

**Statement of the Czech Republic  
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting**

**Working Session 12: Tolerance and non-discrimination II, including prevention and responses to hate crimes, aggressive nationalism and chauvinism, and Roma and Sinti issues including the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti  
September 30, 2014**

Mr Moderator, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Czech Republic fully aligns herself with the EU statement. Building a tolerant and non-discriminatory society is one of the Government's priorities. Therefore I would like to make some remarks in my national capacity on the Czech Republic's policy on Roma integration.

In the beginning of 2014, the Government of the Czech Republic re-established the Council for Roma Minority Affairs, with the Minister for Human Rights, Equal Opportunities and Legislation as its chairperson. Altogether 32 members, out of whom half represents the Roma minority, monitor the implementation of national policies on Roma integration, including the implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti.

Recently, the Media Committee has been established. The Committee shall among other promote tolerance and combat negative trends in society and scapegoating Roma in public discourse. The members of the Committee are well known and respected media experts, commentators, journalists and representatives of public administration.

Moreover, the Government launched a Campaign against Racism and Hate Violence. Its objective is to strengthen social and economic cohesion on the national, regional and local level. The campaign is a response to the increasing occurrences of extremism, racism and hate violence among young people, often aimed at the Roma, especially in regions with generally high unemployment rates. It shall also strengthen capacities of relevant stakeholders, such as schools, police, local authorities in the fields of conflict prevention and the support for victims of hate violence.

Since education is one of the areas that the Government pays special attention to, we highly value the cooperation with the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues in organizing a conference on Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma Children that took place this year during the World Roma Festival Khamoro in Prague.

As we reported at the HDIM last year, the Czech Republic has set up conditions to systematically monitor and follow up the development of education of the Roma children. The attitudes of both the general and professional public to education of Roma pupils are changing. Effective tools to stop any kind of discrimination of Roma children in the education system are being put in place.

The Government of the Czech Republic adopted the Amendment to the School Act, which was submitted to the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament. The amendment proposes complex changes, focusing on individual support to disadvantaged children in order to keep them in the mainstream schools. The Amendment also strengthens the power of Czech Schools Inspection to control among others the procedures of placement of children into schools.

Measures to increase the capacity of preschool education facilities were implemented in order to introduce such legislative changes that would make the last year of preschool education compulsory for all children. This shall foster better preparation of Roma children for the transition to primary education.

The Government is also paying special attention to social inclusion of Roma. It supports projects in socially excluded localities, while seeking synergic intervention in the fields of education, employment and housing. This process shall be facilitated by new legislation that is being drafted in working groups, where Roma experts are included; the Act on Social Housing and the Act on Social Inclusion, to name just a few.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude that Roma Integration is a joint responsibility of the Government, regions as well as municipalities. The Czech Republic is ready to implement synergic activities that help Roma integration, starting from combating social exclusion and its symptoms, fostering good quality education, providing access to housing, health care, and fighting discrimination, stereotypes and prejudices.

Thank you for your attention.