

Roma and Travellers issues at the Council of Europe



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**. As of today **27 member states actively participate in the work of the Committee**¹. 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), as well as international organisations/institutions such as the European Commission, the FRA, the OSCE-ODIHR/Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, IOM, UNDP, UNHCR and the World Bank regularly take part in the meetings of the Committee. In addition, five Roma and Travellers NGOs and/or independent experts are invited to participate in the work of the Committee pending the items on the agenda. The European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) has been granted a permanent observer status. In addition, four Roma and Traveller NGOs and/or independent experts are invited to participate in the work of the Committee depending on the agenda items. This includes the European Roma Information Office (ERIO), the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the Project on Ethnic Relations (PER).

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. 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 act as a forum for the exchange of information, views and experience on policies, good practice and issues relating to Roma and Travellers (e.g. creation of a European Solidarity Fund, situation of Kosovar Roma refugees, returnees and IDPs). It **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, translated into Romani, as well as in some other languages

¹ Active participants 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 participation from Belgium, Estonia, Latvia and Moldova is under consideration.

(Dutch, Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak, Ukrainian, etc.) and widely disseminated in member states.

The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers has adopted **six specific Roma-related recommendations**: on education [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] and on policies for Roma and/or Travellers [Rec.(2008)5]. The latter serves as a **reference document for other international organisations/institutions wishing to develop a European Roma policy**, as well as a **model strategy for member states to follow in policy-making on Roma and/or Travellers and monitoring implementation**.

In 2008, the MG-S-ROM has undertaken an update of recommendations (2000)4 in co-operation with the Steering Committee for Education (CDED). The revised recommendation and its explanatory memorandum are to be adopted by the Committee of Ministers' Deputies in February 2009.

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 23 European countries. Many of these strategies were adopted at the instigation and with the assistance of the Council of Europe. 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. 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.

2. Intergovernmental activities run by DG3 / 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 2008 **assessment visits or hearings** were carried out (or will be conducted) in France (Gien in April and Paris in October), Moldova (Edineț, Călărași, Chișinău in May), the Netherlands (The Hague, November), Turkey (Istanbul and Ankara in June, Ankara in September), and the Ukraine (Kyiv, August). The Secretariat also participated in **national events** organised in Italy (Rome, January and June), Moldova (Soroca in June, Orhei and Cahul probably during the autumn), Poland (Cracow, January), Slovakia (Bratislava, April), Spain (Valencia, October), the Ukraine (Kyiv, early November) and the United Kingdom (London, March).

In 2008, the Council of Europe has encouraged all member states to launch the **Dosta! awareness-raising campaign against prejudice and negative stereotypes**. Italy, Romania and Slovenia have already responded positively to this call, as well as Moldova and Ukraine in the context of a new joint programme on Roma between the European Union and the Council of Europe in these two countries. Other countries, including Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Latvia and Slovakia, have also been invited to join the campaign in the near future. The multilanguage website of the Dosta! campaign

(www.dosta.org) was updated with new information and documentation, in particular a toolkit for campaigning for Roma and for fighting against stereotypes.

Since 1996, regular **financial contributions** are made to **DG3 Special Account on Roma** by member states, in particular **Finland**. Current other contributors include **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.

Since 2003, the Council of Europe has welcomed **more than 20 Roma interns** thanks to a financial contribution from the **Open Society Institute (OSI)**, the **Dutch organisation FORUM** and the **Finnish government**.

The programme of activities of the Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division has included since the last OSCE-HDIM in October 2007:

- **A conference on the Situation of Roma refugees, IDPs and Returnees in the Balkans**, organised together with the Serbian authorities (Parliament and Government) and the CoE Parliamentary Assembly under the Serbian presidency of the Council of Europe (Belgrade, 29-30 October 2007);
- **A Symposium on Discrimination and Access to Labour Market for Roma and Travellers**, organised with the French association FNASAT (Strasbourg, 6 November 2007);
- **A Conference on Romani Women's Rights**, organised with the Swedish Government and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Stockholm, 3-4 December 2007;
- **Tomka Children's project**, which is a two-fold pilot project implemented by two local NGOs in Korça, **Albania**, with a broad approach in **prevention of trafficking**: fighting root causes, such as low attendance at school and raising awareness in parents on the trafficking in human beings by the recently trained by the Council of Europe antitrafficking mediators (year 2008);
- **Extension of the Dosta! awareness-raising campaign for fighting anti-Gypsyism** to other member states (Italy, Romania Slovenia confirmed; Croatia, Czech Republic and Slovakia in the process) and inclusion of the Dosta! campaign as part of the general campaign against discrimination launched by the Council of Europe in 2008;
- **Report on the situation and challenges of (Romanian) Roma migrants in Nantes Metropole** (France, May-June 2008);
- **Needs assessment visit and fact finding visit on local action plans for Roma in Moldova** as part of the joint EC/CoE programme on Roma (Edineț, Călărași, Chișinău, May 2008);

