

Presentation of the project on
" Research on Recent Migration Movements of Roma "
Nina Suomalainen, Senior Adviser at OSCE HCNM

Background on the project

The recent migration movements of Roma in Europe and their human security implications are of concern for the High Commissioner on National Minorities. He is working together with the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights ODIHR to analyze the trends and implications of the new migration movements of Roma in Europe. The purpose is to assess the migration trends of Roma in Europe in the last 20 years, implications of such migration movement and policy responses by governments.

The outcome of the project will be a comprehensive report on recent immigration movements of Roma. The aim is to identify trends, find the issues of concern and suggest solutions. The report should contain data on Roma migration, analysis of the policies and practices of the states to which Roma migrate and give some recommendations to the OSCE participating States. The preliminary findings of the report would be presented in November 2008 and the final report will be available by early 2009.

Within a traditional project cycle, this project represents a situation analysis which will provide recommendations, mainly for participating States' policies and activities. Further projects by organisations and OSCE institutions are not excluded. However, the primary purpose is not to just to follow up with further projects as such, but rather, through the established coalition of organizations, create awareness among participating States and political support for action, so that the States actors will be involved in follow up activities and policy-making for comprehensive and permanent solutions on national and local level.

There are at the moment much soft information and speculation of the Roma migration in Europe and this is why analysis, facts and recommendations are needed to give basis for policy decisions.

How have the HCNM and ODIHR come to tackle the issue

The mandate of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities allows him to work on situations in regard to tensions involving national minority issues and provide "early warning" and as appropriate, "early action". It is clear that the many problems faced today by Roma and Sinti have implications on security in one way or another. These implications concern either the security of Roma and Sinti communities themselves, when being obliged to move from one country to another in search for better conditions or possible negative developments in relations between the Roma and other groups that economic hardships or migration can trigger either in their home countries or when migrated into another country.

The High Commissioner on National Minorities Max van der Stoep issued as early as in 1993, following a request of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, a report on the various problems relating to the Roma population in some participating States. Following the publication of the report, High Commissioner issued recommendations to the OSCE and its participating States in 1993. These included implementation by participating States of the OSCE commitments relevant to the situation of Roma and enhancing the OSCE resources available, which was done in form of creating the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues. A second HCNM report on the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area was issued in 2000.

In the current project, the High Commissioner on National Minorities is working together with the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights ODIHR on the project.

How have the HCNM and ODIHR been instrumental to the project development

The project is implemented by the office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, who are jointly managing the project and are responsible for financial and administrative implementation.

While the HCNM contributes the hiring and contracting of experts, the CoE CHR contributed an in-depth expert hearing and expert travel.

The project Advisory Group provides advice on the project content and methodology. The Advisory Group consists of representatives of the three organisations, namely OSCE HCNM, OSCE ODIHR and CoE CHR. The role of the ODIHR, even if not a project implementation partner, has been and is crucial, as the project concept was elaborated on close cooperation with the ODIHR and originally based on their initiative. The ODIHR approached the HCNM and proposed the study to be conducted by the HCNM, following the examples of the earlier two HCNM reports on Roma. The study is also providing another phase to the implementation of the Roma Action Plan, perhaps even assisting participating States in it. The ODIHR has been involved in all phases of the project planning by advising on contents and methodology.

In addition, civil society representatives, non-governmental organisations, national, regional or local authorities and other possible stakeholders are involved by providing information and analysis on the issues related to recent immigration of Roma. A special expert hearing was already organised for this purpose.

The principles for the project planning and implementation are flexibility, cooperation, complementarity and adding value to each other's inputs. Each institution can work within their mandate and bring to the project their contribution, either financial resources or expertise.