



## EUROPEAN UNION

### OSCE Review Conference Warsaw, 6 October 2010

## **EU Statement – Session 7 : Tolerance and non-discrimination I (1)**

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Dear Mr. Moderator,

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 that all participating States, including the European Union members remain fully committed to.

We find ourselves at a moment of taking stock of the progress achieved not only since last year, but more generally since the last OSCE Summit, in Istanbul in view of the forthcoming OSCE Summit in Astana. Under these circumstances the EU commends the pioneer role of the 2003 OSCE Action Plan that remains the most comprehensive and far-reaching compilation of international commitments aimed at improving the situation of Roma and Sinti. While reaffirming the validity of the commitments thereof and the subsequent ones adopted by the participating States, the EU Member States also acknowledge the urgency of their full implementation and the need to step up efforts to this end.

Roma live in all EU member states. While the EU member states have the primary responsibility for advancing the social and economic integration of Roma, cooperation at the EU level brings significant added value. Since 2007, Roma and Sinti issues have gained in profile in the European Union. The enhanced focus on Roma and Sinti issues was reflected in the outcome documents of the European Council in December 2007 and of the subsequent Council conclusions and European Parliament resolutions. Since 2008, progress has been achieved in the EU in terms of: enforcement and further development of EU legislation in the areas of non-discrimination, freedom of movement, data protection and anti-racism; in mainstreaming Roma and Sinti issues into all relevant EU policies; the adoption of the Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion as a practical framework for public policy makers at all levels on how to design and implement successful initiatives; the creation of the European Platform for Roma Inclusion that provides interaction and exchange of good practices among EU institutions, international organizations, Member States' governments and civil society; dedicated activities in the framework of 2010 - European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion; collection, analysis and dissemination of data on the situation of Roma by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights; in strengthening the partnership among all relevant actors and in increasing the ownership of Roma as regards policies affecting them.

On the occasion of the second EU Roma Summit in Cordoba (April 2010), the Trio Presidency of the European Union (Spain, Belgium, Hungary) committed itself to maintain Roma and Sinti issues high on EU agenda, including by advancing the mainstreaming of Roma issues in European and

national policies, by improving the design of a road map of the Integrated Platform on Roma Inclusion, standing up firmly against discrimination and stigmatization.

Nonetheless, while some progress has been achieved, much remains to be done. We must keep in mind that a significant proportion of Roma experience situation of extreme poverty, discrimination and exclusion, which also entails low educational levels, inadequate housing conditions, lack of access to employment and precarious health; and that the Roma women and girls face particular difficulties, including the risk of multiple discrimination. We must keep in mind that any discrimination against the Roma minority opens the door to further discrimination. Challenges remain in the EU, as well as throughout the OSCE area and are more present than ever, with regard to, inter-alia: combating discrimination and intolerance against Roma and Sinti, including violent manifestations, and ensure effective remedies; countering negative stereotyping, including in the mass-media while fully respecting freedom of expression and of freedom the media; enhancing participation of Roma and Sinti in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies that affect them; integration of Roma and Sinti people into mainstream education; increasing participation of Roma and Sinti in social, economic and political life; improving living conditions. Education, starting from early education, should continue to be a special focus in our efforts as a uniquely efficient means to enhance Roma and Sinti sustainable integration in the society they live in.

The OSCE participating States have undertaken commitments in all of the aforementioned fields, either in the framework of the Action Plan or in subsequent ministerial decisions, notably those adopted during the Finnish

and Greek Chairmanships. The challenges we face need to be effectively addressed through systematic, coordinated and efficient strategies, policies and concrete measures at the state, regional and local levels that with the involvement of NGOs and Roma and Sinti. We commend the assistance ODIHR, notably the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, and the HCNM have extended to participating States in fulfilling their commitments and we look forward to increased support from their side. Additionally, cooperation among international organizations acting in the field needs to be strengthened.

We avail ourselves of this opportunity, before the Astana Summit, to reaffirm our commitment to redouble efforts for the implementation of the OSCE commitments in view of improving the situation of Roma and Sinti and to respond promptly and in a balanced way to all new challenges.

#### Recommendations:

- Make the ODIHR review of the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area a regular exercise, possibly every 2 years. In this context, participating States should respond to ODIHR's requests for information as comprehensively as possible;
- Improve monitoring mechanisms of commitments' implementation in this field;
- Strengthen cooperation between international organizations with a view to improving the situation of Roma and Sinti.

Thank you for your attention

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA\*, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA\* and ICELAND\*\*, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA, the European Free Trade Association country and member of the European Economic Area NORWAY, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

\*Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

\*\* Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and the European Economic Area.