

EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

The Council of Europe focuses on the Roma inclusion again

Sofia, 11/06/09 – The Roma inclusion issue has been on the top priority agenda of the Council of Europe summit on Monday, 8 June, as French media report. This meeting is sort of continuing the debate on the integrated European platform for Roma inclusion, first started in Prague in April 2009. EU Member States are advised to adopt and follow the Roma inclusion initiatives in close cooperation with the regional and local authorities, which have a key role in the process. Since Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU back in 2007, the Roma people represent Europe's largest 'ethnic minority', numbering up to an estimated 10-12 million.

Source: <http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n183987>

ROMA NEWS FROM AROUND EUROPE

Comment: Economist, 'The Roma in Macedonia, Miracle hour'

Day one. "Around midnight a big toad will appear—no-one knows where from—and then healing water will flow from the spring, only to dry up a couple of minutes later," said Iso, a 53-year old *hodja* fresh from reciting the Koran to sanctify the slaughter of six sheep. A volley of gunfire would then be needed to summon three angels to restart the flow, so the 200 pilgrims could take a bottle home. Looking round it seemed it would be easy enough to muster the necessary fire-power. "It's like Afghanistan," said Iso, smiling as he surveyed the steadily growing encampment of gun-toting pilgrims. Even Almir, his 19-year-old pupil, had a pistol grip sticking out of his tracksuit's waistband, and took an unsettling delight in brandishing a murderous-looking axe. Thankfully the guns were only there to satisfy the Balkan-wide custom of loosing off a joyous shot or two in high spirits, and the axe to lop wood for the fire.

Full article on: http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=13811322&CFID=65009278&CFTOKEN=29512036

Italy: successful Roma schooling project

A scholarship of 100 Euros per month for each Roma child who attends school regularly. Few and simple rules: no more than three unjustified absences per month, participation in extracurricular activities, including trips, and no begging. With this method, the community of Sant'Egidio has recovered 30 Roma children in Rome. The project, started from the Gordiani camp, was gradually extended to other settlements, involving 42 children. The project was presented this morning by the chairman of the community of Sant'Egidio, Marco Impagliazzo and the Director General of Immigration Department of the Ministry of Welfare, Giuseppe Silveri. The initiative, said Impagliazzo, started in September and focused on empowerment of parents. They not only must ensure the regular attendance of the child, but have to participate actively, i.e. going to talk with teachers. The results, he stressed, were surprising: the majority of parents have used the money to buy exercise books and school supplies. Over 42, only 12 children did not comply with the rules and did not get the scholarship, ie only one in four. "This is a draft successful project", Silveri said. The cost was 134mila euro, Impagliazzo said. A figure, he pointed out, quite small compared to the results obtained.

Source (in Italian): http://www.apcom.net/newsronaca/20090615_153201_3dc84bc_64300.html

Italy: Dutch NGO files complain against Italy to the CoE

The security package and racist and xenophobic discourse has led to measures contrary to respect for human rights particularly for the Roma and Sinti in Italy. This assertion has been made by the Dutch NGO Cohre, which works to defend the right to housing and prevent eviction, in a collective action against Italy submitted to the Committee on Social Rights, a body of the Council of Europe due to assess whether Member States comply with the European Social Charter. In its application, registered under number 58/2009, the organization argues that the authorities "violated Article 5 of the European Social Charter". According to Cohre, Italy would have violated the rights of Roma and Sinti families to enjoy legal, economic and social protection (art. 16), and the right to protection and care of migrant workers and their families (art. 19). Moreover, the application reports the violation of Article 30, which requires States to ensure to Roma and Sinti, as Italian citizens, the protection against poverty and social exclusion, and violation of Article 31, which enshrines the right to housing. Finally, authorities would have also violated the right to non-discrimination as provided for in Article E of the revised European Social Charter.

