

ERIO ACTIVITIES

ERIO at the presentation of ENAR's Shadow Report on racism in Europe

ERIO Communication Officer attended the presentation of ENAR's Shadow Report on Racism 2008. The report stresses once again the many violations of fundamental rights that occurs daily in today's European Union. Roma, migrants and people from a religious minority are the most discriminated groups in Europe. The report quoted examples of discrimination against the Roma community coming from almost every EU Member State. The report is available on ENAR's website: http://www.enar-eu.org/Page_Generale.asp?DocID=15294

EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Upcoming EU presidents to focus also on Roma minority

Brussels, 03/12/09 - Updating EU judicial cooperation will be among the priorities of the Spain-Belgium-Hungary trio presidency, representatives of the three countries announced at a press conference in Brussels on Tuesday. Other priorities will include implementing the EU's Stockholm programme and reviewing community legislation, Spanish Justice Minister Francisco Caamano Dominguez, Sefaan De Clerck, his Belgian counterpart, and Hungary's deputy Justice Minister Judit Fazekas said after a meeting of European justice ministers. Among Hungary's priorities, Fazekas mentioned traffic safety, data protection as well as development of electronic tools to support the judicial system. Justice Minister Tibor Draskovics said earlier that issues concerning the Roma minority and improving people's access to legal services were also a top priority for Hungary.

Source: <http://www.politics.hu/20091202/upcoming-eu-presidents-to-update-judicial-cooperation>

European Parliament rejects motion against forced returns of Roma to Kosovo

Brussels, 27/11/09 - The European Parliament rejected yesterday a motion submitted by the Greens/European Free Alliance calling on the EU member states to refrain from forcibly repatriating Roma to Kosovo as long as the security situation in Kosovo has not improved. In a media statement, the spokes women for foreign policy issues, Ulrika Lunacek and Franciska Brantner said: "Given the deplorable situation of over 12,000 Roma people, who are currently being deported from EU member states to Kosovo, it is irresponsible that Parliament rejected our amendment on this issue." The two Green MEPs called on the EU member states to refrain from deporting refugees to Kosovo until the conditions for safe returns have been created. Several EU member states including Austria and Hungary are currently negotiating bilateral readmission agreements with the Kosovo authorities. Germany has already deported several dozens of Roma to Kosovo on the basis of an agreement in principle which was concluded earlier this year. Following the signature, in October, of a bilateral readmission agreement with Kosovo, in October, the Belgian Secretary of State, Melchior Wathelet, announced the launch of a public information campaign aimed "to encourage" Kosovo Roma refugees in Belgium "to invest themselves in the local policy of their country."

CoE: Kosovo, “Time is not right for returns”, stresses Human Rights Commissioner

Strasbourg, 02/12/09 - The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, expressed today his very deep concern at the forced returns to Kosovo of people who have found shelter in European states. “The time simply is not right for returns in general, let alone forced returns”, said the Commissioner. Commissioner Hammarberg visited Kosovo last March and in July he made public a report on the human rights situation. His one-week field visit and continuous monitoring attest to the fact that Kosovo is a post-conflict society still struggling to come to terms with the consequences of the armed conflict. It has not the infrastructure that would allow a sustainable reintegration of refugees. This goes all the more for Roma, the biggest minority in Europe subject to wide and systematic discrimination. The Commissioner’s worries have been accentuated even more recently when he was informed that a number of Roma expelled from Council of Europe member states have returned to the lead-contaminated camps of Česmin Lug and Osterode in northern Mitrovica, inhabited for a decade now by Roma families, including children, with very serious effects on their health. The Commissioner has urged the closure of the above camps as a matter of priority, the construction of adequate housing for these families and repeated courses of decontamination treatment for all families affected.

Full article: <http://romarights.wordpress.com/2009/12/03/coe-kosovo-“time-is-not-right-for-returns”-stresses-human-rights-commissioner/>

ROMA NEWS FROM AROUND EUROPE

Italy: round-up “the Roma and Sinti minority: a violation of fundamental rights?”

Soon after the political elections that took place in Italy in April 2008 were won by the Coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi, a growing number of people became aware of the measures against the Roma minority the new Italian government was discussing and of the growing feeling of intolerance towards this minority. Its emblem is the shocking picture published by many international newspapers of two Roma girls drowned in the sea near Naples in the summer of 2008. Their dead bodies were taken on the beach and covered with a towel while waiting for an ambulance. And then something stunning happened. Normal beach life simply went on as if nothing noteworthy had occurred. In the picture, a couple nonchalantly ate a picnic while looking on at the scene. Another threw a frisbee just a few metres away from the two corpses. Unfortunately, hostility against Roma populations is not a recent phenomenon in Italy and the security measures adopted by Berlusconi’s government are just a new development in a deep-rooted problem.

