

Effective and Human Rights-Compliant Policing in Roma and Sinti Communities

**OSCE/ODIHR Training
for Law Enforcement Officers**



BACKGROUND

Throughout the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) region, Roma and Sinti face a number of human rights challenges in their interactions with law enforcement agencies. These can include ethnic profiling, disproportionate or excessive use of force by the police, and police failure to respond effectively to Roma and Sinti victims of crime, hate crime and racist violence. Furthermore, the relationship between police and these communities suffers from mistrust and a lack of understanding, as well as the under-representation of Roma and Sinti within law enforcement agencies.

Many Roma and Sinti communities lack the means to challenge and obtain redress for police misconduct. Roma and Sinti women and children from impoverished communities are particularly vulnerable to becoming victims of human trafficking or domestic violence, or becoming dependent on informal street work and, as such, are often most in need of police intervention to protect them and prevent their further exploitation.

Police officers play a vital role in the protection and promotion of the human rights of all people. This is especially true for the police officers working at the local level, who interact with community members on a daily basis. Police officers can greatly benefit from training or educational programmes that strengthen their understanding and capacity to respect and protect the rights of all people, particularly those who are excluded or discriminated against, such as Roma and Sinti. Such training can also significantly contribute to improving trust and confidence in the police among Roma and Sinti.

In 2003, OSCE participating States tasked the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), together with the OSCE Strategic Police Matters Unit (SPMU), with “assist[ing] participating States in developing programmes and confidence-building measures — such as community policing — to improve the relations between Roma and Sinti and the police, particularly at the local level.” In 2010, in co-operation with the SPMU, ODIHR published the manual *Police and Roma and Sinti: Good Practices in Building Trust and Understanding*, which identifies principles and good practices to improve relations between police and Roma and Sinti communities.

In follow-up to the manual, ODIHR has also developed **Training on Effective and Human Rights-Compliant Policing in Roma and Sinti Communities** to strengthen the capacities of police officers operating at the local level in working effectively with Roma and Sinti and mixed communities, while complying with international human rights standards.

*“I have gained valuable knowledge regarding strategies on how to interact with people and not to judge people based on stereotypes.”**

*Quotes in the brochure are taken from feedback forms provided by police officers attending this ODIHR training.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

The training is aimed at strengthening the capacity of police officers working in Roma and Sinti communities and mixed communities in the following ways:

- By providing effective policing strategies to communities that are fair and responsive to the needs of the people they serve, while engaging in practices that comply with human rights standards; and
- By increasing participants' knowledge of and sensitivity to gender-specific issues that Roma and Sinti women face.

“I discovered solutions to fight discrimination and to make police work more efficient in underprivileged communities.”

KEY TRAINING MODULES

Key training modules include:

- Human rights standards and laws;
- Understanding of hate crimes and hate incidents;
- Impact of human right violations on victims, their families and their communities;
- History of Roma and Sinti and the current situation they face in Europe;
- Stereotyping;
- Good practices in searching for crime suspects;
- Responses to domestic violence;
- Barriers to effective policing, and strategies for overcoming those barriers;
- Rapport building and interview techniques;
- The impacts on police officers of witnessing, or participating in, torture or inhumane and degrading treatment;
- Good practices for conducting human-rights compliant evictions and document checks; and
- Trafficking in human beings and labour exploitation.

TRAINING TARGET GROUP

The training can be provided to three different types of law enforcement officers: patrol officers who have direct experience working in Roma and Sinti communities and mixed communities, specialists or liaison officers whose primary duties are to work in Roma and Sinti communities, and command officers.

ODIHR works to ensure gender balance among participants, as well as the participation of Roma and Sinti police officers.

Police officers can greatly benefit from training or educational programmes that strengthen their understanding and capacity to respect and protect the rights of all people, particularly those who are excluded or discriminated against, such as Roma and Sinti.

TRAINING METHODOLOGY

Needs-driven

Prior to providing training, ODIHR undertakes a needs assessment visit to examine the local issues affecting relations between police and Roma and Sinti communities, including women and youth. The results of the needs assessment visit are used to adapt the training curriculum to the issues and laws of the country in which the training will take place. All training materials are translated into the local language.

Inclusive

Consultation with police, human rights organizations and Roma and Sinti civil society and communities is a crucial step in adaptation of the training curriculum in the country where it will be used. Consultations can offer significant information about the existing challenges between police and Roma and Sinti communities. ODIHR places a particular emphasis on consultations with Roma and Sinti women and youth in addressing specific challenges they might face with regard to the police.

