

JOINT CONFERENCE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES/ACTION  
PLANS FOR ROMA, SINTI AND TRAVELLERS, AND MEASURES AGAINST  
THE ANTI-GYPSYISM PHENOMENON IN EUROPE

WARSAW, POLAND 20 -21 OCTOBER 2005

**CONFERENCE REPORT**

**This report was compiled and edited by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. The opinions and information it contains do not necessarily reflect the policy and position of the ODIHR.**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Ministry of the Interior and the Administration of the Republic of Poland  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, OSCE Chairman-in-Office  
Council of Europe  
European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)

The OSCE ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues appreciates the support given by your respective Ministries and Organizations and looks forward to further cooperation in the future.

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## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The varied and substantial list of participants from many OSCE member States at this conference is testimony to all the hard work of organizing such an initiative. The challenges faced by many Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities in the OSCE region is of growing concern for many governments with large Roma, Sinti and Traveller populations. Recognizing the need to address these challenges and uphold the commitments outlined in the Copenhagen Document of the Human Dimension has become a priority for both governments and those working closely to empower Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities.

Emphasis has been placed on the working groups of this conference to discuss methods of establishing concrete measures for participating States to implement commitments of inter-governmental organizations, including: the Action Plan for Improvement of the Situation of the Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, the Council of Europe's relevant recommendations on Roma and Travellers, European Union standards, as well as the participating States' own applicable national strategies and action plans. Included in these initiatives are those undertaken in connection with the regional initiative for the "Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005-2015." The conference also focused on the phenomenon of anti-Gypsyism in Europe and how participating States, NGOs and the international community can best provide remedies against racism and intolerance faced by Roma, Sinti and Travellers.

Both the timing and contents of the conference coincides with critical issues for Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities across the OSCE region. As the conference made clear these issues include measures to address the following: the situation of Roma minorities, refugees, IDPs and returnees from Kosovo; access to quality education for Roma; and the pan-national sharing of best practices of Roma policy implementation at the local level. At the root of these issues are the explicit rejection of racial and ethnic hatred which fuels anti-gypsyism and leads to discrimination and persecution of Roma, Sinti and Travellers across the OSCE space. A valuable contribution has been made at this conference that pushes forward the notion of translating words into action by policymakers. It was noted that for this to happen words must be backed up with funding.

The targeting of programmes and projects that aim to mainstream Roma, Sinti and Travellers was recommended by all conference contributors. However, it was cautioned to monitor those programmes of targeted action which may contribute to renewed acts of hostilities towards Roma, Sinti and Travellers. It is through a collective exchange of lessons learned, both positive and negative, that further action can be made more constructive.

The co-operation among OSCE Participating States gives credibility and attention to these pressing issues and offers a constructive framework for moving forward on more effective recommendations for actions for Roma, Sinti and Travellers. This conference has further enhanced the dialogue begun at the last Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (September 2005) on effectively achieving policy aims and objectives at the local, regional, national and international level.

As a follow-up to this conference, another joint initiative has been put forth that would bring the relevant actors from both the national and international level together

again with the aim of developing a set of commonly agreed criteria for benchmarking the progress made in implementing Roma, Sinti and Traveller related policies. Only through an integrated approach, across borders and regions, can solutions emerge that contribute to combating the racism and intolerance Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities face on a daily basis.

## 2. AGENDA

### DAY ONE

#### Morning session

9.30-10.15      **Opening and introductory remarks**

*Chair: Mr. Toralv Nordbo, First Deputy Director OSCE ODIHR*

**Opening remarks by:**

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland - Mr. Jan Truszczyński, Secretary of State;
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, OSCE Chair-in-Office (CiO) – Ambassador Boris Frlec, Head of the OSCE Task Force;
- Council of Europe – Mr. Henry Scicluna, Coordinator of the Secretary General on issues related to Roma and Travellers;
- European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) – Mrs. Beate Winkler, Director.

10.15-13.00      **First Plenary Session**

*Chair: Mrs. Vera Klopčič, Senior Researcher, Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, Slovenia*

Topic: Concrete implementation practices at national and/or local levels responding to requirements of the OSCE Action Plan for the Improvement of the Situation of the Roma and Sinti (in particular Chapter III) and of relevant legal instruments and recommendations of the Council of Europe, the European Union and other international organizations/institutions.

10.30-12.00 **Presentations** (maximum 10 minutes each) by States' delegations that should elaborate on one or several of the following items, referring also to concrete good practices:

- a) Partnership between local authorities and Roma  
*(existing practice: Mr. Robin Oakley, consultant for European Dialogue, UK, on the experience of RrAJE Programme in several municipalities, including Pardubice);*
- b) Partnership between local authorities and Roma: ensuring effective and multiple partnership /avoiding conflict situations between various players  
*(existing practice: Croatia – Mr. Josip Posavec, Prefect, County of Medjimurje, Croatia);*
- c) Control mechanisms to enforce the implementation of measures, especially when local authorities and/or local population oppose the implementation of policies for Roma, Sinti and Travellers  
*(existing practices: Greece – Mr. Theos Athanasios, Special Secretary of the Mayor of Sophades, on Roma Social housing project;  
France – Mr. Xavier Denis – Counsellor at the Delegation of France*

to the OSCE on Organizing winter areas for Gens du voyage (Travellers) within a suburban environment);

- d) Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effective implementation of measures and their impact on the grass-root community level

(Existing practice: Poland – Mr. Andrzej Czajkowski, Advisory Office for the Joint Programme between the Polish Ministry of Interior and the British Embassy in Warsaw).

12.00-13.00 **Open discussion about other national experiences, questions and answers**

13.00-14.30 **Break**

14.30-18.00 **Three working group sessions held in parallel**

**Working Group I**

Update on the situation of Roma minorities, refugees, IDPs and returnees: the need for a common strategy, with a special focus on Kosovo  
*Moderator: Mr. Andrzej Mirga, Chair of the CoE Group of Specialists on Roma, Gypsies and Travellers (MG-S-ROM) and Director for Roma Programmes of Project on Ethnic Relations (PER)*  
*Rapporteur: Mr. Robert Rustem, Senior Assistant on Roma Issues, OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje*

**Working Group II**

How to desegregate classes and schools and promote equal access to quality education for Roma and Sinti children and youth?  
*Moderator: Mrs. Eva Sobotka, Administrator for Communication and External Relations, EUMC*  
*Rapporteur: Mrs. Alexandra Raykova, President of the Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP)*

**Working Group III**

Participatory approach to improve the situation of Roma, Sinti and Travellers: lessons learned from Roma working in public/local administration  
*Moderator: Mr. Nezdet Mustafa, Member of Parliament, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)*  
*Rapporteur: Mrs. Vera Klopčič, Senior Researcher, Institute for Ethnic Studies, Slovenia*

**14.30-16.00 Speakers (10-15 min):**

- Dr. Jens Modvig, Deputy Head D/DSRSG of OSCE Mission in Kosovo
- Mrs. Laura Wiseberg, UNMiK Office for Returns, Communities and Minorities, about the situation in Mitrovica/ë (UNMiK)
- Mrs. Gwendolyn Albert, Director of the League of Human Rights (Czech

**14.30-16.00 Speakers (10-15 min):**

- Mr. Claude Cahn, Acting Executive Director of the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC): about various forms and cases of school segregation
- Mr. Bernard Rorke, Director of Roma Participation Programme, Open Society Institute (OSI): projects to desegregate schools
- Mrs. Miranda

**14.30-16.00 Speakers (10-15 min):**

- Mrs. Charlotta Wickman, Director of Minority Policy, Ministry of Justice: the role and impact of the Council on Roma Issues in Sweden
- Ms. Ellen Mongan, Traveller Liaison Officer and Ms. Mary Forde, Senior Social Worker, Galway County Council: the role and impact of Liaison Offices for



Republic) – Mr. Henry Scicluna, Coordinator of the Secretary General on Roma Issues, Council of Europe	Vuolasranta, Adviser to Council of Europe on Roma Issues: the importance of Romani teaching materials and Romani language – Mr. Herbert Heuß, external expert, CARE Bulgaria: using Roma teachers' assistants to desegregate – Ms. Anna Mirga, Roma Educational Association Harangos, Poland: Evaluation of the Implementation of Educational part of the Pilot Government Programme for Roma in Małopolska region	Travellers in Ireland – Mr. Bumbu Ioan Gruia, Adviser, Department of Education and Culture, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Romania: the role and impact of Roma County Officers in Romania – Mr. Albert Kováč, Regional Officer in Rimavská Sobota municipality: the role and impact of Regional Offices of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities
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16.00-16.30 **Coffee break**

16.30-18.00 <b>Discussion, questions and answers</b>	16.00-18.00 <b>Discussion, questions and answers</b>	16.00-18.00 <b>Discussion, questions and answers</b>
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## DAY TWO

### **Morning session**

#### **9.00-10.00 Second Plenary Session**

*Chair: Mr. Jan Schön, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Interior and Administration of the Republic of Poland*

Working group rapporteurs present a summary of the previous day's discussions

- Working group 1:  
Mr. Robert Rustem *Senior Assistant on Roma Issues, OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje*
- Working group 2:  
Mrs. Alexandra Raykova *President of the Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP)*
- Working group 3:  
Mrs. Vera Klopčič, *Senior Researcher, Institute for Ethnic Studies, Slovenia*

## Comments and answers

10.00-10.30 **Coffee break**

10.30-13.00 **Third Plenary Session**

*Chair: Dr. Anastasia Crickley, Chair of the Management Board of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of other Religions*

*Rapporteur: Mr. Herbert Heuß, Germany*

**Topic:** Combating prejudices and hate speech against Roma, Sinti and Travellers: “anti-gypsyism” as a phenomenon throughout Europe

10.40-12.00 **Presentations** (maximum 15-20 minutes each) by:

- Mr. Valeriu Nicolae, Deputy Director of the European Roma Information Office (ERIO): Presentation of a report on anti-gypsyism in the media;
- Mrs. Isil Gachet, Executive Secretary to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI): what is common and different when addressing racism against Roma, Sinti and Travellers compared to other forms of racism and intolerance?
- Mr. Marko D. Knudsen, First Chairman of the European Center for Anti-Gypsyism Research (EZAF): Conclusions of the International Anti-Gypsyism Conference held in Hamburg on 8-9 October;
- Mr. Lauri Sivonen, Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe regarding the Commissioner’s preliminary report on the human rights situation of Roma, Sinti and Travellers in Europe.

12.00-13.00 **Discussion, questions and answers**

13.00-14.00 **Break**

14.00-16.00 **Fourth Plenary Session**

*Chair: Mr. Nicolae Gheorghe, Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues, OSCE-ODIHR (CPRSI)*

*Rapporteur: Mr. Andrzej Mirga, Chair of the Council of Europe Group of Specialists on Roma, Gypsies and Travellers (MG-S-ROM)*

**Topic:** How to better use and co-ordinate initiatives to help local authorities and Roma working together at the local level, including funding mechanisms of local actions

14.00-15.00 **Presentations** (maximum 10 minutes each) by:

- Mr. Detlev Boeing (DG Enlargement) about an assessment of the use of EU Structural Funds for Roma Projects;
- Mr. Julius Varallyay, Director ad interim of the Roma Education Fund;
- Mrs. Victoria Damyanova, Director, European Integration, International Cooperation & Investments, Sofia municipality, Bulgaria, about the Municipal Approach to Roma Community in Sofia;
- Dr. Andor Ürmös, Director for Roma Integration, Government Office for Equal Opportunities of Hungary, about financing the implementation of measures at the local level (state and local authorities' respective contributions/loans/contributions in kind/European and national public funds);
- Ms. Jennifer Tanaka, PAKIV European Roma Fund, about the proposal made at the OSCE Roma and Sinti Side Events to create a fund for sustainable development of local Roma communities.

15.00-16.00      **Discussion, questions and answers**

16.00-18.00      **CLOSING SESSION:** Towards a common vision and implementation guidelines (manual) at international level (OSCE, CoE, EU, Decade of Roma Inclusion) for national policies /action plans for Roma, Sinti and Travellers and towards concrete measures against anti-gypsyism

*Chair:* OSCE ODIHR - Ambassador Christian Strohal

- Council of Europe – Mr. Michaël Guet, Head of Roma and Travellers Division;
- EUMC – Mrs. Anastasia Crickley, Chair of the Management Board;
- Ministry of Interior and Administration of the Republic of Poland: Mr. Jan Schön, Undersecretary of State.

18.00              **Departure of participants**

### 3. OPENING REMARKS

#### **Toralv Nordbo**

*First Deputy Director*

*OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights*

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Conference organizers and in particular on behalf of the ODIHR I would like to welcome you all here in Warsaw, at this Conference devoted to discussing the Implementation of Policies and Action Plans for Roma, Sinti and Travellers, and Measures Against the Anti-Gypsyism Phenomenon in Europe.

I would like to thank all the organizations that have contributed to making possible this meeting, which in itself is a collaborative effort of a number of organizations that share the same goals in this regard. I would like to list the Organizations which have jointly organized this conference with us, in particular our Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues:

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia, currently holding Chairmanship of the OSCE;
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland, again hosting us here today and which held until recently the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers in the Council of Europe;
- The Ministry of the Interior and the Administration of Poland;
- The Council of Europe;
- The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) of the European Union.

In fact, we have been able to gather a large number of participants here, and I already want to thank you all for having come to make this discussion relevant and constructive. We have about 170 registered participants to this meeting from rather diverse backgrounds. According to our current data, participants include:

- 85 participants representing **government** offices, as well as local authorities from various countries, dealing specifically with Roma, Sinti and Travellers issues and/or with mainstreaming social policy issues;
- A group of 20 **officers and experts** from intergovernmental organizations, including the OSCE field missions;
- 63 participants from the large and diverse groups of **NGOs** - in particular 40 who are representing Roma, Sinti and Travellers.

One of the most impressive achievements of the last decade concerning Roma and policymaking has been the growing number of Roma, Sinti and Travellers elected or appointed to all levels of government throughout OSCE Participating States. I am therefore also very glad to welcome all those of you who have been democratically elected to supranational, national or regional parliaments, or local assemblies or local government.

### **Why Warsaw as the conference location?**

I would like to say that it is no coincidence that we are meeting here in Warsaw today. As many of you know, we have just had, in this same venue, the tenth Human Dimension Implementation Meeting of the OSCE, which is an annual event allowing the 55 participating States of the OSCE to review the implementation of their human dimension commitments.

This year we had a record number of 430 participating NGOs and 60 informative side events. When we now focus for two days on issues relating to Roma and Sinti and Travellers, we do so in the same spirit. Namely that it is not the written texts, the Conventions, Action Plans and commitments that matter, but the implementation of these promises on the ground.

The year 2005 marks the 30th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, an event which has evoked not only celebrations, but also a thorough, self-critical analysis of the current workings of the OSCE. This year is also the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and the Copenhagen Document on the Human Dimension. Signifying truly historic changes, this groundbreaking document was the first international agreement to recognize explicitly the human rights problems confronting Roma people: in Copenhagen, the participating States clearly and unequivocally condemned racial and ethnic hatred, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and discrimination against anyone, as well as persecution on religious and ideological grounds. In this context, they also recognized the particular problems of Roma.

If we measure the distance Roma and Sinti have come since the Copenhagen Document, we can make a simple but effective quantitative assessment. Here we can examine the 1990 Copenhagen Document and the 2003 Ministerial Council Decision taken in Maastricht:

- There are 12 words related to Roma in the Copenhagen Document;
- There are 5792 words in the Maastricht Decision to adopt the OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti (December 2003);
- Although this seems to be quite a simplistic yardstick to measure an improvement, in the everyday reality of life for Roma and Sinti communities, it nevertheless gives an idea about the progress made in awareness-raising to the particular constraints faced by this social group among the participating States to the OSCE, and for international organizations.

In Warsaw, in April 1994, soon after the adoption of the Copenhagen Document, the first Human Dimension Seminar on Roma and Sinti took place. This was jointly

organized by the Council of Europe and the ODIHR (one of the first actions jointly organized by these two organizations).

The 1994 Seminar still marks a significant achievement for Roma and Sinti affairs, as it created effective cooperation among intergovernmental organizations that still exists today, and laid the groundwork for the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti at the ODIHR, which continues to operate more than a decade later.

The Warsaw meeting was also creative in generating recommendations for policymaking on Roma over the past decade, both for the OSCE and the Council of Europe.

It is our hope that Warsaw, with its genuine *genius loci*, may stimulate further debates that may generate a vision to continue the policymaking process on Roma for the next decade.

In this sense, I would like to wish you a successful two days together in Warsaw: fruitful, open and frank debates, and guided by a spirit of cooperation and a constructive, forward-looking approach, as is the established practice of our Organization.

Thank you.

**Jan Truszczyński**  
*Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland*

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to this conference and extend my appreciation for your personal commitment to resolving the formidable problems of the Roma community in Europe. The history of the Roma, living in various countries, has never been easy; persecution and humiliation have often been their lot in life. We must never forget the tragic period of the Second World War, when Nazi Germany – misguided by a criminal racist ideology – condemned the Roma to extermination, along with other peoples classified as subhuman and unworthy of existence.

The priorities of the Polish Presidency of the Council of Europe, which ended last May, focused on the promotion of inter-cultural dialogue as an essential condition of tolerance and amicable settlement of disputes, and on defusing difficult problems inherited from the past. All this also applies to the history and the present day of the Roma, Sinti and Travellers. While noticing the many differences between Roma communities in Europe, we should remember that most of their problems stem from centuries-long neglect of Roma emancipation throughout the continent. Consequently, these problems are similar in all European countries. This situation poses a great challenge to international organizations, such as the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the European Union, which are dedicated to the promotion of human and minority rights, inter-cultural dialogue and social cohesion. Initiatives aimed at empowering all the Roma, irrespective of their citizenship or country of residence, are needed in our efforts to build civil societies and strengthen democracy.

I have watched with admiration and hope the growing activity of the Roma in individual countries and on the international scene. The European Roma and Travellers Forum, recently set up at the Council of Europe, offers a chance to build an institution that will represent the Roma and express their opinions. I am confident that joint projects and meetings such as this one enhance our mutual knowledge and foster the process of Roma emancipation.

Upon joining European structures, Poland undertook to build a civil society in which all citizens were aware of their rights and duties. The Roma are an integral part of Polish society – hence our joint commitment to ensuring full Roma participation in the country's public life.

In our endeavours, we follow the best standards developed by European institutions, such as the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and by individual countries. One example is the introduction into Polish schools of Roma education assistants. The measure was proposed by a Roma association, after successful tests in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. The aim is to turn schools into a friendly environment for Roma children and teenagers, indicating at the same time that school education is not conceived as a tool for assimilating the Roma. On the contrary, it empowers the Roma community and reinforces identification with Roma culture and tradition.

With that in mind, the Polish government has been taking initiatives to counter marginalization of the Roma. The relevant policy is set out in the Programme for the Roma Community in Poland, adopted by the Council of Ministers on August 19, 2003, and an earlier Government Pilot Programme for the Roma Community in Malopolski Voivodship in 2001-2003.

The Programme currently being implemented has been developed by the central administration, local government, and representatives of the Roma community. Its principal goal is to bridge any gaps between the Roma and the rest of society. In particular, we are seeking equality in the fields of education, employment, health and hygiene, living conditions, and functional skills in the civil society.

The Programme is not designed to provide short-term relief, but rather to work out mechanisms enabling the Roma to solve problems on their own in the future. The participation of local communities is crucial to its success. The Programme aims to integrate the Roma minority with those communities in a way that provokes no conflicts and prevents potential misunderstandings.

To complement the Programme, we are launching a system to monitor and counter ethnic-motivated crime. In 2004, the Polish government adopted a National Programme to Counter Racial Discrimination and Related Intolerances. Meeting the recommendations of the UN conference in Durban, the Programme targets xenophobia and racism, and promotes a culture of tolerance, including an increased public awareness of these plagues.

Our activity for the benefit of the Roma is supported by new legislation. On January 6, 2005, the Polish Sejm [parliament] adopted the Law on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language. Upholding the best traditions of Polish tolerance and multiculturalism, the law puts us among countries determined to provide high standards of legal protection for national and ethnic minorities.

Let me express my satisfaction that the conference is being held in Warsaw, with the joint collaboration of the Council of Europe and the OSCE. To me, this fulfils the message of the Third Summit of the Council of Europe concerning co-operation among European institutions for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The idea was also affirmed in the Joint Declaration on Co-operation between the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, signed before the summit.

I call on all those present to continue their actions in support of the Roma. I wish you fruitful debates and further interesting initiatives benefiting the Roma community.

Thank you for your attention.



## **Ambassador Boris Frlec**

*Head of the OSCE Task Force*

*Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, OSCE Chair-in-Office*

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to welcome you to the Conference on the Implementation of Policies for Roma, Sinti and Travellers.

The number of logos on the invitation alone demonstrates that this meeting is an indication of the resolve of many states and international organizations involved in improving the situation of Roma, Sinti and Travellers on our continent and in helping them combat discrimination and outright anti-gypsyism. From the organizers, I am pleased to welcome:

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Poland;
- The Council of Europe;
- The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC); and
- OSCE ODIHR.

The meeting's purpose is to assess the current stage of the implementation of national strategies and policies for Roma as well as of several international initiatives on Roma, Sinti and Travellers, including the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area; the Council of Europe's recommendations on Roma and Travellers; the European Union standards on human rights of Roma in member and candidate countries, and the "Decade of Roma Inclusion."

The decision to organize the meeting in Warsaw was made following the Council of Europe Summit which took place in Warsaw in May this year. The Summit adopted a Plan of Action, which pledges in its "Social Cohesion" chapter to continue to improve the situation of Roma and Travellers in the member countries, and which summarizes and upgrades the numerous commitments and recommendations of the Council of Europe concerning Roma and Travellers.

Poland continues to have strong ownership of the process started by the Council of Europe Summit and I am therefore glad that this event takes place here. Poland is also the host country of the OSCE ODIHR as well as our annual OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meetings, thus offering an excellent opportunity for finding synergies among initiatives of all these international organizations, in particular in the area of policymaking for Roma, Sinti and Travellers.

The OSCE plays an important role in improving the situation of Roma at the European level. Let me mention some important turning points: the 1990 Copenhagen document, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Report on the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area of March 2000, and the 2003 OSCE

Action Plan on the improvement of the Roma situation. What is of utmost importance in this regard are ties and cooperation with other international organizations – above all the Council of Europe, the European Union and specialized agencies – in the implementation of adopted documents.

A flexible approach to debate and intensive cooperation with governmental institutions as well as non-governmental organizations, particularly those representing Roma interests at the international level, are the elements that form the basis of the OSCE's special contribution to the discussion of the situation of Roma at the European level.

The first Human Dimension Seminar on Roma and Sinti, jointly organized by the Council of Europe and the ODIHR back in April 1994, resulted in a series of recommendations for policymaking on Roma over the past decade. I hope this place will stimulate further debates that could generate a vision about how to continue the policymaking process on Roma for the next decade.

I am happy to see that the list of participants is not only long, but also diverse, with representatives of governmental offices as well as local authorities from various countries, dealing specifically with Roma, Sinti and Travellers and /or with mainstream social policy issues; there is a large group of officials and experts from intergovernmental organizations and from the OSCE field missions. I am of course particularly pleased to welcome the many groups of non-governmental organizations, in particular those representing Roma, Sinti and Travellers themselves.

I believe that one of the most impressive achievements of the decade of policymaking in this area is the growing number of elected and appointed officials at all levels of governance, recruited from Roma, Sinti and Travellers.

The agenda combines some commonly agreed priorities of the impressive number of co-organizers. One such priority is the engagement of local authorities and local communities as a whole in improving the situation of Roma, Sinti, and Travellers. I am confident that our debates in the next days will focus on how to implement international and national Programmes at the local level. We must involve regions, districts, municipalities, urban neighbourhoods and village communities in this.

I can proudly say that both Poland and Slovenia can look back at substantial accomplishments in this area. Poland has launched a successful initial governmental Programme for Roma in the Malopolska district (Southern Poland); in Slovenia, the authorities have joined forces with Roma representatives and devised a legal and institutional framework for the participation of Roma in local councils and local administrations of the communities where they form consistent groups.

I hope that this meeting will serve to collect other good practices and hopefully generate some guidelines on what the OSCE Action Plan calls “an institutional mechanism for implementing policies at the local level”. Of course, the Council of Europe also has substantial and rich experience in working at the local level, among others through its Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CPLRE).

It was the continuity of these efforts that enabled a comprehensive preparation of this meeting. Slovenia is geographically situated at the crossroads of various cultural flows; consequently, it has always been involved in important initiatives and activities aiming at the improvement of the situation of minority groups. However, the activities for the improvement of the situation of Roma have been seriously undertaken only recently, as has also been the case in many other European countries.

During its 2004 CEI Presidency, Slovenia organized a meeting of the CEI parliamentarians on the characteristics of the Roma situation in individual countries; the meeting received a very wide response. Providing information about the development in each individual country undoubtedly contributes to the enforcement of the new practices at the national and local levels.

The protection of Roma communities and improvement of their position is considered in Slovenia as an integral part of the democratic development of the community as a whole. The Programme on Assisting Roma was adopted at the governmental level a decade ago; some other employment Programmes have also been adopted, including a strategy of Roma integration in education of 2004. Representatives of the Roma community are involved in the adoption of measures and strategies. Similarly to other European countries, the biggest challenge has been to eliminate prejudices and improve communication between Roma and the majority population. The Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia contains a special article in this regard, and individual provisions have already been adopted on its basis.

The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Slovenia has adopted a decision on the Roma participation in the governing of communities at the local level, that is in local municipalities. The **Local Government Act** was amended in 2002. Pursuant to this Act, there are seats reserved for the representation of Roma in municipal councils in 20 municipalities, where the Roma community traditionally resides. The Slovenian model for “guaranteed” participation of Roma in local municipalities has been developed based on the method for protecting the Italian and Hungarian minorities living in Slovenia and guarantees a high degree of autonomy (in health, education, housing) for national minorities. It might be useful to consider this model in current discussion about the decentralization and administrative reforms throughout South Eastern Europe, in particular in areas of post-conflict rehabilitation and reconciliation.

This meeting will address the phenomenon of racism against Roma, Sinti and Travellers, including its particular forms, known as “anti-gypsyism.” Regardless of terminology, it remains all too obvious that the effective implementation of international and governmental plans is seriously hindered by the intense prejudices and direct and indirect racism against Roma, Sinti and Travellers. The destructive effects of such racist attitudes are clearly expressed in cases of violence against members of these communities throughout our region. Less visible but nonetheless destructive effects of racism are those entrenched in the practices of governmental and non-governmental institutions important for people’s daily lives. We still witness systematic mistreatment of Roma, Sinti and Travellers in the work of police, schools, health and employment institutions, and the mass media.

A much desired output of the meeting is to agree on how to achieve better interlinks and harmonization among the key actors on policymaking on Roma, Sinti and

Travellers and how to better coordinate our work. The specific forms and tools of such harmonization remain to be defined by the participants themselves, so that we continue to maintain the advantages offered by the pluralism and competitiveness of initiatives and advance to a different stage of communication and coordination.

I hope that the meeting will also cover practical questions such as how to finance the implementation of policy Programmes for improving the living condition of Roma, Sinti and Travellers by combining resources from national budgets, local budgets, international financing, and increasingly the contributions of the people themselves.

I look forward to serious discussions about the particular problems of Roma in Kosovo, about their current situation and their prospects, including the possibility for Roma and other small minorities to participate in the process of determining Kosovo's status. We will also hear about a specific local project: the return of displaced persons and the reconstruction of Romani *mahala* in Southern Mitrovica. Hopefully the debates in this meeting of distinguished practitioners will provide useful guidelines for the officers in charge and for the Roma beneficiaries of this project.

