

Prime Minister of the Republic of Hungary

**Mr. Thomas Hammarberg
Commissioner for Human Rights
of the Council of Europe**

Budapest, 9th December 2009.

Dear Commissioner,

Let me thank you for your letter dated 22 October 2009, in which you refer to the situation of minority groups, especially of the Roma in Hungary. Our competent authorities examined the proposals of your letter and compiled the remarks of the Hungarian Government, which contain the relevant governmental measures regarding Roma inclusion in the field of adequate housing, employment, equal opportunity policy and public education. The Hungarian position concerning the ratification of the Protocol No. 12 to the European Convention on Human Rights is also attached. With regard to the regulation of freedom of expression I can assure you that we are fully committed to find efficient legal tools against hate speech, which obviously is a grave concern to various minorities, including the Roma. Appropriate legal measures should be based on the consensus of the political parties represented in the Parliament.

The issue is an enormous challenge not only for Hungary, but for the whole region. The responsibility lies in each country, but the answers have to be given on a regional level. Let me briefly inform you about certain results regarding the integration of Roma people in Hungary. Since the democratic transition, Hungary has done a lot for the amelioration of the situation of Roma. Contrary to the view developed about Roma in Western Europe, the Roma people cannot be considered as "travellers" in Hungary, since they have been living in permanent settlements for centuries. Majority of Roma children are enrolled in the public education and over 80% of them accomplish primary school. Their participation in secondary and higher education has also been increasing for years. The system of health and social services is available for all Hungarian Roma as citizens of the state. In the institutional framework, the Hungarian authorities have been seeking the most appropriate mechanisms and solutions in all areas, which are mentioned by your letter, since 1990. We agree that we can never do enough and special efforts have to be made towards our fellow citizens who are the most affected by the current financial crisis. The government has to be cautious and not to lose sight of this great challenge.

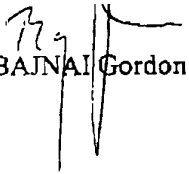
We are absolutely aware and feel the burden of problems and difficulties of integrating a still marginalised strata of the Roma to the society. We have elaborated several initiatives in the field of improving living conditions, social integration of Roma settlements, desegregation

and scholarship programmes in public education. The recently announced governmental measures are in line with our main goal, the social and economic inclusion of those Roma people, who are not integrated yet. We attach great importance to enhance this integration process to prevent the irreversible marginalization of this community. I can assure you that the competent Hungarian authorities do their utmost, serious and consequent efforts have been taken to achieve tangible results.

I would like to take this opportunity to express again my acknowledgement for your assistance and advice to find the most adequate answer to the challenge we face. Consequently, we welcome any proposal to be put forward by your office

We are looking forward to continuing our dialogue.

Yours sincerely,



BAJNAI Gordon