

ERIO organized a seminar for Belgian organisations

On October 24th, ERIO held a seminar to discuss the situation of Sinti and Roma communities in Belgium, to provide Sinti and Roma organizations with information on anti-discrimination and social inclusion instruments they can benefit from and to exchange best practices. Representatives of the Bureau Européen des Gens du Voyage, the Centre de Médiation des Gens du Voyage en Wallonie, the Finland Roma Forum and members of Roma communities from Gent participated in the seminar. The meeting contributed to a better understanding of the local context of Belgian Sinti and Roma organisations, also taking into consideration the traditional distinction between Flanders and Wallony, to exchange of view of personal and professional experiences and to outline joint actions between the participants.

Poll shows European youth prejudiced against Turks, Romanians

29/10/2008 - Turks and Romanians face the most prejudice from minors from 11 European countries, a recent report has indicated. The EYCAdeMy, a joint venture of the European Youth Card Association (EYCA) and the European Commission, cited Turkey's political problems with Greece and Armenia and issues related to Gypsies (Roma) living in countries throughout Europe as the primary reasons behind this prejudice. EYCAdeMy's "Intercultural Dialogue and Youth Research" project was conducted over the course of one year between 2007 and 2008 and polled 460 high school and university students between the ages of 15 and 26 in the Czech Republic, England, Estonia, Holland, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Wales and Andorra. The research revealed a trend of prejudice in the perception of minorities amongst the youth polled, with the most bias shown toward Turks and Romanians. Though the report of the survey's findings did not address the reasons for these prejudices, Elif Memis, who was among those who prepared the report, said on the issue of bias toward Turks: "In Europe, in particular, the influence of our religion and culture on our lifestyle is regarded as strange. Also, prejudice is created as a result of insufficient and incorrect information about Turkey due to our [long-standing] political problems [with Greece and Armenia]." Regarding the prejudice against Romanians, Memis said: "Romanians and the Roma [Gypsies] in the Czech Republic are 'otherized' because, in terms of numbers, they are a significant minority. Also, the uniqueness of their different lifestyle and regional customs is seen as strange." The overwhelming majority of survey participants had a positive attitude about intercultural dialogue. The results showed that intercultural contact reduces prejudices and biases and eliminates racism. The youth define cultural differences in terms of language, values, religion, food, traditions, lifestyles and humour. Religious differences are perceived in terms of practice, not theory. The British participants didn't see a huge difference between their own culture and that of others. The most evident cultural differences were seen between Russians and Estonians.

Read more on: <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=157228&bolum=102>

Italy: Berlusconi government is forced to soften its anti-immigration measures

Brussels, 23/10/2008 - At its first meeting last May, Silvio Berlusconi's government approved a tough "security package" to stem illegal immigration and sling out unwanted foreigners. This week, the Senate will debate the latest measure to implement it-or rather not. For in the five months since Mr Berlusconi promised to guarantee "the right of Italians not to be afraid", his security package has been chiselled away by Eurocrats in Brussels and battered by a brusque contact with reality. Indeed, it has become a paradigm of the difficulties that European governments face if they try to introduce the sorts of measures voters like. Of four main provisions in the package, only the deployment of troops in support of the police has been fully introduced. Some 3,000 soldiers are to remain on civilian security duty until at least January.

Read more on http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displayStory.cfm?source=hptextfeature&story_id=12470625

Italy: Roma census results

Rome, 24/10/2008 - There are 12,346 Roma people - including 5,436 minors - living in camps around Rome, Naples and Milan, according to a controversial census that ended on 15 October. The breakdown of results per city has not yet been made known. The government also estimates that 12,000 Roma, mostly from Romania, have left the country independently since the start of June. In total, 167 camps were included in the census, which was carried out by the Italian Red Cross under the auspices of the interior ministry and the local prefecture. Of the camps surveyed, 43 were authorised by the city authorities and 124 were illegal. Interior minister Roberto Maroni has announced measures to begin clearing out the illegal camps and improve conditions at the legal ones. New sites will also be identified for authorised camps, which will take the form of "villages" equipped to house large numbers of people and where children will have access to schooling. The census got underway in July as part of the government's tough public safety programme aimed at clamping down on illegal immigration in particular. However, it drew immediate criticism from the opposition, religious and human rights groups for discriminating on the basis of ethnicity. Estimates prior to the census put the number of Roma in Italy at around 150,000 with 20,000 living in Rome.

