

**Statement of the Czech Republic**

**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

**Working Session 16: Humanitarian Issues and other commitments II**

**October 3, 2013**

The Czech Republic aligns herself with the EU statement. Furthermore, I would like to make some remarks in my national capacity.

The Government of the Czech Republic supports the enjoyment of all individual rights by Roma in full and without any restrictions. Comprehensive measures to improve the situation of Roma in areas, such as education, employment, housing and healthcare, are included in the Government's "Concept of Roma Integration" and the "Strategy to Combat Social Exclusion". The Czech Republic is a member of the international initiative "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015", which is reflected in its National Decade Action Plan.

As Roma integration is a joint responsibility of the Government, regions as well as municipalities, various bodies have been involved in order to facilitate better understanding among all relevant stakeholders. The Committee for cooperation with municipalities was set up under the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs, whereas regional Roma coordinators as well as Roma municipality counsellors are members of this committee.

The synergic action of the Government and other bodies can be best illustrated on the reaction on recent anti-Roma sentiments in the Czech Republic. Concrete and effective steps have been undertaken to address this issue, including strengthening of police forces or inspection visits of the Ministry of Interior and the Police to the respective localities (České Budějovice and Duchcov). In addition, several crime prevention assistants from the Roma community have been involved into municipal police forces. We would like to underline that during the demonstrations, the Police of the Czech Republic professionally protected lives of Roma living in the respective localities.

Apart from the operational measures reacting on the recent situation, the Czech Government has been working on long-term measures aimed at prevention. In this respect, it has prepared a special nationwide campaign against racism and hate-crime, which is targeted especially at young people.

The Czech Republic is firmly committed to improving equal access to education. In order to fulfil this task, a number of measures have been adopted, aiming at the best interest of the child and its right to quality education.

In recent years, the Czech Republic has applied a whole scale of measures to decrease the number of Roma children in so-called practical schools. Despite all previous efforts of the Government, Roma children are still over-represented in certain segments of the Czech education system, namely in educational programmes adapted for pupils with mild mental disabilities. The Czech School Inspection's report from June 2012 shows a slight improvement. The number of Roma children in these schools has decreased by 8.6 % in comparison with the school year 2009/2010. The Czech Republic is taking measures to further improve the educational chances of Roma children.

During the last and this year, the Ministry of Education has continued the execution of the ECHR Judgment in case D.H. and others against the Czech Republic. In this respect, the Consolidated Plan of Action "Equal Opportunities" has been recently elaborated, of which aim is to address the perceived lack of progress in the execution of the judgement.

Following the reports showing continuing disproportionate attendance of Roma children in schools with different curricula, the Czech Republic started special collection of data on ethnicity of children in practical school programs to serve as indicators for the execution of the ECHR Judgment. Furthermore, the option for a practical school to integrate 25 % pupils without mild mental disability will be abolished, which should have an immediate effect on the number of Roma children in practical schools. Additionally, methodology and tests used to diagnose and place children into appropriate educational programs are being revised, and non-discriminatory tests will be presented, among other measures.

In conclusion, we would like to underline that any change in the education system, due to its nature, cannot manifest itself faster than in an annual cycle corresponding to the school year. The full implementation of the comprehensive and fundamental changes of the system needs time, especially if such changes have impact on all persons involved in the educational system, from teachers to pupils and their parents, who need to adapt to them. It will therefore take some time until the results become more evident. We believe, however, that the steps which we are taking will be considered as steps in the right direction.

We are ready to report on further steps of the Czech Government in this area during the planned November Supplementary Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Vienna which will focus on the implementation of the 2003 OSCE Action Plan on Improving the situation of Roma and Sinti.

Thank you.