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ERTF Update

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Political Developments

International Organisations

CoE

Committee of Ministers

Portugal must step up its efforts to assure equal rights for Roma

5 September 2007

The Committee of ministers has just adopted a resolution on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Portugal.

The Committee of ministers takes positive note of the efforts made by the Portuguese authorities to adopt legislative, institutional and practical measures to combat discrimination and racism and of the measures taken to improve the socio-economic and educational situation of the Roma.

It concludes that a number of Roma are still at a disadvantage and recommends further measures to promote the full and effective equality of the Roma, in particular in the fields of housing, education, employment and health and to continue to combat prejudice and hostility against them.

The full text of the resolution is available at:

[http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/minorities/2._framework_convention_\(monitoring\)/2._monitoring_mechanism/6._resolutions_of_the_committee_of_ministers/1._country-specific_resolutions/1._first_cycle/PDF_1st_CM_Resolution_Portugal_eng.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/minorities/2._framework_convention_(monitoring)/2._monitoring_mechanism/6._resolutions_of_the_committee_of_ministers/1._country-specific_resolutions/1._first_cycle/PDF_1st_CM_Resolution_Portugal_eng.pdf)

Reports/Publications

Fundamental Rights Agency

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has published a new report on racism and xenophobia inside the Member States of the EU. The report finds that unequal treatment continues in employment, housing and education. Figures for racist crime in 2005 and 2006 are up in a number of EU countries.

The report is available for download at:

http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/racism/report_racism_0807_en.pdf

UNDP

UNDP report on the Living Conditions of Roma in Slovakia

This UNDP report maps the socio-economic situation of Roma in Slovakia and offers suggestions for improvement. It was prepared on the basis of data collected during 2005, through extensive surveying of the Roma community.

Results show that Roma households in Slovakia are highly dependant on social benefits, with almost three quarters of households generating an income that could be defined as indicating material distress. It was also found that Roma households do not take advantage of the range of welfare benefits available. Long term unemployment prevails, causing Roma men and women to lose their professional skills.

The report is available for download at:

http://europeandcis.undp.org/?menu=p_cms/show&content_id=2A5FACD7-F203-1EE9-B9D24B3ABF4BE773

News digest

Countries

CEE

The Roma Decade: Talk Show

24 August 2007

Two years into the Decade of Roma Inclusion, critics say the program has been a boon to think tanks and events organizers, less so to the Roma.

Imagine getting up every morning and having to walk to a creek in your village to wash your face, brush your teeth, and bring water back home to make your coffee. Imagine lining up every Monday for several hours just to wash your clothes.

If it sounds like life in some Third World desert region, it's not. It happens, in fact, in the European Union, in the southern Romanian villages of Bolovanu and Catunul Baiasului, where more than 150 families get potable water from a single well in each village. The two villages are inhabited entirely by Roma.

“Each family has between seven and 12 children and we all carry water from one well to drink, cook, or wash,” said Maria Ursu, a resident of Bolovanu. When it rains heavily, the well’s water gets turbid. In the summer, the well dries up and the villagers have to travel some five kilometers to the neighboring village of Balota to find water. Some of the “richer” villagers bring the water by cart, but the poor ones have to walk there and carry it in buckets.

Bolovanu is just an example of the dismal poverty in today’s Romani communities in Romania. Squalid housing conditions, a lack of jobs and quality education, and limited access to health care have for years plagued the lives of many of the 2 million Roma living in this Eastern European country.

It was in this context that the Decade of Roma Inclusion was launched more than two years ago, to better the lives of the Romani minority in nine Central and Eastern European countries by 2015. But so far, despite a few scattered success stories, critics say the initiative has produced mostly sterile debates and a thicket of action plans in Romania and Bulgaria, the newest EU members.

The best-laid plans

The Decade of Roma Inclusion initiative includes Bulgaria, Romania, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia, and Montenegro. Its fathers were the chairman of the Open Society Institute (OSI), George Soros, and then-World Bank President James Wolfensohn.

Representatives of the participating countries, including prime ministers and other leading politicians, pledged to put forward new policies for Romani inclusion. Before the Decade’s launch, a committee of representatives from the participating governments, Romani activists, international donors, and other international organizations nailed down the four focuses for reform: education, employment, health, and housing.

In June 2006, the Decade countries adopted a set of goals and guidelines for the initiative at a meeting in Brussels. A year later, the initiative has produced mainly plans and papers and few tangible results.

“We need more concrete actions in this project,” said Marko Bela, former Romanian vice premier, now senator and chairman of the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania, who participated in the drafting of the Decade’s terms of reference.

In Romania, the section “Success stories” on the website of the country’s National Agency for the Roma (ANR) promised on 1 August, “Here, you can see success stories soon.”

Paper mill

In April 2006, the Romanian Parliament established a fund to receive money from donors interested in supporting the Decade, with the Romanian government kicking in the first 20,000 euros. Two months later, the government took out a 17-year, 47-million euro loan from the World Bank. The money is to be pumped into programs to integrate the country’s poor into education and social protection schemes. The cash was shared among several institutions, including the ANR, the labor and education ministries, and the Romanian Social Development Fund, which provides community development grants.

Through 2011, Romania aims to improve the infrastructure and social services in 100 Romani settlements, improve access to education for poor children between 3 and 6 years old, and renovate health-care facilities for the disabled. The government’s final goal is to see

significant improvement in the living conditions of some 70 percent of the Romani population in the country in the next four years, according to government representatives in Bucharest.

Bulgaria has also been busy planning. It adopted an action plan for Romani integration in 2005, followed in December 2006 by a law on implementation of the Decade policy, and another action plan for 2007. The government set up a similar Decade trust fund, but representatives of the government refused to disclose how much it is spending on Romani integration. The Bulgarian Labor Ministry last year kicked off an informational campaign among Roma about programs for equal access to the labor market, social security, education, health care, reproductive health, and responsible parenting.

Aimed at eliminating discrimination and closing the gap between the Romani community and the rest of the society, Bulgaria's plan for 2007 includes vocational programs to qualify more Romani employees, modernization of the school system to fit the needs of the labor market, and campaigns for ensuring equal access to integrated education. "Significant funds are to be allocated for encouraging employment among Roma," said Baki Hyuseinov, Bulgaria's deputy labor minister and the country's coordinator for the Roma Decade.

But when asked about the country's long-term goals for the Decade, Hyuseinov did not point to any specifics.

Still, Bulgaria got relatively high marks in a June report prepared by teams of Romani civil society leaders, who ranked the country's Romani integration policy second only to Hungary's of the nine countries participating in the Decade. It was not a sterling performance, however. On a scale of 0, for no action, to 4, for best practices, Bulgaria scored 1.84, after Hungary's 2.29 points.

The monitoring effort, called Decade Watch, assesses government policies but not their outcomes because it considers it too early to speak about results.

What's the reality?

But besides planning and paperwork, not much has happened on the ground in the two countries.

"I think the Decade is only on paper," said Antonina Zhelyazkova, chairwoman of the board at the International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, a Sofia-based think tank. "There's a lot of noise around it, but little is actually happening." Zhelyazkova said the Decade has so far been a round of money-wasting seminars and conferences.

"Nothing has happened since the start of the Roma Decade," said Maria Metodieva, Roma Program Director with the OSI office in Sofia. "A great number of activities are planned, there are also measurement indicators, but nothing gets done in practice. Moreover, the government is not allocating any funds for the implementation of the action plan.

The concrete projects that do exist in Romania and Bulgaria have had limited scope, and many are carried out by civil-society organizations. Metodieva said work on school desegregation has been done mainly by nongovernmental organizations. "We constantly try to help the government, so that at least some of each task can be fulfilled. Unfortunately, that is not happening."

In Bulgaria, the government decided to guarantee free school materials for all Bulgarian children until the fourth grade, mindful that many students from poor families cannot afford to pay for their own. The government is now considering extending the program to the eighth grade. But the Decade Watch report stressed that in spite of the progress in "advancing Roma

inclusion” since 2005, the Decade countries must move from such “sporadic measures based on pilot projects to integrated policies and programs.”

Zhelyazkova called for Romani schools to be banned. “It’s time for all children to study together. The belief that people oppose desegregation is absolutely wrong. Everybody agrees that their children can study with the Romani children. People have grown up, unlike politicians.” Zhelyazkova said teachers should be given incentives to work with Romani children.

