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ERTF Update

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Political Developments

European Roma and Travellers Forum

No Security Guarantees for Roma in Kosovo (Press release)

Strasbourg, 15 February 2007: After renewed violence in Kosovo involving two deaths, the president of the European Roma and Travellers Forum, Rudko Kawczynski, warned Roma not to travel to the province. To those who have remained there he recommended to prepare for an eventual evacuation and called on the international security presence to finally fulfil its mandate and guarantee the security of Roma.

"I am appalled to notice that almost eight years after the end of the war the international community has failed to rebuild a multiethnic Kosovo," Mr. Kawczynski said, adding that following the proposal of UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari for a conditional independence of Kosovo and last weekend's events he he was expecting further violence .

The president of the European Roma and Travellers Forum reminded that more than 150,000 Roma have been ethnically cleansed by Kosovo Albanian nationalists by the end of the war and that ethnic cleansing was conducted with the clear purpose to obtain an independent, monoethnic Kosovo. He announced the organisation of an international security conference with the topic of the persecution of Roma in Kosovo.

Kosovo once provided a home to about 200,000 Roma who inhabited this territory for almost 600 years. Most of them were ethnically cleansed from Kosovo in summer 1999 when the international community watched unprepared.

International Organisations

Council of Europe

Committee of Ministers

The Committee of Ministers has adopted several resolutions on the protection of national minorities.

In its resolution on the protection of national minorities in Germany, adopted on 7 February 2007, the Committee of Ministers notes that "the situation of the Roma/Sinti remains an issue of deep concern" and recommends Germany to "adopt a strategy to improve substantially the situation of the Roma/Sinti in all fields" and to "continue to take a firm stand against the racism and discrimination to which they may be exposed."

In its resolution on the protection of national minorities in Finland, adopted on 31 January 2007, the Committee of Ministers notes that "Finland has expanded further its consultative structures designed to address concerns of national minorities, including by setting up permanent regional advisory boards for Roma affairs", but regrets the limited scope of Roma language education saying that it is "coupled with other problems, such as their disproportionate presence in special education."

Both reports are available at the Committee of Ministers website:
http://www.coe.int/t/cm/adoptedTexts_en.asp

European Union

European Parliament

During the session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 14 February 2007, several MEPs addressed the Presidency of the European Council on the situation of Roma in Europe and the EU's policy on that matter.

Later that day, the European Parliament held a debate on "Free movement of Roma within EU borders".

Transcripts are available at:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?objRefId=137212&language=EN>
(questions)

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?objRefId=137212&language=EN>
(debate)

Reports

Council of Europe

Commission against Racism and Intolerance

On 13 February 2007, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) released several new reports regarding racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance in Council of Europe member states.

In its report on **Portugal**, ECRI notices that Roma communities continue to suffer from social exclusion and that access to education, to public services and to housing remains problematic for members of these communities.

In its report on **Slovenia**, ECRI notices that "in the absence of an overall strategy to simultaneously address all areas where Roma experience disadvantage and discrimination, the members of this group are still in need of special support in order to enjoy equal opportunities with the rest of the Slovenian population."

Both reports are available on: <http://www.coe.int/ecri>

NGOs

UNICEF

Launch of the State of Children in Serbia Report 2006

Belgrade, 8 February 2007 – Despite the important steps that have been taken to improve the status of children in Serbia since the late 1990s, there are still over 300,000 children today who are living in poverty or are at risk of poverty according to a UNICEF Report released today.

The State of Children in Serbia 2006 Report – Poor and Excluded Children, produced jointly by the Republic Statistical Office in Serbia, the Council for Child Rights of the Republic of Serbia and UNICEF Belgrade Office, is based on the unique information and statistics derived from the unpublished "Research on Family Beliefs and Care Practices" and "Survey on Child Poverty", and includes the most recent striking indicators and data from the 2006 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).

"Childhood is an opportunity that never comes back," said UNICEF Serbia Representative Ann-Lis Svensson. "The future of Serbia depends on a healthy and educated generation, which requires inclusive policies that target specifically the poor and excluded children and a better use of resources."

