



Report of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

to
Session 3 (“Roma and Sinti”)
of the
Human Dimension Section of the OSCE Review Conference

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I. Introduction

The extraordinary complexity of challenges confronting Romani communities is manifest, as the range of issues addressed in my forthcoming report attests. By equal measure, the rich diversity among Roma within the OSCE makes all but a few general conclusions inappropriate. One, however, is plainly warranted: discrimination and exclusion are fundamental features of the Roma experience.

Ten years after the iron curtain fell, Europe is at risk of being divided by new walls. Front and centre among those persons being left outside Europe’s new security and prosperity are the Roma. In many countries, Roma have been decreed illegal residents on their own property, banished beyond municipal boundaries, and left outside the community of common concern. These are not isolated incidents, but widespread practices — sometimes systematic and on occasion systemic. To redress the long and hard experience of Roma requires, therefore, considerable attention, careful analysis, development of specific policies and commitment of adequate resources.

Exclusion of Roma extends to every sphere of social life, perhaps nowhere with more far-reaching and harmful effect than in respect of schooling. In certain countries of Central and Eastern Europe, this occurs through systematic routing of Romani children to “special schools” for the mentally disabled. Aside from the obvious disadvantage this entails in terms of the sub-standard quality of education made available to Romani children — depriving them of the equal opportunity to learn and to develop as capable and self-reliant citizens — the effect is also automatically to disqualify Romani children from admission to certain secondary and tertiary educational and professional institutions.

Exclusion from educational opportunities holds significant negative implications and gives rise to other problems. Manifestly unwelcome in many public schools, a large percentage of Romani children avoid classes and eventually drop out altogether.

Lacking basic qualifications, many Roma fare poorly in an increasingly competitive job market. Others, whose academic accomplishments satisfy basic job qualifications, face nearly impenetrable barriers of discrimination. Their frustrations lead other Roma to wonder whether there is anything to be gained by sending their children to schools where they are all but certain to face rejection — especially given that many ultimately fail to find decent jobs even if they succeed in school.

Beyond exclusion from education, Roma face profound challenges in virtually every sphere of social life: rates of unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and infant mortality are staggeringly high among Roma. In a classic downward spiral, each of these problems exacerbates the others in a self-perpetuating cycle.

Perhaps of most immediate concern for many Roma is their lack of personal security. In Central and Eastern Europe, the past decade has seen a resurgence of racist violence, sometimes deployed against whole communities. The collective violence visited upon Kosovo's Roma in the aftermath of war has been singular in some respects, but scarcely unique in others: Like Romani communities who have in the past endured organized group violence directed against them in Romania, Italy and Spain in retaliation for apparent delinquencies of individuals, entire Romani communities in Kosovo have recently been made to bear the blame for those presumed to have abetted crimes committed by or attributed to ethnic Serbs. In other places where anti-Roma violence has flared, the victims have often faced significant obstacles securing justice; many have been denied effective protection of the law. This is among the factors leading increasing numbers of Roma to leave their countries.

Although racist violence has claimed its largest toll in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where the majority of European Roma live, Romani communities experience widespread discrimination, including violence, in Western Europe as well. Although several governments have in recent years made significant efforts to reverse these patterns, few have done enough to combat anti-Roma racism and intolerance. While there may be no easy solutions to many of the problems confronting Roma, it is equally plain that present approaches are inadequate. Simply, greater attention must be given to the elaboration and implementation of effective policies.

II. Main Elements of Forthcoming Report

My forthcoming report is the result of observations that I have made since my last report on the Roma which was issued in September 1993. The information contained in it is based on my experience with Roma over the years, including direct contacts during my visits to various OSCE countries, participation in seminars and the analysis of information, which I regularly receive. It also owes a great deal to research carried out by Professor Diane Orentlicher of the Washington College of Law at the American University who worked closely with my office and the Foundation on Inter-Ethnic Relations for most of this year. Her work was generously supported by a grant from the Government of the United States.

The report was prompted by two interrelated concerns. First, in the period since my last report, and notwithstanding notable steps by a few institutions, conditions of Romani communities in Europe have, in many key respects, continued to deteriorate.

Second, despite the seriousness of the problems now confronting Roma, neither the OSCE nor its participating States have devoted the attention or resources to this issue that are plainly warranted. The purpose of the report is to highlight key issues, the approaches taken by a number of OSCE Participating States, and recurrent problems. It includes a number of recommendations which are attached herewith. My forthcoming report will treat the following subjects.

