
Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

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EDITORIAL

Dear readers!

We have a pleasure to fulfil our promise and present to you the CPRSI Newsletter in English and in Romanian languages. The ODIHR editorial staff has decided to make this issue a bi-lingual one, in order to enable you - our readers - to compare the translation with the original language version. We have faced some difficulties

identifying potential translators, considering the differences in various dialects Roma people living in different areas speak. Therefore, we would highly appreciate your comments on the style and a quality of translation.

In this issue we continue the presentation of programmes which focus on mediation and education of Roma. In order to give you a wider perspective on the subject ODIHR has established cooperation with the Minority Rights Group in London. We present to you the results of the most recent projects of the Minority Rights Group in Slovakia.

In his article Arthur R. Ivatts, British educator, introduces the problem of schooling of Travellers' children in the UK. In this issue you will also find a briefing on the situation of Roma in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which outlines the result of the Fact-Finding Mission organised by the Council of Europe, in which CPRSI co-ordinator Jacek Paliszewski participated. The meeting of Roma experts which took place in Strassbourg recently, shows the existent co-operation of the CPRSI and the Council of Europe.

We plan to dedicate the up-coming issue to the problems of Roma national identity within and outside the European borders. Our editorial staff would be most grateful if you have any suggestions for this very enticing proposal. We wish you pleasant reading!

THE OFFICE OF HER MAJESTY'S CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND OFSTED (The Office for Standards in Education)

The Office for Standards in Education is a non-Ministerial government department established on 1 September 1992, under the terms of the Education (Schools) act 1992. Its headquarters is located in central London and has its own personnel, finance and other central service divisions as well as a substantial range of administrative functions covering both policy and casework. There is also a regional structure based in 14 towns and cities in England. The office comprises about 260 administrators and about 210 professional staff who are appointed as Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI).

Under the terms of the above Act, OFSTED is responsible for contacting with Registered Inspectors for an executive and regular programme of school inspection, and using evidence from these inspection, or from data gathered as a result of work by HMI, for providing advice to the Secretary of State for Education and Employment on a range of related matters including quality and standards of education in schools, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and the efficient use of financial resources.

Arthur R Ivatts HMI has a specific responsibility within OFSTED for the education of Gypsies and other Travellers. He was appointed as a specialist to HMI in 1976.

THE EDUCATION OF TRAVELLING CHILDREN

A report from the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, Arthur R. Ivatts

Note from the editor:

The report which we have just received in the ODIHR summarises the evidence from a series of visits conducted by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). These visits were made by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) to Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and three self-governing grant maintained schools (GM) in England, over a period of three years from September 1992. HMI undertook these visits in order to examine the quality of educational opportunities and provision for Travelling children and the extent to which it succeeded in supporting the educational attainment of the children.

In this issue of the CPRSI Newsletter we would like to reproduce some findings of this report which directly correspond to the problems of education of Roma minority in England and the achievements made in this area.

MAIN FINDINGS

- On the basis of new statistical evidence the number of Travelling children in England aged 0-16 may be as large as 50, 000, a significant advance on earlier estimates
- The administration of Section 210 and other additional funding is efficient and effective. The grant represents good value of money.
- Considerable progress has been made in the development of positive attitudes and trusting relationships between schools and the different Travelling communities, who by reason of their nomadic life styles, have traditionally been hindered in their access to education
- Over England as a whole, access to school is significantly more secure for Travelling children of primary age and there is evidence to suggest that although there are below average levels of participation at the pre-school level, the situation is slowly improving

"The Plowden Report"(A report of the Central Advisory Council of Education, England) drew attention to the educational plight of Gypsy and other travelling children in 1967. This report commented, "...the children's educational needs are nevertheless extreme and largely unmet...They will require special attention and carefully planned action." For as long as education has been publicly provided, Gypsy travelling children have had restricted access to schools for a variety of reasons. Nomadism has been, and still is in many cases, an important influence in this regard. Traditionally, the need of the family as a whole to exploit its collective labour power, as for example in the case of seasonal opportunities for casual agricultural work, has been a further factor militating against school admission and regular attendance.

A majority of Gypsy Traveller families have a positive attitude to formal education and are generally anxious for their children to acquire basic literacy skills while in primary education. However, there are some cultural aspects of Gypsy family access and regular attendance.