- **National training workshop on planning and monitoring methodology for the National Action Plan on Roma and national launch of the Dosta! campaign** as part of the joint EC/CoE programme on Roma (Chişinău, Moldova, 13-16 May 2008);
- **Needs assessment visit on the situation of Roma in Turkey** (Istanbul and Ankara, 16-17 June 2008);
- **13th Training Session on the European Convention on Human Rights for English- and French-speaking lawyers involved in legal assistance to Roma** organised with ERRC and the ECHR (Strasbourg, 18-20 June 2008);
- **Information Seminar on the role and functions of Roma school assistants** as part of the joint EC/CoE programme on Roma (Soroca, Moldova, 2-4 July 2008);
- **Study Session “Romani Youth Participation: the way forward” organised by the Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP)** (Strasbourg, 7-14 September 2008);
- **Round table and feasibility study to develop a Roma-related pilot project in Turkey** (Ankara, 11 September 2008);
- **Training sessions of governmental officials and Roma individuals on the planning and monitoring of national and local action plans for Roma in Moldova** as part of the joint EC/CoE programme on Roma (Orhei and Cahul, Moldova, November 2008 – to be confirmed);
- **Workshop on the Legal Status of Roma in Croatia** as part of the annual joint UNHCR/CoE programme of activities Zagreb, 13 October 2008);
- **Promotion of the Dosta! campaign at the Liet-lavlut Festival on Minority Languages** (Luleå, Sweden, 15-18 October 2008);
- **Promotion of the Dosta! campaign at the Roma International Seminar** (Valencia, Spain, 19-22 October 2008);
- **Seminar on the role and functions of Roma health mediators** as part of the joint EC/CoE programme on Roma (Kyiv, Ukraine, 20 October);
- **Round table on the results of a feasibility study to support a new national action plan for Roma and national launch of the Dosta! campaign in Ukraine** as part of the joint EC/CoE programme on Roma (early November 2008);
- **Training for NGOs on the Collective Complaints Mechanism of the Revised European Social Charter** organised with DG Human Rights and Legal Affairs, ERRC and ERTF (Strasbourg, end November or early December 2008);

- **Training on Roma health mediators** as part of the joint EC/CoE programme on Roma (Odessa, Ukraine, December 2008);
- **Launching of the 2nd Edition of the Dosta! Congress Prize for Municipalities**, opened to all Council of Europe member states in 2008.

3. Coordinator of Activities concerning Roma and Travellers

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 (see item 6).

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.

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

▪ The Project "Education of Roma children in Europe"

As regards the education of Roma there are different activities developed in the framework of the project "Education of Roma children in Europe" – Directorate of Education - Division for the European Dimension of Education.

Due to the specific situation of Roma, who face educational, social, cultural and economic problems all at the same time, the education is not considered in isolation, but in relation to cultural identity and heritage, integration into society, preparation for employment and involvement in the community.

As part of the Project, the Council of Europe has designed an **education pack for Roma pre-school children**. This pack 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.

Through the Council of Europe's **in-service training programme** *Pestalozzi* about 40 training seminars are held each year, some of them on Roma issues (use of teaching material, Roma culture and history in schools, Roma school mediators, etc.).