1. Racism

Even against the backcloth of a decade blighted by extreme forms of racist intolerance, the phenomenon of prejudice against Roma is singular. Romani communities are the subject of hostile perceptions across an extraordinary range of countries. In some, politicians and citizens evince scant scruple about expressing derogatory stereotypes of Roma. In this climate, Roma have been prime targets of skinhead violence and, at times, what must properly be called pogroms.

It is incumbent on government officials to provide leadership in condemning acts of racial violence and, indeed, all forms of discrimination against Roma. In particular, when racial violence occurs, political leaders must condemn the crimes lest their silence be interpreted as tolerance. When it comes to racism, what is said — words alone — can make a difference. When officials have publicly condemned acts of racist violence, they have made a significant contribution to the alleviation of racial tensions and toward preventing similar crimes.

But words alone are not enough. Above all, States must ensure that Roma are protected by the rule of the law. As a first and indispensable step, governments must ensure that their laws prohibit discrimination against Roma and provide adequate remedies when discrimination occurs. Moreover, paragraphs 40-40.2 of the Copenhagen Document require participating States to take measures to protect Roma against “any acts that constitute incitement to violence” and against “threat or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence”. These commitments are in accordance with Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which expressly requires States parties to prohibit “any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence”.

Prejudice and intolerance are commonly fed by negative stereotypes. These must be countered through public education about Romani culture and history. In countries where Roma have been part of national history, *their* history and culture must be part of *every* child’s education. I have also found merit in initiatives that readily enable non-Roma to *see* the contributions of Roma to their societies. For example, in the course of my inquiry I learned of a housing project in the eastern Slovakia town of Kremnica where Roma, as well as non-Roma, were employed to build the houses they would occupy. Against the stereotype many local citizens had previously held of Roma as passive recipients of social benefits, the community saw the reality of highly-motivated, industrious Roma constructing homes for non-Roma as well as Romani families.

Discrimination is a defining feature of the Roma experience. To combat anti-Roma discrimination, States that have not already done so should enact effective anti-discrimination laws and ensure that law-enforcement officials receive adequate

training. Police, prosecutors and judges need to be more aware of what constitutes racial discrimination and racially-motivated crimes. Part of the solution could be to introduce conflict-management mechanisms for police and between police and Roma communities. In a similar vein, I would encourage the recruitment of more Roma into police forces.

In some cases it may be necessary to establish specialized State bodies to combat discrimination. In a number of OSCE countries, such bodies have made a valuable contribution toward combatting racism and other forms of discrimination. Another model that has proven effective in some countries is that of an ombudsman.

In dealing with issues of discrimination and trying to document cases of racial abuse, one frequently encounters vexing issues relating to the collection and use of ethnic data. Ethnic data evokes memories of registration of “undesirables”, and also raises many ethical and legal issues. But without statistical data, it is very hard to have a clear picture of patterns of discrimination or to evaluate the progress of programmes designed to assist the Roma. I suggest that a seminar or conference should be held to look at this issue in greater depth. Such a conference could, hopefully, provide valuable insights and guidance on how to solve this dilemma.

2. Equality at All Levels

As OSCE participating States rededicate themselves to ensuring that Roma are treated as full citizens in our democracies, we would do well to keep sight of all levels of governance and the links between them. The important role of local governments and civic organizations should not be ignored. Some of the most impressive programmes launched in recent years have been undertaken at local levels, frequently at the initiative of non-governmental organizations. But local governments have also served to block promising initiatives; some have even sought to institutionalize anti-Roma discrimination through exclusionary policies.

In these circumstances, State authorities remain responsible for ensuring that the fundamental rights of Roma are respected at all levels of society. Above all, it falls to State authorities to ensure that Roma enjoy the fundamental right to equality, both in law and in fact, irrespective of the division of jurisdiction within the State. While the principle of equality requires protection against discrimination, it also entails proactive policies and special measures to ensure equality of opportunity. This is especially relevant for Roma who have been excluded from opportunities and otherwise disadvantaged for so long — indeed, for generations.

3. Living Conditions

Equality of opportunity does not exist in the absence of minimum guarantees of an adequate standard of living. Aside from personal security, participating States must do much more to ensure adequate housing and good health for Roma. The conditions of housing and health which Roma typically suffer are amongst the worst in Europe. In this connection, special attention must be given to the particular situation and needs of women.