Segregation has proved to be a headache for Romanian policy-makers as well. According to an OSI June report, “most ethnic Roma [in Romania] are being isolated or excluded from the education process, despite strategies and anti-discriminatory laws in that respect.” The survey showed that education policies and programs are only partly enforced. The number of ethnic Roma registered at schools has risen sharply, from 138,000 in 1990 to 250,000 in 2007. Still, the report states, 25 percent of the Roma in the country have never been to school and 95 percent have not graduated from high school. Over 13 percent of Romani children study in segregated schools or classes.

Equal education is a major goal, but Zhelyazkova said health care remains the most neglected focus area in Bulgaria. “The state is doing almost nothing in this area,” she said. The only concrete project, financed from Finance Ministry coffers, was development of a network of 80 health mediators in Romani communities across the country who mediate between ghettoized Roma and hospitals.

The official unemployment rate among Roma reaches 90 percent in some communities in Bulgaria, a country that, ironically, desperately needs workers. Employers have even begun to talk about importing laborers. “Apparently, we can’t break the closed circle,” Zhelyazkova said. “Roma should be enrolled in a broad network of qualification courses. Then private employers will be willing to hire them,” she said.

Bulgaria counts among its successes an international conference on good employment practices held in Sofia in May. The event helped participants share lessons from various European countries on the employment of minorities, said Hyuseinov, of the Labor Ministry.

But the OSI’s Metodieva said that even the action plan has become obsolete. “To a great extent it’s already out of date,” she said. “It needs to be rewritten, updated, and funded. In the plan’s current version there are columns saying ‘no funding needed.’ ” For his part, Hyuseinov said there is “intensive” implementation of the policy, but he would not elaborate.

The EU factor

Metodieva praised development projects in several Romani neighborhoods, but noted that funding for them came from the EU. Even that route presents difficulties, she said, given that many Bulgarian institutions lack the savvy or know-how to get and use EU funds effectively. “Most of the ruling parties are from the old generation and don’t have the necessary skills for EU funds absorption,” Metodieva said. Speaking in June at a Decade event in Sofia, Soros stressed that local governments must be capable of putting in quality applications for EU funds.

Part of Romania’s 47 million euro loan will be used to improve the ANR’s capacity for accessing EU funds.

Gruia Bumbu, recently appointed president of the ANR, said the EU’s financial contributions to Romani inclusion projects have been paltry.

He said the European Commission claims to have spent some 240 million euros over the past

decade on such programs. "It seems like a very big sum," Bumbu said, "but if we calculate, it turns out that for a Romani person, [the EU] spent around 3 euros per year, while for a cow the EU offers a subsidy of 32 to 35 euros per year."

But Sonia Iliescu has pinned her hopes on getting EU cash. The mayor of Racovita, which includes Bolovanu and Catunul Baiasului villages, wants to ask the EU for half a million euros to build a water system there. For the villagers, the Roma Decade might mean nothing, but if their basic living conditions improve, the ANR could finally have a success story to post on its website.

Petru Zoltan/Marius Dragomir

Source: Transition Online

<http://www.tol.cz/look/TOL/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=232&NrSection=3&NrArticle=18951&search=search&SearchKeywords=roma&SearchMode=on&SearchLevel=0>

Bulgaria

Roma teenage killing sparks tension in Bulgaria

22 August 2007

Sofia. The brutal death of a Roma teenager sparked fresh tension in Bulgaria Wednesday with some 1,000 gypsies protesting in the streets of the western town of Samokov, police and Roma leaders told AFP.

On Tuesday, "a 17-year-old Roma boy was beaten to death by hooligans. The victim... did not oppose any force and this cost him his life," Euroroma party leader Tsvetelin Kanchev told AFP.

Euroroma is Bulgaria's biggest political party engaged with Roma problems and issues.

The interior ministry confirmed in a statement Wednesday that "a 17-year-old boy was killed in a brawl in Samokov."

This is "the fifth incident in seven years that has ended with the killing of a Roma in Samokov," Kanchev said.

It is also the latest in a spate of ethnic feuds which began ten days ago, when a Roma boy was badly injured by hooligans in a predominantly gypsy-populated neighbourhood of Sofia.

Some 200 Roma men sought revenge by attacking a Bulgarian cafe in the same neighbourhood, beating four clients and breaking tables and chairs.

A crowd of gypsies armed with knives and table legs to use as bats then took to the streets but police prevented further clashes.

According to Antonina Zhelyazkova, of the Sofia centre for minority studies: "Animosity has always existed between the Roma and the other ethnic groups in Bulgaria, mainly fed by prejudice."

She added: "Tension is deliberately stirred by politicians now ahead of the municipal elections in October."

A small nationalist party, the Bulgarian People's Union, even announced the formation this week of a paramilitary anti-Roma guard.

Its first members posed on television in uniforms reminiscent those worn by the Nazis and called for Bulgarians to join in "defending our families, property and lives from the gypsy invasions."

Bulgaria's Roma community, estimated at about 650,000 or nine percent of the country's population, lives for the most part in poverty, with 80 percent of them unemployed.

Source: AFP

<http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n120110>

Roma's isolation in Bulgaria - fertile grounds for tension

22 August 2007

Sofia - Violence targeting Roma and committed by Roma is not unusual in Bulgaria. But the recent explosion of violent hatred in a quarter in the capital Sofia has gone far beyond the ordinary and finally raised the question about the cause of the problem.

Over two nights last week, hundreds of Gypsy men went on a rampage in the Krasna Polyana part of the capital. Waving knives, axes and poles and screaming "death to Bulgarians," the mob torched dust bins, damaged cars and demolished a shop.

Only a massive deployment of special police prevented anyone from getting killed. The media and politicians have since been speculating as to what caused the outbreak.

The Roma say that they wanted to protect themselves from the violently chauvinist, skinhead gangs who go about beating up and molesting the Gypsies on a regular basis.

So, in preventive retaliation, four Gypsies attacked a bald-headed man in a pub and three of his colleague. However, he turned out not a skinhead, but a well-armed employee of a security firm. It may be the fear and frustration of the foiled attackers which sparked the subsequent violence.

Frightened by what it saw, the public has been pressing the authorities for action. Interior Minister Rumen Petkov has promised the "full power of the law" against those responsible for the riot and discussed the issue with President Georgi Parvanov.

Some speculate that trouble was a result of "political interests" and aimed to "liven things up" ahead of municipal polls. That train of thought leads to the conclusion that Gypsies actually rioted to push up the price of their votes in the elections.

In Bulgaria, it is a public secret that the political parties effectively buy the Gypsy votes.

"The Roma vote is an expensive item," said Antonina Zhelyaskova, the head of the Sofia-based Minorities Research Centre.

Of the 7.6 million Bulgarians, some 650,000 are Roma, the centre estimates. Among them, the unemployment rate is a whopping 71 per cent and two-thirds of them survive on less than 100 leva (60 dollars) monthly. Some 68 per cent never achieve basic schooling.

"There are parallel worlds here," Zhelyaskova said, referring to the absence of communication

between the mainstream and the Gypsy community.

"That is fertile grounds for tension," she said, adding that relations have "significantly worsened," even as one-fourth of the period declared as the "Decade of Roma Integration" has passed.

Pressed by the European Union, which it joined on January 1, Bulgaria has launched a series of projects aimed to improve the integration of the Roma.

It will however take much more to eliminate the deeply-rooted prejudice, Zhelyakova warned. In some cases, the effort has backfired, drawing sour complaints from Slavic Bulgarians that the Gypsies felt themselves to be "above the law."

In a reaction, a nationalist "Volunteer Guard" has been set up in three cities. The fledgling organization so far has only around 35 "troops" in Sofia and branches in the second-largest city of Plovdiv as well as in Jambol and Veliko Tarnovo.

The declared goal of the group, dressed in uniforms that not by coincidence are reminiscent of the Hitler Youth of Nazi Germany, is to "protect the life, property and families of citizens ... from the terror of Gypsies."

Elena Lalova

Source: dpa

<http://www.eux.tv/article.aspx?articleId=13121>

Bulgaria's Parliamentary Speaker Worried about National Guard Initiative

22 August 2007

Bulgaria's parliamentary speaker Georgi Pirinski has sent a letter to the Jewish organization Shalom on Wednesday in relation to the intentions of a group of nationalist to create a national guard.

