



Center for Education
and Human Rights

OSCE

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

September 26, 2019

Working session 16 “Roma and Sinti participation in public and political life”

Statement by Center for Education and Human Rights

Your Excellences,

The key message of this statement is that, if we aim to improve the participation in public and political life of Roma and Sinti, we need to work harder with the majority population, to educate and mobilize support from the vast majority of those living in our society. Actually, the legitimate goal is *de facto* (and not just formal) the full ownership and responsibility at society level of the need to increase the public participation and representation of the Roma and Sinti at a level similar to that of the majority. As already stated in the programmatic and strategic documents, this requires public policies devoted to the Roma and Sinti in the fields of education, employment, health, housing, antidiscrimination - in brief, equality of life opportunities and empowerment. The OSCE Action Plan for Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti and other European/national strategies or documents encompassing measures for the Roma and Sinti have not had the expected effects and results, and one of the main reasons for this failure was the lack of commitment and support, on the part of the majority, of substantiated and real measures. Policies designed for minorities and especially those dedicated to Roma and Sinti are not popular

among the majority since they do not mobilize electoral support. Under these circumstances, public decision-makers, politicians are not pro-active in full support of the effective implementation of Roma and Sinti policies. Given a constant pressure and lobby from the OSCE, Council of Europe and European Commission to improve the situation of the Roma and Sinti, a dilemma arises: on the one hand, policies are needed to improve the living condition of the Roma because, or as a result of obligations undertaken by Member States; on the other hand, such public policies do not increase the electoral capital of their decision-makers. Moreover, such policies even create disapproval from the majority electorate, so an electoral reasoning would force the decision-makers to refrain themselves from adopting such policies. How did the political representatives solve this dilemma? They have adopted public policies for Roma and Sinti, quite well articulated on paper, yet have implemented them incompletely, inconsistently, and without major actual positive impact and effect. We cannot deny that the very existence of some principles, legal acts, legitimate objectives assumed by the Governments in its public documents is not a positive step forward. This step has been made, but now we live in another paradigm, that we must go ahead and carry on with the effective implementation of these policies, evaluate the current situation by assessing the results obtained at grassroots level, and not by the measures and statements enclosed in the related public documents. To this end, it is necessary to change the paradigm concerning the relation between the majority population and public policies on Roma and Sinti minority.

From this perspective, the way in which the dialogue is carried out between the majority and the minority is essential. **How can the majority be determined or persuaded to change its approach in the relation with the Roma minority, to consider the policies and measures for the Roma and Sinti as necessary and useful as well as a means of developing the society as a whole?** This is a key question that needs to be addressed with self-confidence, especially since we are convinced that most people would gain enormously from this paradigm shift when relating to the Roma and Sinti community.

- **Recommendation:** OSCE participating states should increase their activities to mobilize public support and involve members of the majority population in full support of the implementation of OSCE Action Plan.