

*SE of the ODIHR-CPRSI*

Monday 2 October 2006, Meeting Room 3, 13.00 -15.00

No. of Participants: 25

Title: ***Building Coalitions among Roma Representatives to Formalize Informal Settlements.***

Convenor: Council of Europe, ODIHR CPRSI, UN Habitat Warsaw Office, UNDP  
Bratislava

Within the framework of the OSCE Roma and Sinti AP (resp. Chap IV, Art. 43-47) the SE addressed the housing and living conditions of Roma and Sinti with practical field examples. UN Habitat presented its mandate to resolve slum dwellings. The improvement of housing conditions means improvement of living conditions and thus quality of life. The UN Habitat Warsaw office identifies the improvement of Roma housing as a key issue within the region and addressed the lack of precise data and concerns about adequate policies with regard to Roma housing. All panelists stressed that the issue is linked to poverty and not exclusively to Roma. The experts presented conclusions from their practical field work and the development of best practice models in Serbia and Romania. The situation of Roma housing is diverse and demands corresponding strategies. The need for a top-down approach taking governments into their responsibility and implement tailor made strategies on local level including the allocation of a transparent budget was strongly emphasized.

The SE was accompanied by the photo exhibition “UNSETTLED SPACES – VULNERABLE PEOPLE” illustrating the housing situation as well as the development of housing projects for Roma in **Romania, Kosovo and BiH (?)**.

Recommendations (mainly for participating states):

- IOs and in particular national governments shall move from pilot projects to a comprehensive, administrative approach on local level to effectively address the Roma housing issue.
- National governments should take the main responsibility in resolving the housing issue
- National governments should undertake a top-down approach to complement the bottom-up approach.
- National governments should allocate a budget for the improvement of informal settlement in a transparent manner

*SE of the ODIHR-CPRSI*

***Wednesday, 4 October***

Plenary Hall, 13.00 – 15.00

**Title: The gender Dimension of the Roma and Sinti affairs, including the situation of Roma Women as Refugees.**

Convenor: ODIHR CPRSI, OSI, OSI Roma Participation Program, OSI Joint Roma Women's Initiative, Romani Criss

Number of Participants: 34

Speakers: Nicoleta Bitu (Moderator), Vera Kurtic, Madalina Kostace, Enisa Eminova, Florin Cioaba

The speakers (Roma activists) addressed the multiple discrimination Roma women refugees and IDPs from the Balkan region are facing. Further, sensitive gender issues (early arranged marriage and the virginity cult) were discussed with practical examples drawn from field research and personal experience. Referring to these practical examples the SE addressed the complexity of gender issues and their different meanings for Roma men and women when speaking about culture/group identity.

*Thursday, 5 October*

Plenary Hall, 13.00-15.00

Title: **Prospects and policies for Roma Ashkali and Egyptians (RAE) in the framework of the Kosovo political status**

Convenor: Kosovo Roma and Ashkali Forum, KRAF, ODHR CPRSI

Number of Participants: 32

Speakers: Nicolae Gheorghe (Moderator)

Ljuan Koka (Head of the Roma National Strategy Secretariat of the Agency for HR and Minority Rights in Serbia)

Bashkim Ibishi (UNMiK) Kosovo Roma and Ashkali Forum

Asmet Elezovski (RNC, FYR of Macedonia)

Spresha Agushi (KRAF, Kosovo)

Dzavit Berisha (ERRC, Kosovo refugee)

Florin Cioaba (ERTF)

The SE addressed the plight of Roma, Ashkalie and Egyptians in and from Kosovo in particular in relation to the current negotiation talks of the future status of Kosovo. The Kosovo Roma Ashkali Forum representatives presented their position paper in which they demand an inclusion of the non-Serbian minorities into the negotiation process. They recommended to include the issue of voluntary/involuntary return of RAE refugees from Kosovo into the negotiation talks and addressed the international community to take responsibility in this issue. Many refugees are homeless after being returned to Kosovo. A new OSI report on Romani Women's Employment in Kosovo was presented and multiple forms of discrimination Roma women are facing addressed. Roma women demand involvement into the implementation of project/policies aiming to improve the situation of women in Kosovo. One participant informed that it is expected that many Roma will leave Kosovo in case of independency. The ERTF informed about its commitment to support the RAE in and from Kosovo. Some participants expressed criticism about the small number of delegations present and the need to discuss these issues together with the concerned governments and the EU.