Pirinski's letter is a response to the organization's condemnation of the stood against the nationalists' initiative to establish voluntary teams for self-defence of the population under extreme circumstances.

"I do share your worries about the creation of such formations, which are against the law and the constitution of Bulgaria," reads the letter.

Pirinski has already sent a copy of the letter to the civil society parliamentary commission and to the media, asking them to review the casus and propose an adequate parliamentary reaction.

The Bulgarian People's Union, self-proclaimed as modern nationalists, announced on Sunday plans to organize the population at grass-roots and set up voluntary teams for self-defence under extreme circumstances. The move was said to be the first step toward establishing Bulgarian National Guard.

The initiative was a response to the recent Roma revolt in Sofia's Krasna Polyana district and reignited the debate over racial discrimination.

Source: Novinite

Czech Republic

Czech president praises efforts to map out Romany history

5 September 2007

Czech President Vaclav Klaus praised the mapping out of the Czech Romany history and pointed to the importance of the effort to return to the historical roots of Romanies at today's opening of an exhibition of photographs reflecting the Romany Holocaust.

"It is necessary to gather historical materials about the Romany minority," Klaus said. He said it is important that after Prague, the exhibition of the pre-war photos of the original Czech Romanies and Sints will tour all Czech regions.

Cenek Ruzicka, head of the Committee for the Compensation of the Romany Holocaust, said a large part of the majority Czech population views Romanies as an alien element though the roots of Romanies in the Czech Lands date back as many as 600 years ago.

The exhibition should help the majority society realise that Romanies and Sints have always been part of the Czech Lands, said Ruzicka.

This is another exhibition on Romanies held in Prague's Veletzrni palace. A year ago, the palace hosted an exhibition documenting the Romany Holocaust victims' stories. The exhibits include family photos and also a unique drawing a Czech Sint made in the Oswiecim (Auschwitz) extermination camp.

Under the First Republic (Czechoslovakia in 1918-38), Moravian Romanies mostly lived in settlements while Bohemian Romanies led a nomadic life. Sints inhabited the Sudetenland in north Bohemia.

In 1940, the authorities of the German-controlled Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia banned nomadic migration. In 1942 they worked out a list of all Gypsies. It featured 6,500 names. A part of them ended up in internment camps in Lety, south Bohemia, and Hodonin u Kunstatu, south Moravia. Almost 5,000 Czech Romanies were transported to Auschwitz, from where only 583 returned.

As a result, only a few thousand original Czech Romanies and their offspring live in the 10-million Czech Republic now. The rest of the current Romany minority, comprising up to 250,000 people, according to some estimates, are Romanies of Slovak origin.

Source: CTK/ROMEIA

http://www.romeia.cz/english/index.php?id=detail&detail=2007_524

Czech Minister to deal with Romany issues together with Mayors

20 August 2007

Dzamilia Stehlikova (Greens, SZ), Czech minorities and human rights minister, wants to cooperate with mayors of municipalities in which separated communities of socially weak Romanies live on the formation of a new government agency aimed at removing social exclusion, she said in a press release today. Stehlikova has already addressed the mayors of 190 municipalities. She said several towns, mainly in north and east Moravia and north Bohemia, had shown interest in cooperating with the agency.

A workshop devoted to the establishment of the agency will be held next week, attended by about a hundred representatives of self-government authorities, public administration bodies, NGOs, experts as well as Romanies' representatives, she said.

According to Stehlikova, the agency will work under the Czech government council for Romany affairs. The agency is to assist state bodies, local authorities and non-governmental organisations in solving Romany issues, using financial funds reasonably, Stehlikova said. The agency, to start working as of January 2008, will employ about about 70 people, most of them in individual regions, according to Stehlikova.

However, some municipalities are opposed to establishing the agency. They claim that there are already a number of projects and organisations dealing with Romanies at present. The opponents also say that the situation should rather be solved by amending the related social laws to motivate the socially excluded to earn their living by work. The agency is also to provide information and consulting services to all municipalities which will be interested in solving problems in socially excluded Romany communities.

Source: Prague Daily Monitor

<http://www.praguemonitor.com/>

France

Shanty towns and Gypsies fall foul of World Cup

7 September 2007

French authorities have been accused of staging a "brutal" clean-up to hide the underbelly of society from Rugby World Cup fans, razing shanty towns of Gypsies, moving rough sleepers in Paris and forcing out the homeless rag-and-bone men that work in the capital's flea markets. As the contest opens tonight at the gleaming Stade de France in the north Paris suburb of Saint-Denis, France eagerly awaits 1.6 million visitors who will pump €625m (£422m) into the tourist industry over six weeks. Rugby fans spend more per head than football supporters, and many have arrived in search of champagne tours, foie gras tastings and a glimpse of la belle France.

But charities say the government's quest to make France look beautiful has included ruthlessly "cleansing" the vulnerable from areas where they might be seen by fans. Homeless people in Paris who say they have been told to move on before the rugby are planning to protest this weekend.

Near the stadium in Saint-Denis, police this week cleared around 600 Romanian Gypsies from a shantytown where they had been living for more than a year. The shacks, made from scraps of wood and plastic sheeting in a disused factory compound without proper sanitation or rubbish collection, threatened to be an eyesore for corporate hospitality tents.

Bernard Moriau, a doctor from Médecins du Monde who worked with the Gypsies, told the Guardian: "It is a catastrophe." He said the families were moved in a "very brutal way", at least 400 of them had disappeared and would probably resurface in other shanties north of Paris with no electricity or water. His work treating tuberculosis and diabetes, and vaccinating children had been disrupted. He said when the renowned circus company Cirque du Soleil performed in the area this year, they had allowed the Gypsy camp to remain and shared their water.

"On the eve of the Rugby World Cup, the government seems to want to hide the misery of the Roma by systematically evacuating Roma camps," Médecins du Monde said in a statement, citing mass evictions around Lyon and near Saint-Etienne, where the Scottish team is based. Malik Salemkour, deputy president of the French Human Rights League, said: "France wants to pretend these people don't exist and make itself look beautiful instead of dealing with its problems."

Afid, 45, homeless for 10 years, is one of the bric-a-brac collectors who restore objects found in bins and doorways in the chic areas of Paris to sell in the capital's flea markets. For a year he has lived in a wooden shack that he built under Paris's ring-road, with no running water.

"The police said I had to be out by Friday because of the rugby. It's inhumane, but they want to pretend there's no misery in Paris," he told the Guardian.

"I've always hated rugby, but I really loathe it now that people can be left with no shelter." Two homeless support groups said people sleeping rough or in tents in central Paris had been told to move on by police and threatened with €135 fines if they returned. Hotel owners who temporarily housed homeless people had reportedly told them to leave to make room for fans.

As homeless people prepared protests for this weekend, the Saint-Denis prefecture denied it had evicted Gypsies because of the World Cup. The interior ministry said decisions were made by local authorities, not central government.

Jean-Baptiste Eyraud of the group Right to Housing said local authorities had been forced to review eviction threats because of the controversy. "Now we need the support of the rugby players," he said.

Angelique Chrisafis

Source: The Guardian

<http://sport.guardian.co.uk/rugbyworldcup2007/story/0,,2164305,00.html>

Evacuation dans le calme d'un bidonville de 230 Roms à Vénissieux

28 août 2007

Vénissieux – Quelque 230 Roms, essentiellement Roumains, ont été évacués mardi matin dans le calme du terrain qu'ils occupaient depuis quelques semaines à Vénissieux (Rhône).

Peu avant 06H00 une douzaine de fourgons de gendarmes mobiles ont pris place à proximité du bidonville, dont les abords étaient contrôlés par les policiers.

Après un rapide recensement, les 220 à 230 occupants du camp, dont une moitié d'enfants, ont été conduits en car à la plate-forme de l'association Forum Réfugiés.

Quelque 80 autres personnes avaient quitté le campement par leurs propres moyens avant l'arrivée des forces de l'ordre.

Selon André Gachet, responsable de l'Association lyonnaise pour l'intégration par le logement (Alpil), 120 Roms auraient accepté l'aide au retour proposée par la préfecture. Le reste devrait bénéficier d'un logement temporaire en hôtel, dans l'attente d'une solution plus pérenne de relogement, et certains bénéficieront d'un suivi médical et social.