Interactive

The training is highly interactive. Most of the training modules encourage the active involvement of the participants and discussion among the trainers and participants in plenary sessions. Moreover, the training allows the participants to discuss issues in small working groups and to examine case studies and engage in problem-solving activities. In this way, the participants can share their experiences and knowledge in order to learn from each other, adding to the knowledge they obtain from the trainers. The interactive teaching approach enhances learning and information-retention among participants.

Motivational

This training introduces the participants to guiding principles that build trust between the police and the communities they serve, while also making them more effective in their work.

“I have realized that communication is the key to success in the relationship between [the police] and the Roma communities.”

Human Rights-based

This training, in each of its phases (needs assessment, design, implementation and evaluation), is based on the values and norms of universal human rights and gender equality. This is essential, as respect for fundamental human rights and the prevention of discrimination are essential to guaranteeing the security of all individuals, especially those who face multiple forms of discrimination, such as Roma and Sinti women.

Expert-Led

The training team is composed of a human rights professional and a police officer with significant experience working in Roma and Sinti and mixed communities.

IMPLEMENTING THE TRAINING IN YOUR COUNTRY

Step 1: Initial Request

Any participating State or OSCE field operation may request ODIHR's assistance in improving the policing of Roma and Sinti communities through this training.

Step 2: Needs Assessment Visit

Before the training, in co-operation with the state authorities, ODIHR will conduct a needs assessment visit, in order to identify the local issues affecting relations between police and Roma and Sinti communities, including:

- Issues and concerns that police officers might have when policing Roma and Sinti and mixed communities;
- Issues and security concerns that Roma and Sinti people might have with the police, paying particular attention to the issues impacting Roma and Sinti women and youth; and
- Understanding of the relevant laws in the country.

The training needs assessment visit involves meeting with:

- Police officers who work in Roma and Sinti and mixed communities, as well as senior police officers;
- Representatives of Roma and Sinti civil society and human rights organizations; and
- Members of Roma and Sinti communities, including women and youth. Meetings with community representatives should reflect the diversity of Roma and Sinti in the respective country.

ODIHR will pay particular attention to the identification of specific challenges that Roma and Sinti women and youth might face in their interaction with the police. In that respect, ODIHR will organize meetings with women rights groups, Roma and Sinti women and youth.

“Human rights are at the core of policing. If you violate human rights standards you are not able to effectively police society.”

Step 3: Adaptation of the Training Curriculum

ODIHR will adapt the training curriculum to the local context and communicate it to the state authorities for their review. After the training curriculum is finalized, all the training materials are translated into the host country's language.

Step 4: Delivery of the Training

The training venue will be provided by the authorities. The training can be delivered either in English or the host country's language. In cases where the training is delivered in the host country's language, simultaneous interpretation and the associated equipment should be provided by the authorities. ODIHR, in agreement with the authorities, can provide several training sessions over the course of the year.

Step 5: Evaluation

ODIHR conducts evaluations of each of the training sessions through pre- and post-evaluation questionnaires and feedback sessions. This is important because it allows ODIHR to monitor the effectiveness of the training and to improve the training programme, approach and materials.

Roma children from the Topaana district of Skopje visit their local police station as part of a project to learn about policing and develop their confidence in the police. (OSCE)



In the 2003 *Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti* within the OSCE Area, participating States recognized the need to improve relations between Roma and Sinti and the police and to improve trust and confidence in the police among Roma and Sinti. In that respect OSCE participating States committed to:

- Develop polices to promote awareness among law-enforcement institutions regarding the situation of Roma and Sinti people and that counter prejudice and negative stereotypes;
- Develop training programmes to prevent excessive use of force and to promote awareness of and respect for human rights;
- Assess the gap between international standards on police and currently existing national practices in consultation with national police forces, civil society and representatives of Roma and Sinti communities;
- Develop policies and procedures to ensure an effective police response to racially motivated violence against Roma and Sinti people;
- Elaborate policy statements, codes of conduct, practical guidance manuals and training programmes in partnership with international organizations and Roma civil society; and
- Encourage Roma and Sinti people to work in law-enforcement institutions.

More information: If you are interested in bringing this training to police in your country, you can contact the ODIHR by e-mail at: roma@odihhr.pl

For detailed information about ODIHR's activities on Roma and Sinti Issues, or to view its full range of publications and reports, please visit: www.osce.org/odihhr/roma

OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions
and Human Rights
ul. Miodowa 10
00-251 Warsaw, Poland
Tel: + 48 22 520 0600
Fax: +48 22 520 0605
Email: roma@odihhr.pl

