



Information Documents

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Council of Europe Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers¹ (2016-2019) - Implementing the Action Plan

¹ The term "Roma and Travellers" is 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. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the state of implementation of the “Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019)”, of which the Ministers’ Deputies took note at their 1249th meeting (2 March 2016), for the period from April 2017 to April 2018. The first implementation report (document [SG/Inf\(2017\)21-final](#)), of which the Deputies took note on 14 June 2017, covered the period from March 2016 to March 2017.

During these first two years of implementation, the Thematic Action Plan has ensured a coherent approach to the Council of Europe’s work on the inclusion of Roma and Travellers, helping to demonstrate both the Organisation’s capacity to apply its instruments and tools towards the achievement of this goal, as well as the commitment of member states to furthering the inclusion of Roma and Travellers. The main achievements so far include the development and adoption of new standards, such as Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2017\)10](#) on improving access to justice for Roma and Travellers in Europe, the provision of peer reviews through the thematic work and reports of the Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM) and the organisation of co-operation and capacity-building activities in the framework of Joint Programmes implemented with the European Commission, such as INSCHOOL, JUSTROM, ROMACT, and ROMACTED. Member states have supported the implementation of the Thematic Action Plan through voluntary contributions (Finland, Germany, Greece and Hungary) and staff secondments (Greece, Poland). The Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe have also given political support to the implementation of the Thematic Action Plan. The Council of Europe has also co-operated with international partners, including UNESCO, OSCE/ODIHR, OSF, ECMI and IHR for the implementation of several activities.

This Thematic Action Plan has enhanced the commitment and co-operation between the various sectors of the Council of Europe and strengthened synergies. Furthermore, it has contributed to the implementation of the Action Plan on “Building Inclusive Societies” (2016-2019).

Priority 1: Tackling anti-Roma and anti-Traveller prejudice, discrimination and crimes (“anti-Gypsyism”)

Overall objective: To achieve the inclusion of Roma and Travellers in European societies as citizens with full rights and responsibilities

Specific objective 1.1 Strengthening the competence to fight against anti-Gypsyism

- Fight against anti-Gypsyism

As the fight against anti-Gypsyism is one of the key objectives of the Thematic Action Plan, high priority has been given to relevant activities.

The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAN), which aims, *inter alia*, to promote arts and culture as a means to promote human rights and intercultural understanding and thereby to tackle anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma in Europe, has been established and is fully operational. Its revised draft statutes were adopted on 18 January 2017 at the 1275th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies. The constituting meeting of ERIAC as an association took place in Berlin in February 2017. ERIAC was subsequently registered as an association under German law with the competent court in Berlin in May 2017 and launched officially in the Federal Foreign Office of the German Government in Berlin in June 2017.

ERIAC's Executive Director took up her functions in September 2017. In December 2017, ERIAC opened its office in Berlin and was bestowed with financial contributions from the Council of Europe and the Open Society Foundations (OSF). The first regular ERIAC Board meeting took place in Berlin on 30 January 2018 (the Council of Europe's representative in the Board is Ms Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director General of Democracy).

In January and February 2018, ERIAC organised an "International Cultural Outreach Programme" to introduce ERIAC to diverse audiences in seven cities (Seville, Cracow, Budapest, Prague, Rome, Bucharest and Berlin). In March 2018, ERIAC presented the exhibition "Hidden Roma Masterpieces" at the Council of Europe in the presence of the Secretary General, Ambassadors, and MEPs. On 10 April 2018, at their 1313th meeting, the Ministers' Deputies authorised the Secretary General to sign the Memorandum of Understanding on the co-operation between the Council of Europe and ERIAC. They also took note of the concept paper of the Terms of Reference for the external evaluation of ERIAC.

- The above actions have contributed to the achievement of expected result No. 4 of the Programme "Promoting Social Inclusion and Respect for Human Rights: Roma, Migrants" in the Council of Europe Programme and Budget 2016-2017: "A European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture has been supported."

The Council of Europe's Youth Department, through the implementation of its Roma Youth Action Plan, has placed the work against anti-Gypsyism high on its agenda. In this context, the "Mirrors - Manual on combating anti-Gypsyism through human rights education", already available in English, French, Greek and Russian, was also made available in Bulgarian and Hungarian. A Mirrors training course on anti-Gypsyism through Roma youth participation, organised at the European Youth Centre Strasbourg in September 2017, increased the capacities of 18 young people to combat anti-Gypsyism through human rights education. Regional training courses were held in Chisinau (Republic of Moldova) in October 2017 and in Vilnius (Lithuania) in November 2017. Both events, supported by relevant stakeholders such as the respective National Youth Councils and governments, provided both Roma and non-Roma youth with unique opportunities to increase their understanding and skills in combating anti-Gypsyism. In co-operation with the National Office against Discrimination and the NGO Roma ONLUS (Italy), the Youth Department organised a seminar in November 2017 for 23 Roma and non-Roma youth on countering online hate speech and anti-Gypsyism affecting Roma youth in Italy.