Activities of DG4 Directorate of Education/Division for the European Dimension of Education in 2008 include:

- European Conference "Tools for a successful integration of Roma children and youth into the school system" organised with the Slovak government under the Slovak chairmanship of the Council of Europe (Bratislava, 8-9 April 2008);
- 2nd edition of the Fortnight of Roma Movies in Cinéma Odyssée in Strasbourg, France (11 June-1 July 2008) with the financial support of the Finnish government;
- Pestalozzi European Roma Workshop "Roma Remembrance: teaching the history" (Budapest, Hungary, 31 July-3 August 2008);
- Pestalozzi European Roma Workshop "The Roma School mediator Guide: working tools, training and needs" (Romania, 15-17 October 2008);
- CIEP Colloque "Roms d'Europe: Ruptures, accueils et scolarisation" (Besançon, France, 1-3 December 2008).

The Council of Europe is producing a **Guide for Roma school mediators**. Positions such as that of 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.

The Council of Europe is producing **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, cinema, literature and theatre**, will foster mutual understanding of differences, which is the basic principle underlying the intercultural approach. It will 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.

Since 2006, the "Education of Roma Children in Europe" project has focused on objectives which take account both of the requirements of **Recommendation (2000)4 on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe**, and also of **Recommendation (2001)15 on "history teaching in twenty-first century Europe"**. Remembrance, particularly remembrance of the events which occurred during the second world war, remains a sensitive and painful issue for Roma. Work covered by the project includes the setting-up of a **website devoted to Roma remembrance**. This work is done in reference to OSCE Decision No. 3/03 : ACTION PLAN ON IMPROVING THE SITUATION OF ROMA AND SINTI WITHIN THE OSCE AREA, chapter V. Improving access to education, item 71. *Include Roma history and culture in educational texts, with*

particular consideration given to the experience of Roma and Sinti people during the Holocaust, in close co-operation with the OSCE/ODIHR, the main partner.

The website's sole function will be to provide instruction on the **Roma holocaust**. It will comprise a data base on the Roma holocaust, with a virtual library of the best-known and most useful publications, and an interactive map on which countries can indicate its 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.

As part of the Council of Europe's project on the education of Roma children, representatives of the Roma community are involved at each stage, and play an active role in the implementation of policies concerning them. The idea of involving community representatives in developing the project is in keeping with the more general principle of encouraging **direct participation** by, and **empowerment** of, members of these communities.

Information about the project "Education of Roma Children in Europe" on the webpage: <http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural%5FCo%2Doperation/education/Roma%5Fchildren/>.

- **The Project "A European Curriculum Framework for Romani Language"**

The Language Policy Division has started a medium term project that aims to elaborate a common framework of reference for the development of **Romani language curricula**, drawing as far as possible on those used in member states and adapting to this effect the structure of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) to the specific situation of Romani language use in society and its place in education systems. Among the expected results there is also a proposal for a European Language Portfolio model as well as a Guide for teachers. The work has benefited from a voluntary contribution from Finland. The European Roma and Travellers Forum has followed the work with interest and is kept informed of developments. The project, along with other policy actions on minority education, was also presented at a Hearing of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages with the Language Policy Division. The curriculum framework for Romani was finalised at a meeting at the end of May 2007 and is now available in Romani, English and French. It should be tested (and adapted) in about ten European countries in 2008.

More information about the European Curriculum Framework for Romani Language on the following webpage: http://www.coe.int/T/DG4/Linguistic/Default_en.asp.

- **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.

More information about the Route of Roma Culture and Heritage on the webpage: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/Aware/Routes/roma_en.asp#TopOfPage

6. Co-operation with international partners

▪ Informal Contact Group between International Organisations/Institutions on Roma, Sinti and Travellers

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 between International Organisations on Roma, Sinti and Travellers. 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 presidency. The next meeting is expected under French presidency in November 2008. 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 the World Bank, UN agencies and other European Union institutions (European Parliament, Fundamental Rights Agency), 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).

Due to an increase in requests from governmental and non governmental organisations to participate in the Informal Contact Group, meetings are now divided into two parts: a first one open to all those NGOs dealing with Roma issues, and a second part limited to the intergovernmental organisations and institutions.

The Group continued tackling the issues of education (school segregation), housing (forced evictions) and the situation in Kosovo (participation in negotiation talks, returnees, integration strategy). Data collection, anti-Gypsyism in Italy and the development of a European Strategy for Roma were also addressed at the meeting under the Slovenian presidency (April 2008).