The Report finds that over 155,000 children in Serbia are poor and that an additional 155,000 are at risk of falling below the poverty line. These are the children who due to material, social and cultural deprivation are limited in the realisation of their rights to education, healthcare, equal

development and protection. Analysis of data from rural and urban areas, from households of different sizes and structures reveal significant disparities within the country. The largest percentage of children who are above the average risk of poverty are:

- children from large families
- children living in rural areas, especially in Southeast and Western Serbia
- children belonging to certain minority groups, particularly Roma
- internally displaced people and refugee children.

These children are growing up beyond the reach of development and are often invisible in everything from public debate and laws, to statistics and news stories.

Improving the status of children will depend on the level of priority this objective will get among the numerous reform objectives of a country in transition. Awareness and good data for evidence-based policy making and for monitoring the effects of these policies are urgently required.

Over 80 per cent of Roma children living in Roma settlements are poor and practically all indicators point to their unacceptable deprivation and multidimensional discrimination. Research presented in the Report show that these children more often suffer from illness and stunting as a result of malnutrition and hunger – four times as many Roma children are stunted compared to the national average. The preliminary MICS survey results indicate that infant and under five mortality rates are three times higher among Roma children than in the general population. These children have to take on adult roles in lack of sufficient government assistance, often live in slums or cardboard and tin houses and have little access to services.

In Serbia, only 33 per cent of children attend pre-school institutions, but this percentage is drastically lower among Roma children – only 4 per cent and just 6 per cent among the 20 per cent poorest. Six per cent of children living under the poverty line do not go to primary school and only 13 per cent of Roma children complete primary school. One of the most often cited reasons for non-attendance is poverty. And yet, education is a key area for breaking the inter-generational cycle of poverty and exclusion. Among the poor, the majority come from families with adult members who have no educational background.

There are also other children who are excluded – children deprived of parental care in residential institutions, children living with disabilities and children victims of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence.

Children with disabilities are not only excluded from the healthcare and educational system, but are also exposed to isolation and non acceptance by the community. Parents of children with disabilities are often left alone without adequate support from government.

Lack of adequate social welfare services at local level to support poor or dysfunctional families, or to provide good quality foster family services often lead to institutionalisation, which deprives the child of the right to grow in a family environment and limits the development of the child for life.

Finally, the Report points to the fact that in Serbia corporal punishment of children is still present in both the family and in schools, and that other forms of violence are also frequent. Interfering in inter-family relationships is still considered unacceptable, and it seems that there is still insufficient public condemnation of 'disciplining' children. A significant number of children are exposed to violence from peers, and also to violent behaviour from teachers.

The State of Children in Serbia 2006 Report calls for action to be taken urgently.

Source: UNICEF

http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/media_38258.html

Serbian Refugee Council issues reports on refugees and IDPs

The Serbian Refugee Council, Belgrade, Serbia has issued several reports on the issue of integration of refugees and IDPs in Serbia and on the right to asylum, on the repatriation of Serb refugees to the Republic of Croatia and on access to rights for IDPs from Kosovo.

All reports are available both in English and in Serbian from the website of the organisation: <http://www.ssi.org.yu>

News digest

Europe

Analysis: Rising racism alarms EU, Germany

BERLIN, Feb. 20 (UPI) -- Racism and xenophobia are becoming decidedly more pronounced across Europe, and it is fast becoming an issue of major concern for Germany which currently holds the presidency of the European Union.

"Xenophobia and racism is tremendously on the rise in Europe," said European Commission Vice President Franco Frattini said Tuesday at a news conference in Berlin:

Frattini cited a report by the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia, which found that racist and xenophobic acts in 2006 compared to the previous year have risen by as much as 70 percent in "one member state."

"In many states, the surge was between 25 and 45 percent," he added.

Frattini refused to name the specific country that topped the list with 70 percent, but said the states where racism was becoming more alarming were France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy.

EUMC spokeswoman Waltraud Heller told United Press International in a telephone interview the country Frattini referred to was Denmark, but added that the total

cases there were minimal, also because the country lacks an efficient monitoring method. Frattini did not, however, mention Germany, another country where extremist crimes have surged according to national statistics.

Late last year, a German newspaper said that may have been a record year for neo-Nazi crimes. The German government reported 10,154 far-right crimes from January through the end of October 2006, the Tagesspiegel newspaper said. The number exceeds the intermediate results of previous years by 20 percent and is the highest since 2001, when the German government reformed criminal codes to include hate crimes. When it comes to neo-Nazi violent crimes, the submitted figure (593) is greater than each of the single year totals from 2001 until 2005.

