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Seilerstätte 17/ St. 2 /8-9  
1010 Vienna

Phone: + 43-1-512.85.66  
Fax: + 43-1-512.90.57  
E-mail: mpromviena@mprom.at  
www.mpviena.mae.ro  
www.mae.ro

**Statement by Romania at the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting  
Vienna, 29-30 October 2015**

**SESSION II: Integration of diverse societies and *The Ljubljana Guidelines***

Mr. Moderator,

We fully subscribed to the statement and the recommendations made on behalf of the European Union, but we would like to make some national remarks in our national capacity. We would like to thank the Serbian Chairmanship for organizing this Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting and reiterate Romania's full support for the activity of the High Commissioner on National Minorities and ODIHR.

The Romanian policies in the field of national minorities are double aimed: (a) to protect the specific identity – cultural, linguistic, and ethnic – of persons belonging to national minorities, and (b) to ensure harmonious coexistence between the majority and the minority, as well as between the minorities themselves. The model of inter-culturalism advocated by Romania fully responds both to the need for the conservation and assertion of the specific identity (ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious), and to the goal of defining an integrating space, that is tolerant and rests on interethnic dialogue and mutual understanding and respect.

As stated in the *Guidelines on Integration of Diverse Societies*, attention should not be directed solely towards the necessity to promote and protect the specific identity of persons belonging to national minorities, but also on the need to integrate them in the societies to which they belong. Such policies contribute to the establishment of tolerant societies, based on intercultural dialogue, which, by itself, prevents conflict. Conflict would be the result of different policies promoting segregation between the minority and the majority.

In order to reach their objective, policies in the field of cultural diversity should aim, on one hand, towards the protection and promotion of different “distinct identities”, i.e. *multiculturalism*, and, on the other hand, the interaction between these “distinct identities”, i.e. *interculturalism*. This “cultural interaction” makes the most out of the measures concerning the distinct identity elements of persons belonging to national minorities and aims at integrating such people in the societies where they live, as members of the “civic nation”.

Romania managed to develop, with the important support of the members of the 20 national minorities that live on its territory, a system for the protection of their rights, which stands above international standards in the field. This system is efficient in protecting and promoting the cultural, linguistic and religious identity of persons belonging to national minorities who live on the territory of Romania. This is entirely confirmed by the conclusions of the different monitoring mechanisms established under the relevant Council of Europe conventions.

Romania protects the right of every individual who freely declares that he/she belongs to a national minority, to use his/her mother tongue when dealing with public authorities and judiciary, to be taught in his/her mother tongue (at all education levels), to have religious service in his/her mother tongue, to have access to media in the mother tongue, to be involved in public life and public decision making concerning the entire society and not only the minority he/she belongs to. Moreover, Romania promotes cultural activities that advance the identity of persons belonging to national minorities, through substantial financial allocation towards the representative organizations of minorities.

In supporting the intercultural dialogue and the inter-culturalism, concrete measures have been taken, including on a legislative level, to increase tolerance and combat discrimination.

Romania has developed an institutional system aimed to develop coherent policies for the protection of national minorities from a multicultural and intercultural perspective. One should note the crucial role of the Department for Interethnic Relations, the creation of a specific department dedicated to education in the languages of national minorities within the Ministry of Education (coordinated by a secretary of state) or the role of the National Council for Combating Discrimination in punishing any form of discrimination and consolidating tolerance within the society.

Romania has learned from its experience the challenges to which policies in the field of national minorities must respond and has undoubtedly understood that solid democratic societies are based on tolerance, mutual respect, cultural diversity, interethnic and intercultural dialogue for the benefit of the society as a whole. We can currently speak in Romania about interethnic „cultural phenomena“ (festivals, theater representations, concerts and various artistic events), of bilingual education systems, of varied media programmes in the language of the minorities that undoubtedly contribute to interaction in between members of different ethnic groups, to promotion of mutual understanding and to the strengthening of tolerance.

The integration of persons belonging to national minorities into the Romanian society and the dialogue between the members of the majority and those of the minorities have contributed to the strengthening of the intercultural dialogue and, equally, to furthering and improving Romanian policies in the field of protection of rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

Romania counts on this type of dialogue between the majority and the minority, as its policies in the field of protection of national minorities aimed, unconditionally, towards the preservation, the development and the promotion of their ethnical, cultural, linguistic and religious identity.

