

HDIM 2015

Thursday, October 1: Working Session 16: Tolerance and non-discrimination I

Statement by Ermira Kamberi, ERCOMER/Utrecht University

Ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Ermira Kamberi and I am a Roma researcher from Macedonia currently residing in the Netherlands. I would like to use this opportunity to talk about a few issues that are currently taking place in Macedonia. One is the recent report by the World Bank (WB) for the Western Balkans regarding the steady outflow of close to 500,000 people who have emigrated from Macedonia in the period from the 1990s to 2010 from all ethnic groups, including Roma, and including myself. To quote the WB report, “the majority of these migrants are young, of working age, and generally with higher educational attainment than the respective age group in their home countries.” I am curious to know if the government is concerned with the fact that a powerhouse of skills and capacities continues to leave the country? And if the answer is yes, do they plan to provide a solution for this and attract these migrants back to the country to use their skills and capacities without coercing them into becoming party supporters and party members as a way to a job? Roma and non-Roma alike.

Next, I would like to express my concern, for the opening of a secondary school in the most densely populated Roma municipality in Macedonia which is not only against the values the government put forward with the Strategy for Integrated Education which was adopted in 2008 on the recommendation of the OSCE but also it leads to further segregation of young Roma from the young non-Roma. In the most recent research that I conducted among secondary school students in Macedonia it is clear that contact with Roma is essential for reducing social distance and negative stereotypes towards Roma among the non-Roma. This, in turn, leads to more endorsement of Roma empowerment (empowerment in the sense of increased social and political participation of Roma in the society). Therefore, a secondary school attended by majority Roma students in a municipality with a majority Roma population will deprive these students from contact with peers from other ethnicities and thus, increase the social distance and negative stereotypes about the Roma among the non-Roma. I would like to know how the government would justify this step and does this mean that the enforcement of the Strategy for Integrated Education is no longer on the agenda of the current government? Just a small reminder most of the issues that are taking place in Macedonia revolve around two ethnicities, those are the Macedonians and the Albanians and the Roma always come third. My recommendation is for this Strategy for Integrated Education to be fully adopted and fully implemented because the Roma are the ones that would benefit from it the most.

Thank you.