**Recommendations:**

- To the international community and the PiSG to include RAE representatives in the negotiation process on the future status of Kosovo
- To the OSCE to ensure that the interest of minorities is taken into account in the future status of Kosovo.
- To the international community to involve Roma women in project/policy implementation aiming to improve the situation of women in Kosovo

*CPRSI-SE*

***Friday, 6 October***

Meeting Room 2, 13.00-15.00

**Title: Bringing Social Partners Together in Facilitating Roma Integration into the Labour Market.**

Convenor: ODIHR-CPRSI, Office of the Co-ordinator of the Economic and Environmental Activities, Roma Education Fund.

Number of Participants: 25

Speakers: Helen Fink (OCEEA), Moderator; Jennifer Tanaka (PAKIV Fund); Alberto Canovas (Operations Manager, Youth Career Initiative – International Business Leader Forum, IBLF); Rumyan Russinov (Roma Education Fund/Decade of Roma Inclusion) Katarzyna Gontarczyk (Public Relation Director for Poland Starwood Hotel & Resorts Worldwide); Teodorov (Roma Activist from Bulgaria); Elena Dobra (Agencia Impreuna)

The panelists of the SE presented best practice models to integrate Roma or socially disadvantaged groups into society. The OCEEA introduced its projects on business trainings for small entrepreneurs in Albania and Serbia. The PAKIV Fund presented its projects focusing on co-operation between social partners (local NGOs, employment services, educational institutions, ministries). In Slovakia such a partnership had the positive result that a clothing firm regularly hires Roma (25% of their employees are Roma). The training program for disadvantaged groups for hotel services presented by the Youth Career Initiative illustrated the high potential co-operation with the private sector can provide. The Roma Education Fund created a partnership with eight Hungarian companies. The Roma candidates will be offered a scholarship/training for their future positions (funded by the Roma Education Fund) in these companies. The Romanian NGO Impreuna presented its experience with two projects supporting Roma women to find a job. The Bulgarian Roma activist highlighted the strong discrimination against Roma in the labour market. The discussion addressed the problems of persons working in the informal sector. The need for actions for begging street children was highlighted. Criticism was expressed against the lack of OSCE projects targeting the Roma integration into the labor market in Kosovo and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

**Recommendations:**

- To ODIHR to co-operate with the OSCE field missions on the implementation of the OSCE Roma and Sinti AP to integrate Roma into the labor market
- To ODIHR to raise awareness of the OSCE Roma and Sinti AP among the OSCE field missions and the OSCE staff
- To ODIHR and national governments to interlink Chap. IV (Addressing socio-economic issues) with Chap. VII. (Roma and Sinti in crises and post-crises situations) of the OSCE Roma and Sinti AP.
- To ODIHR and national governments to ensure that Chap. IV (Addressing socio-economic issues) with Chap. VII. (Roma and Sinti in crises and post-crises

situations) of the OSCE Roma and Sinti AP are incorporated into the national strategies for Roma.

- To governments to report regularly on progress of the implementation of the relevant articles outlined in the OSCE Roma and Sinti Action Plan.

