

Comments of the Romanian delegation in reply to the presentations concerning the conflicts in Sancraieni and Sanmartin villages (Harghita county, Romania)

Side Event: Populism- Extremism-Racism-Social Exclusion

As a general remark, we need to note that the Romanian central and local authorities act in order to protect all the Romanian citizens, without any distinction.

Regarding the measures that followed the conflicts, several central and local authorities representatives worked together with the National Council for Combating Discrimination, the National Agency for Roma, human rights NGOs and, in particular, Roma NGOs' representatives, in order to:

- set-up an action Plan to prevent future conflicts within local communities in Harghita county. This Plan was used to develop preemptive actions aimed at reducing criminality, increasing the citizens confidence in local authorities, enforcing the rule of law, stimulating the social integration of all marginal groups from the area.

- organize, on July 14, 2009, in the Harghita Prefecture hall, a round-table with the title "Escalating the inter-ethnic violent acts in Harghita county – an European trend?".

During this meeting, after analyzing the Sanmartin and Sancraieni conflicts, the conclusions were that they represented the result of tensions accumulated in the village communities because of several offences against personal property. All the participants considered that the authorities' prompt intervention prevented injuries or any escalation of the conflicting situation.

Some proposals were made concerning the establishment of a working group at county level, in order to study the problems of the same type existing in other places, to further involve the local authorities in solving social problems of Roma community and to monitor on a permanent basis potential conflicting situations.

Furthermore, on July 13, 2009, the representatives of local communities of Sancraieni village (Roma and Hungarian) signed in the mayoralty, before a mediation commission, the "protocol for a peaceful life together", in which the Roma community members committed themselves to adopting a civilized behavior, including the immediate pulling down of the offences against personal property, registering of their horses and starting formalities for sending their children to school.

On July 7, 2009, on the occasion of the meeting of the Consultative Committee on relations between Police and Roma minority, held at the General Romanian Police Department and including participants on the side of Roma NGOs (Romani Criss, Trust and Roma Access), it was decided to periodically organize meetings of the Consultative Committee with Roma NGOs, to set up similar working groups in the counties confronted with similar problems, to identify practical instruments to early inform about the conflicting situations, aimed at preventing further confrontations.

Regarding the main actions taken by the Ministry of Administration and Interior immediately after the conflicts, we can mention:

- the setting-up of permanent mixed police & gendarmerie patrols in the villages of Sanraieni and Sanmartin, present in the streets 24 hours/24 hours, and of other patrols in places with potential risk, in order to prevent similar incidents
- the transmission to Harghita County Prosecutor Office six criminal files (three for each village) concerning offences of breaking the entrance, goods destruction, violent acts, instigation to discrimination.