

6 June 2016

CAHROM (2016)14

**AD HOC COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON ROMA AND TRAVELLER<sup>1</sup> ISSUES**  
**(CAHROM)**

**11<sup>th</sup> CAHROM MEETING**

***Samokov (26 April 2016) and Sofia (27-29 April 2016), Bulgaria***

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**ABRIDGED REPORT**

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**Tuesday, 26 April 2016**

1. On 26 April 2016, a field visit to Samokov was organised by the Bulgarian hosting authorities where the participants of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM) exchanges views with the mayor, the priest of an evangelical protestant church, health care professionals from Samokov hospital Roma health mediators and Roma students (see Appendix 2 for a summary of the field visit to Samokov).

**Wednesday, 27 April 2016**

**Opening of the plenary meeting and adoption of the agenda**

2. Mr Branko Sočanac (Croatia), Chair of the CAHROM, opened the 11<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting held in Sofia, Bulgaria, under the Bulgarian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

3. The Committee adopted the agenda as it appears in Appendix 1.

4. The Committee was welcomed by Bulgarian high officials, including Mr Ivailo Kalfin, Deputy Prime Minister for Demographic and Social Policies, Minister of Labour and Social Policy and Chair of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues; Mr Roumen Aleksandrov, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs on behalf of the Bulgarian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe; Mr Krassimir Kiryakov, Vice Minister of Education; and Mr Adam Persensky, Vice Minister of Health. Professor Ivailo Tournev, of the National Network of Health Mediators, as well as Mr Ivan Chakarov, Mayor of the Krasna Polyana Municipality in Sofia with 50,000 Roma residents, also made opening speeches.

5. The Bulgarian authorities referred to the importance of education from pre-school to upper education; the need to develop vocational education and training, to address early marriages and school drop-outs, to combat hate speech, including at political level, and to consider both recent refugees and Roma as two equally important vulnerable groups. They highlighted the positive and efficient role of the 195 Roma health mediators working in 110 municipalities in Bulgaria which can be regarded as a good practice, as well as the good cooperation with Roma civil society and the importance of their participation in decision-making processes. Professor Tournev, however, underlined that not all Roma are poor, marginalised and illiterate and that authorities should build on role models, e.g. the 106 Roma students who are at university. He regretted that prosecutors do not systematically intervene when there is evidence of discrimination against and racism towards Roma and that, in some

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<sup>1</sup> The terms "Roma and Travellers" are used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term "Gens du voyage", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.

municipalities, pressure was exercised to stop the contracts with Roma health mediators. These interventions echoed discussions heard during the field visit to Samokov organised by the Bulgarian authorities one day prior to the plenary meeting.

Three representatives of civil society joined the opening session to alert CAHROM participants about a recent racist attack against a young Roma in Bulgaria and distributed t-shirts with the slogan "Mitko suffered hate crime, not hooliganism - #Roma are equal".

### **CAHROM's working methods and contribution to the Council of Europe's agenda on Roma and Traveller issues**

6. The Committee heard a presentation from the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) of the Council of Europe for Roma Issues who presented an update on the Council of Europe Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019) adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 2 March 2016; recent developments concerning the setting-up of a European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC), the seat of which would be in Berlin; as well as feedback about the first meeting of the new dialogue mechanism with Roma and Traveller civil society held in Strasbourg from 1-2 December 2015. The SRSG also informed the Committee about the recent adoption of ECRI General Policy Recommendation no.15 on combating hate speech and presented developments concerning the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion. He indicated that his successor as SRSG for Roma issues would probably be known by the end of May 2016.

7. The representative of the Congress reported on the adoption of the Alliance's new Strategic Guidelines by the Congress Bureau on 23 March 2016 and highlighted some of the provisions. During the discussion on how the CAHROM could participate in the preparation and follow up the implementation of activities launched by the Council of Europe within the Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019), the CAHROM member on behalf of the Netherlands suggested to organise working committees in between plenary sessions to discuss those activities under the main three priorities of the Thematic Action Plan. The SRSG also proposed that the CAHROM agenda follows as much as possible the thematic structure of the Thematic Action Plan. The CAHROM member on behalf of Finland, also CAHROM Rapporteur on Gender Equality (GER), welcomed the focus given to Roma women in the Thematic Action Plan. She also suggested paying more attention to the use of technology and digitalisation in education and other areas, as well to the geographical balance in projects to be implemented under the Thematic Action Plan. It was agreed that all the above proposals and comments would be discussed at the next CAHROM Bureau meeting to be held in September 2016.

8. As regards the role and contribution of the CAHROM in relation to ERIAC, the Committee was informed by the SRSG that a first progress report on ERIAC would be on the agenda of the next CAHROM meeting and that the CAHROM will be involved in the evaluation of ERIAC foreseen under the Memorandum of Understanding between ERIAC and the Council of Europe. The Slovak CAHROM member highlighted the importance of including the promotion of the Romani language as part of the work of ERIAC. The German CAHROM member requested clarification about the role and financial contribution of the Alliance for ERIAC that made a pledge to contribute financially and in kind in the order of € 1 million. The SRSG responded that this would be addressed during the registration process of ERIAC. In response to the question asked by the CAHROM member on behalf of Switzerland, the SRSG confirmed that Travellers (including Yenish) will be covered by ERIAC activities. The Committee recommended that the statutes of ERIAC and relevant documents include a specific reference to the promotion of the culture of Travellers (including Yenish) or at least the "Roma" explanatory footnote used by the Council of Europe.

