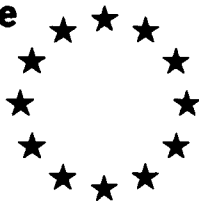


Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe



Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe

Congrès des pouvoirs locaux et régionaux de l'Europe

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Part II

THIRD SESSION

**TOWARDS A TOLERANT EUROPE:
THE CONTRIBUTION OF ROMA**

Rapporteur: Mr Alexander SLAFKOVSKY (Slovakia)

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

* Objections to the Standing Committee procedure must reach the Head of the Congress Secretariat a clear week before the meeting of the Standing Committee; if 5 members object, the report will be submitted to the Plenary Session.

Les éventuelles objections à l'examen en Commission Permanente doivent parvenir au Chef du Secrétariat du Congrès une semaine avant la réunion de la Commission Permanente; si 5 membres du Congrès présentent des objections, le rapport sera soumis à la session plénière

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

In 1981 the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe adopted Resolution 125 on "the role and responsibility of local and regional authorities in regard to the cultural and social problems of populations of nomadic origin", and in 1993 Resolution 249 on "gypsies in Europe: the role and responsibility of local and regional authorities".

On the basis of decisions taken at the Vienna summit in October 1993 the Council of Europe launched a Plan of Action and a European Youth Campaign against Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Intolerance.

In the framework of the campaign the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) held a hearing in Strasbourg in July 1994 on the theme "Towards a tolerant Europe; the Contribution of Roma/Gypsies". The same year the Bureau of the Congress set up an ad hoc Working Group on "Provision for Roma (Gypsies) in Municipalities", to be responsible for further efforts to improve provision for Roma in municipalities by:

- developing a Network of Cities, in particular through the establishment of a network of municipalities in each member State. The network aims to step up the sharing of experience and information and should make it possible to lay down principles of good practice in respect of educational, cultural, training, employment, health-care, housing and other provision for Roma;
- conducting more detailed studies to highlight good examples of such action, if possible with other parties inside and outside the Council of Europe;
- holding hearings with the Network of Cities and other parties, for instance those organised in Košice (Slovak Republic), Ploiesti (Romania) and Pardubice (Czech Republic) on the following themes:
 - . human rights, access to justice, the police, the legal framework, the position of Roma as a minority;
 - . education, employment and culture;
 - . housing/sites, health, social affairs.

CLRAE Resolution 16 (1995) encouraged local and regional authorities to shoulder their responsibilities towards Roma communities, in particular through the following activities:

- respect for Roma's right to their own identity;
- developing the Network of Cities on provision for Roma in municipalities;
- giving Roma communities the possibility of effectively exercising their fundamental right to education;
- encouraging associations representing Roma.

In 1995 the CLRAE sent the Committee of Ministers its Recommendation 11: "Towards a tolerant Europe; the contribution of Roma (Gypsies)". In its reply to that recommendation, the Committee of Ministers drew attention to other Council of Europe initiatives to assist Roma communities:

- * The European Committee on Migration (CDMG) has examined the nature and scope of the international mobility of Roma.

- * A Specialist Group on Roma (MG-S-ROM) was set up by the Committee of Ministers in 1995. This constituted a response, at least in part, to Resolution 125 (1981) and CLRAE Recommendation (11) 1995, which had called for steps to appoint a European Roma mediator or, failing that, to set up a group of experts who could serve as a contact with the Committee of Ministers on Roma matters. The Specialist Group includes government-appointed experts, some of whom are Roma, and its terms of reference are "to establish working relationships with selected Roma associations which it feels are in a position to make a useful contribution towards its work".

As part of its activities, the Specialist Group decided to send a fact-finding mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina in order to examine the position of Roma there and to consider the situation with regard to the possible return of Roma who had become displaced persons in other countries.

A newsletter is also sent free of charge to all interested individuals or organisations. The aim is to provide a regular source of information on current activities and new developments regarding Roma within Council of Europe bodies in fields such as human rights, local and regional authorities, education and culture.

