

NEWSLETTER April 2020

SECTION 1

8 APRIL INTERNATIONAL ROMA DAY



- Joint Statement by CoE Secretary General and European Commissioner for Equality.
- Statement by Dmytro LUBINETZ.
- Interview with Lisa YASKO.

SECTION 2

PROJECT DEVELOPMENTS

- Establishment of the Caucus on National Minorities in the Parliament of Ukraine.



- Launching of Communication Platform in Zaporizhia.

FIND US HERE:

www.facebook.com/Council-ofEurope-National-Minorities-and-Roma

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/kyiv/national-minorities>

OUR PROJECT

The Council of Europe (CoE) continues to support its Member States to implement European human rights standards at national level through revision of legislation, capacity development and exchange of best practices. To contribute to this process, the CoE is implementing a project on “Protecting national minorities, including Roma, and minority languages in Ukraine”. The Project started in March 2018 and it is part of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2021.

OUR GOALS

- Strengthening the protection of national minorities and minority languages in Ukraine by reinforcing relevant policies, improving consultations with national minorities, strengthening the capacities and competences of public authorities dealing with the protection of national minorities and raising public awareness.
- Improving the delivery of identity documents for the Roma people without IDs, including internally displaced Roma.
- Institutionalisation of the profession of health mediator in Ukraine; inclusive health care and services with better access by the Roma communities.

OUR PARTNERS

- National authorities involved in the protection of national minorities, including Roma, and minority languages: Ministry of Culture - State Service on Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience, Ministry of Education and Science, Office of the Ombudsperson, Ministry of Social Policy, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Information Policy, State Migration Service, National Police and others.
- Regional State Administrations and district administrations of Ukraine dealing with protection of national minorities.
- Civil society organisations, including national minorities' organisations.

STEP UP HUMAN RIGHTS PROTECTION FOR ROMA AND GUARANTEE THEIR ACCESS TO VITAL SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

“I am concerned”, says Council of Europe Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić, “by reports that some European countries have adopted measures that could result in further compromising the human rights of Roma and hampering their equitable access to the provision of basic public services, most importantly health care, sanitation and even fresh water. We are worried to learn that the provision of food aid and the disbursement of welfare benefits are endangered, and that some politicians blame Roma for the spread of the virus.”



Marija Pejčinović Burić

Joint Statement

by Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality

Brussels/Strasbourg, 07.04.2020 - Many of the 10-12 million Roma in Europe still suffer from poverty and exclusion. The existence of widespread anti-Gypsyism reinforces and aggravates their economic and social deprivation. These inequalities persist despite ongoing efforts at national, European, and international level to tackle anti Roma and anti-Traveller prejudice, discrimination and crimes.

This year's International Roma Day is celebrated at a time when the world mobilises to combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus and European countries have adopted exceptional measures. As a consequence, everyday life is being transformed for many people in ways we had never believed possible.

Governments need to be supported by all in the management of this crisis, and they must be free to decide

on the necessary measures. However, all measures must respect the existing European human rights framework, including the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality, says: "Online hate speech and fake stories against Roma people are again on the rise. Many Roma in Europe continue to face antigypsyism, discrimination and socioeconomic exclusion in their daily lives - despite EU and national rules against discrimination. Negative stereotypes and prejudices are still very much present in our society. This is why the Commission will present a reinforced strategy for Roma equality and inclusion in European society.

Greater efforts must be put in place now to ensure that Roma people are included in society and that they have equal access to the basic needs, thus ensuring their protection against infection. We need to stand united. The only way to overcome the crisis is by working together. If there can be anything more contagious than a virus, it is our solidarity. Europeans need to stand up for each other now."

In these challenging times, we call for particular efforts by member states to ensure that marginalised groups and ethnic minorities, in particular Roma, do not face additional disadvantage, discrimination, hate speech or hate crime.

We call on all European countries to comply with the standards of the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter by stepping up their support for marginalised groups, and to do their utmost to prevent national or ethnic minorities, in particular Roma, from becoming scapegoats in the current crisis.

We urge governments to ensure equal access to the provision of public services, which in times of a pandemic also includes the provision of food, clean water, as well as basic means of hygiene and health protection.

**"COVID-19 DOES
NOT DISCRIMINATE
AND NEITHER
SHOULD OUR
RESPONSE"**



Helena Dalli

The new **Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025)** and the EU's forthcoming post-2020 Roma Strategy aim to promote and protect the human rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe, to combat antiGypsyism and discrimination, and to foster their social inclusion. They provide a conceptual framework for safeguarding democracy through equality and social cohesion in diverse European societies.