## **Henry Scicluna**

*Coordinator of the Secretary General on Issues related to Roma and Travellers  
Council of Europe*

Honourable ambassadors, Minister of State,  
Representatives of Ministries, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure today to address you on behalf of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and first of all to thank the Polish authorities for their invitation to hold this conference in Warsaw.

I must confess that I am not particularly fond of conferences. Most of them indulge in a lot of discussion and reach very few solutions. Some conferences however, succeed in throwing a fresh look on the issues involved and open new avenues to explore.

On this particular occasion we are lucky to have as organisers not only the main three organisations dealing with Roma and Travellers issues – OSCE, EUMC, and the Council of Europe – but also two member states, Poland and Slovenia. We must exploit this unique opportunity to make of this conference one of those few occasions that raise important questions and open new avenues for reaching solutions.

And I come straight to the subject – the phenomenon of anti-gypsyism. There is only one session in the whole conference that is dedicated to this phenomenon. If we look closer at the agenda, however, we will find out that it is the topic of the whole conference, because whenever we discuss issues concerning Roma and Travellers we are automatically discussing anti-gypsyism.

If we discuss education for Roma and Travellers, are we not discussing segregation and rejection of Roma and Traveller children?

If we discuss employment for Roma and Travellers, are we not discussing the refusal to employ them?

If we discuss housing for Roma and Travellers, are we not discussing their rejection in miserable ghettos?

And if we discuss health issues concerning Roma and travellers, are we not discussing the unhealthy environment to which they have been relegated?

We have been prudish in our terminology. We speak of negative attitudes when we mean outright hatred, we refer to Roma problems when we should be talking of societal problems, and we deplore a lack of communication when we should be condemning rejection.

We have also minimised the extent and the depth of anti-gypsy feeling. I believe this conference can be a turning point in calling a spade a spade.

Anti-gypsyism on the part of European society is at the root of all the ills that plight Roma and Travellers. Anti-gypsyism is widespread, generalised, constant, and often institutionalised. Without knowledge of its nature we will never be able to tackle the problems which face Roma and Travellers in all walks of life.

Several years ago a Council of Europe committee laboured unsuccessfully for a whole day to define “poverty”. At the end of this fruitless day, the Deputy Secretary General, Mr Peter Leuprecht, who was chairing the meeting, said “I do not have a definition for poverty, but when I see it I recognize it immediately.”

Likewise, the Roma boy who is called a “dirty gypsy” at school, he knows what anti-gypsyism is. So does the man who is refused entrance to a bar because he is a Roma or Traveller and so does the Roma or Traveller who is refused employment

Nonetheless, we need a deeper knowledge of the nature of this phenomenon. What is the mechanism that starts off anti-gypsyism? Is it fear, phobia, racism or something deeper and more destructive?

I sincerely hope that this conference will open new avenues to a better understanding of the problem and hence an easier way to a solution.

## **Beate Winkler**

*Director, European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia*

Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me first extend a strong welcome to all of you here in Warsaw and I would like first to thank Polish government, Slovenian government, Council of Europe and the OSCE for bringing us together to address a topic central to the work of all our organisations, and more importantly central to the lives of millions of people living in Europe. The way that all our organisations address the issues confronting the Roma, Traveller and Gypsy communities must demonstrate our commitment to building in Europe a place sharing the same values of human dignity and respect. The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) is therefore honoured to be associated as a partner of this conference. The issues confronting the Roma, Traveller and Gypsy communities do not require an introduction from me, they are well known and well documented. I hope this conference will achieve to identify the practical ways to ensure equal access to employment, education, health care, housing, services and public life and will provide us with ideas on how to measure the impact of policies and actions and follow them up with concrete action.

The title of our conference, “implementation of policies and action plans for Roma, Sinti and Travellers and measures against anti-Gypsyism” therefore relates directly to our view that much more can be done.

### **THE EUMC**

Many of the issues faced by the Roma, Travellers and Gypsy communities fall squarely within the mandate of the EUMC. The EUMC’s core task is to help the European Union’s institutions and Governments to fight racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia. This is done by providing them with evidence based data and information. The EUMC has therefore set up a RACism and XENophobia data collection network which it calls RAXEN for short. The network consists of organisations, which we call National Focal Points, operating in all the EU Member States.

#### **1. Data Collection**

We are well aware of the fact that collecting and comparing data on racism, discrimination is a highly complex task. With regard to the Roma community, I am also well aware of concerns expressed by some Roma in regard to data collection and its usage. The EUMC has always made clear that safeguards around data protection, use and storage must be in place. Nevertheless, inadequate or non-existent data collection is a profound problem when attempting to gauge the extent and nature of racist violence and crime, track the level and extent of racial discrimination, in order to design informed policies and measure implementation. Without appropriate data and information it becomes very difficult to target policy effectively, measure its impact and monitor any progress.

**You can only manage if you are able to measure.**

#### **2. EUMC Activities on Roma Issues**

From my appointment to the EUMC as Director, I quickly identified that the Roma issue was of immense importance. I remember early in my period as Director fondly

offering the EUMC premises for a meeting of Roma activists in Vienna, chaired by Nicolae Gheorghe. It also became apparent that the Roma issue was one that concerned not only the EUMC, but other international organisations. After consultation with other organisations and examining the areas that we all believed required more attention, the EUMC, in cooperation with the OSCE and the Council of Europe, carried out a study on access to public health care of Romani women. That project culminated in an International Conference on Roma women and healthcare issues in Strasbourg in September 2003, hosted by the Council of Europe and supported by the OSCE. In addition, by bringing activists together at a non-governmental organisation meeting during the project a Europe-wide International Roma Women Network was established. I am pleased to see that members of that network will be with us today and that they continue to engage actively on a variety of issues of concern to women. Realising the obstacles that they face as committed volunteers, the EUMC will like to assure them that Vienna will remain a place where they can meet with our support in 2006.

The EUMC is also publishing a Report on Roma in public education. The Report shows that a major obstacle for Romani children in the education system remains segregation. In addition, the EUMC National thematic reports for 2004 showed that access of Roma to employment opportunities across EU-25 shows that there is still a great deal to achieve, with cases of discrimination in recruitment. Housing equally raises a variety of issues that need to be tackled.

What has to be done in order to change this situation:

a) Policy formulation and implementation requires a more comprehensive approach and greater involvement of affected communities. Better monitoring and regular review needs to be built into the process and acted upon. The issues that surround effective data collection are key to the EUMC's ability to inform measures and action taken by governments and the EU institutions. We all need to address the issues raised around data collection, but move forward adopting a step by step approach to improving the collection and range of data available. Trust is central to this process and so are legal safeguards. It is important to demonstrate that data collection can result in positive action to address discrimination and racism. There are many examples from EU countries which show how better data has led directly to better policy and action.

b) We will only succeed in improving policy implementation when Roma issues are mainstreamed, that means being treated, not just with specific programmes and actions, but also as a part of the general framework of European, national and local policies. This requires political will and taking the good arguments about public policy interest from the capitals to the local authorities who actually deal with the issues on the ground. Here all governments have a responsibility and there are examples of good initiatives which can be used.

c) A different approach based on inclusion, dignity, respect for difference and equality, is needed in our societies. Anti-Gypsyism goes beyond the classic forms of discrimination. It is historically rooted, mixed with prejudice towards Roma that some people in society have inherited from generation to generation. It is based on the fear of the "perceived foreign", anxiety and hate.



### **3. EUMC future priorities on Roma, Sinti and Travellers**

The EUMC is looking into developing a specific working method to facilitate the process of turning words into action. On a note of cooperation among international organisations, I think a lot can be done to improve the implementation of policies. In particular on an annual development stage, a genuine cooperation could lead to increasing impact and implementation of national policies and action plans on Roma. In 5 years it should be clear: the Warsaw conference really created change and made a difference to the daily life of Romani people. I therefore propose to hold a follow up conference in a year time and review progress in implementation of policies and action plans. In order to contribute to future developments the EUMC will implement its Multiannual Strategy for the fight against racism on Roma, Sinti and Travellers, with a particular focus on improving comparability of data, cooperation with other organisations and dialogue with governments and civil society. We would aim to assist Member States to respond to policy challenges identified earlier on this year in the Commission report on “Roma in the Enlarged Europe” and through EUMC research and meetings between the agencies of this conference.

### **CONCLUSION**

Ladies and Gentlemen, let us develop these themes further in our discussions over today and tomorrow. We have among us many of those who are in a position to influence policy implementation. We need the courage and commitment of political leaders across the EU and new coalitions between politicians, employers, teachers and many others in order to overcome racism, discrimination and exclusion, anti-Gypsyism. For all of us it must be clear: Roma, Gypsies, Travellers, are valued and respected members of our European societies, and we must ensure that they are able to feel as such.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Speech available on-line at the EUMC web site:

<http://eumc.eu.int/eumc/material/pub/general/DIR-Pres-Warsaw-21-Oct05.pdf>

**4. FIRST PLENARY SESSION: Concrete implementation practices at national and/or local levels responding to requirements of the OSCE Action Plan for the Improvement of the Situation of the Roma and Sinti (in particular Chapter III) and of relevant legal instruments and recommendations of the Council of Europe, the European Union and other international organizations/institutions.**

**Robin Oakley**

*Consultant for European Dialogue, UK*

**Implementing national strategies at the local level: lessons from the RrAJE Programme**

Ladies and gentlemen,

Several of the sessions at this conference recognize the importance of implementing national Roma strategies at the local level. The importance of the local level is also highlighted at the outset of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area, which states: “Implementation strategies should include mechanisms to ensure that national policies are implemented at the local level.” (Paragraph 4.)

Why is the local level so important? Experience of combating exclusion of Roma and other minorities across Europe shows that taking action at the local level is important especially for the following reasons:

- The local level, especially that of the municipality, is the level at which the delivery of most public services is administered;
- The situation of Roma varies from locality to locality, as does the situation of the population generally;
- Directly-elected municipal and other local authorities have political autonomy to decide on their approach to Roma issue;
- The local level is the level at which Roma, like other minorities, can most easily organize to exercise their rights, represent their interests at political level, and engage collectively in the civic process.

What can governments do to try to ensure that strategies are implemented at the local level?

Where functions are carried out at regional or local level by devolved governmental authorities, national government can directly control action at the local level on Roma and minority issues. Where responsibility for relevant functions lies with locally elected government bodies, national government may need to influence action indirectly.

In particular, national government can:

- use law and policy directives to ensure that local authorities take appropriate positive action to promote Roma integration;
- ensure that effective law is in place to combat discrimination and overt racism against Roma;
- ensure that adequate resources (including funding and expert advice) are available to support necessary action at the local level;
- promote pilot projects to demonstrate good practice at the local level;
- monitor whether its policies on Roma issues are being implemented effectively at the local level and whether they are having the intended outcomes.

The RrAJE Programme (Roma Rights and Access to Justice in Europe) was designed to address these issues by promoting the adoption of a strategic approach to Roma integration at the local or municipal level. The aim was to produce models of good practice for local-level strategies that could be disseminated both nationally and also trans-nationally within the region. The RrAJE Programme received its core funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), and (following a development phase during 2000) ran from February 2001 to January 2004. It was coordinated by the London-based NGO European Dialogue, in partnership with local-level Roma NGOs and public authorities.

During its first year the RrAJE Programme began operating in the Czech Republic in the municipalities of Brno and Pardubice, and in Bulgaria in Lom and in the Fakulteta District of Sofia. During the second year, work was extended to Botoşani in NE Romania, and the Presov region in NE Slovakia. In each municipality, the Programme offered support for Roma NGOs to form partnerships with the public authorities to develop and implement strategic plans, aimed at promoting civic integration of Roma and ensuring equal opportunities. The aim was to address needs in fields such as policing and justice, education, housing, employment and social welfare in an integrated manner. The Programme aimed to help empower Roma communities to improve their access to rights and justice in these fields by building the capacity of Roma NGOs and community groups, and by promoting and supporting institutional development and the implementation of equal opportunity policies within local government and other public bodies.

The main conclusion of the RrAJE Programme has been that effective integration of Roma at the local level requires action in four key areas:

- Roma empowerment, based on community development;
- Building of partnerships between public authorities and Roma communities;
- Formulation and implementation of integrated strategies;
- Institutional development and change in local public authorities.

A practical guidance manual based on the RrAJE Programme has now been produced, entitled Promoting Roma Integration at the Local Level: Practical Guidance for NGOs and Public Authorities. The booklet draws out key lessons from the RrAJE Programme about appropriate methods for promoting access to social rights and justice for Roma communities at the local level. The main body of the booklet consists of guidance relating to the four key areas above: minority empowerment, partnership-building, the development and implementation of integrated local strategies, and 'mainstreaming' and institutional change. On each subject, general guidance is accompanied by practical examples drawn from the RrAJE Programme. Although the booklet is focused on the Central/Eastern European context, it is also relevant to the situation of Roma and related groups in countries more widely across Europe.

## **Theos Athanasios**

*Special Secretary of the Mayor of Sophades  
Sophades Municipality, Greece*

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first thank the organizers on behalf of the Sophades Municipality for inviting me to this conference and giving the Municipality the opportunity to share with you this two-year experience on implementing a housing policy for the Roma citizens of our local community.

I sincerely hope we will all leave this conference with some fresh ideas on how to tackle the policy implementation challenges we regularly come across in our countries, particularly at the local level.

Improving the social conditions of Roma populations has become a common concern not only for Eastern European countries in view of their accession to the European Union – the so-called “new democracies” – but also for the old ones, like my country. Indeed, since 1997, Greek governments regardless of their political orientation have committed to promote the social integration of Greek Roma by adopting an Integrated Action Plan.

This Programme is under way and will end in 2008. Without doubt, similar Programmes have been adopted and implemented with successes and failures all over Europe and I will be very happy to learn from your experience.

Realizing Programmes aiming at eradicating many years of exclusion and discrimination is a complex and long-term process. Although what we have experienced as a local authority implementing such a targeted policy is not unique, I think that the exchange of information and good practices could help us to do better. There is always room for improvement, notably when there is a genuine political will.

The municipality of Sophades is home to a population of 13,500 inhabitants, of whom 3,000 are Roma. They have been living there for more than 70 years and the degree of their integration into local society is satisfactory, although a lot of work remains to be done in that respect. The main feature of the Roma community in Sophades is that the majority of them are either farmers or farm workers. Since the employment issue was not a major concern the municipality gave priority to housing, which was far below standard and which led to a negative impact on the Roma daily life.

The housing Programme involved the construction of 150 houses on municipal land funded by the state budget. Up to now, 84 families have moved from the old *mahala* to the new houses and another 66 houses are currently being built. At the same time a loan Programme with state guarantees allowing a certain number of Roma to build on municipality land or to buy their own houses was initiated.

A project to upgrade the old *mahala* is also part of the municipality plans. Planning and implementation of the project involved the active participation of elected representatives of the Roma community who were in constant contact with our municipality representatives.

Today, we are able to say that so far the Programme has been successful, since 20% of the Roma population in need is now living in decent housing conditions. We hope that we will manage to provide them all with housing that measures up to European standards by the end of the Programme.

The municipality has adopted a method of systematic and continuous assessment of the progress made in our efforts to promote full and effective equality between Roma and the non-Roma majority to integrate the Roma population and improve their living conditions – a sort of policy evaluation at local level with the participation of Roma representatives.

Contrary to all expectations the Programme so far has had very positive results. The Roma take care of the new houses in a common spirit of preserving their living area. This has proved the great potential of the Roma population, which encourages the municipality to continue its work. However, the process of house selection and loan attribution was hampered by a number of irregularities by a minority of the Roma population, who either gave fake information about their personal data in order to fulfil the required conditions or used the loans for other purposes. These irregularities have been taken up by the local media, unfortunately provoking disproportionate reactions on the part of the majority population. A local residents committee was set up to defend the rights of the majority population against the housing policy offering benefits to Roma, and challenges the municipality's housing Programme through the local media or during the municipal council meetings.

This is a very paradoxical situation: a successful Programme was jeopardized by the unlawful behaviour of a minority of the beneficiaries on the one hand, which unfortunately stigmatized the whole community; and on the other hand by the misinformation of the local society on the need for housing policy and its benefits for the society as a whole.

I believe that the burden of responsibility lies with the two main actors – the municipal authorities and the Roma leader partners – in this difficult exercise.

We all know that Roma strategies do not attract vast public support. The municipality had underestimated the possible reactions of the majority of the population to this positive discrimination policy and to some extent the hostile and prejudicial behaviour against such a policy. An information campaign among the majority of the population on the need for and long-term positive impact of such targeted policies not only for the direct beneficiaries but for society as a whole was necessary. But it is never too late to do good. During the last 6 months, the municipality has established a constant dialogue with all the main actors of the local population, where positive examples of Roma integration are presented and a constant persuasion process goes on.

Roma leaders also have a part of the responsibility and I would like to take advantage of my presence here to repeat what I keep saying to our fellow Roma citizens in Sophades: the strength of such policies lies with the Roma themselves, because in Sophades they proved that they are able to take their destinies into their own hands throughout the whole process, and that a minority of negative behaviour should not only be condemned but also prevented by them.

By way of conclusion, I would like to assure you that we are following the very stimulating discussion at international level about the need for evaluating and monitoring national Programmes designed for the integration of the Roma population in Europe. We also believe that it is now high time to proceed with the evaluation of such policies. Some considerable improvements have been made in this field and models of good practices should be promoted. The experience exchanged should allow us to improve our policy management.

The Sophades municipality extend an open invitation to you all to come to our town to see the results of our work and to continue the discussion we have initiated here in Warsaw.

## **Xavier Denis**

*Counsellor at the Delegation of France to the OSCE*

The topic of my speech is to share with you the experience on measures that were taken in order to ease traveller families' stay during winter 2004-2005 in a French administrative district – namely Seine Saint Denis, a close suburb of Paris – whose suburban features could be thought to be an obstacle to offering sufficient conditions for settling.

In this speech, travellers should be understood as French non-sedentary citizens.

The district plan for temporary settlement of travellers signed in August 2003, pursuant to the national Law on settlement of travellers dated 20 July, 2000, is based on the aim of achieving a balance between:

- constitutional freedom of movement and the legitimate request from travellers to settle in decent conditions; and
- the concerns of local authorities to avoid illicit settlements which are the sources for difficult co-existence with other citizens.

Successive surveys of travellers in the district concerned revealed a constant and large presence for years, but also a diversity in family settlements specific to the district: 2,650 households have been recorded so far, including up to 10,000 permanent individuals on a total of travellers in France at about 240,000. Among these 10,000, 1,300 (i.e., 400 families) live in mobile homes or caravans.

The implementation of the district plan for travellers settlements will take time, especially when considering that the Law on Freedoms and Local Responsibilities (August 2004) extended the initial deadline for creating temporary settlement areas for travellers. The deadline for the full implementation of the Law on settlement of travellers is now 2006. So, it became urgent to sort out solutions for winter time, organizing the settlement of families in a district where municipalities are not yet in compliance with the Law.

The growing number of families wishing to go back to the district during the winter imposed a search for original solutions. Before winter 2004-2005, temporary settlement was organized thanks to the involvement of two municipalities and the disposal of two large areas provided by the district Council. But the experience of the winter 2003-2004 revealed that these solutions were no longer appropriate, considering they posed huge problems in terms of hygiene. Concerned partners then decided to restrict to 50 the number of caravans that could be put together at each location.

The Travellers Consultative Commission, which had a meeting in July 2004, made a decision for a decentralized layout that was original in spirit and in implementation for at least two reasons:

- It mobilized local elected authorities (mayors) together with travellers associations;



- It gave the priority to informing residents of settlement areas.

So, each envisioned area was the subject of a “Protocol for Temporary Settlement” jointly signed by heads of families, a mediator from one of the travellers associations in the district (SOS Travellers and Association of Travellers families), the mayor and the representative of the central administration. The Protocol, on the basis of reciprocal commitments, established duties and rights of each party.

The experience lasted from September 4, 2004, to May 31, 2005, (to June 15 in some cases) and provided a total of 225 caravan parking spaces.

The breakdown of contributors was as follows:

- Seven municipalities opened areas that belonged to them;
- Four municipalities authorized settlement on state property;
- One municipality opened a private area, pursuant to a special protocol with the landlord.

Lessons learned:

- 1) The result of this organization was that it eased dramatically the daily management of the areas concerned, and also improved tremendously the relationships between Traveller families and local residents. Some examples of “perfect co-existence” may be found in great number of case, and at least in four municipalities, despite some cases of illegal settlements being reported, which raises questions of the involvement of some mediators. Another lesson was that further efforts should be undertaken in order to pursue and to improve winter settlements until the 26 areas will be proposed according to the Law.
- 2) Thanks to this organization, Traveller families enjoyed winter settlement for a long period, until June 2005 in some cases.
- 3) All commitments were fulfilled by all parties, especially from the side of travellers families, who repaid water and electricity fees and financed the building of hygiene blocks on the areas where they were settled.
- 4) A total of 300 caravan parking spaces would have been ideal to respond to the needs as expressed by the aforementioned associations, and would have been likely to avoid cases of illicit settlements (11 reported during the winter period). These 300 will, in the future, solve this issue and put an end to the vicious circle of illicit settlement-warrant-forcible evacuation, etc.

In conclusion, it appears that active and constructive dialogue between all actors involved is likely to bring solutions to the issue of travellers’ settlements, even when facing conditions (few opportunities in available locations, priority to social housing, reluctance due to bad previous experiences) that could have been thought of as insurmountable.

Decent winter settlements are only a partial solution, and offering best conditions only for temporary stay is not enough. For this reason, winter 2005-2006 will extend the experience to ensure comprehensive access to all social services for Traveller families who will settle according to the Protocols.

## **Andrzej Czajkowski**

*Advisory Office for the Joint Programme between the Polish Ministry of Interior and the British Embassy in Warsaw*

### **Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effective implementation of measures and their impact at the grassroots community level**

The objectives and tasks presented in the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, and especially those included in Chapter Three, correspond to the provisions of the National Programme for Counteracting Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance adopted by the Polish government in May 2004, which implements the recommendations of the UN Conference in Durban, and to the principles of the national Programme for the Roma Community in Poland, which has been implemented since 2004.

An element common to both Programmes is the adaptation of planned activities to specific local conditions, with full participation of local government and local community representatives. The National Programme for Counteracting Discrimination has been implemented by the central administration and regional offices, in agreement with the Citizens' Rights Ombudsman and in close cooperation with local self-government units and non-governmental organizations experienced in monitoring and eliminating the manifestations of racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and intolerance.

The main objectives of the National Programme are the following:

- To diagnose occurring cases of racism;
- To develop indicators for monitoring ethnic discrimination phenomena;
- To raise awareness among public officials and other social services concerning legal ways to prevent and eliminate racial discrimination;
- To ensure universal access, free of charge, to full legal assistance for victims of xenophobia or intolerance;
- To undertake action aimed at eliminating the stereotypes surrounding employment of migrants, refugees and the Roma.

Monitoring the achievement of objectives and tasks included in the National Programme is the responsibility of the Monitoring Team, which consists of experts, representatives of relevant ministries and selected non-governmental organizations. The work of the Team is coordinated by the Government's Plenipotentiary for the Equal Status of Men and Women.

In connection with the implementation of tasks arising from the National Programme, a Plenipotentiary of the Police High Commander for the Protection of Human Rights has been appointed. His responsibilities include the coordination of work of the 23 local Police Commander Plenipotentiaries for Human Rights Protection, whose main tasks include:

- coordinating and initiating activities with the aim of prosecuting and punishing acts of violence, including those directed against members of the Roma community;
- training of police officers in prevention of discrimination and violence against the Roma;
- appointing individuals in the *poviat* and municipal police commands responsible for contacts with the Roma and cooperating with the Roma community leaders;
- cooperating with municipal and poviat family welfare centres, social welfare centres and schools.

For the purpose of maximally effective fulfilment of the tasks imposed on the Ministry of the Interior and Administration by the National Programme, in November 2004 the Team on Monitoring Racism and Xenophobia was set up within the Ministry of the Interior. The responsibilities of the Team include the establishment and maintenance of a database, and collection of information on incidents of ethnic discrimination, racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia. For this purpose statistical data is used from Regional Public Prosecutor's Offices and Appellate Public Prosecutor's Offices, related to the results of legal proceedings and court judgments sent by the National Public Prosecutor's Office, as well as to individual cases of racism reported directly to the Team. In addition, the Ministry of Interior arranges meetings with non-governmental organizations active in the field of counteracting discrimination, in order to discuss the most important problems and principles of cooperation, and to agree on the possible role of the government administration in supporting the NGO activity in this field.

In 2005, an agreement was signed between the Ministry of the Interior and the Management Board of Citizens' Advice Bureaus, a national organization with local branches in different regions of Poland. The agreement concerns the provision of free advice to local communities, making them aware of their rights and the ways in which they can be protected from violation of those rights.

One of the tasks implemented since 2004 as a part of the national Programme for the Roma Community in Poland consists of counteracting crimes committed for ethnic reasons against the Roma. Under the Programme, the Ministry of Interior has organized trainings for police officers. The objective of the trainings was to improve the safety of the Roma people, to raise legal awareness among the Roma, to increase mutual confidence in police-Roma relations, and to prepare the police to work in Roma communities. In the course of the training the police officers learnt about the culture, traditions and customs of the Roma community. Apart from experts, local Roma leaders also participated in the training.

The key document regulating the legal position of national and ethnic minorities in Poland is the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and the Regional Language, adopted by the Polish Parliament earlier this year. Among other things, the Act governs the implementation of principles of equal treatment of people regardless of

their ethnic origin, and defines the tasks and competencies of local self-government units in this respect.

The Act includes provisions concerning protection of people who are the objects of discrimination, hostility or violence as a result of their minority background, as well as provisions expressing the Polish government's support for full and real equality in economic, social, political and cultural life. Under the Act, the Joint Committee of the Government and the National and Ethnic Minorities has begun its work – this is an opinion-making and advisory body to the Prime Minister, enjoying broad authority regarding expression of opinions on the execution of the rights and meeting the needs of the minorities, and on undertaking activities to counteract the discrimination against members of national or ethnic groups.

## **4.1 WORKING GROUP I: Update on the situation of Roma minorities, refugees, IDPs and returnees – the need for a common strategy, with a special focus on Kosovo**

### **Ambassador Jens Modvig**

*Deputy Head of Mission  
OSCE Mission to Kosovo*

Thank you for the invitation to speak here today.

On behalf of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, I would like to welcome this International Implementation Conference on Roma, Sinti and Travellers, which has been convened by such renowned institutions and personalities. UNMiK also welcomes the special focus, through this Working Group, that the conference has put on the situation in Kosovo.

I have been asked, on behalf of UNMiK, to provide some numbers and facts about the situation of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in Kosovo, as well as some information on the Programmes and activities of UNMiK and the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo.

Starting with the facts, I would first like to mention that different groups in Kosovo identify themselves as Roma, Ashkali or Egyptians. Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptians speak mainly Albanian, although many also speak Serbian. Kosovo Roma speak both Albanian and Serbian, depending on the areas where they reside. In addition, Roma speak the local variant of Romany, while Kosovo Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptians do not or refuse to speak Romany.

There is still no comprehensive data on the number of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in Kosovo. Indeed, there is no reliable data about the population of Kosovo as a whole, let alone the refugees and IDPs from Kosovo. According to information from the Kosovo Statistical Institute, the population of Kosovo was between 1.9 and 2.4 million in 2003. We hope that the population census, scheduled for 2006, provides us with more clarity. Estimates put the current number of only Roma in Kosovo at between 15,000-35,000. More than 100,000 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians might have fled Kosovo in 1999 and 2000. The UNHCR estimated in 2001 that from the Ashkali and Egyptian communities alone 27,000 fled to Montenegro and Serbia proper. In Montenegro alone, there are still approximately 7,000 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian IDPs from Kosovo, while in the FYROM there are estimated to be between 1,000-2,000 Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Their situation has been discussed on a number of occasions between Skopje and PISG/UNMiK. I would like to give you the estimates about Pristina: following the NATO intervention, several thousand Roma were expelled from Pristina by the Albanian population. Today, only very few of them live in Pristina. The situation was and is slightly better for the Ashkali population, of whom an estimated 400 live in Pristina.