The Secretary General also appointed a Coordinator of Activities on Roma within the Council of Europe. The latter has informed the CLRAE that a special account "Projects on Roma/Gypsies in Central and Eastern Europe" has been opened to receive non-budgetary contributions from the Netherlands and Finland. The purpose of the special fund established in this way, is to supplement the resources earmarked for Roma's activities within the Council of Europe. It has been specified that the funds may also be used to support Roma non-governmental organisations of a pan-European nature, in order to facilitate the emergence of Roma representatives to take part in discussions with international organisations.

- * The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) pays special attention to discrimination, racism and intolerance in respect of Roma and proposes legislative measures to guarantee that the media do not deliberately or unintentionally convey a negative image of Roma.
- * The CLRAE encourage, the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC) to set up a "Roma (Gypsy) Cultural Route" and to carry on activities in the fields of schooling, training and information. In order to save the Roma culture, the CLRAE invites the CDCC to support financially the school of the Arts to train professional actors, musicians, etc. and to the activities of the National Romathan Theatre in Košice (Slovak Republic).
- * The Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men (CDEG) supports activities in favour of Roma women.
- * The Steering Committee on Social Policy (CDPS) monitors steps taken by member States to act on the Committee of Ministers' Resolution (75) 13 on the social situation of travellers in Europe.
- * The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) sent an observer to the MG-S-ROM meeting and has confirmed its determination to continue and expand co-operation with the Council of Europe regarding Roma.

Following the hearing held by the CLRAE in Košice on 9 December 1995 a report was published on "Roma in Municipalities: What provision for education and culture, social problems, training and employment? - Some innovative experiences and models" [AUD/KOS (2) 18]. A team of experts on housing and town-planning in multi-ethnic districts was also sent to Košice in 1996 to give an opinion on a project to rehouse the Roma minority in the run-down suburb Lunix IX. This activity is being kept under review.

The hearing in Ploiesti (Romania) on 28 November 1996 focused on the "Legal and institutional framework of national minorities: the situation of Roma/Gypsies in municipalities", and the development of the European Network of Cities on provision for Roma was discussed.

The terms of reference of the CLRAE Working Group on Provision for Roma/Gypsies in Municipalities expire at the end of 1997 and, in so far as the CLRAE cannot in the long term devote the work and financing required by the Network of Cities, the need to make the network an independent organisation has become apparent.

This draft Resolution ... (1997) on "Towards a tolerant Europe: the contribution of Roma/Gypsies" shows the CLRAE's determination to take concrete measures to ensure that Roma rights are respected. With a view to setting up an association of the European Network of Cities on Provision for Roma in Municipalities, thereby giving an institutional basis to the activities of the network and making it self-reliant, at its meeting in Ploiesti (Romania) the Working Group adopted a preliminary draft Statute for the network. The association will have its head office in the city of Strasbourg, which heads the network in France and has come forward as a location for the headquarters. In the course of the next - and last - meeting of the Working Group in Pardubice (Romania) on 23 and 24 October 1997 all the cities in the network will be invited to a signature ceremony, at which the association of the Network of Cities will actually come into being.

We hope that, in the future, the Specialist Group on Roma (MG-S-ROM) will support the continuation of the network's activities.

The CLRAE also thought it necessary to clarify the interpretation to be given to certain sentences in Resolution 16 and to include new paragraphs in order to avoid any misunderstanding. Paragraph ix in the Appendix to Resolution 16 had, in particular, been criticised by the "Zentralrat deutscher Sinti und Roma", which had perceived it as an incitement to racial hatred, completely the opposite of what the authors intended.

In addition, to make our documents easier to read and understand, it has been decided that the term "Roma" should be used to designate all groups such as Roma, Gypsies, Sinti, Manush, Gitanos, etc., and that the word shall in future be spelt "Roma", with a single "r", in line with the practise of the OSCE and other Council of Europe bodies.

We hope that, after it has been adopted, the resolution will become an essential element of the Council of Europe's basic texts aimed at guaranteeing the principle of progress towards a tolerant Europe.