



*Presidency of the Council of Ministers*  
*Department for Equal Opportunities*

Office for the promotion of equal treatment  
and elimination of discrimination based on  
race or ethnic origin



## 2011 HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

### WORKING SESSION 14

#### ENHANCING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OSCE COMMITMENTS REGARDING ROMA AND SINTI

**Italy, Department of Equal Opportunities, UNAR**

Ever since its foundation, the National Office against Racial Discriminations has paid particular attention to the issues related to Roma, Sinti and Camminanti in Italy.

The fact that the activity of the Office is very much oriented towards this area of interest is firstly explained by examining the number of cases reporting racial discrimination received by the Contact Centre of UNAR or by Roma Associations. These cases have increased over the last few years of activity and are mostly related to education and housing, areas where it is possible to have a clear perception of both the needs of this people and the need of global intervention strategies complementing integration policies on the part of the State and local authorities.

In some cases, UNAR has contributed decisively to the elimination of inequalities of treatment; in other cases, when the facts reported suggested a supposition of offence and no other actions were considered possible, UNAR has proceeded to inform the relevant judicial authorities.

UNAR has been particularly successful in its actions against local Councils for the cancellation of discriminating orders or administrative procedures contrary to the principle of equal treatment.

UNAR has also played a relevant support role to Roma associations granting the right to education, reasserting the prohibition of segregation practices in schools, or ensuring free access to commercial businesses for Roma and Sinti people and the right of parking for Sinti mobile houses.

The periodic meetings with Roma associations made it possible for the Office to have an exhaustive overview on the main critical profiles characterising this people and to use the mediation activity of the association to know at close quarters their complex situation in order to identify the crucial areas for potential intervention by the State or local Authorities: housing, access to work, education, health and legal status as mentioned before.

Furthermore, the work done together with the associations has had the precise aim of informing this community about their rights and protective measures that the Italian legal system offers to the victims of racial discrimination.

The periodic contacts with members of the associations engaged in the protection of the rights of this minority, often prompted by the examination and treatment of racial discrimination

cases received by the Office, also led to their registration onto the Register of the associations and bodies involved in the fight against discrimination, envisaged by article 6 of Legislative Decree no. 215 dated July 9, 2003. Associations such as Opera Nomadi, Associazione Italiana Zingari Oggi (AIZO), Unione Nazionale ed Internazionale Rom e Sinti in Italia (UNIRSI), OsservAzione, Nevo Drom and Rom Sinti@Politica Abruzzo Opera Nomadi are now some of the associations registered. These registered associations have the right to act in name, on behalf of, or to support the victim in the judicial proceedings.

As a support of associations, together with training opportunities, as for the past years, in 2010 UNAR issued a public notice of € 900.000 for the presentation of projects for the analysis of factors, processes and best practices related to ethnic and racial discrimination open to all the non profit associations and institutions. Some of the financed proposals had been projects for the protection of basic rights and the fight against the discrimination of Roma and Sinti communities, focussing in particular on access to work, health, education and housing. These positive actions were aimed at avoiding or compensating for disadvantageous situations linked to the Roma and Sinti social exclusion.

Another important step towards the needs of the Roma community present in Italy, came under article 1, paragraph 1267 of Law no. 296 dated December 27, 2006 (Financial Act 2007), which set up a fund called “Fund for Social Inclusion of Immigrants” at the Ministry for Social Solidarity. The fund was allocated the amount of 50 million Euros for the year 2007 and some of these projects ended in 2010. It is important to point out that among the identified priority areas on which to focus the funded interventions there were measures towards access to housing for Roma, Sinti and Camminanti communities. A further area of intervention to facilitate access to education and school orientation for Roma children and to facilitate the relationship between families and school institutions was also envisaged.

Apart from the intervention already carried out with the resources of the “Fund for Social Inclusion of Immigrants”, it is relevant to highlight that within the National Strategic Framework for Structural Funds for the period 2007-2013, the Department for Equal Opportunities has prepared action Plans envisaging organised interventions in favour of Roma communities through the European Social Fund and European Fund for Regional Development, to be agreed upon by the relevant management authorities.

In particular, within the framework of European Social Fund PON GAS 2007-2013 Axis D equal opportunities and non discrimination, the following action, to be managed directly by UNAR, has been envisaged: “Promotion of the governance of policies and tools for social inclusion and fight against discrimination of Rom, Sinti and Camminanti communities”.

The aim of the action is to eliminate any discrimination and favour a larger participation to the processes of economic and social development of Roma, Sinti and Camminanti communities in the regions under the Convergence Objective (Campania, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicilia, Puglia).

The action aims at promoting the enhancement of strategies in favour of the aforesaid communities by supporting the Regions with regard to regulations, administration and management in identifying, planning and monitoring, regional guidance and support to locally overcome the obstacles to social inclusion of these communities. Due to its innovative and experimental nature, the action requires a previous elaboration of fact-finding analyses related to social, demographic and economic characteristics of the communities present in the regions under the Convergence Objective, mappings of local institutions and services in their favour for education, vocational training, access to work, health and social services, as well as the identification of local interventions for social inclusion to be carried out by councils and the private sector.

The economic resources allocated amount to 3 million Euros over a six-year period.