Co-operation with the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest (Hungary) continued in 2017 for the summer university on topics related to building a counter-narrative to discrimination and anti-Gypsyism.

- Teaching of Roma and Traveller history and Remembrance

Work on teaching the history of Roma and Travellers and the remembrance of the Roma Holocaust is ongoing; the pedagogical factsheets on Roma history, culture and language were revised and made available online.

The Roma and Travellers Team, the Roma Education Fund (REF) and the Georg Eckert Institute (GEI) contributed to a research project analysing the representation of Roma in European school curricula and textbooks at secondary education level. The report on the curricula was finalised in 2017, whilst the report on the text books will be available in the second half of 2018. The project will finish at the end of 2018 with recommendations to educational policy-makers on how to improve the representation of Roma.

A thematic visit of the Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM) on the teaching of Roma history, including the Roma Holocaust, in textbooks and school curricula took place in Košice (Slovak Republic) in November 2017. Partner countries included the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Republic of Moldova and Romania. IHRA and OSCE/ODIHR also participated in the visit. The CAHROM thematic report was presented at the 15th CAHROM meeting in Athens, Greece, in May 2018.

In November 2017, whilst adopting the CAHROM's 2018-2019 Terms of Reference, the Committee of Ministers also tasked the Ad hoc Committee with the preparation of a draft recommendation on the inclusion of the teaching of Roma history, including the Roma Holocaust, in textbooks and school curricula. The CoE/REF/GEI research project and CAHROM thematic visit mentioned previously will contribute to the drafting of that recommendation.

Closer co-operation with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) was established: the Roma and Travellers Team was represented at both the IHRA plenary meeting and the meeting of the IHRA Committee on the Genocide of Roma held in Geneva in June 2017 (the CoE now holds a permanent seat in this committee). It also participated in the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Research Network on "Legacies of the Romani Genocide in Europe", which took place in Liverpool (United Kingdom) in July 2017.

Roma Holocaust Day (2 August) was commemorated at the Council of Europe with a remembrance ceremony held on the forecourt of the Palais de l'Europe. The joint CoE/ODIHR website on the Roma Holocaust was also updated.

The second edition of "Right to Remember – A Handbook for Education with Young People on the Roma Genocide" was published by the Youth Department in April 2017 within the framework of its Roma Youth Action Plan (RYAP). The RYAP also supports the Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative founded by Roma youth organisations, which has raised awareness and knowledge of European youth on topics related to Roma history, including the Roma Holocaust, remembrance, human rights education, and anti-Gypsyism. The latest event held on 2 August 2017 in Krakow and Auschwitz-Birkenau (Poland) brought together some 380 participants from 14 member states who learned about and commemorated the fate of Roma during the Holocaust, whilst relating it to the present day challenges of racism, xenophobia and anti-Gypsyism.

- The above actions have contributed to the achievement of expected result No. 2 of the Programme "Promoting Social Inclusion and Respect for Human Rights: Roma, Migrants" in the Council of Europe Programme and Budget 2016-2017: "Stakeholders (legal professionals, law enforcement agencies, equality bodies, civil society organisations, media and citizens) have been made aware of Roma discrimination in its current and historical dimensions."

- *"Dosta! Enough! Go beyond prejudice, meet the Roma" awareness-raising campaign*

The Dosta! leaflet and toolkit were produced in Greek for use in a training course on non-discrimination with the Greek police and for the JUSTROM programme in Greece. These materials were also produced in the Georgian language in view of future awareness-raising activities within the framework of the project "Fight against discrimination, hate crime and hate speech in Georgia", implemented by the No Hate Speech and Co-operation Unit under the Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia.

A Dosta!-supported workshop, an awareness-raising event and an exhibition were organised in Kumanovo ("the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia") during the Roma Pride events held in October and November 2017, which were attended by teachers, civil society,

ambassadors, and representatives of state and local authorities. Prejudices, stereotypes and discrimination faced by Roma pupils and students in the education system were addressed in order to change the current perception of Roma in primary and secondary schools in Kumanovo.

In order to combat as early as possible the intolerance and racism that many Roma face in Europe today, a child-friendly version of the Dosta! campaign is planned for 2018-2019. The concept for developing the child-friendly Dosta! toolkit has been prepared and validated with the involvement of 70 children from Albania, Hungary and Spain, who were consulted on how to raise awareness about racism and prejudice towards Roma.

A perpetual Dosta! calendar was produced in English with short texts and visuals raising awareness of discrimination against Roma and Travellers in everyday life.

During the 33rd Congress session (Strasbourg, October 2017), the 6th Dosta! Congress Prize for Municipalities was awarded to Şişli (Turkey), Volos (Greece) and Gliwice (Poland) for their innovative local-level Roma inclusion projects (see below under Congress). A brochure to mark the 10th anniversary of the biennial Dosta! Congress Prize was produced in English and French and distributed.

- The above actions have contributed to the achievement of expected result No. 2 of the Programme “Promoting Social Inclusion and Respect for Human Rights: Roma, Migrants” in the Council of Europe Programme and Budget 2016-2017: “Stakeholders (legal professionals, law enforcement agencies, equality bodies, civil society organisations, media and citizens) have been made aware of Roma discrimination in its current and historical dimensions.”

