

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

**Warsaw, 28 September – 9 October 2009**

**Working Sessions 14 and 15 : ‘Roma/Sinti and, in particular, early education for Roma and Sinti children’**

**Contribution of the Council of Europe**

**Roma and Travellers**

***1. Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers (MG-S-ROM)***

In 1995, the Committee of Ministers set up a committee, the Specialist Group on Roma, Gypsies and Travellers (MG-S-ROM). In July 2006, **the MG-S-ROM was renamed “Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers”**.

The Committee of Experts is **open to all member states, including states with observer status with the Council of Europe**. As of today **27 member states actively participate in the work of the Committee**<sup>1</sup>. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the Office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe, as well as representatives of various Council of Europe monitoring bodies (e.g. the European Social Charter, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages) are invited to take part in the meetings of the Committee. In addition, international organisations/institutions such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, the FRA, the OSCE-ODIHR/Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, the IOM, the UNDP, the UNHCR and the World Bank regularly take part in these meetings. A number of international non-governmental organisations have been granted an observer status. This includes the European Roma Information Office (ERIO), the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF), the Open Society Institute (OSI), the Project on Ethnic Relations (PER), and since 2009 the Decade of Roma Inclusion

<sup>1</sup> Regular participating countries are : Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Turkey, Ukraine and United Kingdom. A more regular participation from Belgium, Estonia, Latvia, Moldova and Switzerland is under consideration.

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Secretariat Foundation, the Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP) and the Roma Education Fund (REF). Five Roma and Travellers NGOs and/or independent experts, including one designated by the European Roma and Travellers Forum, are invited to participate in the work of the Committee pending the items on the agenda.

The Committee has a mandate to **study, analyse and evaluate the implementation of policies (national programmes and/or action plans) and practices** of member states concerning Roma and Travellers at domestic level, and **act as a forum for the exchange of information**, views and experience on policies, good practice and issues relating to Roma and Travellers. It **keeps under review the situation of Roma and Travellers in member states** in compliance with relevant international instruments, including those of the Council of Europe, and can issue Opinions on specific issues of concern (e.g. the creation of a European Solidarity Fund, the situation of Kosovar Roma refugees, returnees and IDPs, the housing situation of Roma). The Committee **draws up draft recommendations** for the improvement of the access of these populations to human and social rights, (employment, health, housing, culture and education), the situation of women and children and other issues of daily life. These recommendations are adopted by the Committee of Ministers, systematically translated by the Council of Europe into Romani, and sometimes in some national languages by member states.

The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers has so far adopted **seven specific Roma and Travellers-related recommendations**: on the education of Roma children [Rec. (2000)4], on employment [Rec. (2001)17], on the movement and encampment of Travellers [Rec. (2004)14], on housing [Rec. (2005)4], on access to health care [Rec. (2006)10], on policies for Roma and/or Travellers [Rec.(2008)5] and, a few months ago, on the education of Roma and Travellers [Rec. (2009)4]. These recommendations serve as **reference documents for model strategy for member states wishing to engage in policy-making on Roma and/or Travellers or in monitoring of policy implementation, as well as for other international organisations/institutions wishing to develop a European Roma policy (re. EU Roma Platform)**.

In 2009, the MG-S-ROM also adopted an explanatory memorandum of Rec. (2006)10 on access to health care, which includes examples of good practices. An explanatory memorandum of Rec. (2009)4 on the education of Roma and Travellers has also been recently adopted by the Steering Committee for Education (CD-ED).

One of the main priorities of the Committee is **to encourage member states to adopt comprehensive national programmes for Roma and/or Travellers following a participatory consultation process with Roma civil society**. Such programmes or national action plans have now been adopted in 22 European countries. Finland and Sweden are in the process of adopting such national strategies, while the Ukraine is considering adopting a new Plan of Action on Roma with the assistance of the Council of Europe.

The Committee encourages other European states having even a small Roma, Sinti or Traveller population to develop such national comprehensive programmes at national level. This was one the recommendations addressed by the MG-S-ROM to the Dutch authorities on the occasion of the public hearing organised in The Hague in November 2008. Such public hearings with state and local authorities and local NGOs are organised when the Committee meets in a CoE member state (i.e. once a year). In March 2009, the Committee was invited by the Spanish authorities to hold its 27<sup>th</sup> meeting in Seville. In the

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autumn 2010, the Committee should meet in Poland.