"L'évacuation s'est passée plutôt bien. De toute façon, l'évacuation d'un bidonville, c'est toujours un acte positif (...) ce sont des lieux qui restent dangereux", a souligné M. Gachet.

"Nous ne sommes absolument pas pour les bidonvilles, mais nous ne sommes pas pour les évacuations sans solution durable", a-t-il ajouté.

Le 1er août, plusieurs centaines de Roms avaient été expulsés d'un autre bidonville à Villeurbanne (Rhône) et il y a dix jours une quinzaine de Roms yougoslaves ont été délogés d'un terrain à Vaulx-en-Velin (Rhône).

Lundi, le député-maire PCF de Vénissieux, André Gerin, a appelé à la mise en place d'un plan d'aide national pour les Roms. "Aujourd'hui, c'est la responsabilité de l'Etat et du gouvernement de s'emparer de cette question aux dimensions européennes, humaines, sociales et économiques", a déclaré M. Gerin, reprenant les termes d'une lettre qu'il a dit avoir envoyée au Premier ministre François Fillon.

Source: AFP

<http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5h3Zu4KZSOL6TgTa4JaW3XjeRXbfw>

Pour éradiquer les bidonvilles de Roms, des mairies ont créé des programmes d'insertion novateurs

Ils sont roms, viennent de Roumanie et, jusqu'à récemment, vivotaient dans un bidonville, à Aubervilliers (Seine-Saint-Denis). Depuis la fin du mois de juillet, ils ont troqué leur caravane pour un bungalow. Les piliers de l'autoroute A 86 surplombent leur nouveau domicile, les vrombissements du RER surviennent à intervalles réguliers, mais eux sont enthousiastes.

"Ce n'est pas luxueux, mais c'est propre, confortable et c'est bien pour les enfants", commente Robert Ciurar, 35 ans. Comme lui, ils sont une cinquantaine, sélectionnés par la mairie, à avoir choisi d'emménager dans ces préfabriqués aux allures de cabanes de chantier pour 50 euros par mois. En échange, tous se sont engagés à suivre des cours de français, à scolariser leurs enfants et à entreprendre des démarches, avec l'aide de travailleurs sociaux, pour être régularisés et pour trouver, d'ici trois ans, un travail et un logement en dur.

Ce programme d'insertion novateur est le dernier-né d'une série d'initiatives lancées par une dizaine de municipalités - dont Lyon et Marseille - pour éradiquer les bidonvilles à leur périphérie. *"Selon la saison, nous avons entre 500 et 600 Roms sur la commune*, explique Joël Demartini, le directeur général des services de la mairie (PCF) d'Aubervilliers. *Nous avons, certes, d'autres problèmes sociaux importants, mais il devenait urgent de régler cette question.*" Ce projet représente un investissement total de 1,5 million d'euros pour les différents partenaires.

L'une des initiatives du même type les plus abouties a été lancée, en 2002, sur la ville nouvelle de Lieusaint (Seine-et-Marne). A l'époque, 39 familles roms avaient été prises en charge. Cinq

ans plus tard, seules huit d'entre elles ne sont pas encore totalement "insérées". Toutes les autres ont trouvé un logement, souvent dans le parc social, et le chef de famille travaille, généralement en CDI.

La plupart des Roms qui vivent en France sont de nationalité roumaine ou bulgare. Or, depuis le 1^{er} janvier, ces deux pays ont intégré l'Union européenne. Tous leurs ressortissants bénéficient donc de la liberté de circulation. En France, elle est limitée à trois mois. Pour prolonger leur séjour, ils doivent justifier d'un emploi, être étudiant ou créer leur entreprise. Mais la majorité des Roms qui vivent aujourd'hui sur le territoire ne respectent pas ces conditions. Confrontés à des problèmes de discrimination dans leur pays, ils arrivent généralement sans ressources et sans formation qualifiée. *"Malgré des conditions de vie précaires, faire la mendicité en France est jusqu'à cinq ou six fois plus rentable qu'un salaire d'ouvrier agricole en Bulgarie"*, souligne Michèle Mézard, l'une des responsables du collectif Roms Europe.

Depuis 1990, les municipalités ont l'obligation d'aménager des terrains pour accueillir les gens du voyage. Mais ces terrains sont interdits aux étrangers dont aux Roms, ce qui oblige ces derniers à s'entasser dans des bidonvilles en périphérie des agglomérations.

Jusqu'à présent, toutes les initiatives de création de camps destinés aux Roms en vue de leur intégration dans la société française ont, dans l'ensemble, été des succès. Mais les places sont chères. Une personne sur six seulement qui vivait dans le bidonville d'Aubervilliers a ainsi été sélectionnée par la mairie.

L'obligation de rester en France à l'issue des trois ans de programme d'insertion en dissuade également plus d'un. *"Beaucoup renoncent, car une fois bien réfléchi, ils n'ont pas envie de se retrouver, à terme, au douzième étage d'une tour HLM"*, commente M. Demartini. Le règlement intérieur de ces camps est, de surcroît, extrêmement contraignant. Des vigiles contrôlent les allers et venues sept jours sur sept, 24 heures sur 24. Et les visites de tiers sont interdites.

Enfin, ces projets d'insertion restent très marginaux. La plupart du temps, les camps de Roms sont plus simplement évacués à grands renforts de policiers. Selon le collectif Roms Europe, environ 500 Roms auraient ainsi été expulsés de leur campement depuis le mois de mai. Quand ils sont en situation irrégulière, les Roms reçoivent également, au passage, un avis de reconduite à la frontière.

Si elles se réjouissent du développement, même restreint, de ces initiatives d'intégration, les associations qui défendent les Roms en France expriment des réserves. Selon elles, tous ces programmes permettent aussi, in fine, aux municipalités d'obtenir l'appui de leur préfecture pour évacuer les Roms dont les dossiers n'ont pas été retenus. Ceux-là n'ont alors pas d'autre choix que reprendre la route et aller gonfler les bidonvilles d'autres communes. *"On les aide à s'en sortir une fois, mais ce n'est pas non plus du crédit revolving"*, explique encore M. Demartini, de la mairie d'Aubervilliers. *"Après, c'est aux autres communes de fournir un effort."* Les résidents du camp d'Aubervilliers ont bien conscience de ce provisoire. Pourtant, dans leurs bungalows qui sentent encore le neuf, certains ont décoré leur porte d'entrée avec un voilage. D'autres ont accroché des photos de famille aux murs. Dans le sien, Robert Berbekar, 28 ans, a dépensé ses premières économies dans des fleurs artificielles.

Elise Vincent

Source : Le Monde

<http://www.lemonde.fr/web/article/0,1-0@2-3224,36-945837@51-945910,0.html>

Hungary

Hungary's Prime Minister Concerned About Formation Paramilitary Group

27 August 2007

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY (BosNewsLife)-- Hungary's Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany said Monday, August 27, he "shared" concerns from the World Jewish Congress (WJC) about the re-emergence of anti-Semitism in his country, after a far-right party inducted its paramilitary wing, whose members wear uniforms resembling the Nazi era.

In a statement to the WJC obtained by BosNewsLife in Budapest, Gyurcsany described the so-called 'Magyar Garda', or 'Hungarian Guard', as a symbol of an "ideology of hatred," a reference to World War Two when about 600,000 Hungarian Jews were massacred.

Gyurcsany said he had asked Hungary's Chief Prosecutor Tamas Kovacs to "closely monitor" the group, which was founded by the 'Movement for The Better Hungary' (Jobbik) party, known for rhetoric perceived as anti-Semitic, anti-Roma and anti-gay. "I would like to assure you that I understand your concerns about the re-emergence of hatred," Gyurcsany said, adding that it was important to teach children "honestly" about Hungary's history.

The WJC and other organizations asked Gyurcsany to ban the Magyar Garda, whose formation they said was "an extremely alarming development" amid "rising anti-Semitism in Europe". Undeterred and cheered by about 1,000 supporters, 56 founding members of Magyar Garda however swore to defend Hungary at an induction ceremony Saturday, August 25, near the presidential palace in Budapest.