Specific Objective 1.2 Improving the access of Roma and Travellers to justice

Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2017\)10](#) on improving access to justice for Roma and Travellers in Europe was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 17 October 2017. Drafted by the CAHROM in consultation with the European Committee on Legal Cooperation (CDCJ) and the Gender Equality Unit, this recommendation emphasises the need for equal access to legal aid and legal services and highlights the importance of quasi-judicial methods of conflict resolution and the effectiveness of judicial remedies. Particular attention is paid to the situation of persons suffering from intersectional discrimination, such as women and girls, young people and people with disabilities. The recommendation was translated into Bulgarian, Finnish, Greek, Italian, Montenegrin, Romanian, Serbian and Spanish, and widely distributed, including to participants of the CAHROM thematic visit on Roma and Travellers’ access to Justice which was held in Helsinki (Finland) in March 2018.

In 2017, the joint statement on evictions of Roma and Travellers, adopted by the Operational Platform for Roma Equality (OPRE)² in June 2016, was circulated to the Albanian, French and Ukrainian local authorities either prior to, or following, evictions of Roma in order to recall the relevant international human rights standards.

OPRE met in Paris in May 2017 under the auspices of the French *Défenseur des Droits* addressing, *inter alia*, the situation of Roma (migrants) and Travellers (*Gens du voyage*) in France, child and/or forced marriage within Roma communities, anti-Gypsyism and hate

² OPRE partners are: the Council of Europe, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI), and the European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet). The European Commission (DG JUST), the Office of the EU Ombudsman, the OSCE/ODIHR and the OHCHR are represented in OPRE meetings as associate partners.

speech against Roma, school segregation, and the prevention of Czech and Hungarian Roma from travelling to Canada.

The 5th OPRE meeting, to be hosted by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission in Belfast (United Kingdom) on 15-16 May 2018 as a joint meeting between OPRE and the Platform on Social and Economic Rights, will address the issues of accommodation for Travellers, and Roma housing rights.

In Romania, one of the objectives of the project on “Improving access to justice: an integrated approach with a focus on Roma and other vulnerable groups” is to pilot legal aid services in five legal assistance offices in Mures, Bihor, Dolj, Dambovita and Calarasi in order to improve access to legal aid services for vulnerable communities, including Roma.

More than 1,000 individuals benefited from legal advice; lawyers from the pilot centres assisted with 762 cases. The support provided was specialised, addressed legal or administrative proceedings, and covered issues such as family law, social security benefits, payment of taxes, etc. Within the framework of this project, the Council of Europe provided significant support to the Superior Council of Magistracy in raising awareness and legal literacy among the targeted vulnerable groups, including Roma. The Council of Europe also trained 139 judges, lawyers and civil society representatives, addressing stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination faced by vulnerable people, including Roma, whilst raising awareness of the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights.

Specific Objective 1.3 Developing the skills and knowledge of legal professionals and administrators

In 2017, emphasis was put on both the training of legal and law enforcement professionals and the provision of adequate training materials.

Three training of trainers sessions on non-discrimination for the police were organised: a training session on non-discrimination and combating human trafficking for 30 heads of anti-racist units in the police administration in Athens, Thessaloniki and Xanthi (Greece, July 2017); a training session on non-discrimination for 16 Bulgarian police officers (Sofia, Bulgaria, in November 2017); and a training session on non-discrimination for 23 Romanian police officers (Bucharest, Romania, in December 2017).

One training of trainers session on non-discrimination for legal professionals and one for 40 judges, procurers and lawyers took place in Rome, Italy, in December 2017. A training session on hate crimes and anti-discrimination with a special focus on Roma (Gitanos) was organised for 75 national police officers of the Police Academy and 10 civil guards in Madrid (Spain) in February 2017.

The training activities in Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and Romania have also contributed to the implementation of the JUSTROM Programme on improving Roma women’s access to justice. The training sessions in Bulgaria, Romania and Spain were funded by a German voluntary contribution.

Part of an ODGP VC grant was used to finance two training sessions of prison staff in Bulgaria on non-discrimination with a focus on Roma, namely for 25 penitentiary staff in the male-only prison in Sofia and for 25 penitentiary staff in the Sliven female-only prison, both of which were held in November 2017. Training materials for prison staff on anti-discrimination and human rights standards were produced in English and Bulgarian. In total, 100 Bulgarian prison staff members were trained on non-discrimination with a focus on Roma in the four above-mentioned Bulgarian prisons.

The Handbook for Lawyers on Roma and Traveller-related ECtHR Case Law was translated into Bulgarian, Greek and Romanian. A Council of Europe Toolkit on non-discrimination for police officers on CoE standards on racially-motivated crimes and non-discrimination with a focus on Roma was developed and translated into Bulgarian, Greek and Romanian. Training materials and a curriculum for police officers on non-discrimination, racist crimes and Roma were produced.