Their implementation, especially at the local level, is now a major concern for the Organisation. This is why the Committee is currently seeking to **reinforce its cooperation with the Congress for Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe**. The latter has decided, in March 2009, to nominate a special rapporteur on Roma and Traveller issues who will now attend MG-S-ROM meetings and ensure better coordination between the two bodies. Municipalities which demonstrate good examples of integration of Roma can receive a **Prize for Municipalities, a joint project between the Dosta! campaign and the Congress**. A new Prize competition should be launched in 2010.

**2. Intergovernmental activities run by Directorate General of Social Cohesion/ Roma and Travellers Division**

Within the framework of the Council of Europe programme of assistance and cooperation with member States, activities have been undertaken to assess the present situation of Roma and/or Traveller communities.

In addition to the Ordinary budget of the Council of Europe, regular **financial contributions** are made **by Finland to DG3 Special Account on Roma** since 1996. Other recent ad hoc contributors included **Norway** (activities related to youth and migration, women, anti-trafficking and Roma health mediators) and **Sweden** (Romani women's conference). These contributions have made it possible to develop a comprehensive programme of activities to assist governments seeking to develop policies towards Roma and Travellers, as well as to ensure the participation of Roma in various activities at national and international levels.

**The thematic programme of activities of the Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division** has included since the last OSCE-HDIM in October 2008 the following activities or contributions from DG3 Social Cohesion:

**DISCRIMINATION / ANTI-GYPSYISM**

- Since 2008 the Council of Europe has encouraged all member states to launch the **Dosta! awareness-raising campaign against prejudice and negative stereotypes**, which had been initially launched through a joint CoE/EU programme in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and in "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" in 2006-2007. Croatia, Italy, Latvia, Romania and Slovenia have responded positively to this call, as well as Moldova and Ukraine in the context of another joint CoE/EU programme on Roma in these two countries. Other countries, including the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden have also been invited to join the campaign in the near future. The multilanguage website of the Dosta! Campaign ([www.dosta.org](http://www.dosta.org)) is regularly updated with new information and documentation, including leaflets, posters, TV and radio spots, as well as a toolkit for campaigning for Roma and for fighting against stereotypes. The Dosta! campaign is also linked to the Council of Europe campaign "Speak out against discrimination!" (<http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/anti-discrimination-campaign/>).
- Training of journalists on Roma minority and ethical reporting in Moldova (9-10 March 2009) and Ukraine (6 May 2009) in the framework of the joint CoE/EU

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programme on Roma, and in co-operation with the CoE Directorate of Communication.

- Festival “Art and Youth against discrimination” organised in the framework of the joint CoE/EU programme (Ukraine, 27 June 2009).
- Participation of the Coordinator for Roma-related activities in the High Level Conference on the Security Situation of Roma in Europe organised by the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) and the Roma Party in Romania (Bucharest, 12-13 October 2009).

### **MIGRATION**

- Elaboration of project proposals concerning Roma migrants for voluntary contributions in 2010.
- Participation of the Roma Division in the Working Preparatory Seminar between FRA, OSCE-HCNM and the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the CoE on Roma migration and freedom of movement (Strasbourg, 9-10 July 2009).
- Participation of the Roma and Traveller Division in various public debates with local authorities and local population on Roma migrants in France (Nantes, 28 April, Strasbourg, 15 October and Laval, 4 November 2009).
- Item on Roma migration, freedom of movement and asylum in the agenda of the 28<sup>th</sup> MG-S-ROM meeting (Strasbourg, 15-16 October 2009).
- Participation of the Roma Division at the Joint FRA/OSCE/Council of Europe Conference on Roma migration and freedom of movement (9-10 November 2009).

### **POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

- Participation of the Roma Division in the meetings of the international steering committee of the Decade for Roma Inclusion, under the Serbian and the Slovak presidencies.
- Preparation of a joint CoE/EU/Turkish authorities project on Roma in Turkey.
- Assistance (expertise) for the development of a new national action plan for Roma in the Ukraine in the framework of a possible new joint CoE/EU programme, and for the implementation of the current action plan for Roma in Moldova, taking into account CoE Recommendation (2008)5 on policies concerning Roma and/or Travellers in Europe.

