

Informal Board discussion on European policy on Roma communities and accession states to the European Union

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

At the last European and International Board meeting, members requested a more detailed discussion on the lobbying work that the Board could undertake at a European Union level in light of proposals from the EU on the rights of Roma children.

Recommendation

Members are asked to discuss the issues and provide a steer as to the focus of the LGA's lobbying going forward.

Action

In line with Members' direction.

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Background

1. At the last European and International Board meeting, members requested a more detailed discussion on the lobbying work that the Board could undertake at a European Union level in light of proposals from the EU on the rights of Roma children.

The Issue

2. In the 2013 EU Commission work programme, there is a proposal for a policy initiative to address the diverse situations concerning Roma within the EU and identifying good practice and effective approaches to Roma integration.
3. Board members asked for further detail on this work - which was being undertaken at a European level by UK councillors - in order to identify the focus of any LGA lobbying. Members involved in such debates at a European level have been invited to lead discussions at the Board meeting. The speakers are:
 - 3.1. Cllr Roger Stone (Leader of Rotherham Council) is a member of the National Roma Network and has developed a number of transnational initiatives in this area. He will brief the Board on local issues and national policy debates.
 - 3.2. Cllr John Warminsham (Salford Council and leader of the UK delegation to the Congress of the Council of Europe) had led policy work on Roma issues at the Council of Europe and will brief the Board on the wider international issues.
4. Whilst the issues related to the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the Union are separate policy issues, the issues of Roma communities and accession states are often merged in public debate. Therefore officers will be available to provide briefing these issues at the meeting. For example, there have been recent approaches to the LGA by the Romanian Embassy in the UK to look at new trade opportunities for UK firms from the expanded EU.

Conclusion and next Steps

5. From Members' discussions, officers are asked to arrange focused lobbying on behalf of the Board.