Berlin, which currently holds the rotating six-month EU presidency, wants to revive the EU-wide framework to combat racism and xenophobia, the goal of which is to harmonize provisions on criminal liability for racist acts, disseminating racist and xenophobic statements, and for inciting violence and hatred against other peoples. Berlin wants to make denial of genocide accepted by international courts, such as the Holocaust, a crime in all 27 EU member states. Unofficially, the Germans would also like to see Nazi signs such as the Swastika banned (which is illegal in Germany). But Berlin knows that such a move will not be backed by all member states.

German Justice Minister Brigitte Zypries, who appeared alongside Frattini in the news conference, said that due to its special historic responsibility, Germany was determined to bring racism and xenophobia back on the political agenda.

"The aim of the framework decision is not to restrict people's freedom of expression," she said. "Rather, it is to honor the memory of victims of genocide and to protect all people -- regardless of their race and skin color -- against defamation."

She said while the minimal standards of the framework decision were binding for member states, countries still can go beyond those restrictions; meaning that the swastika will remain banned in Germany, for example.

Tricky details like those have been a source of debate for several years and have blocked any agreement. Zypries acknowledged there still are "different positions" in Europe on the fine line between taking advantage of free speech and inciting hatred. "But I am optimistic that we will come to an agreement before the end of the German EU presidency," she said.

The pair was also in favor of harmonizing legal standards across Europe in a bid to "strike the right balance between security and protecting individual rights," Frattini said. He agreed with Zypries that every EU member taken to court in a foreign country should be informed about the legal peculiarities of that country, have the right to an interpreter and a lawyer. While every country agreed to those minimal standards, realizing them was often difficult because of the differences in the countries' legal systems, Frattini said.

Another German initiative mentioned Tuesday was the fight against violent computer games. That debate was sparked in Germany after violent ego-shooters appeared to have motivated young killers to embark on bloody rampages through local schools.

Frattini said the Commission supported such an initiative, adding there was still "not enough knowledge about the danger for children from very violent video games."

While most countries already have minimum age rules for buying some games, in many member states, Frattini said, there was no enforcement of these rules, with poor or totally absent in-shop control of the buyer's age.

Stefan Nicola

Source: United Press International

<http://www.upi.com/InternationalIntelligence/view.php?StoryID=20070220-123344-3853r>

Rudko Kawczynski: Le Robin des Roms

19 février 2007

Président du Forum européen des Roms et des gens du voyage, Rudko Kawczynski défend une minorité forte de 14 millions de membres sur le continent.

Sa vie est un puzzle dont il livre les pièces dans le désordre. Son nom - prononcez Kav-tchin-ski - a des consonances polonaises. Bingo, notre homme est né à Cracovie. « Mon père a participé à l'insurrection polonaise contre les nazis ». Mais sa famille maternelle vient de Roumanie, la branche paternelle de Russie, et c'est en Allemagne qu'il a grandi, après avoir fui, bébé, la Pologne stalinienne avec sa famille.

Cinquante ans plus tard, ce fils de restaurateur de tapis règne sur des bureaux attendant au Conseil de l'Europe, à Strasbourg. Ils hébergent le Forum européen pour les Roms et les gens du voyage, une ONG qu'il a co-fondée et qui a signé un partenariat en 2004 avec le Conseil de l'Europe. Son but : que les Roms ne soient plus « les perdants de l'Europe ».

D'autant que leur nombre dans l'Union européenne a explosé depuis l'entrée, en janvier, de la Roumanie et de la Bulgarie (la Roumanie en compte 1 850 000).

Première gaffe : parler à Rudko Kawczynski de Sinti, de tsiganes ou de manouches. « Nous sommes tous Roms, avec 22 sous-groupes. » Lui-même se dit rom kaldérache. « Toute ma famille parlait romani, la langue rom venue du vieux sanscrit, mais avec des dialectes différents. » Il s'exprime aussi en allemand, anglais, serbo-croate, suédois ou polonais, et tâte un peu du roumain.