### **CO-OPERATION WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Dosta!/Congress Prize for municipalities: the prize giving ceremony took place during the 16<sup>th</sup> Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Plenary session (Strasbourg, 4 March 2009).

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- Meeting between members of the MG-S-ROM and members of the Congress for Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on Roma and Travellers related issues where the Congress announced that a special rapporteur for Roma and Travellers issues would be nominated to attend future MG-S-ROM meetings (Strasbourg, 5 March 2009).
- Participation of the Roma Division Secretariat on Roma and Traveller Issues at a meeting of the Social Cohesion Committee of the Congress (Strasbourg, 12 October 2009).
- Participation of the Congress special rapporteur for Roma and Travellers issues, as well as of the President of the Greek Rom Intermunicipal Network at the 28<sup>th</sup> MG-S-ROM meeting (Strasbourg, 15-16 October 2009).
- Active support of Odessa municipality at the Festival “Art and Youth against discrimination” organised in the framework of the joint CoE/EU programme (Ukraine, 27 June 2009). The Odessa municipality invited other minority groups to perform at the concert and delivered speeches against racism.

### **EDUCATION**

- Contribution to DG4 International Conference “Education for Roma: achievements, opportunities and challenges for the future” under the Slovenian presidency of the Council of Europe (Brdo, 25-26 May). The conference was the closing event of the CoE Project “Education for Roma children”.
- Teachers’ training in Moldova on Roma school assistants/mediators in the framework of the joint CoE/EU programme on Roma (19-20 June 2009).
- Co-operation between the MG-S-ROM and the Steering Committee for Education (CD-ED) and respective secretariats in DG3 and DG4 to draft Recommendation Rec. (2009)4 on the education of Roma and Travellers in Europe that was adopted by the Committee of Ministers in July 2009.
- Participation of the Roma Division and the Coordinator for Roma-related activities at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Seminar of the Integrated EU Platform for Roma Inclusion: Improving the quality education for Roma (Brussels, 28 September 2009).

### **EMPLOYMENT**

- Participation of the Vice-Chair of the MG-S-ROM at the Decade of Roma Inclusion Employment Workshop (Zagreb, 15-16 June 2009).
- Collection of good practices in the field of Roma employment to be included in an implementation report of Recommendation (2001)17 on improving the economic and employment situation of Roma and Travellers in Europe. The draft report will be presented at the 28<sup>th</sup> MG-S-ROM meeting (Strasbourg, 15-16 October 2009).

### **HEALTH**

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- Adoption by the MG-S-ROM at its 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of the explanatory memorandum and implementation report of Recommendation (2006)10 on better access to health care for Roma and Travellers in Europe. The report includes good practices in this field (Seville, 26-27 March 2009).
- Meeting between the Roma Division Secretariat and the European Committee on Health (CDSP) to discuss possible future co-operation between the MG-S-ROM and the CDSP (6-7 July 2009).
- Participation of experts supported by the Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division at the Panel on Forced Sterilisation of Women (Romani women in Europe) at the Conference of the International on Gynaecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) (Cape Town, South Africa, 5 October). One of the experts reported about the conference conclusions at the 28<sup>th</sup> MG-S-ROM meeting (Strasbourg, 15-16 October 2009).

### **HOUSING**

- Draft Opinion proposed by the Coordinator for Roma-related activities and discussed at the MG-S-ROM regarding the alarming housing situation and evictions of Roma and Travellers in Europe to complement Recommendation (2005)4 on improving the housing conditions of Roma and Travellers in Europe and Recommendation (2004)14 on the movement and encampment of Travellers in Europe (27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> MG-S-ROM meetings, Seville, 26-27 March and Strasbourg, 15-16 October 2009).
- Participation of the Coordinator for Roma-related activities at the FRA Round table on the housing situation of Roma and Travellers in the EU (20 October 2009).