9. The Committee heard information from the representatives of ECMI (as a new CAHROM participant), ENNHRI and Equinet (as new observers) who highlighted their possible contribution to the work of the CAHROM. The Committee underlined that ECMI research and field offices in some member States could be useful in the context of the CAHROM thematic work. As an example, the CAHROM member on behalf of the Republic of Moldova pointed out the conclusions of an ECMI Seminar on minority participation in public life through advisory and deliberative bodies (Kyiv, December 2015). The participation of ENNHRI and Equinet were also seen as a possibility for reinforcing the links between the inter-governmental work and equality bodies and national human rights institutions. The Committee also took note of the Equinet publication "Making Equality Legislation Work for Roma and Travellers".

10. The Secretariat of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion informed the CAHROM member on behalf of the Netherlands that consideration will be given in the future working programme of the Alliance to his proposal to discuss the Dutch approach towards complex families with a Roma background with other Alliance participating municipalities.

11. A questionnaire was distributed to the Committee for the forthcoming report of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on "The situation of Roma and Travellers in the context of rising racism and xenophobia". The deadline for CAHROM members to reply to this questionnaire was fixed to 31 May 2016 at the latest.

## Co-ordination among international organisations on their Roma-related thematic priorities for the years 2016-2017 and recent developments at national and international level

12. The Committee heard the presentation by Ms Rita Izsák-Ndiaye, United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues, on the main findings of her comprehensive study of the human rights situation of Roma worldwide, with a particular focus on the phenomenon of anti-Gypsyism. The Committee took note of Ms Izsak-Ndiaye's invitation to the CAHROM and the Council of Europe in general to consider establishing closer links with other geographical areas where Roma are also present, in particular Asia, Middle East, Latin America, North America and Australia. The Committee recalled examples of previous cross-continent cooperation on Roma issues, such as the participation of Roma women from Latin America in the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Roma Women's Conference held in Spain in 2011 and Brazil having approached the Council of Europe in the context of the joint CoE/EC ROMED programme. The Committee also invited the UN and OSCE to facilitate the participation of Canada, Israel, Mexico and the United States of America (all hold observer status with the Council of Europe) as observers in the CAHROM. Should these countries be represented in future CAHROM meetings, Roma representatives from these countries could also be invited to speak at the CAHROM on an ad hoc basis in the future. The Committee also took note of the suggestion of the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues that contacts should be established between the Council of Europe and American-based International Intergovernmental Organisations with a view to possibly setting up a similar experts' committee to the CAHROM.

13. The SRSG debriefed the Committee on the coordination meeting he organised as a CAHROM side event with international intergovernmental partners, attended by representatives of the European Commission (DG EMPL, DG EAC and DG NEAR), FRA, OSCE/ODIHR, OHCHR, UNDP, UNICEF, World Bank, IOM, CEB, ECMI, RCC, as well as the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues. Topics covered included the possible future co-operation of international organisations around the indicators on the social inclusion of Roma and Travellers that is currently being developed by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights so as to reach a pan-European approach (the developments of which will be on the agenda of the next coordination meeting in October 2016), as well as follow-up to the "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015" and the possible involvement of international organisations in the Roma Integration 2020 initiative led by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the European Commission-DG NEAR. The Committee regretted the absence of DG Justice of the European Commission - as the Commission's coordinating body - both at the CAHROM plenary meeting and the coordination side event.

14. The Committee heard from the representative of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) on the developments of the Local Engagement for Roma Inclusion (LERI) project, the EU-MIDIS II survey, as well as the use of the template of Structure-Process-Outcome (S-P-O) indicators by 20 EU pilot countries. Some CAHROM members recalled that they were not part of these pilot countries since it was impossible for them to collect any data based on ethnicity, whilst others indicated that they had adopted a pragmatic approach even though they do not have targeted Roma policies but mainstream ones instead. The Committee agreed that FRA could present the results of the EU-MIDIS II survey at the next CAHROM meeting.

15. The Committee heard a presentation from the representative of the European Commission (DG EMPL) concerning the widening of the ROMACT3 Joint Programme between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, in particular developments concerning a pilot twinning project between Western and Eastern municipalities under ROMACT3. A call for proposals was launched and several municipalities from Western Europe had already expressed an interest in this project. The CAHROM member on behalf of Germany welcomed this initiative which meets the interests expressed by several German municipalities receiving a Roma population from *inter alia* Romania and Bulgaria.

16. The Committee heard a presentation from the European Commission (DG-NEAR) on Roma integration in the EU enlargement countries<sup>2</sup>, including the focus given to Roma in several accession chapters, and took note of the European Commission (DG NEAR)'s call for obtaining written information from CAHROM members and representatives of international organisations on their financial and thematic contributions as donors to Roma-related projects and policies in EU accession countries from the Western Balkan region and Turkey.

