

## **OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2017**

### **Statement by the Czech Republic**

Working session 10: Tolerance and non-discrimination I, 18 September 2017

Roma and Sinti issues

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Mr Chairman,

The Czech Republic aligns herself with the statement of the European Union to which we would like to make some comments in our national capacity.

Roma integration remains a high priority for the Czech Government. The Czech Government is resolutely implementing its Strategy for Roma Integration up to 2020. Wider public, including Roma groups and representatives, is involved in the annual monitoring of the Strategy.

Regarding education, the Czech Government, following the amendment to the Education Act of 2015, continues to promote joint education and equal access to education for all pupils. With the introduction of adequate support measures necessary to meet the educational needs of each pupil, conditions have been created for all pupils to be educated primarily in the mainstream education. This step should bring significant support to Roma pupils and their integration into the majority population.

In the Czech Republic, since 1 September 2017 compulsory pre-school education has been introduced. It applies to children aged 4 and older, primarily in kindergartens, for 4 hours a day, but the law also allows individual education. At the same time, the already established rule of free-of-charge last year of kindergarten is preserved in order to ensure that all children enter primary education successfully. A place in kindergarten is guaranteed for all children aged 4 and older. In accordance with the gradual effect of the provisions of the Education Act, admission to the kindergartens established by municipalities is guaranteed for children aged 4 and older from September 2017, children aged 3 and older from September 2018 and children aged 2 and older from September 2020.

We have continued the activities on which we reported at the HDIM last year, such as the Campaign Against Racism and Hate Violence, which is particularly relevant when addressing anti-Gypsyism, hate speech and violence against Roma, as well as when addressing anti-Islamic sentiments in the Czech Republic.

The Czech National Roma Contact Point has successfully completed the project Activation and Empowerment of Roma Stakeholders by the National Roma Platform. Its objective has been to strengthen the cooperation and dialogue of all relevant stakeholders of Roma integration and empower Roma stakeholders to effectively take part in identifying the needs of Roma minority, solving the problems of Roma minority and ownership of the results of the integration process. There were 5 meetings of the National Roma Platform, in which participated 162 representatives of Roma, 93 representatives of local authorities and 6 representatives of national authorities. A total of 37 Roma representatives successfully completed courses on increasing competences in the area of community work and its principles and strengthening soft skills in the area of negotiation and advocating Roma interests. A follow-up project is underway.

Last year we informed the HDIM that the Czech Government had declared its determination to purchase the pig farm in Lety near Písek, which stands on the site of a former so-called "Zigeunerlager" Lety.

This year we are pleased to announce that the negotiations with the representatives of the owners of the pig farm were successful and on 21 August 2017 the Government approved the purchase of the premises of the pig farm for the purpose of its removal. Currently, a purchase contract is being prepared which will be signed. The Government, in cooperation with the Museum of Romany Culture, will ensure that the final form of the memorial site is consulted with Roma survivors, Roma representatives and professional public and also the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs.

The second significant memorial site of the Roma Holocaust in the Czech Republic is located in Hodonín near Kunštát. Currently, the Czech Government is conducting negotiations in order to bring this memorial site under the administration of the Museum of Romany Culture.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude by underlining that the Roma integration remains one of the priorities of the Czech Government. Measures of the Strategy for Roma integration up to 2020 are being implemented. Whenever possible, the Czech Government is making sure that the Roma themselves are involved in deciding on Roma integration issues. Roma integration cannot be carried out without the Roma.

Thank you.