In general, provided they are appropriately received by the schools, Travelling pupils respond very positively to the education they receive, particularly in the primary phase, so long as the work is relevant, interesting and challenging. In the main, they work productively both as individuals or in small groups, and make satisfactory progress in mathematics, science and technology.

Traveller Education Services

Traveller Education Services use a range of strategies to encourage and enforce regular patterns of school attendance. A key element in successful practice is the establishment and maintenance of trusting relationships with individual families and a willingness to understand and appreciate the varied circumstances which militate against regular attendance at school. This work is time-consuming and the additional involvement and vigilant support of both schools and statutory agencies is necessary. Ready and easy communications with parents are a further aspect of good practice. In these circumstances there is a growing trend towards Travelling parents notifying the school about an impending move and thus facilitating opportunities for the gathering of information about when a family might return, the provision of distance learning materials; ensuring that the family is in possession of updated DfEE Record Transfer "Green Cards"; and liaison with colleagues and schools in the area to which the family may move.

MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP

By Martin Emerson

Note from the editor:

Martin Emerson has been involved with Roma and Travellers Education Rights and Provisions over the past ten years. He has worked as a co-ordinator of a range of EC Projects within the fifteen European Union States. Within these projects there has always been an enthusiasm to build-in links to colleagues in Central and Eastern Europe. The focus of the work has principally been on open and distance approaches in which the participants in the programme, be they teachers, children, parents or whoever are encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning. There is considerable interest in the open distance learning approach within the EC and there is the prospect of a Roma Training Project for young Roma people, particularly women, active in NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe. We intend to provide more information in a later issue but if you have an interest in realising this intention then please contact Martin Emerson at the MRG in London

Founded in 1969 Minority Rights Group is an international advocacy organisation that informs and warns governments, the international community, NGOs and the wider public about the situation of minorities and indigenous groups around the world and promotes minority rights as a global concern. This work is based on the publication of well-researched reports, books and papers; direct advocacy on behalf of minority rights in international fora; the development of a global network of like-minded organizations and minority communities to collaborate on these issues; and the challenging of prejudice and promotion of public understanding through information and education projects.

Minority Rights Group has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and has a world-wide network of partners. Its international advocacy programme promotes good practice and provides evidence on the situation of different minorities to international bodies including the UN Commission on Human Rights, its Sub-Commission, UN Treaty bodies, the OSCE, the European Commission and European Parliament, the Council of Europe, and other governmental and inter-governmental bodies. It has recently prepared papers on Implementation Mechanisms on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities to the Council of Europe's Subcommission on Human Rights, and one for the Advisory Committee on Human Rights and Foreign Policy of the Netherlands analysing the situation of minorities in Central and Eastern Europe and formulating specific recommendations for policy action.

Its international headquarters are in London, where it has twenty-one staff members who conduct its programmatic, advocacy, and publishing activities. It also works with affiliated

partner organizations throughout the world who share similar aims and concerns. It co-ordinates regional programmes in Central and Eastern Europe, the Horn of Africa, and South Asia. Minority Rights Group is currently working with nine partner organizations in Central and Eastern Europe to develop a new programme aimed at strengthening the capacity of NGOs to advocate minority rights and the development of pluralistic, democratic societies. This programme will seek to accomplish the following:

1. Provide information about minority groups and minority rights protection for NGO activists, representatives of minority groups, parliamentarians, public officials, journalists, academics, and the general public. This involves translating and disseminating existing MRG reports and commissioning, publishing, and distributing new local- and English-language editions of reports on topics that are particularly important in Central and Eastern Europe.
2. Promote the domestic implementation of international and regional minority rights standards through increased awareness of relevant instruments and mechanisms and enhanced participation in the process of integrating these standards into the rule of law of each country. This objective will be met through rights and advocacy training seminars designed to develop the skills of advocates of minority rights from both majority and minority communities. Participants will be chosen based on their capacity to bring these skills back to their wider community and to train others in their group with the materials developed through the programme.
3. Encourage co-operation between representatives of different communities throughout the region to address specific, practical issues in implementing minority rights standards at local community and state levels. This objective will be met through skills-exchange workshops that bring together public officials, representatives of minority groups, and NGOs working on the relevant issue in order to share and compare experiences, and generate ideas for approaches to similar problems.

