

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2015
Statement of the Czech Republic

Working Session 16: Tolerance and non-discrimination, including Roma and Sinti issues

Madame Moderator,

The Czech Republic fully aligns herself with the EU statement. I would like to make some remarks in my national capacity and inform you about recent developments and efforts made by the Czech Government in order to improve the situation of the Roma minority.

According to the last expert estimates there are about 241,000 of Roma living in the Czech Republic. In February 2015, the Czech Government adopted the Strategy of Roma integration up to 2020 which was developed within the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. It focuses on four key areas: education, employment, healthcare and housing, as well as other areas such as anti-discriminatory measures, international cooperation with regard to Roma integration, and security issues.

The most important change in the area of education was the adoption of an amendment to the Education Act in April 2015. The amendment introduces specific measures in line with the Government's strategy to promote inclusive education and equal access to education for all children. It focuses on individual support to disadvantaged children and strengthens the institutional capacity of the Czech School Inspection with regard to the procedures of placement of children into schools. Currently another amendment to the Act is being prepared according to which the last year of pre-school education should be compulsory for all children.

As we reported at the HDIM last year, the Czech Government launched a Campaign against Racism and Hate Violence. The main objective of the campaign is to decrease tension in the society and radicalization of young people by actively refuting misinformation and myths, to strengthen the capacity of schools, police, representatives of municipalities etc. to predict violence, prevent it and efficiently manage it, and to strengthen the capacity of the media to use communication as a means of decreasing tension and defending integration measures.

The campaign consists of a national media campaign called HateFree Culture, aimed at young people in the age between 15 and 25 which concentrates on raising awareness of different forms of racism and hate violence and how to deal with them. It is innovative in its usage of new media such as Facebook and Twitter. The campaign is accompanied by educational activities for local actors such as schools and police and by spreading good practices for social inclusion and coexistence among mayors and representatives of municipalities, local organizations and associations.

In comparison to previous years, the number of anti-Roma demonstrations decreased significantly, their size and attendance being insignificant. In this regard, we highly value the cooperation with the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues in organizing trainings for the Czech police on human rights and security related matters in March this year. The main topics of the first training were the current situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area, addressing hate crimes, and assembly policing with special focus on policing marches with anti-Roma messages.

We also welcome this year's visit of the members of the IHRA Committee on the Genocide of the Roma to the Czech Republic. It was an excellent opportunity to discuss Roma genocide remembrance, research and education and particularly the situation of the memorial site for the Roma victims in Lety u Písku. Another memorial in Hodonín near Kunštát is currently being built on the site of a former camp where Roma prisoners were detained before being transported to Oświęcim.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude that the Roma integration remains one of the priorities of the Czech Government. Specific measures towards this goal are being implemented, aimed at combating social exclusion and its symptoms, fostering equal access to education, providing access to housing, health care, and fighting discrimination and stereotypes.

Thank you for your attention.