A comprehensive training programme for legal professionals on non-discrimination and implementation of anti-discrimination law and policies was conducted in Albania within the framework of the CoE/EU Joint Programme on “Enhancing the effectiveness of the Albanian system of human rights protection and anti-discrimination”. The training course was launched for a selected group of professionals, including representatives of the Ombudsperson Office, the Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination (CPD), the former Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, and NGOs and delivered in close partnership with the regional project “HELP in the Western Balkans and Turkey”. As a result of the training course, more than 30 representatives of the beneficiary institutions became better equipped with relevant knowledge and skills. In addition to the training course, the project initiated a review of the existing training modules of the School of Magistrates, the School of Advocates, the Albanian School of Public Administration, and the Security Academy along with a review of internal procedures of the Audiovisual Media Authority.

In Montenegro, the Council of Europe intensified the assistance provided to the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, through the tailoring of training programmes for the members of the National Commission in charge of the National Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma (2016-2020), consisting of representatives of line ministries, the Roma National Council and Roma NGOs. The training programme aimed to enhance participants’ knowledge of relevant human rights standards and case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, with a focus on concrete examples on how to apply those standards in institutional practices. More than 20 governmental representatives and Roma activists were trained.

HELP courses on Hate Crime and Hate Speech were also launched for legal professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. HELP courses on anti-discrimination, including the module on Roma, were launched in Bulgaria and in several Eastern Partnership countries, such as Armenia, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. The HELP course on the Fight against Racism and Xenophobia was launched in Austria, Croatia, France, and Spain.

The courses were attended by about 250 participants, of whom approximately 72% completed them successfully.³

A guide and leaflet on anti-discrimination for police officers were translated into Romanian, Romani and other minority languages. 300 copies of the guide and 800 copies of the leaflet were distributed in pre-trial detention centres.

Under the Programme Area 32 “Correctional Services and Non-custodial Sanctions”, a Roma Monitoring Committee (RMC) was established in order to evaluate and monitor the implementation of the projects aimed at improving the situation for Roma within the correctional service system. Following two assessment visits to Bacau prison and police establishments in September 2017, a report with recommendations was submitted to the

³ The online courses are now available on the HELP e-learning platform (<http://help.elearning.ext.coe.int>). The rollout of the following HELP courses will continue under various projects, e.g. HELP in the Western Balkans II or HELP in the EU, and under other CoE projects using HELP courses and methodology on the following themes: Antidiscrimination (including a module on Roma); Hate crime and hate speech; Fight against racism, xenophobia and transphobia.

RMC and the Romanian authorities in order to achieve the limit of 10% funding dedicated to improving the situation of the Roma population out of the total budget for the whole “Correctional Service” programme area under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014.

- The above actions have contributed to the achievement of expected results No. 1 of the Programme “Promoting Social Inclusion and Respect for Human Rights: Roma, Migrants” in the Council of Europe Programme and Budget 2016-2017: “Member states have been assisted in their capacity to foster social inclusion or Roma and respect for human rights.” and No. 2: “Stakeholders (legal professionals, law enforcement agencies, equality bodies, civil society organisations, media and citizens) have been made aware of Roma discrimination in its current and historical dimensions.”

Priority 2: Demonstrating innovative models for inclusive policies for the most vulnerable

Overall objective: To empower the most vulnerable among Roma and Travellers, and strengthen their protection against all forms of discrimination

Specific objective 2.1 Strengthening the self-organisation of young Roma and Travellers and their participation in society

The feasibility study on the Roma Youth Academy, finalised in April 2017, looks into the possible needs, gaps and shortcomings in training and non-formal education provision in the field of Roma youth leadership and elaborates three proposals on the desired role, outcomes and medium-term impact of the Academy. On the basis of the study and consultations with Roma and youth stakeholders, the Youth Department developed a revised concept for the Academy, which aims to enhance the role of Roma youth leaders in democratic processes. Fundraising and resource mobilisation activities are under way.

A national training workshop on Roma youth participation and self-organisation in Zagreb (Croatia) in November 2017, supported by the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of Croatia and the Croatian National Youth Network, led to the creation of a national Roma youth organisation established by the 22 workshop participants.

A meeting of representatives of European Roma youth networks and organisations advocating and supporting the participation of young Roma people was held at the European Youth Centre in Budapest (Hungary) in February 2018, aimed at building synergies within the Roma youth movement. The event analysed the current organisational challenges and needs of existing Roma youth structures and produced medium-term objectives aiming to strengthen the sustainability of organisations and networks working effectively towards greater and more meaningful participation of Roma youth at all levels, including Council of Europe structures.

During EU Roma Week in Brussels in April 2018, the Youth Department organised the event “Roma youth in the European Policy Agenda Post 2020”, which brought together relevant Roma and youth stakeholders, MEPs, and representatives of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, to discuss participatory policy making and Roma youth participation in possible post-2020 instruments and mechanisms.

In 2016 and 2017, the European Youth Foundation (EYF) supported 20 pilot activities, five international activities and nine work plans involving Roma participants and/or tackling Roma issues.