17. The Committee was informed by the RCC Roma Integration 2020 Action Team Leader that Roma Integration 2020 is in its starting phase, with the launching event to be organised in Brussels on 9 June 2016. Roma Integration 2020 will build upon the spirit of the Roma Decade but with different working methods, focus (civil registration and identity documents in addition to education, housing, employment and health) and geographical scope (six Western Balkan countries plus Turkey). The work will be conducted through national contact points to be appointed by national authorities. A regional task force will be set up and include the seven national contact points, one RCC representative, one OSF representative, one DG NEAR representative and two Roma civil society representatives to be appointed by OSF after a call for applications. Working methods will include, among

<sup>2</sup> A side event was organised by the European Commission (DG NEAR) with representatives of Albania, Montenegro, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Turkey, as well as representatives of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the Council of Europe (SRSG Roma Support Team and the Youth Department). Bosnia and Herzegovina (excused) and Serbia were not present.

others, the organisation of workshops. International organisations, previously observers under the Roma Decade, will be invited to the thematic workshops. The CAHROM member on behalf of the Republic of Moldova and Bureau member regretted that his country, which was on the verge of accessing the Decade for Roma Inclusion, is no longer covered by Roma Integration 2020. The Council of Europe recommended that, as far as possible, national contact points be the same as CAHROM members so as to ensure synergies.

18. The OSCE/ODIHR representative informed the Committee about ODIHR programmatic priorities (2017-2018) which include assisting the OSCE participating States in implementing policies to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti at national and local level, monitoring progress and sharing good policy examples; raising awareness (through teaching and commemoration) on the Roma and Sinti genocide; ensuring gender mainstreaming and addressing the specific needs of Roma and Sinti women and girls, as well as promoting trust and understanding between the police and Roma and Sinti through training of front line police officers and ensuring participation and empowerment of Roma and Sinti, particularly women and youth. The OSCE/ODIHR representative also informed the Committee about the planned Roma and Sinti related events of the German OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office, including a 2<sup>nd</sup> Supplementary Human Dimension meeting in Vienna on 7-8 July 2016 entitled "Minorities as bridge builders"; sessions on Roma, women, security and tolerance with a youth focus during the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw on 19-30 September 2016; and a Conference on combating anti-Gypsyism to be held in September 2016. In June 2016, OSCE/ODIHR will publish the report of its field visit assessment addressing current forms of racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti in Hungary, conduct a training of trainers for promoting trust and improving relations between the police and Roma and Sinti in Warsaw and organise a conference in Prague on the forced sterilisation of Roma women.

19. The Committee heard a presentation by the World Bank on their recent regional Roma-related report "Being Fair - Faring Better" - Promoting Equality of Opportunity for Marginalized Roma", which focuses on the Roma most at risk of being marginalized in Central and Eastern European countries. The report shows that inequalities between Roma and non-Roma start early and are striking. Some of these inequalities reflect hard-wired family circumstances. A Roma child is much more likely to grow up in a household at the very bottom of income distribution, or have parents with little or no education. Other inequalities reflect limited opportunities such as access to basic goods and services (e.g. quality education and adequate living conditions) which are necessary, not only for realizing one's potential in life, but also for living with dignity. The World Bank representative underlined that investing early, by promoting good nutrition, cognitive child development and access to quality education is a policy with recognized high returns, especially for disadvantaged children.

20. The Committee heard a presentation from the UNDP representative on three topics: data collection and data use; labour market inclusion; and Roma inclusion at local/municipal level. Regarding the first topic, UNDP informed the Committee that they will repeat the 2011 survey on the socio-economic position of Roma in the Western Balkans, including Turkey this time, in partnership with DG NEAR, FRA and the World Bank. It will cover the five main priority areas identified under Roma Integration 2020, in addition to others. The data will provide a baseline for both the Roma Integration 2020 project, as well as all other activities funded under IPA II. To respond to the gaps in the available data for determining policy and programme priorities and evaluating impact, UNDP will work with the National Statistical Offices on the design of the survey and use of the data, as well as with national authorities on the use of data for indicators, including S-P-O indicators (where and to the extent possible). As regards the second topic, UNDP is partnering with ILO on a project in Western Balkans running from May 2016 until December 2017 which will look explicitly at the practices needed to ensure outreach of employment and social sector policies and institutions to those most at risk of exclusion. This project does not explicitly target Roma labour market inclusion, but will include a focus on this aspect. The project will also link up with the ILO-EU Economic and Social Platform, located with the RCC. As regards the last topic, UNDP informed the Committee that it is actively supporting Roma integration through its work on local economic development and area-based development in several Western Balkan countries, in particular Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". UNDP will be looking at how to link up this work with the proposed expansion of ROMACT to municipalities in enlargement countries. In addition, UNDP wished to share with CAHROM participants a graphic novel that it produced on 4 April 2016 entitled "Daria – a Roma woman's journey" on the subject of early marriages<sup>3</sup>.

21. The Committee took note of the Roma-related activities scheduled under the Slovak Presidency of the EU Council in the second half of 2016 under the theme of Roma integration. The CAHROM member on behalf of the Slovak Republic confirmed that the CAHROM Rapporteur for Roma youth (from Slovenia) would be invited to attend the Roma Youth Conference scheduled in Bratislava on 10-12 October 2016. The Slovak EU Presidency also plan to introduce draft Council conclusions on the European Commission's report on the implementation of the EU Council Recommendation on Roma integration adopted in 2013.