Controversial uniforms

Magyar Garda members were wearing red and white insignia while many onlookers waved red-and-white striped Arpad flags, reminiscent of the flag used by Hungary's pro-Nazi Arrow Cross Regime, which sent hundreds of thousands of Jews to their deaths during World War Two. The group was formed shortly before the first anniversary on September 17 of violent anti-government protests that followed the leak of a tape in which Socialist Prime Minister Gyurcsany admitted he had lied about Hungary's economic situation to win re-election. "The Magyar Garda was formed to execute a true (political) transition from Communism and to save the Hungarian people," Jobbik President and Magyar Garda Founder Gabor Vona explained to the enthusiastic crowd.

Hundreds of people attending nearby anti-Magyar Garda protests, were not impressed. "What is more important? Their right to free speech or our right to human dignity?" asked Agnes Daroczi, a Roma-rights activist at a counter-demonstration.

Death camps

Some protesters held up placards of black-and-white photos, showing Jews wearing the yellow star and being herded into trains to be sent to death camps, by individuals resembling Magyar Garda members.

Hungarian born Holocaust survivor and current United States Congressman Tom Lantos said in published remarks this month that those behind the Magyar Garda "are mentally deranged," and should not be allowed to land in the US.

He said he would ask for a list of its members. Prime Minister Gyurcsany and others have suggested that the refusal of the biggest center right party, Fidesz, to condemn the group

shows it "tacitly" supports the far right to win the next election. Fidesz has denied the charges, saying it supports freedom of speech if it stays within the boundaries of the laws of the land. The Magyar Garda comes at a time when there have been worries over the rise of the far right in ex-Communist countries following an attack last week on Indians in what used to be East Germany, analysts say. The group's formation is also seen as a setback for representatives of Hungary's 100,000 strong Jewish community, the largest in Eastern Europe outside Russia. Following the collapse of Communism in 1989, there had been a revival of Jewish culture in Hungary.

Stefan J. Bos

Source: BosNewsLife

<http://www.bosnewslife.com/news/3130-news-alert-hungarys-prime-minister-concerned#>

Self-abusive Governance

22 August 2007

Local and regional elections brought hope to Hungary's Romani communities for greater control over their own affairs. But not everyone is happy at the results.

BARCS - Hungary's system of minority self-government is a complicated affair, but when a third level of minority representation was added this spring, many Romani leaders and activists welcomed the addition of a regional dimension as a way to bridge the gap between the national and local levels.

"Regional minority self-government was missing for a long time here. It will help us to communicate closely with the national Romani self-government," Tibor Szegedi says. The 24-year-old is a representative of the Romani self-government in the town of Barcs in Somogy County and a police officer working with minorities in the county seat, Kaposvar.

Romani and other voters went to the polls last fall to elect some 2,000 minority self-governments at town and village level, 200 more than in the 2002 elections. Minority representatives function as a kind of parallel government, working alongside local authorities on behalf of their constituents, primarily in the areas of education and culture. In March, those elected representatives then chose county-level minority governments, for the first time.

To some ordinary Roma who voted last fall and to elected representatives who took part in the spring elections and subsequent vote for national Romani officers, it must look as though what was supposed to be an opportunity to broaden the scope of self-government was squandered. Instead of moving forward with new ways to address the plentiful problems facing this poorest of Hungarian minorities, Romani leaders slid back into mutual recriminations and allegations of mismanagement or worse.

As an illustration, consider the scene when members of Hungary's major Romani organizations met in March to elect a new president of the National Roma Minority Self-government. People usually call this body the Roma Parliament, but there was little parliamentary decorum in sight as the two most influential Romani organizations, Lungo Drom and the Hungarian Gypsy Forum, tried to get their man into the job.

There were rumors that some of the 53-member national self-government put their votes up for sale. Two Lungo Drom members jumped to the Gypsy Forum and the rest of their delegation walked out. Lungo Drom's defeated candidate Florian Farkas complained bitterly.

"The Hungarian parliament didn't want me to be the president because it's easier to employ and pay only three people than to look after a half million Roma in Hungary," he told the Hungarian News Agency. The "three people" are the top officials of the National Roma Self-Government, whose salaries the government pays.

Hopeful beginnings

"My friends and I threw ourselves into Romani minority self-government with huge enthusiasm," says Istvan Kalanyos, a 54-year-old member of the Romani organization DCKSZ in Barcs who served as a local Romani self-government officer for 10 years.

"But back then we weren't aware of what we know today - that the minority self-government has no authority outside the area of cultural autonomy. Minority self-governments are unable to help Roma in the fields of education, health, housing, and others."

Nearly 15 years ago Hungary adopted one of the most comprehensive systems of minority self-governance in Europe, giving a degree of autonomy to each of the 13 officially recognized national and ethnic minority communities. The interests of the estimated 450,000 to 600,000 Roma, the largest minority in Hungary, are promoted by 5,500 elected representatives working in hundreds of towns and villages.

By law, the field of action of minority self-governments is limited to basic education, media, language, and culture. In their daily work, however, the self-governments, especially those serving the Roma, face and seek solutions to all kinds of ills that beleaguer the community.

In Somogy County, southwestern Hungary, there are 79 local Romani minority self-governments served by 395 representatives. Their annual budget for utilities and other overhead is around 600,000 forints (2,400 euros) each. The county authority gives financial help depending on its budget and capabilities, and municipalities also provide funds.

In Barcs, a town on the border with Croatia, the Romani office gets on average 3 million forints (12,100 euros) annually from the city hall. In Kaposvar the grant is typically 6 million forints, and in the nearby city of Pecs, 5 million forints. The paperwork is always in order for these amounts received but sometimes it seems that only the self-government chairman knows where the money goes. Szegedi says he has been given no access to the Barcs Romani minority's finances. The town's Romani community house was built for the cultural needs of local Roma from the national self-government budget, but the feedback of many Roma from the community is negative as they criticize the chairman.

"I am not a member of the chairman's family so I have no right to enter the community house," one woman said, mirroring the views of several others whose requests to use the facility were turned down.

The community center is a place for the Romani minority representatives but not the house of all Roma, chairman Imre Balogh told me. "Meetings, gatherings, and open discussions about the Roma, yes, but no events for the teenagers and their interests, like discotheques."

The nationwide Romani community has had its "house" too since the beginning of the decade: the National Roma Information and Cultural Center in Budapest. The center was far and away the biggest single project of the Hungarian Romani community, but it was deep in debt and producing no income.

Last year Orban Kolompar, the candidate eventually elected to lead the Roma Parliament, perhaps thinking about the upcoming elections, decided to sell the center. Strange things began to happen. The unguarded building was broken into and a fire broke out. Then the taps

disappeared and the place was flooded completely. Then it emerged that Kolompar wasn't authorized to sell the place anyway and the police started looking into the affair.

Non-profits show the way

Behind almost every Romani minority self-government stands a non-government organization. These associations do better at winning government and private grants to aid their communities than do the Romani self-governments. This is why the work of non-profits is so important in places like Babocsa, the village whose Romani self-government he served, Istvan Kalanyos says.

"There are 1,870 people in Babocsa. Forty-two percent are Roma, and I just wanted to help them. Unfortunately, even after 15 years of the Romani self-government's presence in our village I can't see that much has improved," he says. "But I still believe that the Romani self-governments will find their feet and that the living conditions for the Roma will get better."

Answering a question whether Romani self-governments can be effective and helpful without these Romani civil-society organizations, the non-Roma assistant to the Barcs Romani self-government, Andrea Baratine Cziraki, replied in the negative.

"Two or three times per year some kind of cultural event happens here - on May Day and international Roma day - nothing else," she says. "Roma can't make phone calls from our office while dealing with various problematic situations because of the self-government's financial problems. It's impossible to offer them any extra help. I really don't know how to say anything positive."

"Self-government" has a grand sound but maybe people haven't taken on board the reality that the law allows elected minority representatives to do only so much, although they try to do what they can in areas like employment, housing, and health care. The deeper issue, though, is that Romani politicians are not going to earn respect outside their communities until they achieve it among themselves.

Lucia Curejova

Source: Transition online

<http://www.tol.cz/look/TOL/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=232&NrSection=2&NrArticle=18943>

Council makes last-minute closure decision for N Hungary village school

4 September 2007

Budapest - The ombudsman for minorities has launched an investigation to see why some 40 children, mainly Roma, were suddenly left without a local school to attend in Matraszolos, N Hungary, MTI learnt on Tuesday.