- The above actions have contributed to the achievement of expected result No. 3 of the Programme “Promoting Social Inclusion and Respect for Human Rights: Roma, Migrants” in the Council of Europe Programme and Budget 2016-2017: “The most vulnerable among Roma have been supported to participate actively in society, assisted by vibrant Roma civil society organisations”.

Specific objective 2.2 Better protecting the rights of Roma and Travellers children

The EU/CoE Joint Project “Inclusive schools: making a difference for Roma children” (INSCHOOL), implemented in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, the Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom since May 2017, aims to enhance the social inclusion of Roma by promoting inclusive education policies and practices. The project targets six schools and one national working group per country. From September to December 2017, inception visits were carried out in the five implementing countries in co-operation with the ministries of education, and information meetings were organised with Permanent Representations in Strasbourg and relevant Council of Europe departments. Research on the respective education systems was conducted and country factsheets were drafted. Three meetings of the Advisory Board were organised and the methodology to work with the schools was developed. The website was set-up and some visibility materials were prepared, including the promotion of the stories of the Ambassadors on Inclusive Schools. In January 2018, facilitators and educational advisors selected through two public calls for tender were trained on the project methodology. In February 2018, the baseline survey was conducted in pre-selected schools and the first meeting at national level took place in Hungary. Since March 2018, the selected schools have been supported in producing and implementing their inclusive school development plan; in parallel, meetings at national level have been organised to discuss findings and challenges.

The INSCHOOL Joint Project was successfully initiated in the five countries of implementation, with the support of relevant national stakeholders. The presentation of the project during the Anti-segregation Roundtable organised by the Ministry of Human Capacities in Budapest (Hungary) on 13 February 2018, confirmed this support. Furthermore, a team of 30 experts has been established and prepared to support the schools in developing more inclusive environments. The selection of schools was finalised in March 2018 based on the results of the baseline survey.

The project on peer-to-peer teacher training on inclusive education, including exchange visits of teachers (“REST”) was pursued between Babington College, Leicester, United Kingdom, and schools in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic (partly thanks to a Finnish voluntary contribution). The movie “Europe: Which Children Matter?”, highlighting Roma children's experiences in the United Kingdom and the Czech schooling systems, was produced by REST and the Czech NGO Prameni with support from the Council of Europe. The REST project was integrated into the INSCHOOL joint project to ensure sustainability of the action.

As a follow-up to previous activities related to child and/or forced marriages within Roma and Traveller communities, a VC from Finland funded a study visit of 12 experts from Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, and Poland on child and/or forced marriages within Roma and Traveller communities to the United Kingdom’s Forced Marriage Unit in London in December 2017. The report and conclusions of the study visit were discussed at the 15th CAHROM meeting in Athens, Greece, in May 2018.

A guide to good and promising practices aimed at combating and preventing female genital mutilation and forced marriage, elaborated by the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) with input from the Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues

(CAHROM) and the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF), was adopted in June 2017 by the CDDH and submitted to the Committee of Ministers for information. An international Conference in London in May 2018, organised by the British authorities under the auspices of the Council of Europe, will further examine that issue.

These questions were also considered by specialised monitoring bodies. For example, in its first (baseline) report on Albania, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) encouraged the Albanian authorities to address, through research, all forms of violence against women such as sexual violence, sexual harassment and forced marriage or other traditional practices harmful to women, as well as violence affecting vulnerable groups of women such as Roma women and girls and older women.

In its country evaluation reports, the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) pays particular attention to the prevention of trafficking in human beings among Roma children, including steps taken to ensure schooling, access to healthcare, registration at birth, the availability of centres for children in street situations, and the work of community health mediators.

GRETA's 6th General Report on Activities, covering 2016, focuses on child trafficking and addresses, *inter alia*, the issue of human trafficking of Roma children. The report stresses that the absence of any registration at birth affects mainly children from Roma communities, rendering such children vulnerable to trafficking. GRETA notes that measures to resolve problems of birth registration must be part and parcel of national social and health policies. For example, if there is no social service to support Roma parents in obtaining personal identity documents, they cannot register with a general practitioner (GP) and subsequently the GP cannot assist them in registering their newborn baby. The implementation of projects aimed at the creation of innovative social services provides opportunities for the application in practice of legal measures aimed at improving birth registration and for bridging the gap between the spheres of public health and social work.

Although the lack of official data disaggregated according to ethnicity precludes a reliable assessment of the occurrence of human trafficking in Roma communities, there is evidence that Roma, in particular Roma women and children, are highly vulnerable to trafficking due to structural forms of ethnic and gender discrimination, poverty and social exclusion which result in low educational achievement, high levels of unemployment, domestic violence and difficult living conditions that affect predominantly women and children. In Bulgaria, for example, according to expert assessments, child victims of trafficking of Roma origin account for between 50 and 80% of trafficked children.⁴

Several of GRETA's reports published in 2016 refer to cases of trafficking for the purposes of forced begging of Roma children (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia) and early/forced marriage of Roma girls (Croatia, Montenegro). In the reports on Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and the Slovak Republic, GRETA has recommended that the authorities intensify their efforts to prevent trafficking in children, including by paying special attention to Roma children, their inclusion in education and the prevention of child, early and forced marriages.

