

EF.IO/23/05  
26 May 2005

ENGLISH only



13<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic Forum on “Demographic Trends, Migration and Integrating Persons belonging to National Minorities: Ensuring Security and Sustainable Development in the OSCE Area”  
Prague, 23-27 May 2005.

**Session VII – Policies of Integration of persons belonging to national minorities**  
**Session VIII – Economic and social integration of persons belonging to national minorities**

*Intervention by Michael Guet, Head of Roma and Travellers Division, DG III Social Cohesion, Council of Europe*

### Texts of reference

#### **Article 15 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities**

*The Parties shall create the conditions necessary for the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them.*

See also **Council of Europe Committee of Ministers adopted Rec (2001)17 on improving the economic and employment situation of Roma/Gypsies and Travellers in Europe** - available online at: [www.coe.int/T/E/Social\\_Cohesion/Roma\\_travellers/](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Social_Cohesion/Roma_travellers/)

#### **As regards the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities:**

- Article 15 of the FCNM on participation has a strong economic and social component.
- The issue of economic and social participation is a growing concern in the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention (ACFC) monitoring work and that it is possible that this issue eventually becomes the subject of some specific thematic reflections by the ACFC.
- A number of issues pertaining to the economic and social participation of persons belonging to national minorities have been commented upon by the ACFC under Article 15. This includes *inter alia* the following:

**1. *Employment of persons belonging to national minorities:***

ACFC recognised that while unemployment may be a problem affecting the whole society, persons belonging to national minorities may be in some instances disproportionately affected by unemployment. ACFC would look into the cause of such situations (for example, in some countries, national minorities are concentrated in areas where severe economic difficulties exist).

**2. *Social and economic exclusion, with Roma being recognised as the most vulnerable group.***

The ACFC was supportive of the drafting of the National Strategy for Roma in the countries concerned. It highlighted the need to consult minorities in the drafting process. With the beginning of the second monitoring cycle, ACFC is increasingly concerned with the effective implementation of these strategies and their impact in practice.

**3. *Land usage***

ACFC has raised this issue in relation to the indigenous people (the issue of land rights being central to indigenous people culture and identity), Travellers (stopping places) and Roma (especially in the former Yugoslavia where the lack of identity documents leads to a denial of a number of rights, including in terms of access to land).

**4. *Data collection***

Generally speaking, the ACFC noted that its monitoring of the implementation of the FCNM was complicated by the lack of statistical data that is broken by ethnicity. The ACFC is of course aware of the sensitive nature of this information. Yet, it encouraged States to look into the ways to collect such data while providing adequate guarantees concerning the protection of personal data collected and processed for statistical purpose.

**Mainstreamed and targeted policies: the case of Roma and Travellers**

In the case of Roma, the Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Division considers important to have a targeted participatory approach in the first hand in order to understand the roots of the problems, the specificities of the Roma or Traveller culture and traditions, the best way to address the issue in consultation or even better effective participation of Roma and Traveller representatives.

Indeed, generally speaking state and international programmes and policies designed for vulnerable groups, which - in principle - should reach Roma communities, do not because they are not adapted to their situation, because the traditional communication channels do not function in their case (due to illiteracy, difficulties to understand the written form of the national language, because they live in isolated areas, or have no access to media or ITs, etc.). because the Roma are living in the margin of the society

These targeted policies shall be accompanied by **positive (discrimination) measures** which should not be considered as discriminatory for other minority groups or majority population but which serve to compensate the gaps and help Roma and Travellers to reach the average level.

Examples of positive discrimination measures:

- reserved seats in parliament
- reserved seats in high school or university, etc.

As far as positive measures are concerned, in the field of Roma and Travellers there are numerous but often limited to certain municipalities or areas and not generalised. It is also important to assess whether these positive measures are so positive in the long run.

Example of housing estate in Presov, Eastern Slovakia.

Examples of positive measures (not always adaptable to all countries)

### **Education**

- preschooling for Roma
- Roma school assistants
- Scholarships
- Reserved seats at university

### **Health**

- Roma health mediators

### **Housing**

- Legalisation of Roma settlements
- Improving infrastructure and transport

### **Employment**

- Training courses adapted to nomadic lifestyle
- Incentives to create small enterprises
- Municipality level contracts
- Creating jobs for Roma mediators or assistants
- Employing Roma in local employment offices

### **Justice**

- Free of charge legal aid

### **Participation**

- Roma assistant ministers or ministers
- Roma MPs also at European level
- Roma mayors or local counselors
- European Roma and Travellers Forum

Etc.

But then targeted policies and programmes should progressively be mainstreamed in general policies for budgetary reasons, and also to avoid another type of institutional segregation where only some departments deal with Roma but their concerns are not known by other ministries or by the majority. Also budgetary allocations for Roma programmes tend to be minimum and are not always guaranteed.

The risk to focus too much on targeting can be also observed at international level.