Source (in Italian): <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/SoleOnLine4/Norme%20e%20Tributi/2009/06/pacchetto-sicurezza-ong-italia-consiglio-europa.shtml?uuid=e1b55418-568e-11de-8641-7073d85a2f75&DocRulesView=Libero>

Spain: Andalusian city of Cabra will be honoured by Instituto de Cultura Gitana

Next June 21, coinciding with the 41st edition of the National Festival of the Virgen de la Sierra, the Instituto de Cultura Gitana will deliver a prize to the City of Cabra (Córdoba), the first city to receive this kind of distinction. As reported in a press release, Cabra has hosted for over four decades 'payos' (non Gypsies) and Gypsies, reflecting the historical link between the Andalusian and Gypsy culture. That has have brought legendary artists such as Antonio Mairena y Camarón, famous writers and politicians such as Juan de Dios Ramírez-Heredia, priests like Monsignor José María or Cirarda Pedro Puente. The National Gypsy Pilgrimage of Our Lady of the Sierra for many years was defined as the 'Pilgrimage of the Brotherhood' by José Reyes Cordova, national president of the pilgrimage and an "exemplary Gypsy", who is also going to be honoured in this event . In this way, the Institute of Gypsy culture starts a journey of appreciation to several Spanish cities that have contributed to the aggrandizement of the history and culture of the Gypsies.

Source: <http://www.europapress.es/andalucia/cordoba-00352/noticia-cabra-sera-primera-ciudad-reciba-distincion-instituto-cultura-gitana-20090616190107.html>

Northern Ireland: racist attacks drive Roma out of their Belfast homes

Belfast, 18/06/09 - Romanian Gypsy families in Northern Ireland have been forced to leave their homes after racist attacks that are being blamed on rightwing elements of the pro-British loyalist community. About 100 people, who local politicians say are members of the ethnic Roma community, were yesterday preparing to spend their first night in a Belfast leisure centre. They arrived under police escort after attacks on homes in south Belfast on Monday night, when bricks were thrown by a crowd shouting slogans of the hard-right Combat 18 group. Martin McGuinness, Northern Ireland's Sinn Féin deputy first minister, told Irish radio: "There is no doubt that the people responsible for this emanate from the loyalist community but I wouldn't make the allegation, at this stage anyway, that they are part of any paramilitary group. I think the likelihood is they're not." There has been a steady increase in racist incidents in Northern Ireland since civil conflict ended there, with several involving attacks on local Chinese, the largest ethnic minority.

But the latest incidents mark a new low in race relations in a region that for 30 years was plagued by sectarian violence between rival Protestant and Roman Catholic communities.

Source: http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/21e67b66-5b9e-11de-be3f-00144feabdc0.html?nclick_check=1

UK: Travellers aim to dispel myths about culture with Sutton exhibition

Sutton, 16/06/09 - An exhibition featuring the work of young travellers hopes to dispel the myths about the community and celebrate their culture. Organised as part of this year's Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month the exhibition aims to promote and provide information about traveller history and culture. The traveller education service will be running events in schools throughout June focusing on the achievements of the traveller community. There are no records of how many people of traveller heritage live in Sutton, but the traveller education service supports more than 60 young people from Irish and English traveller families. Local traveller, Adele Gregory said: "Traveller history month is a fantastic opportunity to dispel myths, state facts and network with the wider community. "It is a chance for our voices and our feelings to be heard, and to celebrate our culture." Sutton Council's executive member for equalities Councillor Ruth Dombey said: "Traveller History Month is a way for our borough to celebrate the culture of the traveller community in Sutton and help all people appreciate the richness this brings to our borough." The exhibition is open at Sutton Central Library. For details call 020 8648 3267 or visit sutton.gov.uk.

Source: http://www.suttonguardian.co.uk/news/4432373.Travellers_aim_to_dispel_myths_about_culture_with_exhibition/

UK: MP and council leader at war over Gypsy site

Plymouth, 14/06/09 - Vivien Pengelly, the leader of Plymouth City Council, has come out fighting over personal attacks on her in The Herald yesterday. Mrs Pengelly dismissed claims by Plymouth Sutton MP Linda Gilroy that she had "lost the plot". And she accused the Labour MP of "slinging arrows from the sidelines". Plymouth's leading ladies came to blows for a second time in little over a week after Mrs Gilroy submitted a formal objection to the proposed Efford Warren Gypsy and Traveller site. She was quoted in The Herald yesterday as saying that Mrs Pengelly had "lost the plot". The latest spat follows a bust-up between the pair at the beginning of the month, when Mrs Gilroy first made a personal attack on Mrs Pengelly over Gypsy sites. Yesterday Mrs Pengelly angrily rejected Mrs Gilroy's claim that consultation over the proposed site had been "pathetic".