It is widely acknowledged that the Roma are the most vulnerable and disadvantaged ethnic group in South Eastern Europe. However, the situation is all the more dramatic in Kosovo, where Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians face even worse neglect and

discrimination. After the 1999 NATO intervention, many Egyptians, Ashkali and in particular Roma, who were perceived as collaborators with the Serbs, were expelled from their homes by the ethnic Albanian population. In many cases, their houses and whole settlements have been destroyed. In the Roma *mahala* in the Albanian part of Mitrovica alone, around 8,000 Roma were expelled and all their houses destroyed. Laurie Wiseberg from UNMiK's Office of Return, Communities and Minorities, who is here with us, will give you more details about their situation and the efforts to reconstruct their houses.

Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in Kosovo face widespread direct and indirect discrimination when it comes to the realizing their basic and social rights. They have limited or no access to social security, the health system, education, and – due to a mixture of discrimination and lack of education – the employment market. Their houses or shelters and their settlements, the vast majority of which have not been legalized, are often not connected to electricity or water.

The school attendance rate among Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians is low. As in most countries in South-East Europe, most of them drop out of primary school during the first four years, if they attend school at all. Kosovo institutions, including law-enforcement bodies, are passive towards the failure of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children to attend school. Activities by Kosovo institutions to integrate Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians into the school system and develop additional and specific educational Programmes are very limited in number and implemented only half-heartedly, if at all.

The Kosovo authorities and, it must be admitted, UNMiK and the international community have failed over the last six years to solve the problem of Roma IDPs who live in lead-contaminated camps under very poor conditions. Only this year, efforts have been considerably strengthened by all international actors and many NGOs active in Kosovo, as well as the Kosovo authorities, to reconstruct the houses of these IDPs and to relocate them from their provisional settlements.

In many of the areas mentioned previously, UNMiK as early as 2000 recognized the need to improve the situation of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, and responded with a number of Programmes and activities.

These activities include support for the establishment of kindergartens in several municipalities in Kosovo. Catch-up classes for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, aiming at their integration into the Kosovo education system, were organized. In the school year 2004/05 almost 1,000 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians attended these catch-up classes, organized jointly by the Kosovo Ministry for Education, Science and Technology and the OSCE Mission. In 2004, the OSCE Mission assisted this ministry in drafting a Feasibility Study for Roma Education.

The OSCE Mission financed the placement of a Roma consultant within the Ministry of Education for a five-month period. Unfortunately there are still no teaching materials and additional lessons for Roma in their mother tongue, but additional classes are being provided for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children on their tradition and culture.

UNMiK was and is actively involved in further strengthening the Roma and Ashkali Forum, a project initiated by ODIHR, aiming at representing as many Roma and Ashkali civil society actors as possible, thus providing for the greatest possible influence and legitimacy of the Forum. UNMiK and the OSCE Mission will support the establishment of regional forums in Kosovo in 2006. Moreover, the OSCE Mission provided for numerous roundtables and capacity building training Programmes for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian NGOs, and training for journalists from these communities. In this context, I would like to add that UNMiK also actively supported Roma-language Programmes in Kosovo broadcast media at the central and local levels.

At the same time, UNMiK is trying to include as much as possible the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in the development of policy, and to raise the awareness among the Kosovo institutions of the need to responsibility for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. The current failure of Kosovo institutions to properly tackle the problems of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities results from a mixture of a lack of awareness, inadequate financial and human resources, as well as straightforward discrimination. The process of forced returns from Western European countries of people belonging to the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities illustrates the shortcomings. Mechanisms have not yet been developed to receive these forced returnees. UNMiK's Office of Communities, Return and Minorities is doing its utmost to screen cases of forced return and to raise the awareness for the responsibility of Kosovo institutions for the return of their residents and for creating the necessary conditions.

All countries surrounding Kosovo have over the past years developed Strategies for the Improvement of the Situation of Roma, while Kosovo has not. For well-known reasons, the Serbian National Roma Strategy does not cover the territory of Kosovo. For the same reasons, Kosovo does not yet take part in the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

As reflected in many OSCE documents, the mere abstention from discrimination against Roma communities is not sufficient to provide them with equal chances and opportunities. *Affirmative action*, or *positive discrimination*, is needed in Kosovo as elsewhere, in accordance with the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area, adopted by the Permanent Council of the OSCE in November 2003. Six years after the NATO intervention in Kosovo, there is a need to streamline the activities of the Provisional Institutions of Self Government and the international community, with the aim of improving the situation of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians.

To translate existing standards, including the OSCE Action Plan, into the situation in Kosovo, the OSCE Mission has included into its 2006 Programme facilitation of and support for the development by the Kosovo Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of a comprehensive Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Strategy for Kosovo. Kosovo institutions, not the international community, are in charge of adopting and implementing Programmes aiming at improving the situation of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians. But UNMiK and the OSCE will support the institutions, *inter alia* by providing expertise, in developing a strategy and concrete Action Plans. To make this document a living document, we have envisaged the inclusion of the communities



concerned, the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, into the development of the strategy from the earliest possible stage and during the whole process.

For the development of this strategy and its subsequent implementation over many years, the active support and involvement not only of the Kosovo institutions and the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians communities, but also other international organizations and agencies, local and international NGOs will be needed. Initially, this strategy could informally accompany the Decade on Roma Inclusion. As an action framework for governments, the Decade will monitor progress in accelerating social inclusion and improving the economic and social status of Roma across the region. It should not be excluded that Kosovo, at a later stage, will become a formal member of the Decade.

A Strategy for the Improvement of the situation in Kosovo has to address issues such as education, health and employment. In addition, a Kosovo Strategy has to develop solutions for issues that are specific or particularly difficult for Kosovo's Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities: housing, including the legalization of informal settlements, and civil registration.

Property in Kosovo has often not been registered, or the registers were taken to Serbia when the Yugoslav Army pulled out of Kosovo in 1999. This makes it difficult not only for Serbs, but also for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians to claim their property back. One of the underlying problems for the situation described earlier is the lack of personal identification documents for a large part of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. For Kosovo, the problem of civil registration is aggravated by the fact that many registers from Kosovo were taken to Serbia during the NATO intervention. Access to these registers can be described as limited at best. UNMiK therefore welcomes the initiative of ODIHR and the Serbian-Montenegrin Ministry for Human and Minority Rights to organize a regional conference on the issue of registration in November 2005.

Such a conference constitutes a good starting point for a regional approach towards the issue of civil registration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians. Closely linked to the issue of civil registration is the issue of citizenship of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians following the dissolution of Yugoslavia. As many of them have never been registered, it will be difficult to establish their citizenship. In Kosovo, this problem is aggravated by the fact that the decision on its final status is still pending. All these issues have to be solved without discrimination, according to highest international standards and principles. And they can only be solved regionally. UNMiK, and the OSCE Mission in Kosovo as part of UNMiK, are ready to actively support these efforts. Thank you very much for your attention.

## **Laura Wiseberg**

*Minority Rights Advisor, UNMiK Office of Returns, Communities and Minority Affairs*

Thank you for inviting UNMiK here today to talk with you about the extremely complex and difficult situation we are facing with respect to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian IDPs (RAE) in camps in Northern Kosovo. It is – in the words of the SRSG Soren Jessen-Petersen – “one of the most serious humanitarian problems in the entire region of the Western Balkans.” And he has acknowledged – as we all must – that “the living conditions experienced by the Roma families in these camps are an affront to human dignity.”

I will talk about how this humanitarian crisis emerged – but I will especially focus on what is being done to address the situation, which has now become a major mission priority of UNMiK and of other international organizations in Kosovo. I also want to address myself to what help we need from you, because there is clearly the need here for a common strategy on the way forward.

I will be glad to answer any questions you may have, during the workshop or afterwards, because there has been a great deal of misinformation circulating about the situation.

Let me also say – there is no “quick fix” to this situation – so we welcome all practical proposals or solutions you may have.

### **What is the situation and how did the situation arise?**

We are dealing with RAE in four camps in northern Kosovo – two in north Mitrovicë/Mitrovica (Cesmin Lug and Kablar), one in Zvečan/Zvečan municipality (Žitkovac/Zhikoc), and one in Leposaviq/c – a total of 163 families (about 740 people), about half of whom (341) are children 14 or younger. About 70% of these people originate from the Roma *mahala* on the south side of the Ibar river in Mitrovicë/a. This Roma settlement, one of the oldest in the Western Balkans, was home to 8,000 people – many of whom lived in large comfortable houses prior to June 1999, though some lived in homes on land they did not own, and others had a more precarious housing situation. The Roma *mahala* is extensive – an area of 13.5 hectares and about 750 homes, some three and four stories. In June 1999, after the NATO forces had taken control of Mitrovicë/a, extremist elements of the Albanian community who accused the RAE of having collaborated with the Serbs threatened the RAE, forcing them to flee their homes, and then looted them and burned them to the ground.

The Roma fled – many outside Kosovo. About 1,000, the poorest among them, remained in Kosovo north of the Ibar river, where the Serbs remained in control. The UNHCR helped create three camps for them (a fourth was later set up informally). The UNHCR believed that the RAE would be there for a few weeks and could then return home. But, because of the security situation, the weeks became months and the months became years. And, six years after the crisis, the RAE IDPs are still in the camps. It is, in many ways, a classical situation of “benign neglect” (although the consequences were hardly benign). That the situation was permitted to continue in

this way is unconscionable – particularly as Kosovo was under United Nations administration. Nonetheless, the fact that the Roma are living under miserable conditions is not a unique problem – it is endemic across Europe and is still inadequately addressed in most countries in Europe.

What makes this situation unique and a humanitarian emergency is the fact that northern Mitrovicë/a and Zvečan/Zveçan are areas heavily polluted by 35 years of mining and smelting in the Trepča mine complex – and three of the four camps are situated right under mountains of lead tailings. While UNMiK closed down these mining and smelting operations in 2000 because of the environmental hazard they posed, the people were not moved from the camps. Moreover, their situation has been made more precarious by the fact that their hygienic conditions (particularly water, sewage and garbage) have been exceedingly poor, and their vulnerability has been much aggravated by the practice of illegal lead smelting as a source of income. In fact, the administration of the camps passed from the UNHCR to UNMiK in 2001 and then from UNMiK to the municipalities, with little real serious attention paid to the health situation of the RAE communities. Attempts to return the RAE to their Roma *mahala* failed, initially because of security concerns and subsequently because the municipality of Mitrovicë/a realized the value of their real estate – prime land in the centre of the city on the river bank. – and had other plans for the land. Indeed, in February 2003, the municipality presented the “Fidanishte Plan” to house the RAE in four apartment complexes (336 apartments) up to six stories high outside the *mahala* and to turn the *mahala* into a park and commercial centre, a plan rejected by both the Roma and the international community as going against Security Council Resolution 1244, which recognizes “the right of all refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes in safety.”

Attention only refocused on the dire conditions in which the RAE IDPs were living in the summer of 2004, when a World Health Organization report found that the RAE children living in the camps in northern Mitrovicë/a and Zvečan/Zveçan had critically high blood lead levels, and recommended immediate evacuation of the camps. I must admit that even then it was hard to mobilize and focus the attention of the PISG, UNMiK and other international stakeholders inside Kosovo, as all concern was then directed at dealing with the crisis that had been generated by the March 2004 violence – an additional 4,000 IDPs and massive destruction of homes and property. This notwithstanding, a large international NGO campaign did achieve the objective of moving this health emergency from the periphery to centre stage, and to make it a priority concern of UNMiK and of the UN country team in Kosovo.

### **What have we done?**

UNMiK has pursued a three-pronged strategy to address this humanitarian emergency: medical evacuation to safer places; risk management and remediation in the camps until that is possible; and return to the Roma *mahala* as the only long-term sustainable solution.

#### **1. Medical evacuation**

Medical evacuation was the recommendation of the WHO, as well as of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on IDPs, who visited Kosovo, and of the UN

Country Team and of many NGOs. However, it is not as simple as it sounds. The first complication is that the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in the camps rejected the idea of evacuation in February 2005 when UNMiK met with them to solicit their views. At a meeting with the camp leaders that I chaired, the RAE were adamant and unanimous that they did not want to move again into secondary displacement. To all proposals for a medical evacuation they gave a resounding no. Why? There are many reasons to explain this. First, they have lost trust in the international community. Having been initially told they would be in the camps for a few weeks, they have been permitted to languish there for six years. They therefore do not believe that a relocation to another place would be for only a short while. Indeed, they fear that if we relocate them to a safer location, the concern of the international community will then be diverted elsewhere and they will again be forgotten. Secondly, they believe this would divert funds from what should be the real objective: returning them to their former homes. "Do not waste money on a building a new camp," they said. "Use it to rebuild our homes in the Roma *mahala*." Third, they do not really understand the danger of the lead. Despite our attempts to provide "lead education," many still deny there is a lead danger. Lead is like chronic hunger, it debilitates, but it is hard to see how it impacts daily. Thus, for example, many of the RAE have continued to smelt lead, refusing to recognize how dangerous this is, especially for children and pregnant women.

A second problem with the medical relocation concerns the difficulties of locating a site that would be secure – and to which the RAE would go – and environmentally safer, given the high degrees of pollution throughout Mitrovicë/a and Zvečan/Zveçan. UNMiK did everything possible to identify an appropriate site in the north (which the RAE would consider secure yet not remote from their sources of income) – and came up unsuccessful. Therefore, UNMiK took up the option that the municipality of Mitrovicë/a had agreed to in February 2004, of using 1.5 hectares of land next to the Roma *mahala* as a relocation site. This would have the advantage of being perceived as a step on the road back to the Roma *mahala*, and the RAE would be well positioned to participate in the reconstruction of their homes there.

Therefore, a multi-sectoral team was established including not only key UNMiK staff, but also representatives of other international agencies and non-governmental organizations. The team was tasked not only with developing an operational plan, but also with raising the approximately 1.5 million euros that would be needed to bring it to fruition. The original plan was completed in July and construction at the site was slated to begin in August. Unfortunately, subsequent testing of soil at the relocation site indicated that the area was unsafe and the team was forced to go back to the drawing board and design a new plan for a new site. This proved to be a massive challenge, but the team regrouped and developed a second option – using a KFOR base (Osterode) that the French were vacating in the north at the end of November, so that the RAE could be relocated before the end of the year. An environmental assessment has been commissioned by American engineers, who are to test the new site to ensure that it will be safe for the RAE. We will only go ahead with this plan, and publicly announce it, once we know that we have received an environmental green light to go ahead.

## **2. Return to the Roma *mahala* as a permanent solution**

Beginning in February 2005, serious efforts began to press forward on the option of return to the Roma *mahala* as the only permanent solution for the RAE. At that time, the municipality recognized in principle the right of all former inhabitants to return to their homes in the *mahala*, and negotiations opened on a new urban plan began the following month, first between representatives of the RAE community and the municipality, chaired by the Municipal Representative, and then – at the request of the RAE, between the international community and the municipality. This resulted in an agreement signed on 18 April 2005 by the President of the Municipality, UNMiK and a representative of other international stakeholders. The UNMiK and other internationals believed that, while compromise had been necessary on some issues, the agreement fully respected the rights of the RAE of the Roma *mahala*. Specifically, it acknowledged the right of all former inhabitants to return to the *mahala*; that private property would not be touched; and that infrastructure would, to the extent possible, respect private property with compensation made where infrastructure infringed on private property. For those who had homes on municipal land, apartments would be given to them in small apartment buildings (P+2 or P+3) and they would get security of tenure by means of a 99 year lease. Every family that originated from municipal land, even those formed by marriage since 1999, would be entitled to an apartment. There was one small piece of land (the so-called “green triangle”) where the municipality felt it needed to protect the riverbank and to forbid construction. By way of exchange, the municipality offered 3.41 hectares of agricultural land adjacent to the *mahala*, and because no rubble clearing was required on this land, it was there that the first apartments would be built. Meanwhile, the “green triangle” would be preserved as a park for all inhabitants of the *mahala*.

No RAE representative signed the document despite the fact that they had been consulted as the document was negotiated. There were several reasons for this unfortunate occurrence. First, RAE leaders stated that return is a decision taken by each family, and community leaders could not speak for heads of household. Second, there were a number of elements in the agreement which they were not happy with – specifically, the trade of the “green triangle” for the “agricultural triangle” and the fact that those who came from municipal land would get apartments and not houses. Thirdly, they were under very considerable pressure from Roma in the diaspora to reject the agreement that was reached. The fear in the diaspora was that rebuilding the Roma *mahala* would give Western governments reason to deport Roma refused asylum in their countries.

The result of this was that, when a donors’ conference was held on May 5, 2005, to raise money to begin the reconstruction of the *mahala*, RAE representatives refused to speak in favour of the agreed plan and donors were consequently reluctant to commit funds without assurances that the RAE would return. While the PISG committed €200,000 to launch the Return to Roma Mahala Project and the SRSG promised to more than match this (committing €250,000), most donor governments and agencies adopted a wait and see attitude. The end result of this was that we lost an entire building season. Before winter, the only funds available for beginning the construction was €400,000 that the Norwegian Government provided to the NGO Norwegian Church Aid to put in the infrastructure (water, sewage, electric and roads) for the *mahala*. Other funds subsequently pledged (€250,000 from Ireland and €10,000 from Greece) will only be able to be utilized later.

This notwithstanding, work has begun in the Roma *mahala*. A competition was held for the design of the buildings and a company selected to produce the architectural drawings; the infrastructural work has started; and rubble clearing was initiated in August with the assistance of KFOR and KPC to prepare the private land for the reconstruction. In parallel, a social assessment was undertaken of all the families in the camps who originate from Roma *mahala* and, with the exception of three families, every other family signed a declaration stating their interest in returning and their readiness to accept an apartment. Of course, these statements were signed in the privacy of their own living space and do not mean that they are as yet prepared to declare this intention publicly.

### **3. Risk management in the camps**

As it was clear that, regardless of the efforts expended, the first returns to the Roma *mahala* would not take place until the next summer, it also became essential to reemphasize the third prong of the strategy – the one that was actually initiated the most rapidly. Remediation in the camps and risk management, until a relocation or return was possible. With a budget of approximately €400,000 and under the direction of a Health Task Force co-chaired by the Ministry of Health and UNMiK, serious efforts were made to improve the existing public health problems in the current IDP camps. This has included putting the camps under professional camp management; improving the water, sewage and garbage situation in the camps, and providing firewood to each family; providing supplemental milk and food for the IDPs; fielding and equipping medical teams (two doctors and three nurses) to diagnose and treat the IDPs, including preparing a Programme to screen the blood of all camp inhabitants and to prepare appropriate convalescent facilities for those who might need chelation therapy.

#### **Where are we at the present time?**

We have been working on this three-pronged strategy and trying to raise the resources needed to implement the strategy. We have raised approximately €1.4 million for the reconstruction of the *mahala* (€400,000 from the Norwegians, €10,000 from Greece, €250,000 from Ireland, €400,000 for private houses from the Netherlands, €450,000 from PISG/SRSG funds) but we need approximately €8 million for the first phase of the reconstruction, which would provide housing for most of the people from the lead affected camps. For the relocation, we recently received the pledge of €500,000 from Germany and €114,000 from the USA. We are grateful for these funds, but it is not enough.

Moreover, we need your assistance – including the assistance of Roma organizations and NGOs and IGOs working on behalf of the Roma – to halt the dissemination of misinformation – of which there has been a lot. We need your help as interlocutors to convince the Roma that they should participate in the rebuilding of the Roma *mahala*, that we have no intention of leaving them to languish further in lead polluted camps, or in dire poverty, that we really want to make it possible for them to return to their homes in freedom and in dignity. The time now is not just to stand back and criticize but to pitch in and act – and to act strategically – so that the Roma have a chance to rebuild their lives and to give their children a future in Kosovo. Sometimes, the best is

the enemy of the good. The solutions we have may not be ideal, but it is respectful of their rights. Help us to help them build a future.

## **Gwendolyn Albert**

*Director, League of Human Rights*

### **Lead poisoning in Mitrovica RAE IDP camps: Where is the solution?**

In May 2005 the human rights advocacy community in Kosovo, led by the Humanitarian Law Centre in Pristina and the European Roma Rights Center in Budapest, spearheaded a call for action on the issue of lead contamination in the three IDP camps of Cesmin Lug, Kablare and Zitkovac built in 1999 in North Mitrovica on the tailings of the Treпча mine complex, once the largest mine in all of the former Yugoslavia. Levels of lead contamination in the blood of the camp residents, all of whom are from the Roma, Askhali and Egyptian community (RAE), exceed acceptable levels more than ten times over, yet the camps have remained in these dangerous sites for six years.

HLC's presentation of the facts led to press coverage of the issue by Kohe Ditore, Kosovo's highest-circulation Albanian-language daily, BBC World Service radio, the Washington Times, and the Philadelphia Inquirer. US Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas convened hearings on the issue before the US Senate at the behest of the International Helsinki Committee, and Amnesty International issued a call for action (<http://news.amnesty.org/index/ENGEUR700112005>)

The official UNMiK response to this issue has changed greatly since it was first brought to their attention by the ERRC in November 2004. Today, UNMiK representatives are able to acknowledge that the camp residents have been neglected by all those responsible for their welfare, despite information being given to UNMiK in the year 2000 that the locations were extremely hazardous. Camp management was passed from UNHCR to UNMiK to the local municipality without any strategy ever being developed for informing the residents of the danger they faced and the necessity to move them elsewhere. Not surprisingly, almost no trust exists between the camp residents and government structures, as officials have discovered while belatedly trying to negotiate an exit from this tragedy. A crucial error has been the linking of the resolution of their humanitarian situation to the rebuilding of the South Mitrovica *mahala* from which 70 % of them were burned out in 1999; rebuilding the *mahala* has been impossible until recently for political reasons. The camp residents have been thus held hostage in a toxic situation by the inability of the Albanian, Serb, international and Roma diaspora actors to come to a solution.

The advocacy community will continue to pose the following questions to the authorities until such time as the situation is resolved:

1. Which official body is responsible for testing the camp residents' blood and communicating the results to them in a meaningful way?
2. Which official body is responsible for arranging medical treatment for the camp residents once they are removed from the source of contamination?
3. Which official body is responsible for monitoring the treatment of those contaminated and the mental development of the children affected?



4. Will the camps be closed or will they remain open for reuse?
5. If those 70 % of the camp residents who are from the South Mitrovica *mahala* are eventually returned to the *mahala*, can their relatives in the diaspora rest assured that the governments of Germany and other host countries will not automatically interpret this belated resolution of their situation as proof that Kosovo is safe for Roma returns and that their asylum requests will continue to be handled on an individual basis?
6. What will happen to the 30% of the camp residents who are not from South Mitrovica? Where will they go once the camps are closed?
7. Who will provide security in the South Mitrovica *mahala*, should the IDPs return, and what guarantees do the Roma have that eventual independence for the province will not result in a new wave of ethnic cleansing?
8. Which official body is responsible for seeing that the Roma IDPs receive justice both for the crimes committed against them by those who burned down their homes and for their neglect by the Kosovo government structures?

The international advocacy community remains very strongly concerned that a nightmare scenario lies in store for the Kosovo Roma, and that once the international security presence leaves Kosovo, they and all other minorities will suffer a repeat of the 1999 ethnic cleansing. There are no indications that ethnic Albanian extremism is declining; in fact, quite the opposite. EU heads of government as well as the Council of Europe have expressed similar concerns.

UNMiK must remove the RAE IDPs to safety and establish a clear communications channel with all Kosovo minorities regarding the issues above. To this end the advocacy community welcomes the recent establishment by the OSCE of the Roma and Ashkali Documentation Office in Pristina and in Mitrovica (<http://belfries.tripod.com/getleadoutradreport.htm>)

**Henry Scicluna**

*Coordinator for Activities concerning Roma and Travellers  
Council of Europe*

## **Discussion Summary**

### **Working Group I: Update on the situation of Roma minorities, refugees, IDPs and returnees – the need for a common strategy, with a special focus on Kosovo**

**Submitted by: Ramneek Grewal**

Kosovo was home to approximately 1.29-1.49 million Roma. The UNHCR has reported that many Roma fled to neighbouring countries after the outbreak of conflict in the area. In Albania and surrounding areas, where many Roma sought refuge, thousands were expelled. It is widely acknowledged that Roma are one of the most disadvantaged groups in Europe. Roma in Kosovo face a lot of discrimination. They were expelled by ethnic Albanians, who viewed Roma as collaborators with Serbian forces. The basic social rights of Roma are violated in areas such as education, employment and housing. For instance, in some areas there is no electricity or water. The school attendance rate for Roma children is quite low. In early 2000, the particular needs of Roma children were acknowledged. For example, support for kindergartens and catch up classes for Roma children to facilitate their integration in Kosovo educational classes. In 2004, a feasibility study was conducted by the OSCE, and it was found that no teaching material for Roma children exists.

The main issue in the Kosovo region is the failure of authorities to help Roma (internally displaced people) leave lead-contaminated camps. The Roma have been forced to return to Kosovo, although no mechanisms exist to assist the returnees. The Kosovo region is in the process of rebuilding, yet it is unfortunate that the government has not helped the Roma population, while other social groups in this area have been assisted. In general, it would be useful to institute affirmative action Programmes in this area in regards to education, housing, and employment. It was noted that the personal property of Roma returning to Kosovo has not been returned. Roma have lived in Kosovo for many years, however, some do not have personal identification. This is an acute problem as civil registration would enable the Roma community to access many of the socio-economic benefits that citizens enjoy. It was recommended that there be a regular conference on civil registration to address this problem.

There needs to be an inclusion in the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE area, to facilitate and develop a strategy for Kosovo. It would be useful to include other international organizations and NGOs in this regard. There should also be more emphasis on accelerating the social inclusion of the Roma community.

With regard to civic organization and capacity building, currently there are limited capacity-building Programmes for Roma NGOs. In addition, there needs to be support for media Programmes. Presently, there is a lack of awareness, inadequate resources and discrimination toward the Roma community.

Mrs. Laura Wiseberg (UNMiK) discussed how the situation of Roma in Kosovo is a serious humanitarian concern. The living conditions in camps are terrible. She attempted to answer some difficult questions: How did this crisis emerge? How to address the situation? What can be accomplished? She emphasized the need for a

common strategy. Mrs. Wiseberg acknowledged that the situation is complicated and that the issue cannot be quickly addressed.

She gave a brief description and background knowledge of the camps in Kosovo. The Roma population reside in highly contaminated camps. Of the 163 families in the camps seventy percent are from the Roma *mahala* region, one of the oldest Roma settlements. Extremist Albanian groups attacked the Roma settlement, and in response the UNHCR created the camps, but in a highly polluted area. The Roma have been living there for six years. This is a disgraceful issue for the international community, as there has been extreme neglect of this community. The UNHCR passed management of the camps to other organizations, until it was eventually turned over to the municipal authorities. The Roma community on the contaminated camps have been referred to as the “forgotten people”.

