

**Iulius Rostas**  
**Talking points**

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

WORKING SESSION 10

18 September, 10:00 – 13:00

Tolerance and non-discrimination I, including:

- Rights of persons belonging to national minorities
- Roma and Sinti issues, including implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti
  - Preventing aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism
- The 2003 OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti set important standards as the first comprehensive policy document for Roma and Sinti integration adopted at international level, and inspired subsequent processes such as the EU Framework on National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 adopted by the European Council in 2011.
- Roma and Sinti are on average in a worse vulnerable position than the majority population and they continue to face racism and discrimination in all areas of life. The European Commission's recent Communication regarding the Midterm review of the EU framework for national Roma integration strategies issued on 30 August 2017, states "it is clear that five years is too short a period to undo centuries of discrimination and deprivation".
- Over the last 25 years, Roma were at the center of attention of international organizations and national governments as never before in their history. The concern with the situation of Roma is reflected in the increased number of policy documents targeting Roma: the 2003 OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti; The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, The Council of Europe Strasbourg Declaration of 2010, and the EU Framework on National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020, national strategies and programs to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti. It is high time for these institutions and for the participating States to reflect on their experiences and identify lessons learned during the policy processes targeting Roma. As a scholar conducting research on and teaching about policy making towards Roma and Sinti, I identified the following lessons that we all should learn from the field:
  - participation mechanism to ensure meaningful participation of Roma and Sinti, with special attention to women and youth;
  - the active role of local authorities in designing and implementing policies is crucial for any improvement of the situation of Roma and Sinti;

- combating antigypsyism as a special form of racism towards Roma should be at the core of any policy intervention;
  - mainstreaming gender and adopting an intersectional approach is needed to effectively address complex issues faced by Roma and Sinti;
  - plans and documents should be backed by financial allocations and adequate resources.
- The global economic and the recent migration crises revived and fueled trends of increased anti-Roma rhetoric by populist politicians and extremists or violent manifestations against Roma and Sinti. I would like to underline that the increasing gap between Roma and Sinti and mainstream societies is reflected in the escalation of hate crimes and violence against Roma and Sinti.
  - I used this opportunity to raise some questions to the delegations of participating States.

## **Questions**

- Has the impact of integration policies for national minorities and Roma and Sinti been monitored and measured and what are the lessons learned? Is there evidence regarding which measures have had a definite positive impact and/or examples of promising practices? What are the main challenges to implementation of integration policies?
- Which mechanisms are in place to ensure that minorities, including Roma and Sinti, are consulted regularly on policy development and implementation? Do these processes include consultations with women from national minorities, including Roma and Sinti women, and do they address issues that affect minority women and youth?
- Do (new) current challenges to peace and security in the OSCE region compel participating States to design, implement or revisit existing integration strategies and which new elements (if any) should be introduced into integration policies to effectively address new current challenges to peace and security in the OSCE region?
- How are participating States ensuring implementation of OSCE commitments on preventing aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism?

## **Recommendations**

- OSCE participating States should create mechanisms for an effective participation of Roma and Sinti, in particular Roma and Sinti women and youth, in policy processes concerning them.
- OSCE participating States should place the fight against antigypsyism at the core of their policies towards Roma to promote equality and social inclusion. Without removing structural factors reproducing inequality, no policy towards Roma will succeed.
- Regarding monitoring the impact of integration strategies of Roma and Sinti, underline that OSCE participating States need to increase efforts in terms of

allocating adequate financial resources, creating effective monitoring frameworks, set quantifiable indicators and targets and collect necessary data.

- OSCE participating States should ensure the mainstreaming of specific measures related to Roma and Sinti women and youth are mainstreamed into both integration policies related to Roma and Sinti as well as in mainstream policies related to women and youth.