**Recommendation to future OSCE fora: to consider replacing the practice of side-events on Roma and Sinti issues by the mainstreaming of Roma and Sinti issues within the various plenary sessions, through the interventions of Roma and/or international actors working on Roma, Sinti and Traveller issues.**

*Appendix: presentation made by Michael Guet, Head of Roma and Travellers Division of the Council of Europe at the OSCE Side Event on Roma and Sinti in Prague, 24 May.*

### **General remarks**

- access to employment for vulnerable groups, including Roma, is part of the Social Cohesion policy of the Council of Europe

- in 2001 Council of Europe Committee of Ministers adopted Rec (2001)17 on improving the economic and employment situation of Roma/Gypsies and Travellers in Europe - available online at: [www.coe.int/T/E/Social\\_Cohesion/Roma\\_travellers/](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Social_Cohesion/Roma_travellers/)

- Employment of Roma is one of the priority areas (see CoE recommendation, OSCE Action Plan, Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, etc.) alongside with education, housing and health...

- Employment should not be tackled separately but in conjunction with other areas, including:

**education** (fighting against illiteracy and drop out of schools thanks inter alia to preschooling, courses for adults and Roma school assistants, providing vocational trainings, professional orientation in secondary school, etc.)

**housing and transport** (considering the impact of isolated Roma settlements or bad urbanistic planning in terms of access of Roma to employment)

**migration** (roots and consequences of Roma economic and/or political migration, overestimation and negative prejudices among majority population of receiving countries vehicled by the media, need to provide better information to Roma candidates for migration about the risks and the real economic situation in the receiving country via the publication of manuals adapted for each country giving details about professional skills needed in receiving countries such as traditional crafts, roof-reparation, metallurgy work, etc. that could be occupied by Roma migrants in order to reinforce the channel of legal migration of Roma. This manual could also be distributed to migration offices as it would contain some info about Roma migration specificities - see the report published by FERYP on Young Roma and Alternatives to Migration sponsored by the Norwegian government under its Council of Europe presidency - available online at the above-mentioned web address).

### **Approach to the issue of employment of Roma**

- need to integrate factors and estimates of gray economy when analysing Roma unemployment (figures of 80-90% unemployment are often overestimated).

- need for Roma to be more open about the issue: too often we get very little info about what the members of the Roma community are doing, including for those who are traveling abroad (seasonal work), which often lead to many speculations among the

majority population and authorities. Roma NGOs should work on combatting mistrust among Roma population vis-a-vis majority population/institutions in order to have an open dialogue and exchange of info (would be better for Roma to acknowledge if they get money on the black market rather than leaving open speculations about their involvement in drug or human beings trafficking which are probably overestimated (like Roma migration, etc.).

- need for local authorities to have a pragmatic approach by taking some specific targeted measures, like a decision to legalise a settlement or to provide infrastructure, etc since once the vicious circle has been broken, solutions can be found step by step. Local authorities and state institutions should reduce the level of requirements usually needed, accepting that during a certain period, a number of Roma persons will have to be employed even if they have not yet the requested education level or skills (compensated by training courses)

- need to adapt the approach to the system of values of Roma: if more Roma were to be employed this would have a snowball effect within this community in terms of living conditions, dependence and integration in society as Roma put employment and money much higher in their scale of values than education. In addition, Roma live in present. envisaging the future of their children in 15 years time when they finish studies mean nothing for Roma parents. This should not be blamed, just need to be taken into account when addressing education/employment. Sending messages to Roma that their children will make more money if they send them to school will have a stronger impact than just telling them you must send their children to school because education is needed and because the rest of the population does so.

- use positive examples and good practices already implemented in Europe: community work, enrollment of Roma by the municipality under programmes for unemployed people, having short-term insertion programmes for Roma in private companies to give longtime unemployed Roma self-confidence and a professional experience to learn again how to live in a working environment, introducing orientation interviews in secondary school to direct Roma students in needed work areas, recruiting Roma as mediators in local employment offices, or in ministries for labour, incentives for self-initiatives, support to income-generating projects, etc.

- generally-speaking we focus too much on the 80% unemployment and not enough on the 20% success story. Attention of the public - in order to fight against prejudices - should be oriented towards success stories through TV interviews with Roma businessmen, Roma educated students and Roma employees, insisting in employment offices on the skills of Roma (language and communication skills, mobility, knowledge of traditional savoir-faire, etc) - see Council of Europe posters for the Skopje Conference on Roma Access to Employment.

### ***International coordination in the field of Roma and employment***

The Council of Europe, OSCE-ODIHR and the European Commission have been cooperating for five years under the Stability Pact programme for Roma in South East Europe. The Council of Europe made a two-year survey on access of Roma to employment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The conclusions and recommendations of the national

and regional reports drawn by two international consultants and five local consultants (three of them were young Roma) are presented today by Nenad Vladisaljev from Serbia.

The Council of Europe works together with other international actors (OSCE, EC, World Bank, OSI, ILO...) on promoting national policies, programmes or action plans for the employment of Roma (Stability Pact Programme, Decade of Roma Inclusion, etc.).

The Council of Europe has recently supported activities on Roma migration which include economic migration aspects (see above FERYP's activity).

The OSCE and CoE together with Polish and Slovenian authorities will organise a Conference on the implementation of National policies for Roma, Sinti and Travellers at the local level, with specific focus on anti-discrimination ("anti-Gypsyism") in which employment issues and measures at local level will be addressed.

The European Roma and Travellers Forum which signed a specific partnership agreement with the Council of Europe will address Roma and employment issues in future.

-----