The World Health Organization has tested the Roma community and found that the children had extremely high blood lead levels. It was recommended that they be evacuated immediately. Many children/women did not want to leave, or are not aware of the situation. There are three main issues that the Roma and international community are currently facing: risk management, relocation, and return. In regards to medical evacuation, the Roma community has not agreed to relocation or a secondary settlement. The Roma community only wants to move back to the Roma *mahala* area. Many Roma fail to recognize the problem of lead poisoning. There was a negotiation in process for the return of the Roma to the Roma *mahala*, but they did not want to accept the municipality’s conditions of return. On April 18, 2005, there was an agreement to return and for the compensation of private property. Under the municipality’s agreement the Roma community would not be granted land, but would be given apartments. The Roma did not participate in the negotiations or sign an agreement, as community representatives indicated that return is a family situation. Attempts to return the Roma to the *mahala* region is a difficult security concern.

In the case of Kosovo, there exists the opinion locally that the Roma diaspora is threatening. The Roma cannot be forcibly returned to Kosovo (there is less prejudice if they are Ashkali or Egyptian). Amongst the diaspora, there are people who had property on municipal land and did not want to move into apartments. Unless they have access to their private property, they do not want to return. Currently, the negotiation process is stalled. The donors involved will not provide funding unless the Roma community move into apartments.

The Roma *mahala* region is also polluted. The Roma can be relocated to a French base that is not far from this region. The German government has provided funds for medical evacuation. There are attempts to rebuild the Roma *mahala* and funds have been received for reconstruction. The private land that was previously owned by the Roma in this region will need to be cleaned. Very little has been done for the Roma, however, there has been considerable reconstruction of Serbian/Albanian property.

#### **Follow-up discussion:**

Sebastian (Kosovo): The representative works closely with Roma refugee camps. The Roma community is tired of international policies that have not been implemented. The Roma community wants guarantees that they will not be forgotten. The

representative questioned to what extent the Action Plan regarding the Roma community was important. The representative mentioned the importance of returning IDPs under good conditions. There has been no assistance from Germany, NGOs or international organizations in returning IDPs to Kosovo. Local authorities need help to develop an action plan.

There was an emotional personal narrative by an internally displaced Roma woman from the Kosovo region. She commented on the lost years spent as a refugee, and the need for psychological recuperation after such a conflict. She noted that the Roma perspective should be taken into account as well as the government perspective. An important question raised was: Who is conducting an investigation for the IDP camp in Kosovo? A representative referred to this situation as a modern Holocaust.

The moderator (Mr. Andrzej Mirga) disagreed with the representative in referring to the situation of Roma in Kosovo and elsewhere as a Holocaust. He emphasized the need to ensure the security of minorities and commented that the international community has made a mistake by not including Roma in all discussions.

Mr. Nicolae Gheorghe noted that there are various perspectives on issues concerning the Roma community and asked how we can implement solutions (especially on the issue of Roma in Kosovo). He commented that all emotions are valid. The issue is complex, not only in relation to Roma in Kosovo, but also in general, addressing any problem that the Roma community confronts. There are diverse needs within the Roma community. There is not a united perspective. There are also class divisions within the Roma community. This contributes to the confusion, because distinctions have to be made. It is difficult to present one Roma voice. Each group has a different agenda. It is important to acknowledge the distinctions in the Roma community. Specifically, there is diversity among the Roma population in Kosovo, so a different agenda is applicable to different groups. It was also emphasized that it is important to meet regularly. Another recommendation was to present a paper representing the different factions and groups in the Roma community.

Mrs. Wiseberg focused on the right to choose/right to return in regards to internally displaced people in Serbia. She asked about the guarantees the Roma have that if they return it will be a secure situation. The discussion that followed indicated that there are no guarantees that the Roma would be safe if they returned. An excellent idea was presented that there be a common political platform representing the different Roma constituencies. This would enable the Roma community to present a unified voice on issues that concern them. It was also indicated that women's groups are not heard often enough in the Roma community. It was recommended that a common position paper regarding refugees, Roma and Kosovo be worked on to bring together the various perspectives on the issue. Another recommendation was that police forces should be representative of the Roma population in the area. This would reduce the security concerns of Roma and contribute to decentralization processes.

## **4.2 WORKING GROUP II: How to desegregate classes and schools and promote equal access to quality education for Roma and Sinti children and youth**

This working group was chaired by Ms. Eva Sobotka from the EUMC. Speakers included Mr. Claude Cahn (ERRC), Mr. Bernard Rorke (OSI, Roma participation Programme), Mrs. Miranda Vuolasranta (CoE), Mr. Herbert Heuss (CARE Bulgaria) and Ms. Anna Mirga (Roma Educational Association *Harangos*, Poland).

General remarks:

The group started the discussion with an implicit agreement on the bases of two pre-conceptions:

1. Education is the starting point to improve the situation of Roma communities. By improving Roma education, other aspects of their situation such as employment, access to health care, etc., will also improve;
2. Quality education is a pre-condition to equal access to the labour market.

However, the above can be additionally reflected or can be considered as subjects for specific discussions by policy and decision-makers.

The content:

- The content of the discussion focused on formal education only;
- The roles of non-formal education and vocational training were not discussed;
- The importance of the latter should not be underestimated. The relevance of non-formal education and vocational training with Roma communities should be reflected and prioritized.
- A debate on the inclusion of human rights education, intercultural learning and education for citizenship in the educational curricula for all students in Europe should be initiated.

### **Manifestations of anti-gypsyism in education:**

A. In terms of attitudes:

Mrs. Miranda Vuolasranta, who was a participant in the group, reported that recently she received information about children throwing stones at a Roma child because of his ethnicity. Mrs. Vuolasranta shared with the group that she experienced exactly the same situation on her first day at school as a child in Finland in 1966.

Besides of the already known discriminatory attitudes of the majority children towards their Roma peers, it was pointed out that in some cases teachers also have negative attitudes towards students of Roma origin.

It was also reported by several organizations that work on desegregation of Roma education that there is tendency among majority parents to pull their children out of schools that are running desegregation projects.

In relation to the above, the question was raised of the protection of children's dignity by international and domestic legislation, as well as incorporation of international legislation into national constitutions.

An obvious conclusion is that the manifestation of anti-gypsyism in education is not a new phenomenon. However it is important to underline that manifestations of anti-gypsyism have increased in number recently in Europe.

B. In terms of practices:

- a) Segregated education/schools due to resident segregation;
- b) Special education/schools for mentally disabled children;
- c) Special classes.

The result of the above:

- Poor quality, sub-standard education for Roma children, which limits their possibilities to progress beyond elementary levels of schooling;
- Fewer chances to compete and find realization on the labour market;
- In addition, segregated schooling isolates Roma children from the wider society from an early age, and perpetuates existing divisions and inequality in society.

Two questions were raised in the group:

1. Are all residentially segregated schools providing low-quality education? An example of the school in Kneja, Bulgaria was pointed out. In this school, which is residentially segregated, Roma children receive good quality education, and as a result the overall educational level of the community is higher.
2. Should segregated schools be closed at once, or should there first be an assessment of the local situation, the priorities of the communities, etc., in order to take a joint decision with the communities?

C. In terms of politics:

- Lack of political will;
- Lack of policies;
- Lack of coherence between policies and practices;

Experiences:

The guest speakers at the panel presented and reflected different types of experiences:

Mr. Claude Cahn, Acting Executive Director of the European Roma Rights Centre, presented various forms and cases of school desegregation;

Mr. Bernard Rorke, Deputy Director of the Roma Participation Programme, Open Society Institute, reflected on experiences based on desegregation projects funded by the OSI in the region;

Mr. Herbert Heuss presented a project for training assistant teachers in Bulgaria, implemented by CARE International in co-operation with CARE Bulgaria, the Veliko Turnovo University and the Diversity Foundation;

Mrs. Miranda Vuolasranta, Adviser to the Council of Europe on Roma issues, reflected on the importance of Romani teaching materials and the Romani language;

Mrs. Aurora Ailincăi presented the Roma Education Project, Council of Europe;

Ms. Anna Mirga, Roma Educational Association Harangos, Poland, presented an evaluation of the implementation of the educational part of the Pilot Governmental Programme for Roma in Malopolska region;

Mr. Ivan Ivanov, Director of ERIO, Brussels, intervened during the discussions;

Mr. Lyubomir Lazarov, Project Officer, European Dialogue, shared experiences from projects implemented in Bulgaria;

Mr Kujtim Pacaku, Roma-language radio, Kosovo, underlined experiences from Kosovo;

Governmental representatives from Croatia, Slovak Republic and Slovenia contributed with their experiences.

### **Conclusions and recommendations based on practices.**

One of the conclusions of this group, underlined also during the plenary session, was that Roma education should be aimed at integration of the community, and not at assimilation.

A fundamental point to be recommended to the states is the adoption of legal provisions on school desegregation, specifying the role of all actors involved and especially the obligations of the public authorities. However it was underlined in the group that this point is still far away from the policy agendas.

It is necessary to introduce policy changes which imply:



- Moving from ad-hoc project-funding to sustainable and coherent policymaking, which involves structural changes within the educational system.
- Amendments of educational law (with clear legal provisions established);
- Providing financial incentives to schools per disadvantaged child;
- Grant tenders for schools pursuing multicultural practices;

Policy should also envisage mechanisms to overcome the following challenges identified by the group in relation to policy implementation (based on the Hungarian experience):

- Reluctance to put existing policy into practice;
- Creation of alternatives to comply with policy that on a practical level are different from the expected;
- Non-Roma children pulled out of schools running integration projects;
- In cases where policy exists to a certain extent but there is no real result.

It is also recommended that states adopt a law establishing a special state fund to support projects aiming at educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities.

Adaptation of the mainstream educational curriculum is also of major importance. Education should contribute to strengthening the identity of all children, should build “bridges” between communities, and should provide reasons/motivation for Roma parents and children to enjoy education. The recognition and inclusion of Roma culture, history and language into the European educational curriculum should be prioritized.

As an example of work on these issue was presented by the Roma Education Project, Council of Europe. More info available at [http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural\\_co-operation/Roma-Gypsy\\_children](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_co-operation/Roma-Gypsy_children).

Other important questions were also stressed:

- Recognition of the Roma language as the mother tongue of the Roma;
- The inclusion of the Romani language in the mainstream educational curriculum;
- Opportunities for the Roma to study their mother tongue in schools, as well as the availability of an option for receiving bilingual education in integrated schools;

- That state and municipal authorities should establish effective mechanisms to combat racism in the schools;
- A proposal to consider the creation of local educational models, taking into consideration the local specificity of the Roma community, was proposed by the representative of European Dialogue, based on the experiences of the organization from Bulgaria;
- Working with the community on the aspirations of Roma parents is very important. The question of informed choice among Roma parents was underlined;
- That, where necessary, local governments provide free transportation of Roma students to integrated schools;
- That state and local government institutions ensure that Roma organizations have a central role in the school desegregation process;
- The group also concluded that desegregation of Roma education has to be implemented not only with educational curriculum change, but also with training of teachers on intercultural learning;
- Another discussion was on the relevance of training of teaching assistants and their use in schools. The final conclusion was that teaching assistants are certainly needed and relevant in pre-schools and kindergarten. Furthermore, it has to be decided whether teaching assistants should be employed as temporary or permanent staff. Attention should be put during the selection process on the motivation and competencies of the candidates. Sustainable funding to ensure long-term employment of the teaching assistants and the effects of their work should be ensured by states. Their role should be perceived as extended from teacher assistants to community mediators;
- On the question of the relevance of teaching assistants in primary and secondary schools, the group had a long discussion but agreement was not reached;
- The group recommended that the practice of placing Roma children in special schools for the mentally disabled and testing for that should be ended. It was mentioned that some governments have already acknowledged the practice of diagnosing Roma children as handicapped and routing them to special schools as “deeply discriminatory” and “a violation of the right of the Roma children to equal access to education”. An example for improvement of the testing system in the Slovak Republic with financial support from the EC was presented;
- The question of adult education within the Roma communities was raised. Its relevance and positive impact on the education of Roma children was stressed;

- It was mentioned that due to demographic issues, desegregation of education might be impossible in some geographic areas where Roma children are more numerous than non-Roma children. An example of a Croatian village where Roma children make up 80% of the total was presented;
- The role of the Roma Education Fund in promoting the above-mentioned recommendations was stressed;
- The importance of setting up criteria for quality evaluation and monitoring was underlined. It was mentioned that there are currently no clear criteria to assess what a successful desegregation project is or what a successful teaching assistants training project is.

## **Claude Cahn**

*Acting Executive Director  
European Roma Rights Center*

In the first part of the working group Mr. Cahn from the ERRC elaborated on the law suits against Hungary, Bulgaria and Croatia to challenge these countries to stop segregating Roma children and put them in “gypsy classes”. The ERRC considers that these law suits are the beginning of a policy-change process, resulting in long term sustainable change. However, good policy changes can also face problems in implementation (on a local level). Hungary was taken as an example in this respect. Since 2003 Hungary has reformed the educational law, which now explicitly states that discrimination against Roma is forbidden. Hungary has also released a call for proposals for promoting “multicultural schools” and promotes mainstreaming of Roma issues in the educational system.

However, schools in Hungary have been obstructing this policy by:

- 1) Ignoring the policy and thus continuing segregating Roma children;
- 2) Applying “administrative formalities” (for example two schools (one “Roma” and one “non-Roma” school) merged *on paper* but remaining segregated in practice);

Another complication lies in the fact that some schools are situated in Roma areas, so mainstreaming and integration of Roma children is simply not possible.

In general, Hungary was presented as a country in which national-level policy makers have made large positive strides in creating incentive (i.e., subsidy-based) frameworks to encourage integration in schooling, without (yet) having elaborated suitable mechanisms to sanction schools not in compliance with the requirement to desegregate. Mr. Cahn argued on the basis of observing developments in Hungary, including via discussions facilitated by the OSCE, that there was a need in all countries with *de facto* segregated school systems for positive laws, adopted by parliament, to desegregate school systems. Such laws would specify responsibilities and include adequate budgetary allocations.

Mr. Rorke from OSI underlined that the *de facto* segregation that still pervades in the educational systems across East and Central Europe is well documented, as is the disastrous impact this has on Roma communities. OSI’s Roma Participation Programme strategy has been to challenge the denial of equal access to education through high-impact civic campaigns around desegregation, led by Romani non-governmental organizations. The basic idea was to develop models of good practice to show that integration can work, to publicize these successes, advocate their replication, and build broad coalitions of support to advocate for substantive governmental reform to address the issue of segregation. He mentioned specifically results of desegregation projects in Bulgaria and Hungary. In Bulgaria desegregation is now common currency in public discourse in Bulgaria used widely in the media, in public speeches by the President, the Prime Minister, education ministers, Romani activists, and now surfaces in official policy documents. In Hungary similar initiatives were challenged by the decentralisation of the educational system.

It is becoming more and more evident that sustainable and thoroughgoing desegregation requires the political will to set in place a system of incentives and punitive sanctions at local level to halt discriminatory practices that inhibit reform.

Mr. Rorke stressed that to make desegregation it is necessary to cultivate the necessary political consensus and commitment of stakeholders for successful integration and to ensure that the receiving schools would provide a welcoming environment

Mr. Heuss, consultant for CARE Bulgaria, elaborated on a “teaching assistant” Programme he has been implementing with partners in Bulgaria. The aim of the project was to train 100 Roma to become teaching assistants to give children in disadvantaged situation more help during school (not only Roma children!). The results of the project were very good: 92 out of 100 passed the final exam, and those who dropped out were mainly because of health or family problems.

During the discussion that followed, several other participants contributed to the topic of this working group. A Bulgarian Roma man shared how he was involved in drafting an action plan for Roma children’s education. He pointed out to the problem of local implementation: the central policies may be good but the local implementation often fails. Another person commented that a related taboo in this discourse is the phenomena that some parents and Roma activist in fact support a segregated school system. This taboo has to be acknowledged in the discussions.

## **Bernard Rorke**

*Deputy Director*

*Roma Participation Programme, Open Society Institute*

### **How to desegregate classes and schools and promote equal access to quality education for Roma and Sinti children and youth**

I would like to thank you, on behalf of the Open Society Institute's Roma Participation Programme for the opportunity to participate in this conference. In broad terms, our Programme is committed to furthering the integration of Roma in society and empowering Roma to challenge the direct and indirect racial discrimination that continues to hinder such integration. We view integration in terms defined by Roy Jenkins over 30 years ago, "not as a flattening process of assimilation but equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance."

We believe that all talk of integration is meaningless as long as Romani children are denied equal access to quality education. The *de facto* segregation that still pervades in the educational systems across East and Central Europe is well documented, as is the disastrous impact this has on Roma communities. Whether Romani children are classified as mentally handicapped and sent to special schools, or are educated in so-called "gypsy schools" situated in Roma ghettos, the results are the same. They receive poor quality, sub-standard education that leaves them unable to progress beyond elementary levels of schooling, unqualified and ill-equipped to compete in the labour market. In addition, segregated schooling isolates Romani children from the wider society from an early age and perpetuates existing divisions and inequality in society. Some governments have already acknowledged that the practices of diagnosing Romani children as handicapped and routing them to special schools as "deeply discriminatory" and "a violation of the right of Romani children to equal access to education."

Our Programme strategy to challenge the denial of equal of equal access to education was to initiate high-impact civic campaigns around desegregation, led by Romani non-governmental organizations. The basic idea was to develop models of good practice to show that integration can work, to publicize these successes, advocate their replication, and build broad coalitions of support to advocate for substantive governmental reform to address the issue of segregation.

In Hungary, Roma-led advocacy prompted perhaps the most far-reaching governmental reforms in all of Europe. The Minister for Education, Magyar Balint, in 2002 appointed Mohacsi Viktoria as a ministerial commissioner responsible for promoting integration of Roma and other disadvantaged children into the schooling system, and committed significant resources to this end. Viktoria has of course since then become a Member of the European Parliament, where she champions the cause of desegregation with characteristic fervour and eloquence. However, the extent of decentralization and devolution of power in Hungary carries with it particular problems when it comes to implementing reforms that threaten vested interests and deep prejudices. It is becoming more and more evident that sustainable and thoroughgoing desegregation requires the political will to set in place a system of

incentives and punitive sanctions at local level to halt discriminatory practices that inhibit reform.

In Bulgaria, the very word “desegregation” was something of a neologism and deliberately deployed by RPP and its partner Romani organizations to distinguish and contrast this advocacy campaign from prior efforts which were content “to improve the quality of education in Roma-only ghetto schools.” The word was also chosen with the knowledge that analogies would be frequently drawn with the civil rights movement in the United States, and to bolster our insistence that, in the field of public education, separate and segregated educational facilities are inherently unequal. The desegregation campaigns differed in that the pilots and attendant advocacy was Roma-led, committed to empowering Roma parents to make informed choices about their children’s futures and publicly countering the pervasive prejudice that Roma do not value education. Desegregation is now common currency in public discourse in Bulgaria used widely in the media, in public speeches by the President, the Prime Minister, education ministers, Romani activists, and now surfaces in official policy documents.

At the local level there were intensive preparatory phases prior to the launch of the desegregation pilot projects. These included round table discussions involving education directors, school teaching staffs, Roma and non-Roma community representatives, public debates and extensive media coverage to render the process completely transparent and to cultivate the necessary consensus for successful integration and to ensure that the receiving schools would provide a welcoming environment. The new and remarkable partnerships formed between Romani parents, the staff and directors of the mainstream schools consolidated and legitimated the process among Roma and non-Roma alike. From the first pilot project in Vidin, RPP-funded projects subsequently extended to more than 2,500 children in 8 cities across Bulgaria. Professor Jack Greenberg, who was among the lawyers who argued *Brown v. Board of Education*, spoke of his experience with Bulgarian desegregation projects:

“Even more striking was the community effort to provide social supports. Social workers visited every Romany family that had school-age children. Tutors were available for children who needed help. Teachers received special training. Families that needed food or clothing received assistance. Roma and non-Roma children shared outings, social events, and cultural experiences.”

Professor Greenberg asserted:

“They taught me more than I taught them. Just as learning another language helps one understand English better, *Brown v. Board of Education* took on new meaning for me as I observed integration of Roma into Bulgarian public schools.”

In 2001, then Bulgarian President Petar Stoyanov fully endorsed the Vidin initiative and expressed the hope that very soon “the experience of Vidin will be common practice in the rest of Bulgaria”. In 2005, I echo this noble sentiment – we are still waiting for the day. We recommend:

- that the Bulgarian government adopt a law establishing a special fund to support projects aiming at educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities;
- that state and municipal authorities establish effective mechanisms to combat racism in Bulgarian schools;
- that the option of bilingual education be available in integrated schools;
- that, where necessary, local governments provide free transportation of Roma students to integrated schools;
- that state and local government institutions ensure that Roma organizations have a central role in the school desegregation process.

In the Republic of Slovakia, I was very heartened to learn of a new pilot school integration project in the Trnava municipality. 90 Romani schoolchildren, formerly in classes for the mentally retarded, are now part of a Programme coordinated by the League of Human Rights Advocates, a Bratislava-based NGO. The Ministry of Education approved this project, and matched its approval with financial support from the European Social Funds Programme. In this project 7 teaching assistants and 3 coordinators from the local Romany community work in close partnership with parents, children, teachers and the local authorities. Vital to the success of this project is the enthusiastic support of the Mayor of Trnava, Štefan Bošňák and his deputy Daučo Ľudovít. I hear already that more schools want to be part of this initiative, and many more Romani parents want such opportunities for their children. This pilot project currently involves 90 Romani children, the problem of access to quality education affects tens of thousands of Romani children in the Slovak Republic.

We would urge the government to build on the positive lessons learned from its involvement in this project and greatly expand the reach of initiatives to overcome discrimination in education.

The constitutional court in Slovakia has just ruled that affirmative action is unlawful and unconstitutional. We hope the government will choose to amend the constitution rather than abandon its commitment to affirmative action.

In a broader context, by affirmative action we do not mean open-ended policies of preference with rigid quotas for ethnic minorities that ignore wider social and economic inequalities. What we do mean is Programmes of positive action rather than positive discrimination. By positive action we mean well-targeted Programmes and policies to remove obstacles to equality, to liberate those disadvantaged from cumulative cycles of disadvantage and exclusion. Such policies should apply to all the disadvantaged, but special attention should be directed to Roma because their disadvantages are greater and compounded by discrimination.

As regards the sphere of education – affirmative and positive action is so important because schools play a crucial role in creating a wider common sense of belonging in society. Integration and a sense of common belonging should, always and everywhere, be a two-way process. Roma cannot belong to a society that does not



welcome them. Schools should prepare their pupils by cultivating such skills and virtues as sympathetic imagination, tolerance, openness to other ways of life and mutual respect. Schools must address issues of racism in the playgrounds and classrooms, among children and teaching professionals. Schools must work to provide a welcoming and positive environment for Roma and all ethnic-minority children. Civil society organizations and donors have funded many innovations in the sphere of inclusive education. However, the responsibility for education reform lies not with the civil-society sector. Indeed, with the best will in the world it is beyond our capacity. The responsibility for substantive educational reform lies squarely with the elected governments in each nation-state in the region.

To sum up and reiterate: The overwhelming placement of Romani children in sub-standard schools and classes is such that governments should publicly commit themselves to staged but steady desegregation over the next ten years. Governments must scrutinize the workings of commissions responsible for testing and diagnosing children to bring an end to systematic practices of misplacing Romani children in special schools. Indeed, the very notion of this psychological testing is an absurd anomaly and should be scrapped forthwith. As they move to desegregate, governments must progressively enhance the quality of education afforded Romani children, with the goal of achieving equal Roma and non-Roma secondary school graduation levels by 2015. Special attention is also needed to ensure that Romani girls can fully and freely avail of all educational opportunities, to reduce any existing disparities in enrolment and retention rates between Romani girls and their peers. Experience across the region shows that centrally devised policies alone will not suffice. Sustainable educational reform requires the political will to set in place a system of incentives and sanctions at local level to halt discriminatory practices that inhibit reform.

The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, an initiative supported by OSI and the World Bank, is an unprecedented international effort to combat discrimination and ensure that Roma have equal access to education, housing, employment, and healthcare. Launched in February 2005, and endorsed by the Prime Ministers of 8 Central and East European countries, the Decade is also supported by the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme. At the Sofia launch, George Soros pledged to contribute \$30 million to the newly established Roma Education Fund, which will support education reform in conjunction with the Decade. Governments, multilateral institutions, private organizations, and individuals have also contributed to the Fund, which now has more than \$45 million in pledges.

I hope that the expressions of goodwill and pledges of partnership and progress by participating governments in the Decade, combined with OSI and the World Bank's continued commitment to equal access and opportunities to quality education for Roma heralds the beginning of a new and profound transition. What I mean by transition was best articulated by a Roma colleague from Macedonia as a move from *ad hoc* project financing to sustainable and coherent policymaking. I hope that the result of our combined efforts will be to realize the vision and objectives of the Roma Education Fund:

- To ensure full and equal access to quality education for Roma;

- To close the gap in outcomes between Roma and non-Roma;
- To desegregate fully the schooling systems of East and Central Europe in this coming decade.

Complementing local level advocacy was sustained campaigning at national and international level. At this point I will hand over to the leading advocate on desegregation, my colleague, Romyan Russinov.

[Russinov]: Governments need to produce action plans within fixed timeframes for the complete desegregation of their educational systems. Social segregation and extreme poverty further hinder access to education. There is a need for social support (clothing, light breakfasts and lunches, books etc.) as well as transportation where Roma are housed in ghettos far from the mainstream schools. Governments should aim to provide 2 years of free pre-school education for all disadvantaged children (Roma and non-Roma).

The Decade Education Goals were endorsed by countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion. In addition to issues of full and equal access, these goals stress the need to focus on retention and successful completion in primary, vocational and secondary schools for all Romani children to raise academic achievement of Romani children to the same level as their non-Roma peers. These goals are related to the quality of education services provided. To overcome the legacy of discrimination, material disadvantage, and outdated approaches in pedagogy, affirmative action is needed to complement and bolster the process of desegregation. Such action includes Programmes to engage Romani parents and community, anti-bias training for teachers and administrators; the use of child-centred rather than teacher-centred pedagogy; the use of differentiated instruction to build on children's strengths rather than focus on deficits; the development and use of culturally-sensitive curricula; supplementary tutoring and scholarship support to prepare for exams and complete secondary schooling.

There needs to be a drive to hire more qualified Roma as teachers, and to upgrade the professional status of Romani teaching assistants. Special attention is also needed to ensure that Romani girls can fully and freely avail of all educational opportunities, to reduce any existing disparities in enrolment and retention rates between Romani girls and their peers.

## **Herbert Heuss**

*External Expert, CARE*

### **Teaching assistants, desegregation and quality education**

All over Europe, education systems are in rapid transition. This is caused not only by the sheer quantity of knowledge students have to learn – and teachers to teach – but also by the quality of knowledge needed in rapidly developing economics and sciences. Therefore the introduction of self-organized learning processes is overdue, and it is common knowledge that learning does not end with school or university exams.

At the same time, we can observe a growing social distance between large parts of the Roma population and the elites; a phenomenon that came into view with the end of the communist era in the Eastern and South-Eastern European countries. One wonders to what extent this phenomenon is a result of the transition period, which brought with it the unemployment of a vast number of Roma groups that had been integrated into the working class during the communist period, or is it the overture to a broader social tendency that will concern other strata of society in the near future? This new phenomenon, which we can observe day by day, is verified by growing numbers of young Roma people dropping out and by increasing illiteracy levels among younger generations – demographic figures show an increasing percentage of young Roma within this segment of the Bulgarian population.

This new discrimination is not a transitory obstacle that can easily be overcome by schooling. The experience of other countries shows that schooling is no longer the ticket to social integration. The integration of Roma children into mainstream education is a main feature of political programmes, both of national governments and international institutions as well as of Roma NGOs. However, it is still unclear what reasonable “integration” means or could mean, especially if we take into account the different developments in the societies of Western and Eastern Europe.