Élu sans passeport

De son enfance à Hambourg, il a gardé le souvenir d'un appartement dans une cave dont il sortait peu, faute de papiers, et de l'école dans une ancienne baraque à munitions britannique, remplie « de réfugiés, d'expulsés de Pologne et de bombardés », où son teint mat se fond dans la pagaille. Plus tard, dans une école « normale », il évite de s'avouer Rom : « je cassais la g... de ceux qui me cherchaient. »

A quatorze ans, il reprend le métier de son père et de son grand-père. Il hante la fac en science politique, économie, droit, « ce qui me plaisait et où il y avait des jolies femmes. »

Son engagement remonte aux années 70. Avec un ami sinti, il fait de la chanson politique où il ridiculise les préjugés anti-tsiganes. « C'est une situation schizophrène: les gens vous applaudissent alors qu'on vous interdit l'entrée des cafés. » Il se bat pour que les Roms aient accès aux archives de police -contenant celles de l'époque nazie, où au moins un demi-million d'entre eux ont été exterminés. En 1987, élu député européen des Verts allemands, il se voit refuser l'entrée du Parlement pour...absence de nationalité : « j'étais élu, mais sans passeport. »

A 52 ans, il vibre d'une colère intacte contre la décision de justice qui l'empêche de voir le plus jeune de ses quatre enfants, eus avec trois femmes - « j'en suis à ma quatrième union sans contrat. Nous sommes modernes depuis des siècles ». Ou encore contre Michel Habig, le maire d'Ensisheim incendiaire de caravanes, « un geste digne du Ku Klux Klan ».

A la tête du Forum, il réclame une « charte des droits des Roms » européenne et une meilleure reconnaissance des gadjé. « Le combat contre le racisme anti-tsigane commence par l'éducation de la majorité, pas juste celle des Roms pour les rendre plus adaptés. »

Catherine Piettre

Source: Dernières Nouvelles d'Alsace

Minority report

14 February 2007

There are 785 MEPs in the European parliament. Of which only nine are non-white. Why is no one up in arms about it? Patrick Barkham reports from Brussels

It is not Livia Jaroka's youth or talent that mark her out in the beige corridors of the European parliament, but her skin. Jaroka, a centre-right MEP for Hungary, was nominated for a parliamentary award for her conscientious work last year. The response? A Bulgarian objected, arguing that she did not deserve it. "In my country, there are tens of thousands of Gypsy girls way more beautiful," Dimitar Stoyanov wrote in an email to MEPs. "In fact, if you're in the right place at the right time you even can buy one (around 12-13 years old) to be your loving wife. The best of them are very expensive - up to €5,000 a piece, wow!"

Jaroka is Roma, one of two representatives in the European parliament who are from what is now the largest homogeneous ethnic minority in the European Union. The "Gypsy girl" email met with widespread condemnation within the parliament building, but Stoyanov, then an observer in the parliament, since Bulgaria had not yet joined the EU, duly took his seat as a fully fledged MEP last month, part of the new far-right coalition that includes fascists and Holocaust deniers in Europe's premier democratic institution.

A walk through the European parliament in Brussels challenges some of the prejudices peddled by the British press. We are told the European project is stalled, sclerotic and bureaucratic, but there is a buzz here. The chamber - all blond wood and black office chairs - is packed; the lifts echo with earnest chat in all 23 "official"

languages. New countries, political groups and, increasingly, laws that affect us all are being formed here. Once dismissed as a talking shop, parliament has a hand in most European legislation. Its power is not doubted by the young European elites who compete for jobs or the legion of lobbyists, who would not waste their time working its cafes and committee rooms if parliament did not matter.

With 785 representatives from 27 member countries and chambers in Brussels and Strasbourg, it is the world's only directly elected international chamber. It represents a more diverse range of people than almost any other - 492 million European citizens. It is also almost completely white, and it is against this backdrop that Stoyanov's inclusion starts to make sense.

There are just nine non-white MEPs here, 1.1% of the total. Five of them come from Britain. Add MEPs of recent Turkish/Kurdish descent and there are a grand total of 13 MEPs whose ethnic origins could be said to lie outside Europe. It is estimated (part of the problem is no one in the EU, and few of its member states, are counting properly) that at least 5% of the population of the EU - 25 million and rising - is non-white. This figure does not include the eight million Roma in the EU, of whom Jaroka and another Hungarian Roma MEP are the only two to make it into parliament.

