

2008 HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

Speech by Prefect Perla Stancari
Central Director for Civil Rights, Citizenship and Minorities
Department for Civil Liberties and Immigration
Ministry of the Interior

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Present in Italy since the 15th century, part of the Roma population is integrated in the social context, some of their members live in their own houses or in houses provided by the Municipalities and they are included in the labour market.

However, apart from these, a considerable number of Roma persons live in a seriously degraded environment, often in unauthorised camps.

On more than one occasion the **International Organisations** active in the area of human rights protection have urged Italy to make their living conditions more dignified and to fill the enormous gap existing with the surrounding population, which gives rise to mutual distrust possibly resulting in cases of intolerance and emargination.

Therefore, the **aim** of the Government's action is the re-establishment of viable living conditions in a situation of legality, meant as respect of the fundamental rights of all individuals and particularly of the socially weakest.

However to achieve this objective efforts must be made in various directions:

- 1) knowing the real size of these settlements;
- 2) favouring their social inclusion.

This means:

- a) providing dignified housing;
- b) protecting children living in the settlements and improve their school attendance;
- c) giving job opportunities to women as well.

The first phase of this process began with a census in the large metropolitan areas of Rome, Milan and Naples carried out with the active participation of the Italian Red Cross to know the exact location of camps, both authorised and unauthorised, and the number of persons that live in the camps, regardless of their nationality or ethnic origin.

As a matter of fact, in the course of time persons belonging to other ethnic groups have settled in the camps, alongside Roma who are Italian citizens, Community citizens and third-Country citizens.

As regards the methodologies that were used, the European Commission has already taken its stand, by declaring that the Government's activity complies with the provisions of the European Union, after its objectives and implementation conditions were clarified through the issuing of the relevant guidelines in July.

The census will be concluded on the 15th October, meanwhile action is already under way in the area of social inclusion together with local authorities, schools and other actors including associations and volunteers' organisations.

Operations to ensure the safety of decaying areas and buildings are under way, social and health service provision in favour of camp residents is being restored, integrated projects for school attendance in favour of minors are being initiated as are projects for placement in employment including for women.

In particular, in the hinterland of Naples the criterion of subdividing large settlements into smaller camps is being followed. To this end an intervention plan is being carried out, in agreement with local authorities, which relies on two main criteria: creating small settlements, in the form of villages and giving preference to self-building, as the final objective is overcoming the logic of camps

However a priority in the construction of their own future is the school attendance of children, involving the parents

Activities are under way as regards a comprehensive plan, adopted by Parliament on the 30th July, that take into account the transfer to schools, special teaching support, vaccinations, medical examinations, afterschool activities and all other possible forms of humanitarian assistance and at the same time training for teachers must also be envisaged. To achieve these objectives, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Education and UNICEF have concluded a Convention.

Furthermore, thanks to the census and the related checks of documents, it emerged that a number of individuals were not aware that they were entitled to stay regularly in Italy or that they even possessed the necessary requirements to acquire our citizenship.

In the other Italian regions as well, **best practices** were developed to attain a higher level of inclusion of Roma in the social context.

The positive solutions adopted in Bologna and Pisa have already been highlighted in the **2008 Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan** on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area; also in Padua projects centred on self building are under way, making use of ground and materials provided by the Municipality. In Voghera a camp was organised where Roma and Sinti live; they are perfectly integrated with the surrounding community and they enjoy all services available in the rest of the Municipality.

UNAR, the Office for Equality of Treatment and Elimination of Discriminations Based on Race and Ethnic Origin has actively cooperated even by financing specific projects.

However, for a **lasting** social inclusion to be achieved a higher level of participation on the part of Roma themselves is also necessary- they must be the protagonists of this course and not the passive recipients of welfare interventions.

It is necessary that they commit themselves personally.

Therefore, they will be the co-protagonists in the projects that are about to be financed by the Ministry of the Interior through European Funds, including projects for placement in employment in sectors where they can develop their potentials, also of a creative nature.

Recently, relations with other Member States of the European Union have intensified to create common synergies. As a matter of fact, the issue of Roma involves Europe as a whole and it must be addressed with an exchange of information and cooperation with the origin Countries of the recent flows of immigrants, even by ensuring technical assistance and best practices.

During the first **Italian-Romanian Intergovernmental Summit**, to be held in Rome on the 9th of October, co-operation between the two Governments in this area will be a focus.