<sup>3</sup> <https://undpeurasia.exposure.co/daria-a-roma-womans-journey>.

22. In addition, the Committee took note of written information on recent developments at national level submitted by Latvia, as well as on the celebrations of International Roma Day on 8 April by various member States. The CAHROM member on behalf of Greece informed the Committee that information on the Greek legislative and policy response to the phenomenon of Roma babies sold for adoption following a recent case involving a Bulgarian Roma woman would be sent after the meeting. The German CAHROM member asked the Bulgarian CAHROM member to provide written information on this topic as well.

### **Housing and accommodation**

23. The Committee heard presentations from the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) on the loan mechanism for supporting Roma projects, as well as the results and the lessons learnt from an independent evaluation of a housing project for low-income Roma and vulnerable groups in Bulgaria. The Committee took note of the financial possibilities provided by the CEB, *inter alia* for housing and micro-credits. The Committee also took note of the updated CEB Facstheets on Roma-related loans and projects.

24. The Committee was informed by the representative of Equinet that a draft joint statement on evictions of Roma and Travellers in Europe was under preparation. The Committee took note that the preliminary draft version circulated to the CAHROM for information is subject to modifications and further approval by the four OPRE partners (Council of Europe, FRA, Equinet and ENNHRI). A final decision on the text will be taken at the next OPRE platform meeting to be held by the end of June 2016 and CAHROM will receive a copy of same. The Committee took note of the support of the OHCHR representative for this draft joint statement.

### **Thursday, 28 April 2016**

### **Discussion on recent thematic visits and reports**

25. The Committee examined four thematic reports, namely on child/early and forced marriages within Roma communities, Roma health mediators, vocational education and training for Roma and Roma and Travellers' participation in advisory councils and consultative mechanisms.

26. The rapporteurs of the parallel working group sessions gave feedback to the Committee on the four above-mentioned thematic reports/visits (a summary of these working groups is available in an Addendum to this abridged report).

27. The Committee endorsed the thematic report on child/early and forced marriages within Roma communities (with a contribution from the OSCE/ODIHR included). It decided to endorse the three other thematic reports by written procedure by 20 May 2016, following the inclusion of possible factual corrections by CAHROM members from the countries concerned. Such factual corrections should be sent to the Secretariat by 12 May 2016.

28. The IOM representative updated the Committee on the Equi-Health project, including exchanges between various countries participating in the Equi-Health project on the practice of Roma health mediation and information about upcoming activities in Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Spain.

29. The Committee was informed by the Secretariat of the European Alliance for the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers about the intention of the Council of Europe's Good Governance Division to address to CAHROM members a questionnaire on Roma and Travellers' participation in electoral processes and representation at national, regional and local levels in the coming weeks.

### **Review of the outcome and follow-up given to CAHROM thematic reports endorsed between 2012 and 2015**

30. The Committee unanimously agreed that CAHROM thematic visits and reports were useful. The Committee heard replies to the questionnaire on the follow-up and possible impact of past CAHROM thematic reports and visits from Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, the Republic of Moldova and Switzerland, as well as concrete examples of follow-up at policy and project level or bilateral contacts from Albania, Croatia, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". The recently appointed a Rapporteur on Roma issues (from "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia") of the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) informed the Committee about the work to be carried out by the CDDH in regard to female genital mutilation and forced marriage that may be useful for the future work of CAHROM, and that the CAHROM thematic report on child/early and forced marriages within Roma communities will be taken into consideration in the future work of CDDH on the topic of forced marriages.

31. The Chair of the CAHROM invited Committee members who had not yet replied to the questionnaire to send their reply to the Secretariat by 30 June 2016 at the latest so that an overview could be prepared and presented by the Secretariat at the next CAHROM meeting.

#### **Vulnerable groups within Roma and Traveller communities: women, youth, children and LGBTIQ<sup>4</sup>**

32. The Committee received information from CAHROM members on behalf of Finland and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” on the final report of the 5<sup>th</sup> International Roma Women’s Review Conference held in Skopje on 6-7 October 2015 and the results of the meeting between the Roma women’s international networks (IRWN and Phenjalipe) held in Brussels on 2-3 March 2016, namely the merger of the two networks and the forthcoming registration of the new Roma women’s network “IRWN-Phenjalipe”. As a consequence of the dissolution of IRWN, the Committee received confirmation from the CAHROM Rapporteur on Gender Equality (from Finland) that IRWN will de facto no longer be a member of the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF), once the new IRWN-Phenjalipe network is registered; IRWN-Phenjalipe will then need to take a decision as regards ERTF membership.

33. The Committee heard about recent developments in the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, including the recent nomination of a Rapporteur on Roma issues to the Joint Council on Youth (from the Slovak Republic), as well as a presentation of the new Guidelines for the implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan 2016-2020. The secretariat of the Youth Department recalled its openness for cooperation with and support to member States’ initiatives in regards to addressing the specific needs of Roma young people and welcomes initiatives for the inclusion of a Roma youth dimension as part of national Roma inclusion strategies.

