

Addressing racially motivated crimes against Roma, Sinti and Travellers: towards effective and non-discriminatory policing

OSCE/ODIHR and Council of Europe joint training for law-enforcement officers on human rights and non-discriminatory policing



BACKGROUND

The **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)** is the world's largest regional security organisation, comprising 57 participating states in Europe, Asia and North America.

The **Council of Europe** is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union.

The OSCE's **Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area** recommended that participating states develop training programmes for police to promote awareness of, and respect for, human rights and to improve relations between Roma and Sinti communities and the police.

The **Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025)** underlined that anti-Roma and anti-Traveller prejudice, discrimination and hate crimes require a combination of measures. These measures include training law-enforcement officers on the Council of Europe's standards and relevant case law of the European Court of Human Rights. Another measure is for the Council of Europe and the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) to establish a **common initiative** on practical ways to improve training programmes on promoting the inclusion of Roma and Travellers and to offer training opportunities on diversity and non-discrimination, focusing on the situation of Roma and Travellers, to national police forces.

The OSCE and the Council of Europe have a well-established and long-standing **relationship**, based on their shared values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. For several years, both the OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe have assisted various member states in implementing training activities for law-enforcement officers to ensure an effective police response to racially motivated violence and discrimination against Roma, Sinti and Travellers and to improve relations between Roma communities and the police. ODIHR and the Council of Europe have developed a joint training curriculum for member states to improve policy responses on the situation of Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities and to counter prejudice, negative stereotyping and discrimination from law enforcement.

JOINT TRAINING OBJECTIVES

The joint training aims to strengthen the capacity of police officers working in Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities and mixed communities in the following ways:

- ▶ by providing effective policing strategies that are fair and responsive to the needs of the communities they serve, while engaging in practices that comply with human rights standards;
- ▶ by educating participants on European standards on non-discrimination, the findings and recommendations of human rights monitoring bodies and on the principles and standards derived from the European Court of Human Rights' jurisprudence on preventing and investigating racially motivated crimes; and
- ▶ by increasing participants' knowledge of and sensitivity to gender-specific issues that Roma, Sinti and Traveller women face.

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.

KEY JOINT TRAINING MODULES

Key components of the training include:

- ▶ current challenges in policing, with a focus on policing in minority communities;
- ▶ historic challenges faced by Roma, Sinti and Travellers and the current situation in Europe;
- ▶ the vulnerability of Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities and relevant police obligations, including identifying and addressing the needs of members of vulnerable groups;
- ▶ human rights standards and laws, with an emphasis on Council of Europe standards and pertinent jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights;
- ▶ police officers' human rights;
- ▶ international policing standards;
- ▶ discrimination, stereotyping and antigypsyism;
- ▶ the impact of human right violations on victims, their families and their communities;
- ▶ issues specific to policing in Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities;
- ▶ understanding racially motivated crimes and racist incidents and relevant principles from the European Court of Human Rights' jurisprudence;
- ▶ responses to domestic violence;
- ▶ barriers to effective policing and strategies for overcoming those barriers;
- ▶ rapport-building and interview techniques;
- ▶ the impact on police officers of witnessing or participating in torture or inhuman and degrading treatment;
- ▶ good practices for conducting human rights-compliant evictions and document checks;
- ▶ trafficking in human beings and labour exploitation.

JOINT TRAINING TARGET GROUP

The joint training is available to four different types of law-enforcement officers: patrol officers who have direct experience working in Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities as well as mixed communities; specialists or liaison officers whose primary duties are to work in Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities; command officers; and police officers investigating racially motivated crimes.

ODIHR and the Council of Europe work to ensure gender balance among participants and the participation of Roma, Sinti and Traveller police officers.

JOINT TRAINING METHODOLOGY

Key components of the training include:

Needs driven

Before the joint training programme, ODIHR and the Council of Europe conduct an online/hybrid/in-person needs assessment to examine the local issues affecting relations between police and Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities, including women and young people. The results are used to adapt the training curriculum to the issues and laws of the country where the training programme takes place.

Inclusive

Consultation with police, human rights organisations and Roma, Sinti and Traveller civil society and communities is a crucial step in adapting the curriculum. Consultation can produce important information about the existing challenges between police and Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities.

ODIHR and the Council of Europe place particular emphasis on consultations with Roma, Sinti and Traveller women and young people in addressing specific challenges they might face regarding the police.

Interactive

The joint training programme is highly interactive. Most modules encourage active involvement of the participants and discussions between trainers and participants in plenary sessions. Moreover, it allows participants to discuss issues in small working groups and to examine case studies and engage in problem-solving activities. In this way, participants can share their experiences and knowledge, learning from each other in addition to the knowledge they get from the trainers. This interactive teaching approach enhances learning and information-retention among participants.

