



## **Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting**

# **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN ON IMPROVING THE SITUATION OF ROMA AND SINTI (dedicated to the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the adoption of the 2003 OSCE Action Plan)**

**7-8 November 2013  
Hofburg, Vienna**

## **ANNOTATED AGENDA**

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as early as 1990, recognized the specific human dimension challenges faced by Roma and Sinti communities throughout the OSCE region. Since then, Roma and Sinti issues have continued to be high on the OSCE agenda, as demonstrated by the adoption of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area in 2003 (Maastricht Ministerial Council Decision No. 9/03). This Action Plan is the most comprehensive policy document aimed at Roma and Sinti integration with its concrete recommendations in the area of combating racism and discrimination against them, improving access to education, employment, housing and health services, enhancing their public and political participation and addressing Roma and Sinti issues in crisis and post-crises situations.

The OSCE commitments relating to Roma and Sinti have been further reinforced with the MC Decision 6/08 in Helsinki in 2008 focusing particularly on enhancing equal access to education and promoting early education and with the MC Decision 8/09 in Athens in 2009 by urging participating States to address the rise of violent manifestations of intolerance against Roma and Sinti.

Both MC Decisions built on the findings of the ODIHR 2008 Status Report on the Implementation of the Roma and Sinti Action Plan, which assessed efforts by participating States to meet the OSCE commitments. This year ODIHR launches its second Status Report which highlights initiatives from the participating States and looks into progress and continuing challenges experienced in the last five years. The findings of this report demonstrate that integration strategies or sets of policy measures for Roma and Sinti inclusion have become a standard in many OSCE participating States; it also documents an increase of local level initiatives and of increased funding made available by national authorities governments and by the European Union for programmes aimed at Roma and Sinti integration. Moreover, the consolidation of an EU policy on Roma and Sinti with the adoption of the EU Framework Strategy for National Roma Integration Strategies in 2011 is visible progress in this area, as well as such initiatives in other OSCE countries

Despite these positive developments ODIHR identifies worrying trends in the area of discrimination and racism against Roma and Sinti, especially the rise in the level of anti-

Roma rhetoric from populist politicians and far-rights movements. In addition, no satisfactory results of Roma and Sinti access to the education, employment, housing and social services were achieved

Taking stock of ten years of implementation of the 2003 OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti and other relevant OSCE commitments and recognizing the existing regional initiatives such as, in particular, the Decade for Roma Inclusion and the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting seeks to review the lessons learned from realized policies and measures aiming at Roma and Sinti integration. Particular attention will be paid to progress made at the local level and to identify concrete recommendations for the way forward to address more efficiently existing gaps and persistent forms of racism and discrimination and to broaden good examples of successful integration to ensure visible progress in the years to come.

**Day 1**                      **7 November 2013**

**15:00 – 16:00**              **Opening Session**

**16:00 – 18:00**              **SESSION I: Status Report on the Implementation of the Roma and Sinti OSCE Action Plan: Key Findings and Lessons Learned**

ODIHR's second Status Report on the Implementation of the Roma and Sinti OSCE Action Plan is based on 41 responses to the questionnaire the Office sent to the participating States and additional information provided by international stakeholders and civil society. The information provided demonstrates that participating States have stepped up their initiatives and many have introduced new policy measures to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti. Furthermore, new institutions and financial instruments were established to address key areas for Roma and Sinti integration such as in the area of education, employment, housing, health and other public services.

Although big differences are observed from country to country when it comes to the key objectives to be achieved for Roma and Sinti integration, in general more and better funded examples of local level policy measures targeting Roma and Sinti can be found than in the previous review in 2008. Despite this progress, concern remains with regard to the resistance of some local level authorities to implement policies assisting Roma and Sinti communities due to lack of interest or active opposition from the mainstream.

The increase of funding for the implementation of Roma and Sinti strategies and action plans, including the EU funding, for its Member States or countries aspiring to the EU accession, is a positive development. However, increased funding does not necessarily bring better results if the lack of monitoring mechanisms or of data on Roma and Sinti do not allow for tracking the benefit for Roma and Sinti on the ground. In fact, governments often do monitor the spending or the number of beneficiaries of their programmes, but the evaluation of longer term outcomes and impact on the situation of Roma and Sinti is missing.

