



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 22 September - 3 October 2014

EU Statement for Working Session 12: Tolerance and Non-discrimination II

Mr./Ms Chairperson,

I have the honor to take the floor on behalf of the European Union and refer to the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area which the European Union remains fully committed to. Roma and Sinti issues remain high on the agenda of the EU. A solid policy, legal and financial framework has been put in place at both EU and national levels. Many Member States have developed their own National Roma Integration Strategies, while others are taking the issues through wider social inclusion policies. The European Commission publishes an annual assessment of progress in each Member State. The EU has managed to strengthen EU financial support for Roma inclusion not only in 28 EU Member States but also in enlargement countries. We also recall the Decision adopted by the OSCE Ministerial Council in 2013 on Enhancing OSCE efforts to implement the Action Plan, with a particular focus on Roma and Sinti women, youth and children.

Social integration of Roma requires political commitment at national and local level. This is why the Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures, adopted unanimously by all 28 EU Member States in December 2013, was an important step. It is also the first ever EU legal instrument for Roma inclusion which aims to assist member states in integrating their Roma citizens, including reducing social and economic inequalities between Roma and the rest of the population.



EUROPEAN UNION

Furthermore, the EU has set up a permanent dialogue between Member States through 28 National Roma Contact Points. This network represents an important opportunity for Member States to exchange good practice on Roma integration which may assist them in taking forward their Roma Integration Strategies or sets of policy measures. Finally, projects in four key areas – education, employment, healthcare and housing - are being carried out in all 28 EU Member States.

However, as stated in the European Commission's 2014 progress report, in order to see a real improvement in the lives of Roma people, much remains to be done, including by our Member States also at local level. The EU will help local and regional authorities strengthen their administrative capacities to access and use EU funds more effectively. The EU will continue to work with the Member States, to assess progress and support them in their efforts.

Many challenges still remain in the EU and throughout the OSCE area with regard to, inter-alia: combating discrimination and intolerance against Roma and Sinti; improving the status of Roma women as well as combating discrimination on multiple grounds; increasing participation of Roma and Sinti in social, economic and political life, including in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies that affect them; improving living conditions; ensuring equal access to healthcare and education. We continue to be worried by the disturbing number of hate crimes against Roma and Sinti, in some member states, as well as intensified extremist anti-Roma rhetoric in the public sphere. The EU condemns all manifestations of racism and xenophobia and calls systematically on public authorities to distance themselves from all stigmatizing discourses.

The OSCE participating States have undertaken commitments in all of the aforementioned fields. We should address these challenges through systematic, coordinated and efficient strategies, policies and concrete measures at the state, regional and local levels with the involvement of NGOs and Roma and Sinti.



EUROPEAN UNION

Strong condemnation of acts of discrimination from officials, political leaders and civil society is also a must. The European Union commends the work of OSCE institutions, notably the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, for their dedicated efforts in advancing the implementation of the OSCE commitments and assisting participating States to this end.

Cooperation among international organizations acting in this field needs to be strengthened and, in this regard, we welcome the increased dialogue and cooperation between ODIHR and the European Union. Additionally, we are committed to strengthening the cooperation with the Council of Europe including its “Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues (CAHROM), on which almost all EU member states are represented.

The full implementation of all OSCE commitments continues to be the EU’s guiding principles. We take this opportunity to reiterate our calls for full implementation of all OSCE commitments regarding Roma and Sinti and our firm determination in this respect.

Recommendations:

- Enhance efforts to implement all OSCE commitments, in particular the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, as well as continue the regular review of its implementation; in this context, participating States should respond promptly and comprehensively to ODIHR’s requests for information.
- Enhance the complementarity of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the situation of Roma and Sinti and the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.
- Enhance implementing of the OSCE commitments with regard to Roma and Sinti by local authorities.



EUROPEAN UNION

- Enhance data collection with regard to the situation of Roma and Sinti in all fields of the Action Plan, as far as this is in compliance with the legal framework and overall policy of a Member State.
- Include, where appropriate, a monitoring and assessment component in strategies, policies, measures and programmes related to Roma and Sinti, as well as review mechanisms taking into account the respective results of monitoring and assessment, as far as this is necessary by taking into account any existing monitoring mechanisms especially in the framework of the European Union.
- Enhance efforts to increase enrolment for Roma and Sinti children and youth at all levels in State-provided education and reduce school dropout rate; enhance efforts to eliminate segregation of Roma and Sinti at all levels in education
- Enhancing, where appropriate, the participation of Roma and Sinti in the elaboration, implementation and evaluation of the policies that affect them ;
- Prevent further marginalization and exclusion of Roma and Sinti and address the rise of discrimination and violent manifestations of intolerance against Roma and Sinti, including against Roma and Sinti migrants;
- Enhance efforts to strengthen the rights of Roma women and girls and to eliminate discrimination on multiple grounds;
- Enhance cooperation among international organizations with regard to improving the situation of Roma and Sinti.
- Continue activities of the OSCE field operations with regard to improving the situation of Roma and Sinti.

I also have the honour to also address on the issues regarding prevention and responses to hate crimes in the OSCE area, protection against discrimination of any grounds by law, preventing aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism, including the rise of political parties, movements and groups advocating violence and hatred on ethnic, racial and religious and other grounds.



EUROPEAN UNION

The EU supports ODIHR's work in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination and believes that our shared values and principles are integral to the OSCE's objective of building more stable, pluralistic and democratic societies.

We regret that discrimination is still widespread in the OSCE area, including in EU Member States. We therefore call on OSCE participating States actively to cooperate with ODIHR in implementing our shared commitments to promote mutual respect and understanding. In times of economic difficulties, the danger of rising racism and intolerance manifestations, fuelled by increasing economic insecurity, are very real. In these challenging times, our efforts to fulfil the commitments must be relentless. We highly value the work carried out by ODIHR in preventing hate crime across the OSCE region. We are aware of the importance of reliable data on hate crimes in the fight against intolerance and non-discrimination and fully support ODIHR's activities in this field.

The EU has a solid legal framework to combat discrimination on grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, disability, age, religions of belief and sexual orientation. We would like to reiterate our steadfast commitment to the global fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance. The EU remains convinced that the fight against all manifestations of extremist, racist and discrimination-based ideologies must be a common and consensual priority for all of us.

Recommendations:

- The implementation of commitments against all forms of intolerance.
- Strengthen the capacity of ODIHR to deal with TND issues and ensure better synergy between the CiO Personal Representatives and ODIHR structures.
- Publicly speak out against hate crime, whatever the motivation.



EUROPEAN UNION

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.