

**Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller<sup>1</sup> Civil Society**  
**8<sup>th</sup> Meeting**  
**Strasbourg, 10-11 October 2019**  
**Palais de l'Europe, Room 10**  
***“Protecting the right of Roma and Traveller children to equal access to quality education.***  
***Fighting school segregation through inclusive education”***

**Closing Remarks, Friday, 11 October 2019, 12:00-13:00**

**Speaking Notes**

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**Head of Anti-Discrimination Department and Head of Department a.i. for the Roma and Travellers Team,**  
**Council of Europe**

Mr Madame Chairperson, dear Ambassador, dear participants,

It is a great pleasure for me to close what we consider a very successful Dialogue meeting with Roma and Traveller civil society, the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of this kind since the creation of this mechanism by the Committee of Ministers in 2015.

All eight meetings have shown that it is indispensable to regularly involve civil society in our work. The involvement of Roma and Traveller civil society is necessary to advance our work in the field of Roma and Travellers inclusion. The Dialogue meetings provide for regular exchange of information and views fruitful for all stakeholders.

All eight meetings have tackled important items. Previous meetings have addressed housing, evictions, migration, employment, political participation, and combating hate speech.

And I would in particular like to highlight the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting which carried out an assessment of the implementation of the current Council of Europe Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019) and pointed the way for the development of a new strategic policy document on Roma and Traveller inclusion post-2019.

From a content point of view, this 8<sup>th</sup> meeting on “Fighting school segregation through inclusive education” was one of the most important ones out of the series of Dialogue meetings. As Jeroen Schokkenbroek put it yesterday morning in his opening address: “Segregated schooling of Roma and Traveller children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a real human rights scandal.” And because inclusive education is the prime change agent related to inclusion into society.

The problems are obvious:

- Lack of equitable access to quality inclusive education
- High rate of absenteeism
- High drop-out rates
- Low educational achievements

- Segregation from other, non-Roma children, and
- Allocation to schools for children with special educational needs (SEN)

How do we solve that issue? Well, we believe that desegregation and inclusive education are the solutions.

I would like to quote the CoE Human Rights Commissioner, who said: “Inclusive education is not a utopian project but an achievable goal for the benefit of all.”

What can the Council of Europe do, and what can you do, to achieve that goal?

One part of this Dialogue meeting is that we inform you of what the Council of Europe has done and is still doing to tackle the issue and, more importantly, how Roma and Traveller civil society can participate in or contribute to this process.

In this meeting,

- we learnt about the relevant case law of the European Court of Human Rights, notably the case of D.H. and others vs the Czech Republic, as presented by the President of the European Court of Human Rights, who informed you that “the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights is not the end but the beginning in a process of finding the right solution to the right to inclusive education”.
- we learnt that the implementation of the Court judgments by member states is followed up by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, assisted by a specific Department set up at the Secretariat for that purpose, and that civil society has the possibility of submitting NGO submissions, as it has for example been done by Amnesty International in the case of D.H. and others vs. the Czech Republic. **Please make use of that possibility.**
- we learnt that the implementation of the European Social Charter is monitored through an obligation by States Parties to submit regular national reports, which are then being examined by the European Committee for Social Rights (ECSR). We heard yesterday that reports concerning Article 17 on the Right to Education are currently being examined by the Committee and that its conclusions are expected to be published in December 2019 or in January 2020. **Please keep track of that publication.**
- we also learnt that another way to monitor the implementation of the European Social Charter is through the collective complaint’s procedure by which non-governmental organisations can launch complaints with the European Committee for Social Rights in cases of an alleged breach of Charter provisions. The President of the ERTF has shown you yesterday though one of the ERTF collective complaints that it can be done, and that you can also win. **Please make use of that possibility.**
- we learnt that the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) during its country visits also meets with NGOs, including Roma and Traveller NGOs. **Please make use of that possibility.**
- we learnt that the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities also takes into account so-called “shadow reports” from civil society, which you could submit to the Secretariat of the Framework Convention after having examined the respective State report. **Please make use of that possibility.**
- In addition to the monitoring work of the Council of Europe, we also learnt about our more project-based activities, such as the EU/CoE Joint Programme "Inclusive Schools: Making a Difference for Roma children

(INSCHOOL), which is currently being implemented in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, the Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom. This pilot project needs to be made sustainable in the respective member states. **Please assist the Council of Europe in working towards that goal.**

- We also learnt that Roma mediation pilot projects, such as the previous EU/CoE Joint Programme ROMED, have proven to be successful but now need to be rolled out large scale and must be made sustainable through public funding in the member states. **Please assist the Council of Europe in working towards that goal.**

The following recommendations emanate from the plenary and workgroup sessions of the 8<sup>th</sup> Dialogue Meeting:

- The impact of ECtHR jurisprudence should be amplified by other International and European institutions to ensure legislative and regulatory change. To this effect the Court should further infuse into their definition of discrimination based on ethnic and racial grounds when examining such cases, the standards and interpretations of racial discrimination as developed by other bodies such as ECRI.
- Policymakers can and should take urgent steps to ensure widespread desegregation outcomes. Therefore, the forthcoming Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan on Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025) should include forward-looking measures that enhance the chances of effective and sustainable desegregation while promoting quality and inclusive education.
- The Anti-discrimination framework policy should explicitly address anti-Gypsyism and anti-Nomadism. This should be rigorously enforced at International, European and National policy development. Intergovernmental bodies and monitoring mechanisms of the Council of Europe should include the examination of this specific type of racism when examining the compliance by of member states with standards particularly in the area of the right to education.

On another note, I would like to recognise the strong interest by the Council of Europe's intergovernmental Roma and Traveller-related structure in this Dialogue meeting, manifested by the presence of both the Chair and the Vice-Chair of CAHROM in this meeting.

Finally, I am pleased to confirm what Jeroen Schokkenbroek said yesterday in his welcome address, namely that the SG has proposed for the CoE P&B 2020-2021 to continue these regular meetings of the Dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society. We need your grassroots experience, and we need Roma and Traveller civil society to accompany the implementation of our new post-2019 strategic document on Roma and Traveller inclusion, which will hopefully be adopted by the Committee of Ministers by the end of this year.

As of next year, we intend to reinforce our co-operation with equality bodies and National Human Rights Institutions. Why? Because equality bodies, Ombudspersons and Human Rights Institutions or Commissioners have an important role to play in supporting Roma and Traveller organisations in assisting their members to report and follow up human rights violations and to seek redress and compensation.

Last but not least, I would like to thank all chairs, moderators, rapporteurs and speakers for having contributed so actively to the success of this Dialogue meeting. And I would of course like to thank you, the participants, for your participation and your active taking part in discussions and workshop sessions. Without all of you, this meeting would not have yielded the same results. And I would like to thank the interpreters, because without your communication and dialogue would have been much more difficult.

Have a safe journey back home. Looking forward to seeing as many as possible of you at the next Dialogue meeting in spring 2010.