Regarding the activities carried out it is important to point out:

1. A mapping of critic areas of exclusion and the opportunities of social integration in the fields of housing, employment, health and education, with important guidelines for local authorities, carried out in 2010 and now published by UNAR in the book “The exclusion circle”, Armando Editions, 2011;
2. The launching since September 2011 till August 2013 of a new action of training of Roma and Sinti mediators. The experiences has been set up, after a first cooperation with the Council of Europe for the training of cultural mediators in April 2011;
3. The launching since September 2011 till August 2013 of a new editorial series of books and leaflets on policies and interventions to promote the inclusion of Roma and Sinti, addressed to local authorities;
4. A forthcoming EU ban of public evidence (foreseen in October 2011) for the creation of task forces operating in the regions of Campania, Apulia, Calabria and Sicily, which can cooperati in terms of regulatory, administration and management to identify, desing and monitoring of policies for guidance and support of overcoming the obstacles in the local inclusion of Roma and Sinti, as well as the strenghtening of strategies and models of project development in the social and socio-economic of the ESF by the Municipalities and Provinces ( € 2.000.000,00). The action is aimed at improving a proven economic condistions, employment and social inclusion of Roma and Sinti communities, with particular reference to the condition of Roma women;

As for activities also referable to the European Fund for Regional Development PON GAT, support action for the Regions has been envisaged. The activities of the Regions aim to ensure to the population at risk of social exclusion, in particular that of Roma and Sinti origin, equal access to social and local services, in conformity with the new European programme for the period 2007-2013 envisaging specific areas of intervention aiming at the increase of social and local cohesion.

The interventions are planned for four regions under the Convergence Objective (Calabria, Campania, Puglia and Sicilia) and the economic resources available amount to 1,410,000.00 Euros.

With reference to the intervention lines for Calabria region, with the support action no. 3 “Support and definition of models to ensure objectives of equal access to services for immigrants, Rom and Sinti”, it is planned to promote the support and enhancement of the institutions in charge of protecting the rights of Roma, Sinti and Camminanti communities, an increase in the tools for equal treatment and support to increase the effectiveness of the opportunities for social, cultural and economic inclusion and participation for the mentioned communities.

Intervention line no. 2 for Campania region “Technical support for the definition of intercultural policies and provisions of services towards social inclusion for immigrants, Roma and Sinti” refers to the support for the definition of models to ensure information and raise awareness in favour of the access to services to the population by the people more at risk of discrimination and the creation of maps of social opportunities.

Intervention line no. 3 aims at reaching similar objectives for Puglia region, “Technical assistance and support to information and awareness actions to ensure access to services for the people more at risk of discrimination and also enhancement of the capacity to manage intercultural policies”. The same applies to intervention line no. 2 for Sicilia region “Support for the identification of innovative models to ensure equal access to services for the population at risk of social exclusion”.

Furthermore, UNAR participates in EUROMA, European Network for the social inclusion of Roma, coordinated by the Spanish European Social Fund management authority as representative for Italy and is itself part of the working group for the social inclusion in EUROMA. EUROMA network is financed by the European Commission and aims at increasing the use of structural funds by local institutions for action in favour of the social inclusion of the Roma community. The documents and discussions emerging by the group are exchanged by Italian partners with local authorities, for enhancing of ESF support of their actions in favour of Roma and Sinti people.

In the same effort of offering tools for local authorities and administrations, in 2011 UNAR translated and published the **OSCE ODIHR Status Report 2008** for the implementation of the OSCE Plan of Action, disseminating the Plan and the Report to the Italian local authorities.

As for **awareness initiatives**, an area of intervention that UNAR considers vital for the fight against stereotypes of Roma and Sinti, Another important project that UNAR has been carrying out since 2010 is the Dosta Campaign, promoted by the Council of Europe and concerning the fight to prejudice and stereotypes against Roma and Sinti through a global strategy based on dialogue and mutual knowledge.

This initiative has already been introduced in various eastern European countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Carrying out this campaign in our Country also has a symbolic value since Italy one of the first countries within the European Union to use this awareness raising tool which has produced excellent results so far.

In order to carry out the Campaign, the Office has set up, by means of a decree, a technical panel for a permanent coordination with the Roma and Sinti associations and federations. This panel has met several times drawing up the essential profiles of the campaign, gathering ideas, projects and initiatives to be organised throughout the country. The activities of the campaign, funded with a budget of 200,000 Euros per year, have been involving 30 Italian cities with public exhibitions, concerts, cultural and sport events, theatre pieces, public debates and confrontations among Roma associations and local authorities.

A special attention has been put in 2011 to the training of journalists. With the event ROMNEWS, training courses for professional journalists have been held in Rome, Milan and Naples, with a huge presence of professionals coming from the Italian national TV and the most important newspapers.

At school level a dissemination of a tool-kit with spot and movies for a better knowledge of Roma world have been disseminated.

A television advertisement and promotional videos were produced and broadcasted on the national TV network and on video screens in subway stations and on buses in some cities. It is important to point out that a video spot with the Roma actress Dijana Pavlovic and the Roma winner of the Italian 2010 "Big Brother" edition Ferdy Berisha has been produced and distributed through TV stations and public transportation video networks, with a relevant audience and a strong sensitization impact against prejudice on Roma.