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OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Warsaw, 21 September – 2 October 2015

EU Statement – Working Session 16

Mr/Madame Chairperson,

I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union and deliver the following recommendations regarding the Roma and Sinti issues in the OSCE area:

- Increase the efforts to implement all OSCE commitments, in particular the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, as well as continue the regular review of its implementation; in this context, participating States should respond promptly and comprehensively to all ODIHR's requests for information;
- Continue to ensure the complementarity of the OSCE Action Plan on improving the situation of Roma and Sinti and the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.
- Take effective policy measures to ensure the equal treatment and the respect of fundamental rights, including access to education, employment, healthcare and housing; take measures to ensure that all Roma population is registered and holds identity documents;
- Enhance efforts to increase enrolment for Roma and Sinti children and youth at all levels in State-provided education and reduce school dropout rate; enhance efforts to eliminate segregation of Roma and Sinti at all levels in education; adopt measures to avoid the children fall victims to labour exploitation and trafficking;
- Enhance efforts to strengthen the rights of Roma women and girls and to eliminate discrimination on multiple grounds; fight violence, including domestic violence, against women and girls, trafficking, underage and forced marriages;



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promote the effective and equal participation of Roma and Sinti women in public and political life, including through the promotion of women's access to public office, public administration and decision making positions;

- Prevent further marginalization and exclusion of Roma and Sinti and address the rise of discrimination and violent manifestations of intolerance against Roma and Sinti, including Roma and Sinti migrants, refugees and IDPs, who may be subject of multiple discrimination;
- Enhance the participation of Roma and Sinti in the elaboration, implementation and evaluation of the policies that affect them; where appropriate, promote the training and employment of qualified mediators dedicated to Roma and use mediation as one of the measures to tackle inequalities in terms of access to education, employment, healthcare and housing;
- Enhance implementation of the OSCE commitments with regard to Roma and Sinti by local authorities;
- Enhance data collection with regard to the situation of Roma and Sinti in all fields of the Action Plan, as far as this is in compliance with the legal framework and overall policy of a Member State;
- Include, where appropriate, a monitoring and assessment component in strategies, policies, measures and programmes related to Roma and Sinti, as well as review mechanisms taking into account the respective results of monitoring and assessment, as far as this is necessary by taking into account any existing monitoring mechanisms enhance cooperation among international organizations with regard to improving the situation of Roma and Sinti;
- Continue activities of the OSCE field operations with regard to improving the situation of Roma and Sinti,
- Ensure effective coordination between the OSCE, EU and the Council of Europe.

Mr/Madame Chairperson,



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The adoption of Council Conclusions on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies in 2011 has put Roma and Sinti integration onto the political agenda of the European Union, building on the earlier Strasbourg Declaration adopted by Council of Europe member states in 2010 and the OSCE Roma and Sinti Action Plan. In this context, non-discrimination is a horizontal principle and a precondition for effective Roma integration. A solid policy, legal and financial framework has been put in place at both EU and national levels. EU Member States, which have the primary responsibility for advancing Roma integration, have elaborated and are currently implementing Roma inclusion strategies or sets of policy measures within their broader social inclusion policies. These policies target in particular improving access to education, employment, healthcare and housing, and, where appropriate, supported by targets and monitoring mechanisms. The Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures, adopted unanimously by the 28 EU Member States in December 2013, aims to assist Member States in integrating their Roma citizens, including reducing social and economic inequalities between Roma and the rest of the population. It also gives guidance on horizontal policy measures such as anti-discrimination.

Furthermore, the EU has set up a permanent dialogue between Member States and between Member States and the European Commission through the 28 National Roma Contact Points in order to exchange good practices. The EU has also managed to strengthen EU financial support for Roma inclusion not only in 28 EU Member States but also in enlargement countries. Based on a request by the European Commission, EU Member States allocated at least 20% of their national European Social Fund allocation to the objective of social inclusion.

The European Commission produces annual assessments of progress on Roma integration in the Member States. Last year's report underlined that efforts to improve the lives of Roma population within the EU have already delivered visible results, but progress still needs to be done in some areas, also at local level. This year's report



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notes that there is improvement in aligning the policy framework with the funding instruments, as well as progress in empowering the Roma National Contact Points. The EU will continue to help local, regional and national authorities strengthen their administrative capacities in order to access and use EU funds more effectively. It will seek a closer cooperation among international organizations like the OSCE or the Council of Europe in order to avoid the duplication of work and to create synergies for a better and more effective Roma integration.

The European Union commends the work of OSCE institutions, notably the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, for their dedicated efforts in advancing the implementation of the OSCE commitments and assisting participating States to this end.

The European Union welcomes the focus of the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti on enhancing the public and political participation of Roma and Sinti women and youth, contributing thus to the implementation of the Kyiv Ministerial Council Declaration, which has a particular focus on Roma and Sinti women, youth and girls. Consultation meetings with Roma and Sinti women activists are a good opportunity to receive direct feed-back and further guidance on the existing needs of their communities and for mainstreaming their needs in the further activities of the CPRSI. EU puts great emphasis on actions concerning youth and children, notably in the areas of education and employment.

We also welcome increased dialogue and cooperation between ODIHR and the European Union on these issues. Additionally, we are committed to enhancing cooperation with the Council of Europe, including through its Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma (CAHROM) on which almost all EU Member States are represented.



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The OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti remains a milestone document for the OSCE on Roma and Sinti issues. The Status Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan prepared by ODIHR in 2013 accurately highlighted some visible progress has been achieved, while challenges persist throughout the OSCE area. We should address these challenges through systematic, coordinated and efficient strategies, policies and concrete measures at the state, regional and local levels with the involvement of NGOs and Roma and Sinti.

The full implementation of all OSCE commitments continues to be the EU's guiding principles. We take this opportunity to reiterate our calls for full implementation of all OSCE commitments regarding Roma and Sinti and our firm determination in this respect.

Thank you.

The Candidate Countries TURKEY, the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA country NORWAY, member of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA, and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.