At the meeting under German Presidency (11 June 2007), participants agreed on the need of multilateral cooperation and considered holding a conference on a possible division of work, followed by a conference of the main actors with representatives of countries concerned.

The Dutch authorities have decided to organise such a conference on 5 November 2008 in order to discuss the specific issue of ensuring better coordination between main inter-governmental organisations/institutions. A questionnaire was sent to CoE, EC, OSCE-ODIHR, UNDP, UNHCR and WB in view of debating about solutions. The conclusions and recommendations adopted at the November meeting will be examined at the next meeting of the Informal Contact Group under French presidency (November 2008).

▪ ***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 or DG Enlargement.

The Council of Europe was also consulted by Mrs Beate Winkler who prepared for President Barroso a background paper on **“the situation of Roma in the EU: barriers and solutions for integration”** (August 2008).

The Council of Europe attended the **first EU Roma Summit on Roma** organised by the European Commission in Brussels on 16 September. Various departments of the European Commission attend meetings of the Informal Contact Group.

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

The third joint Council of Europe/European Commission Project “Equal Rights and Treatment for Roma in South East Europe” ended in March 2008. It aimed at assisting the development of participative monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, as well as at combating prejudices and stereotypes for improving the social image of Roma in South East Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, and « the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ») via an awareness-raising campaign for combating prejudices towards Roma called Dosta! (www.dosta.org). The ultimate beneficiaries of this project were the Roma communities of these countries. The project was divided into three components:

Component 1: *Aim:* Improvement of participative monitoring and evaluation methodology; *Target groups:* the members of the Inter-ministerial commissions responsible for the implementation of national programmes/action plans for Roma, and members of commissions in charge of the implementation of Roma Decade Action Plans, Roma project managers; *Main activities:* presentation of the whole project in each participating country and needs assessment seminars on monitoring and evaluation ; training and mentoring, trainers’ training, publication and translation of a guidebook on monitoring and evaluation techniques.

Component 2: *Aim:* Ensuring transparency and visibility of national programmes/action plans for Roma through improved communication channels and an awareness-raising campaign; *Target groups:* State and local authorities, members of national parliaments, state institutions such as local employment offices, schools, social welfare offices, etc, national and local media, the society at large; *Main activities:* setting-up of an awareness-raising campaign internet site, video competition, promotion of school and other civil society projects combating prejudices and negative stereotypes against

Roma, VIP testimonials, campaign posters and videos against discrimination, festivals (film, music, youth) ; regional media training on ethical reporting.

Component 3: *Aim:* Evaluation of the two previous joint programmes for Roma; *Target groups:* Council of Europe/European Commission/OSCE-ODIHR (partner institutions in developing these programmes on Roma in South East Europe); *Main activities:* external evaluation through consultation of the main actors (partners and beneficiaries of the two previous joint programmes).

The 3rd project ensured sustainability of the two previous joint projects (2000-2002 and 2003-2005) and contributed to a regional exchange of experiences. The Dosta! campaign, conceived and launched through this joint project is now an independent activity for raising awareness on anti-Gypsyism and the respect of Roma culture and identity. The project was implemented in close cooperation with other international actors, involving *inter alia* EC delegations, OSCE field missions and Council of Europe field offices, and taking into account existing initiatives (e.g. the Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015).

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” was initiated in January 2008 for 15 months.

The **specific objectives** are divided into three components:

1. **in Moldova**, to ensure that, by the end of the one and half-year project, planning, implementing, communication and monitoring mechanisms on the Action Plan for Roma at national and local levels are improved and become more inclusive for the Roma representatives. This implies the provision of focused training and policy advice for the officials in charge of implementation of the Action Plans for Roma at national and local levels, as well as for Roma representatives themselves. **As for Ukraine**, to assess the opportunity of a similar project and action.
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 an awareness-raising campaign aimed at combating prejudices and negative stereotypes.

▪ **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.

- ***European Parliament***

In 2008 the Council of Europe has attended several meetings organised by various political groups of the European Parliament, namely a PSE Conference “Towards a European Roma Strategy – from commitment to results” (Brussels, 6 March) and an EPP-ED-CET European Roma Round table (Budapest, 12 July).

