



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

**Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and
Environmental Activities**

Vienna, 23 June 2004

To: All OSCE Delegations
Partners for Co-operation
Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation

Subject: Report on the Side-event on Promoting entrepreneurship and
opportunities for economic development for Roma and Sinti

Attached herewith is the Report on the Side event on Promoting entrepreneurship and opportunities for economic development for Roma and Sinti held on 2 June 2004 on the occasion of the 12th OSCE Economic Forum.

12th Economic Forum
Rapporteur's Report on the Side event on
Promoting entrepreneurship and opportunities for economic development
for Roma and Sinti

Gallery Hall, Czernin Palace, Prague, Wednesday, June 2, 16: 30 – 18:00

On 2 June 2004 a side event focused on promoting entrepreneurship and opportunities for economic development for Roma and Sinti was organized on the margins of the Twelfth meeting of the OSCE Economic Forum. The purpose of the meeting was to explore ways and means of developing related activities, and enhance the co-operation between OCEEA, the ODIHR-CPRSI, as well as other international organizations, governments and Roma NGOs, also with a view to implementing the relevant provisions of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, adopted the Maastricht Ministerial Council (MC.DEC/3/03).

The side event was chaired by Ambassador Liviu Aurelian Bota, Permanent Representative of Romania to the OSCE. The Chairman noted that so far within the OSCE Roma and Sinti issues had been mainly approached from the human dimension perspective. He also highlighted the importance of economic and social aspects and pointed out that the topic of the side event was related to the general theme of the Economic Forum. Ambassador Bota recalled a number of principles of the Action Plan, that should guide any implementation activity: to respond to the real needs and priorities of Roma and Sinti communities; to be comprehensive; to integrate human rights goals with social policies; and to maximize Roma ownership and involvement.

Mr. Nicolae Gheorghe, OSCE-ODIHR Contact Point on Roma and Sinti Issues, referred at his turn to the provisions of the Action Plan as well as to the background document distributed in the preparation of the side event (EF.GAL/3/04) and highlighted the relevance of this first discussion of Roma and Sinti issues within the economic dimension and the potential for further co-operation between his office, the OCEEA and other partners in supporting the development of the employability and entrepreneurial skills of Roma and Sinti, training and retraining, economic and social insertion, SME development, etc.

To launch the discussion, two presentations were delivered by two representatives of Pakiv - European Roma Fund: Ms. Bari Judit (Hungary) and Ms. Erika Adamova (Slovakia). They focused on the role of human capacity development and income generation in Roma communities for promoting economic opportunities and also for alleviating tensions and preventing social crisis. Pakiv experience demonstrated that the most successful and effective activities are community based projects. Therefore Pakiv focused on capacity-building at community level, training of community facilitators and community mobilization for income generation activities. Several examples such as the establishment of community centres to promote the social mobilization of Roma communities and the creation of revolving funds, managed and used by the Roma community to support income generating activities were presented.

During the lively discussion that followed the introductory presentations, numerous participants representing governments and NGOs from countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, etc, as well as the OSCE (ODIHR, OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, OCEEA), IOM and other organizations referred to various experiences and activities and focused on the potential follow-up.

The following conclusions and recommendations could be drawn:

Addressing the needs of many Roma and Sinti communities should be considered an issue of emergency, as often Roma communities are confronted with extreme poverty, high unemployment of up to 80-90 %, affecting also very much the youth, as well as social and economic marginalization.

Various projects and activities should be more integrated into a cross-dimensional process. Various national and international networks for discussions should provide feed back to this “learning by doing” process, identify best practices and avoid repeating the mistakes.

Participating States should first and foremost demonstrate political will to tackle these issues, and adopt and implement relevant policies. Countries should also resort to the assistance of organizations such as the World Bank, the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the Open Society Institute, IOM, ILO and others, which have been mentioned as potential partners.

The OSCE can at its turn provide and mobilize advice and assistance and can also develop activities to support the Roma and Sinti communities directly.

Reporting on the actual situation of Roma communities and assessment of the needs should be improved.

Social policy reforms should carefully assess the impact on Roma communities and take into account their needs. These policies should combat the dependency trends. Furthermore, employment policies should be harmonized with social policies.

Roma and Sinti are often confronted with discrimination on the labour market. This negative phenomenon must be addressed by the participating States through adequate policies and regulations, including affirmative action. The adaptation and replication of projects such as the Fair Employment Program developed by the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina could be considered and supported by the OSCE.

Community based activities were considered extremely valuable and should be further developed and promoted. They have also the role of enhancing the capacity of the respective communities to influence public policies and procedures.

In order to better serve the needs of Roma communities at local level, capacity-building programmes at municipal and local level should be developed and implemented.

More activities should target the youth and consider the potential of youth for mobilizing the community.

Providing training for employment is essential for social inclusion. Participating States should continue and further enhance their efforts in this regard. OSCE can provide support and in particular the Youth Entrepreneurship Seminar (YES) programme can be adapted and implemented to target the needs of Roma communities. Other OSCE activities in the area of vocational training or promoting economic empowerment for marginalized, underserved local communities could be replicated.

Issues such as business ethics and business for social responsibility were considered important and could be promoted.

To complement training activities and support income generation at community level the need for social start-up capital should be considered. A fund to support the development of Roma communities could be created with the support of the OSCE. Further discussions on this issue could be envisaged.

Due to the extreme poverty, trafficking in human beings can affect Roma and Sinti communities. Necessary measures to combat this phenomenon should be taken at national and local levels, including in the framework of the OCEEA anti trafficking programme, in particular its sub-programme III – economic empowerment.

Participants agreed that the side event was a useful exercise and that discussion on these issues should continue. As an immediate follow-up debates and roundtables at national and local level could be organized and should focus on concrete issues.

Within the OSCE framework issues related to social inclusion and economic discrimination could be addressed by the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw.

Roma and Sinti related issues could also be included on the agenda of the next year's OSCE Economic Forum.