This is the background of every discussion on Roma inclusion and access to education. The RPI project, with its core activity on training 100 young Roma to become teaching assistants, triggered off a discussion on the development of the education system concerning Roma children. The political preference of de-segregation is obviously favoured by governments and a number of Roma NGOs. De-segregation is being presented as an explicitly political concept, focussing primarily on special schools for disabled children, and now expanded on neighbourhood schools in Roma quarters. To what extent is this solely a political question? The other important topic is how to improve the quality of education for Roma children, and for children in general. Here, teacher assistants may play a role in the introduction of new methods and in implementing multi-cultural education.

The concept of de-segregation is a kind of reversed version of an increasing ethnification process that took place during the last two decades. However, it defines a specific self-understanding of the minority group, while at the same time being an instrument in the political process and the search for resources. The contradiction between the pursuit of political participation and the cultural autonomy of the minority group – a number of representatives claim the concept of a Roma nation – is

a complex question. Obviously there are fields where a minority group insists on ethnic criteria, e.g., in culture and history, and other fields, where ethnic criteria shall not play any role or are not allowed at all. Education seems to be in the point of intersection of both.

In principle, the teaching assistant position is not based on any ethnic approach; the teaching assistant has to work with all children in the classroom and outside. However, support for children with a bilingual background is an important part of the teaching assistant's tasks, which needs a specific qualification here. Knowledge of the children's mother tongue should therefore be a preference but not a condition for participation in the training. De-segregation as a political concept only is not sufficient. De-segregation also needs a pedagogical concept to evoke positive long term results. This includes frequent teacher training on intercultural education, understanding of the characteristics of children with bilingual background, and the introduction of new methods into the education process – including the position of the teacher assistant supporting the education process inside and outside the classroom.

De-segregation is not a general solution for all “Roma schools” or all locations either. Even in places where de-segregation projects run, representatives of Roma communities state that they do not want their neighbourhood school to be closed down. Many reasons are given for this: not all children will participate in the de-segregation project; not all parents agree to send their children out of the neighbourhood; schools around the neighbourhood do not have the capacity to enrol all the children; bussing and support for Roma children may cause tensions with Bulgarian parents; some children do not feel welcome in the mainstream schools – a number of children return to the neighbourhood schools; the neighbourhood school arrived at some success as long as the school received reasonable support from the Ministry of Education and Science and the municipality; ongoing de-segregation projects produce a new dependency for children and parents on NGOs and external financing. Reports collected during the RPI project state that segregation can take place even in schools participating in de-segregation projects: Roma children have to sit in the back row, and teachers do not pay attention to the child, often not even addressing the child by its name, but as “gypsy child”. This process of “secondary segregation” needs to be closely observed. Additionally, it is reported that Bulgarian parents start to send their children to other schools not participating in desegregation projects the moment too many Roma children enrol in a school.

Up to now, the local administration often did not start any own initiative to improve the education of Roma children – the NGO activities are seen as a kind of welcomed service in this field with the consequence that the municipalities and the Ministry of Education and Science's administration shows no own responsibility. The argument that there is a desegregation project in the locality arises often enough; no matter if the neighbourhood schools still exists with a large number of children, and no matter the condition of the school. The de-segregation approach is especially welcomed by a number of local and national politicians because the demographic process shows that there are not enough children born during recent years in Bulgaria – and schools need children not to lose teacher positions or even to be closed down. Roma children are welcome to ensure the existing mainstream schools, but neither teachers nor the environment are really prepared to welcome these children. They are often expected either to assimilate or to return to the “Roma schools”.

However, most children from the neighbourhood schools do stay in these schools. Support for these schools is poor, and the political concept of de-segregation excludes these children – with the effect that these children are losers twice over. They stay in underprivileged schools, and projects and Programmes forget about them. It is obvious that the concept of de-segregation has to deal with this situation too.

It is worth considering that de-segregation has to include the mainstreaming and improvement of neighbourhood schools. It needs to be underlined that this is not a general solution but an option for communities, based on analysis of the local situation, especially in neighbourhoods where de-segregation projects cannot reach all children, for various reasons. Neighbourhood schools in Bulgaria are legally “normal” mainstream schools, with the same curriculum as any other school. Their position is weak because of a lack of funding by municipalities, and often because of less-qualified teachers, poor equipment, etc. However, in a number of localities the neighbourhood schools are an important part of the infrastructure within the neighbourhood. To close down such schools could mean to contribute to the ghettoisation of a neighbourhood. Generally it needs to be considered that the closing down of a neighbourhood school means to remove one of the few centres in a quarter – with all consequences of reducing jobs in the neighbourhood, and it makes it more difficult for the parents to establish and keep a close contact to the school.

The possibility of improving neighbourhood schools could start in a few places, selected on a local analysis. Such “model schools” in specific neighbourhoods may follow the concept of language schools in Bulgaria: the schools may put an emphasis on music, on languages including Romani, etc. The model schools should develop new approaches to attract teachers, parents, students. This needs a proper environment, equipment, new teachers, new and interactive methods, and curriculum development. However, the idea is to mainstream the neighbourhood schools to meet national and international standards. Improvement of neighbourhood schools should be a complementary alternative to de-segregation initiatives; it is not intended to replace de-segregation projects.

Teaching assistants – trained at universities and qualified to support the educational process in the schools and to bridge the gap between schools and the communities – may contribute to the improvement of the quality of education. The RPI project has proven the positive role teacher assistants fulfil in their position. The experiences gained include the setting-up of groups for drop-outs in order to bring them back to school and catch up with the level of the classes; support for teachers in addressing children with a bilingual background; individual support for children in the classroom, whenever difficulties in the education process show up; addressing children in their mother tongue and expressing thus respect for the culture of their community.

All this contributes substantially to the well-being of the children in the schools, no matter whether they visit neighbourhood schools or so-called “mixed schools” outside. If parents feel that the mother tongue is taken care of in school, they take it as a sign that the school is accepting Roma, that the institution estimates their background and will safeguard the continuation of the Roma community. This is of major importance to the Roma communities; it helps them to associate with the

majority and to experience empowerment with school and the education of their children.

The teaching assistants succeeded in establishing bridges between school/society and Roma homes and clearly promoted the integration and interest in educational matters in general among the Roma. This outcome cannot be estimated highly enough. The teaching assistants' competence in the children's mother tongue gives the children a greater chance to develop their language skills in both languages, and to improve their Bulgarian skills properly. Last but not least, the training for the teaching assistants fulfilled the expectations in other aspects as well: out of the 92 trainees who passed the final examination, more than forty applied for university studies, and 32 of them passed the exams. However, only 15 have been accepted at the Veliko Turnovo University, because vacant places were limited. The training obviously can open doors for higher education – before the training only one participant was enrolled at university, although all the trainees had secondary education. For the Bulgarian education system, therefore, the position of the teacher assistant should be introduced to all schools which identify the need. Opportunities for higher education teachers in the field of minority education with a special focus on Roma need to be provided in adequate numbers in order to meet the interest of young Roma who want to become teachers.

## **Anna Mirga**

*Roma Education Association Hangaros*

Good morning, ladies and gentleman,

I represent the Roma Educational Association Harangos. Hangaros is an organization that brings together young, educated, college-level students from the Romani minority and also young non-Romani people who subscribed to the organization's mission – to work to improve educational chances for Romani children in Poland.

Our organization was commissioned by the Advisory Office at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration and founded by the British Embassy to evaluate implementation of the Pilot Governmental Programme for the Roma Community in Malopolska Province for 2001-2003. More specifically, the educational part of the Programme, which was prioritized. I would like to thank here the British Embassy and Mr. Alan Philips and Mr. Andrzej Czajkowski who supervised our effort.

The report we have prepared was based primarily on field visits and interviews we conducted with Romani parents and school authorities (including head teachers, teachers, support teachers and Roma assistants in 13 schools and two kindergartens). We conducted our field research between August and December 2004, visiting nine out of 17 localities where the Programme was implemented. We also did a brief research into existing data's and reports on the subject. All together 10 of us were involved in realizing this project. Our aim was to evaluate implementation of the Programme's education objectives and highlight that factors that made it effective and those that eventually hampered it. We paid special attention to the performance of Romani assistants and support teachers as the Programme's innovative tools in the school attendance and education achievements of Romani kids.

The Pilot Programme introduced "Roma assistant" and "support teacher" positions in schools with Romani children as a way to overcome existing disadvantages originating from a variety of sources (anti-Romani prejudice, language problems, poverty, parental illiteracy, to mention just a few), which in the past have limited Romani children's presence in school, their educational achievements, or their chances of receiving a quality education. It was believed that these positions will work to facilitate Romani parents' and pupils' relations with the school environment, build up a positive image of the school and education, work to recognize the specific needs of Romani pupils, and ensure emotional support and motivate them – as well as helping parents to view education positively as a means for change in their social and economic standing. At the same time recognition and affirmation of Roma ethnic traditions, culture and identity was made part of their tasks.

The Programme covered southern Poland, which is home according to estimates to 3,000-3,500 Roma (about 10% of all Roma living in Poland). The Programme was designed as a pilot initiative, and if successful was to be extended to other parts of the country where Roma reside – which in fact happened in 2003, when the government adopted a long-term support programme for Roma community in Poland. It has to be also mentioned here that as a result of positive assessment of the Roma assistants' work and mission, the position of Roma assistant is officially listed as a job position by the Ministry of Economy, Labour and Social Policy in 2005.

As for our findings, we need to underline that introducing these two positions was a good investment and a very positive factor in improving education situation of Romani pupils. Much of the later success of a child in education depends on the child's early experience in school. Here, Romani assistants are doing invaluable work. They help Romani children feel comfortable and overcome inhibitions regarding weak command of the Polish language. Their presence works to improve Romani children's school attendance, since they assist them getting to and from school. Their engagement with children works to build a relationship with Romani parents, who become more interested in their child's school achievements and other activities. Similarly, the involvement of support teachers brings positive results: Romani children's educational achievements are rising and they are attending various activities (art, music, etc.) in more numbers. More importantly, however, integration in the classroom, where Romani children are together with their Polish friends, is beneficial to Romani pupils.

While the overall evaluation of Romani assistants' performance, according to our survey, is positive, and there is a clear link between these assistants' quality work and progressive change in Romani children's education situation, we also need to report that in several communities assistants were unqualified and incompetent for a job. Hence no positive results have been obtained there to date. It shall be mentioned here also that most of them have at best secondary education, and only primary education in most cases. Our recommendation is, therefore, that since these people are so crucial for the success of Romani children at school, they need to be carefully selected and prepared as well as possible for performing the tasks at hand. Our hope is that in time there will be more assistants with higher education. On the other hand, Roma assistants' work cannot be disrupted by worries that there are no more funds, or that they are underpaid, as some of them may lose interest in doing this job.

Some Roma assistants said that in some cases parents turned out to be a big problem – themselves uneducated, they hardly realized the importance and perspectives of education. Due to this negative attitude, parents were often harmful to their own children's academic future. Those parents maintain a very poor relationship with schools; Roma school assistants often made up for these shortcomings by taking parents' responsibilities on themselves. Bearing in mind the positive role of Roma assistants in motivating pupils to participate in the educational process, it can be asked whether Roma assistants' taking over parental responsibilities (participation in school life, presence during school meetings, the role of a link between Roma home and school) does not strengthen the conviction that sole responsibility for a child's education does not lie with the parents, but with the school or school employees. Perhaps in the future it will be necessary to create a way to actively engage Roma families in the educational process, and then developing Roma assistants to undertake the tasks of support teachers (those assistants capable of doing so) or tasks of pre-school assistants.

As regards support teachers, all of them were qualified elementary teachers with higher pedagogical diplomas. In most cases, hiring them in this position was coincidental and for some of them it was their first contact with Roma culture and community altogether. Nevertheless, they tried to increase their knowledge of Roma culture and traditions, and participated in training and workshops to familiarize them



with specificities of Roma children's needs and problems. Here the role of Romani assistants proves to be valuable as well, since they displayed a mediation role in better understanding Romani children and in facilitating contacts with Romani parents. In general, however, in schools where support teachers were strongly motivated, ready to undertake challenges and actively involved, the Programme was much more effectively implemented. In those cases, teachers took on tasks that surpassed their core responsibilities. It seems obvious, therefore, that well motivated people should be employed as support teachers, and that they should have opportunities to learn more about the Roma. In our view, there is a need for a systemic solution here: prospective school teachers support teachers should be able to study Roma culture, traditions and history during their academic studies. We therefore recommend launching such courses at university level.

Based on the experience gained during three years of acting as support teachers, assistants indicated several crucial problems impeding Roma pupils' educational progress. All of them pointed out as problematic the low level of interest among some Roma parents in the education of their children and parents' poor contacts with school and lack of cooperation with teachers. For them, changing parents' attitude towards school was seen as a key to solving these problems, and a lot of effort was put into it. Support teachers associated poor interest in school and education among Roma families primarily with poverty and unemployment, as well as an attitude of passiveness and hopelessness. They also pointed out greater difficulties in establishing contacts with Roma children and parents from the most impoverished communities, those living in so-called Roma settlements.

As Roma children most frequently lack pre-school education, resulting in disparities between Roma and non-Roma pupils at the very start, the Programme assumed the provision of financial support for education in so-called "zero class". As part of their pre-school education at kindergarten, Roma children learn the Polish language, enhance their vocabulary, and acquire the skills of working in groups and a basic knowledge about their closest social and natural environment. This type of preparation is invaluable to the success of the child in the educational process. The only kindergarten run by an ethnic Roma teacher, established at Roma settlements in Czarna Gora, turned out to be a success story. It is exemplary proof that early education conducted in a friendly atmosphere levels differences in culture and society between Roma and Polish children that previously had been visible in first year. This is a practice worth duplicating in other locations. The first kindergarten "graduates" are now at the mainstream school. They have no problems there, and their teachers assess them as among the best performing pupils in their classes. The other positive example is provided by the kindergarten in Nowy Sacz, an integrated kindergarten led by a non-Roma employee. No doubt a preschool and kindergarten education provides Roma children with more chances in an equal start and has to become much more common practice, especially in impoverished Roma settlements.

All interviewed head teachers of schools where Roma assistants had been hired spoke of their work in the context of significant changes that took place after implementation of the Programme in 2001. Predominantly, a considerably increase in attendance occurred. According to nine out of ten head teachers interviewed, this is a direct result of the work of Roma assistants, who accompany Roma pupils on their way to and from school, mobilize parents to send their children to school, take over

part of parents' responsibilities like attending school meetings, and are a bond between the school and Roma families.

Based on the information we obtained we conclude the Pilot Programme has proved to be successful and effective, despite some minor shortcomings, and we believe it to be a big step towards improving Roma life situation and their image in Polish society. To make the Programme yet more productive, we have come up with some recommendations for the future:

- It is necessary to introduce clear criteria for the selection of Roma assistants to get those most qualified for a job, and preferably with higher education. Their role can be also expanded with clear specification of tasks;
- Workshops for Roma assistants should contain a separate section on interpersonal communication skills, with special attention given to relationship-building skills in working as Roma assistants;
- The monitoring system of control over the work of assistants and support teachers should be improved in order to enhance the effectiveness of the Programme;
- An initiative of organizing a forum of assistants and support teachers that would allow them to exchange experience would be a valuable idea;
- It would be worth increasing the qualifications of those Roma assistants who display a strong interest in their responsibilities and who fulfil their tasks well, by organizing various courses and providing training in methods of working with young people that would serve among other things to improve the effectiveness of their work in school;
- Periodic meetings between teachers, especially support teachers with members of Roma community (e.g., Roma associations) and workshops on Roma traditions and culture would be an effective way to deepen knowledge of the Roma, and consequently improve working with Roma pupils;
- Extremely important is financial backing of the Programme, allowing continuity in employing Roma assistants and support teachers. In these localities where because of a temporary lack of funding hiring of assistants and support teachers was interrupted, it was very difficult to rebuild an interest in school, pupils' enthusiasm even for additional classes (like interest clubs) decreased, and motivation dropped.

### **4.3 WORKING GROUP III: Participatory approach to improve the situation of Roma, Sinti and Travellers: lessons learned from Roma working in public/local administration**

#### **Charlotta Wickman**

*Director*

*Section for Democratic Issues, Human Rights, National Minorities, NGOs and Sport  
Ministry of Justice, Sweden*

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would first of all like to express our appreciation to the organizers (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Interior and Administration of the Republic of Poland, the Council of Europe, the OSCE ODHIR and the EUMC) for taking the initiative to arrange this conference on the very urgent issue of the situation of Roma in Europe. The purpose of this working group is to discuss participation of Roma in public and local administration. I would firstly like to share with you very briefly as a background some of the experience in Sweden when it comes to minority policy and in particular measures for the Roma minority. I will however in my speech focus especially on the importance of dialogue and participation with the Roma in issues that concern them, and also how the government is working to strengthen the situation and participation of the Roma women.

Sweden ratified the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 1999. Since then, the Roma are a national minority in Sweden and Romani Chib an official minority language. The Swedish Government has through the ratification of these instruments committed itself to protecting national minorities, promoting their participation in community affairs and public decision-making and helping keep long-established minority languages alive. The conviction of the Government is that ensuring these groups the right to preserve their identity and remain who they are, culturally and linguistically, is a precondition for integration. Sweden has had a Romany population since the 16th century. Today the number of Roma, including Travellers, is estimated at around 40,000-50,000. The Roma in Sweden have throughout history suffered violations of their human rights and attempts at assimilation by the Government. These offences have made their imprints on the Roma community and are an explanation for the deep mistrust of authorities that is not unusual among the Roma.

The Roma still occupy a highly vulnerable position in Swedish society and are exposed to discrimination in nearly all areas in society. Generally speaking, many Roma encounter great difficulties in education, the labour market, housing and health care, and when it comes to possibility of participating in the community on the same terms as the majority population.

The national minority policy spans several areas, including culture, education, language, non-discrimination and influence in decision-making. There is a lot to be said about these different areas, but considering the topic of this working group I will focus on the aspect of promoting Roma participation in community affairs and public

decision-making. In the 1970s, when the Roma population increased due to migration from Eastern Europe and Finland, the Swedish authorities started working together with Roma representatives to come to terms with the difficult situation. Results did not however come as quickly and effectively as hoped. During the 1990s, active participation of the Roma through their organizations was further developed. One conclusion of this cooperation between the Roma and the authorities was that the only way to achieve results is to involve the Roma themselves in the processes and in decision-making.

As a result of the ratification of the conventions on national minorities and minority languages in 1999, cooperation between the Government and Roma representatives was taken to another level. A Council on Roma issues was established in 2002 as an advisory body to the Government. The majority of the members are Roma, who in turn have been nominated by Roma organizations. The council also includes representatives of the National Integration Office, the Office of the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination, the Living History Forum and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities. The Chairperson is the minister responsible for minority policy, Mr Jens Orback.

The main responsibility of the Council is to be proactive in national efforts to promote the situation of Roma in Swedish society. The Council has expressed a desire to focus its work on areas such as non-discrimination and human rights, education, culture and media, social issues and international cooperation. Currently the Council is concentrating its efforts on education and a seminar will be organized on this issue. Another important part of the work of the Council, which we want to increase, is to promote initiatives on the local level, for example to encourage cooperation between the Roma and local authorities.

It is vital that the Council on Roma issues, just like any other advisory committee to the Government, has a broad representation of both men and women. In order to even further strengthen the position of Roma women and to encourage them to set up networks and become more involved in the Roma organizations and in society, an informal working group with Roma women has been created. The working group is led by Secretary of State Lise Bergh. The working group took the initiative to host a seminar in February this year, where around 40 Roma women and public officials working on related issues gathered to discuss the situation of Roma women when it comes to education and working life.

To promote similar processes on the local level, the working group is, together with the Ministry of Justice, organizing local seminars between Roma women and officials from the local administration in the cities of Malmö, Luleå and Gothenburg. Through these seminars, the working group intends to continue and intensify the process of encouraging Roma women in different parts of the country to build networks and work together with authorities and municipalities to reach more understanding and increase knowledge about Roma issues within local authorities. One view that is often pointed out in the Roma women's working group is that it is of crucial importance to build bridges between the Roma community and authorities, schools and the public in general, for any improvements to be achieved.

To summarize, the Swedish experience is that the following components are important in strengthening participation of the Roma in the Swedish society:

- Open dialogue on the national and local level;
- Increased mutual knowledge on the situation of the Roma and what needs to be done to improve it;
- Exposing direct and indirect discrimination;
- Support for the development of independent organizations and institutions;

One vital conclusion of this is that the inclusion of those who are excluded and isolated in our community can only be achieved by ensuring them the right to remain who they are, ensuring them the right to their identity, their culture and their language. This in turn calls for dialogue between and participation of those concerned as an integral part of decision-making processes. The Swedish government considers it a high priority to have effective structures for this participation and dialogue. The information and discussions during these two days in Warsaw will surely contribute to further developing these structures and methods in Sweden.

Thank you.

## **Gruia Bumbu**

*Adviser, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister  
Department of Education and Culture, Romania*

Certain areas have been improved in the last two years. While there has been good progress in terms of improving Roma access to health, education and employment of Roma mediators, housing needs remain a problem. The need to include Roma into mainstream schools on a national level has been recognized by the Minister of Education and Research, but further steps are needed to ensure that Roma to have full access to high-quality education throughout the country.

In accordance with Governmental Decision NO. 430/2001, the Government Strategy for Improving the Condition and Situation of Roma established County Offices for Roma (BJR) within Prefectures. Each office should include three or four experts, one of whom should be of Roma origin. The main responsibilities of the BJR are organization, planning and coordination of activities related to the Plan of Measures of the Strategy.

The BJR members include the Councillor of the Prefect on Roma Affairs, who is hired by the Prefect in his office following in each case a transparent and open selection process. The Roma expert member of the BJR was a position created under the law in 42 counties. Usually the main responsibilities of BJR are suited to a single person – the councillor for Roma affairs.

Based on the Prefect's orders, the County Office for Roma has responsibilities including:

- evaluation of the situation of Roma in their area of responsibility;
- identification of solutions to the needs of local communities;
- mobilization of community resources in order to accomplish the objectives of the strategy;
- ensuring continuous communication with local administrative authorities;
- highlighting problems for which the local authorities are responsible in order to resolve them;
- initiation of partnership between members of Roma communities and local authorities;
- collaboration with decentralized and deconcentrated institutions;
- mediation on any interethnic or intercommunity conflicts;
- reporting to the General Directorate for Relations with the Prefecture.

The Roma Councillor position under the Precture is not that of a civil servant, meaning that the position doesn't have security of job tenure and can be changed by the Prefect. The large majority of councillors for Roma affairs employed in the Prefect office are Roma.

When they first started the Councillors faced various problems, from organisation to relationships, including a lack of knowledge on the part of the BJR members of their role and context within the Strategy. The councillor has only very limited resources at his disposal and low decision-making authority. All decisions must be approved by the Precture's administrative hierarchy and thus it is impossible to react immediately in a effective crisis situation.

The Romanian Government is aware of all these problems faced by the councillor of Roma affairs at the county level and has already taken concrete measures:

- replacing the state secretary who was President of the National Agency for Roma with a Roma expert woman who already organised a meeting of all Roma county experts;
- ensuring the participation of Roma in the decision-making process – with and for the Roma we redesigned the Master Measure Plan for 2005-2007 where the Roma councillor has an active and determinant role for positive change in Roma communities at the local level.

## **Albert Kovac**

*Regional Officer for Projects and International Assistance*

*Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities*

### **The Role and impact of Roma Regional Advisers in Slovakia**

Ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Albert Kováč, and I work as a regional consultant in the Regional Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities in Rimavská Sobota. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities has its main department in Bratislava and five regional offices in Košice, Spišská Nová Ves, Rimavská Sobota and Banská Bystrica. Four of them were created in 2004. The seats of the regional offices and their districts of competence are not identical with the territorial division of the Slovak Republic. Their seats were specified according to the size of individual districts, the proportion of marginalized Roma communities in these districts and the population's access to the regional offices.

Each regional office has the following staff: regional coordinator, regional consultant and administrative worker. The regional coordinator is responsible for management of the office and for coordination of programmes implementation in the region; the regional consultant advises and consults the Offices of self-governing regions, municipalities and all other final beneficiaries of structural funds.

Rimavská Sobota is situated in south Slovakia, near the Hungarian border. It belongs to the Gemer region, which has about 25,000 inhabitants speaking mostly Hungarian. The Roma community is numerous and identify themselves as Hungarian, speaking mainly Hungarian and very little Roma Chib. The regional office in Rimavská Sobota is responsible for five region zones in south Slovakia called Revúca, Poltár, Lučenec, Veľký Krtíš and Rimavská Sobota.

The basic activities of the regional offices focus on:

1. mapping the situation in the regions;

We collect information about the situation in individual localities, municipalities, settlements and monitor usage of the grant scheme of the Office of the Plenipotentiary. We also carry out regular field visits, mapping the situation and solving less complicated problems. Our reports from the visits and mappings include identified needs of individual communities and proposed suggestions, which are the basis for the work of the Office of the Plenipotentiary. In emergency situations (floods, infectious disease outbreaks,) we try to be the first in the locality and to cooperate with the relevant authorities.

2. co-ordination and implementation at the regional level of programmes approved by the Government;

This means that we share in the creation and guidance of regional or national documents where we use knowledge and remarks from our practice.



3. consulting and advice on the elaboration of regional projects for foreign assistance funds and on the solving of simple problems for individual Roma citizens;

We consult and give advice to different potential applicants (municipalities, non-profit organizations, educational institutions and others) on project proposals. The consulting activity is in accordance with the strategy entitled Basic Theses of the Slovak Government's Roma Communities integration policy in the field of employment, housing, education and health. Advising means also help to individual Roma citizens in the field of legislation and civil laws, especially in social issues. Giving them correct information or searching for some good solutions.

4. building regional partnerships – communication at the level of mayors, regional self-governments and local non-governmental organisations, and co-operation on specific projects;

The regional offices in Rimavská Sobota and Banská Bystrica are currently preparing a Conception of Roma Social-Economic Integration 2007-2013. The aim of the conception is to strengthen the cooperation and effective coordination of activities and financial recourses aimed at improvement of living conditions of Roma in this region. Representatives of state administration, municipalities and non-governmental organizations created nine thematic working groups (education, employment, housing, etc.). Their task is to analyze the current situation within the concrete theme and to prepare a strategy of solving the existing problems with the year 2013 in mind. Action plans with concrete steps on the first 12-24 months will be components of the strategies. Each working group is open for other participants working in the respective area. The working groups shall finish the preparation of strategy proposals by the end of October 2005. The regional conception will be prepared by the end of December 2005.

In consideration of the existing strategic documents, the main aim of all these activities is to reflect the regional disparities that influence the social-economic development of regions, cities and municipalities. The regional conception will use the principles of partnership, sustainability and systemic creation and realization of programmes.

5. active co-operation with regional commissions for the co-ordination of activities to eliminate racially-motivated violence and extremisms, which should be established at every regional Police Force directorate, on specific cases of violations of human rights; cooperation with social field workers, Roma activist and human rights activists, community centres, non-governmental organizations dealing with Roma issue and the issue of human rights protection;

Our first tendency is to know and see the region where we work and know the requirement of Roma community, co-operate with municipal offices and local institutes and non-government organizations. All these activities work really well and bring great results. We try to keep the good relations and conditions between all partners and to continue in our achievements.

Thank you for your attention.

## 5. SECOND PLENARY SESSION

### Working Group Rapporteurs present discussion summaries

#### Working Group I

##### **Robert Rustem**

*Senior Assistant on Roma Issues*

*OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje*

Mr. Moderator, ladies and gentlemen,  
Representatives, and NGOs,

Yesterday's working sessions were very productive. Many important issues and ideas were discussed during the plenary discussion and then continued more specifically to Working Group I on the topic of Roma minorities, refugees, IDPs and returnees and the need for a common strategy, with a specific focus on Kosovo. We received very detailed information on the activities of the OSCE mission in Kosovo, the United Nations mission in Kosovo, the League of Human Rights, and the Council of Europe. The issues discussed were not purely technical in nature, but also very emotional. Personal narratives gave a human face to the reality in Kosovo.