34. The Committee heard a presentation of the proposal to set up a LGBTIQ Roma, Gypsy, Sinti and Travellers European Platform as a result of the Prague Declaration adopted at the First International Roma LGBTIQ Conference held in Prague on 13 and 14 August 2015. A second international Conference of Roma LGBTIQ will be held in Valencia, Spain, at the end of June-early July 2016. Some of the issues raised by the Platform are in line with the topics discussed at the 11<sup>th</sup> CAHROM meeting, specifically early and forced marriage which is sometimes used to “remedy” the perceived deviance of such individuals. Roma health mediators are also crucial since many health issues are overlooked and unaddressed, such as HIV/AIDS, other STDs, and a higher incidence of suicide among Roma LGBTIQ as a result of social isolation or being ostracised due to their coming out. Awareness-raising activities, curricular or extra-curricular, were also suggested by the Platform in the field of education. The Committee took note of the call from Ms Lucie Fremlova addressed to CAHROM members and international observers to provide political, and possibly financial, support for this initiative. The Youth Department of the Council of Europe invited Ms Lucie Fremlova and committee representatives to explore the opportunities for support of youth initiatives under the funding schemes provided by the European Youth Foundation.

35. The Committee heard a presentation of the project “Every child matters: High quality education for all”, a peer-to-peer *in situ* training of Czech and Slovak teachers on inclusive education conducted by Babington College teachers in Leicester, UK, which also includes study visits and training of Czech and Slovak teachers in the United Kingdom to see how Roma children/students perform in an inclusive education system.

36. The Chair of the CAHROM (Croatia) informed the Committee about his participation at the High-Level Conference on the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2016-2021 held in Sofia on 5-6 April 2016 under the Bulgarian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe. The Roma children’s chapter of the Strategy includes among its priorities promoting inclusive education, addressing early marriages and fighting stereotypes.

#### **Roma history, Roma genocide and anti-Gypsyism**

37. The OSCE/ODIHR representative provided the Committee with a summary and comparative presentation of the 34 replies to a questionnaire reproduced in the publication “Teaching about and Commemorating the Roma and Sinti Genocide Practices within the OSCE Area”. She highlighted that seven States had officially recognised the 2 August as a commemoration date for the genocide of Roma and Sinti during the Second World War<sup>5</sup>, while six countries indicated other specific commemoration dates<sup>6</sup>. Another twelve States include the commemoration of Roma and Sinti victims during the commemoration ceremony for all the victims of the Holocaust (usually 27 January). She also informed the Committee about the co-operation with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in furthering work at national level to integrate the experience of Roma

<sup>4</sup> LGBTIQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer/questioning individuals.

<sup>5</sup> Croatia, Hungary, Poland and Ukraine through a parliamentary resolution, plus the Czech Republic, Lithuania and the Slovak Republic.

<sup>6</sup> Austria, Bulgaria, Latvia, the Netherlands, the Russian Federation and Serbia. The Czech Republic has several commemoration dates, including 2 August.

during the Holocaust in history education. In the following discussion, the Committee recalled that there was still no consensus among CAHROM members to propose the establishment of a unique commemoration date at European level.

38. The Committee heard a brief presentation from the Secretariat on the joint CoE/OSCE-ODIHR website on the genocide of the Roma<sup>7</sup> and future Council of Europe work on the remembrance of the Roma Holocaust/genocide. The CAHROM member on behalf of the Republic of Moldova gave feedback on the ERTF Conference “Forgotten Voices - The Holocaust of the Roma” which was held in the Romanian Parliament on 6-7 April 2016 and supported by Partida Romilor PRO-EUROPA (Romania), the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland and the Council of Europe<sup>8</sup>. He informed the Committee about recent developments concerning the official commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust organised last year by the Government, in partnership with the Jewish community of the Republic of Moldova, OSCE-ODIHR and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). The Chair invited Committee members who had not yet done so to send to the Secretariat any updated information regarding their respective country for the joint CoE/OSCE-ODIHR website.

39. The Committee took note of the recommendations adopted by the participants of the Forgotten Voices Conference. Whilst participants insisted on the use of the term “Roma Holocaust”, they were unable to reach consensus on the equivalent term in Romani. The Committee took note of the proposal agreed at this conference to set-up an ad hoc committee of representatives of Roma organisations to agree on the term to be used to define the “Roma Holocaust”, bearing in mind the various terms used in Romani to designate it, including *Kali Traş*, *Porrajmos*, *Pharrajimos*, *Samudaripen*, *Mu(r)daripen*, *Maripen*, and *Baro Mariben*. A tour-de-table held of CAHROM members indicated that *Porrajmos* seems to be currently the most widely used term in the member States, although some Roma strongly oppose it due to its meaning in some variants of Romani. The CAHROM reaffirmed that it does not intend to take a formal view on this debate and will await the results of the above-mentioned ad hoc committee between Roma organisations that may propose the most appropriate term in Romani.