School drop-out disproportionately affects children from Roma communities and children living in rural areas. GRETA's reports noted that school drop-out had increased in Croatia

⁴ Kamelia Dimitrova, Yva Alexandrova, Countering new forms of Roma child trafficking (CONFRONT), Centre for the Study of Democracy, Sofia, March 2015.

and Romania.⁵ GRETA addressed this issue in its reports on the Republic of Moldova⁶ and Montenegro.

Another area of concern for GRETA is the absence of long-term support to ensure the reintegration of child victims of trafficking.

- The above actions have contributed to the achievement of expected result No. 3 of the Programme “Promoting Social Inclusion and Respect for Human Rights: Roma, Migrants” in the Council of Europe Programme and Budget 2016-2017: “The most vulnerable among Roma have been supported to participate actively in society, assisted by vibrant Roma civil society organisations”.

Specific objective 2.3 Empowering Roma and Traveller women and promoting gender equality

The 6th International Roma Women’s Conference on “Women and Political Representation: The Case of Roma and Traveller Women” (Strasbourg, November 2017) was attended by more than 100 participants, including about 70 Roma and Traveller women. Other participants included current and former members of parliament, representatives of political parties, international organisations, Permanent Representations, and Council of Europe entities (Parliamentary Assembly, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Gender Equality Unit, etc.). The Conference conclusions and recommendations will be further discussed (15th CAHRM meeting in Athens (Greece) May 2018; the 5th meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller Civil Society in Strasbourg, June 2018).

A pledge to promote gender equality and the participation of women from minority groups, in particular Roma and Traveller women, in decision-making bodies and in political representation was signed by 13 representatives of political parties/groups in the margins of the Conference. In his message on the occasion of International Roma Day (8 April), the Secretary General urged more political leaders and parties to sign this pledge.

Members of the IRWN-Phenjalipe Roma women’s network have received training from various CoE sectors and have been assisted in the legal registration of the network.

The CoE/EC Joint Programme “Roma and Traveller women's access to justice (JUSTROM)” provided legal aid through the setting up of legal clinics involving lawyers, paralegals and community mediators in Bulgaria, Greece, Ireland, Italy, and Romania. Within the JUSTROM Programme, two legal clinics per country were in operation from February 2017 to March 2018, providing information on human rights to approximately 10,000 Roma and Traveller women, with legal advice/aid provided to about 4,000 persons (including 3,000 women) in 50 communities. A Greek voluntary contribution was used to extend the JUSTROM programme to Xanthi, Greece. In December 2017, the European Commission agreed to continue the Programme in co-operation with the Council of Europe: as a result, JUSTROM2 runs from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

- The above actions have contributed to the achievement of expected result No. 3 of the Programme “Promoting Social Inclusion and Respect for Human Rights: Roma, Migrants” in the Council of Europe Programme and Budget 2016-2017: “The most vulnerable among Roma have been supported to participate actively in society, assisted by vibrant Roma civil society organisations”.

⁵ GRETA report on Croatia, paragraph 63; Romania, paragraph 67.

⁶ GRETA report on the Republic of Moldova, paragraph 68.

Priority 3: Promoting innovative models for local-level solutions

Overall objective: To enable local and regional authorities to address discrimination more effectively and develop successful strategies for the full inclusion of Roma and Travellers in society

Specific objective 3.1 Supporting the participation of Roma and Travellers in local decision-making

Following the successful implementation of the ROMED and ROMACT Joint Programmes, the Council of Europe and the European Commission (DG NEAR) in May 2017 signed a new Joint Programme “Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level (ROMACTED)”, to be implemented by the Roma and Travellers Team and ODGP in the Western Balkans and Turkey in about 50 municipalities until the end of April 2020. The aims of the programme are to:

- build up political will and sustained policy engagement of local authorities;
- empower the Roma community at individual and community level; and
- improve and expand the institutions’ commitment, capacity, knowledge and skills.

The actions aim to assist local authorities in integrating Roma-specific dimensions or measures into mainstream local policies, budgets and public service delivery, and in enhancing the participation of Roma citizens in the design, implementation and monitoring of policies and projects. Through implementation of this programme, it is expected that the participating municipalities will remain with consolidated features to continue serving the needs of the Roma population, such as sustainable local action plans and improved access of Roma to the public services.

The inception phase of the ROMACTED programme was finalised in November 2017. National teams, consisting of Support Organisations, Focal Points, and Facilitators, have been established in each of the seven beneficiaries. Project Officers received induction training in Strasbourg in November 2017, and the national teams in December 2017 in Budapest. Field visits to the municipalities started in December 2017. Launch events in each of the beneficiaries are being held between February and May 2018.

- The above actions have contributed to the achievement of expected result No. 1 of the Programme “Promoting Social Inclusion and Respect for Human Rights: Roma, Migrants” in the Council of Europe Programme and Budget 2016-2017: “Member states have been assisted in their capacity to foster social inclusion or Roma and respect for human rights.”