The chamber in Brussels is housed in two sleek glass blocks a stone's throw from narrow streets filled with North African grocers and Vietnamese cafes. Within its walls, every face seems to be white. As well as MEPs, almost all those legendary Brussels bureaucrats are white. So are security staff. This whiteness stunned Claude Moraes, a London MEP who was raised in Scotland by Indian parents, when he first arrived in Brussels. "I grew up in an all-white town and an all-white school. When I came here, it hit me hard that it was so ethnically non-diverse and that no one spots it or cares about it," he says. "You walk out of this place and there is complete ethnic diversity in Brussels - from Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Come here and that's all over, unless you arrive at 5am when the cleaners are in."

Neena Gill was elected as a Labour MEP alongside Moraes eight years ago. She is the only Asian woman in parliament. "Nobody would believe me when I said, 'Britannique'. Only two nights ago I was at a function and this Belgian found it really hard to accept that I was an MEP because I was wearing a sari," she says. "I hear phrases such as, 'Madame Gill is wearing oriental costume.' When they realise you're Indian, people say, 'Why aren't you wearing that spot on your head?' It is the sort of thing that would have been said in Britain 35 years ago."

Ethnic-minority MEPs who have climbed this white political ladder are not oversensitive souls. But Gill admits she feels "uncomfortable" if seated next to a neo-fascist. (The far right easily out-numbers the non-white MEPs here: the new Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty group has 19 members.) "I've got used to it now but initially I felt quite intimidated. It's threatening. This man thinks I shouldn't be here. If he was in power, you don't know where they would stop. They are intolerant; they don't want to understand; they don't want you playing your part in society; they don't see you as an equal. That's pretty unpleasant."

I am dining in the huge parliamentary restaurant with Syed Kamall, a charming, blunt Conservative MEP of Guyanese descent, who was born in London, when the French National Front leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, sits down at the next table. Le Pen, convicted of inciting racial hatred in France, stares over, inscrutable, chewing on a bread stick. In here, it seems, this shrunken white-haired extremist is a celebrity. A

waiter approaches and shakes Le Pen's hand. The three black waiters running between tables are not dispatched to serve Le Pen's coterie.

Kamall, who has no truck with hand-wringing lefty verbiage, grins rebelliously. "I've always wanted to go over to his daughter - because she's in parliament as well - and greet her with a kiss on the cheek in front of him. It amuses me. He doesn't speak to me but one of them [in France's National Front] does. He always says hello. They like to say they are not racist but ..." He shrugs. "I'm very lucky to come from London - it's very different from the rest of Europe. I've been to parts of Europe where I've been the only dark face. In some way, I relish that. Just being here sends a message."

As part of the centre-right European People's party group, Kamall and his Conservative colleague Nirj Deva, born in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and raised in Britain, are pretty unusual. Their EPP colleagues, the German Christian Democrats, are the biggest single party in parliament and do not have a single non-white or Turkish MEP. A German Christian Democrat once told the British Asian MEP Claude Moraes: "We would never have someone like you in our party elected in Germany."

Parliament passed a race equality directive in 2000 (currently not fully implemented by many member states) but several MEPs say their colleagues don't engage with ethnic minority issues. Viktoria Mohasci, the second Roma MEP, does not believe parliamentarians would tell her to "go home" to her face. "But in my work if you raise Roma issues, most people smile," she says. "If I speak of how Roma kids in schools are not getting as many qualifications, most people smile and say the Roma produce these kids - they are to blame. They don't take it seriously."

Across the political spectrum, ethnic minority MEPs struggle to get colleagues interested in campaigning for a parliament that is roughly reflective of the ethnic mix of Europe's people. Islam, immigration and integration are increasingly tense subjects across Europe. This parliament is tackling them with all-white representatives. But no one seems too bothered.

Here is an astonishing fact: no one knows how many non-white parliamentary officials there are here because no one is counting. Yet the European parliament is the sort of place where every paperclip is logged, in triplicate. There were exactly 37,091 people - civil servants, administrators and other staff - working for the European parliament, European Commission and other EU bodies in 2006 (far fewer than in Eurosceptic legend). But there is no way of telling how many are non-white. Officials estimate that it is probably "a handful".

In parliament, any debate about this has yet to begin. Everywhere you turn, progressive politics are being practised. Sensitivity towards the diversity of nationalities and languages is so acute as to encourage parody: Gaelic was recently made the EU's 23rd official language with its own translation box in the chamber - meaning that parliament must find those elusive Gaelic speakers who also understand Bulgarian or Hungarian. There is a gender committee looking at equal opportunities and rights for women. And yet there is no committee examining ethnic discrimination. European politicians think they are "colour-blind", argues Moraes, but parliament's whiteness is "symptomatic of what happens when you pretend discrimination doesn't exist".

