

**EUROPEAN UNION****OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting****IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN ON IMPROVING
THE SITUATION OF ROMA AND SINTI****dedicated to the 10th Anniversary of the adoption of the
2003 OSCE Action Plan
7-8 November 2013, Vienna**

EU statement – SESSION I

Mr Chairperson,

The European Union welcomes the organization of this timely event by the Ukrainian Chairmanship and the ODIHR. The tenth anniversary of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area is a moment to welcome the achievements in its implementation, but, even more, to dwell upon the many persisting and new challenges and find ways to address them.

The European Union remains strongly committed to the full implementation of the Action Plan. The EU has given increased attention to improving the situation of Roma and Sinti and the EU Heads of State and Government have called for the rapid implementation of the Council Conclusions on an EU framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020. Currently, all EU Member States are implementing Roma inclusion strategies or sets of policy measures within their broader social inclusion policies, especially via improving access to: education, employment, healthcare and housing. These strategies are subject to appropriate monitoring and where necessary supported by targets. We are pleased to see that the EU's increased efforts for Roma and Sinti inclusion benefits from extensive attention in the Status Report and are pleased that EU's enhanced commitments and actions to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti count for some of the positive trends identified in the Status Report.

However, despite some progress achieved, multiple problems remain. We acknowledge the challenges that the Status Report highlights. We are concerned by the registered negative trends with regard to Roma housing, employment and access to social services. These are also areas of specific focus for the EU. We concur with the assessment that hate crimes against Roma, use of extremist anti-Roma rhetoric, and reports of police ill-treatment are disturbing trends that need renewed efforts to combat. Strong condemnation of acts of discrimination from officials, political leaders and civil society is a must if we are to be efficient in eradicating intolerance and prejudice. We are also worried by the stagnation in the area of education given the importance of this area for the future generations of Roma and their inclusion. Access to quality education, throughout the education cycle, remains one of the most powerful tools in breaking the circle of vulnerabilities and in empowering Roma and Sinti. We also believe that greater attention needs to be given to the situation of

Roma and Sinti girls and women who find themselves in situations of increased vulnerability and face multiple forms of discrimination, as discussed at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting Special Day of 2012.

Addressing successfully most of the issues mentioned above depends on involvement of authorities at all levels and increasingly, as you pointed out, of the local authorities, but also of civil society and of Roma and Sinti themselves. The principle “with Roma, for Roma” of the Action Plan needs to remain the cornerstone of all measures addressing Roma issues.

We agree that assessing the results efforts aimed at improving the situation of Roma and Sinti is absolutely necessary for better implementation. For that reason, the strategies, measures and policies developed in the framework of EU Member States’ national Roma integration strategies up to 2020 are subject to appropriate monitoring and, where necessary, supported by targets.

The OSCE participating States have undertaken commitments in all of the aforementioned fields. We need to face these challenges through systematic, coordinated and efficient strategies and policies. We also need to take effective and practical measures to make these commitments a reality and deliver sustained improvements in the social and economic situation of Roma and Sinti.

We commend the assistance that ODIHR, notably the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, and the HCNM have extended to participating States in fulfilling their commitments and we look forward to increased support from their side.

Additionally, cooperation among international organizations acting in this field needs to be strengthened and, in this respect, we welcome increased dialogue and cooperation between ODIHR/CPRSI and the European Union as well as with the Council of Europe.

We commend the fact that the Ukrainian Chairmanship-in-Office has presented a draft Ministerial Council decision on this topic and look forward to adopting a meaningful decision in Kyiv.

The full implementation of all OSCE commitments should continue to be our guiding principles, including in view of the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. This should also apply to improving the situation of Roma and Sinti. Therefore, we take this opportunity to redouble our calls for full implementation of all OSCE commitments regarding Roma and Sinti and our firm determination in this respect.

Thank you for your attention.

The Candidate Countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro* and Serbia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Georgia.

** the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*