Read more on: http://www.wantedinrome.com/news/news.php?id_n=5024

Italy: deported Romanians 'finding safe haven in Spain'

Madrid, 28/10/2008 - Dozens of Romanian citizens who have been deported from Italy have moved to the outskirts of Spain's capital Madrid, Spanish police claim. According to Spanish daily ABC, Romanians have recently begun arriving in Spain by bus and settling in Canada Real and San Sebastian de los Reyes, areas traditionally inhabited by Spaniards and Moroccans. The report does not specify whether the Romanians that moved to Spain are mainly of Gypsy ethnicity. In early October, Italy's Interior Minister Roberto Maroni said that Roma Gypsies have left the country and gone to 'permissive Spain'. "We thought there were 120,000 (Roma Gypsies in Italy). There are fewer. Many of them have gone to the more permissive Spain of Zapatero," said Maroni, referring to Spain's Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. At least 70,000 Roma Gypsies are Italian citizens, and many others come from European Union countries such as Romania or from countries of the former Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, the Romanian government has been desperately trying to lure Romanian migrants to return to their country, due to a chronic shortage of labour, especially in the construction sector.

Source: AKI

UK: Scottish Gypsies are distinct ethnic group, rules judge

Glasgow, 25/10/2008 - Scottish Gypsies have been recognised as a distinct ethnic group in a landmark legal ruling. The move means that the travelling community is now entitled to the same legal protection as other ethnic minorities, as outlined by the Race Relations Act of 1976. With their newly recognised status, they can bring claims of racial discrimination to employment tribunals, after an appeals tribunal in Aberdeen overturned a previous decision to the contrary. Judge Nicol Hosie reconsidered the results of a previous hearing in March which found Scottish Gypsies were not a distinct race. The debate arose after Kenneth MacLennan, of Inverurie, Aberdeenshire, claimed his employers at the Gypsy Traveller Education and Information Project (GTEIP) had dismissed him for "taking a stance on behalf of Gypsy travellers". Mr MacLennan worked for the organisation as a strategic co-ordinator until July last year.

Read more on http://www.theherald.co.uk/news/news/display.var.2463167.0.Scottish_gipsies_are_distinct_ethnic_group_rules_judge.php

Hungary: Radical right Magyar Garda inducts 400 new recruits

Budapest, 26/10/2008 - The Magyar Garda, the militia arm of the radical rightwing political party Jobbik, inducted 400 new recruits -- children among them -- in a ceremony in downtown Budapest on Saturday. Members of the Hungarian Guard, wearing black uniforms and insignias redolent of Nazi symbols, held their fourth national ceremony in Heroes' Square. Among members addressing the crowds were Lorant Hegedus Jr, a controversial Calvinist priest, and Lajos Fur, former defence minister in Hungary's conservative government following the change of political system.

Read more on <http://www.budapesttimes.hu/content/view/9736/219/>

Czechs Republic: Greens want government to discuss extremists' actions

Prague, 24.10.2008 - Czech Education Minister Ondrej Liska (Green Party, SZ) wants the government to discuss the rightist extremists' action in Litvinov, north Bohemia, last Saturday, he says in a statement his party sent to CTK today. Some 300 to 400 extremists attended an unauthorised rally in Litvinov during which nationalists wanted to enter the Janov housing estate inhabited by Romanies, but the police succeeded in preventing a clash. Four people, including three policemen, were injured in the action, however. The extremists have said on their web page that they will return to Janov and that there will be more of them.