Just four days before the start of the school year, the local council decided there were not enough children to make running the school viable and ordered its closure.

Head of the county's public education office Laszlo Szandai disputes the council's right to close the school on grounds that it had a special minority education curriculum.

The Education Ministry said they had no competence in the matter as it was in the authority of the local government.

The Matraszolos school had 90 students last year, but students, like in many other villages in the area, are now encouraged to enroll in one of the schools of the nearby town Paszto, to where they have been offered a school bus service.

In a similar case, MEP Viktoria Mohacsi (Free Democrat) recently called on Hungary's parliament to convene a special session in order to amend legislation to ensure Roma children have guaranteed access to schooling, referring to 29 Roma pupils in Csorog, C Hungary, who had been left stranded since schools in neighbouring districts refused to admit the pupils after the closure of their local school.

The minorities' ombudsman investigated the matter and found that the laws on public schooling and local government needed to be amended so as to make it mandatory for the schools in neighbouring districts to accept the children.

Source: MTI

<http://english.mti.hu/default.asp?menu=1&theme=2&cat=25&newsid=245462>

Italy

Migration: „Kopfprämie“ für die Heimkehr

12. September 2007

Die italienische Stadt Pavia kauft sich von Roma frei.

BUKAREST/WIEN - Die italienische Stadt Pavia kämpft mit einer kleinen „Invasion“ von Roma aus Rumänien - und könnte sich eine große einhandeln. Die Stadtväter haben nämlich, wie die rumänische Online-Nachrichtenagentur HotNews.ro berichtet, jedem der rund 120 Menschen tausend Euro angeboten, wenn sie heimkehren. Spricht sich das in Rumänien herum, kann sich Pavia auf „Nachwuchs“ gefasst machen.

Ursprünglich wurden die 120 Roma - etwa die Hälfte davon Kinder - in leer stehenden Wohnungen auf einem aufgelassenen Werksgelände der Chemie- und Finanzgruppe Snia am Stadtrand von Pavia einquartiert. Vor kurzem wurde das Lager laut der italienischen Nachrichtenagentur Ansa mit Steinen beworfen. Da sich die Proteste von Anrainern häuften, beschloss die Stadtverwaltung die „Prämie“, um die unerwünschten Siedler los zu werden. Etwa 80 Roma hätten das Geld genommen und seien zum Flughafen begleitet worden.

Quelle: Die Presse

<http://www.diepresse.com/home/wirtschaft/eastconomist/329386/index.do>

Nomadi: PDL bipartisan in consiglio regionale per tutela rom

11 settembre 2007

Cagliari - Tre consiglieri regionali della Sardegna, Luciano Uras (Rc), Alessandri Frau (Ps) e Carlo Sanjust (Fi) hanno depositato stamane una proposta di legge bipartisan per tutelare l'identità etnica delle comunità rom, garantire loro il pieno diritto al nomadismo e alla sosta nel territorio regionale in condizioni idonee ad assicurare il vivere civile e la sicurezza. In Sardegna, i rom sono circa un migliaio, di cui circa 200 si concentrano a Cagliari. Composto da otto articoli, il provvedimento ha una dotazione finanziaria di 1 milione e 500 mila euro per il 2007, e prevede contributi a favore di Comuni e associazioni di volontariato

che svolgano, da almeno cinque anni, specifica attività di promozione culturale e sociale delle popolazioni nomadi. Sono previsti anche contributi ai Comuni per la realizzazione, gestione e manutenzione di campi di sosta e transito, interventi per reperire alloggi attraverso l'azienda regionale per l'edilizia abitativa destinati a famiglie che preferiscano acquisire una fissa dimora e corsi di formazione professionale per favorire l'inclusione sociale.

La proposta disciplina le caratteristiche dei campi di sosta, per i quali le comunità dovranno versare un contributo da stabilire nel regolamento comunale: le aree dovranno avere una superficie fra i 2 mila e i 5 mila metri quadri ed essere situati vicino a servizi pubblici; essere dotati di servizi igienici, energia elettrica, spazi attrezzati per il lavoro artigianale e area giochi per bambini. L'assistenza sanitaria nel campo dovrà essere garantita dalle Asl e il regolamento comunale dovrà stabilire le norme di comportamento che i nomadi saranno tenuti a osservare per il buon mantenimento delle strutture.

Fonte: AGI/Diritto Oggi

<http://www.diritto-oggi.it/archives/00028111.html>

Immigrati/Ferrero: I 140 mila Rom in Italia si possono integrare

11 settembre 2007

Roma - "Bisogna avere il coraggio virile di dire all'opinione pubblica che i 140 mila rom presenti in Italia si possono integrare". Lo ha detto il ministro della Solidarietà sociale, Paolo Ferrero, al termine dell'incontro con il vicesegretario generale del Consiglio d'Europa, Maud De Boer Bouquichio, sulle politiche a favore dei rom, degli immigrati e dell'infanzia.

Per Ferrero si tratta di scegliere: "O si superano i campi con l'integrazione oppure si fanno dei mega-campi". Sul tema dei rom, dei sinti e dei camminanti il Consiglio d'Europa ha mosso dei rilievi all'Italia. In particolare, come ha spiegato il vicesegretario del Consiglio d'Europa tre sono i punti al centro dell'incontro avvenuto oggi con il ministro Ferrero (e di quello successivo con il ministro della Famiglia, Bindi): il problema della inadeguatezza dei campi rom, quello dello sgombero forzato e il tema degli alloggi permanenti. "Il Consiglio d'Europa - ha detto Bouquichio - nel corso di una conferenza stampa - ha a cuore il tema dei diritti umani". E c'è in Italia, come in altri Paesi, un problema di raccordo delle competenze tra gli organismi centrali dello Stato e quelli locali. Bouquichio, ha poi sottolineato la necessità di una modifica della legge del '99 sulle minoranze linguistiche in Italia che non fa riferimento appunto ai rom.

Quello dei cosiddetti nomadi, ha aggiunto Bouquichio "non è solo un problema giuridico ma di sensibilizzazione a tutti i livelli". Per questo il Consiglio d'Europa ha organizzato una campagna di sensibilizzazione inizialmente prevista per i Paesi dei Balcani e "anche l'Italia potrebbe essere coinvolta in questa campagna di informazione e sensibilizzazione".

"Il Consiglio d'Europa ha ragione", ha spiegato Ferrero, con riferimento ai rilievi mossi all'Italia. E il ministro della Solidarietà ha spiegato che sono stati avviati i primi interventi, anche di carattere finanziario come l'utilizzo del Fondo per l'immigrazione. Si tratta di 50 milioni di euro già stanziati dei quali 3 milioni di euro saranno destinati al superamento dei campi in quattro esperimenti che interesseranno Roma, Padova, Torino e Milano. Un milione di euro sarà stanziato per progetti di inserimento scolastico dei bambini rom a Roma, Bologna, Napoli, Firenze e Milano. Per Ferrero è necessario un raccordo tra ministero e i Comuni. A riguardo il ministro ha annunciato che nei prossimi giorni incontrerà i sindaci di diverse città italiane e ha citato come modello d'intervento quello adottato dal Comune di Pisa, dove 470 rom sono stati integrati e dove è stata attuata una politica di inserimento scolastico di tutti i bambini delle comunità cosiddette nomadi. Si tratta di un intervento, ha sottolineato Ferrero, che "non risolve il problema ma permette di segnare una direzione di marcia".

Fonte: Alice

http://notizie.alice.it/notizie/politica/2007/09_settembre/11/immigrati_ferrero_i_140mila_rom_in_italia_si_possono_integrare,13117410.html

Court says children can be jailed

11 September 2007

CHILDREN who rob houses or pick pockets can be jailed in Italy following a controversial new ruling by the country's highest court.

Italy's legal system previously did not allow the arrest of minors for theft, frustrating the efforts of police under pressure to curb rampant pick-pocketing in town centres and train stations.

Now children as young as 14 can be immediately arrested and held in custody, following the ruling by Rome's Court of Cassation.

Most tourists to Italian cities have witnessed or been warned about the risk of bag snatching and pick-pocketing.

The culprits are often Gypsy children under the supervision of an adult who collects their bounty at the end of the day.

The court's ruling was prompted by the case of a 15-year-old Gypsy girl, known as Romina N, who was caught attempting to break into a house near Rome in August, 2005.