40. The Committee decided to postpone to a future meeting its decision on the feasibility and relevance for the CAHROM to draft a recommendation for the Committee of Ministers on the inclusion of the teaching of Roma history in school curricula. It took note, however, of the future setting up of a working group with pilot countries that will examine current practices in teaching about Roma genocide and start the process of introducing Roma genocide in the school curricula and texts books. The Committee took note and of the offer from the Slovak Republic to join this pilot working group and be one of the two or three countries to pilot the revision of the school curricula. The Chair invited other CAHROM members interested to join this pilot working group and project to inform the Secretariat as soon as possible<sup>9</sup>.

### **Friday, 29 April 2016**

#### **Initial discussion on a draft concept for a CM recommendation on Roma and Traveller's access to justice**

41. The CAHROM took note of a draft concept prepared by the Secretariat and, as a response to one of the specific tasks listed under its Terms of Reference for 2016-2017, decided to establish a Drafting Group, which will have the tasks of discussing first of all the feasibility and relevance of developing a draft Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on access to justice for Roma and Travellers, and, if the Committee subsequently agrees on the conclusions of the first drafting group meeting, of starting drafting a text. The Committee agreed that, for its first meeting scheduled in June 2016 (exact dates to be fixed), the composition of this Drafting Group will be limited to four persons, preferably with a legal background, appointed by CAHROM members and including a member of the Bureau. It was proposed that the composition of the June meeting will include two CAHROM members to be nominated by countries pursuing a mainstreamed policy approach regarding the issue of ethnicity and two CAHROM members nominated by member States conducting programmes particularly targeting Roma and Travellers. The CAHROM Secretariat also stressed the importance to have at least one member from a country with Traveller communities. The CAHROM Bureau appointed the member on behalf of the Republic of Moldova. The other members should be communicated to the Secretariat as soon as possible<sup>10</sup>.

The Drafting Group will receive the assistance of the Secretariat. Other relevant Council of Europe entities and external consultants may be invited to participate at a later stage in the drafting process, pending decisions and proposals made by the Drafting Group in June.

<sup>7</sup> [www.roma-genocide.org](http://www.roma-genocide.org).

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.2august.ertf.org/Projects/>.

<sup>9</sup> During a conference organised in Bucharest in May 2016, the Romanian and Swiss members of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) expressed their interest to join this working group.

<sup>10</sup> Since the 11<sup>th</sup> CAHROM plenary meeting, Austria, France and Ireland, in addition to the Republic of Moldova, have proposed to attend the first meeting of this drafting group which will be held in Strasbourg on Monday, 13 June 2016.

### Update on the list of proposed thematic groups and visits for the years 2016-2017

42. The Committee reviewed the list of proposed thematic groups/visits for the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2016 and 2017 and took note of numerous new proposals from CAHROM members for participation as requesting or partner countries, as well as confirmations of dates and venues. The results of this consultation appears below:

- Spain will host a thematic visit on addressing the needs of newly-arrived Roma communities, as well as opportunities and challenges for their integration, in Madrid in December 2016 (exact dates to be fixed). Bulgaria, Italy, Montenegro, Norway and Serbia proposed themselves as partner countries. Spain also invited Romania to join this group;
- Bosnia and Herzegovina will host a thematic visit on linking anti-poverty and Roma policies through an integrated approach in Sarajevo in November 2016 (exact dates to be fixed). Partner countries include Albania, Croatia, Hungary, Italy and the Netherlands, plus Greece which expressed an interest in the group;
- Ukraine will host a thematic visit on challenges and best practices in implementing Roma inclusion strategies, including mechanisms for resolving the issue of personal identification documents and improving access to social services and education through mediation in Kyiv at the end of 2016 or early 2017. The Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Serbia and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" had already confirmed their interest in being partner countries. In addition, Greece and the Slovak Republic expressed an interest in joining this thematic group;<sup>11</sup>
- Georgia will host a thematic visit on the situation of eastern Roma groups (Roma, Lom/Bosha/Posha, Dom/Garachi/Karachi, Abdal, etc.) in Tbilisi (dates to be fixed). Armenia, the Russian Federation and Turkey confirmed their interest in being partner countries. Azerbaijan will confirm its possible participation in the coming weeks;
- Austria will host a thematic visit on the protection, preservation and teaching of the languages spoken by Roma, Sinti and Yenish (including ways to handle the opposition of certain traditional communities to having their language written and taught) in Graz on 23-25 March 2017. In addition to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Germany, Poland and Slovenia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, and Switzerland proposed joining this thematic group as partner countries;<sup>12</sup>
- Turkey will host a thematic visit on Roma access to employment (with a focus on Roma women and youth) in Autumn 2017 (venue and exact dates to be fixed). Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Moldova, Poland, Spain and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" have already confirmed their participation as partner countries. Greece has expressed an interest in joining this thematic group. The Youth Department of the Council of Europe expressed its interest in joining the thematic group;
- Following the withdrawal from Spain as a hosting country of the CAHROM thematic visit on the empowerment and participation of Roma and Travellers in decision-making bodies and in political life (with a focus on Roma women and youth) for which Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Norway and Romania had already confirmed their interest, a hosting country will need to be identified among these countries in the coming weeks. The Youth Department of the Council of Europe expressed its interest in joining the thematic working group<sup>13</sup>.