Read more on http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/index_view.php?id=340626

Project on Ethnic Relation Announcements

Princeton, New Jersey, 24/10/2008 - On October 22, 2008, the Project on Ethnic Relations (PER) held an international roundtable to discuss challenges and prospects of sustainable integration of Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in host countries and in Kosovo itself. The event was held at the Hofburg Palace in Vienna and was organized by PER with the support of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The meeting gathered representatives of European governments, international organizations, Kosovo government representatives and Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians. The topics debated during the roundtable included: prospects for integration of these communities in host countries, the return process to Kosovo, living conditions for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities in Kosovo, and conditions for integration of returnees in Kosovo.

Read more on <http://www.per-usa.org/1997-2007/announcements.htm>

Czech Republic: Investing in jobs for Roma makes economic sense

Prague, 27/10/2008 - The Czech Republic's labour market has been performing strongly in recent years, and high labor demand has driven down unemployment to record low levels. Yet, according to a new World Bank study, Czech Republic: Improving Employment Chances of the Roma, over half of Czech Roma of working age (15-64) are out of the labour force. "At this scale, the joblessness of Roma is an economic challenge and carries substantial unnecessary costs," argues Orsalia Kalantzopoulos, World Bank Director for Central Europe and the Baltic Countries, pointing to the financial costs of welfare benefits and the loss of a productive contribution to the economy of long-term unemployed Roma. "Given that the Czech Republic, like most of its neighbours, will face an ageing population, it is in its economic interest to tackle current and prevent future long-term unemployment, including among the Roma population." The World Bank report finds that many Czech Roma living in marginalized localities are jobless often because of a dramatic skills deficit. This skills deficit affects their chances in the labour market and has led to widespread discouragement in searching for work.

Read more on <http://euyouthspeak.org/roma/?p=7890>

Livia Járóka MEP Comment: School daze

Brussels, 27/10/2008 - Segregating Roma children from mainstream into "ghetto" schools deprives them of their fundamental rights, argues Livia Járóka. Within Europe there are great disparities in accessing different levels of quality education across various groups in society. People with disabilities, linguistic minorities, religions, racial and ethnic groups, undocumented people, migrants, refugees, displaced persons and the extremely poor are particularly marginalised, segregated and many times excluded from mainstream education. Among these, Roma in the EU especially stand out in needing our attention in every area, and particularly in education. What distinguishes Roma from other disadvantaged groups can be characterised in one respect by their limited access to quality education due to the extent of poverty and deprivation they suffer. The negative stereotypes of the majority society concerning Roma have had a significant effect on the desire of authorities to exclude them from the educational system. Three such effects which have limited their equal access to education are segregation in schools, lack of student attendance or integration based on claims of the 'travelling' Roma lifestyle, and the belief that Roma children are mentally disabled.

Read more on <http://euyouthspeak.org/roma/?p=7891>

Council of Europe event: "Teaching remembrance for a Europe of freedom and rule of law"

Strasbourg, 30.10.2008 – "Teaching remembrance: for a Europe of freedom and rule of law" is the theme of the fourth Council of Europe ministerial seminar, organised in co-operation with the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder of the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK), and which will take place in Nuremberg and Dachau on 6 and 7 November. Organised within the framework of the Council of Europe-organised "Day of Remembrance of the Holocaust and for the Prevention of Crimes against Humanity", and on the eve of the 70th anniversary of Reichskristallnacht, the seminar will be attended by Education Ministers, senior officials and experts from the 49 states of the European Cultural Convention. Eyewitness accounts by two survivors, a presentation on "The Righteous among the Nations", a lecture on "The significance of the Nuremberg trials" and general discussions on the theme of "Towards a European citizens' ethos" will be among the highlights of the seminar. Historic sites will be used for these events, including the Nazi Party Rally Grounds (Reichsparteitagsgelände), the Dachau concentration camp memorial and the Nuremberg court room (see programme). The official opening will take place at the Reichsparteitagsgelände at 9 a.m. on Thursday 6 November, starting with a video message from the Council of Europe Secretary General, Terry Davis. Addresses will also be made by Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, President of the KMK, Ambassador Guido Bellatti Ceccoli, Permanent Representative of San Marino, speaking on behalf of the Committee of Ministers, and Hans-Christian Täubrich, Director of the Reichsparteitagsgelände documentation centre. A representative of the Free State of Bavaria is also expected.

Source: www.coe.int



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