Full article: <http://www.euroalter.com/2009/the-roma-and-sinti-minority-in-italy-a-violation-of-fundamental-rights/>

UK: training about Gypsy culture necessary for Cumbria health staff

London, 01/12/09 - Cumbria Primary Care Trust staff should have mandatory training on Gypsy and Traveller culture, a report has found. Specialist health workers should also be appointed to visit campsites, according to the report by NHS Cumbria. Research found that Travellers were more than eight times as likely to have family members with untreated illness or depression than the general population. The project recommended the introduction of hand-held medical notes, to help the 40 per cent of Travellers who’d had treatment cut short when they moved to a new site. Ian Twiselton, who prepared the report with Fiona Huntington, said that while 86 per cent were registered with a GP, more than half had not disclosed their background. He added: “There’s a very real fear, rightly or wrongly, that they will suffer from an adverse or hostile reaction if they identify themselves as Travellers.” Targeted vaccination programmes, based at campsites, would

boost the number of Traveller children who were fully immunised – just 42 per cent, compared to 91 cent across Cumbria as a whole. But the report also found that more than half of Travellers were living in houses or flats, rather than caravans. The information was gathered from 103 people around the county, interviewed by Travellers Louise Wannop and Richard O'Neill. Louise said: "There's a lot of Travellers about that people aren't aware of, like myself and my family. "We started buying houses a long time ago, because we thought it would mean a better life."

Source: http://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/need_for_specialist_care_for_travellers_1_644619?referrerPath=home

Germany: photographs from seven years with the Roma

What began as a short visit to Hungary finished seven years later with a prize-winning book documenting the lives of the Roma people, from India to Eastern Europe. The photos are now on display in Germany. And with Berlin planning to repatriate up to 10,000 Roma, they are more than just pretty pictures. It was nine years ago that Danish photographer Joakim Eskildsen and his wife, Swedish writer Cia Rinne, first decided to travel to Hevesaranyos in Hungary to document the life of the Roma people living there. Having just been to South Africa and seen the effects of apartheid firsthand, the couple became interested in what they saw as a form of apartheid in Europe: the way that the Roma -- commonly referred to as Gypsies -- were being treated. And then somehow, that first trip to stay with the friend of a friend's Roma mother in Hungary for four months turned into a seven-year-long project. It wasn't planned that way but as, Eskildsen writes on his Web site, "once we had started we were unable to simply stop. The more we found out about the Roma and got to know them, the more our interest in, and liking for them, grew." For seven years Eskildsen and Rinna saved up and traveled intermittently through seven countries -- Hungary, India, Greece, Romania, France, Russia and Finland -- sometimes living with Sinti and Roma people for months at a time. The couple would often move in with the Gypsies they met and at times, Eskildsen has said in various interviews, the lack of privacy almost drove them crazy. Eskildsen took pictures and Rinna wrote while they lived in Roma villages, on the edges of cities, in streets, forests and rubbish dumps, and in huts, tents, and shacks.

Full article: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/0,1518,661836,00.html>

Slovakia: time to apologising to sterilised Roma women

Bratislava, 27/11/09 - Rights activists are hoping a landmark announcement by the Czech government regretting forced sterilisation of Roma women in the past will push politicians in neighbouring Slovakia to follow suit. The Czech government this week made a public statement of regret that Roma women were sterilised in the past without their full consent and said that safeguards had been drawn up to make sure nothing similar happens in the future. Rights groups claim that from the 1970s until 1990, Romani women were systematically sterilised under a Czechoslovak government programme aimed at reducing the "high, unhealthy" birth rate of Romani women. But while the Czech government has now issued a statement of regret over the sterilisations, rights groups say Slovak politicians have not dealt with the issue. Ostalinda Maya, women's issues specialist at the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) in Budapest, told IPS: "We have to hope that this move by the Czech government will push the Slovak authorities into doing more on this issue and compensate victims of forced sterilisation." Rights groups claim that authorities in the former Czechoslovakia coerced Roma women into sterilisations by offering them either large financial incentives or threatening that if they did not undergo the procedure their existing children would be taken away and put under state care. Under communism the Roma, better known as Gypsies, in the Czech Republic were largely seen as uneducated and

backward and, while outwardly considered by the authorities as part of communist society, they were often looked down upon and treated as second-class citizens.