Full article on: <http://www.thisisplymouth.co.uk/news/MP-s-carping-Gypsy-site-won-t-help-forward/article-1070816-detail/article.html>

UK: Lambeth children learn about Gypsy Roma culture

Lambeth, 16/06/09 - West Norwood children celebrated Gypsy Roma travellers as part of a history month being held in Lambeth. A day of events - including dancing, storytelling and theatre - took place at Nettlefold Hall last Friday. Lambeth is one of just two London boroughs holding celebrations for this year's Gypsy Roma Traveller history month. The event was set up to explore the history, culture and language of the communities - not usually included in the school curriculum - and is intended to challenge myths and tackle prejudices.

Source: http://www.streathamguardian.co.uk/news/4438904.Lambeth_children_learn_about_Gypsy_Roma_culture/

France: new priorities for the Consultative Commission of France Travellers

The National Consultative Commission of France Travellers (Gens du voyage), from a decree of

6 June, fell under the Ministry of Social Affairs. "We continue working so that travellers can enjoy the same rights as other citizens, particularly as regards the right to vote and insurance," said Senator Pierre Hérisson named by the Prime Minister to head the Committee whose members will be appointed during the summer. "We must take account of changes in society and we address the issue of land owned by travellers' families who have a genuine need of sedentarisation or semi- sedentarisation," he said, pointing out that the Act now allows housing viable parcels adjacent to communal benches. "Mayors cannot refuse water and sanitation networks or electricity when contracts are concluded with operators. He also recommends two camp large sites for department and also the continuation of the efforts in areas of permanent home. "Half of the sites are under construction. The municipalities must deliver the 20,000 places that are still missing. State assistance will help those who were delayed against their wishes officials" he says, recalling that the law stipulates that the prefect may replace the mayor and make the reception area at the expense of refractory municipalities.

Source: http://www.lagazettedescommunes.com/actualite/34420/amenagement_territoire/pierre_herisson_presente_priorites_commission_gens_voyage.htm

Germany: 110 Romanian Gypsies will receive 27,000 euros to return to Romania

Berlin, 15/06/09 - Berlin's central town hall is resorting to public money to get rid of the Romanian beggars and windscreen cleaners. Romanian Gypsies will receive 250 euros for each adult and 150 euros for each child, so that the ethnic minority will return to Romania. They invaded a park, then a church in Berlin, asking both for the right and the place to stay. They have been the main focus in the "immigration press" for the last month. Some German politicians are sceptical about the solution. The German press says the Gypsy group left Berlin on Thursday, heading for Bavaria. Romanian Consul in Berlin Remus Marasescu contacted the group of nomads twice last week. The Gypsies were on their way to Hof and Nürnberg, leaving Germany. "I believe the people understood they had to respect the contract they had signed." On receiving the money from the Berlin central town hall, the nomads had to sign a contract that bound them to use the money for travelling back to their country of origin. A large part of the Gypsies apparently come from Rosiorii de Vede, Teleorman (South Romania). Berlin Kuriei says that some of the nomads came to Berlin in cars with British numbers. Others spoke Spanish. They asked for a place to stay. During mid-May, 60 of them camped in Görlitz park, then they illegally made their headquarters in a kindergarten from Bethanien cultural house in Berlin. When they saw the buses authorities sent to transport them in a hall from Spandau on May 28, the group of Gypsies, now counting 100, ran away with their children and sought shelter in a church from Wrangelstrasse. The priest serving St.-Marien-Liebfrauen-Kirche said the church was taken by surprised by this group of people who barged in and said they wanted to stay. The senator for refugee problems Heidi Knake-Werner suggested that they be lodged in a refugee shelter in Motardstrasse (Siemensstadt), where they were to receive food and health services. The solution was initially refused, being considered an "expulsion camp". As Romanian citizens, the Gypsy minority from Romania enjoy the right to travel freely within the EU. The German Senator for Inner Affairs Ehrhart Körting (SPD) considers that "despite the fact that they came to Germany as tourists, they are not on holiday, they are not looking for employment opportunities". Eventually, the Gypsies accepted to be lodged in the Motardstrasse hall, where the complaints kept pouring. The solution was either the 250 euros money for travel or buying a one-way bus ticket to Romania. counselling regarding their rights, like the one in Frankfurt".