In the time that it has taken to approve the need to arrest her, she and her family have disappeared.

The ruling has sparked protest over whether severe punishment is the best way to deal with child criminals, but is defended by those who say it will curb theft and bring children out of the reach of those who exploit them.

The court's decision comes in a climate of growing concern about crime in Italian cities perpetrated by foreigners.

Florence has imposed a controversial crackdown on roadside car windscreen washers, another profession dominated by Gypsies, and local government in Rome has come up with a 15 million euro (Australian \$25.13 million) plan to move illegal immigrants into camps outside the city.

Source: Reuters

<http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,22403749-663,00.html>

Altri 25 nomadi tornano in patria. E alcuni fanno «tappa» al Barattolo

Rom, la protesta dei residenti non si ferma

9 settembre 2007

Pavia - Altri 25 rom hanno deciso di fare ritorno in Romania, e alcuni sono già partiti. E' il risultato di una giornata di contatti e trattative, condotte soprattutto dall'assessore alla protezione civile di Pavia, Roberto Portolan. Nella struttura di Pieve Porto Morone, ieri sera, rimanevano circa 20 persone, rispetto alle 45 iniziali. Ma la protesta dei residenti non si placa.

Nella notte tra venerdì e ieri, contro alla cascina Gandina sarebbero stati lanciati alcuni petardi. Ieri pomeriggio, alle 16.30, il sindaco Capitelli ha riunito una sorta di “unità di crisi” per cercare soluzioni al problema dei rom. Dalle 7 della mattina l’assessore Portolan stava viaggiando da una cascina all’altra. Alla fine ha ottenuto le dichiarazioni scritte da parte di 25 persone che si impegnavano a fare ritorno in Romania.

«Così - ha commentato Portolan - è stata alleggerita la situazione di Pieve Porto Morone dimostrando che il Comune di Pavia non ha scaricato il problema a nessuno. Anzi, se si profilano soluzioni alleggeriamo le situazioni dei due comuni coinvolti». Alcuni dei rom, fuggiti da Pieve Porto Morone perché terrorizzati dalla reazione dei residenti, erano stati temporaneamente accolti al centro sociale “Barattolo” di via dei Mille a Pavia. Ma si è trattato di una semplice tappa, in attesa di fare ritorno nel Paese natale. I quattrini necessari a pagare il viaggio (si parla di 1.300 euro per nucleo familiare, ma il particolare non ha avuto conferme) sono stati messi a disposizione dalla Caritas. Non è escluso che nelle prossime ore si trovino sistemazioni alternative a cascina Gandina, il centro gestito dalla Curia a Pieve Porto Morone. A cascina Mensi, frazione di Albuzzano, si stanno invece attendendo sviluppi. In questo caso il prefetto di Pavia ha assunto l’impegno di ospitare, sempre temporaneamente, una famiglia a palazzo Malaspina.

Inoltre il sindaco, Margherita Canini, ha riferito che lo stesso prefetto avrebbe assicurato la liberazione delle cinque case coloniche requisite entro la fine della prossima settimana. In questo senso potrebbe rivelarsi decisivo l’avvio di un regolare contratto di affitto per alcuni soggetti che, dopo avere abbandonato il piazzale del PalaRavizza, erano stati sistemati provvisoriamente in una cascina che fa capo alla Casa del Giovane di don Tassone. Ieri mattina era attesa anche la manifestazione dei residenti di Pieve e di Albuzzano davanti alla prefettura e a palazzo Mezzabarba. Le forze dell’ordine hanno messo in campo una forza nutrita per fare fronte a eventuali disordini. Ma la manifestazione non si è tenuta. Secondo Lorenzo Demartini, consigliere regionale della Lega Nord, «i cittadini erano spaventati, perché il prefetto aveva promesso che avrebbe fatto disperdere ogni manifestazione. Noi, comunque, diamo ragione all’onorevole Burgio di Rifondazione: non si può addossare ai cittadini la colpa di una mancata programmazione da parte degli amministratori comunali di Pavia». Ad Albuzzano, questa mattina, si dovrebbe tenere un consiglio comunale aperto in piazza.

Fonte: Espresso

<http://espresso.repubblica.it/dettaglio-local/Rom-la-protesta-dei-residenti-non-si-ferma/1760609/6>

Romania

Appeal Anti-Discrimination of the Ethnic Roma Christian Center

11 September 2007

Christian Center of Roma, or CCR, addressed an Appeal Memorandum to the Romania’s president and Premier as well as to the leadership of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, asking for the enactment of a stance towards the statements of public servants, including diplomats and workers with the ministry, regarding the statute of the ethnic Roma Romanian citizens, migrant and/or resident in some countries of the European Union.

The release published Tuesday, September 4, includes the opinion of the former country’s consul to Italy Mircea Gheordunescu, cited by daily “Il Giornale”, on August 21, “subject to which the Romanians and ethnic Romas coming from Romania belong to “different nations,” which should not be mixed up: Romanians are working while the “nomads” commit crimes, illegally occupy houses etc”.

CCR claims these “spontaneous opinions of some Romania’s public servants could originate - if not stopped in time - limitative, xenophobic and racist sideslips on the legal status of Romanian citizenship (speaking about an “ethnic” and not “country” citizenship).

CCR addressed his Appeal to the Annual Meeting of Romanian diplomats held in Bucharest, proposing an analysis of the economic migration phenomenon of Romanian citizens, including the ethnic Romas, to the EU’s countries and asking the Romanian state to grant assistance for the economic and social inclusion of the immigrants from Romania.

“Romania’s embassies to the EU’s countries should set up offices and services on counseling the persons and families who wish to work and settle on the territory of the EU’s countries.

Romania, as an EU’s member country, could initiate joint programs on this issue, negotiated within the country’s bilateral relations and well as within the EU’s institutional framework,” CCR chairman Florin Cioaba, vice-president of Ethnic Roma International Union said.

CCR said that a Romanian delegation including public servants and ethnic Roma workers within non-governmental institutions, is drafting the schedule of a research visit in September, on the current status and perspectives of ethnic Romas, targeting ethnic Roma families currently living in Italy.

Source: www.divers.ro

Romania's Romany Representatives Gather in Single Organization

6 September 2007

Approximately 600 leaders of Romania's Romany community from all over the country convened in Bucharest on Sunday, September 2 to set up the National Chamber of Romany Representatives (CNRRR), a single organization to represent the Romas of Romania nationwide and Europe-wide.

According to the statutes of the new body, the CNRRR is the first body of national representation gathering the civic and political forces of the Romany community with the aim of defending the rights and fundamental freedoms of this ethnic community.

The CNRRR is entitled to struggle for justice and observance of equality and peaceful coexistence of the Romany community and other citizens of Romania. It would also like to file candidates for the future local and national elections in Romania.

Deputy Nicolae Paun stressed out that CNRRR will be a democratic institution of pressuring the state institutions on improving the ethnic Roma living standard.

Nicolae Paun said the people guilty for this situation are the political party from 1990 and until now, the state institutions, as well as some ethnic Roma leaders that directed the ethnic Roma votes to certain political parties and who even registered in some political parties.

He accused the politicians of intolerance, exclusion and racism, which caused ethnic Romas uncontrolled actions in the relation with the state institutions.

Despite of the optimistic declarations, CNRRR could not say it represents all the ethnic Romas in Romania as long as their representative organizations, including the Civic Alliance of Ethnic Romas and the Christian Center of Ethnic Romas, are not part of this department. The Christian Center led by the self-called King Florin Cioaba withdrew from CNRRR in the last moment, without explaining the reasons leading to this decision.

According to statistics with the CNRRR, at 2.5 million people, the Romany community is making up 11 percent of Romania's total population.

Source: www.divers.ro

Romanian police break up brawl between Magyars and Roma

22 August 2007

Bucharest. A brawl broke out overnight between several hundred ethnic Magyars and Roma in a village in central Romania, police said Wednesday.

The fighting erupted after five Roma, or gypsies, were allegedly caught in a field stealing crops after having beaten up the local watchman, a police spokesman told AFP.

About a hundred civilian and paramilitary police officers had to be called in to break up the fight between the two communities, in the mainly ethnic Magyar village of Apata.

Although only a few people were slightly hurt, some villagers threatened to burn down the houses of local Roma.