The Roma population has not been able to resettle successfully in Kosovo, because in the opinion of governments they lack the proper documentation, which leads to unequal socio-economic opportunities. Therefore, civic registration should be recognized as an important issue for the Roma community and a regional approach needs to be implemented. An emotional issue that should be brought to the attention of the international community is the Roma refugee camps that were set up six years ago on lead-contaminated sites. The WHO, on testing the Roma community in this area, recommended that they be moved immediately because of the high concentration of lead in their blood. The United Nations Mission in Kosovo in responding to this crisis tried to negotiate their move from the temporary residence to their return in the Romani *mahala*. This has been an unsuccessful endeavour so far because the Roma are afraid that the international community will not support them upon return and they will be in danger. It was recommended that Roma NGOs cooperate with the missions to convince the Roma people to leave this area. It is not only international organizations that can support the Roma community, but it is important to recognize that change needs to occur by presenting the unified voice of the Roma people. It was recommended that a common political platform representing the diverse but unified voice of the Roma community should be encouraged. It was also recommended to work out a position paper that could be presented as regards Roma refugees, IDPs and the status of Kosovo – and this is one way to include various points of view. The German Delegation officially protested against an accusation from an NGO that the Government violates the Geneva Convention and is undertaking forced deportation of Kosovar Roma from Germany.

The unified voice of the Roma community can only be presented if effective communication occurs between governments and the Roma people. Successful integration in society in all areas such as education and employment can only occur if

there is mutual respect and dignity. Another issue that is important to emphasize are basic needs such as housing. Best practices in instituting housing programmes for the Roma can serve as a good example for others.

After the Kosovo crisis, a continuing problem is the integration of Roma children in schools. It is important for future generations to succeed, and this can only be accomplished by allowing Roma children to learn in a mainstream school environment, and not a segregated school system.

In conclusion, while some important issues were discussed in regards to implementing the action plan on Roma and Sinti, much more work needs to be done. It was fruitful to have this discussion, but it is important to translate our ideas into reality.

## **Working Group II**

### **Alexandra Raykova**

*President*

*Forum of European Roma Young People*

General remarks:

The group started the discussion with an implicit agreement on the bases of two pre-conceptions:

3. Education is the starting point to improve the situation of Roma communities. By improving Roma education, other aspects of their situation such as employment, access to health care, etc., will also improve;
4. Quality education is a pre-condition to equal access to the labour market.

However, the above can be additionally reflected or can be considered as subjects for specific discussions by policy and decision-makers.

The content:

- The content of the discussion focused on formal education only;
- The roles of non-formal education and vocational training were not discussed;
- The importance of the latter should not be underestimated. The relevance of non-formal education and vocational training with Roma communities should be reflected and prioritized. A debate on the inclusion of human rights education, intercultural learning and education for citizenship in the educational curricula for all students in Europe should be initiated.

### **Manifestations of anti-gypsyism in education:**

D. In terms of attitudes:

Mrs. Miranda Vuolasranta, who was a participant in the group, reported that recently she received information about children throwing stones at a Roma child because of his ethnicity. Mrs. Vuolasranta shared with the group that she experienced exactly the same situation on her first day at school as a child in Finland in 1966.

Besides of the already known discriminatory attitudes of the majority children towards their Roma peers, it was pointed out that in some cases teachers also have negative attitudes towards students of Roma origin.

It was also reported by several organizations that work on desegregation of Roma education that there is tendency among majority parents to pull their children out of schools that are running desegregation projects.

In relation to the above, the question was raised of the protection of children's dignity by international and domestic legislation, as well as incorporation of international legislation into national constitutions.

An obvious conclusion is that the manifestation of anti-gypsyism in education is not a new phenomenon. However it is important to underline that manifestations of anti-gypsyism have increased in number recently in Europe.

E. In terms of practices:

- a) Segregated education/schools due to resident segregation;
- b) Special education/schools for mentally disabled children;
- c) Special classes.

The result of the above:

- Poor quality, sub-standard education for Roma children, which limits their possibilities to progress beyond elementary levels of schooling;
- Fewer chances to compete and find realization on the labour market;
- In addition, segregated schooling isolates Roma children from the wider society from an early age, and perpetuates existing divisions and inequality in society.

Two questions were raised in the group:

1. Are all residentially segregated schools providing low-quality education? An example of the school in Kneja, Bulgaria was pointed out. In this school, which is residentially segregated, Roma children receive good quality education, and as a result the overall educational level of the community is higher.
2. Should segregated schools be closed at once, or should there first be an assessment of the local situation, the priorities of the communities, etc., in order to take a joint decision with the communities?

F. In terms of politics:

- Lack of political will;
- Lack of policies;
- Lack of coherence between policies and practices;

Experiences:

The guest speakers at the panel presented and reflected different types of experiences:

Mr. Claude Cahn, Acting Executive Director of the European Roma Rights Centre, presented various forms and cases of school desegregation;

Mr. Bernard Rorke, Deputy Director of the Roma Participation Programme, Open Society Institute, reflected on experiences based on desegregation projects funded by the OSI in the region;

Mr. Herbert Heuss presented a project for training assistant teachers in Bulgaria, implemented by CARE International in co-operation with CARE Bulgaria, the Veliko Turnovo University and the Diversity Foundation;

Mrs. Miranda Vuolasranta, Adviser to the Council of Europe on Roma issues, reflected on the importance of Romani teaching materials and the Romani language;

Mrs. Aurora Ailincăi presented the Roma Education Project, Council of Europe;

Ms. Anna Mirga, Roma Educational Association Harangos, Poland, presented an evaluation of the implementation of the educational part of the Pilot Governmental Programme for Roma in Malopolska region;

Mr. Ivan Ivanov, Director of ERIO, Brussels, intervened during the discussions;

Mr. Lyubomir Lazarov, Project Officer, European Dialogue, shared experiences from projects implemented in Bulgaria;

Mr. Kujtim Pacaku, Roma-language radio, Kosovo, underlined experiences from Kosovo;

Governmental representatives from Croatia, Slovak Republic and Slovenia contributed with their experiences.

### **Conclusions and recommendations based on practices.**

One of the conclusions of this group, underlined also during the plenary session, was that Roma education should be aimed at integration of the community, and not at assimilation.

A fundamental point to be recommended to the states is the adoption of legal provisions on school desegregation, specifying the role of all actors involved and especially the obligations of the public authorities. However it was underlined in the group that this point is still far away from the policy agendas.

It is necessary to introduce policy changes which imply:

- Moving from ad-hoc project-funding to sustainable and coherent policymaking, which involves structural changes within the educational system.
- Amendments of educational law (with clear legal provisions established);

- Providing financial incentives to schools per disadvantaged child;
- Grant tenders for schools pursuing multicultural practices;

Policy should also envisage mechanisms to overcome the following challenges identified by the group in relation to policy implementation (based on the Hungarian experience):

- Reluctance to put existing policy into practice;
- Creation of alternatives to comply with policy that on a practical level are different from the expected;
- Non-Roma children pulled out of schools running integration projects;
- In cases where policy exists to a certain extent but there is no real result.

It is also recommended that states adopt a law establishing a special state fund to support projects aiming at educational integration of children and students from ethnic minorities.

Adaptation of the mainstream educational curriculum is also of major importance. Education should contribute to strengthening the identity of all children, should build “bridges” between communities, and should provide reasons/motivation for Roma parents and children to enjoy education. The recognition and inclusion of Roma culture, history and language into the European educational curriculum should be prioritized.

As an example of work on these issue was presented by the Roma Education Project, Council of Europe. More info available at [http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural\\_co-operation/Roma-Gypsy\\_children](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_co-operation/Roma-Gypsy_children).

Other important questions were also stressed:

- Recognition of the Roma language as the mother tongue of the Roma;
- The inclusion of the Romani language in the mainstream educational curriculum;
- Opportunities for the Roma to study their mother tongue in schools, as well as the availability of an option for receiving bilingual education in integrated schools;
- That state and municipal authorities should establish effective mechanisms to combat racism in the schools;
- A proposal to consider the creation of local educational models, taking into consideration the local specificity of the Roma community, was proposed by



the representative of European Dialogue, based on the experiences of the organization from Bulgaria;

- Working with the community on the aspirations of Roma parents is very important. The question of informed choice among Roma parents was underlined;
- That, where necessary, local governments provide free transportation of Roma students to integrated schools;
- That state and local government institutions ensure that Roma organizations have a central role in the school desegregation process;
- The group also concluded that desegregation of Roma education has to be implemented not only with educational curriculum change, but also with training of teachers on intercultural learning;
- Another discussion was on the relevance of training of teaching assistants and their use in schools. The final conclusion was that teaching assistants are certainly needed and relevant in pre-schools and kindergarten. Furthermore, it has to be decided whether teaching assistants should be employed as temporary or permanent staff. Attention should be put during the selection process on the motivation and competencies of the candidates. Sustainable funding to ensure long-term employment of the teaching assistants and the effects of their work should be ensured by states. Their role should be perceived as extended from teacher assistants to community mediators;
- On the question of the relevance of teaching assistants in primary and secondary schools, the group had a long discussion but agreement was not reached;
- The group recommended that the practice of placing Roma children in special schools for the mentally disabled and testing for that should be ended. It was mentioned that some governments have already acknowledged the practice of diagnosing Roma children as handicapped and routing them to special schools as “deeply discriminatory” and “a violation of the right of the Roma children to equal access to education”. An example for improvement of the testing system in the Slovak Republic with financial support from the EC was presented;
- The question of adult education within the Roma communities was raised. Its relevance and positive impact on the education of Roma children was stressed;
- It was mentioned that due to demographic issues, desegregation of education might be impossible in some geographic areas where Roma children are more numerous than non-Roma children. An example of a Croatian village where Roma children make up 80% of the total was presented;

- The role of the Roma Education Fund in promoting the above-mentioned recommendations was stressed;
- The importance of setting up criteria for quality evaluation and monitoring was underlined. It was mentioned that there are currently no clear criteria to assess what a successful desegregation project is or what a successful teaching assistants training project is.

## **Working Group III**

### **Vera Klopčič**

*Senior Researcher*

*Institute for Ethnic Studies, Slovenia*

### **Presentations**

Presentations were made by participants from Sweden, Ireland, Slovakia and Romania.

**Sweden:** The role and impact of the Council on Roma issues in Sweden: Mrs Charlotta Wickman, Director of Minority Policy, Ministry of Justice

Since the ratification of the Framework Convention in 2000, the Roma are recognized as a national minority and Romani Chib has the status of a minority language in Sweden. The Council on Roma issues was established in 2002. The majority of members are Roma, nominated by the Roma organizations. Also an informal working group of Roma women was established.

In the course of the discussions which followed the presentation by Ms Wickman, the representatives of Roma/Sinti from Sweden underlined the importance and symbolic value of the recognition of the status of national minority (pointed out particularly by Mr Lars Demetri of the Roma cultural centre).

Some critical remarks were addressed on the issue that the Council on Roma issues has only advisory capacity at the moment; it was suggested to strengthen the influence of Roma in the decision-making process.

**Ireland:** The role and impact of liaison for Travellers in Ireland: Presentation by Ms Ellen Mongan, Traveller Liaison Officer, Galway County, and Ms Mary Forde, senior social worker.

Recently the new post of Traveller Liaison Officer (TLO) with Galway County was opened to facilitate communication between Travellers and local authorities. The TLO is a community development worker.

Voluntary partnership is encouraged between the relevant public local services and Travellers.

**Slovakia:** The role and impact of Regional Offices of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities: Mr. Albert Kovač, Regional Officer in Rimavska Sobota municipality

The office of the Plenipotentiary has five regional offices in Slovakia.

The basic activities are: mapping the situation; coordination and implementation of the government programme at regional level; elaboration of project proposals; assistance in

solving individual Roma problems; building a regional partnership and cooperation with civil society within the scope of human-rights protection and elimination of racially motivated crimes.

**Romania:** The role and impact of Roma County Officers in Romania: Mr Bumbu Ioan Gruia, Adviser, Department of Education and Culture, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Romania

County Officers, mediators and advisers for the Roma are employed at all levels. The main problem is inadequate funding or completely lack of funding. Roma County Officers/counsellors do not have a regular job as a civil servants.

Romania adopted a strategic national plan for improvement of the position of Roma. There are already some results, e.g., in the field of access to health care for Roma, but housing still remains a problem.

Presentations were followed by interventions of other participants, and during the discussion the model of self-government in Hungary was also presented, as in Hungary the Roma are included among minority self-governments.

### **General remarks**

Over the last decade, there has been a tremendous improvement of Roma participation at international level, and to some extent at state and local level, with Roma becoming mayors, MPs, assistant ministers, advisers to ministers, prefects or counsellors in local municipalities.

In some countries though – like in Sweden – there is a need for more participation at local level compared with the state level, where it already exists. In most countries, due to decentralization, there is a need also to have Roma, Sinti and Travellers issues addressed at the local level with local actors.

The main challenge is how to ensure that the person involved, who has sufficient knowledge about the real needs and long-term interests of Roma community, is ready to share common responsibility, not excluding the other members of the Roma community from the decision-making process. Several participants highlighted existing models through their own experience, as they themselves work in public/national, regional or local administration focusing on:

- the need for adequate financial resources. Sometimes these positions are not paid, or are paid as a part of projects financed by donors. Once the project comes to an end, the state or local authorities do not provide any funds;
- development of independent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (pointed out particularly by Mr Alan Philips);
- training for Roma in public administration. From various experiences – Ireland, Romania, Hungary, etc. – it is clear that, if the political will exists, there are possibilities to recruit Roma within local public administration or

state bodies even if the people do not have yet the necessary educational background.

### **Main messages**

Some participants raised the issue of effective participation. Too often, participation is in practice a consultation process, without the possibility for Roma to make a change in policy or to become owners of the project.

Some participants also underlined the need for Roma to become more active in political life, especially as voters, in order to influence the state and local policies.

A dilemma has been identified around the issue of granting jobs for Roma in public administration, and is related to the issue of targeted/mainstreamed measures:

Positive aspects:

- Roma get a job in a non- Roma environment and are becoming more visible in public life;
- Roma are being recognized as partners at the state or local level and become mediators between their community and the local public administration, which has a positive impact in information sharing and awareness raising.

Negative aspects:

- Those positions are fragile: Roma or Travellers occupying these positions are not civil servants but – as in Romania – are attached to some public authorities. If the mayor, prefect or minister leaves, so usually does the Roma mediator or assistant.
- There is a big risk that creating structures such as Roma self-government in Hungary, or Roma social workers, assistants, mediators, etc., often gives an excuse for civil servants belonging to the majority not to deal with Roma issues. They will forward any request or complaint to these Roma advisory bodies – even if in some cases they do not have the necessary mandate to deal with the issue. This is a side effect of Roma participation that must be taken into consideration to avoid a new form of segregation.

## **6. THIRD PLENARY SESSION: Combating prejudices and hate speech against Roma, Sinti and Travellers: “anti-gypsyism” as a phenomenon throughout Europe**

**Valeriu Nicolae**

*Deputy Director, European Roma Information Office*

### **Anti-gypsyism – a definition<sup>1</sup>**

Anti-gypsyism is not just another type of racial discrimination. It is at the same time similar to, different from and intertwined with racism. This article presents an argument that anti-gypsyism only partially fits the definition of racism, and is in fact an ideology rather than a form of racism. Aware of the conceptual inflation of racism (Miles and Brown, 2001) which resulted in hundreds of definitions, this article starts from just one definition of racism, considered to be one of the most read and accepted (Blum, 2002), from *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Fourth Edition): “1. the prejudice that members of one race are intrinsically superior to members of other races; 2. discriminatory or abusive behaviour towards members of another race.”

This article puts forward the definition of anti-gypsyism as a complex code of social behaviour used to justify and perpetrate the exclusion and supposed inferiority of Roma. It is based on historical persecution and negative stereotypes, and in its current forms continues to strongly hinder Roma from reaching the status of equal citizens. Anti-gypsyism can be defined as a form of dehumanization, because prejudice against the Roma clearly goes beyond racist stereotyping, whereby the Roma are associated with negative traits and behaviour. By being dehumanized, the Roma are viewed as being less than human; and being less than human, they are perceived as not morally entitled to human rights equal to those of the rest of the population. In other words, the Roma are delegitimized (Bar-Tal, 1989; 1990) and morally excluded (Staub, 1987; Opatow, 1990). A demonstration of the delegitimization and moral exclusion of the Roma is provided by current denials of Roma identity in some EU member states (e.g., Italy and Netherlands) which do not officially recognize the Roma as a national ethnic minority despite recognizing others.

Socio-psychological research carried out in various countries (Spain: Pérez, Chulvi and Alonso, 2001; Pérez, Moscovici and Chulvi, 2002; Chulvi and Pérez, 2003; Britain and Romania: Marcu and Chryssochoou, 2005) has revealed that, unlike other minorities, the Roma are perceived as being closer to the animal realm than the human. In Romania, for example, while prejudice against Hungarians was expressed in terms of negative human attributes (e.g., hypocrite), prejudice against the Roma was expressed in terms of negative animal traits (e.g., wild). Given the existing interplay between the majority and the Roma, it is clear that dehumanization is not necessarily based on the perceptions of the majority population. Instead, dehumanization of the Roma appears to be a legitimizing myth that serves to justify the majority’s abusive behaviour towards this minority. The pogroms against Roma in Romania at the beginning of 1990s that resulted in over a hundred houses being

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<sup>1</sup> The term “anti-gypsyism” has been used before by academics and Roma activists. This article tries to present new perspectives while building on previous interpretations.

burned down and dozens of victims, as well as frequent attacks by skinheads in Europe, are often “justified” by dehumanizing the Roma victims. Denial or marginalization of Roma Holocaust victims (Nicolae 2005) also helps the preservation of the existing status quo, which finds Roma in the position of noncitizens or pariahs.

From the perspective of theories justifying the social system (Jost and Banaji, 1994; Jost, Burgess and Mosso, 2001; Jost, Banaji, and Nosek, 2004) the current psychological findings on the dehumanization of the Roma indicate that their dehumanization is an instance of systemic justification (ideology) whereby the presupposed inferior essence of the Roma is used as a justification for their oppression. Some of the perceptions of the inferior essence of Roma are based on historical prejudices. For centuries, the Roma were banned from living in several European countries, enslaved in what was then Romanian territory, accused of playing a role in the killing of Jesus, and often identified with criminals (Lucassen and Willems 1999). Moreover, the Roma were rejected by majority populations long before biological theories of race surfaced in Europe. European Roma are not a homogenous group. Roma can range in appearance from fair-skinned and blue-eyed to dark-skinned and black-eyed, with the two extremes often seen in the same community or even family. Roma share many physical features with Arabs, Turks, Indians, as well as Europeans. Roma in Europe follow a number of different religions: Christianity (Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant), Islam (both Shia and Sunni), Judaism, as well as atheism. Many Roma are unable to speak Romani. Even those who speak Romani may have difficulties understanding each other, as the various dialects are quite different across Europe. Therefore, discrimination against Roma cannot be based on any one of these factors – appearance, skin colour, religion or language – alone.

The fact that anti-gypsyism operates even in the absence of direct contact with the Roma, and thus in the absence of conflict or of other relationships with them (see opinion polls in Malta, Luxembourg and Denmark), reinforces the view that anti-gypsyism is an ideology. Anti-gypsyism often serves to justify the existing social order, whereby the Roma are permanently kept in an inferior social position, and is also reflected in the form of false consciousness on the part of the Roma themselves.

The pervasiveness of the presupposed inferiority of the Roma has been so strong that Roma people themselves internalize it and use it to justify the system (system justification theory argues that both majority and minority engage in system justification). This is evident in Roma people’s false consciousness (Augoustinos and Walker, 1998; Augoustinos, 1999), i.e., their acceptance of the majority’s belief system, which leads them in some instances to deny their Roma origins, hide their ethnic identity, deny commonality with other Roma groups, and assimilate with the majority. This is regularly reflected in the appalling discrepancies between the estimated number of Roma and the results of official censuses (five to six times fewer people declared their Roma ethnicity in Slovakia and Romania than the estimated number; see Council of Europe statistics). The often eager ease of most professionally successful Roma to lose their ethnic identity and assimilate with the majority is a clear sign of structured social pressure towards assimilation. Such assimilation is rarely possible for other groups facing racism, and could be held as an argument that anti-

Roma feelings are not based on race or ethnicity, but on an ideology built on stereotypes and historical prejudices against Roma.

A tremendous amount of energy is spent in justifying and legitimizing political, economic and cultural exclusion of the Roma. Prejudices against the Roma are based not only on race but on a combination – unique in each region or country – of religion, language, culture and physical appearance. Moreover, Roma are “identified” based on neighbourhoods, villages, regions or countries where they live, social class, “specific Roma” professions, speaking patterns, clothing and even behaviour. This complex exercise of building negative stereotypes directed at Roma based on whatever features are shown by the Roma in a particular area is not typical of racism, which focuses on race or ethnicity alone, as shown by a few key features such as skin colour, language or religion. Like any ideology, anti-gypsyism can adapt as Roma remain targeted, regardless of the changes they make in their social status, living conditions and practices, as long as they admit their ethnic roots. Anti-gypsyism has such contempt for reason, facts and intellectual debate that there is practically no effort put into justifying its often ideological changes, something that links it strongly with fascism.

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## **Isil Gachet**

*Executive Secretary*

*European Commission against Racism and Intolerance*

### **What is common and different when addressing racism against Roma, Sinti and Travellers compared with other forms of racism and intolerance?**

My contribution to this panel is from the perspective of the work of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI).

Within the Council of Europe, the ECRI is tasked with combating racism and racial discrimination. It takes a “rights-based” approach to its work, and undertakes activities aimed at ensuring that the right to freedom from discrimination is enjoyed by all persons present on the territory of Council of Europe member states. The ECRI works to prevent violence, discrimination and prejudice faced by people and groups on grounds of race, colour, language, religion, nationality and national or ethnic origin.

The ECRI’s statutory instruments are country-by-country monitoring of phenomena of racism and discrimination, with specific recommendations addressed to each country separately, and the drafting of standards on important issues in the fight against racism in Europe in the form of General Policy Recommendations.

On the basis of this mandate, and both through its specific and general instruments, the ECRI has examined in detail and on many occasions the specific situation of Roma in Europe today with regard to the racism and discrimination from which they suffer.

First of all, some figures: the second round of ECRI’s country-by-country monitoring was completed in 2002 and covered 43 member states. Aspects of the situation of Roma are covered in the reports on 32 member states, while for 16 member states the ECRI decided to include this question in the section of the report dealing with “issues of particular concern”. These figures concern Western European countries just as much as those of Central and Eastern Europe.

We are currently half way through the third round of ECRI’s country-by-country monitoring. Of the 19 reports already published, 18 deal specifically with the situation of Roma, and of these 10 consider the issue to be of particular concern.

If we consider that the ECRI’s field of action covers all groups that are vulnerable to racism in Europe, then it is evident when looking at these figures that the Roma do indeed constitute a group that is particularly and specifically vulnerable. In fact, they are a target-group for racism, and one which is in a way the ECRI’s “most frequent customer” and which is in the situation that causes most concern.

On the basis of facts gathered from the ECRI’s country-specific reports, we can say that:

- In our societies, Roma do not enjoy the equal dignity that is the right of all human beings;

- Along with discrimination, they are also the target of racist violence;
- The intolerance they face is not decreasing.

The ECRI addresses this situation in its General Policy Recommendation No. 3, which deals specifically with the fight against racism and intolerance towards Roma.

In the preamble of this Recommendation, the ECRI states clearly that “Roma suffer throughout Europe from persisting prejudices, are victims of a racism which is deeply-rooted in society, are the target of sometimes violent demonstrations of racism and intolerance, and their fundamental rights are regularly violated and threatened.”

I wanted to quote this text because we all know that if we want to combat racism against the Roma effectively, we first have to grasp the specificities of this racism. I think that certain elements of the phrase in the preamble give us some leads to follow.

First of all, the notion of the persistence of prejudice: We are faced with a situation of permanent racism – both from a historical and geographical point of view – a racism which has endured over the centuries without waning, and which spreads from East to West and North to South.

Next, the notion of systemisation: This is a systematic, regular, repetitive racism; to the point where it almost seems to indicate a sort of “acceptance of that kind of racism” within society.

And, another element contained in the preamble, the violent nature of manifestations of racism towards Roma. Without a doubt, it is a racism that is actually put into practice on a particularly regular basis. We could ask ourselves if the notion of impunity in the minds of perpetrators is not in some way responsible for facilitating here and there the carrying out of racist acts.

If we turn to the ECRI’s country-by-country monitoring reports, we realize that it is most often when dealing with Roma communities that the ECRI uses the words “exclusion” and “segregation” to describe the situation in a given country. This is another lead that should be explored. Of course, part of this exclusion, and only part of it, can be explained by the severe socio-economic disadvantages from which Roma communities suffer. But there are obviously other aspects to analyse and deal with in the behaviour of mainstream society in order to put an end to this exclusion and segregation.

Obviously, there is a serious problem here, and in a way we are at the hard centre of racism. A serious problem, of which the ECRI is not only well aware, but which it also brings to light as it does a lot of work on this issue.

However, as we all know, it is not enough to analyse manifestations of racism and intolerance. This analysis is not an end in itself. For the ECRI, it is a necessary step in the process that consists of offering practical and reliable solutions to combat these phenomena.

As far as the fight against racism and intolerance towards Roma is concerned, the ECRI's recommendations cover a vast range of suggestions. As my time is limited, I shall not mention them here, at least not all of them. But I would like to highlight two major issues in this fight:

- Combating denial the problem. It is fundamental to take the first step, which some of our partners have yet to take – that is, to acknowledge the problem. It must be stated loud and clear: yes, it is racism which is at the root of the violence perpetrated against Roma, and at the root of the violations of their basic rights. On this subject, institutions such as the ECRI, ODIHR and the EUMC have a fundamental role to play and should firmly carry this message together.
- Empowerment. It is evident, as stated by the ECRI, that it is through the active participation of Roma communities in decision-making processes that the progress will be made. Here again, priority should be placed on the idea of partnership on an equal footing. Empowerment is all the more important, because it is what will eventually give the Roma the opportunity to have their voice heard and understood at the European level. This is why the Council of Europe actively supported the setting up of the European Roma and Traveller Forum, from which we expect results in terms of participation and making the voice of the Roma heard.

## **Marko D. Knudsen**

*First Chairman of the European Center for Antiziganism Research*

### **What does antiziganism mean? Proposal of a scientific definition from different European viewpoints.**

#### **The evil reality of antiziganism**

Antiziganism has to be understood as an instrument of stigmatisation, the intent of which is not to observe and understand the circumstances of the “other” side, but to find elements of identification that legitimate separation and other discriminative actions against those “others”. Antiziganism is carried out freely and unfiltered by the majority society. Thus, it hardly matters if a community of “gypsies” has been living nearby for decades – their neighbours still consider them “nomads”.

657 years ago, the Roma entered the continent together with the Turks during the Osman Empire’s invasion of Europe. This is probably the reason why they were initially feared and distrusted – a notion that remained in the European consciousness and has been nourished until our present day.

#### **Europe’s cultural heritage**

Antiziganism can be considered as a kind of European cultural heritage. As early as childhood, the individual is faced with the decision:

- a) do I form and stand to my own opinion, thus questioning the values and prejudice of my own parents? Or
- b) do I believe what my parents tell me?

