



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
29.09.-09.10.2009, Warsaw
14th Session

Statement- Slovenia

Dear Mr. Moderator,

First of all, my delegation would like to express its appreciation that for the last two years due attention is given to the topic of early education for Roma and Sinti in the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. Slovenia is fully aware of the importance of this issue and is taking positive proactive measures in order to promote and improve the integration of Roma children into the educational system.

Since May 2009 Slovenia holds the **Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe**. During the Chairmanship we aim to promote the fundamental values and objectives of this organization- the respect for human rights, strengthening the rule of law and defending the democratic ideals. One of the priorities of our Chairmanship is the promotion of the rights of minorities and active policy for their integration, especially regarding Roma. In this context we have organized many important events; in May 2009 for example a **conference on "Roma Education"** was held in Slovenia, in which the participants underlined the importance of education of Roma children for their successful integration. Allow me to mention another event. Just today an opening of a very important Council of Europe's project is held in Slovenia- an opening of a **"European Road of Roma Culture and Heritage"**. This road will in fact connect villages with Roma population which will offer tourist and educational activities. Visiting these villages will help changing stereotypes and prejudices against Roma and Sinti.

Now, I would like to present the legal basis and some recent activities of the Slovenian government aimed at improving education of Roma population. In 2007 a comprehensive **Roma Community Act** was adopted. This law obliges all state and also self-governing local community bodies to ensure the implementation of special rights of the Roma community in order to improve its status in all key areas, housing,

education, employment, family welfare, social and health care, as well as cultural development. A national programme of measures for the operationalization of this act, which will determine sector specific programmes and measures, is planned to be adopted by the end of 2009.

In 2004 **Strategy for Education of Roma** was drafted and adopted by the highest professional authorities in the field of education and with the active involvement of the Roma Union of Slovenia. The strategy provides the basis for specific and coordinated further measures in education. I would like to underline few positive solutions that the Strategy provides for:

- Early, pre-school integration of Roma children into the education system;
- Roma assistants to help Roma children;
- Adaptation of the curriculum taking into account the teaching of Romani language and introducing Roma culture, history and identity;
- Permanent in-service training and additional education programmes for professionals working with Roma;
- Non-segregation and inhomogeneous classes;
- Various forms of learning assistance;
- Building confidence in school and the elimination of prejudices;
- Understanding that Roma pupils are not pupils with special needs.

Objectives and measures included in the document are numerous and of strategic nature. For this reason a **special group** for the implementation of the strategy headed by the President of the Roma Union of Slovenia was appointed in 2005. Each year this group drafts an annual action plan enumerating specific activities for the current year. Financial resources for the implementation of the action plan are provided from the state budget and in 2008 also from the European Social Fund.

Based on the mentioned legislation several **successful activities and measures** were carried out in Slovenia. Let me mention some of them:

- A normative act was adopted banning the establishment of segregated classes exclusively for Roma pupils;
- A network of schools with Roma pupils has been formed; within this network, teachers exchange experience and good practices, and additional professional teacher training is also provided by faculties, institutes and public institutions;
- Schools were provided with the resources to implement projects and other activities to fulfil the objectives of intercultural dialogue;

- Several research projects were financed;
- Occupational standards for Roma assistants were developed;
- In 2008 funds were earmarked to increase the number of teaching staff in classes with Roma pupils;
- The Roma Union of Slovenia carried out an independent evaluation of the education of Roma pupils and proposed specific measures based on it.

In conclusion let me draw your attention to the **project of Roma assistants**. In May 2008 the Government of Slovenia published a call for applications for this project worth 2 million Euros for a period of 6 years. The Roma Union of Slovenia was selected and is therefore in charge of the project of employing Roma assistants in schools. One of the most important tasks of the Roma assistant is to increase attendance and ensure regular presence of Roma children in schools. They help Roma children in studying, with homework and understanding the Slovenian language. The Roma assistants represent an important link between the school and the families of Roma children. Until now, 26 assistants have been employed.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

If you are interested to learn more about the project of Roma Assistants allow me to use this opportunity to invite you to a side event, which is organized by Slovenia and will take place after this session.

Thank you for your attention!