

ERIO project for civil and political participation receives a grant by the European Commission

ERIO received a grant for its project for civil and political participation "Enhancing Participation". The grant is earmarked by the European Commission - DG Education and Culture under the Citizenship program fund. Partners are European Dialogue, a London based organization dealing with Roma education and civil society participation, the Romania based Project for Ethnic Relations, an organisation with long experience in political participation and minority issues in the Balkans, the Bulgaria based Tolerance and Mutual Aid Foundation, one of the most effective advocacy organizations in that country, the Catalonia Roma Federation, a well known organization dealing with culture and political participation of Gitanos in Spain. The project foresees a series of national level discussions on Roma and Travellers issues and round-tables with local, regional and national officials. Under this Project ERIO is going to organize a major conference in Brussels. The project is coming just in time for this year's EP elections and for national elections in several countries. ERIO and partners will have the possibility to sensitise different parties for Roma acceptance in the political arena and giving them chance to be elected, as their representation in the decision-making bodies is crucial for their effective integration and the full respect of their rights.

ERIO participation to the EPP-ED hearing on the anti-discrimination directive

ERIO's Executive Director Ivan Ivanov participated to the EPP-ED public hearing on the recently proposed EU broader anti-discrimination directive. The hearing, whose title was "The anti-discrimination directive, expected impact on the ground", has been held in the European Parliament premises on Thursday 29th. During the discussion, hosted by Patrick Gauber and Thomas Mann MEPs, many questions were raised: does existing national and EU legislation protect victims of discrimination enough? Should we opt for more legislation or insist on better implementation? The EPP-ED group (that was not in favour of a broader directive) wonders whether that additional legislation would be of a significant benefit to the target groups, what the added-value would be in terms of legal certainty and whether this legislation will increase red tape and costs.

EU good practice project for the inclusion of Roma young people "Coloured mosaic of Europe"

The youth exchange project "Coloured mosaic of Europe" involved 38 Roma youngsters from Italy, Germany, Slovakia and Poland. The main topic of the project was to show differences between majority and minority and between participating countries and to display that just these differences make our society unique and interesting. The outcome of the project was an exposition of photos created by the participants and presented in form of mosaic at primary school. Youth Initiative project: The youth initiative project was prepared by a non-governmental organization which works with Roma and non-Roma youngsters and adults. The aim of the project was to train a group of young "advisers", who will be able to train and lead non-formal groups of Roma and non-Roma youngsters. The main activities of the project were based on training in the field of communication, peer leading, group dynamic etc. and in the further phase of the project on activities carried out by advisors themselves for their peers. Amen sam pro jekh than (We are all in the same place): The youth initiative project had been implemented by non-formal group of Roma young people aged between 15-21 years from Roma communities in the Slovak town Banská Bystrica. The main objective of the project was to introduce to Non-Roma youngsters the life of Roma young people in Roma settlements including community, culture and tradition. The aim was to contribute to the fight against prejudices between Roma and non-Roma youth. The group had prepared a traveler's musical, which reflected their life and their place in the society. This performance was presented to Non-Roma children and youth at primary and secondary schools. The performance was presented also in Roma communities.

Italy: tensions rise over Italy's Gypsy migrants

Rome, 26/01/2009 - A political storm has erupted around Italy's Gypsy community after a series of recent attacks prompted Silvio Berlusconi, the country's prime minister, to suggest deploying 30,000 troops nationwide to combat crime blamed on Gypsies and other immigrants. Europe's open borders have led to a flood of Romanian Gypsies into Italy, straining municipal services and stirring political tensions. Some church groups estimate 50,000 Romanian Gypsies have arrived in recent years, adding to thousands of Balkan Gypsies who had fled the former Yugoslavia. Many live in squalid conditions condemned by human rights groups. Mr Berlusconi suggested the extra deployment of troops in response to the highly publicised cases of two women reportedly gang raped near Rome. Police have not publicly identified their suspects as Gypsies.

