

High-Level Conference on Combating Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding, Bucharest, 7 and 8 June 2007

Plenary session 3: Combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, also focusing on intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions

Protection of the rights of the Roma/Gypsies in Ukraine

According to the Ukrainian census of 2001, 47,6 thousand Roma/Gypsies reside in Ukraine, representing 0,1 % of the total population of Ukraine. Most of the Roma reside in the Zakarpattya region of Ukraine, in the Uzhgorod, Beregiv, Vynogradiv regions. Significant number of Roma representatives live in the Odessa region.

To date, there are 88 Roma national and cultural societies in Ukraine. The activity of the Roma organizations is focused on the rebirth of language, culture, traditions and customs of the Roma national minority.

The Association of public organizations "Congress of Roma of Ukraine" functions in Ukraine, whose president is a member of the Council of representatives of public organizations of national minorities in Ukraine to the State Committee for Nationalities and Religions of Ukraine and a member of the working group on Roma and Sinti of the Council of Europe.

The state policy of Ukraine aims to ensure all necessary conditions for integration of the Roma in the Ukrainian society, for realization of their social, economic and cultural rights and freedoms as well as their active participation in the state building processes.

Specific areas of ethnic and social development of the Roma include promotion of ethnical and cultural development, integration of the Roma in the social and cultural life of the Ukrainian society, education about the history and culture of the Roma, preservation of their cultural heritage, promotion of the development of general education institutions with the Romani language of instruction.

In a number of regions, namely, in the Zakarpattya region, in Odessa, Dnipropetrovs'k, Kyrovohrad and Kyiv local authorities adopted regional programs aimed at social and cultural revival of the Roma people.

On 8 October 2004 the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Decree "On Commemoration of the International Day of the Roma Holocaust". From the time of adoption of this decree state authorities and local self-government bodies hold relevant commemorative events.

In the period 2005-2007 a number of parliamentary and public hearings were conducted to discuss the measures to address ethno-cultural as well as social and economic needs of the Roma in Ukraine.

Ukraine is currently studying the issue of Ukraine's joining the European initiative "The Decade of Roma Inclusion".

Under the project, supported by the European Union and the International Renaissance Foundation and coordinated by the European Roma Rights Centre in Budapest, 15 centers for providing legal assistance to the Roma population have been established in 12 regions of Ukraine.

Ensuring Roma children's education remains a priority focus of the regional state administrations in Ukraine. In 2005/06 5247 Roma pupils studied in 115 schools of the Zakarpattya region. The study of the culture, customs and traditions of the Roma/Gypsies is

included into educational programmes of these schools. Specific methods of teaching of Roma children, which take into account traditions of upbringing and life have been introduced.

A number of events devoted to the revival of Roma ethnic, language, cultural identity have become traditional in Ukraine. Among the most prominent ones – the annual international festival of Romani culture "Amala" organized by the Roma Theatre of music and drama "Romance".

The Regional State Television and Radio Company of Zakarpattya is currently examining the possibility of establishing the Roma TV studio and radio programs.