Moraes would like the ethnic monitoring of parliament's workforce - a basic recording of the background of the workforce, widely accepted by British companies and institutions. "It shows you where you are going wrong and then you can put something in place to correct it," he says. For other countries, however, it is anathema. "You can't get the concept of monitoring accepted here," says Gill. "There is a real reluctance to deal with it, particularly because the French have the attitude that they just see themselves as French. White French will say a person is French and from an African background but one or two of the black French I've met say, 'We're French and we don't want monitoring'."

Of course, MEPs point out, you do not need to be from a particular community to speak up for its interests. "You don't have to be a Muslim to represent Muslims," says Sajjad Karim, a Lib Dem MEP from the north-west who is one of a handful of Muslims in parliament. But Karim and others, such as Kamall, like to stress the practical benefits of having MEPs from diverse backgrounds. It is particularly useful in trade or diplomatic manoeuvres with senior politicians beyond Europe, they say. Karim has undertaken missions to Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Kuwait, where officials assumed he was from their Brussels embassies. "When they realised I was an MEP, it was fantastic because we were changing their view of what Europe was about."

The few non-white MEPs try to avoid being stereotyped as token experts on race or immigration. But it is a telling sign of their rarity that many are inundated with appeals from people in other countries who share their ethnicity or religion. As well as being the only Asian woman in parliament, Gill is the only Sikh too. She says she receives "almost weekly" calls from Sikh groups in Italy and France who are attacked because of "the turban issue".

The sprinkling of non-white or Turkish MEPs from France, Germany and the Netherlands are reluctant to accuse their fellow MEPs of discrimination. Instead, they focus on how hard it is for people from ethnic minorities to get into politics. "People need time to build up networks in society. Immigrants start very low in terms of jobs and education and they need time to catch up," says Emine Bozkurt. Born in Holland to Turkish parents, in 2004 she became the first MEP elected from the Netherlands with ethnic minority heritage. "People refer to me as a migrant but I've never migrated apart from when I moved to the European parliament. Then I really felt like a migrant."

To British eyes, Socialist MEP Kader Arif is classically French: pale pink shirt unbuttoned at the neck, smoking, philosophical. His French assistant refers to him as "black". Hugely popular in south-western France, Arif attributes his political ascent to his accent which, reassuringly for his constituents, is a strong Toulouse drawl. His passions - rugby and bullfighting - show he is well integrated, he says, since coming to France from Algeria aged five.

The reason there are so few non-white MEPs, Arif says, is because of the social environment and the nature of political careers. You find more immigrants in sport and culture because their talent can be objectively recognised and rewards are instant - unlike in politics, he says. "When you get recognised in sports or culture, this breaks all social barriers; politics is made up of social barriers."

He believes there is racism across the board in French political parties. All of them, he says, conservatively recruit in their own image. But he was elected first in the list

of 10 MEPs in their National Front-friendly constituency of 8.5 million people. "It shows that sometimes the masses are in advance of the political elites," he says.

For Moraes, the whiteness of the European parliament is not simply because alienated, unconfident minorities shun politics. "Confidence of the individual is a small part," he says. "A large part is direct and indirect discrimination. Where do you advertise jobs? Do you encourage schools in particular parts of Europe? Is there real accessibility? Do people apply from non-traditional backgrounds?"

If you judge power by the size of an office then, as the adage goes, the bureaucrats really are running Europe. Julian Priestley is the outgoing secretary general, the parliament's top civil servant. After three decades working in Europe, he talks of "broadening the diversity agenda" in carefully honed sentences that are almost as long as his desk.

"It is true that at the moment the number of people from ethnic minorities working here is way below the proportion of European citizens from ethnic minorities," he says. The problem is recruitment. "I have a horrible feeling that when European institutions place advertisements announcing competitions [for training and employment] there will be part of ethnic minority communities who will feel it's not really for them. We should work with those communities to make sure that candidates come forward."

He considers ethnic monitoring "interesting" but fears it would be blocked by his colleagues who find it "intrusive". And, he adds: "You don't need ethnic minority monitoring to know we're not doing very well." Is the parliament institutionally racist? "I think that would be unfair. The numbers are insufficient because we haven't been imaginative enough and active enough as all institutions together to take positive measures for people to come forward. We've been slower than certain parts of public administrations in the member states and I recognise that."