Read more on http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/7f6d4b84-ebdc-11dd-8838-0000779fd2ac.html?nclick_check=1

Italy: comment, Berlusconi's frighteningly successful racism

Two days after the United States Presidential Election, Prime Minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi, said to the President of Russia President-elect Barack Obama "has all the qualities to get along well with you: he's young, handsome and suntanned, so I think you can develop a good working relationship." This statement was harshly rebuked by Italian politicians as being racist. Berlusconi's opponent in the last Italian election, Walter Veltroni, went far enough to say that his comments "seriously damage the image and dignity of our country on the international scene." Unfortunately for Italy, this statement is insignificant compared to the racism rampant in the Italian government and population at large. The Roma (Gypsy) are an ethnic group that emigrated from South Asia to many countries primarily in Southern and Eastern Europe almost a millennium ago. For many centuries, Europeans have been at odds with the Roma community due to their cultural differences and physical appearances. The Roma have experienced injustices for centuries including losing their children, suffering discrimination, and even being forced into labor.

Read more on: http://progressive.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/article.php?article_id=287

UK: Dale Farm Travellers lose eviction court case

Basildon, 22/01/2009 - The Court of Appeal has ruled that 1,000 Travellers living in Dale Farm in Essex can be moved on by Basildon Council. Up to 50 families now face being forcibly removed from their homes from what is the largest traveller community in the UK, including more than 150 children. Reacting to news of the court's decision, Dale Farm spokesman Grattan Puxon said: "We are not going to allow (our youngest) to be terrorised. "We don't want bailiffs to come in, using force and heavy machinery around our children." Mr Puxon described the petition as "somewhat confusing" and insisted the community would still fight for a "common sense solution". He said the Travellers would pitch at a site 50 yards south of the contested land, between Dale Farm and the A127, for the next 28 days. From there, Mr Puxon said, they would make further legal applications. In May 2005, Basildon Council voted to clear a large part of the settlement. It said that sections of the site had no planning permission.

Read more on <http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/UK-News/Court-Of-Appeal-Rules-50-Families-of-Travellers-Must-Be-Evicted/Article/200901315207873>

UK: Dale Farm prepares to counter eviction

Basildon, 23/01/2009 - Dale Farm residents will hold what looks like being a war council on Sunday to decide what can legally be done to counter an Appeal Court ruling which has opened the way for the destruction of Britain's largest Gypsy village. Women were in tears yesterday when the news came through that judges had decided Basildon councillors had been within their rights to vote for a three million euro direct action operation against Dale Farm. Last night lawyers acting for the community were waiting for the go-ahead to mount an appeal to the House of Lords. But it is uncertain the UK's highest court will agree to hear the case.

Read more on <http://www.romarights.net/content/dale-farm-prepares-counter-eviction>

Greece: a mall for Roma

Athens, 24/01/2009 - PUOGR (PAN HELLENIC UNION OF GREEK ROM) rent a place in Greece of 8.337 m2 for making 82 different works for 82 Greek Roma. They use a programme of eommex that gives to each one of the Roma 55% from European funds and 45 % loan to make his new work. At this Romanes Mall , we can have employers from all Europe, Roma and non-Roma which must agree to live at the same area in Greece for 5 years at least. This project also foresees the building of a village of 369 homes for the people that they work at the mall. Also with money from PUOGR and the education of all those people to their objects.

Source: PAN HELLENIC UNION OF GREEK ROM aspidarom@hol.gr

Czech republic: most Roma welcome the appointment of Michael Kocáb as minister

Prague, 23/01/2009 - Today at Prague Castle, Czech President Václav Klaus named the new members of the coalition government of Czech PM Mirek Topolánek (ODS). In addition to the four new ministers Daniela Filipiová (ODS), Petr Bendl (ODS), Michael Kocáb (for the Greens) and Pavel Svoboda (for KDU-ČSL), Klaus appointed, at Topolánek's request, Czech Defense Minister Vlasta Parkanová (KDU-ČSL) as Deputy Prime Minister and Cyril Svoboda (KDU-ČSL), previously Minister without portfolio, to the post of Minister for Regional Development. Members of the Roma community contacted by Romea.cz evaluated Kocáb's appointment as positive. According to those with whom we spoke, when addressing issues of concern to Roma, Kocáb should focus primarily on reviving the project of the Agency for Social Inclusion in Roma localities. Cyril Koky, coordinator for Roma affairs and the integration of foreigners in the Central Bohemian region, said, "He should revive the languishing project of the Government Agency for Social Inclusion, which is part of the government's declaration."