Of course, most people unquestioningly follow the views of their parents, because they are the instance of truth for all children. This manner of relaying values, traditions and prejudice from one generation to the next has been apparent in all European countries and in all social classes for centuries.

“The great breadth of a nation falls for a big lie much easier than for a small one.”  
- *Adolf Hitler*

This “tradition” manifests itself in a mental as well as palpable society-internal declaration of enemy status against those who are not supposed to be assimilated or integrated. The majority society legitimates its antiziganistic behaviour against the Roma and Sinti, because individuals see their own actions and attitudes in a subjectively logical context that is shared by the whole society:

#### **Historical antiziganist persecution**

- 15th-16th century: Antiziganistic laws
- 16th-19th century: Marking and killing

- 16th-21st century: Deportations and resettlements
- 20th-21st century: Gypsy offices, adoptions, sterilisations

### **The curse of antiziganism**

The fact is generally ignored that the Roma managed to survive for more than 1,000 years in a hostile environment only because of their exceptional ability for assimilation and integration. With this, they weathered prejudice and antiziganism, the resulting discrimination, racism and – at the end of the spiral – murder, and the historical genocide during the Nazi era and in Kosovo.

Antiziganism has left the Roma and their fellow groups crippled, both physically and psychologically; worried only about survival, feeding the hunger for food and not the one for knowledge. Poverty through exclusion – this is the result of the systematic antiziganism in Europe: 12 to 15 million people neglected and ignored by a society that does not want them and considers itself right to hold this opinion.

### **Antiziganism or anti-gypsyism?**

The European Center for Antiziganism Research will use the term antiziganism in its international, English-language work, thus refraining from the term anti-gypsyism. We decided against the commonly used English term, because it only refers to the Roma (“gypsies”) in English-speaking territories like Great Britain and Ireland, while the rest of Europe uses closely related terms like “Zigeuner”, “cigan”, “cingany”, “tsigange” etc. Thus, the linguistic root “zigan-“ is better suited for usage in a terminological definition for the entirety of Europe, and the term “antiziganism” allows an identification of the problem on a national as well as international level. For example, a Rumanian might not make a direct connection between the word “anti-gypsyism” and the “tsigans” in his homeland. The term “anti-gypsyism” therefore only makes sense in the context of the special, national Antiziganism in the English-speaking territories of Europe.

### **Summary**

Antiziganism prevents equal treatment and therefore every attempt at integration, tolerance or assimilation of the Roma into the majority society of the respective states they live in, although they are rightful citizens. Because of antiziganism, the Roma in all of Europe lack the protection of their basic democratic rights, especially the right for equal treatment, which should be codified in every democratic constitution.

In Europe, everybody is equal – but the “gypsies” are nothing.

“There is no greater merit than freeing an oppressed nation.”

- *Nelson Mandela*

**Lauri Sivonen**

*Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights*

**Anti-gypsyism in the light of the preliminary report of the Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation of the Roma, Sinti and Travellers in Europe**

Anti-gypsyism is a word riddled with contradictions and it takes a long route to test the real utility of the term. A bold step forward is to see it as a slogan for a campaign against behaviour considered so pernicious to society that it has to be changed through measures that encompass most sectors of society. In the case of anti-gypsyism, the harmfulness to society is immediately visible: the Roma are barred from full participation in our societies because of racism, prejudice, discrimination, hate speech and antagonism against them perpetrated by long-standing anti-Roma sentiments, attitudes and stereotypes. In addition to the societal harm caused by anti-gypsyism we must also understand its individual consequences through the discrimination that Roma individuals may endure throughout their lifetime and in several social spheres simultaneously.

The preliminary report of the Commissioner for Human Rights, Alvaro Gil-Robles, on the human rights situation of the Roma, Sinti and Travellers in Europe, issued in May this year on the Commissioner's website, has certainly taken this step, among others. The report traces the discrimination and persecution of the Roma across Europe and throughout history, and sets an agenda for remedying the situation in a number of fields such as housing, education, employment, health care and the treatment of the Roma by public authorities. It also introduces good practices and legal frameworks already in place in member states. The provisional report is the first thematic report by the Commissioner, and will be finalised by early next year through a consolidated version that will take into account comments already received from governments and civil society.

But as the definitions proposed by Valeriu Nicolae and Herbert Heuss demonstrate, there is more to anti-gypsyism than meets the eye at a first glance. It does not go away when it is revealed as racism, discrimination and prejudice. It seems that anti-gypsyism is being underpinned by a particularly virulent ideology, an extraordinarily focused type of racism that posits anti-gypsyism as a form of discrimination that could actually be justified in contrast to other forms of prejudice. Such an ideology, in its more subtle forms, would seem to concede that discrimination in general may indeed be harmful but denies the Roma, yet not others, their right to protection against prejudice.

In the most drastic way, this ideology currently manifests itself in extreme forms of hate speech which aim to push the Roma from the confines of humanity either through their physical elimination or by characterising the Roma as being sub-human and animal-like. In principle, although sadly not always in practice, there are efficient legal means to counter hate speech, and the European Convention on Human Rights does exclude hate speech from the freedom of expression it protects. Such an ideology may also be at work when public authorities perpetrate illegal violence against the Roma and exclude them from the protection they are entitled to. The European Court

of Human Rights has become the ultimate instance of redress in many cases of this type.

At a more low-key but pervasive level, anti-gypsyism seeks to belittle the Roma by making them and discrimination against them invisible. Its objective is to push the Roma to the margins of society, and hide the diversity of multiple Roma, Sinti and Traveller identities through the use of well-rehearsed stereotypes. Here we are talking, for example, about a certain amnesia regarding the Roma as victims of the Holocaust, the ghettoization of Roma into separate neighbourhoods and their being debarred from entering public spaces, segregated schools or the frequent placement of Roma children in special classes, or the attitude that “Roma need not apply” for posts on the labour market. Furthermore, this manifests itself in denying the Roma a role in the preparation and application of policies and measures directly affecting them, leading to situations where the Roma are simply managed or administered by someone else using standardised measures that are not adapted to the specific needs of each community. The Commissioner has encountered many instances of these practices during his country visits as his reports spell out.

The specific feature of such a generalised anti-Roma mindset is that it often leads to indirect discrimination where seemingly neutral criteria are applied, for example, in access to municipal housing, health care and employment, but which in fact tend to be clearly more unfavourable to the Roma than other people. However, it is particularly worrying that the exclusion and marginalization of the Roma is surprisingly often supported by apparently democratic arguments. This happens when the Roma are denied their legal rights by majority votes in municipal councils and local plebiscites, when anti-Roma discourse reaches mainstream political discussion, as has recently been documented by the ECRI, or when the parents of non-Roma children reject integrated schools. The Commissioner is very concerned when the rule of law is pitted against democracy as if these two did not form an inseparable whole.

Local autonomy does not mean autonomy from protection of human rights. The rule of law guaranteeing equality before the law is a fundamental condition for sustainable democracy, and states are responsible for upholding it evenly throughout their territories. There is a potential loophole in the principle of equality before the law that is exploited by anti-gypsyism. That is the abstract and erroneous requirement that equality before the law should always mean totally undifferentiated treatment, which would seem to rule out affirmative action or, as it is somewhat misleadingly described, positive discrimination. This is used as an excuse by some people against specific measures in favour of Roma inclusion, often coupled with arguments in favour of other vulnerable groups or the dictates of economic necessity rendering affirmative action impossible. We should keep in mind that the EU equality directives of 2000 clearly upheld the possibility for affirmative action, as long as the measures are proportional and are not prolonged beyond the time their targets have been reached. The preamble to Protocol 12 on non-discrimination to the European Convention on Human Rights also endorses affirmative action, although this is not spelled out in its operative provisions. Furthermore, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is interpreted to endorse affirmative measures in a fairly proactive way.



The Commissioner is adamant that no-one can afford to tell a pan-European minority that has been subjected to a long history of discrimination and persecution to remain patient in its wait for equality. Perseverance may be a necessary virtue, but special measures to bring about equality before the law and equality of opportunity for the Roma are clearly justified. It is also obvious that behind anti-gypsyism or antiziganism as a campaign slogan we find a certain conceptual alignment with reference to other antis, as well as a research agenda.

This is a project for increased visibility of the Roma and discrimination against them. First of all, its aim is to put anti-gypsyism on the same level as other comparable “antis”, such as anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism. It is no accident that the European Centre for Antiziganism Research has chosen “Holocaust and the Genocide of the Roma and Sinti” as the theme of its third annual conference next year. Antiziganism clearly opens an agenda for serious research. Knowledge and sharp reasoning are also required to put discrimination against the Roma at centre-stage, where it belongs with the other antis. The struggle for Roma inclusion is not a sideshow: it must be at the centre of our attention. It presents us with an opportunity that we can only ignore at our peril, to build and strengthen everyday democracy and the rule of law. This is the only way towards a truly inclusive society where everyone has the right to participate and to be heard. In his report, the Commissioner highlights the need to enhance the participation of the Roma in public decision-making at all levels, while he also points to the central role non-governmental organizations representing the Roma can have.

## **Discussion Summary**

### **Third Plenary Session: Combating Prejudice and Hate Speech against Roma, Sinti and Traveller: Anti-Gypsyism as a Phenomenon throughout Europe**

**Submitted by: Herbert Heuss**

Chair: Dr Anastasia Crickley, Chairperson of the Management Board of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of other Religions

Speakers: Valeriu Nicolae (ERIO): Anti-gypsyism in the media; Mrs Isil Gachet (ECRI): Specifics in racism against Roma, Sinti, Travellers; Ashmet Elezovski (RNC): Conclusions from the Hamburg Conference on Anti-Ziganism; Lauri Sivonen (CoE, Office of the Commissioner for HR): Anti-gypsyism in the light of the Commissioner's HR report.

#### **Anti-gypsyism most virulent**

All speakers described anti-gypsyism as the most virulent form of racism rising in Europe today. Anti-gypsyism was seen as a European phenomenon, crossing borders and social strata and shared by different social and political groups.

#### **Terminology**

Brief attention was given to terminology: is the phenomenon of racism and stereotypes against Roma to be called anti-gypsyism or antiziganism? The majority opinion was that this should be a minor problem, to be solved in a footnote for translation. However, in English the term anti-gypsyism should be used while at national level there could be varieties of both. In the given context, everybody should understand the meaning of both terms.

#### **Anti-gypsyism and racism**

Speakers reflected different understanding/definitions of anti-gypsyism. One speaker stated that anti-gypsyism because of its unique character is more than just racism, and referred to it as an ideology. Others commented that the common definition of racism is exactly that of an ideology, and that there is no need to create a kind of meta-racism. The dimension of anti-gypsyism was presented as a kind of European heritage, with a history of more than 1,000 years in Europe, and with a climax in national socialism and the genocide.

Comment: However, it was observed that a clear understanding of what anti-gypsyism means was missing even in the review of the results of the Hamburg Conference on anti-gypsyism. Anti-gypsyism being a facet within the broader context of racism means an individual behaviour: stereotypes and resentments within the belief-system of individuals, highly resistant and connected to emotions, an ideology, and an institutional structure. This dimension was not mentioned during the session;

however, in Working Group II on education it was a cross cutting issue, e.g., segregation in the educational system.

It should be understood that there is no automatism in history; there is no one-way road from the edicts during the Middle Ages via the enlightenment to Auschwitz.

### **Anti-gypsyism as a trans-European stereotype**

All speakers stressed the point of anti-gypsyism being a European heritage, and a trans-European stereotype, which can be followed in both Eastern and Western Europe. It has been observed that within the presentation of stereotypes there were only negative ones listed; however, there are lots of positive stereotypes as well, which needs to be discussed too.

Comment: To the rapporteur it is still questionable whether the actual forms of anti-gypsyism in a number of South-Eastern and Central-Eastern European countries share the same history (e.g., Bulgaria under the Ottoman Empire compared to Spain), and do these forms of anti-gypsyism have similar functions? It might be worth considering the specific function of “bridging anti-gypsyism” in Europe today, both cross-border and across social and political strata. To the Rapporteur, this is the most important function of anti-gypsyism. See recommendations on research.

### **On laughing about racist video clips**

The presentation of a racist video clip provoked laughter among some participants, which in return provoked negative feelings among a number of Roma participants. They asked what there is about such racist clips to laugh about, and expressed their being insulted and hurt.

Comment: It needs to be understood that laughter indeed hurts those who suffer from racism. On the other hand, laughter is one psychological option to react when being confronted with shock or horror. Such behaviour is well known among visitors of concentration camps. Dr. Freud tells more about it.

### **Monitoring mechanisms and schemes**

A number of speakers and participants referred to the existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms in European institutions like the EMCR and the ECRI, and also the Commissioner for Human Rights or the CPRSI. While, for example, the EMCR reports on discrimination of Roma in all the fields which the Centre covers (from education and housing to health etc.), the ECRI had already produced its specific recommendation no. 3 on combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies – which other speakers declared as still lacking.

### **Identified specifics of anti-gypsyism**

Monitoring and reporting of anti-gypsyism shows a serious increase in violence against the Roma. Within the EU and the OSCE region, anti-gypsyism is the most virulent form of racism, although it needs to be mentioned that other forms of racism (e.g., anti-Semitism) are rising too. Backed by a rights-based approach, monitoring

institutions cover anti-gypsyism and identify a number of peculiarities: the persistence of prejudice, systematic racism and therefore anti-gypsyism, accepted as the “normal” violent character of anti-gypsyism and easily turning into action, being used as justification for social and political exclusion.

### **Hamburg Conference on Anti-Ziganism**

The presentation of the results of the Hamburg Conference on Anti-Ziganism (October 8-9, 2005) gave an input on what research on anti-gypsyism should focus on (see recommendations). The speaker stressed that for the Roma a control function in the research process has to be guaranteed, and the majority has to accept the Roma as being their “own” experts. Education of children plays an important role in overcoming anti-gypsyism.

Comment: Claiming control of any research process generally turns out contra-productive; within sciences such political control of any group cannot be accepted.

### **Risks in awareness on anti-gypsyism**

During the discussion one speaker mentioned that a number of Roma representatives expressed their feeling of being put at risk by campaigns to combat anti-gypsyism. By paying attention to anti-gypsyism Roma may become objects of violence and discrimination in a more dangerous way than at present. Some Roma groups may prefer to prevent tensions by non-awareness.

### **Positive image campaigns combating anti-gypsyism**

Other speakers expressed the need to combat anti-gypsyism and to strengthen the existing monitoring schemes, while on the other hand it should be even more important to focus on the positive experiences in presenting Roma culture and in meeting Roma communities and individuals. This might contribute to overcome racism and anti-gypsyism more than any collection of existing anti-gypsyism. The danger of a negative self-definition and identity was mentioned in this context too.

### **Need for legislative measures**

The need for a clear and strong legal order and the implementation of specific laws to overcome structural forms of anti-gypsyism were underlined by one speaker, focussing especially on desegregation processes. Without national laws on desegregation, Governments might always find ways not to implement the concept of desegregation; the expression of political will is not enough to overcome such forms of racism.

### **Kosovo**

During the session, the case of the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo was stressed as one of the most extreme forms of anti-gypsyism since World War II. The need for Roma participation in any negotiation of future status of the Kosovo had been underlined.

Comment: It was stated that the expulsion of the Roma in Kosovo and their current situation is caused by and to be described as anti-gypsyism. However, the expulsion might be caused more by extreme nationalism, and anti-gypsyism serves as a kind of ex-post explanation to justify this nationalist behaviour. The long history of Roma in Kosovo with its high level of integration into an ethnic patchwork might have been accompanied by stereotypes and anti-gypsyism, but not at a level that led to expulsion.

### **Follow-up**

A number of participants expressed their satisfaction that with this Warsaw Conference the topic of anti-gypsyism has been set on the agenda of international institutions for the first time. They expressed the need for a follow-up conference and asked the chairing governments in the EU, CoE and OSCE to support such a follow-up. Romania was encouraged to host the next conference during its period chairing the CoE.

### **Recommendations made during the presentations and discussion**

- Awareness raising among institutions and strengthening the role of ECRI, EMCR, ODIHR;
- Immediate and permanent reaction at all levels to current anti-gypsyism: by European and national institutions, individuals (politicians, representatives, intellectuals), NGOs; and a report of such reactions with the monitoring of anti-gypsyism;
- Developing a Roma institution (not necessarily a new one) for campaigning and permanent media watch, following the example of the Anti Defamation League;
- Producing guidelines for human rights activists, with special attention to women and feminists, on how to speak about anti-gypsyism;
- Presentation of positive Roma culture and strong self-consciousness by supporting Roma traditional trades;
- Participation of Roma in the decision-making process at all levels, and adequate representation of Roma in institutions and NGOs;
- Partnership with and empowerment of Roma communities and representatives;
- Inclusion of anti-gypsyism in human rights education research should focus on Roma persecution during the Nazi era; continued discrimination after World War II; discrimination in compensation; memorial work; comparison of anti-gypsyism to anti-Semitism;
- Identifying structural anti-gypsyism; e.g., lack of data as a sign of anti-gypsyism, in housing, education, access to labour market, etc., and addressing these forms by legal measures.

## **Comments**

On research: Taking into account the variety of forms and the differences in historical and social functions of anti-gypsyism, research should start with an European project on comparison of forms and functions of anti-gypsyism. There is definitely a difference between the history of stereotypes in Balkan states and Western European nation states. The role of anti-gypsy laws in the process of establishing nation states might be one topic in such an research project. To underline again, despite the fact that images of the “gypsy” look the same all over Europe and throughout centuries, it is necessary to analyse the specific function of such images in a given situation.

On Roma policy, programmes and projects: Anti-gypsyism being a cross-cutting issue, combating anti-gypsyism needs to become a permanent component in ongoing programmes and projects. This means that a media component should accompany any activities in order to spread positive information on Roma issues, and to avoid tensions in the context of a project targeting the Roma only. The project design should anticipate such potential tensions (which will show up in almost any kind of Programme; e.g., desegregation and the reaction of majority parents) and react in a proactive way.

## **7. FOURTH PLENARY SESSION: How to better use and coordinate initiatives to help local authorities and Roma working together at the local level, including funding mechanisms of local actions**

**Jennifer Tanaka**

*Assistant Director*

*Pakiv European Roma Fund*

The proposal for a possible fund for sustainable development, especially economic development, was put forward in the context of the OSCE Economic Forum – Roma Side Events in 2004 and 2005. In thinking about a fund, the question was not so much the proposal to create a new fund *per se* but first to promote the idea of a process allowing for deeper reflection, thinking and assessment of how funds can be more effective in making a sustainable difference on the lives of Romani individuals and households.

Poverty and social exclusion are certainly multi-faceted, with a number of causes and effects. Among those, and perhaps one of the most important, is access to sustainable income and employment, allowing for adequate standard of living, self-worth and life-long perspectives. At the moment we still lack a clear understanding and vision of how to improve the economic situation among Roma in a sustainable way.

In terms of local partnerships, there is general recognition that integrated development efforts cannot take place in isolation from the authorities, and many funding schemes require such partnerships or look upon them favourably. Still, what is the substance of these partnerships and are they sustainable? The question of how to use initiatives and funds better or more effectively requires that we first have a clear understanding and broad overview of how they are currently being used; what they do and can achieve and what they do not and cannot achieve. In contributing to this process, I may provide one example of Structural Fund use.

Within the European Union, Structural Funds are the main form of financial assistance granted to resolve structural economic and social problems. Among the objectives of the Structural Funds there is also the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme to support initiatives which foster training, job access and employment for disadvantaged people – those who are excluded from the labour market or experience difficulties in accessing employment due to discrimination, low schooling, lack of qualifications, lack of work experience, etc. The EQUAL Programme thus targets Roma in particular, though not exclusively.

In Hungary, for the period 2004-2006, the budget of the EQUAL Programme is about 40,400,000 euros, of which 30,300,000 euros come from Structural Funds and the rest, 10,100,000 euros, from the Hungarian Central Budget. To apply for support, organizations should form local partnerships with other public and private stakeholders.

The project took place in the north-eastern region of Hungary, which is one of the most economically underdeveloped regions of the country. The proportion of Roma is

10.8 percent, and nearly 20-25 percent of Hungary's Romani population lives in this region.<sup>2</sup> The micro-region of the programme (Encs) has a mixed economy characterized by arable land, although the majority of the population used to work in the industrial sector before the economic changes. The rate of unemployment is 33.8 percent, and 80 percent of registered unemployed people are permanently unemployed.<sup>3</sup> This micro-region has one of the most undereducated populations as well, with an average of 7.8 years of schooling. According to estimates, there are some 20,000 people who are completely excluded from the labour market, have no contact with employment organizations and are not registered anywhere. For most of the local Roma the only means of living are social benefits and allowances, as well as temporary or informal work.

Without going into too many details, the main elements of the Programme included:

- A needs and opportunities assessment of the local Roma community, employers, labour market and existing programmes, carried out in order to prepare the eventual project proposal;
- Training and setting up a network of 8-10 Roma labour market “referees” or mediators, to improve relations among labour bureaux, local businesses and Romani community members, and to give professional assistance in the organization and implementation of labour market programmes;
- A “second chance” educational course for those without a completed 8th-grade education, since this is not offered in the immediate region. This opened opportunities for new graduates to access other employment programmes;
- Six vocational training courses for 104 people. The courses were easily accessible to local Roma and took into account seasonal work calendars. Courses included heavy machine operator, lumber, florist training, motor-saw operators, light and heavy machine operators, shop assistants;
- Organizational and enterprise development training;
- A roundtable or forum bringing together local entrepreneurs, employers and Roma graduates of the vocational courses;
- Small investment into the local Romani organizations participating in the Programme and with small business activities related to forestry;
- An international exchange component, related to sharing among EQUAL Programme partners from other EU member states. The total cost of the Programme was about 410,000 euros.

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<sup>2</sup> The case is presented in the Hungarian Self-Reliance Foundation Annual Report 2004. The statistics are based on publications of the KSH (Central Statistics Office, reports 2000 and 2001), Kertesi Gábor and Kézdi Gábor: The Roma Population in Hungary, BP society, 1988, publications of the BAZ Employment Centre, as well as information provided by local Romani organizations.

<sup>3</sup> Employment Center - Encs



In the end, the Programme resulted in 14 people accessing jobs on the primary labour market, and another 23 were employed by participating organizations of the Programme with the help of wage subsidies paid by the Programme (18 forestry workers, five fireplace builders). The labour bureau also placed another 15 in additional training courses and paid for follow-up employment with wage subsidies for a period of six months.<sup>4</sup>

On the one hand, the Programme did a lot: it provided new skills and access to labour bureau programmes; it increased capacities among local Romani organizations; it improved relations among local Roma and labour bureaux, schools, and some employers; and 14 of the 104 trained found jobs within the primary labour in the first year. In the case of another 38, they obtained work experience and employment, but the Programme or the labour bureau funded the wages. When the Programme ended, most local organizations were unable to maintain these persons as full-time personnel. In other words, it increased skills and work experiences among target beneficiaries, but did not provide sustainable employment.

Such constrictions within Programmes are not uncommon, especially when we are trying to stimulate greater access to labour markets in areas where it has little to offer. Drawing on such experiences can help us better understand the concrete challenges related to greater social inclusion of Roma, and to allow for more articulate policy development and advocacy initiatives. In terms of specific recommendations, we should increase coordination among Programme actors to come together to identify sustainable working methods for joint action in thematic areas, such as education, employment, health, housing, etc. Once articulated, there should be clear follow up for policy and eventual operations for institutionalizing or mainstreaming such practices and promoting greater outreach to isolated communities and regions.

Along these lines, coordination may also involve the production of an inventory of various Programmes, assessed according to common indicators, and therefore providing for a broad overview of Programmes and their impact. At the same time, we need to rethink the limits of project funding, which, as in the example earlier, provides for local action and concrete outcomes, but for the limited period of the project, and in a piecemeal manner. We may also ask whether the funding mechanism of competitive open tenders, consistent with EU and governmental practices amongst others, provides access to the most needy, disadvantaged and isolated Romani groups? Likewise, does the mandatory partnership among various stakeholders already exclude proposals from localities where relations and desire for relations among Romani groups and local institutions do not exist? In seeking greater effectiveness, we may ask to what degree Structural Funds provide for structural economic change? We may encourage the introduction of institutional policies and practices to assess the impact of Programmes more rigorously, in public fora, together with project organizers and beneficiaries. In a sense, an eventual fund for sustainable development may have the sole task of looking at the sustainability of results produced by all other funds. Finally, we may invest renewed energies into developing a clear vision for economic development of Roma, starting out perhaps with a deeper look at Roma and the political economy. As with the popular phrase of the early 1990s, “Roma are the litmus test for democracy in Central and Eastern Europe”, it

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<sup>4</sup> Another eight were employed by the lead applicant organizations as Roma employment referees.

may well be time to consider the Roma as the litmus test for economic development and cohesion within the expanded Europe.

## Discussion Summary

### **Fourth Plenary Session: How to better use and co-ordinate initiatives to help local authorities and Roma working together at the local level, including funding mechanisms of local actions**

**Submitted by: Andrzej Mirga**

At this session five speakers made presentations. They represented various institutions and initiatives dealing with Roma issues: the EC, the European Education Fund of the Roma Decade, and Hungary's Government Office for Equal Opportunities. Two other speakers represented the municipal authorities of Sofia and the Pakiv European Roma Fund, a private foundation.

Presentations were very informative, outlining institutional approaches and Programmes (Boeing and Varallyay), or focused on concrete action (as in the case of Ms Damyanova from the Sofia municipality Roma housing project). Urmos' presentation highlighted some recommendations as an outcome of experiences gathered from implementation of Roma policies in Hungary. Ms Tanaka in contrast presented an analytical statement, raising some important questions regarding the larger context and conditions for effective implementation of Roma Programmes at local level.

Mr. Detlev Boeing, representing the DG Enlargement, focused on Roma within the EU space in his first part of presentation. He underlined that the most important DGs in the European Commission to deal with Roma issues are the DG Employment and Social Affairs and DG Regio. In his view, the accession process has worked to raise awareness about problem encountered by Roma communities in Europe. Currently Roma are regarded as a key issue at the Commission and European Union level. Relevant for Roma concerns are the EU's regional and structural funds policies, social inclusion and anti-discrimination policies and PHARE Programme for countries in the process of accession.

The use of regional and structural funds policies to improve living conditions for Roma requires a comprehensive strategy policy (framework) at the government level and a **pro-active approach for implementation at regional and local tailored to the specific needs and realities. It should also involve the Roma themselves in its programming and implementation.**

An novelty in the EC policy toward the Roma that should be underlined here is the proposed **“package approach” to Roma issues**. The overriding idea is to realize a “package approach” through a process, steered by government ministries and institutions, of partnerships at the regional and local levels. The **package approach allows funds to be channelled to improve physical infrastructure in Romani settlements, together with projects aimed at increasing human resources and combating unemployment (the enterprise/employment block). These blocks of the package are complemented with anti-discrimination work, regularization of illegal settlements, and awareness-raising. The EC approach aims at long-term and sustainable improvement of Roma living conditions.** As Boeing pointed out, however, there may be barriers to overcome in realizing this approach, including **lack**

**of will on the part of authorities, consensus among the Roma, and coordination among institutions and programmes or action plans.**

Slovakia has been mentioned as example in case in realizing this “package approach”. In 2004, the Roma Working Commission was established as Subcommittee to the Community Support Programme. The Commission included government ministries, regional authorities and Roma representatives. Its mission was to give a clear direction and strong leadership, facilitate cooperation, improve reporting, propose improvements and reach consensus. The Commission provides also technical assistance to support panel of experts at the Office of the Roma Plenipotentiary to assess projects and assist municipalities to develop a package of projects. In Boeing’s presentation, however, there was nothing said about how much this approach and its realization were successful in Slovakia.