### **POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

- Update by the Roma Division of an overview document on forms of representation/participation of Roma and Travellers in decision-making processes at all levels to be presented at the 28<sup>th</sup> MG-S-ROM meeting (Strasbourg, 15-16 October 2009). Discussion about a MG-S-ROM Opinion or draft Recommendation on this topic.

### **ROMA WOMEN AND YOUTH**

- Organisation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference of Romani women (as a follow-up of the joint Council of Europe/FRA/Swedish authorities Conference from December 2007) by the Council of Europe and the Greek State and Local Authorities (Athens, 5-6 December 2009 – dates to be confirmed).
- Participation of the Head of Migration and Roma Department at the FERYP Consultative Meeting on Roma Migration – Challenges, Opportunities and the Youth Perspective” (Valencia, Spain, 10-15 November 2009).

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- Renewal for three years (2009-2011) of the Roma internship programme at the Council of Europe sponsored by Open Society Institute (OSI) for young Roma from Central and Eastern Europe. Since 2003, the Council of Europe has welcomed more than 25 Roma interns thanks to a financial contribution from the Open Society Institute (OSI), the Dutch organisation FORUM and the Finnish government.

## **LITIGATION**

- 2<sup>nd</sup> training session for national NGOs on procedures related to the collective complaints under the European Revised Social charter, in co-operation with ERRC, Interrights and the European Roma and Travellers Forum (Strasbourg, 19-20 February 2009).
- 13<sup>th</sup> annual training session for English-speaking lawyers willing to defend Roma on the case law and mechanisms of the European Court of Human Rights, in co-operation with ERRC (Strasbourg, 28-29 May).
- Publication by the Council of Europe in 2009 of the “Handbook on the role of the European Court of Human Rights, a useful tool for lawyers defending Roma and Travellers before national and international jurisdictions” (available in English).

### ***3. Coordinator of Activities concerning Roma and Travellers***

Since 1995, the Coordinator is responsible at the level of the Council of Europe for:

- co-ordinating activities on Roma and Travellers within the Council of Europe;
- co-operating with other international organisations involved with Roma issues, and in particular with the OSCE/ODIHR/Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues and with the European Commission;
- establishing working relations with Roma and Traveller associations, in particular the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF); and
- advising on policies and problems regarding Roma and Travellers.

The Coordinator is also closely involved in the organisation of the bi-annual meetings of the Informal Contact Group of international organisations/institutions dealing with Roma, Sinti and Traveller issues under each EU Council presidency (see item 6 below).

### ***4. Roma documentation centre and websites***

The Secretariat of the Roma and Travellers Division of the Council of Europe maintains a **documentation centre**, as well as a **website** with thematic reports and other documents concerning Roma and Travellers activities: <http://www.coe.int/romatravellers>.

The Dosta! awareness-raising campaign against prejudice towards Roma has its own multilingual website: [www.dosta.org](http://www.dosta.org).

## **5. Intergovernmental activities run by DG4/Education and Cultural Heritage**

### **▪ The Project "Education of Roma children in Europe"**

#### **Council of Europe experience**

The Council of Europe is the pioneer organisation which began its involvement with the Roma in 1969 by adopting the first official text on the "situation of Gypsies and other Travellers in Europe". In 1983 the Council of Europe organised the first training seminar for teachers working with Roma children. In 1993 the Roma population was declared a European minority. A special Division working only on Roma and Travellers issues was created in the Council of Europe in 1995 - Roma and Travellers Division - together with the Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers (MG-S-ROM). The MG-S-ROM, which has a mixed composition of Roma and non-Roma, officials and civil society representatives, representatives of Roma NGOs and intergovernmental organisations, is open to all member states. The Council of Europe was once again at the forefront when, in December 2004, it became the first international organisation to sign a partnership agreement with the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF). It also contributed to the creation of the Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP) and to the International Romani Women's Network (IRWN), both members of the ERTF.

#### **Education: a priority** **Recent activities**

The future of Roma communities hinges very much on arrangements for the schooling of their children, as education is a key factor in understanding modern reality and in social integration.

That is why in 2002, the Council of Europe started the "Education of Roma children in Europe" project with the aim of implementing the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers' Recommendation 2000/4 on the education of Roma in Europe. The aim of the project is to support and guide, through co-ordination, synthesis and evaluation, information and training, the integration of Roma communities into the mainstream education system. The originality of the project lies in the fact that the Roma themselves were/are actively involved at every stage, mainly through participation in the design and execution of the policies concerning them.

