

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2015  
Statement by the Republic of Bulgaria on Roma and Sinti Issues  
Working Session 16: Tolerance and non-discrimination I (continued), including:  
Roma and Sinti issues, including: Implementation of the OSCE  
Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti

Madame Moderator,

The Bulgarian delegation fully supports the statement made by Romania on behalf of the European Union and would like to make some comments in our national capacity.

The Bulgarian delegaion welcomes the opportunity to discuss today the meaningful participation of Roma and Sinti in all policies that affect them, as well as other important issues related to the efforts of the participating States to implement their commitments to improve the situation of Roma population in the OSCE area and to ensure its wider social inclusion.

Bulgaria has also been part of those efforts by devising and implementing a National Strategy for Roma Integration 2012-2020, which provides a road-map with emphasis on six priority areas of integration policies: education, healthcare, housing, employment, rule of law and non-discrimination, and culture and media. A large array of governmental and non-governmental actors is engaged in the implementation of the Strategy at national, regional and local level.

The strategy uses an integrated territorial approach, allowing the simultaneous undertaking of measures across the territory of the country and unifying the resources under different priorities, taking account of the specific local needs, particularly the needs of the most disadvantaged people, in order to bring about visible changes in the individual settlements/neighbourhoods.

In 2012, regional and local strategies for the integration of Roma and Action Plans to them were also elaborated. Currently, there are 28 regional strategies and 220 municipal APs in place, developed on the basis of analysis of the needs and specifics of local communities.

The involvement of Roma representatives in the process has been essential for ensuring that Roma themselves have a say in policies and programmes concerning them. In Bulgaria, we have a special body, functioning within the Council of Ministers, which coordinates the Government's policy in this area.

The National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues (NCCEII) is a coordinating and consultative body, assisting the Government in formulating the policy on the integration of minority groups, ethnic and minority issues, and encourages the cooperation between the state bodies and the NGOs.

There has been certain progress, but challenges remain. Hardly an overall success story could be reported in any country addressing the Roma inclusion, as the search for solution is a long-term process.

However, efforts should persist and my country is committed to pursue a better perspective for its Roma population based on the rule of law, democracy and human rights.

At the same time, we would like to note that the situation of Roma is not an issue that could be solved in the framework of bilateral or even intra-European relations. It is a matter of enhancing social inclusion and the fair distribution of the burden of responsibilities.

Thank you.