



Ministry of Interior
Decentralization & E- Government
General Secretariat of Public Administration
& E- Government
Office of Vice Minister

Athens 13 April 2010

To : Mr. Thomas Hammamberg
Commissioner for Human Rights
of the Council of Europe

Dear Commissioner,

I would like first of all to thank you for your letter and the copy of your study "Recent Migration of Roma in Europe" sent to me which provides a detailed analysis of the existing human rights standards concerning migration in Europe and the discriminatory practices Roma face. It is truly an inspiring study which can be really useful to everybody interested in the Roma migration and especially politicians.

The Roma issue is truly a case upon which we all have to deal with great sensitivity in order to face effectively some of the deeply rooted attitudes and mentality which characterize even in the 21st century the relationship of many National States and Roma populations. Besides there is a greater need for better coordination within the European community and its institutions to deal in a holistic way to the Roma issues always within the context of human rights.

I would like to assure you at this point that the Greek Government and I personally stand on this issue with great interest and we are determined to do anything in our power to safeguard that the Roma population within the Greek

territory will be treated on the basis of human rights and that each Governmental Agency responsible will work to this direction.

As you know, even though the newly elected Greek Government has been in power only for a few months and despite the difficulties due to the economic crisis, it has been working hard to reform the legislation regarding legally residing long term immigrants in Greece as well as immigrant children born in Greece. The new legislation voted recently by the Greek Parliament grants to the abovementioned immigrants their right to attain the Greek citizenship as well as the right to vote to the local elections. Moreover as the Prime Minister himself announced recently the whole asylum Greek system is being reformed with respect to the international treaties on human rights and the needs emerging from the great influx of immigrants seeking asylum.

Finally, in regards to Article 19 of the Greek Nationality Code it has ceased to exist. Based upon the new legislation of the Greek Nationality Code persons who lost their citizenship are entitled to reapply in order to restore their Greek citizenship. Currently the Greek Government is in the process of evaluating a number of applicants who based on former Article 19 lost their Greek Nationality. Therefore to this extent the Greek Government has also been working to the direction of facilitating the process of persons wishing to reapply for citizenship based on the former Article 19.

I remain at your disposal for any further information you might need and I am looking forward to our future cooperation.

Sincerely,



Theodora Tzakri
Vice Minister of interior