After six years of work, a range of products was produced which show the concrete manner of the Council of Europe's contribution in improving the access to education for Roma. They are available on the internet site of the project: [www.coe.int/education/roma](http://www.coe.int/education/roma)

Some examples:

- Strategies for developing national education policies for the Roma. Specifically, it describes the particular educational context of the Roma and the role of school. It proposes, via a grid, strategies for implementing those policies. The result is a comprehensive vision of education policy for the Roma, that covers schooling, social inclusion, cultural identity and the promotion of Roma cultural heritage as well as the empowerment and participation of the Roma community.



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- Teaching kit for Roma pre-school children. This kit prepares Roma and Traveller children who have not attended nursery school and are neither ready nor sufficiently mature for the first primary school class to start school so that they do not fall too far behind.
- Training seminars in the framework of the “Pestalozzi” programme for education professionals of the Council of Europe. Every year training seminars are devoted to Roma issues (use of teaching material, Roma culture and history in schools, Roma school mediators, community/family and school, etc.).
- Guide for Roma school mediators. Positions such as that of a Roma mediator or school assistant can be made more effective by promoting high-quality initial training geared to the needs on the ground. This Guide contains an occupational profile, training modules for mediators and other essential practical information.
- Teaching material suitable for use by Roma and non-Roma teachers working with classes made up of both Roma and other children. This material, in the form of publications or sets of educational fact sheets covering a number of topics, such as history, culture, language, will foster mutual understanding of differences, which is the basic principle underlying the intercultural approach. It can be used in both formal education and non-formal educational settings such as cultural centres or museums of Roma culture and history. Some of this material can be used in the community by children and their parents.
- The Roma Holocaust. A section of the Roma website is dedicated to the Roma Holocaust. This work is done in co-operation with OSCE/ODIHR. It comprises a database on this period of Roma history, with a virtual library of the best-known and most useful publications, and an interactive map on which countries can indicate their special/distinctive features at national level. The website will also provide information on curricula, available teaching materials, school textbooks, places of remembrance, and innovative practices introduced by ministries, civil society, international organisations, museums and schools.

### Project follow-up

After the implementation of the project and almost a decade after the Committee of Ministers adopted Recommendation No. R (2000) 4, it was necessary to take stock of the work done on the education of Roma, to draw lessons from this stocktaking exercise and to make fresh proposals.

That is why an evaluation conference of the project was held in Slovenia in May 2009.

The conclusions of the conference show that there is a huge need of continuity and co-operation at international level.

One of the conclusions is that the Council of Europe project should continue in order to ensure the dissemination of the results (teaching and training material, training methods etc).

Another important conclusion of the conference agreed by the international organisations present (Council of Europe, UNESCO, OSCE/ODIHR, Roma Education Fund) is to set up an International Task Force for the Education of Roma and Travellers (ITFERT). The ITFERT would meet once a year in order to compare every organisation's agenda, establish co-operations and create strategies of dissemination of the existing products.

The Council of Europe works closely with UNESCO, OSCE-ODIHR, the Roma Education Fund, and the Roma Civil Society. The COE has also established contacts with the European Commission, the Task Force for International co-operation on

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Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research and the European Roma and Travellers Forum. This co-operation is a coherent approach at an international level and is critical for the funding, visibility and organisation of the project and also for promoting new ideas in support of the education of Roma children. An international body such as the ITFERT would help for a better co-ordination and coherence of the work.

A new [Recommendation on the education of Roma and Travellers](#) was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 17 June 2009. It is the most recent international official text covering all aspects of the education of Roma and Travellers.

- **Project "A Curriculum Framework for Romani" and related tools**

The Language Policy Division implemented a project to foster the teaching and learning of the Romani language in Europe. A "[Curriculum Framework for Romani](#)" was developed, drawing on the Council of Europe world-wide used "[Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment](#) (CEFR). It is designed for practitioners as well as for manual designers and policy deciders. The Framework concerns age groups 4-16 and can be adapted to local contexts and needs. After a piloting phase and two seminars involving deciders and the teaching profession, a revised version was published in late 2008.