Human rights-based

In each phase (needs assessment, design, implementation and evaluation), the joint training programme is based on the values and norms of universal human rights and gender equality, with an emphasis on the relevant standards and instruments of the Council of Europe and particularly the European Court of Human Rights' jurisprudence. This is key, as respect for fundamental human rights and the prevention of discrimination are essential to guaranteeing the security of all individuals, especially those who face multiple forms of discrimination, such as Roma, Sinti and Traveller women.

Expert led

The training team is composed of human rights professionals and police officers with significant experience of working with Roma, Sinti and Traveller and mixed communities.

IMPLEMENTING THE JOINT TRAINING IN YOUR COUNTRY

Step 1: Initial Request

Any participating state or OSCE field operation and any Council of Europe member state may request ODIHR's and the Council of Europe's assistance in improving the policing of Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities through this joint training programme.

Step 2: Joint Needs Assessment

Before the training programme, in co-operation with the state authorities, ODIHR and the Council of Europe will conduct an online/hybrid/in-person needs assessment to identify the local issues affecting relations between police and Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities, including:

- ▶ issues and concerns that police officers might have when policing Roma, Sinti and Traveller and mixed communities;
- ▶ issues and security concerns that Roma, Sinti and Traveller people might have with the police, paying particular attention to the issues impacting Roma, Sinti and Traveller women and young people; and
- ▶ understanding the relevant laws in the country.

The joint training needs assessment involves engaging in discussions with:

- ▶ police officers who work in Roma, Sinti and Traveller and mixed communities, as well as senior police officers;
- ▶ representatives of Roma, Sinti and Travellers civil society and human rights organisations; and
- ▶ members of Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities, including women and young people. Meetings with community representatives should reflect the diversity of Roma, Traveller and Sinti in the respective country;

ODIHR and the Council of Europe will pay particular attention to the identification of specific challenges that Roma, Sinti and Traveller women and young people might face in their interaction with the police – ODIHR will organise meetings with women rights groups, Roma, Sinti and Traveller women and young people.

Step 3: adaptation of the joint training curriculum

ODIHR and the Council of Europe will adapt the joint training curriculum to the local context and communicate it to the state authorities for their review. After the curriculum is finalised, all the training materials are translated into the host country's language.

Step 4: joint implementation of the training programme

The venue may be provided by the authorities. The training programme can be delivered either in English or the host country's language. Where the joint training programme is delivered in the host country's language, simultaneous interpretation and the associated equipment should be provided by the authorities. ODIHR and the Council of Europe, in agreement with the authorities, can provide several joint training sessions over the course of the year.

Step 5: evaluation

ODIHR and the Council of Europe conduct evaluations of each training session with pre- and post-evaluation questionnaires and feedback sessions. This is important because it allows ODIHR and the Council of Europe to monitor the effectiveness of the joint training and to improve the training programme, approach and materials.

In the 2003 [Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area](#), participating states recognised the need to improve relations between Roma and Sinti and the police and to improve trust and confidence in the police among Roma and Sinti. OSCE participating states committed to:

- ▶ developing policies to promote awareness among law-enforcement institutions regarding the situation of Roma and Sinti people and that counter prejudice and negative stereotypes;
- ▶ developing training programmes to prevent excessive use of force and to promote awareness of, and respect for, human rights;
- ▶ assessing the gap between international standards on police and existing national practices in consultation with national police forces, civil society and representatives of Roma and Sinti communities;
- ▶ developing policies and procedures to ensure an effective police response to racially motivated violence against Roma and Sinti people;
- ▶ developing policy statements, codes of conduct, practical guidance manuals and training programmes in partnership with international organisations and Roma civil society; and
- ▶ encouraging Roma and Sinti people to work in law-enforcement institutions.

The [Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan on Roma and Traveller Inclusion \(2020-2025\)](#) sets out the strategic objectives of the Council of Europe regarding the protection and promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in a policy framework for the social and intercultural inclusion of Roma and Travellers in Europe. It provides a framework that is flexible and adaptable to country-specific conditions, serving as a road map and practical tool for the design, implementation and adjustment of programmes and action. The objectives of the strategic action plan are to promote and protect the human rights of Roma and Travellers, to combat antigypsyism and discrimination and to foster inclusion in society.

The strategic action plan is structured around three main lines of action:

- ▶ combating antigypsyism and discrimination and supporting real and effective equality;
- ▶ supporting democratic participation and promoting public trust and accountability; and
- ▶ supporting access to inclusive quality education and training.

More information: if you are interested in providing law-enforcement officers in your country with this training opportunity, you can contact the ODIHR by e-mail at: roma@odhr.pl or the Council of Europe by e-mail at: roma.team@coe.int.

For detailed information about ODIHR's activities on Roma and Sinti Issues, or to view its full range of publications and reports, please visit:

www.osce.org/odhr/roma

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<https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers>

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