As the sun sinks and the colours slip out of Brussels, Arif smokes at his desk on the 14th floor of the European parliament and ponders whether this building is equipped to tackle questions of religion, race, immigration and identity that define modern Europe. "It's not because I'm from a minority that I can fight racism," he says. "But if you don't have institutions that represent the diversity of Europe you can't fight against racism properly".

Source: The Guardian

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/eu/story/0,,2012518,00.html>

Countries

Serbia

Attacks on Roma every two days

7 February 2007

Every two days there are criminal offences that are motivated by national or racial intolerance to Roma, says Srđan Šajn, president of the Roma Party. He also says that this Party will propose the adoption of anti-discrimination law, which would enable more strict punishments for perpetrators of such criminal offences. "Additionally, we will propose a forming of the Board for Roma Integration within the

Parliament and defining authorities for monitoring integration of Roma, including forms of their discrimination”, says Šajn. He reminded that there were several attacks on Roma people in the previous few months – in Belgrade settlement Dorćol, in Niš, Leskovac, Kikinda, Boljevci. The most severe case was the murder of Roma boy B. N. from Boljevci. Šajn estimated that this murder was ethnically motivated, although the official investigation records do not agree with this statement. He also estimated that Serbia was not a country that had a rooted hatred toward Roma and that except “a small group of skinheads, there are no organized attacks on Roma in Serbia.”

Source: Beta/Minority Rights Center: MRC newsletter no. 56
http://www.mrc.org.yu/?mod=prikaz&jezik=engleski&sta=vesti&id_tekst=1648

Serbia/Kosovo

Roma Party for resolution

14 February 2007

President of the Roma Party Srđan Šajn said that he would vote for the resolution in the Parliament, and that Roma Party was against the plan of Marti Ahtisari, as it gave no guarantees for return of almost 100 000 Roma displaced from Kosovo. Šajn said that this party would ask from the Government of Serbia to represent all non-Albanian nations in Kosovo and to demand, during negotiation,s forming of one Roma province in Kosovo. The Union of Roma of Serbia’s president, Rajko Đurić, said that many truths about suffer of Roma in Kosovo were not told. He added that there used to live 150 000 Roma in Kosovo, but that now there were only 20 000 of them, who were exposed to hatred and oppression.

Source: Danas/Minority Rights Center: MRC newsletter no. 57
http://www.mrc.org.yu/?mod=prikaz&jezik=engleski&sta=vesti&id_tekst=1685

Hymne, drapeau : quels symboles pour le Kosovo ?

3 février 2006

Le point 1.7 de la proposition de Marti Ahtisaari stipule que « le Kosovo aura ses propres symboles nationaux incluant un drapeau, un emblème et un hymne qui reflèteront son caractère multiethnique ». Pour représenter les communautés albanaise, serbe, rrom, turque, boshniaque, ashkali, égyptienne, les symboles du nouveau Kosovo risquent d’être particulièrement complexes !

L’aigle bicéphale noir est le symbole des Albanais mais la roue em mouvement est celui des Rroms. Les quatre S identifient les Serbes, alors que les Ashkali sont fiers de leur aigle blanc à une tête.

D’après les propositions de Martti Ahtisaari, tous ces symboles, y compris ceux de la minorité turque, doivent figurer sur le drapeau, l’emblème et dans l’hymne futur du Kosovo.

Cela est précisé au point 1.7 qui dit que « le Kosovo aura ses propres symboles nationaux incluant un drapeau, un emblème et un hymne qui reflèteront son caractère multiethnique ».

Avec cette proposition, il semble que Martti Ahtisaari ait mis sur la table un des casse-tête les plus difficiles à résoudre pour le Kosovo. Si ce point ne change pas et reste formulé en ces termes, il est possible que le drapeau futur du Kosovo ressemble à une feuille blanche trempée dans de multiples couleurs.

Sur base de ce point, tous les groupes nationaux qui vivent au Kosovo pourront demander qu'un de leurs éléments soient représentés dans les trois symboles nationaux du futur État.