For more information about this programme or MRG's other programmes and publications, contact the International Secretariat at 379 Brixton Road, London SW9 7DE, U.K., tel. +44.171.978.9498 or fax +44.171.738.6265 or E-mail: minority.rights@mrg.sprint.com.

ROMA TRAINING PROJECT IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN SLOVAKIA

MRG Slovakia, based in Bratislava, has been involved with training relating to the Roma over the past few years. Lota Pufflerova has led the work in close collaboration with Klara Orgovanova of Inforoma. Most recently, the EC funded the Roma Rights and Education Project, (separately referred to in this issue), within which there is a major training component organised by Lydia Kudlickova of MRG Slovakia and here she writes about the programme :

“Two Roma groups of about 20 people each are involved. It is just the right number for a training programme as it seems to produce appropriate group dynamics. One group is female, the other one is male.

Why the separation ?

Because it seems to be the best way of working with the Roma particularly when it comes to the public appearance of such events. It has to do with the values within Roma families, which seem to work rather for men than for women. Women need the extra support for them to be able to attend and participate. The two day workshops are held near to the place where they live. Although, as with every family, the kingdom of the woman varies significantly from case to case.

The other distinction between the two training groups is the location. The men are from the beautiful area of the High Tatras Mountains in Eastern Slovakia (near the town of Kasmarok), whereas the women come from Central Slovakia (around the towns of Banska Bystrica, Zvolen, Kremnica and Detva).

The things which all of them have in common are a reflected desire to achieve a personal growth and a particular enjoyment from having such an opportunity. It is good that we have found both a group of very enthusiastic participants and a group of experience trainers who are equally enthusiastic. This is especially good when the rules and procedures of the training are agreed upon together, and when there is always a room available to talk about the heavy problems in a new interactive way. The interaction which focuses on relationships and trust between the Roma and non-Roma involved in the training is a strong and relevant bond for both parties.

Men seem to be more interested in the 'leadership' training elements. Thus training on communications, negotiation, delegation and human rights has been provided. Women seem to enjoy training on communications and human rights. In addition the women are very appreciative of the opportunity to meet with other Roma women and create some sort of collaborative group, who seek to achieve their personal agendas as members of the community, wives and mothers. All the participants enjoy gaining further knowledge of Roma history which is an integral part of the training programme.

Maintaining continuity in the training process; personal approaches to each of the trainees; occasional visits to their homes; and close cooperation with well respected Roma colleagues are major features of the programme. Considerable documentary evidence has been collected from the training events and two video recordings have been made. Many articles have been written about the training.

What has been achieved so far ?

A two-way information flow which questions the mutual prejudices and constructs a better understanding on the base of positive experiences. A peaceful and constructive dialogue is one of the most praiseworthy outcomes so far."

The Project is hoping to produce a training manual base on the experience of MRG Slovakia and the trainers and trainees. The evaluations from the Roma trainees is a good testament to the quality of the work and will feature in the final report which will be accompany the end of the programme in November 1996.

Note from the editor:

MRG has commissioned regional surveys of minority issues in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States as part of its forthcoming World Directory of Minorities, to be published in late 1996.

FIRST MEETING OF THE SPECIALIST GROUP ON ROMA/GYPSIES (MG-S-ROM)

20-21 MARCH 1996, Strabourg

Note from the editor:

This information was taken from the Newsletter published by the Council of Europe on the activities related to Roma/Gypsies. It aims to provide a regular source of information on current activities and new developments within various Council of Europe bodies regarding Roma/Gypsies in areas such as human rights, local and regional authorities, education and culture.

The first meeting of the Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies, whose setting up was decided by the Committee of Ministers in 1995 was held on 20-21 March in Strasbourg. The seven members of the Group: Mrs Outi Ojala (Finland), Mrs Carmen Santiago Reyes (Spain), Mrs Josephine Verspaget (Netherlands), Mr Catalin Zamfir (Romania), Mr Miltcho Dimitrov (Bulgaria), Mr Claudio Marta (Italy) and Mr Andrzej Mirga (Poland). Mrs Verspaget was elected Chairperson of the Group and Mr Mirga Co-Chair. Other countries sent representatives at their own expense, namely Hungary, the Czech Republic, the Russian Federation, Belgium and Austria. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe was represented by Mr Slafkovsky (Rapporteur of the Working Group on "Provision for Roma/Gypsies in the Municipalities"). The OSCE/ODIHR Co-ordinator of the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues and the European Commission participated as observers. The latter underlined the need for further and expanded co-operation between the three organisations on issues regarding Roma/Gypsies. Such co-operation could provide a good support for the future activities of the Group.