Source: FOCUS News Agency

<http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n120071>

Serbia

Assaulted Roma boy awarded compensation

29 August 2007

Niš -- Niš Municipal Court has awarded Dragiša Ajdarević compensation for the pain he suffered during an attack in April 2000.

The court ruling instructed Oliver Marković and Nataša Stojanović to pay 150,000 RSD (EUR 1,875) each to Ajdarević as compensation for mental and physical pain he suffered when a group of the so-called skinheads attacked him in 2000.

The Humanitarian Law Center (HLC) filed a compensation lawsuit on behalf of the victim on March 7, 2006.

The HLC said in a statement today that it will appeal against the ruling on the grounds that the amount Ajdarević had been awarded was insufficient and did not constitute compensation for the pain he had suffered as a victim of a serious racist incident.

On the night of April 8, 2000, Ajdarević, a fifteen-year-old boy at the time, was on his way back from a store with his friend Miloš Stamenković, when he was confronted by a group of young skinheads in Niš.

As they were passing by, one of the group asked him out loud: "Hey, you! Are you a Gypsy?" Soon after, the entire group surrounded Ajdarević and started punching and kicking him in the head and all over his body.

A girl from the group, later identified as Nataša Stojanović, threw an empty bottle at Dragiša but missed him because he ducked. After beating him, the skinheads tore off his jacket and his

T-shirt, leaving him half naked. Also, they shouted insults at him saying: "Gypsy, what are you doing in Serbia?"

In the meantime, Dragiša's friend had fled the scene and informed his father, Nebojša Ajdarević, of the incident. He quickly came to the store together with his wife and daughter and found Dragiša lying on the ground.

At that moment one of the attackers shouted: "Hey, Gypsies, what are you doing here? This is not your country!", and proceeded to attack Nebojša Ajdarević as well. However, he fought back and they ran away.

Source : B92

http://www.b92.net/eng/news/society-article.php?yyyy=2007&mm=08&dd=29&nav_category=102&nav_id=43368

OSCE condemns attacks on Roma community members in Serbia, urges action

24 August 2007

Belgrade: Europe's leading security organization on Friday condemned recent attacks against Gypsies, or Roma, in Serbia, and urged government action.

"Assaults on Roma, destruction of their homes and hate speech graffiti represent attacks on the integrity of the Roma and violate their basic human rights," a statement by Ambassador Hans Ola Urstad, head of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe mission in Serbia, said.

The statement followed a spate of attacks that prompted the Roma, who live mostly in various slum settlements in the capital city, to set up own security.

The incidents included beatings and insults. Serbian police said they have launched an investigation but no arrests have been made yet.

Attacks against minority groups have increased since the Balkan wars of the 1990s, which led to a rise in extremism and nationalism in Serbia.

"I call on the authorities to do their utmost to apprehend and prosecute the perpetrators of these acts and prevent similar attacks in the future," Ola Urstad said.

Source: International Herald Tribune/ Associated Press

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/08/24/europe/EU-GEN-Serbia-Roma.php>

Spain

Gypsy camp evicted in Spain

23 August 2007

Three hundred Romanian citizens, Roma ethnics, were evicted from a tent camp near the city of La Herrera (Albacete, Spain) in a Civil Guard intervention, daily El Mundo reads, quoted by the Realitatea TV station. according to the newspapers, the police demanded their documents, then forced them to leave the area.

The Spanish papers inform that tens of tents remained near the Tajo-Segura aqueduct, where the Roma camp was, while other immigrants still remained in the area saying that they have nowhere to go.

The camp was largely publicized in Spain during the past few weeks, after the local authorities discovered that the immigrants used the aqueduct water to wash themselves and their clothes, the water then arriving in the village homes.

Source: HotNews.ro

http://english.hotnews.ro/Gypsy-camp-evicted-in-Spain-articol_45738.htm

Sweden

Housing market sees rise in ethnic discrimination

8 July 2007

The Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (Diskrimineringsombudsman - DO) has begun an investigation into the housing market as the number of complaints continues to increase.

Over the last five years DO has received a total of 314 reports of landlords discriminating against people with non-Swedish ethnic backgrounds. The first half of this year has already seen 43 complaints, compared to 60 for all of last year.

According to DO, groups most likely to be discriminated against are Africans, Roma, Muslims and people from Middle Eastern countries.

"We have come across terrible situations whereby people have become trapped in ghetto-like areas. They have often applied for hundreds of apartments in an attempt to get out of the areas in which they have been placed. It is a situation that breeds despair," John Stauffe, DO's lawyer and project manager, told Svenska Dagbladet.

None of the cases reported to DO have resulted in a single court decision. The ombudsman's office has however instigated proceedings on five occasions, most recently in the case of a Roma woman evicted from her apartment in Sundsvall.

Legal proceedings are underway in a further three cases. In the fifth case, an out of court settlement has been reached, with the tenant receiving 20,000 kronor (\$2,900) in compensation from the landlord.

Source: The Local

www.thelocal.se/7825/

United Kingdom

Public asked views on gypsy camp

2 September 2007

The public is being given the chance to air views on proposals to provide 79 pitches for gypsies and travellers in the Mendips.

The figure has been revealed by the South West Regional Assembly (SWRA) as part of a consultation document to help plan future provision for gypsies.

It would see Mendip providing 49 residential pitches for static homes, and 30 pitches for mobile homes.

The proposals will be formally considered in the spring of next year.

The proposed pitch figures for Mendip, which are expected to last until 2011, have been compiled by the district council through its own studies and consultation. Housing manager Jennie Wheeler said: "We take the need for gypsy and traveller pitches extremely seriously.

"We recognise that we must work with the South West Regional Assembly and the government to progress their proposals.

Ms Wheeler said comments should be submitted before the end of October.

The district council has set up an exhibition outlining the proposals at its offices in Cannards Grave Road, Shepton Mallet.

Source: BBC NEWS

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/england/somerset/6974997.stm>

Source: BBC

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/somerset/6974997.stm>

Vacancies

Project Assistant

The European Roma and Travellers Forum is looking for a Project Assistant to set up its new subsidiary in Brussels.

Job Description

- assist the project manager in his/her daily duties,
- perform administrative tasks including book-keeping.

Requirements

- University degree in Social Sciences or Law or commensurate professional experience,
- professional fluency in English and good knowledge of Romani compulsory,
- additional language in particular of French and Dutch will be considered as an asset,
- flexibility and adaptability.

Candidates must be nationals of a Council of Europe member State.

Applications

Interested persons should send their application together with a cover letter and CV outlining their interest and experience in English, French or Romani to:

European Roma and Travellers Forum
c/o Council of Europe
Bâtiment G - 1 quai Jacoutot

F - 67 075 Strasbourg
e-mail: ertf@ertf.org or ertf@coe.int

Letters of recommendation from Roma or Traveller NGOs as well as of recommendation from a former employer will be appreciated.

Internships at the ERTF Secretariat

The European Roma and Travellers Forum is looking for paid interns to assist the Secretariat of the Forum in the preparation of the Plenary Assembly 2007 and following EU conference (26 - 29 November 2007).

Tasks include:

- assisting in the preparation and mailing of conference documents;
- assisting in the organisation of travels and accomodations;
- answering correspondence and phone calls;
- filing and managing databases.

Person specification:

- University degree or commensurate professional experience working with an NGO;
- Professional proficiency of English and/or French written and spoken and of Romani (compulsory);
- Computer literacy;
- Good communication skills;
- High motivation and flexibility.

Interested candidates should send their CV and letter of motivation stating their period of availability to the Secretariat of the European Roma and Travellers Forum:

European Roma and Travellers Forum
c/o Council of Europe
Bâtiment G - 1 quai Jacoutot
F - 67 075 Strasbourg
e-mail: ertf@ertf.org or ertf@coe.int

Established in 2004, the European Roma and Travellers Forum is the European Romani interest representation which gathers Romani organisations from all over Europe. Its aim is to promote the effective exercise by Roma and Travellers of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as protected by the legal instruments of the Council of Europe and other international legal instruments. A partnership agreement with the Council of Europe gives the Forum a unique status and makes it a prime interlocutor for the Council of Europe and national governments on issues affecting Roma communities.

ERTF Update is an information bulletin on Roma issues. The views represented in the articles and comments do not necessarily represent the view of the European Roma and Travellers Forum. For reactions and comments please write to ertf@ertf.org.