Étant donné que depuis 1999 et l'installation de la mission de la MINUK, le nombre des minorités a semblé encore augmenter, les symboles nationaux du Kosovo pourraient être les plus « riches » de la région. Les Albanais, les Serbes, les Roms, les Ashkali, les Égyptiens et les Turcs ont été enregistrés officiellement par la MINUK comme des groupes ethniques du Kosovo.

« Nous ferons comme les autres, lorsque quelque chose sera décidé », a déclaré Zylfi Merxha, président du Parti rom du Kosovo. Sa communauté n'a pas encore décidé de ce qu'elle fera, mais elle est sûre d'une chose « Si les autres minorités mettent quelque chose sur le drapeau, nous ferons de même ». Mais Zylfi Merxha, qui n'a pas encore d'idée sur ce que pourraient proposer les Roms, ne pourra décider sans l'avis de la présidence de son parti.

Oliver Ivanovic, un des politiciens serbes du Kosovo, pense qu'il est trop tôt pour parler des symboles du Kosovo. « Il faut que nous voyons et que nous étudions le plan de Martti Ahtisaari et ensuite, peut-être, donnerons-nous nos propositions », a déclaré Oliver Ivanovic. Pour lui, il est important d'avoir l'avis de la population sur cette question. « Je ne déciderai jamais sans l'opinion de la population. Cela ne serait pas démocratique de prendre une décisions sur les symboles sans lui demander son avis ».

Gëzim Gashi, le dirigeant des Ashkali du Kosovo, pense qu'il est important de respecter la volonté de la majorité. « La majorité doit décider des symboles de l'identité kosovare et ensuite les Ashkali prendront la parole, mais je ne sais pas quel symbole qui nous représenterait nous pourrions présenter. Il faut que nous en discussions au sein du parti ». Gëzim Gashi, qui a pris la place de Sabit Rrahmani il y a quelques jours, n'est pas satisfait des propositions de Martti Ahtisaari, qui n'évoque pas l'indépendance pour laquelle la majorité a combattu.

Avant même que le « paquet » Ahtisaari n'atterrisse à Prishtina, plusieurs propositions ont été faites pour les symboles nationaux. L'Académie des Sciences et des Arts du Kosovo a déjà un projet prêt. L'académicien Besim Bokshi explique que l'Assemblée du Kosovo lancera un appel à propositions, et que l'Académie présentera sa proposition, de façon égale, comme les autres. « Le drapeau ne doit pas comporter d'autres couleurs que le rouge et le noir et, en ce qui concerne notre proposition, tous les membres de la commission n'ont eu aucune difficulté à se mettre d'accord sur ce point ».

L'administrateur de la Minuk Joachim Rucker, dans une interview donnée il y a quelques semaines, a déclaré qu'aucun symbole ne sera imposé au Kosovo, comme cela a été fait en Bosnie-Herzégovine. « Les symboles du Kosovo vont dépendre des Kosovars seuls ».

D'autres propositions, parallèlement à celle de l'Académie, ont été faites pour les symboles nationaux, principalement pour le drapeau. Le président Rugova avait présenté son drapeau. Joseph DioGuardi, le congressman américano-albanais, a aussi fait sa propre proposition.

Jeton Musliu, traduit par Nerimane Kamberi

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- in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Forum, set up and maintain a functional office in Brussels,
- establish and maintain good working relations with the European Commission, Parliament and other EU institutions and national government representations,
- liaise with the national member organizations and the Secretariat in Strasbourg and keep them informed about relevant developments affecting Roma at EU level,
- in cooperation with the ERTF Secretariat, draft regular reports on specific policy areas,
- in cooperation with the Secretariat and the network members issue policy recommendations to the EU institutions on specific policy areas and policies affecting Roma,
- establish and maintain good working relations with civil society organizations working in Brussels, in particular with the Commission sponsored networks.

Requirements

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- knowledge and understanding of EU politics, in particular on areas which particularly affect Roma,
- good communication and writing skills,
- professional fluency in English and good knowledge of Romani compulsory,
- additional language skills in particular of French will be considered as an asset.

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Candidates must be nationals of a Council of Europe member State and must be aged under 55 on the closing date of the vacancy notice.

Both positions are initially limited until 15 December 2007.

Applications

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European Roma and Travellers Forum
c/o Council of Europe
rue Tureau
F - 67075 Strasbourg

E-mail: ertf@ertf.org

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

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For further information:
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Established in 2004, the European Roma and Travellers Forum is a international Roma umbrella organisation 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.

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