

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
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Working Session 17: Roma and Sinti

Finland aligns itself with the EU statement and the recommendations made in it. In addition to that I would like to highlight a few issues in my national capacity.

Roma and Travellers are the largest ethnic minority in the European Union and a big number of Roma live in other OSCE participating States. Despite many policy strategies and projects by governments and inter-governmental organisations, the Roma continue to live in the margins of the society. An absolute majority of Roma in Europe live below the poverty line, and their life expectancy is years less than life expectancy of an average European. Roma are frequently subjected to discrimination, prejudice and hate, also in my own country.

We need an effective Roma policy to combat discrimination. It shall be comprehensive and consist of three tracks: (1) to improve socio-economic status, including housing, education and health; (2) to promote non-discrimination and full legal rights of the Roma; and (3) the Roma shall have a full right to participate and effectively influence the planning, implementation, evaluation and follow-up of the measures that aim at improving their situation.

Finland is committed to promote the rights of the Roma and to “give Roma a voice” at European level. The prohibition of discrimination is a key principle of human rights.

The Roma policy of the Finnish government is guided by the National Policy Program (on Roma) for years 2018 – 22. It covers all relevant policy sectors to support the integration of Roma and aims at positive development in linguistic, cultural and social rights.

So far, the biggest achievements in Finland have been reached in housing and education. Today the housing segregation or vagrancy is no longer a major problem. A school attendance of Roma girls and boys has increased remarkably; now more than half of them continue their studies after 9 years of primary school education. Unemployment continues to be a big challenge, not only due to the low level of education but also due to stigmatization.



The hate crimes against Roma were recorded the first time in our annual Hate crime report in 2017. The statistics are based on crime reports retrieved from the National Police Information System. In the target year, 1 165 reports of offences on suspected hate crime were filed and four of these were targeted at Roma. (The number of Roma in Finland is estimated from 10 000 to 12 000 persons.) Most likely the real number of offences is higher. However, the trust in police is very high in Finland, also among the Roma community.

The Finnish Non-Discrimination Ombudsman takes constantly up Roma discrimination and harassment, when meeting stakeholders, civil servants from different ministries, the police or other public authorities or private actors in commerce or restaurant and hotel sector.

The Government Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, composed in half of public authorities and Roma representatives, monitors the implementation of the Government Roma policy. Respectively, provincial bodies enable co-operation between the police, public service offices and Roma communities.

We believe that governments can do a lot to promote the rights of the Roma.

Roma women are more disadvantaged and at risk of exclusion and marginalization than Roma men or than women in general population. Finland supports the empowerment of Roma women at European level, including the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the EU politically and financially. We encourage the European bodies to work together for non-discrimination of Roma women.

Finland has also contributed to the work of the OSCE/ODIHR Contact Point on Roma and Sinti by supporting its activities to promote Roma youth participation in public and political life, including within the OSCE.

In order to further promote non-discrimination of Roma:

- Finland calls on all governments to combat anti-Gypsyism and work together with Roma and Sinti communities to promote the Rights of the Roma;
- Finland calls on all participating States to support the work of the OSCE/ODIHR Contact Point on Roma and Sinti as well as the OSCE Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities and other OSCE independent institutions and their strong and independent mandates.

Thank you.