To supplement the "Curriculum Framework for Romani", additional tools were produced to help more specifically teachers and learners of Romani: two European Language Portfolio models (for age groups 6-11 and 11-16) which are a personal document for the learner, accompanied by a Handbook for teachers. The translation of these instruments into other Romani varieties and into national/official languages is encouraged.

The work has benefited from a voluntary contribution from Finland. The European Roma and Travellers Forum has followed the work with interest and was closely involved in the preparation of instruments, which are available in [English and in Romani](#) online.

More information on the Language Policy website: [www.coe.int/lang](http://www.coe.int/lang) (Section Minorities and Migrants).

- **The Project "Route of Roma Culture and Heritage"**

The objective of the Route of Roma Culture and Heritage is to increase the knowledge of people in Europe about Roma history, culture, values and lifestyle, to encourage the contribution of Roma to Europe's cultural life and diversity and ultimately contribute to giving a positive value to an image of Roma which are, more often than not, perceived in a negative and stereotyped way.

The Cultural Route will first develop as a network of organisations (associations, museums, documentation and cultural centres, art and education institutions, festivals, etc.) which work together towards developing a common set of activities.

As a second stage, the Route will evolve as a series of tourist itineraries across different cities and territories of Europe, which would allow visitors to gain a more thorough understanding of Roma culture.

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More information about the Route of Roma Culture and Heritage on the webpage:  
<http://www.coe.int/routes>

**6. Co-operation with international partners**

▪ ***Informal Contact Group (ICG) between International Organisations/Institutions on Roma, Sinti and Traveller Issues***

An informal mechanism of consultation and cooperation among international organisations involved in Roma issues was put in place in 2000 and named Informal Contact Group (ICG) between International Organisations on Roma, Sinti and Traveller Issues. It was originally intended to hold meetings between the Council of Europe, the OSCE/ODIHR, the European Commission and the Presidency of the European Union on the occasion of each EU Council presidency.

The objectives of these meetings are to maximise the use of existing resources, to avoid duplication, to benefit from each other's experience and to launch a process of common reflection on current problems facing Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities in Europe. Participants include representatives of European Union institutions (various DGs of the European Commission, European Parliament, Fundamental Rights Agency), the Council of Europe, the OSCE-ODIHR, the World Bank, UN agencies (UNDP, UNHCR), as well as representatives from some international partner NGOs: the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF), the European Roma Information Office (ERIO), Open Society Institute (OSI) and the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC).

At the 12 June 2009 ICG meeting organised under the Czech EU Council presidency, the Group addressed growing anti-Gypsyism and Roma emigration from the Czech Republic and EU countries in general. The European Commission also reported about the conclusions of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) and reiterated the common basic principles on Roma Inclusion adopted by EU member states at the end of the French EU Council presidency. discussion took place regarding the

The agenda of the next ICG meeting organised under the Swedish EU Council Presidency in Brussels on 28 September 2009 included issues, such as measures to be undertaken by member states and international organisations/institutions to address extreme forms of discrimination and violence against Roma in Europe, and the role of international organisations/institutions in promoting wider Roma representation/participation at the political level. Apart from exchanging information on upcoming activities, the Group also debated about the possible merge in the long term between ICG meetings and meetings on the EU Platform for Roma Inclusion.

▪ ***European Commission***

The co-operation in the field of Roma between the European Commission and the Council of Europe is ensured through regular contacts between the Roma and Travellers Division and DG Employment, DG REGIO and DG Enlargement.

Various departments of the European Commission attend meetings of the Informal Contact Group (see above).

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Since 2000 the Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division implements joint European Commission (EIDHR) and Council of Europe programmes on Roma.

