



## **Survey of Roma involvement in the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue – 2008 at national level**

ERIO's observation shows that EU programmes and campaigns do not address Roma issues adequately and Roma organisations are only poorly involved in those activities. During 2008, ERIO conducted a survey on Roma involvement in the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (EYID) – 2008. The aim of the survey was to find out how Roma issues are addressed by programme activities and to what extent Roma organisations have been involved in the EYID activities; both at national level. The survey addressed National Coordination Bodies (NCBs) which were governmental agencies in charge for the EYID programme at national level. ERIO sent a request to the National Coordination Bodies (NCBs).

The survey was based on a two-questions questionnaire:

1. How do you address Roma issues in your programme activities?
2. To what extent have you involved Roma organisations in the EYID implementation activities?

The request was sent to 15 NCBs of countries with significant Roma populations, namely Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and the United Kingdom. The request was sent by email. Phone calls were made to NCBs which did not react to the first request. A personal interview took place with the representatives from the Bulgarian NCB. The German NCB was not interviewed because it had provided with information in advance through a personal interview by the end of 2007.

The NCBs from Bulgaria, Finland, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom replied to the survey. The questionnaire showed that countries with large Roma populations have devoted parts of their programmes to address Roma issues.

In **Slovakia** several activities were carried out. Roma issues were addressed at the opening event of the EYID in the country, the international conference Diversity Connects. Following specific activities were carried out:

- Balval Fest – Roma festival with presentation of their music, traditions and hand work.
- Project “Roma Good-will Mission” aiming to promote the Roma traditional culture and their cultural, human and religious rights, funded by the Ministry of Culture
- Project Roma Wandering Theater focusing on Roma population living in very poor conditions; it consists on dramatic performances and creative activities devoted to Roma children and young people.
- Moreover, the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic supports other several projects to promote intercultural dialogue in Slovakia: International Roma Smithy Creative Workshop in Dunajská Lužná, traditional Gypsy Fests in Kokava nad Rimavicou, Špišský hrad, Lučenec, International Minority Festivals in Bratislava and Trebišov and seminars focussing on minority rights e.g. in Košice, Bratislava, Nové Zámky, and Giraltovce.

**Romania** dedicated a large part of its work programme to Roma issues. Its activities included:

- A series of debates under the title “From difference to dialogue” focussing on Roma communities
- Cultural events promoting Roma culture
- European seminar with mediators and school assistants; workshop on challenges of a multicultural society focussing on Roma
- Awareness raising TV campaign “Get to know the Roma before you judge on them!”
- Festivals on minorities and Roma culture
- Museum of the Roma Culture and Civilisation

**Bulgaria** had already begun implementing programs and activities on behalf of intercultural dialogue between Roma and other groups based upon the Decade of Roma Inclusion. These activities were carried on during the Year and included establishment and maintenance of *chitalistas* in Roma districts, creation of Roma musical theatre, and improvement of Roma image in the media. Conferences and seminars, cultural events, educational projects were also provided to further dialogue on Roma and minority issues. Roma organizations such as the United Roma Union, St. George National Roma Center, Confederation of Roma “Europe”- Sofia, Municipality Roma Union – Burgas, for example, were involved in the Year as members of civil society.

On the other hand, the survey showed that in countries with no representative Roma populations such as Germany, Poland or the United Kingdom there were no specific activities focusing on Roma.

In the **United Kingdom**, even no funds were made available for carrying out projects. The British NCB could just disseminate information on the EYID among

stakeholders. ERIO encouraged the NCB to contact the UK Federation of Gypsies and Travellers for carrying out activities at national level.

The NCB in **Poland** has not focussed on Roma communities since Roma is the fourth minority in the country. Two projects focussing on Roma were selected by the NCB. The first project was a festival on Balkan cultures including lectures, workshops, concerts and screenings of films and documentaries. The second project was to organise the inaugural ceremony of the multimedia exhibition “The Roma – a state of mind or a parallel culture”. These projects were conducted under the EYID patronage; they were allowed to use the EYID logo and motto but they are not financed by the NCB.

In **Germany**, no activity focussing Roma issues was planned. The NCB had invited the Central Council of Sinti and Roma to submit a project proposal to be implemented during the EYID programme. No proposal was submitted. But the Council asked the NCB to include a paragraph in the work programme on promoting intercultural dialogue with Sinti and Roma in Germany. In the beginning of 2008, ERIO disseminated the German work programme of the EYID through German mailing lists.

A country with no numerically representative Roma population which devoted activities to Roma was **Finland**. This is related to the traditionally strong Finnish politics promoting minority cultures, especially the Roma one. In Finland, the preservation of Romani culture and language was addressed at a seminar on cultural accessibility and in a project called “Living Library” where people are “available” for short conversations with the “visitors”. Information on the EYID -2008 in the Romani language was also planned to be developed.

In the same request e-mail, ERIO encouraged NCBs to make all possible efforts for a stronger involvement of Roma organisations in the EYID – 2008 activities. During the beginning of 2009, ERIO will conduct a survey among Roma organisations to find out to what extent they were involved in the EYID – 2008 implementation.