Source: http://english.hotnews.ro/stiri-top_news-5829643-berlin-bought-its-peace-110-romanian-gypsies-will-receive-27-000-euros-return-romania.htm

Kosovo's strategy to integrate the Roma community

Pristina, 14/06/09 - "The Kosovo Times" publishes the Kosovo Government strategy to fully integrate the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities into the new Kosovo society. The Government of Kosovo is fully committed to do everything possible to ensure that Kosovo Minority Communities, which all together make less than 10% of the overall Kosovo population, enjoy all the benefits and advantages given to them by the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo which is the most advanced in Europe on Minority Rights protection.

The full copy of the the strategy can be found here: http://www.kosovotimes.net/kosovo-pdf-library-download-section/doc_download/55-republic-of-kosovo-government-strategy-for-integration-of-roma-ashkali-and-egyptian-communities.html

Kosovo: don't forget the ethnic cleansing and exodus of the Roma, say NGOs

For the Roma from Kosovo, the 16th and 17th June, are a sad anniversary. It was indeed on these dates, on 16th and 17th June 1999, that Kosovar nationalists began to systematically attack the houses of Roma and other communities, forcing several ten thousands of Roma into exile. Hundreds (?) of Roma were savagely killed, women were raped, sometimes in front of their husbands and their children. Hundreds of people are still missing today. Ten years later, the rights of Roma are still being violated in Kosovo. The few thousand remaining Roma, out of a community which had more than 100 000 people, live in fear and under precarious conditions. Their survival depends largely on humanitarian aid and transfers from their family members abroad. Excluded from the labor market, they are also absent from public institutions with the exception of parliament where one local representative acts as an alibi. The constitution does not guarantee any particular rights to the Roma, and minority rights are not applied to them. After having suffered ethnic cleansing and an exodus, the Roma community in Kosovo is today threatened by assimilation and may even disappear entirely which does not however prevent the governments of the host countries refugees to think about the forced repatriation of the refugees. We call today for the public recognition of the ethnic cleansing of the Roma from Kosovo. The perpetrators must be brought to justice, the victims need to be compensated. We also call for an urgent solution to the refugee problem. Refugees should have a real choice either to return to Kosovo or to stay in their host country. Finally, we ask for the rights of Roma in Kosovo to be guaranteed in Kosovo so that they can be free and equal citizens and for racism and discrimination to be banned.

NGOs: Ibar/URYD, Chachipe, UFAT, CCPECO, Rromano Radio, Ibar34, Rromano Phralipe

One American discovers the Roma from Romania (I)

Bucharest, 16/06/09 - Until coming to Romania she had never heard of Roma. The project "Revealing Romania" was the way through which the journalist Shaina Humphries knew them. After two weeks of investigation, Shaina says that, despite the racist attitude with which they are treated, the Roma do not hate Romanians. "Most of the things I read about the Roma were told through somewhat of a critical perspective. Always looking AT the Roma, and talking ABOUT them, but almost never with them. There are many inconsistencies and contradictions in the Roma population, just like every other population. They are not ALL as poor and unhappy as they are made out to be. There is obviously quite a bit of racism against the Roma in Romania. It is a majority of the Roma that accept their lives and their place in society as natural. They are just so used to being discriminated against that they think it is normal. The Italian government's actions from the past couple of years have made it even closer to impossible to lessen the racism there."