Read more on http://www.romea.cz/english/index.php?id=detail&detail=2007_1146

Hungary: Protest over planned rally by right-wing group

Budapest, 27/01/2009 - Roma pupils have been kept home from school in the north-western Hungarian village of Ivan in protest against a demonstration planned by the Magyar Garda, a radical nationalist paramilitary group, national daily Nepszabadsag said on Tuesday. The Garda, the paramilitary wing of the radical nationalist Jobbik party, has said it will stage a demonstration and march through the village on Saturday. The local Roma community has decided to keep their children at home during the week. Police, who have the power to decide on such grounds as whether a gathering will disrupt traffic, refused to allow the march, but gave permission for a gathering.

Read more on http://www.caboodle.hu/nc/news/news_archive/single_page/article/11/protest_over/

Romania: Roma Holocaust victims speak out

Vlasca, 27/01/2009 - The Roma people of Vlasca - traditional metal workers called Kalderash - are closed and inward-looking. They are reluctant to talk to anyone from outside the community. It took weeks of negotiation to hear the accounts of Holocaust survivors in the village. Historians often call it "the forgotten Holocaust". Up to 500,000 Roma are believed to have died in mass shootings and Nazi gas chambers. Recent studies have brought more of their suffering to public attention, but to this day little is known about the Roma targeted for persecution and extermination by the allies of the Third Reich on the eastern front. The men are the first to speak - and later, when it is the women's turn, they leave the room.

Read more on: www.divers.ro/documentar_en?wid=37648&func=viewSubmission&sid=9590

Romania: A million euros to improve Roma public image

Bucharest, 26/01/2009 - The Greek Company LDK Consultants Engineers and Planners SA and its branch from Romania won, from the Romanian state, a contract of almost a million Euros for a campaign on informing and improving the Roma image, say the press agencies. As per the announcement published on public system for public

acquisitions, the two companies will promote the social inclusion of the Roma population at local, regional and national level, using all media channels suitable to the target groups. The 998.115 euro the Ministry of Finance will pay to accelerate the implementation of the National Strategy to improve the Roma situation- the money for "Public Campaign for Informational and Awareness" part come from European funds through Phare Program. The Romanian Branch, LDK-Consultants Engineers & Planners SRL, was founded in 1998 in Bucharest and offers technical consultancy in Phare, SAPARD and World Bank projects, and LDK-Consultants Engineers & Planners SA is a group of companies for consultancy with headquarter in Greece, operating on many markets from the developed or developing countries from East of Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia.

Source: www.divers.ro

Romania: EU 5 million Euros fund for Roma children scholarization

26/01/2009 - Roma children from disfavoured areas from Iasi will be included in a project meant to keep them in schools by social inclusion methods, says Ziarul de Iasi. The Project "Quality education - a step to equality" will be implemented from January 2009 to January 2011 and it is financed by European Union with 5 million Euros. The project is designated to apply an inter-cultural curriculum in 40 kindergartens, for approximately 800 Roma and non-Roma children, from the 4 counties, facilitating the access to the pre-school education of the children from traditional communities, and also to create a model of intervention for Roma students with risk of abandoning school. Also, the project foresees training for 24 people, responsible for the support groups, in order to develop the activities with parents and children in risk to abandon the school, to equip the bilingual kindergartens and offer scholarships for 120 Roma students, from the 4 counties involved in the project, children in risk to abandon the school.

Source: www.divers.ro

BBC News: videos, 'Roma suffering in economic crisis' and 'Health fears for Roma on lead mine'

London, 20/01/2009 - Eastern Europe's Roma Gypsy community is the latest group to suffer from the global financial downturn. Many make a living trading scrap metal, demand for which has dropped dramatically. A second documentary will tell about a mission by the World Health Organisation to investigate the health of hundreds of Roma refugees living in a camp on a former lead mine in Kosovo.

More on: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7839096.stm>

More on: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7830394.stm>

Roma exhibition on Flickr

Sixteen snapshots of the Roma experience in Europe are now online as part of Dosta campaign. In addition, the Flickr Council of Europe image gallery offers a wealth of photo-facts on the Organisation, its leaders, famous guests and historic moments. For additional information on minority issues and their protection in Europe, you may consult our online bookshop reference titles.

See the pictures at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/councilofeurope/sets/72157611319096059/>



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.

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