International Roma Day (8 April) is a day to celebrate Romani culture, history and language, and to raise awareness of the issues Romani people still face. It was officially declared in 1990 during the 4th World Romani Congress, in honour of the first major international meeting of Roma representatives, 7-12 April 1971, in Orpington near London, UK.

STATEMENT OF DMYTRO LUBINETS



Dmytro Lubinets

Head of the Caucus
on National Minorities,
Head of the Parliament
Committee on Human
Rights, De-occupation
and Reintegration of
Temporarily Occupied
Territories in Donetsk,
Luhansk Regions
and the Autonomous
Republic of Crimea,
the City of Sevastopol,
National Minorities
and Inter-Ethnic
Relations

On the International Roma Day on behalf of the Parliament Committee on Human Rights, I express my respect to the Roma community wishing peace, development and prosperity among other nations of a united Ukraine.

Today, we honor the rich cultural heritage and traditions of the Romani people and their contribution to Ukrainian culture. Unfortunately, many Roma continue to face discrimination, segregation, and marginalization in their daily lives. Romani women and girls are in a particularly vulnerable situation due to the double discriminatory burden. Thus, authorities need to be especially vigilant in combating cases of intolerance

and xenophobia or other forms of discrimination based on ethnicity. The Committee takes this opportunity to reaffirm its support for the idea of integration and equal treatment of all members of the Roma community in Ukraine. Together with the newly established Caucus on National Minorities, Roma civil society, national stakeholders and International organizations we are ready to join our efforts for a fully fledged post 2020 Roma National Strategy. Ukraine has positive examples of inclusive programmes and measures in different regions that target Roma community, such as Roma mediators, who build a bridge between communities and state institutions. The

positive impact of their work on school attendance, access to social, medical services, as well as documentation of the Roma population is evident. Therefore, it is important to institutionalize Roma mediators, as it has already been done in many European countries. Social cohesion is very important today. It is not only a matter of combating social exclusion and poverty. It is also about creating solidarity in society such that exclusion will be minimized. The International Roma Day is an opportunity to recall our obligations in the protection of human rights and reaffirm our commitment to promoting equality and non-discrimination to Roma community in Ukraine.

INTERVIEW WITH YELYZAVETA YASKO

Member of
the Ukrainian
Parliament Head
of the Ukrainian
Delegation to the
Parliamentary
Assembly of the
Council of Europe

Interviewed by Aurora Ailincăi,
Deputy Head of Roma and
Travellers Division, Council of Europe

1. Where do you see the place of Roma culture and identity in Ukraine as a multi-ethnic and diverse country?

Yes, indeed Ukraine is a multi-ethnic and diverse country. For me personally it was a great surprise to realise one day some years ago that in fact I did not know much about Roma and other ethnic minorities in Ukraine. We sometimes hear about Roma culture in folklore, but this is not enough. Since then I have become convinced that the primary goal of ethnic policy in Ukraine is to provide opportunities for cultural self-expression and dialogue so that all members of society can learn about each other.

Concerning Roma, I believe that the Parliament needs to advocate for the rights of Roma to maintain their cultural identity, as well as to stress the importance of promotion of nondiscrimination. The integration of Roma into

society is extremely important however it is also essential to preserve, and not lose, cultural self-identification. Ukraine also needs to work harder on the socio-economical protection of vulnerable groups, which has to be implemented at both state and local levels.

2. Time and again, Roma culture and identity is misrepresented in the media, in political statements, in national literature or public events. What can be done by the next April 8 to improve the representation of Roma in Ukrainian public opinion by yourself as a member of the Ukrainian Parliament and by the Ukrainian Parliament?

Of course this is a very complex process. And I think we can use the next year to raise

these issues in the Parliament and in the Ukrainian media with a positive agenda.

The integration into Ukrainian society of national minorities is a serious social issue today. I am glad that there is work being done on this in the Ukrainian Parliament. Finding the ways to cope with the discrimination and social marginalisation of Roma is one of the scopes of work of the Committee on Human Rights, National Minorities and International Relations. In addition, with the support of the Council of Europe, there was the Roma Political School and discussions with representatives of Roma communities and MPs, where I was present. These kinds of projects are great for changing the situation and perception of Roma.



Yelyzaveta YASKO



What else can be done? It is necessary to continue our work on implementing the Strategy for protection and integration in the Ukrainian society of the Roma national minority for 2020. A wide range of issues have been addressed so far, such as legal protection, social security, provision of educational and medical services, and promotion of cultural activity.