The participation of national minorities in public life, in decision making concerning the society as a whole is guaranteed by the Romanian Constitution. Each representative organization of the 20 national minorities has, *ex lege*, a deputy seat in the Romanian Parliament<sup>1</sup>. The active involvement of representatives of national minorities in the local decision making process is more so explanatory for the Romanian system of protecting the rights of national minorities. In the current mandate 45 representatives of national minorities have become parliamentarians of which 18 deputies of UDMR (Democratic Union of Hungarians of Romania), 18 deputies of the Parliamentary Group of national minorities and 9 UDMR senators. 21 national minorities organizations participated in the local elections of June 2012, and 16 managed to get the necessary votes to be represented in the local structures. Organizations representing the minorities participated over time in governing coalitions, and thus had a direct contribution to decision and policy making for the Romanian society as a whole.

With regard to **Roma integration policies**, as this topic has also been addressed in this session, we would like to mention that Roma social inclusion represents a key priority for the Romanian Executive.

A new Governmental Strategy for the inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to Roma minority was adopted in January 2015. The essential stake of the Strategy is to bring the Romanian citizens belonging to Roma minority to a socio-economic level of inclusion similar to that of the rest of the population and to provide equal opportunities by initiating and implementing public policies and programs in various fields of intervention. The document represents an in-depth review of the 2012-2020 Governmental Strategy, in accordance to the fundamental EU documents setting the framework for Roma inclusion (the 201 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 and

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<sup>1</sup> Politically, the national minorities are represented in the Parliament, take part in the Government and are consulted by it. Article 59(2) of the Constitution on the election of the Parliament's Chambers, sets this right of automatic representation and provides that: „[o]rganizations of citizens belonging to national minorities, which fail to obtain the number of votes for representation in Parliament, have the right to one Deputy seat each, under the terms of the electoral law“.

the 2013 Council recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Members States). Covering the 2015 – 2020 timeframe, the Strategy supports the efforts to reach the national social targets of *Europe 2020*. Budgetary resources aimed at accomplishing the proposed measures are foreseen, to be complemented with the EU Structural and Investment funds' financing related to the multi-annual financial framework.

The strategy is accompanied by action plans focused on the each major field of intervention as identified at EU level (*education, employment, health and housing*), complemented by the *social services, culture and combating discrimination*. Taking into consideration the social and cultural particularities of various Roma sub-groups, the new Strategy provides a pragmatic, effective approach by integrated and tailored intervention measures.

Robust mechanisms for implementing, monitoring, assessing and eventual review of the Strategy are established. Both the central and local authorities and the civil society will participate in an integrated manner in those mechanisms. The involvement in the implementation and assessment process of the local level and of the civil society is going to be a substantial one, coherent institutional mechanisms being foreseen in this regard. Concrete indicators measuring the level of accomplishment of the Strategy's targets and measures are set at intermediate (year 2016) and final (year 2020) levels.

The civil society was actively involved in the adoption process of the new Strategy, built on a comprehensive assessment of the present-day state of affairs.

Roma integration issues remain among the domestic policy priorities of the Government. Some main concerns are: solving the problems regarding the property rights of the lands where Roma ethnics built their houses on; implementation of the house rehabilitation plans for the Roma neighborhoods, with a special focus on the ensuring access to main facilities (electrical energy, gas, drinkable water, waste water drainage systems and waste disposal management); ensure access to labor market and healthcare; reduce school drop out (i.e. there are reserved seats for Roma students at state universities – in the previous university year there were around 555 seats; there are currently 240.000 Roma pupils and students registered in the state education system); promote artistic values; create civic educational programs; crime prevention.

Romania achieved a significant expertise regarding the institutionalization of the school and health mediators (currently there are 400 school mediators employed, as well as 400 health mediators), both at national and international level. Moreover, at county level, the offices of each Mayor and Governor have employed local Roma experts that are in direct contact with the local Roma communities.

The National Agency for Roma, National Cultural Center for Roma and the National Council for Combating Discrimination are very important institutional instruments that contribute to the social inclusion and judicial protection of Roma population.

We value the work done by the ODIHR/CPRSI and we welcome the focus in their latest activity in promoting public and political participation of Roma (especially women and youth). Romania takes steps towards ensuring and active participation to public and political life of Roma minority. The Roma minority is represented in the Romanian Parliament (2 deputies) and members of the Roma community were elected at local level (1 mayor and 161 local councilors). The Prime-Minister appointed a state counselor on Roma issues (in June 2012). In this context, we would like to mention that Romania co-organised, together with ODIHR/CPRSI and Finland, a side-event at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw on participation to public and political life of Roma and Sinti, with a focus on Roma women.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.