

HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING

**Speech by Prefect Dr. Perla Stancari
Central Director for Civil Rights, Citizenship and Minorities
Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration
Italian Ministry of the Interior**

(Warsaw, 27th September, 2007)

Italy has hosted Roma and Sinti communities since the 15th Century. No official data exist, but on the basis of elements available to us it emerges that out of the 150,000 individuals residing in our country, only 70,000 are Italian citizens, a further 50,000 are Rumanian citizens and the rest come from Countries belonging to the former Jugoslavia.

On the basis of powers that the Constitution grants to local authorities, many Italian regions have issued relevant legislation to protect Roma communities in areas including housing, health, education and work. Local authorities ensure assistance and reception on the respective territories.

Educational activities are particularly important- they are aimed at the inclusion of Roma minors in schools, even by making adults feel responsible for the school attendance of their children. In a number of provinces it was envisaged that Roma families made a contribution towards the expenditures for the management of camps. Other important interventions are those carried out to build and renovate halting sites and to accommodate Roma families in ordinary houses, even through the promotion of Roma cooperatives for self build or for the recovery of dismissed public buildings. In a number of provinces there have been satisfactory results where the policy of inclusion focuses on women, both in the area of hygienic-medical education and training and in the establishment of work cooperatives.

To avoid the creation of ghettos, which pose problems related to public order and civil co-existence with the local population, the solutions that have been foreshadowed include a more widespread distribution of families on the territory, which however requires that local authorities are favourable. To achieve this end, it is necessary that the various relevant actors exchange views and create an effective system of intervention. In order to combine social solidarity with the compliance with the rules of civil co-existence, local authorities have introduced the Pacts for the compliance with social and legal rules, signed with the individuals responsible of Roma families in authorised camps, to make them share responsibilities and duties related to the education of children, to the commitment to work and to the refusal of all forms of illegality. The co-operation of cultural mediators was useful to make these Pacts effective.

There exist excellent examples like Pisa and the Mayor of Rome himself signed agreements with Rumania. The Ministry of the Interior – Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration, that carries out activities of in-depth study of these communities through Prefectures, organised a monitoring of the real situation of Roma on the territory, so that social cohesion actions fully respectful of legality can be undertaken.

Since a few months ago, the Ministry of the Interior has established an interdepartmental technical table that, even taking stock of appeals and recommendations of international organisations, sets itself the aim of examining jointly the various problems that emerge as well as of identifying possible solutions, even in terms of legislation.

On a bilateral level, intensive contacts are under way with the main Countries of origin of Roma communities, to be able to manage the phenomenon of numerous daily arrivals that increase the population of Roma camps as well as to provide those already residing in Italy dignified living conditions and favour their inclusion in the social texture. It is essential to step up the co-operation with the origin countries of these communities, to improve their living conditions also involving the institutions of the European Union.

In our opinion, the challenge that European and Italian institutions have to face is that of creating in each country the conditions for a full social inclusion of these individuals, at the same time combining the recognition of rights and the compliance with rules.

It is important, therefore, to start projects supported also by national and international organisations to back programmes of training and introduction to work, even in the countries of origin, laying special stress to the educational aspects, so as to ensure that these communities fully integrate in the world of labour.

An example of bilateral co-operation were a series of recent meetings with the Rumanian authorities, which resulted, among others, in the creation of a permanent table, both at national and at local level, for co-operation and exchange of information.

Mister moderator, furthermore I would like to briefly reply to the United States representative and to a number of representatives of the NGO's, who mentioned the incident of Livorno of last August, in terms that clearly hint at the malicious nature of the event. May I here express the sorrow of Italy and of Italians for what has happened. However, I would also like to stress that the origins and causes of the fire are still far from being clear and that at the moment they are being investigated by the Italian judiciary.

Finally, I take this opportunity to inform you that the Ministry of the Interior will organise an International Conference in Italy, that will also examine the experiences underway in other European countries with a view to finding the best solutions that can be adopted to improve the living conditions of the Roma communities, recognising their cultural differences in a spirit of conscious sharing of the principle that inspire civil coexistence.