

Press Release

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Council of Europe puts forward initiative to improve Roma situation

Strasbourg, 16.09.2010 – The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, today presented to the Committee of Ministers an initiative to help overcome the immediate and long-term challenges related to the rights and obligations of Roma communities throughout Europe.

"The Council of Europe has repeatedly expressed its concerns about some measures adopted by Member States with regard to Roma, most recently by the Human Rights Commissioner Thomas Hammarberg and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). I believe it is our responsibility to work with Member States to find solutions to current issues", said the Secretary General.

At the heart of the initiative, the Secretary General proposes a High Level Meeting with two main objectives: Firstly, to clarify the applicable Council of Europe and EU standards in the case of the Roma migration and secondly, to launch a process involving the Council of Europe, the European Union and national governments, focusing on specific actions aimed at improving the economic and social integration of Roma people in Europe.

"This is a pan-European challenge and requires a pan-European response. Social and economic marginalisation, and all problems which come with it, are not limited to one country", Jagland said.

"The Council of Europe is determined to work with our partners in the Member States to ensure respect for our standards. This is not only a legal and moral imperative. Respect for human rights is an asset in the conduct of any public policy, including in those related to migration. The Council of Europe offers its experience and support. In the context of my consultations with European Ministers on this subject, I will tomorrow be meeting the French Secretary of State for European Affairs, Pierre Lellouche", he added.

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