- *Supporting the political participation of Roma and Travellers at local level*

In order to improve the political participation of Roma and Travellers, “political schools/academies” provide training to Roma and Traveller citizens with a potential of standing for election at local level, in order to bring Roma and Travellers closer to local decision-making and promote their active participation in local administration. The training in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2016 resulted in the election of 10 persons of Roma ethnic origin into local councils. The political school/academy initiated in Portugal in 2017 will be continued in 2018. France and Italy will join this year.

Specific objective 3.2 Strengthening the capacity of local and regional authorities to develop and implement plans, strategies and services for the inclusion of Roma and Travellers

The Council of Europe/European Commission Joint Programme “Building up political will and understanding of Roma inclusion at local and regional level (ROMACT)”⁷ has been implemented in 107 municipalities (29 in Bulgaria, three in the Czech Republic, seven in Hungary, seven in Italy, 51 in Romania, and 10 in the Slovak Republic). 56 Joint Action Plans have been developed and approved by Local Councils, covering the following areas: identity documents (IDs), employment, education, infrastructure, mediation, social work, culture, health, small infrastructure, landfill clearance, and roads. They have reached a total number of more than 254,000 beneficiaries. ROMACT experts have also helped municipalities to access EU funding.

The ROMACT programme also contains a component for study visits and the provision of mediation and intercultural training for countries receiving non-national Roma, in the framework of which 614 persons from municipalities in Western European countries have been trained.

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Accompanying measures

- *Monitoring bodies*

The implementation of the Thematic Action Plan is also enhanced by the work of relevant Council of Europe Monitoring bodies (see also above under 2.2). The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has covered Roma issues in its country reports and interim follow-up conclusions as part of its country monitoring work, and has continued to monitor the situation of Roma and to address Roma-related recommendations to member states. In respect of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), its Advisory Committee pays considerable attention to Roma-related issues in its opinions. Recent opinions have highlighted matters related to housing, education, discrimination and languages. Evaluation reports adopted by the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) in respect of those countries that have ratified the ECRML and have included Roma as a protected minority group from the language perspective continue to monitor the situation of the Romani language.

⁷ ROMACT activities generally follow four methodological steps in each municipality: 1. becoming committed; 2. agreeing on needs and plans; 3. translating the Community Priorities List into concrete measures; 4. funding, implementing and monitoring of the process. Specific activities include: community mobilisation actions; raising awareness of the need to tackle marginalisation; setting up task forces at municipal level and appointing coordinators; mapping stakeholders; setting up Community Action Groups (CAGs); assessing the capacities of the municipalities; carrying out community needs assessments; drafting the Community Priorities List; developing and adopting Joint Action Plans for Roma Inclusion; implementing short and medium-term actions; integrating Roma issues in the Local Development Plan/Strategy of the municipalities; capacity-building sessions for local authorities and the Roma community; and monitoring and evaluating the implementation of actions.

- **Roma Rapporteurs**

At its 84th meeting in December 2015, the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) appointed its expert from “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” as Roma Rapporteur, with the task, notably, to represent the Steering Committee in the meetings of the Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM). Since then, the CDDH Roma Rapporteur has actively participated in relevant events and meetings and has regularly reported back to the CDDH. The Legal Adviser of the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) regularly participated in CDDH meetings. He has successfully introduced Roma and Traveller perspectives into CDDH discussions dealing in particular with issues such as forced marriage, social rights, freedom of expression, migration and human rights defenders.

The Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child (CAHENF) has appointed two Roma rapporteurs to help mainstream Roma children’s rights in the Committee’s work. The Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) appointed a Roma Rapporteur at its 36th meeting in March 2017.

In addition to a Gender Equality Rapporteur, the Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM) has appointed four more rapporteurs, namely on Roma youth, Roma children, anti-Gypsyism/hate crime and on the role of local and regional authorities.

All rapporteurs ensure synergies both between and within the respective inter-governmental committees and their Secretariats. Improved working relationships between the CAHROM and the CAHENF, GEC, CDDH, the Joint Council on Youth, the Advisory Council on Youth, and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities were noted in 2017. The appointment of Roma and Traveller Rapporteurs in the Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE), the European Committee on Legal Cooperation (CDDJ), and the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) in 2018 would be welcome.

- **Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers Issues (CAHROM) - thematic work**

In 2017, CAHROM thematic peer reviews covered school mediators, eastern Roma groups, lack of IDs, the Romani language, and Roma history teaching. 32 experts from 26 different member states were involved in five CAHROM thematic visits and the Committee endorsed five new thematic reports. In November 2017, CAHROM endorsed and published a review of the 30 thematic visits held between 2012 and 2017 detailing the outcomes and follow-up.

The Council of Europe continued and further developed its dialogue with international organisations on Roma and Traveller inclusion policies, notably through a coordination meeting with international intergovernmental partners held in the context of the 13th CAHROM meeting in Prague in May 2017, when the proposal to set up an International Task Force on Combating anti-Gypsyism was discussed.