Regarding the EC’s social inclusion and anti-discrimination policies the speaker stressed that there is **a need to complete transposition of the EU Directives into national legislation**, and here the Commission can enact a strong pressure on countries which have not done it. However, effective execution of the EU **anti-discrimination directives require better statistical data and its use**, which are missing at the moment.

In the field of employment policy a general approach is to boost employability through education, as programmes like ACCEDER or EQUAL are doing. The latter will have 80 new projects directed to Roma communities. Those Programmes can also be used to improve the quality of education for Roma children and to support Roma interest representation networks at the EU level.

In the second part of his presentation Mr. Boeing concentrated on the PHARE assistance programmes for Roma in candidate countries. Here his remarks were based on the thematic review of EU PHARE assistance to Roma minorities (1999-2002). The EU financial assistance in this area reached almost 100 million euros: one third went to education, one quarter to infrastructure, and only about 10 percent to employment and training. The rest went to support Roma organizations. According to the speaker, while most of assistance rightly so went to education sector there is an obvious **need for government leadership in introducing systemic change and reform of the education system with an aim to fully integrate Roma children and provide quality education to them**. The NGO’s education projects will not solve structural deficiencies in education. Regarding infrastructure it has been suggested to introduce a **“bottom-up approach” combining infrastructure development with community planning**. The speaker underlined that too few funds went to tackle unemployment among the Roma. Here he **recommended more efforts be undertaken to ensure that wider PHARE ESF type projects are successfully inclusive for Roma**.

In conclusion the speaker underlined that the Commission keeps contacts and cooperates with main players in the field of Roma, both international organizations and Roma civil society.

Mr. Julius Varallayay, interim Director of the European Education Fund, outlined the Fund’s mission and its policy regarding the funding of education projects in his

presentation. He mentioned that the donor conference in Paris in 2004 brought 32 million euros to the Fund. As of January the Fund is registered officially in Switzerland. Among the board members there is a Roma representative, Mrs Maberka Kamberi from Macedonia. The Fund started work already, and the first 22 projects were approved after field visits undertaken by the Director. Projects deal with desegregation, developing pre-school education, education centres and scholarship for secondary-school students. The Fund's policy and guiding principles for project selection aims to support those: a) with **substantive Roma participation and preferably with Roma placed in central or leadership position in projects**; and b) **which intend to reform education policy and institution's approaches ensuring providing to Roma children equal quality education**. In the speaker's view the Fund had a good start, but there is a need for more funds. He mentioned that there will be more donor meetings organized periodically to rise the level of funding.

Mrs Victoria Damyanova presented the Sofia's municipality housing project. The project originated from a municipal programme for Roma which was developed and signed by the authorities and Roma NGOs in 2001. A **public council along with advisory and audit committees composed of representatives of ministries, the municipality and Roma NGOs were established to implement the Programme**. In 2003 Programme has started to be implemented; *inter alia* it provided help to pay bills for electricity to Roma families. A business centre for Roma entrepreneurs funded by PHARE was open as well. A housing project in a large Romani settlement in Sofia lunched in 2005 (?) is financed by the loan from the Council of Europe Development Bank. To date 100 families have been moved to new apartments and 100 more are slated to move in the next year. The speaker mentioned also that the rent in these houses are very low and the municipality takes care of maintenance of houses there.

Mr. Andor Urmos, Director for Roma Integration at the Government Office for Equal Opportunities in Hungary, focused his presentation on Roma participation in public administration and decision making. The **legal framework for it is provided by the Hungarian Minority Law of 1993 which introduced the system of minority self-governments and by later government decrees**. While the Roma minority self-governments are working well there is an disadvantage – municipality authorities tend to segregate Roma problems to be solved by Roma minority self-governments. The overall result is however positive; **Roma representatives are placed in all levels of public administration**. There are three Roma commissioners at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Economy; 13 coordinators in various ministries. At the county level there are Roma coordinators, and at the county's labour offices there are Roma consultants. There are Roma family coordinators at schools and Roma social workers.

Roma also participate in decision making bodies on budgets including for structural funding. According to the speaker, Roma eligible for job position have to fulfil certain criteria: self-identification with Roma minority; engagement in Romani issues; experience in project implementation; and maintaining relations with Romani communities. The speaker also raised the issue of mainstreaming and targeting Roma, which for some time dominated discussion among policy-makers and Roma. In his view this is a fruitless debate. The **best approach is to do both depending on area of interest or activity; some have to be mainstreamed and others work better if they are targeted. There has to be also more attention paid to policy issues and**

**not only to projects**, like in education – there is a need for systemic reform, which require a policy change.

Ms Jennifer Tanaka addressed the crucial issue of Roma access to employment and income in post-communist countries. According to her, the Romani communities are confronted with high rates of formal unemployment due to insufficient skills, lack of job opportunities and discrimination. The **combination of systemic transformations in the region and historic marginalization of Roma led to a unique situation in this regard**. Despite many programmes and initiatives **there is a lack of vision on how to ensure a job and sustainable income for Roma women and men**.

The speaker used as an example a project implemented in the north-eastern part of Hungary, an region populated with Roma who are undereducated, excluded from the labour market, making a living out of welfare, and where job opportunities are limited. Significant money was spent on vocational training, but only 14 people obtained jobs. Even then these jobs were lost when the project ended.

In her view projects aimed at combating unemployment might have a marginal impact on the overall employment situation among the Roma communities due to human resources and market-related difficulties. The speaker **called for “institutional change” in approaches to Roma employment and income issues**. It might require **more investment in new institutional practices at the systemic level, with more effective participation of Roma through capacity-building at local level, realizing partnership between local authorities and Roma communities and putting Roma-related issues as regular and not “special” on the agenda of local and regional authorities**. It has been suggested that a **limited number of pilot initiatives, well coordinated among various actors, should be supported**. The speaker also called for **allocation of resources to critical reflection, assessment and shared learning, with an inventory of programmes and projects and their real impact on the Roma. In such an inventory and assessment there is a need to look beneath some indicators** (it is not enough to report how many people participated in a project or in vocation training or were employed, but also whether the employment or new business was successful and sustained over time). Finally, tackling the **issue of access of Roma to employment and income needs to be integrated into large framework of macro-economic policies**. Many Roma communities live in underdeveloped regions where opportunities for job are limited. A **vision for Roma economic development should be integrated with the structural changes in those regions as part of structural funding policies of the EU**.

The discussion that followed did not add much to what has been presented. Only one speaker, Mr Robin Oakley, contributed to the topic, while others made unrelated remarks. Mr. Oakley shared the RrAJE experience from projects in several municipalities. This was all collated in a publication presented to the audience. In his view, **a successful initiatives at local level require participation of Roma, local partnership between Roma and local authorities, financial commitments from local authorities, and a horizontal approach – bringing in many local actors and authorities’ commitment to fight against discrimination**.

Conclusion:

The selection of speakers for this session was adequate. The EU policies provide both larger policy frameworks and financial instruments to be used to address acute problems of Roma minorities in the EU member states and in new member states. The EC is developing an innovative approach to tackle Roma problems as presented in “package approach”, which ties together its building blocks of infrastructure, human resources (education) and employment and anti-discrimination tailored to the specific regional and local needs and realities of Roma communities. The other speakers each addressed a specific area of these building blocks. Mr Varallyay focused on education, Mrs Damyanova on municipal housing, Mr Urmos on participation of Roma in decision making bodies and public administration essential for coming to consensus with Roma partners and in realization of concrete measures, and Mrs Tanaka on access to employment and income.

The presentations made it clear that achieving the common goal of all programmes and initiatives, i.e., measurable improvement of the situation of Roma communities:

- cannot be realized without real involvement of regional and local authorities in partnership with Roma communities;
- Roma Programmes and action plans have to be tailored to the specific needs of regional and local communities;
- Key problem areas for the Roma should be approach as a “package”, since only in a comprehensive way can they be tackled and remedied;
- Regional and local authorities’ role in dealing with Romani issues with decentralization can only increase and, as Sofia’s municipality case proved, they might be essential in changing living conditions for Roma communities;
- Mainstreaming and targeted policies should be applied flexibly in accordance with specific fields or areas of concern;
- In implementing Roma-related programmes and initiatives more attention should be paid to introducing institutional or systemic changes or policy changes instead of project-oriented policies;
- Horizontal approach – bring in many local actors and coordinate action and funds;
- Implementation needs to be followed with critical reflection, assessment and shared learning, with an inventory of Programmes and projects. In such an inventory and assessment there is a need to look beneath of some indicators to assess their real impact on the Roma;
- Roma-related Programmes and initiatives should be part of a larger vision of macro-economic policies and integrated into regional and local development.

## 8. CLOSING SESSION

### **Recommendations: Towards a common vision and implementation guidelines at the international level for national policies/action plans for Roma, Sinti and Travellers. and towards concrete measures against anti-gypsyism**

#### **Toralv Nordbo**

*First Deputy Director, OSCE ODIHR*

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I think our hope expressed during the opening session, namely that this conference should contribute to a focused, relevant and forward-looking debate, has been fully fulfilled. We have heard a variety of opinions, experiences, suggestions and also critical comments, which will help us, the relevant authorities and the international community, to develop even more targeted responses to the challenges of implementing the ‘promises’ that have been made vis-à-vis the Roma during the past decade. Let me just briefly summarize what I would see as the elements of “added value” resulting from the current conference:

- This International Roma Conference has been about promoting the process of implementation of existing national plans of action and recommendations – in particular the OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti, and the Council of Europe’s recommendations for Roma communities. What this conference was NOT about is launching new initiatives, new commitments, etc;
- The meeting will also bring onto the policymaking agenda the phenomenon of racism against Roma, Sinti and Travellers, including its particular forms called “anti-gypsyism” by some authors and activists. Regardless of terminology, the practitioners’ view is that effective implementation of international and governmental plans is seriously hindered by the intensity of prejudice and of direct and indirect racism against Roma, Sinti, and Travellers. The destructive effects of such racist attitudes are more visible in cases of violence against Roma, Sinti, Travellers in particular local communities, throughout the CoE/OSCE space;
- Cases of violence against Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians in Kosovo have been frequently and strongly brought into discussion in this perspective;
- Less visible but nonetheless destructive effects of racism are those entrenched in the practices of some institutions, as illustrated by systematic mistreatment of Roma, Sinti and Travellers in the work of the police, schools, health and employment institutions, as well as in various forms of mass media.
- In terms of substance, this Implementation Conference has contributed to formulating some “good practice guidelines” based on already existing



practices collected both by the OSCE and the Council of Europe in the framework of the recent decisions of both organizations, in particular the Warsaw Council of Europe Summit within the framework for enhanced cooperation between both organizations;

- The various speakers/papers used this opportunity to enter into a discourse on the vulnerabilities, challenges and “controversial” phenomena confronting Roma and Sinti communities in the OSCE region;
- This will allow both the OSCE and the Council of Europe to develop standards based on the results of this discourse, and their possible solutions, into a language rooted in human-rights principles and experience.

Another suggestion for more effective implementation of Roma policies is to raise awareness on how to create better inter-linkages among Roma-related initiatives. This would avoid parallel, and sometimes redundant, programmes and projects and facilitate better use of the resources allocated by the limited number of donor states and organizations. The experience with the “ups” and “downs” in setting the format and modalities for this Conference (beginning with discussions during the 2004 HDIM) may in itself serve as a lesson on how to tackle some of the obstacles in achieving inter-linkages among participating states and international organizations.

- An important priority mentioned by government representatives and NGOs was the engagement of the Roma community in municipal affairs, thereby improving their position in daily life in all areas such as housing, education, employment, and healthcare. It is important to stress that it is at the municipal level that real change can be implemented. National action plans may have been formulated at the national level, but it is important to oversee the objectives implemented at the local level;
- A common political platform that presents the coherent voice of the Roma population is important for change to occur. While it is important to promote unity amongst the Roma community, diverse perceptions and interests have to be recognized.

In a very active discussion on the issue of Roma IDPs and the conflict in Kosovo, some significant recommendations were made. The situation of Roma in refugee camps is extremely difficult. There needs to be urgent action for the medical evacuation of Roma in this region. Concerning refugee policy, Western European nations need to formulate humanitarian refugee policies that do not re-victimise those who have been forced to flee from their homes. The Roma population has not been able to successfully resettle in Kosovo because in the opinion of governments they lack the proper documentation, which leads to unequal socio-economic opportunities. Therefore, civic registration should be recognized as an important issue for the Roma community. In this context, we remind the participants on the forthcoming OSCE Conference in Belgrade on November 28, 2005, on civil registration of Roma in SEE.

- It is not only international organizations that can support the Roma community, but it is important to recognize that change needs to occur by presenting the unified voice of the Roma people. It was recommended during

the Conference that a common political platform representing the diverse but coherent voice of the Roma community should be encouraged. Participants committed themselves to work out a position paper which can be present as regards Roma refugees, IDPs and the status of Kosovo, and this is one way that they can bring various perceptions.

Debates during this conference brought a valuable contribution to exploring how to achieve the desired process for moving words into action, for matching commitments with deeds, and with funds.

- With regard to funding mechanisms it was proposed to promote the launching of a process allowing deeper reflection and assessment of how funds can be more effective in making a sustainable impact, especially in terms of economic development. The process may begin with the commissioning of an inventory of various funds and programmes, with an initial assessment of the input.

The Conference has contributed to articulating a political vision to effectively mainstream Roma affairs in participating states and in inter-governmental organizations. This vision is based on the lessons learned (both good and bad) in the implementation of Roma-related commitments and recommendations of both the OSCE and the Council of Europe.

- Part of the mainstreaming effort is the commitment to tackle particular forms of racist attitudes and practices that have been so amply documented by this Conference. These have been defined, by some of the participants to this debate, as “anti-gypsyism” and/or “antiziganism.” We need to move from passively observing anti-gypsyism to active measures meant to prevent and combat it. Mainstreaming measures against racism and xenophobia can not be effective without focused monitoring of the existing problems;
- The best results came always when discriminated groups were strongly involved in the activities of the bodies dealing with their problems. The OSCE’s successes in addressing Roma issues are a result of the activity of the ODIHR Roma and Sinti Contact Point. This, we hope, could be replicated not only within other units of the OSCE but also within other intergovernmental organizations;
- For instance, it has raised awareness to some recent side effects of current practices of Roma and Sinti policymaking. This would include a sense of renewed hostilities and intolerance in some segments of society in particular States, generated by distorted perceptions of Roma and Sinti policies/initiatives, which some label as “positive discrimination”, Roma-“targeted” institutional arrangements, etc; solutions must be explored in view of preventing further negative developments.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we said at the beginning of this Conference, it will only be as good as its follow-up. From the discussions of the past two days, we should be able to distil a number of

items which are particularly well suited for future action. I would like to offer the following:

- It remains the obligation of the organizers of this Conference to continue the implementation process - to design and to manage its development properly so that after a number of years we may report that we have indeed accomplished some significant progress in improving the situation of Roma and Sinti communities throughout the OSCE region;
- A number of concrete and implementable suggestions have been formulated that I would like to highlight. These include:
  - Involving senior and high-level officers in major line ministries involved in implementing existing national and international Action Plans with the implementation of Roma and Sinti policies;
  - This involvement of senior government officials should complement, and eventually correct, current practices in some participating states when dealing with Roma policy affairs.
- We hope that at some stage of this implementation process we will be able to raise both the number, and the profile, of the representatives of participating states who are directly or/and indirectly interested in solving the issues currently confronting Roma and Sinti communities throughout our region;
- We are welcoming the progress in setting up the newly created Council of Europe-sponsored European Roma and Travellers' Forum (ERTF). To this end, we congratulate all the actors, participating states and NGOs, and Roma and Sinti representatives – all of them have made an essential contribution to what is already considered to be a historic achievement. We look forward to the December 14-15 meeting of the plenary assembly of this Europe-wide, democratic representative body of the Roma and Sinti.

A proposal was formulated to consider continuing this Warsaw Roma Implementation Conference with a follow-up event, under the auspices of inter-governmental organizations, and eventually to be jointly organized by the chairing governments of IGOs involved in Roma and Sinti affairs – mainly the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and the Chair of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers; we have heard a proposal coming from Romania to host a meeting of this format at beginning of 2006.

- It is hoped that other States may join this core group of organizers, including the states active in the Decade for Roma Inclusion, and/or the states holding the presidency of the European Union.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank you once again for coming to join us at this conference, for having contributed with all your efforts and ideas, and for having kept up such a good focus and sense of collaborative endeavour during the past two days.

We can be proud to have taken another important step in making reality what was promised more than a decade ago, in the various formats of our international organizations. We should not let ourselves be discouraged by the obstacles along the way, as insurmountable as they sometimes seem. It is essential to be realistic, and honest to ourselves when assessing past practices and measuring how far we have come. But at the same time, the outlook for really making human rights and democracy a tangible reality for all, including members of Roma and Sinti or Traveller Communities, may never have looked so promising.

Thank you for your attention.

## **Michael Guet**

*Head of Roma and Travellers Division  
Council of Europe*

Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

When I started preparing a document about Council of Europe activities on Roma and Travellers for this plenary, I made a mistake in the title of the session. I had written “Intolerance and non-discrimination”, probably because I do not see much tolerance in my field of work. I would like to invite you to take some distance from this comfortable conference room for a few minutes, and imagine.

### **Education**

Just imagine that you are poor Roma parents, quasi-illiterate living in shameful conditions. You have the choice of the country; could be any of the EU new member states or EU accession states (Bulgaria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Croatia, Slovenia, etc.).

Just imagine that your children are being sent from their early age to schools for mentally disabled or to “specialized schools” just because they are Roma or are coming from an isolated environment which of course does not allow them to learn the basis of the national language. Just imagine the kind of future these children, but also future generations, will have when being given this start.

Just imagine that your children might be lucky to enter “normal” schools but then have to enter through separate doors or stay in separate classes not to mix with other children, or that they will face – when going out of the school – demonstrations by non-Roma parents who refuse to have their children sit next to Roma kids (e.g., Aspropyrgos).

### **Housing**

Just imagine that you are living in Tirana, Belgrade, Vilnius, Patras, Athens, Kosice, Toulouse, Milan, Sofia, Istanbul, etc. and that after being “tolerated” for several years, you are suddenly evicted, often with violence, by police forces, without being given alternative shelter, just because the municipality needs this space to build an Olympic stadium or has sold the land to a private company. It happens sometimes that children who were very well integrated in the schooling system become street children as a result of these expulsions.

Just imagine that in the few cases when municipalities have taken measures to provide social housing for Roma, the local population demonstrates, as recently in the streets of Sophades, Greece, or Belgrade, that they do not want Roma as neighbours.

Just imagine that sixty years after the Second World War a 65-meter-long, 2-meter-high wall was built in the city of Usti nad Labem in the Czech Republic to separate communities. Sure this was a few years ago. Unfortunately, two days ago, the municipality of Presov, Slovakia, decided, following a petition circulated by the

residents of an adjoining neighbourhood, to build a 400-meter-long fence around the district of Stara Tehelna, an area inhabited mostly by ethnic Roma.

Just imagine you have been the victims of an inter-ethnic war which was not yours, that your house has been destroyed or occupied by others and that you have been “temporarily” placed in a camp north of Mitrovica/ë, Kosovo – if not in a lead-polluted area – and that six years later you are still living there, or even dying, you and your family, from lead without any major assistance.

Just imagine that you found asylum in a rich Western country after the war but that this country, has decided years later to send you and your children back “home”, despite the fact that your situation will be worst than in the host society and that your children speak now – let’s say German. It might be true that you have a house still in Kosovo but in a very hostile environment, which you will probably have to leave sooner or later to finish in one of these aforementioned camps or contaminated areas. But be happy because you are contributing to the restoration of a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo.

### **Health**

Just imagine that your wife goes to hospital to give birth to your second child and comes back sterilized without her consent, as in the cases which were recently reported in two EU member states, Czech Republic and Slovakia, or other cases in Nordic countries, such as Norway and Sweden, not so long ago.

### **Employment and access to public places**

Just imagine that you are a young Roma who has eventually finished his/her studies searching for a job and that you discover adverts in newspapers explicitly forbidding Roma from applying for the job; or, that you are being systematically told, despite the fact you have been invited for an interview, that the job offer you were applying for has just been given to someone else. If you are a Roma, you may equally be confronted with refusal of access to cafes, restaurants, discotheques and other public places, just as I “tested” with Roma friends last week in Moldova.

### **Media and Internet**

Just imagine that few months ago a video game circulated in Hungary, the aim of which was to eliminate Roma from the country. Just imagine that two days ago some of us received over the Internet a clip that had been shown on Czech public television in 1994 in a programme called “Ceska soda”– where a famous Czech actress is whitening a Roma kid with a washing powder to prove that this powder is efficient. This clip is now being circulated as ... a joke.

Just imagine that at 8 p.m. you are watching a programme on French public television with your kids and family, and realize that this programme, full of negative prejudices and mistakes in speakers’ statements, is portraying your community as being criminals; and that no one from the Roma or Sinti (Manouche) communities was invited to defend his/her community against these allegations.

## **Hate speech**

Just imagine that you are French Travellers in the town of Emerainville in Seine-et-Marne, France, where the mayor is calling – in a very provocative way – inhabitants to publicly demonstrate against the encampment of your caravans. Should you be Irish Travellers or Swiss Yenish you will find similar difficulties to find halting sites and will be little by little forcibly encourage to sedentarize and lose your traditions.

Just imagine that in Bulgaria trade union leaders, or intellectuals based in Switzerland and Romania, can make statements such as “we should expel Roma from our country” or even more violent statements without receiving any warnings from state institutions, despite the whole range of national and international legislation against discrimination.

## **Misuse of Roma in political campaign**

Should you be a Traveller in the UK, you probably realize that during the last general election you became a subject of political debate. Should you be a Roma in Bulgaria, you certainly saw a TV clip from the majority party targeting in a very tricky way Roma communities with the slogan: “Please vote or others will choose instead of you”. In both cases it is fair to note that these abuses came from main political parties, not from extremist parties.

## **Lack of recognition of Roma as a national or ethnic minority**

Should you be a Roma or Sinti in the Netherlands or Denmark or an Egyptian in Albania, you are refused the status of a national minority under the framework Convention for the protection of national minorities, despite the fact that your ancestors have been living in these countries for centuries.

I could continue imagining such situations all day long, but that is just reality. After all these examples, people still wonder why the Roma have a strong mistrust vis-à-vis non-Roma institutions, politicians or our education systems, or why they refuse to provide data and register themselves as Roma in population census. I apologize to country delegations for having mentioned country names or specific municipalities, which I know is not very diplomatic. I equally apologize to other country delegations for not having had the time to mention their countries as unfortunately there is no exception in Europe in the field of intolerance and racial discrimination against Roma.

As Nicolae Valeriu wrote recently in a study available on the European Roma Information Office’s website (<http://www.erionet.org/Antigypsyism.html>), “Anti-Gypsyism is not just another type of racial discrimination. It is at the same time similar, different and intertwined with racism”. We believe at the Council of Europe that it requires special attention and special wording to make people more conscious of this phenomenon. You can find other references to anti-gypsyism/Romaphobia in the Joint Resolution adopted by the European Parliament last April, as well as in positions defended by the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) or by several participants of the OSCE Conference in Cordoba. Next week in Hamburg, on 8-9 October, the European Centre for Antitziganism Research will organize an international conference on “Antitziganismus”. Additional information on what is

discrimination and how it applies to Roma communities can be found in European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) publications.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator, for reminding me to finish my presentation. Indeed, you are perfectly right, time is running and as a matter of fact it runs even faster for those Roma, Sinti and Travellers families I was referring to as their life expectancy is much lower than ours. To conclude, I kindly invite all of you to attend the joint OSCE/CoE/EUMC Conference in Warsaw on October 20-21, which will address the anti-gypsyism phenomenon further. The Conference will also provide positive examples of implementation of policies for Roma, Sinti and Travellers and measures against discrimination at the local level, as there are some good state and local initiatives and a room for hope.

Thank you for your attention.



**Anastasia Crickley**

*Chairperson of the Management Board of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of other Religions*

## **Jan Schon**

*Undersecretary of State*

*Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Poland*

Ladies and gentlemen,

In order to conclude this meeting, I wish to thank you for your participation in the conference. I do hope that the time we spent together and conclusions drawn from the discussions we had will result in further valuable initiatives beneficial for the Roma, Sinti and Travellers.

I would like to address my special thanks to the representatives of the main organizers of the meeting, that is the OSCE ODIHR, the Council of Europe and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia – for the initiative to organize the conference and for the opportunity to discuss a broad spectrum of issues related to the situation of Roma, Sinti and Travellers in Europe, with special consideration given to the question of discrimination of these groups and the anti-gypsyism phenomenon. The analysis of the discrimination phenomenon carried out at the conference confirms that it requires counteraction from both governmental institutions and nongovernmental and international organizations. The debate also led to the conclusion that combating discrimination should be started by counteracting the existence of its sources. Special stress should be put on education, mainly for young people, shaping open attitudes, inciting interest in other cultures and traditions and providing knowledge on national and ethnic minorities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is the obligation of each state to ensure the appropriate conditions to integrate the Roman ethnic community into society, as part of this minority group remains still beyond the primary stream of social and public life. However, I wish to strongly emphasise that the word “integration” shall be construed as levelling out opportunities, taking advantage of all benefits and developments of a democratic state and special rights granted to national and ethnic minorities. These rights guarantee, *inter alia*, the state’s assistance in carrying out activities aimed at cultivating one’s own identity and at developing the native culture.

In case of the Roma minority, the major instrument supporting integration processes in Poland is still the governmental Programme for the Roma Community in Poland mentioned before and coordinated by the Ministry of the Interior and Administration. The most important and unquestionable component of the Programme is its section on education. Several projects are realized within the framework of this section, including the programme for assistants for Roma education and teachers supporting the educational process of Roma children, study grants, programmes for Roma students and pupils with special talents, projects promoting the pre-school level education and financial support for the Roma pupils.

In the second year of the Programme’s realization, we can already observe the positive results of the activities carried out, measured by a significant increase in attendance and consequently also by the improvement in the study results achieved by Roma pupils in schools covered by the Programme. Improvement of the level of

education is a key factor contributing to solving most of the problems faced by the Roma. However, we do realize that sustainable results will be observable only in a few or more years' time. Also, knowing that some of the problems need solving immediately, the Programme also provides for the realization of tasks aimed at improving the standards of living. The provision of running water, as well as of the sewage systems and power networks for the Roma districts and houses is ensured. Also, refurbishment and construction works are carried out. Furthermore, in cases where the issue of ownership of land where the Roma people reside is unclear, their legal situation is regulated. The Programme also provides the framework for activities oriented towards counteracting unemployment among the Roma community, improving health care conditions, preserving the Roma ethnic identity and promoting knowledge on the Roma community among non-Roma. We are convinced that the Programme will contribute in a sustainable way to the improvement of the Roma situation on every ground, starting from education to shaping their social image.

It is worth mentioning the realization of the Programme for the Roma Community in Poland constitutes the field of cooperation for the local communities – Roma and non-Roma – who often for the first time have the opportunity to work together in order to solve particular problems. The ability to cooperate and to go beyond particular group interests is a basic component of success and of normal, everyday relations based on mutual respect. The activities carried out within the Programme constitute the framework for such cooperation and in many cases they build new quality standards in the social life of the Roma community in Poland.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are witnessing today significant changes decisively influencing the image of the Roma in Europe. The sense of responsibility and wisdom of all of us will determine the future perception of this period after many years, whether we will look back with satisfaction and with sense of well realized duties, and not with the sense of a lost opportunity.

I have the honour to thank you for taking part in this conference and for the efforts invested in the work for the Roma community so far. We do need and will need in the years to come your perseverance, knowledge and experience.

Ladies and gentlemen – thank you!

# LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

## DELEGATIONS

### ALBANIA

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