

**OSCE 2018 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
Warsaw, 10-21 September 2018**

**Working session 9: Tolerance and non-discrimination II, including Roma and Sinti issues**

**Friday, 14 September 2018**

**Statement by Head of the Council of Europe in Warsaw**

The Council of Europe expresses its concern over the rise of anti-Gypsyism, anti-Roma rhetoric and violent attacks against Roma in Europe. It calls on governments and public authorities to swiftly and publicly condemn incidents of hate speech or hate crime, implement anti-discrimination legislation, as well as to ensure that national strategies for social inclusion in the field of housing, education, health care and employment include a strong component on anti-Gypsyism.

Forced evictions without due consultation or provision of adequate alternative accommodation continue unabated across Europe, in violation of member States' international human rights obligations. This summer a number of evictions took place in France, Italy and Belgium where we have seen people being forcibly removed from settlements and homes where they had lived for a number of years, without being properly consulted or given adequate notice, with no compensation for the loss of their homes, leaving many without anywhere to go. The Council of Europe calls on government to find sustainable solutions to the housing or accommodation problems many Roma and Travellers face, in order to avoid further evictions. To that end, the Council of Europe would like to remind member states of the adoption in June 2016 of a joint statement by the Council of Europe, the Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU, the OSCE/ODIHR, the OHCHR, Equinet and ENNHRI on evictions of Roma and Travellers in Europe, which recalls international standards and basic procedures to follow.<sup>1</sup>

Regrettably, in 2018, a number of politicians, public leaders and opinion bodies keep defaming Roma and Travellers using racist or stigmatising rhetoric. Xenophobic statements by politicians revive age-old stereotypes about the Roma which in turn are perceived by the public, or certain sections thereof, to encourage or "legitimise" violent actions against the Roma community. The Council of Europe urges local and regional authorities to sign the "Declaration of Mayors and elected local and regional Representatives of Council of Europe Member States against anti-Gypsyism", and to implement its actions.<sup>2</sup>

The Council of Europe believes that the inclusion of Roma and Travellers, in particular women, in politics would have a positive impact on the inclusion of Roma and Travellers in Europe. In his statement on 8 April, on the occasion of the International Roma Day, Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, called on politicians and

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<sup>1</sup> OPRE joint statement on evictions of Roma and Travellers: <https://rm.coe.int/1680682b0a>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.roma-alliance.org/en/page/251-declaration-against-anti-gypsyism.html> - The Declaration against anti-Gypsyism is available in 23 languages.

political parties in Europe to sign a pledge to improve the political participation and representation of Roma women<sup>3</sup>, and to implement it.

Hate speech by individuals is only one aspect of anti-Gypsyism in Europe. The recent attacks against Roma by extremist groups in Ukraine are another sad example of the persistence of anti-Gypsyism in Europe. The Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe have all expressed concerns over the attacks in Ukraine and, whilst welcoming condemning statements made by some Ukrainian political figures, invited the authorities to conduct the necessary investigations into allegation in line with the requirements of the European Convention on Human Rights Convention and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, and bring the perpetrators to justice.

The Council of Europe has been at the forefront of efforts to raise awareness and improve the situation of Roma and Travellers for decades. A new impetus was given to European efforts in this field by the Committee of Ministers' 2010 Strasbourg Declaration on Roma, and the adoption in March 2016 of the Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019). An assessment of the implementation of this Thematic Action Plan will be conducted in the coming months, including by Roma and Traveller stakeholders.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/roma>. The pledge for the political representation of Roma women is available in 16 languages.