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- **Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller Civil Society**

The new Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller Civil Society was consolidated with four meetings (2016-2017) involving the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF). The 4th Dialogue meeting took place in September 2017 on the transition

from education to employment, with a focus on Roma youth. For that meeting, new methods were introduced for the selection of participants, who were for the first time identified through an open call published on the internet. The Dialogue meeting adopted nine recommendations on improving the transition from education to employment (with a focus on Roma and Traveller youth), which were presented at the 14th CAHROM meeting (Strasbourg, October 2017) by an ad hoc Dialogue Rapporteur, and at the EU's European Platform for Roma Inclusion in November 2017 in Brussels by the Director General of Democracy (DG II). They will be further discussed at the 15th CAHROM meeting in Athens (Greece) in May 2018 with a view to preparing an international seminar on the same topic to be held in the Brijuni islands in September 2018 under the aegis of the Croatian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers.

The respective Secretariats of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Framework Convention on the protection of national minorities (FCNM), and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) are regularly represented at the meetings of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller Civil Society. At the 4th meeting, the ECRI representative presented positive action in the fields of education and employment.

- The above actions have contributed to the achievement of expected result No. 3 of the Programme “Promoting Social Inclusion and Respect for Human Rights: Roma, Migrants” in the Council of Europe Programme and Budget 2016-2017: “The most vulnerable among Roma have been supported to participate actively in society, assisted by vibrant Roma civil society organisations”.

- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

The No Hate Parliamentary Alliance held a hearing on “Places of remembrance and cultural institutions as a tool to counter hatred” in Paris in March 2017, with the participation of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues.

The Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination is currently preparing a report on forced marriages in Europe, which will, *inter alia*, cover the situation of Roma. A hearing on the situation of women belonging to minorities, held jointly in September 2015 by the sub-committees on the rights of minorities and on gender equality, with the participation of a Roma representative, contributed to this development. The work of the CAHROM on this issue is also being taken into account. It is expected that the draft resolution will be debated by the Assembly in June 2018.

- Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

In March 2017, the “Declaration of Mayors and Elected Local and Regional Representatives of Council of Europe member states against anti-Gypsyism” was launched at the Congress session by the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma Issues, and Mr John Warmisham, Congress Spokesperson for Roma and Traveller Issues. The Declaration, signed by 83 representatives from 32 member states to date, is a landmark document for fighting anti-Gypsyism at local and regional level. It gives local and regional authorities the possibility to clearly position themselves in the fight against anti-Gypsyism. It has been translated into 21 languages and is available online for signature. In his message on the occasion of International Roma Day (8 April), Mr Warmisham urged other local and regional elected officials to sign this declaration.

In October 2017, during the 10th anniversary event of the Dosta! Congress Prize for Municipalities, the prize was awarded to the municipalities of Şişli (Turkey), Volos (Greece) and Gliwice (Poland) in view of their efforts for Roma inclusion focusing particularly on

education. The 2017 Prize highlighted that building capacity of, and investing in, the education of Roma and Traveller children are essential for improving the situation of Roma and Traveller communities on the whole.

2017 saw the launch of the Ukrainian Alliance of Cities and Regions on the development of Roma initiatives, a joint initiative by the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion and the Roma NGO Chiricli. A seminar held in Kyiv, Ukraine, in November 2017, was attended by 50 participants from different Ukrainian regions, municipalities and institutions, including representatives of the CoE, the UN, the EU and five Ukrainian ministries. During the meeting, topics such as Roma housing, the lack of identity papers, and some good practices were discussed. The Declaration against anti-Gypsyism was signed by the participating municipalities. Solving the issue of the lack of personal IDs through the setting up of mobile units, establishing the institution of health mediators, and increasing their capacity are among the priorities of the project "Protecting national minorities, including Roma, and minority languages in Ukraine", which will be jointly implemented between March 2018 and August 2020 by the Roma and Travellers Team and the No Hate Speech and Cooperation Unit of the Anti-Discrimination Department in the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2020.

As of December 2017, the Secretariat of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion presented its work to several human rights and development organisations, as well as the City of Strasbourg administration. An outline on the situation of Roma women in politics was drafted. The Alliance continued its activities with a meeting in Athens, Greece, in April 2018, co-organised by the Greek Association of Municipalities (KEDE) in order to reinvigorate an Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion at national level in Greece.

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- Recruitment of Roma professionals to the Council of Europe Secretariat

The Thematic Action Plan also provides for the recruitment of Roma professionals to the Council of Europe Secretariat. There are currently 13 staff members of Roma ethnic origin employed on different types of contract and in different locations (Strasbourg headquarters, both European Youth Centres, and field offices). Their employment contracts are often linked to the implementation of Council of Europe/European Commission Joint Programmes. Moreover, co-operation started in 2017 between the Council of Europe Secretariat and the Central European University (CEU), Budapest, Hungary, with a view to offering traineeship places to CEU graduates of Roma origin. To date, two CEU Roma trainees have joined the Secretariat, one working in the ECRI Secretariat and one in the Youth Department. A first preliminary assessment of the co-operation is positive so that possibilities of its continuation and expansion in 2018 are currently being explored.