Among the most obvious and pressing problem is that of securing adequate and appropriate housing. This demands immediate attention. My forthcoming report highlights the problems created by resettlement projects, ghetto-isation and the exclusion of Roma families from municipalities, and expresses support for projects aimed at integrative housing. Because of the substantial resources that are required, Governments should show greater readiness to assume the risk of guaranteeing loans that may be available from international organizations and financial institutions for housing projects. Targeted international, national or local support could kick-start community development. Involving Roma in the planning, renovation, building and maintenance of houses that they live in can help advance their integration in society and avoid patterns of dependency associated with some public housing programmes. Governments must, at the very least, ensure that housing projects do not foster segregation. In view of the extreme insecurity that many Roma now experience in respect to housing — and here I refer both to nomadic and sedentary Roma groups — governments should also endeavor to regularize the legal status of Roma who now live in circumstances of unsettled legality. This is particularly important in the context of nomadic and semi-nomadic Roma who often encounter difficulties in relation to encampments and halting sites.

Non-existent or inadequate access to health care is also of immediate concern. Numerous chronic tendencies bear upon Romani communities. Typical among these are: 1) high incidence of disease; 2) high incidence of malnutrition; and 3) high incidence of frequent and sometimes unwanted pregnancy. These are largely the result of poverty giving rise, for example, to very high rates of tuberculosis among Roma in some countries. Such diseases underline not only the serious situation experienced by Roma, but also the clearly inadequate reach of public health. Improvement in the health of Roma demands equal access to public health care with a view to achieving the highest attainable standards of health. In this relation, special attention needs to be paid to sanitation, clean water and medical care. In addition, the situation of women demands improvement not only in terms of immediate health concerns, but more generally with regard to gender issues.

4. Respect for Diversity

Following from the principle of equality, paragraph 33 of the Copenhagen Document commits all OSCE participating States to “protect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities on their territory and create conditions for the promotion of that identity.” In the first place, it is evident that policies and practices of coerced assimilation are incompatible with this standard. It also seems clear that effective policies and programmes of promotion of Romani identities will require special measures of facilitation. This would be the case in relation, inter alia, to improving access of Roma to the public and private media, both in general and in respect of their own cultural needs. In this regard, account must also be taken of the need for Roma to adapt to new realities; the traditional trades that have sustained Roma across centuries are no longer sufficient. It is for these reasons that a rising generation of highly-educated Roma is committed to improving the educational prospects of Romani youth in a fashion that honours, reclaims and revives Romani identities.

The challenge facing participating States is to build strong States which include Roma as full and equal members of our political communities while respecting their distinct identities. This is a challenge that does not lend itself to facile solutions. However, significant experience gained in relation to the protection and promotion of the identities of other minorities may be drawn upon. In this respect, and as paragraph 33 of the Copenhagen Document prescribes, “due consultations, including contacts with organizations or associations of such minorities” are vital in devising, developing and implementing effective policies and programmes.

With regard specifically to education, of course Roma have the right to establish their own schools with a view to maintaining and developing their identities. But, in terms of mainstream education, participating States should encourage integrative schooling and do away with the practice of involuntary segregation. Roma children should not be relegated to Roma classes within mixed schools. Alienation in, or even from, school strengthens the image of the Roma as perennial outsiders. In the same vein, the decision of some Roma parents to keep their children out of school — even if this may be the result of discrimination, impoverishment or poor health — leads to problems later in life. It is essential that Roma children get a good start in life. Special emphasis should therefore be put on pre-school and kindergarten education for Roma children to increase their proficiency in the language of instruction and, more generally, to prepare them for primary school. Furthermore, I see a need for making improvements to curricula that provide all students (including non-Roma students) a greater understanding of Roma culture in particular, and multi-culturalism more generally. I think that there is also scope for hiring Romani teachers’ assistants and mediators and developing extra-curricular support programmes.

5. Participation of Roma

Perhaps no principle is more essential to the success and legitimacy of initiatives to alleviate the concerns of Romani communities than that Roma themselves should be centrally involved in developing, implementing and evaluating policies and programmes. The basic democratic principle that individuals should have a say in how they are governed requires nothing less, and pragmatic considerations counsel the same approach. The importance of minority participation in public affairs is specifically provided in paragraph 35 of the Copenhagen Document which requires participating States to “respect the right of persons belonging to national minorities to effective participation in public affairs, including participation in the affairs relating to the protection and promotion of the identity of such minorities.”