More needs to be done to ensure good and disaggregated data on Roma and Sinti to measure progress and evaluate the results of programmes implemented. In addition, there is a need for independent evaluation of the achieved long term outcomes to induce a change at local level.

This session will explore which efforts are needed by the OSCE participating States to overcome the existing challenges and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of implementation of their strategies or action plans targeting Roma and Sinti and how to overcome obstacles at local level in implementing policies assisting Roma and Sinti.

***Questions for discussion include:***

- How can the implementation of strategies and action plans aimed at Roma and Sinti integration be enhanced at national and local levels?
- How to efficiently use available resources to ensure tangible outcomes? Which areas should be prioritized to invest more funding in order to yield higher returns?
- How and in which areas do participating States prioritize their action and investment towards Roma and Sinti integration?
- How to increase political will among local authorities to enhance Roma and Sinti integration?
- How to ensure that policy measures by participating States render the best return of invested financial resources?
- What national monitoring mechanisms exist or shall be put in place to track the results of financial and other resources invested to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti and how can the national monitoring of the longer term outcomes of policy programmes be enhanced?
- What are the good practices to establish data on the situation of Roma and Sinti and how to improve data collection on Roma and Sinti?

**Day 2**

**8 November 2013**

**10:00 – 12:00**

**SESSION II: Ten years of Implementing the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti: Key Trends, Developments and Challenges**

Despite efforts by the OSCE participating States to comply with their OSCE commitments and improve the situation of the Roma and Sinti, throughout the OSCE region challenges remain in improving access to education, employment, housing and health services, enhancing their public and political participation and addressing Roma and Sinti in crisis and post-crisis situations. ODIHR assessed in its new Status Report that only little progress has been achieved to combat persistent forms of racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti; resolve existing challenges such as segregation in education; reduce high level of unemployment; improve housing and living conditions or decrease the number of segregated ghettos. Of particular concern is the little progress observed in enhancing access to quality education and the low achievements in implementing desegregation policies in education. In this regard urgent action is needed to ensure that Roma and Sinti children have access to quality education in order to enhance their equal opportunities in societies. Overall, Roma and Sinti still belong to one of the most marginalised populations in the OSCE area.

The last five years have seen new disturbing challenges. Against the background of the global economic downturn there has been an increase of anti-Roma rhetoric by politicians and extremists, violent manifestations against Roma and Sinti, inter alia marching with discriminatory slogans targeting their Roma neighbours and the scapegoating of Roma migrants. In response to increased Roma migration, Roma migrants became labelled as

“beggars” or “criminals” and a threat to internal security. These trends have serious negative implications for the Roma and Sinti as well as for social cohesion of societies and they can lead to inter-ethnic tensions. These trends also induce a feeling of insecurity on the part of members of Roma and Sinti communities.

This session will address concrete ways to ensure the efficient implementation of programmes providing access to quality education for Roma and Sinti children and to halt segregation in education. In addition, the session will explore how to speed up efforts to enhance sustainable integration of Roma and Sinti in the economic and social life in order to halt their marginalization. The session will also focus on the possibility to increase and motivate Roma and Sinti’s active participation to enhance their social inclusion. Finally, the session will explore ways to combat anti-Roma rhetoric, racist violence and how to address mass protests or marches aiming to intimidate Roma and Sinti communities.

***Questions for discussion include:***

- Which measures should be undertaken by participating States to effectively initiate desegregation policies in the areas of education?
- How to ensure better results in integrating Roma and Sinti children into quality education?
- What are effective measures and policies to desegregate Roma and Sinti in the area of housing?
- How can participating States enhance their efforts to implement OSCE commitments towards social cohesion and security of minorities?
- How can participating States enhance their efforts to increase and motivate the active participation of Roma and Sinti for their social inclusion?
- How can participating States enhance the implementation of OSCE commitments in the area of combating hate crimes, racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti and in promoting tolerance with regard to Roma populations?
- What effective policies and good practices exist to address challenges stemming from the current anti-Roma rhetoric and marches from far right and extremists movements? How can the promotion of tolerance from national and local level politicians be enhanced?
- What are the available legal means to address violence, hate crime and racists acts targeting Roma and Sinti and how to make use of them to ensure safety and security for the Roma and Sinti community?

