

## HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

**Speech by Prefect Dr. Francescopaolo DI MENNA,  
Central Director for Civil Rights, Citizenship and Minorities  
Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration  
Ministry of the Interior**

**(Warsaw, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2009)**

Mister President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to address this Assembly to update you on the measures adopted by our country in order **to assist the integration process involving both Italian and foreign Roma communities.**

A number of initiatives launched by central and local government authorities are under way, partly financed by European funds.

I should like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to the issue of Sinti and Roma populations in a context of full respect for the rule of law and in fulfilling commitments made by our country to protect human rights.

On this special occasion, I also should like to stress the cooperative spirit of Italy that signed and supports the OSCE plan in favour of Roma and Sinti communities.

The OSCE and Italian authorities pursue common goals in this respect. We are also in favour of a European approach that, allowing better use of the instruments provided by the OSCE and other regional organisations in terms of financing and expertise, would enable us to set the basis for the solution of serious problems encountered by the communities without a territory, that in many cases go beyond national borders and are similar in many European countries.

The situation of Roma in Italy has been closely monitored at national level by the Interior Ministry in collaboration with the Prefectures since 2006 in order to identify any critical situation and to adopt the appropriate solution.

The most urgent priorities identified include **housing, employment education and vocational training**, as essential prerequisites for real integration into society.

One of the priorities set by the **Italian Government** is the adoption of urgent measures to find a solution to problems encountered by people living in environmentally and socially degraded situations, with a special attention to children. The aim is to find a lasting solution to the many problems affecting the Roma community and to promote decent living conditions as well as the full respect of legality.

**In fulfilling Government's previous commitments, an amount of 52 million Euros, forming part of a fund of 100 million Euros allocated to the Interior Ministry, was made available to finance projects developed by the Commissioners for Roma of Lombardy, Latium and Campania and including direct interventions, the elimination or upgrading of Roma settlements, social integration of the residing communities, especially of children; special attention is attached to projects aimed at social and work integration, children assistance and medical assistance.**

Within the framework of the initiatives taken to cope with the emergency situation, positive results have already been recorded, particularly those taken in close cooperation with the public institutions active at the local level, even by the involvement of the Roma communities that offered their own collaboration.

Furthermore, an ad hoc technical group composed of representatives of the Interior Ministry and of the 33 organisations co-ordinated by **Unicef**, was set up. Its purpose is to address the Roma issue with a view to developing an action plan based on three specific points contained in the abovementioned order: first aid assistance, social integration and children education programme.

**Now I should like to give you an outline of national and international projects launched by different ministries.**

1) Within the framework of the 2007-2013 EU funding scheme, the Ministry for Employment, in its capacity as Italian Managing Authority for the European Social Fund, set up a **National Network for Roma Inclusion** bringing together central government administrations, regions, the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI), the Italian Union of Provinces (UPI) and other voluntary associations representing Roma communities.

**The aim is to gather and compare data relating to Roma integration experiences made throughout the national territory and even in other European countries in order to harmonise actions and optimise the use of resources.**

**A number of national projects are financed by specific funds allocated to Ministries.**

2) **The Ministry of the Interior**- Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration has funded projects submitted by local authorities and non governmental organisations **with UNRRA funds** (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration). These projects are in favour of persons in a state of poverty and of the weakest social layers. Two projects specifically referred to Roma. The first one related to the "Setting up of two reception areas in favour of aliens without fixed abode and in a serious state of poverty" in Turin and in the Municipality of Reggio Emilia. The second project is called **Mosè** and it deals with the recovery and the inclusion of ROMA at risk of being marginalised in the city of Reggio Calabria

**Within the Central Directorate for Civil Rights, Citizenship and Minorities of the Interior Ministry where I am honoured to serve as Central Director, is developing five projects funded under the National Operational Programme, Convergence Objective for the period 2007-2013, Operational Objective 2.6 (Containing deviant manifestations).**

In particular, I should like to stress a pilot-project entitled “*Roma women as protagonists in a change for better social inclusion*”, aimed at facilitating women’s access to the National Healthcare System. This initiative stems from the consideration that Roma community members usually have recourse to medical care almost exclusively in extreme situations by an improper use of emergency rooms.

**3) The Ministry of Employment, Healthcare and Social Policies** financed the following initiatives:

**a)** an experimental programme jointly developed in collaboration with Lombardy, Piedmont, Tuscany and Apulia regions and funded **under the National Fund for social inclusion of migrants**. Funding amounts to 3,360,000 Euros. This programme consists of several initiatives aimed at providing Roma community members education and training and at favouring their employment. Cultural mediators from these communities will give their assistance and awareness-raising activities will be carried out at work sites by involving employers, employees and Roma associations.

**b)** 7 projects aimed at favouring **access to housing by Roma, Sinti and Travellers’ community members** were developed by the municipalities of Milan, Turin and Padua. Funding amounts to 2,25,000,Euro.

Under this funding programme a set of interventions were envisaged including measures to facilitate the organisation of **settlement and guidance-oriented courses intended for students** belonging to Roma, Sinti and Travellers’ communities living in the metropolitan areas of Rome, Bologna, Naples, Florence and Milan.

Initiatives promoted include assistance and reception activities. Participation of cultural mediators is also envisaged with a view to involving Roma parents and family members in both school and students’ guidance activities.

**c)** Under the **Migration policy fund** managed by this Ministry, some outline agreements were also signed between the above ministry and the municipalities of Naples, Reggio Calabria and Roma, aimed at carrying out activities for social inclusion of Roma community members, especially those of Romanian origin. Funding amounts to 2,400,000.00 Euros.

**4) Equal Opportunity Department** is currently engaged in carrying out a project whose funding amounts to 3 million Euros (under the Governance National Operational Programme, Priority Axis D, Specific Objective 4.2, Action 6), aimed at improving anti-ethnic and racial discrimination policies. **Its aim is to eliminate any discrimination and favouring an increased participation to economic and social development processes of Roma, Sinti and Travellers’ populations.**

**This project also include a survey to be carried out by different actors, i.e. associations and regions concerned. At an early stage the survey will identify the institutions, services and actions involved. The survey’s results will be presented during a workshop to be held in January 2010.**

**The National Office Against Racial Discrimination ( UNAR)** will improve ,very soon, in our country **The Dosta! Campaign**, supported by the European Council and by the European Commission under the third programme *Equal Rights and Treatment for Roma* with the general aim to fight against the most common stereotypes and prejudices towards Roma.

Mister President,

My report was intended to provide an outline of the major activities promoted by local and central authorities which are currently under way with a view to favouring the integration of Roma and Sinti communities.

It is the intention of the Italian Government to maintain a strong focus on any possible contribution which could help better pursue its goals.

However, Roma issues should be jointly addressed with origin countries of recent migration flows. To this end, relations between Italy and other Member States have been recently strengthened. An example, in particular, is given by bilateral cooperation: a series of meetings held with the Romanian authorities resulted, among others, in the setting up of a permanent group, at both national and local level, for cooperative activities and the exchange of information.

In our opinion, the challenge posed by European and Italian institutions is creating in each country the conditions for a full social inclusion of these people, by combining recognition of rights with respect for rules.

The OSCE can be an helpful mediator to promote a synergy between States enabling us to counter Roma exclusion.

This is a top priority for the Italian Government.

CENTRAL DIRECTOR FOR CIVIL RIGHTS, CITIZENSHIP AND MINORITIES  
(Prefect Francescopaolo DI MENNA)