Roma /Gypsies in Bosnia-Herzegovina

As regards urgent actions, the issue of Roma in and from Bosnia-Herzegovina was considered by the Group and by the Roma/Gypsy representatives attending the Hearing to be utmost priority in the light of the situation resulting from the Dayton Agreement and plans to the early return of refugees and displaced persons.

Thus the Group decided to organise a fact-finding mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina (in particular in areas with a high percentage of Roma before the war) in close co-operation with the OSCE/ODIHR/Contact Point for Roma and Sinti associations of Roma refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Next Meeting of the MG-S-ROM

It will take place on 10-11 October 1996 and will be devoted to two main issues: human rights in the broad sense (discrimination) and violence and how to respond to them, training of police, legal advice, and building of good community relations), education and culture.

Members of the Secretariat and the representatives of the OSCE/ODIHR decided beside the meeting to organise, in the Autumn 1996, a joint workshop on legal assistance for

Roma/Gypsies. It should take place in the second European Youth Center just opened in Budapest.

FACT-FINDING MISSION TO BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA ON THE SITUATION OF THE ROMA/GYPSIES, Jacek Paliszewski

In accordance with the decision taken by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, a fact-finding mission on the situation of the Roma/Gypsies in Bosnia-Herzegovina took place from 15 to 21 May 1996. The team was composed of the President of the Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies, the Co-President of the latter Group, one representative of an association of Roma/Gypsy refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina (based in Germany), the Coordinator of the Contact Point on Roma and Sinti Issued of the OSCE/ODIHR and of two members of the Secretariat.

The team decided, on the basis of information provided by non-governmental organisations and refugees organisations, to visit the areas with large Roma/Gypsy communities before the war. It was received by the Minister for Refugees of the Croato-Muslim Federation and travelled to Sarajevo, Tuzla, Bjeljina and Banja-Luka, in order to meet with Roma/Gypsy people, governmental and local authorities, international agencies acting in the field (UNHCR, OSCE, UN Human Rights Centre) and other organisations.

As a result of enquiries, the group formulated its opinion that it is not yet time to return any refugees and displaced persons from third countries to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Moreover the group is of the opinion that no return should be planned in areas where the returnees would not belong to the majority population. This is especially the case in the Republic Sprska where no security of the returnees would be ensured, because of the instability of the political situation and the still dominating atmosphere of ethnic cleansing.

Returns to the Federation would raise less interethnic problems but, in view of the massive destructions, the huge amount of internally displaced persons whose fate is not yet secure and the lack of plans and preparation to make the resettlement of the displaced persons and refugees operational, it would probably not be advisable to start returning the refugees and displaced persons from third countries neither. It could create additional problems in places already overwhelmed with internally displaced persons and could lead to further instability and tensions, in particular in attractive places such as Sarajevo and Tuzla where a relatively multicultural atmosphere still prevails. The group was informed that in Sarajevo in particular, those who remained behind during the war feel resentment against those who left the country and they are therefore not ready to accept easily returnees (Sarajevo syndrome). Moreover it appeared that neither the local authorities nor the Ministry for Refugees are prepared to face the enormous problems resulting from the inflows of internally displaced persons in areas such as rehousing, setting up of basic infrastructures, job creation, return of properties and goods, management of community relations and arbitration of the tensions between those who remained during the war where they used to live and the newcomers (internally displaced persons).

In relation to the future place of the Roma/Gypsies in the country, the group

recommended that they should be recognised - by both entities of the Republic - as a national minority along the lines of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities. This would provide some guarantees compensating for the lack of protection by one of the three main communities. In addition it would support the recognition of their basic rights and foster self-organisation and self-confidence of the Romany community. It could as well help them to get a share in the reconstruction.

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