**12:00 – 14:00            Lunch break**

**14:00 – 16:00            SESSION III: Integration of Roma and Sinti with a particular focus on women, youth and children: best practices and ways forward**

The OSCE Roma and Sinti Action Plan (Chapter II) recommends active participation of Roma and Sinti as a guiding principle for all decisions that affect their lives and particularly with regard to the design, implementation and evaluation of strategies and action plans. Roma and Sinti should be real and equal partners and share the responsibility for the betterment of their welfare. The Action Plan further recommends the equal participation of Roma and Sinti women in decision-making and policy processes regarding their communities. It also recommends systematic mainstreaming of Roma women’s issues in all relevant policies.

As other international and European stakeholders, the OSCE recognizes that Roma and Sinti women face multiple forms of discrimination in all areas of life based on their gender and ethnicity. In 2011, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly adopted the *Resolution on Promoting Policies on Equality between Women and Men of the Roma Population* addressing the particular vulnerable situation and gender-based discrimination of Roma women with concrete recommendations in the area of education, employment and their active public and political participation.

Taking into account the necessity to provide for equal access to health services, education, housing, employment of Roma and Sinti population, the session will focus on the best practices and effective mechanisms of Roma and Sinti integration, their active public and political participation.

Despite the existing policy recommendations, equal opportunities for Roma and Sinti women and girls continue to be limited and in many cases the introduced policy measures addressing gender equality remain symbolic. The session will therefore explore ways to enhance Roma and Sinti women's active public and political participation in all policies targeting their population. In addition, the session will address the mainstreaming of Roma women's issues in all relevant policies in order to overcome the multiple forms of discrimination faced by Roma and Sinti women.

The OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti further identifies education as a key for the participation of Roma and Sinti on equal footing with others in the political, social and economic life of societies. Recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness and quality of education for Roma and Sinti children have been further strengthened with the MC Decision 6/08 promoting access to equal and quality education and to early education for Roma and Sinti children.

Although a number of participating States have initiated programmes targeting Roma and Sinti education, overall, visible progress is still outstanding. Many Roma and Sinti children continue to receive poor education if at all or face segregation in school. In addition, there is still a high school dropout rate among Roma and Sinti children and particularly among Romani girls. This also impacts the integration of Roma and Sinti in tertiary education.

Promoting active participation of Roma and Sinti women, children and youth through education is the key to reach progress in breaking out from the vicious circle of social exclusion and discrimination. Both, Roma and Sinti women and youth are important agents of change for their communities and for the future inclusion of their communities.

This session will provide the opportunity to present good practices to enhance the integration policies, equal access to employment, education at all levels, including access to early, primary and secondary education and to promote Roma and Sinti students at universities. In addition, the session will provide an opportunity to look at successful initiatives to engage Roma and Sinti women and youth in grass-root activities and promote positive role models to build on a better future for their communities.

***Questions for discussion include:***

- What good practices exist to enhance active participation of Roma and Sinti population, in particular women, in decision-making, design, implementation and evaluation of policies addressing Roma and Sinti integration?

- How can full active and equal participation of Roma and Sinti women in public and political life be enhanced?
- What is the role of Roma and Sinti youth in the design, implementation and evaluation of Roma and Sinti related policies and decisions of their concern?
- What good practices exist to enhance equal access of Roma and Sinti to education at all levels, including early education, primary and secondary education? And what good practices exist to combat discrimination against Roma and Sinti children in education?
- What good practices exist or how do participating States enhance access to all levels of education of Roma and Sinti girls?
- What are successful measures to increase the motivation of Roma and Sinti to get higher education?
- How can national and local level authorities support Roma and Sinti women and youth to strengthen their role in improving the life of their communities?
- How can the role of media be strengthened in shaping the favourable public opinion on Roma and Sinti issues?

**16:00 – 16:30**

**Break**

**16:30 – 17:30**

**Closing Session**

Reports by the Moderators of the Working Sessions

**17:30**

**Closing of the meeting**