Unfortunately, countless programmes for Roma have been destined to fail because they were developed without Roma participation, and, correspondingly, with scant awareness of the specific culture and needs of the intended beneficiaries. Equally important, programmes *for* Roma designed *without* Roma are scarcely likely to earn the confidence and commitment *of* Roma. At the same time, the active engagement of Roma in developing and implementing projects helps ensure that they do not inadvertently create or perpetuate a classic syndrome of dependency and passivity on the part of the intended beneficiaries.

Encouragingly, recent years have seen an increase in the dynamism of the Roma movement. With renewed and energetic commitment on the part of OSCE

participating States, the disturbing trends in the treatment of Roma can be reversed. This must begin with the establishment of structures of dialogue where there is direct and open communication between Roma representatives and governmental authorities.

Constructive and effective communication must feature mutual respect on the basis of which mutual trust may be built. More specifically, the problem of underrepresentation of Roma in elected and appointed office at all levels of Government must be overcome. Efforts must be made to engage Roma more actively in public service. Only then will they feel that they have a stake in the system. In addition, mechanisms that are set up to allow for Roma participation must be genuine in their intentions and meaningful in their endeavours; without this they will represent nothing more than window dressing or tokenism. The effectiveness of consultative mechanisms can be measured by a number of criteria: allowing for early involvement of Roma in Roma-related policy formation; the extent to which the process is broadly representative; transparency; and the involvement of Roma in implementation and evaluation of Roma-related programs. These benchmarks hold true for more than political consultative bodies. In order to enjoy legitimacy and success, any initiative relating to the Roma should involve Roma in the development, implementation and evaluation phases.

6. Responsibility

There should be no doubt that primary responsibility to respect and ensure the rights of Roma falls to the governments of OSCE participating States. In addition, the community of States shares responsibility, in particular through the relevant international organisations. Just as States must intensify their activities to improve the lives of Roma, so, too, must the OSCE.

The Organization took an important step in this regard when its Ministerial Council decided last December to strengthen the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues in the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). It took another major step when ODIHR appointed Dr. Nicolae Gheorghe, a highly-respected Romani leader, to head the Contact Point as its Advisor on Roma and Sinti Issues. OSCE Participating States must now ensure that they provide the Contact Point the support it needs to carry out its important mission.

To focus the OSCE's work on Roma issues I would recommend that the Contact Point give priority to a specific range of issues, for example, the effective participation of Roma at all levels of government, the development and refinement of mechanisms to alleviate tension and conflict between Romani and non-Roma communities, and combating racism and discrimination within public administrations. In this work, I encourage the Contact Point to carry out on-site inquiries. A precedent has already been established through the joint ODIHR/Council of Europe Field Mission on the Situation of the Roma in Kosovo. I know from personal experience that the effectiveness of an instrument like the Contact Point relies a great deal on the ability to conduct on-site visits as necessary, particularly in response to crisis situations. The Office should be assured the necessary resources and facilities to undertake such

initiatives when they are indicated. I hope that these points will be given further consideration during the upcoming Review Meeting.

7. Effective Coordination

As has often been noted, the complex and interlocking set of problems confronting Roma make clear the need for comprehensive and integrated strategies. For example, improvements in access to education will have scant impact on Romani students' long-term prospects if they are denied access to meaningful employment after graduation. Re-training programmes will avail little if participants cannot find gainful employment because of discriminatory hiring practices.

At the same time, the enormity of these challenges requires States to target their resources effectively — to establish priorities and try to minimize duplication of efforts. This point is equally relevant to inter-governmental bodies. The past decade has seen increasing efforts on behalf of Roma by regional and international bodies: The Council of Europe has undertaken a range of initiatives in this area, including the activities of its Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies. Among the European Commission's various activities aimed at improving conditions of Roma, it may be recalled that a precondition to EU accession is the protection of minorities. In this context, the Commission has taken special note of the situation of Roma and has provided financial support to several candidate countries to assist them in meeting related accession criteria. Both the World Bank and the Council of Europe's Social Development Fund have explored opportunities to include Roma in their development programmes. These developments are most welcome, and it is to be hoped that they signify further intensification of efforts in the years ahead. As this trend continues, the coordination and co-operation that has long characterized the respective efforts of various organizations will be more important than ever. The impact of these initiatives can be maximized if each organization's efforts draw upon its particular strengths. With these thoughts in mind, my forthcoming report offers suggestions about areas in which OSCE participating States and institutions can make a particularly effective contribution in light of their particular mandates and expertise.