The fourth joint CoE/EC Project “Moldova and Ukraine: Enhancing the domestic capacity to devise, implement, monitor and communicate on the national action plans for Roma (with focus on education and health) and countering negative stereotyping faced by Roma people” came to an end on 30 June 2009. This joint project had the following objectives:

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1. in Moldova, to ensure that implementing, communication and monitoring mechanisms on the Action Plan for Roma at national and local levels were improved and became more inclusive for the Roma representatives. As for Ukraine, to assess the opportunity of a similar project and action for Roma in Ukraine specifically.
  2. to empower Roma communities in Moldova, women and youth in particular, by promoting their active participation in the implementation of national action plans, including through concrete actions such as promoting institutionalisation of Roma school assistants, socio-sanitary and anti-trafficking mediators. As for Ukraine, to assess the opportunity of similar initiatives.
  3. to promote both in Ukraine and Moldova a better image of Roma through the Dosta! awareness-raising campaign aimed at combating prejudices and negative stereotypes.
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No follow-up EU/CoE joint projects on Roma are for the time being foreseen.

- ***European Economic and Social Committee***

The Council of Europe has contributed through several consultations to the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) opinion on how to maximise the impact and effectiveness of all relevant instruments in order to fight discrimination and promote the integration of minorities, notably Roma. Representatives of the EESC have attended the last ICG meetings.

- ***European Parliament***

In 2009 the Council of Europe has contributed with comments to the European Parliament report on Roma Access to Employment. The Roma and Travellers Division also attended the Conference on Roma participation organised by the European Roma Information Office (ERIO) and the European Parliament in Brussels on 16 April 2009.

- ***FRA***

FRA attends and actively contributes to MG-S-ROM and ICG meetings.

On the occasion of the International Roma Day (8 April), FRA and the Office of the CoE Commissioner for Human Rights released a joint statement.

In 2009, the Office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and DG3 Roma and Travellers Division have actively co-operated with FRA on various projects,

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including a study on the situation of Roma in accessing housing in the 27 EU member states and on Roma migration and freedom of movement.

A Working preparatory seminar was organised by the Office of the CoE Commissioner for Human Rights in Strasbourg on 9-10 July 2009 in the framework of the joint action between FRA, OSCE and the Council of Europe on Roma migration and freedom of movement. A Joint Conference on these topics will be organised in Vienna on 9-10 November 2009.

The Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division expects future joint activities with FRA in three areas, namely gender (follow up of the Romani Women's Conference jointly organised by the CoE, FRA and the Swedish government in Stockholm in December 2007), training sessions (training of Roma health mediators and training of lawyers defending Roma) and promotion of the Dosta! campaign in EU member states.

- **IOM**

IOM has an observer status in MG-S-ROM meetings. IOM Office in Ukraine has contributed to the Festival "Art and Youth against discrimination" organised in the framework of the joint CoE/EU programme (Ukraine, 27 June 2009).

- **OSCE**

Issues of common interest between the two organisations are the following: early education of Roma children, remembrance of Holocaust, anti-trafficking, Roma refugees, IDPs and returnees (with specific focus on Kosovar RAE), migration, political representation and implementation of policies for Roma.

On 8 April 2009 the CoE Commissioner for Human Rights and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities released their joint report on Roma migrants.

OSCE-ODIHR attends and actively contributes to MG-S-ROM meetings, as well as to the Informal Contact Group of international organisations. The OSCE-ODIHR also took part in CoE International Conference "Education for Roma: achievements, opportunities and challenges for the future" organised under the Slovenian presidency of the Council of Europe in Brdo on 25-26 May 2009, and accepted to joint a future task force on Roma Education.

Both the OSCE-ODIHR and the OSCE-HCNM are – together with the Council of Europe and FRA – co-organisers of the Conference on Roma migration and freedom of movement to take place in Vienna on 9-10 November 2009.

The Council of Europe will be represented *inter alia* by the Council of Europe Coordinator on Roma-related activities at the 2009 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting who will also represent colleagues from DG4 Education Directorate when pre-school education of Roma will be addressed (7 October 2009).

- **UNDP**

UNDP has an observer status in MG-S-ROM meetings and also takes part in ICG meetings. In 2009, there has been no specific co-operation between the Council of Europe

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and UNDP on Roma issues. Closer co-operation in terms of monitoring Roma Decade Action Plans and general Roma strategies could be established in the future.

- **UNESCO**

The Council of Europe Division for the European Dimension of Education in DG4 co-operates with UNESCO. Follow-up co-operation activities are being envisaged, including in the framework of a future task force on Roma education as discussed at the CoE International Conference “Education for Roma: achievements, opportunities and challenges for the future” organised under the Slovenian presidency of the Council of Europe in Brdo on 25-26 May 2009.

