

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2009

Statement of the delegation of the Czech Republic for the working session 14:

Roma/Sinti and, in particular, early education for Roma and Sinti children

Wednesday 7 October, 2009

Thank you, Madame Moderator.

Let me briefly inform of the multitude of measures adopted in the Czech Republic in this crucial area.

The Czech Republic has in recent years and also in aftermath of the decision of the European Court for Human Rights in D.H. v. the Czech Republic, considerably stepped up its efforts to improve access of Roma children to all levels of education.

Number of legislative changes and set of measures were adopted which focus on four main areas:

- 1) preschool preparation;
- 2) school counselling;
- 3) schools and teaching staff;
- 4) transformation of former special schools.

Ad 1)

In the area of preschool preparation, the Government has for number of years supported preparatory classes. 157 preparatory classes in 2008 were attended by a total of 2120 pupils. In April 2009, a comprehensive action plan of early care was adopted which introduced a new concept of early care and a number of further inclusive measures.

Ad 2)

In the area of school counselling system, two studies have been conducted. One on educational chances of Roma pupils at primary schools in the vicinity of excluded Roma locations geared towards analysing difficulties faced by children living in these areas.

Second study analysed teachers' individual approach to pupils with special educational needs. Both the studies suggested need to upscale existing counselling facilities directly in schools to provide timely solutions in the very place where children are educated. In October 2008 such

support for the developing of counselling services was launched and in July 2009 a national program of Support Centres for Inclusive Education was started.

Objectives of these nationwide projects are to establish school pedagogy centres, create expert teams in all regions, promote training for the teaching staff in the field of inclusive education, provide information about available subsidy schemes and develop networks of accessible professional services in all locations. These projects cover kindergartens and primary schools alike.

Ad 3)

In the area of schools and teaching staff, the Ministry of Education is preparing “standards of teaching profession” that include definition of teachers’ competence for class work based on the principle of inclusivity. As part of teachers’ lifelong education, more room is being given to topics of inclusive education and training.

Another step represents systematic support to teachers’ assistants whose numbers continue to increase. In 2008, 431 such assistants provided support to pupils in adaptation to the school environment and to school pedagogues in their educational activities, in their communication with pupils and in their cooperation with parents, legal guardians and community of pupils.

Besides that, the Ministry of Education is proposing change in financing of the costs of education that will strengthen direct link to individual needs of each particular child.

Ad 4)

In the area of transformation of former special schools, the Ministry of Education prepares measures

- to ensure that children are not enrolled in these schools unless all forms of support within the educational mainstream have been exhausted;
- to gradually educate at least part of the children in today’s “practical primary schools” under educational mainstream curriculum;
- and last but not least, the goal of reintegration into the mainstream schools has been set and methodology outlining schools’ procedure to achieve it is being prepared.

The Government further supports overall increase of education of Romas through program of direct support of Roma secondary school students and through financial support to socially disadvantaged university students.

Based on our experience and projects let me make the following two recommendations:

- 1) We should strengthen the role of schools in increasing professional and educational aspirations of Roma children.
- 2) We should strengthen support of States to funding of measures focused on needs of individual children.

Thank you.