Full interview: http://www.divers.ro/focus_en?wid=37645&func=viewSubmission&sid=10066

Romania: tens of Gypsies urge the Executive to get more involved in ethnic issues

Bucharest, 16/06/09 - Tens of Gypsies gathered on Tuesday in Victoria square, urging the Executive to get involved more in their problems and help them recover their losses during the second World War. An official delegation was called to negotiations but leaders of local communities are dissatisfied with official talks. Some 200 Gypsies gathered in Victoria square to celebrate 67 years since the Gypsy Holocaust in Romania. The delegation called to talks put forward a document reporting the main problems the minority faces. The Executive declared that they will provide an official response to the problems in ten days.

Source: http://english.hotnews.ro/stiri-top_news-5833182-tens-gypsies-urge-the-executive-get-more-involved-ethnic-issues.htm

Canadian officials do not perceive Czech Roma as a drain on resources

Hamilton, 16/06/09 - In Canada, according to recent data from Roma organizations there, 1 687 Czech Roma out of a total of 50 000 immigrants are waiting to hear how the courts will rule regarding their status. The total number of Czech Roma living in Canada, including those from the previous emigration wave in the mid-1990s, is around 3 500. Bureaucrats with civil administrations of the cities where Czech Roma immigrants have settled, most frequently Hamilton and Toronto, do not perceive their arrival as a drain on the system. "We have many people here who have come from Africa – Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan. The Czech Roma do not represent such a big problem for us. The number is still not that alarming," Hamilton town councillor Bob Bratin told Czech Television. In his view immigrants are a priority for the Canadian government as they are needed to maintain the economy. "We need people who will do difficult labour," Bratin said. However, the Roma are not travelling to Canada merely for economic reasons. They are primarily arriving to request asylum from the ethnic discrimination that predominates in the Czech Republic. Paul St. Clair, who works with a local Canadian Roma organization, discusses the decisions made by local courts as confirmation of this fact: "That court is independent, and if 95 % of the people are succeeding, then something must be going on there (in the Czech Republic) that is more than just an economic problem." "Maybe I am overdoing it a bit, but I do feel more at home here than in the Czech Republic. We are welcome here," says Marek Polák, who came to Canada with his mother, Anna Poláková, who until recently was chief editor of Czech Radio's Roma broadcasting section. After repeated attacks on her family in the Czech Republic, she requested asylum in Canada. In her view, the attacks crossed the line of what was bearable. Her daughter Andrea is satisfied in Canada: "It's simply that people behave differently here, they do not view us with prejudice."

Source: http://www.romea.cz/english/index.php?id=detail&detail=2007_1250

EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Urgent: Sinti interpreter sought

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Romania: training on minorities and the media

The Department of Interethnic Relations of the Romanian Government organizes during August 9-15 the training entitled "The reflection of ethnic diversity in the Romanian press." The training will be delivered by Nicholas Nugent, journalist BBC, trainer and media and diversity consultant, who has a vast experience in the media reflection of interethnic and inter-religious from countries like Bosnia, Serbia, Russia, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Afghanistan, Somalia, Nigeria, Egypt, Turkmenistan, Indonesia etc. The training will contain the following elements:

- the media reflection of the national minorities from Romania and other parts of Europe, taking into consideration the cultural differences;
- interactive sessions based on the identification of some basic principles in the management of ethnic diversity by the journalists and at the workplace; case studies
- debates based on audio-video materials from different conflict regions or which produced divergent reactions, etc. According to the organizers this training addresses the urgent need to form journalists regarding producing objective materials on events which imply an ethnic, religious or linguistic component. The deadline for applications is July 5, 2009. More information can be asked at e-mail: monica.andriescu@dri.gov.ro and monica_andriescu@yahoo.com. Contact person: Monica Andriescu, personal councilor (tel. 021.231.44.24)

Source: http://www.divers.ro/actualitate_en?wid=37647&func=viewSubmission&sid=10062

France: exhibition "Trajectories Gitanes" in Paris

The exhibition "Trajectories Gitanes" will start on 20 June in porte de Bagnolet, Paris, at 19.30. It will be presented by Antonio Maya, Gabi Jiménez and many other guests. The exhibition will be accompanied by a flamenco concert.



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-depth 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.

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