- **UNHCR**

FRA attends and actively contributes to MG-S-ROM and ICG meetings.

The Council of Europe and the UNHCR organise every year joint activities related to Roma refugees. However, in 2009, the proposed joint Regional Conference on the legal status and citizenship of Roma has been cancelled by the UNHCR due to an overlap with a joint project between the UNHCR and the EU under IPA.

- **UNICEF**

In 2009, there has been no specific co-operation between the Council of Europe and UNICEF on Roma-related issues. UNICEF has not yet requested observer status with MG-S-ROM. The Roma and Travellers Division meets with UNICEF representatives at Roma Decade International Steering Committee meetings.

- **UN-OHCHR**

The OHCHR actively contributed to the Romani Women's Conference jointly organised by the CoE, FRA and the Swedish government in Stockholm in December 2007. A reinforcement of co-operation between the two organisations is expected in the future, in particular as concerns gender issues and reproductive rights.

OHCHR has not yet requested observer status in MG-S-ROM meetings.

- **World Bank and Open Society Institute (OSI)**

Both the World Bank and OSI have an observer status with the MG-S-ROM. They also participate in meetings of the Informal Contact Group on Roma, Sinti and Traveller Issues (ICG).

Their participation, as well as the fact that several MG-S-ROM members are also Roma Decade official interlocutors, contributes to a certain degree of coordination between the intergovernmental work of the Council of Europe and the Roma Decade initiative. Coordination should be further reinforced following the granting in 2009 of an observer status with the MG-S-ROM to the Secretariat of the Decade for Roma Inclusion.

The Council of Europe participates and contributes to international steering committees of the **Decade for Roma Inclusion (2005-2015)**.

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**7. The European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF)**

A partnership agreement was signed between the Council of Europe and the Forum on 15 December 2004 on the occasion of the first plenary meeting of the Forum. The Forum is an independent international organisation established upon the initiative of the President of Finland, Mrs. Tarja Halonen, and developed according to a French-Finnish proposal.

The European Roma and Travellers Forum represents Romani interests at European level and gathers together Europe's main international Roma organisations, as well as national member organisations, from most Council of Europe Member States.

The aim of the Forum is *"to promote the effective exercise by Roma, Sinti, Travellers and related groups of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as protected by the legal instruments of the Council of Europe and other international legal instruments where applicable. It shall promote the struggle against racism and discrimination and facilitate the integration of these populations into the European societies and their participation in public life and in the decision-making process"* (Article 2.1, Statutes of the European Roma and Travellers Forum). As a network of networks, the Forum brings together national and international Roma organisations with the aim of unifying and strengthening their voice and achieving a greater impact on policy-making.

In 2006 the ERTF adopted a policy paper on the Romani language, as well as a position paper on ensuring Romani interests in the status negotiation talks in Kosovo. In 2007 the ERTF published regular updates about positive developments and major incidents in Europe related to Roma and Travellers.

The *(Fourth) Plenary Assembly* of the European Roma and Travellers Forum held on 24–25 November 2008 established the orientations and priorities for the coming year. National Delegates from 36 countries, members of the Council of Europe and 21 delegates from international organisations were present at the meeting. The main topics on the agenda were the adoption of the European Roma Rights Charter and the creation of the national members/umbrella organisations. The fifth Plenary Assembly will take place in December 2009.

In 2009, the ERTF's focus has been on the ever-increasing violence and anti-gypsyism against Roma in Europe and, to this end, has organised an *assessment visit to Hungary* (the scene of several Roma murders) and a hearing on the human rights situation of Roma entitled *"Uniting against Anti-Gypsyism in today's Europe"*. A *High-Level Conference on the Security Situation of Roma in Europe* will take place in Bucharest, Romania, from 12-13 October 2009 in order to address this issue further.

In addition, the ERTF continues to issue press releases on topical issues related *inter alia* to the situation in Kosovo, forced returnees, evictions, stereotypical exhibitions on Roma, health related conferences, etc. (information available on ERTF website: [www.ertf.org](http://www.ertf.org)).