43. In addition, other proposals for thematic groups were proposed by several CAHROM members in their reply to the questionnaire on the follow-up and impact of previous CAHROM thematic reports/visits. The Republic of Moldova has proposed to set up a thematic group on the teaching of Roma history (including Roma Holocaust) in school curricula; Latvia has proposed to host a thematic visit on Roma integration and coordination practices in countries with a small Roma population and invited *inter alia* Estonia and Lithuania to join this thematic group; Lithuania has proposed to host in 2017 a thematic visit on Roma mediation<sup>14</sup>; and Slovenia supported the proposal to set up a thematic group on the impact of traditions and culture in Roma policy development and implementation. Greece also proposed to keep Roma education among future thematic priorities.

### Arrangements and proposals for the agenda of the next plenary meeting

44. The Committee agreed that the 12<sup>th</sup> CAHROM meeting will be held in Strasbourg from Tuesday 15 November until noon on Friday 18 November 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Following a new proposal received from Lithuania to host a thematic visit on mediation, the list of partner countries may be split into two groups: one going to Ukraine to share experience on ID documents and one going to Lithuania to discuss mediation.

<sup>12</sup> Taking into account the large number of countries involved, this thematic visit will count for two in terms of budget planning.

<sup>13</sup> Since then, Greece has proposed to host the thematic visit in October 2016.

<sup>14</sup> See footnote no.11 above.



45. The Committee also agreed on the Secretariat's proposal concerning the modus operandi of the dialogue meeting with Roma and Traveller civil society due to take place during the Strasbourg CAHROM plenary meeting in November 2016. The dialogue meeting will more than likely take place on 15 November 2016 and form part of the agenda of the CAHROM meeting. Topics for discussion with civil society will include Roma youth and the lifestyle of nomadic and semi-nomadic Roma and Travellers. The CAHROM thematic report on the empowerment and participation of Roma youth and the inclusion of a Roma youth dimension in national Roma inclusion strategies, the thematic report on Roma and Travellers' participation in advisory councils and consultative mechanisms, as well as the CAHROM thematic report on the schooling of Roma migrant and Traveller children, will be finalised and distributed as background documents for the dialogue meeting with Roma and Traveller civil society.

46. The Committee expressed its satisfaction and gratitude to the Bulgarian authorities for the excellent organisation of the CAHROM meeting and the cultural event with Roma artists. CAHROM members welcomed the new working methods introduced by the CAHROM Bureau, in particular the parallel working sessions to examine and discuss CAHROM thematic reports, although some members would recommend allocating more time to these working group sessions in future meetings. Several CAHROM members also appreciated the feedback given to the coordination meeting between international intergovernmental organisations and their respective interventions. Some members, however, felt that this was too lengthy; others, who are neither EU members nor EU accession countries, suggested limiting these interventions to once a year. Several CAHROM members additionally suggested to envisage more time for the analysis of the situation of Roma and Travellers in specific Council of Europe member States. CAHROM members are therefore invited to communicate to the Secretariat certain issues that they would like to raise during the next CAHROM-meeting. Several CAHROM members expressed satisfaction about the chairing of the meeting and the respect for the timing. The Chair also invited Romani speakers to make full use of the Romani interpretation provided at CAHROM meetings.

47. The CAHROM Bureau will discuss this feedback and examine possible ways to improve further the working methods at its next meeting in September 2016. Pending the availability of financial means for interpretation, more parallel working group sessions could be envisaged in future meetings (covering some of the agenda items and interventions from international observers) so as to bring more flexibility for CAHROM members to attend sessions on certain topics.

48. As regards agenda items for its next meeting, in addition to the thematic reports mentioned in paragraph 45, the Committee agreed to examine and discuss the thematic report on testing systems and diagnoses for Roma children with allegedly mild mental disabilities (following the visit to Budapest, Hungary, on 9-11 March 2016), as well as the thematic report on addressing and combating human trafficking within Roma communities with a focus on street children and prostitution (following the visit to Tirana, Albania, in April 2015) in the presence of GRETA, ECRI, the Children Rights' Division, the Equality Division and other relevant Council of Europe bodies. The Committee invited FRA to present the results of the EU-MIDIS II survey and will await the results of the first meeting of the Drafting Group for a CM recommendation on access to justice for Roma and Travellers in Europe. The Committee took note of the proposal from Turkey to present at the next meeting its recently adopted Strategy Document for Roma Citizens and the First Phase Action Plan, as well as a proposal from Latvia to present the results of the 2015 research entitled "Roma in Latvia" which includes ethnic-based data and statistics. Pending its finalisation, a publication marking the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dosta! campaign could also be presented at the October CAHROM meeting.

49. The Committee took note of the invitation of the Czech Republic to host the 13<sup>th</sup> CAHROM meeting in Prague in May 2017 (exact dates to be fixed) under the Czech Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The Committee also took note that Greece is exploring the possibility to host the 15<sup>th</sup> CAHROM meeting in Athens in Spring 2018, provided the Committee of Ministers adopts the CAHROM Terms of Reference for 2018-2019.

### **Adoption of the list of decisions**

50. The Committee adopted a draft list of decisions at the meeting and agreed to adopt the draft abridged report by written procedure by 12 May 2016.