III. Recommendations

A. Discrimination and Racial Violence

Law should establish cause of action, remedies and define discrimination. Among the specific measures needed are:

1. Enactment of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation (addressing racial and ethnic discrimination in all fields of public life, including access to public accommodations, citizenship, education, employment, health, housing, public and social services, etc.).

2. Enactment and enforcement of legislation prohibiting advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.
3. Enactment of legislation mandating sentencing enhancements for offenses motivated by ethnic/racial animus.
4. Enactment of government regulations or other applicable legal norms specifically prohibiting ethnic-racial discrimination in all activities undertaken and/or funded by the government.
5. Promulgation and implementation of affirmative action policies giving preference to qualified Roma in public employment, public contracting, and in all other activities undertaken and/or funded by the government.
6. Effective enforcement of the above legal norms through promulgation and enforcement of internal disciplinary standards to ensure that public officials who discriminate, including police, are sanctioned swiftly and meaningfully.
7. Establishment of a government office staffed with qualified personnel with responsibility for publicizing anti-discrimination norms, and with the power to investigate and prosecute violations.
8. Public officials from the highest levels on down should speak out against racial discrimination against Roma and others, and make it clear that racism will not be tolerated.
9. Pursuant to Article 14 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, declaration of recognition of the competence of the supervisory Committee to receive and consider communications from individuals or groups alleging violations of the Convention (NB many OSCE countries have not so declared).
10. Development and execution of training programs for police, prosecutors, judges in international human rights law concerning racial and ethnic discrimination.
11. Development and execution of education programs for the general public — including use of the mass media — concerning the nature of racism against Roma, the legal prohibitions against racial discrimination, and the rights of all individuals including Roma to legal redress for violations of their rights.
12. In the field of education, fund and provide language and/or other assistance necessary to ensure equal educational opportunities for Romani children.
13. Adopt measures aimed at facilitating access to justice for Roma, including establishing, funding and implementing effectively an entitlement to legal assistance for indigent persons, including but not limited to Roma, charged with crimes and/or those bringing civil legal action in order to vindicate legal rights.
14. Establish and implement domestic mechanisms to monitor and report transparently and regularly on progress in each of the above areas.

B. Education

Improving access to education and opportunities for academic achievement by Roma are crucial to the advancement of Romani communities' broader prospects.

1. National governments must make concerted efforts to eradicate manifestations of anti-Roma discrimination in schools. To this end, governments should ensure that teachers and other education professionals receive adequate training in multicultural education, and that national law includes adequate provisions banning discrimination in the sphere of education and providing effective remedies.
2. Governments should make concerted efforts to eradicate practices that tend toward involuntary segregation of Romani children in schooling, particularly the practice of routing Romani children to schools or classes for mentally disabled students. Governments should commit resources to programs that enable Romani children to succeed in regular schools.
3. Governments may wish to consider supporting pre-school programmes that help prepare Romani children for primary schools, as well as “booster” programs that provide appropriate support to Romani children while they are attending regular schools.
4. Governments should take steps to increase the number of Roma educators and teachers’ assistants.
5. In light of the distinct cultural identity of Roma, a keystone of educational programs aimed at enhancing their access to education and their academic achievement should be flexibility.
6. To ensure that the dignity of all children is fully respected in schools, governments should ensure that educational texts include material on Romani history and culture, especially in regions and localities with substantial Romani populations.
7. Governments should adopt programs that would ensure that the costs of meals, textbooks, and similar costs related to education are covered with respect to children whose parents cannot afford to pay these costs.

C. Living Conditions

The housing and health needs of many Romani communities in OSCE participating States merit concerted attention and commitment of resources. Some of the measures that could be usefully considered:

1. Governments should show greater readiness to assume the risk of guaranteeing loans that may be available from international organizations and financial institutions for housing projects.