In addition, I had a meeting with the Roma human rights activist Zola Kondur, where I learnt about the situation around the issuing of legal documents for Roma people in Ukraine and the introduction of a new profession, an interethnic mediator. Both of these matters are important and need to be developed and implemented.

A change of perception and behaviour is needed from all sides. Inclusion and willingness to participate and integration

into civil life should also come from the Roma communities. Therefore I was happy to see many active Roma at one of the Political Schools that took place in the Parliament this year.

3. As a person who understand and values the role of culture in politics, what is your message to the Roma in Ukraine and across the globe who celebrate today their international day?

First of all, I am honoured to express my congratulations to the representatives of the Roma community in Ukraine on the occasion of their international day! You have a great rich culture that you should use to spread a voice about Roma!

I believe that the coming years could bring unique opportunities for Roma {education, legal, media) to

**“IT IS NECESSARY
TO CONTINUE
OUR WORK ON
IMPLEMENTING
THE STRATEGY”**

tackle the challenges and to integrate into Ukrainian society. Educational policy will play an important role in this process and Roma communities should use this for their own benefit.

4. As Chair of the Ukrainian Delegation to PACE in the Council of Europe, what is your message to the new Secretary General of the Council of Europe in the same context of the celebration of 8 April?

I believe that the role of the Secretary General can be huge in uniting the efforts of international organisations and parliaments of all countries in raising awareness about the problems of Roma communities. One of the primary goals of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe could be to bring the topic of Roma issues onto the agenda as one of the priorities of European politics.

I personally plan to meet delegations of the states with a large Roma population in their countries and discuss what we can do all together to address these issues.



PROJECT DEVELOPMENTS

Council of Europe Office in Ukraine welcomes the establishment of the Caucus on National Minorities in the Parliament of Ukraine



The Council of Europe Office in Ukraine welcomes the efforts of Ukrainian Parliament to promote the rights of national minorities in Ukraine. The Caucus (inter-factional union) on National Minorities was established on 6 March 2020 and brings together 15 legislators committed to advance national minorities rights, coordinate their efforts and accelerate progress. Its objectives include improvement of Ukrainian legislation on national minorities and policy-making through enhanced

public consultations, promoting and increasing participation of national minorities in public life, as well as mainstreaming gender equality and promoting national minorities' participation in decision making.

“The Caucus is set to cooperate with the Parliament's leadership, parliamentary factions and Committees, other state authorities and civil society. We are open for cooperation and would like to learn about the best European practices, Council of Europe standards and best

practices on this topic”, said Mr. Dmytro Lubinets, the Chairman of the Caucus on National Minorities, Head of the Parliament Committee on Human Rights.

The Council of Europe Office in Ukraine is open for cooperation with the Caucus on National Minorities in the framework of ongoing projects implemented under the Council of Europe Action Plan for 2018-2021, in particular through the project “Protection of national minorities, including Roma and minority languages in Ukraine”.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENTS

Communication platform for national minorities presented in Zaporizhia region



On 27-28 February, in Zaporizhia a new communication platform for the national minorities prepared in partnership with the Zaporizhia Regional State Administration was presented. During the presentation, the national minorities organisations provided their comments about the design and functioning of platform and their ideas for further improvements. The communication platform will be now tested and officially launched in the summer this year during an

official launching event.

The platform will help the representatives of the national minorities and the Regional State Administration of Zaporizhia region to share information with each other and consult on matters which are important for the national minorities, such as policies, plans of actions, events, funding opportunities and others.

The presentation took place on the margins of the Zaporizhia national minorities movie festival. The local TV visited the event and

prepared a short reportage about it which can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6ZuShBIOzE&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR2n4RGA8u8e8Bpuew%ADuScLGkQvc7Mmyfpxp4hS3QrSJ2-nRFoOe4ANcGsl>

The platform was prepared in the framework of the Project 'Protecting national minorities, including Roma, and minority languages in Ukraine' implemented as part of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2021.



OUR CONTACTS:

Aneta Witwicka
Project Coordinator

aneta.witwicka@coe.int

Oksana Ovcharuk
Project Officer

oksana.ovcharuk@coe.int

Zemfira Kondur
Project Officer

zemfira.kondur@coe.int

Yevheniia Sadovska
Project Assistant

yevheniia.sadovska@coe.int

FIND US HERE:

www.facebook.com/Council-of-Europe-National-Minorities-and-Roma

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/kyiv/national-minorities>