

Romani Rose
Statement by the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma
For the
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Working Session 7

The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma is extremely concerned about the spread of far-right and racist policies which are aimed decidedly against the Sinti and Roma minorities in Europe. Primarily there are political parties and organizations - such as "Jobbik" in Hungary, the "NPD" in Germany, "Ataka" in Bulgaria, or the "Slovak National Party" - seeking to win votes with racial incitement against Roma. Even increasingly alarming it becomes, when government representatives – as recently in France and Bulgaria – adopt such reasoning patterns making them acceptable in the mainstream of society. This poses the risk of extremist violence in itself, as the example of Hungary last year proved sufficient evidence. In the context of "Jobbik's" nationalist and racist agitation a murder series took place which caused the death of eleven Roma people.

Because of their history, Sinti and Roma do have a particular sensitivity to racist ideologies. Therefore the warnings of the organisations of Sinti and Roma in the OSCE member states must be taken seriously.

The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma therefore urges that the protection against discrimination, as it is shown in the Equal Treatment Directive of the European Union, should be extended specifically to the actions of state institutions. The current EU directives against racism and discrimination (2000/43 and 2000/78) applies only to private law transactions and employment law. In order to guarantee effective protection and, where appropriate, enforceable injunctive relief (and compensation) against (sovereign) action of authorities and governmental institutions, an extension of the existing Directives is required. Appropriately modified Directives would require states to create binding legal regulations, protecting the victims against any kind of discriminatory or racist practices of the state – including the protection against discriminatory statements by governmental institutions, the police and other agencies as well as following media coverage. Such a general prohibition of discrimination does not yet exist. The Council of Europe's Convention on Human Rights provides only limited protection for certain rights, which do not apply in all OSCE States. We believe that general protection against discrimination is required in all OSCE States.

A critical point of this conference is the implementation of strategies and action plans to improve the situation of Sinti and Roma in Europe. We know reports from many countries criticizing that only a very small part of the funds reaches the local Roma communities. Our confidence in the interest of the OSCE Member States is low when it comes to the concrete implementation of strategies and action plans. Now, for example, the European Union reviews why only a third of the available resources of the European Social Fund to improve the situation of Roma were ever retrieved.

The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma is of the opinion that - based on a general prohibition of discrimination – Roma-programmes need to be mainstreamed. Regional development plans are needed in which Roma have to be an integral part. Above all, structures must be developed to ensure it that the resources actually reach the local level. This is a challenge for the Roma organisations in their various home countries, too. They have to take an leading role in the implementation and they have to empower the Roma communities to actively participate. At the same time, these programmes need to be long-term to show sustainable success.