

HDI meeting
Special Day on Roma and Sinti issues.
5 October 2011
Warsaw

Lack of personal and/or other documents/discriminatory treatment by public officials in accessing documents in Ukraine.

Thank you for the opportunity to present information on the worrying situation of Roma in Ukraine.

According to the 2001 census, 47,917 persons declared to belong to the Roma ethnicity.¹ Unofficial sources estimate the number of Roma to be between 200,000 and 400,000 persons.² Roma live dispersed all over Ukraine, however population density varies throughout the country. The largest concentrations of Roma live in the following regions: Odessa, Poltava, Cherkassy, Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkov, Chernovtsy and Transcarpathia.³ In certain areas in Transcarpathia in western Ukraine, Roma officially represent as much as 3% of the population.⁴

Many Roma in Ukraine currently live without any personal documents, including an unidentified number of immigrants from the period of the former Soviet Union. The latter are, effectively, stateless, and lack recognition before the law. Various forms of abuse in this area include arbitrary confiscation of Roma residence permits by local officials, and refusal of authorities to issue residence permits to Roma under various pretexts.

The generally low level of education of many Roma make it difficult for them to fully understand how to navigate complex bureaucratic requirements needed to register property or secure individual identity documents. Moreover, the administrative processing fees are simply unaffordable for people living in conditions of extreme poverty. Racially discriminatory treatment, though, constitutes the most insurmountable obstacle. There are no government programs in place to assist an impoverished, uneducated and highly stigmatized population with obtaining the documentation they need.

Roma also often experience great difficulty in acquiring proper registration documentation for their homes or places of work. This fact can enforce the *de facto* segregation of many Romani communities away from desirable locations and decent living conditions. Lacking one or more personal documents and/or official local residence permits, many Roma are often unable to secure legal aid, be recognized by the courts nor are they able to submit official complaints to the police. This, in effect, denies them their fundamental right to be recognized as individuals before the law.

¹ Ukrainian Institute for Social Studies, International Renaissance Foundation. Analysis of Real Problems and Needs of Roma People in Ukraine. Kiev, October 2003, p. 7

² Ukrainian Institute for Social Studies, International Renaissance Foundation. *Analysis of Real Problems and Needs of Roma People in Ukraine*. Kiev, October 2003, p. 7.

³ Muller, Stefan and Chiricli. *Development of a Comprehensive National Plan for Roma in the Ukraine*. Assessment Report for the Council of Europe and the European Commission. November 2008.

⁴ Ibid.

Our organization implementing the Roma health mediators program in Ukraine in 5 pilot regions: Odessa, Transcarpathia, Donetsk, Kiev and Lvov , according to the Roma health mediators reports more than 9000 Roma requiring help in registration passports or birth certificates or other documents.

In light of this, we would like to ask the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti issues to organize special meeting in Ukraine with the relevant Ministries regarding problem with the personal identification cards and other documents of Roma population, and to establish exchange with the best practices on mentioned above issue between Ukraine and European countries.

Thank you for your attention,

International Charitable Organization “Roma Women Fund “Chiricli”
Ukraine.

5 October 2011.