The Council of Europe also participated in the meeting on the EP Resolution on a Strategy on the Roma that was conveyed in Strasbourg on 20 February by both the President of the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF), Mr. Rudko Kawczynski, and the MEP Viktoria Mohacsi.

- ***FRA***

2008 represented a transitional year in terms of cooperation with FRA due to the change of status of the latter. The Council of Europe participated in two coordination meetings organised by FRA: one concerning a research on housing conditions of Roma (Vienna, 13 June) and another on the 2009 FRA programming activities on Roma (Vienna, 9 July). 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.

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

In addition, the Office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights co-operates with FRA on a project dealing with Roma migrants.

- ***IOM***

IOM has recently received the observer status in MG-S-ROM meetings. In January 2008, the Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division attended an International Romani Conference on Social Co-operatives as an example of promoting entrepreneurship among Roma communities organised by IOM in Cracow, Poland.

- ***OSCE-ODIHR***

OSCE-ODIHR attends and actively contributes to MG-S-ROM meetings, as well as to the Informal Contact Group of international organisations. The Head of the Roma and Travellers Division visited the OSCE-ODIHR in January 2008 to exchange information about the planned activities and coordinate actions as much as possible. Issues of common interest are the following: early education of Roma children, remembrance of Holocaust, anti-trafficking, Roma refugees, IDPs and returnees (with specific focus on Kosovar RAE), political representation and implementation of policies for Roma.

The Council of Europe Coordinator and Head of the Roma and Travellers Division

participated in the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Implementation Meeting organised in Vienna on 10-11 July by the OSCE-ODIHR under the Finnish OSCE chairmanship in office. The aim of this meeting was to discuss sustainable policies for Roma and Sinti integration, in particular at the local level. The Council of Europe will be represented *inter alia* by the Directorate General of Political Affairs at the annual OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting taking place between 29 September and 10 October 2008. A status report about the implementation by OSCE member states of the OSCE Action Plan for Roma and Sinti will be distributed.

- **UNDP**

UNDP has an observer status in MG-S-ROM meetings. In 2008, there has been no specific co-operation between the Council of Europe and UNDP on Roma issues.

- **UNESCO**

The Council of Europe Division for the European Dimension of Education in DG4 co-organised an International Conference on Access of Roma Children to Preschool Education with UNESCO (Paris, 10-11 September 2007). Follow-up co-operation activities are being envisaged.

- **UNHCR**

The Council of Europe and the UNHCR organise every year joint activities related to Roma refugees. The last activity was on Access to Civil Rights for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians internally displaced persons in Montenegro (Budva, April 2007). Another joint CoE/UNHCR activity on the legal status of Roma in Zagreb, Croatia, on 13 October 2008.

- **UNICEF**

In 2008, 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.

- **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. The Council of Europe Co-ordinator for activities concerning Roma and Travellers attended a coordination meeting between the CoE and the OHCHR of the United Nations in Geneva on 4-5 September 2008. 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 MG-S-ROM. Their participation, as well as the fact that several MG-S-ROM members are also Roma Decade official interlocutors, contribute to a certain degree of coordination between the intergovernmental work of the Council of Europe and the Roma Decade initiative.

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

In 2008, the Council of Europe contributed with its expertise in addressing anti-Gypsyism and fighting stereotypes towards Roma at the Anti-Discrimination Workshop organised by the Hungarian Government in Budapest on 17-18 April.

7. The European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF)

The Council of Europe signed a partnership agreement with the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) on 15 December 2004. The Forum is an independent international association set up thanks to the initiative of Finnish President, Mrs. Tarja Halonen, and developed according to a French-Finnish proposal. It represents Roma, Sinti, Kale, Travellers and other related groups in Europe, helping them to voice their concerns and provide channels of communication with the relevant organs of the Council of Europe, as well as of other international organisations and institutions. The ERTF will organise its fourth Plenary Assembly in Strasbourg on 24-25 November 2008. About 80 delegates (both from national level and from the level of seven international Roma associations) are invited. This will be an opportunity for both the Council of Europe on the one hand and the ERTF president (Mr. Rudko Kawczynski) and the Executive Board of the Forum on the other hand, to present the results of the first four years of co-operation. In 2006 the ERTF adopted a policy paper on the Romani language, as well as a position paper on ensuring the 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. A number of press releases have been also issued 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).