*CPRSI SE*

**Monday, 9 October**

Plenary Hall, 13.00 – 15.00; Number of Participants: 26

Title: **Methodology for review and assessment of the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti in relation with the Governmental Programs for Roma and Sinti: lessons learned in reviewing the implementation of the Polish Governmental Program for Roma and Romanian Strategy for Improving the Situation of Roma.**

Convenor: Ministry of Interior and Administration of Poland; Permanent Delegation of Romania to the OSCE; ODIHR CPRSI

Speakers: Ms. Agnieszka Dajewska (Department of Denominations of National Minorities, Poland); Ms. Carmen Podgoran (Permanent Delegation of Romania to the OSCE); Ms. Claudia Grosu (National Agency for Roma, Romania); Ms. Malgorzicka (Ministry of Interior, Poland); Mr. Nicolae Gheorghe (ODIHR CPRSI)

The SE addressed the mechanism and challenges to implement the OSCE Roma and Sinti AP with the presentation of concrete experiences from Romania and Poland. In both countries the governments developed national action plans to improve the situation of Roma. They set up institutional structures for the administration and coordination of their national strategies. Representatives of both countries emphasized the importance to raise awareness at the local level about the OSCE Roma and Sinti AP as well as the need to allocate a budget for the concrete implementation. The need to control the expenditure of money on the local level was addressed. Anti-Roma biases at the local level was identified as an obstacle in the implementation process. All participants strongly recommended the need for concrete benchmarks within all strategies. Roma representatives criticized the lack of concrete benchmarks, the lack of specialized bodies, the lack of a transparent budget, the lack of Roma participation as well as the bad Roma representation at all levels and in particular within international organizations (Roma employees), the understaffing of the ODIHR-CPRSI. International organizations were addressed with the recommendation to better co-ordinate their Roma policies and to establish a set of indicators which shall be applied by international organizations throughout their Roma related work.

Recommendations:

- To include concrete benchmarks (clear measures, time-frame, budget) into the OSCE Roma and Sinti AP as well as into national strategies to improve the situation of Roma
- To IOs and national governments to include Romani expertise in all Roma policy related bodies.
- To IOs and national governments to ensure Roma participation in all Roma related policies/programs/projects
- To IOs to establish a set of indicators to be applied by all IOs throughout their Roma related work
- To IOs and governments to undertake long term planning with regard to human resources and build on the capacity of Roma (employ Roma)

- To IOs and national governments to staff Roma related bodies with the adequate number of employees to ensure that these bodies can fulfill their mandate properly.

**Tuesday, 10 October**

SE CPRSI

Meeting Room 2, 18.00 -20.00

Number of Participants: 35

Title: **Police and Roma: towards safety for multiethnic communities**

Convenor: ODIHR CPRSI

Speakers: Mr. Maximillian Nicolae (Commissioner, the Romanian Institute for Crime Research and Prevention); Nicolae Gheorghe (CPRSI), Moderator

The Romanian Institute for Crime Research and Prevention presented its project to improve the relationship between police and Roma in Romania. The project addresses the need to build on trust and confidence within multiethnic societies as well as train and improve the understanding of the police corps for vulnerable minority communities. The project started with a self-assessment of the police looking into the Romanian legislation and their compliance with international HR standards, investigating the internal police regulations and addressing the human resource policy within the police. In addition the civil society and police officers in the field could participate through a questionnaire in an evaluation of the relation between police and Roma. Based on this assessment recommendations for the police are developed. One effective result is the establishment of a permanent advisory committee (which may be attended by members of the civil society) at the highest police level coordinated by the chief of the police. The need to empower members of ethnic communities to become police officers was highlighted. The SE addressed the massive discrimination and cases of police brutality against Roma, stressed the need to combat the biased portrayal of Roma in the media as well as to abolish statistics indicating the ethnic background of criminal offenders.

Recommendations:

- To ODIHR to interlink the CPRSI projects on police and Roma with the anti-hate crime program of the ODIHR tolerance and non-discrimination unit
- To national governments to replicate best practice models building on the improvement of the relationship between police and vulnerable communities
- To national governments to abolish ethnic statistics on criminal offences