2. Foreign donors should consider funding feasibility studies on specific housing projects, which may in turn encourage local and national authorities to apply to these same donors for loans to implement larger housing projects.
3. OSCE Participating States should review their regulatory systems with a view toward eliminating requirements that serve to block housing programs from moving forward even when sufficient funding may be available.
3. Romani individuals should be involved in the design of housing policies and meaningfully engaged in the construction, rehabilitation and/or maintenance of public housing projects meant to benefit them.
4. While respecting the free choice of particular Romani communities to live with other Roma, governments should ensure that housing policies do not foster segregation. One approach that may be productive is to provide financial incentives for housing projects whose intended beneficiaries include a mix of Roma and non-Roma relegate Roma to segregated communities apart from the rest of society.
5. Governments must ensure that Roma are not victims of discrimination in respect of housing. Where such legislation does not yet exist, OSCE participating States should enact laws that prohibit discrimination in housing and provide effective remedies for violations.
6. In view of the extreme insecurity many Roma now experience in respect of housing, governments should also endeavour to regularize the legal status of Roma who now live in circumstances of unsettled legality.
7. Governments should take immediate steps to address the high incidence of disease and malnutrition among Romani communities.
8. Governments should take steps to ensure equal access of Roma to public health care.
9. Governments should give special attention to the particular situation and needs of women in taking measures to ensure, *inter alia*, adequate housing and access to health care.

D. Political Participation

The following recommendations are all meant to support the general objective of ensuring effective Roma participation, and several have application for inter-governmental organizations as well as OSCE States.

1. *Early involvement*: The involvement of Roma at the earliest stages in the development of the broad outlines as well as the specific contours of Roma policy is essential to the effectiveness of such policies.

2. *Influence of Roma views on government policies:* Inclusion of Roma in formal consultation processes will contribute to the effectiveness of government policies.
3. *Inclusiveness:* Mechanisms for securing Roma participation in shaping major policy initiatives are most likely to be effective and legitimate if they involve a broadly representative process.
4. *Transparency:* Governments should ensure that representatives of Romani communities receive essential information about programs and proposals sufficiently in advance of decision-making deadlines to allow meaningful analysis and input by those representatives.
5. *Participation of Roma outside formal meetings:* Valuable input from Romani leaders can be gathered in the course of substantive working sessions, taking place outside the parameters of regularly-scheduled formal meetings with government officials.
6. *Meaningful participation of Roma at all levels of governance:* In view of the central importance of local administrations in realizing national Roma policies, Roma participation at these levels is essential to the effective implementation of such policies.
7. *Involvement of Roma in implementation and evaluation:* Roma should be meaningfully involved not only in developing but also implementing and evaluating the success of programs aimed at improving the conditions of Romani communities.
8. *Training:* Donors seeking to enhance Roma involvement in policy-making processes could usefully offer training programs aimed at improving political, policy-making and public administration skills.
9. *Citizenship:* In no case should new citizenship laws be drafted and implemented in such a way as to discriminate against legitimate claimants for citizenship, or to withhold citizenship from long-term inhabitants of the state. Further, OSCE participating States should ensure that laws relating to registration of residency do not operate to disenfranchise their citizens or otherwise have a discriminatory effect.

E. Enhancement of the Mandate of the OSCE Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues

In light of the complexity and magnitude of the issues Roma face, and the various inter-governmental bodies which have developed initiatives related to Roma, the OSCE Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues will be most effective if the office establishes targeted priorities in implementing its broad mandate. Below are some of the activities that could usefully be pursued by the Contact Point:

1. Assume a pro-active role in analyzing information concerning measures undertaken by participating States in meeting their OSCE commitments vis-a-vis Roma and in advising governments concerning their efforts to meet those commitments.

2. OSCE Participating States should respond in a timely fashion to specific questions concerning their policies and practices in respect of Roma that may be formulated by the Contact Point.

3. Act as an advisor to governments on mechanisms that are likely to ensure the effective participation of Roma in policy-making at the national, regional and local level, and in linking national policy to implementation at the local level.

4. Advise governments on effective mechanisms for alleviating tensions between Romani and non-Roma communities, and on effective means for combatting anti-Roma discrimination by public officials and institutions, including police. The compilation of a manual of “best practices” in this regard could be a particularly useful contribution.

5. Conduct on-site inquiries as necessary to investigate conditions affecting Roma populations. The Contact Point should be assured the necessary resources and facilities to conduct these inquiries.

6. Governments and inter-governmental bodies confronted with the challenge of protecting Romani communities which are at risk can draw upon the Contact Point as a resource; the OSCE in particular could usefully incorporate Roma issues into its training programs for its mission members who are working in countries where Roma are at risk.

7. In light of the Contact Point’s mandate to include “seminars [and] workshops” in his work programme, and of the utility of targeted implementation in this area of the mandate, it would be a particularly useful contribution to organize a seminar on the issue of ethnic data collection by governments.

8. The programmes of the Contact Point should be shaped, at least in part, by the possibility of enhancing the contributions of important initiatives in respect of Roma undertaken by other organizations.