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**Appendix 1 – Agenda of the 11<sup>th</sup> CAHROM meeting, Samokov (26 April 2016) and Sofia (27-29 April 2016), Bulgaria**

**Tuesday, 26 April 2016**

Field visit to Samokov

**Wednesday, 27 April 2016**

- I. Opening of the plenary meeting and adoption of the agenda
- II. CAHROM's working methods and contribution to the Council of Europe's agenda on Roma and Traveller issues
- III. Co-ordination among international organisations on their Roma-related thematic priorities for the years 2016-2017 and recent developments at national and international level
- IV. Housing and accommodation

**Thursday, 28 April 2016**

- V. Discussion on recent thematic visits and reports (parallel working groups x 2)
- VI. Review of the outcome and follow-up given to CAHROM thematic reports endorsed between 2012 and 2015
- VII. Vulnerable groups within Roma and Traveller communities: women, youth, children and LGBTIQ
- VIII. Roma history, Roma genocide and anti-Gypsyism

**Friday, 29 April 2016**

- IX. Initial discussion on a draft concept for a CM recommendation on Roma and Traveller's access to justice
- X. Update on the list of proposed thematic groups and visits for the years 2016-2017
- XI. Arrangements and proposals for the agenda of the next plenary meeting
- XII. Adoption of the list of decisions

## Appendix 2 – Summary of the field visit to Samokov (26 April 2016)

On the day before the CAHROM plenary meeting, participants from member States and observers visited the city of Samokov. Three main areas were scheduled for the visit: the municipality, the hospital with health mediators and the protestant church.

### Samokov City Hall

The Mayor of Samokov presented the overall situation of the municipality, which has an integration strategy, with an emphasis on the Roma citizens living there. Approximately 30,000 inhabitants live in Samokov, 8,500 of whom are of Roma origin and live in the Roma neighbourhood. About 6,000 of them worship in the protestant evangelical church.

The Mayor provided participants with information on specific issues related to education, employment, social life and the use of EU funds and stressed the need to work on infrastructure, which remains the biggest challenge within the municipality. In reply to some questions, he indicated that marriages between Roma and non-Roma are not uncommon, but there are not too many cases of them; no criminality related to drug trafficking has been noted in the Roma settlement; several projects focus on Roma children; the employment (or indeed lack of employment) of Roma (3,000 out of 8,000 Roma from the municipality are registered in the employment agency) is directly linked to the fact that Roma children drop out from school after their primary education; healthcare is directly linked to employment and the high percentage of unemployed Roma explains the presence of health mediators; in terms of infrastructure, the Roma neighbourhood is in bad shape and a lot of work needs to be done, however, since many of the houses are illegal, no legal urban planning has the scope to address this issue. The municipality has developed a special plan for housing: the houses built illegally need to be demolished and replaced with new ones. Yet the vicious circle of “no education, no jobs, no housing” cannot be combatted without real investment and additional financial resources.

### Samokov Hospital

After an introduction to the hospital's services, a question and answer session provided a more indepth discussion of the situation of health mediators in Bulgaria. The most successful practice and governmental policy measure is that of the health mediator. Over the years, the profession has evolved from being a pilot non-governmental activity to becoming government policy: in 2007, 57 health mediators were appointed in municipalities with funds allocated from the state budget. By 2015, the number of health mediators in Bulgaria had reached 170, a number which is continuously on the rise. Ms Rositsa Ivanova, Bulgarian CAHROM member, informed participants that the profession of health mediator has been included in the National Classification of Occupations in the Republic of Bulgaria. Health mediators enjoy recognition in society; they assist the population in neighbourhoods with a compact Roma population, as well as the medical professionals who serve this population. The very concrete presentation of the work of health mediators by Mr Georgi Nikolov and another health mediator resulted in a broader understanding of the main challenges they face in their work, as well as their main achievements.

The main problems and difficulties encountered by the health mediators in the realization of their objectives related to:

- the lack of health mediators working in the Roma community;
- poor attitudes among the Roma community for incorporating preventive activities for better health;
- an unsatisfactory range of preventive examinations among the Roma community as a result of irregular health insurance; no choice of family doctor; and low literacy and lack of health education.

A significant problem concerns the further follow-up and possible treatment of persons without health insurance who have health problems uncovered during the prophylactic examination. It is also very difficult to implement the policy of mandatory immunization of children in accordance with the Immunization Calendar of the Republic of Bulgaria – for example, there is often a lack of evidence of vaccinations carried out to date, an incomplete immunization scheme for the respective ages, patients do not have a GP and/or no registered permanent address.

### Evangelical Church

Later during the day, the visit continued to the protestant evangelical church in Samokov, which is the biggest in Bulgaria. The priest presented the community and the importance of the church in the life of its worshipers. The church is a very strong connector between young and elders, between women and men, between educated and uneducated people. As such, it plays a very important role in the community, although it is disconnected from the other inhabitants of the municipality. Various topics were discussed after the presentation, including the educational programmes the church offers that aims to improve the behaviour of men through religion which has subsequently enhanced the status of women. Early marriages and healthcare (personal hygiene) were also addressed though participants could notice a conservative stance regarding sex education and abortion. In addition, the church supports children from early education until university through scholarships. Most of the young Roma students present indicated that they envisage their professional future working for the community.