Full story: <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=49444>

Hungary: Roma living in slums see no hope for improvement

Budapest, 01/12/09 - Inhabitants of Roma slums in Hungary do not expect their situation to improve and social prejudice combined with the lack of targeted programmes enhance their problems, a survey by the National Criminology Institute issued on Tuesday said. The survey was carried out in 16 Roma slums at 14 locations in four counties last year and this year. The results show that Roma living in slums tend to stick together by sharing a common fate of poverty and a sense of social exclusion. Those who try to rise above these circumstances are shut out of the community. Head researcher, sociologist Agnes Solt called for programmes that would truly tackle the Roma's problems. Instead, emotions are stirred on the surface and "we do not notice that time is running out," she added.

Source: <http://english.mti.hu/default.asp?menu=1&theme=2&cat=25&newsid=266175>

Belgrade's Roma museum aims to educate marginalized group

Belgrade, 01/12/09 - Belgrade recently became home to Serbia's first Museum of Roma Culture - an institution that seeks to fight prejudice and serve as an educational tool for the marginalized minority. The museum's first exhibition - on Roma written culture - opened last month. It features Bibles, dictionaries, grammar books and texts in Roma - some of them dating from the 16th century. The exhibit also includes the first issue of Romano Lil, a Roma daily, which began publication in 1935 in Belgrade. "This is not the first institution that calls itself a Roma museum, but it is the first real museum with exhibitions that will change periodically and have different programs and events," the museum's director, Dragoljub Ackovic, told the German Press Agency dpa. The museum is situated in a small storage room in a public building in downtown Belgrade. Its walls are covered with photographs and documents in the Roma language.

Full story: <http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/296439.belgrades-roma-museum-aims-to-educate-marginalized-group--feature.html>

EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Fundamental Rights Conference 2009, Stockholm 11/12/ December

Brussels, 02/12/09 - Nyamko Sabuni, Swedish Minister for Integration and Gender Equality, will open the Fundamental Rights Conference 2009, organised by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in cooperation with the Swedish Presidency of the EU. The Conference is the European Union's key event on International Human Rights Day and aims to promote action to better protect people from violations of their rights. It further aims to support the social inclusion of marginalised groups, with the situation of the Roma as a prominent topic. Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson, Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner Thomas Hammarberg, FRA Director Morten Kjaerum and others, will address the Conference. The theme of the conference will be "Making rights a reality for all". The conference will discuss the place of rights, such as the right to non-discrimination, in times of economic crisis. A high-level panel debate will consider whether rights that are described as 'fundamental' can ever be deemed a luxury. More than 200 representatives from EU Member State governments, EU institutions, intergovernmental organizations, local authorities, civil society, social partners, and na-

tional human rights bodies will participate in the conference. Travellers and Roma are by far the most discriminated against minority groups in Europe and could face further scapegoating during this recession, a leading EU rights agency has warned. Morten Kjaerum, director of the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency, said today its recent study of 25,000 people across Europe found on almost all parameters - health, education and housing - the two groups faced high levels of discrimination.

Source:
[fundamental rights conference 2009 making rights a reality for all](http://www.se2009.eu/en/meetings_news/2009/12/3/fundamental_rights_conference_2009_making_rights_a_reality_for_all)

http://www.se2009.eu/en/meetings_news/2009/12/3/

Call for applications: scholarship for online course in public diplomacy

The Policy Centre for Roma and Minorities&DiploFoundation has launched a call for applications for an online course in public diplomacy. The selected applicant will receive a scholarship covering full tuition to attend a 10-week online course in Public Diplomacy, run by DiploFoundation, a leading international provider of online training in diplomacy and international relations. The deadline for applications is 15 December 2009.

Read more on: <http://www.policycenter.eu/scholarship.pdf>



The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) is an international advocacy organization, which promotes political and public discussion on Roma issues by providing factual and in-dept information on a range of policy issues to the European Union institutions, Roma civil organizations, governmental authorities and intergovernmental bodies. ERIO cooperates with a network of a large number of organizations and acts to combat racial discrimination and social exclusion through awareness raising, lobbying and policy development.

ERIO

Av. Edouard Lacomblé 17
Brussels 1040

Belgium

Tel: 0032(0)27333462

Fax: 0032(0)27333875

For more information: news@erionet.org / ivan.ivanov@erionet.org / www.erionet.org