

EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

UN: Roma seek recognition at Holocaust conference

Prague, 29/06/09 - Gypsies attending an international conference on the Holocaust said Monday the suffering they endured at the hands of Nazis during World War II has never been fully recognized. «We are still fighting for the recognition of the genocide of the Roma population during the war,» said Cenek Ruzicka, a prominent Gypsy leader. The nomadic Caucasoid people found throughout the world also are known as Roma. «The Romani Holocaust still has to be studied,» said Ruzicka, who wants the Czech government to create a fund that would finance research of Roma suffering and properly compensate the few survivors still alive today. Jan Istvan is one of them. In December of 1942, he escaped from a place where the Nazis herded Czech Gypsies before transporting them to death camps. He was lucky and made it out alive. His parents and six siblings died. «Nobody survived,» the 88-year-old told The Associated Press in a recent interview. Up to half a million European Gypsies, also known as Roma, are believed to have died at the hands of the Nazis during the Second World War _ along with 6 million Jews. Others were sterilized or subjected to grisly experiments. It is a little-explored and tragic part of history that many experts and survivors say deserves more attention.

Full article on: <http://www.pr-inside.com/roma-seek-recognition-at-holocaust-conference-r1352939.htm>

ROMA NEWS FROM AROUND EUROPE

Spain: Catalonia government approves plan for Gitanos

The Catalonia Government today approved the Comprehensive Plan for Roma 2009-2013 to combat the situation of "inequality" that these people experience in Catalonia, in order to heighten their living standards to levels comparable to the rest of Catalonian citizens. This is the second plan implemented by the Government, which for 2009 has a budget of 3,547,000 € and drives 106 actions in 16 areas. It has been presented by Councilor for Social Action and Citizenship, Carme Capdevila, at the press conference after the Council Executive meeting. The plan promotes measures to promote access to employment, housing, education and university studies. It also aims to disseminate the culture of this group and recover its tongue, through the creation of the Fundación Instituto de Cultura del Pueblo Gitano.

Source (in Spanish): <http://www.europapress.es/catalunya/noticia-govern-aprueba-plan-integral-pueblo-gitano-visibilizar-colectivo-20090630162628.html>

France: a bill to 'nationalize' Travelers

Hervé Maurey, Senator (centre) from Haute-Normandie, revived the debate about the competence of the municipalities in hosting travellers with a bill to nationalize these competences. "I never understood why the Besson law imposed such jurisdiction to the municipalities, while the nomads by definition are outside the local area," says the politician. He proposes that the state only bear the cost of the construction and management of reception areas. Without questioning the principle of departmental schemes that determine through consultation with travellers the location of areas, his proposed law would lead to the removal of obligations on the municipalities of over 5,000 inhabitants. "This legislation is not thought against

nomads who have needed the reception areas are made, laugh rather whether they depend on the mayor and the prefect," justifies the Senator, Mayor of Bernay. He justifies his approach by pointing at the limits of police powers of the mayor. "In cases of illegal parking, the prefects do not support us because for them, evict caravans simply means moving the problem," he notes. Speaking after the 31 December 2008, the date from which the state no longer subsidizes the construction of reception areas, this text gets very timely for the finances of local governments. For their part, the associations of travelers who have not been consulted by Hervé Maurey, fear that this initiative will contribute to slow down or stop permanently the construction equipment inadequate in number. They also wonder about the consequences that could have such a transfer of jurisdiction to the State on issues of schooling and access to public services within local communities.

Source (in French): http://www.lagazettedescommunes.com/RSS/34699/amenagement_territoire/une_proposition_loi_nationaliser_gens_voyage.htm

UK: cash boost to help Gypsies and Travellers

London, 30/06/09 - Gypsies and travellers living in South Bucks are set to benefit from a £10,000 health and well-being grant. Buckinghamshire Community Foundation, a registered charity, donated the money to a project aimed at helping improve the lives of Gypsies and travellers in the area. About 60 families living in Gypsy and traveller sites in Iver, Mansion Lane, Wapsey Wood and Dudley, are expected to benefit from the grant once the project begins in July 2009. The project is being led by One Voice 4 Travellers Ltd, working in partnership with Bucks New University, Buckinghamshire Primary Care Trust and Uni (South-East BME) Network. One of the aims of the scheme is to provide support to women, children and young people from the Gypsy and traveller communities affected by social exclusion, isolation, conflict or violence. Dr Margaret Greenfields, senior lecturer on social policy at Bucks New University, said: "The project has the potential to make a significant change to the health and wellbeing of this local minority ethnic group."

Source: <http://www.maidenhead-advertiser.co.uk/news/article-11725-cash-boost-to-help-gypsies-and-travellers/>

Ireland: comment 'The Roma: why we shouldn't fear Gypsies'

I know too well its truth, from experience, that whenever any poor Gipsies are encamped anywhere and crimes and robberies, etc, occur, it is invariably laid to their account, which is shocking; and if they are always looked upon as vagabonds, how can they become good people? I trust in Heaven that the day may come when I may do something for these poor people. These lines were written by Queen Victoria in 1836 — wise words from a young girl. And just by writing them she had already done something for those "poor people". The loyalist thugs responsible for the hate campaign against the Romanian Gypsies in Northern Ireland might perhaps heed the words of the great-great-grandmother of their present Queen. Queen Victoria drew attention to what is still the nub of the problem: that wherever Gypsies go they arouse suspicion. They look different, often with dark skin and wearing unusual clothes, they speak a different language, do not understand local customs and make little effort to integrate.

Full article on: http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/women/the_way_we_live/article6611276.ece

Ireland: North's racist incidents could 'rocket', say authorities

Belfast, 30/06/09 - Officials at two Stormont departments are working on specific policy proposals to meet the needs of immigrant communities in Northern Ireland following recent racist attacks.

The Assembly was also warned that the rate of racist incidents was due to “rocket”. Initiatives from the Department of Social Development, expected to be published in the next few weeks, follow the intimidation of more than 100 Romanians in south Belfast this month. They were forced to spend a night in a church hall, which was later attacked, before being allocated emergency accommodation by the North’s housing executive, an agency of the department. The Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister is also finalising a Cohesion, Sharing and Integration programme which is designed to tackle what Peter Robinson called the “inextricably linked” problems of racism and sectarianism. The First Minister told the Assembly yesterday he hoped the proposals would be published “without delay” and that the programme’s measures would tackle racism “in a substantive and holistic way”. Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness told the house: “It’s my intention to provide the draft strategy to the committee before the summer recess. If that isn’t possible we will continue to work through the summer.” Just two members of the Roma community targeted in recent racist attacks have opted to stay in Belfast, while the remainder returned to their own country last week on a flight paid for by the department. It is understood that those who have remained are in employment and are not in receipt of support by the state.

Full article on: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2009/0630/1224249783915.html>

Ireland: The Vals say no to racism with Belfast gig

Belfast, 02/07/09 - In response to the racially motivated attacks on the Romanian and Roma community in Belfast, pop rockers The Vals are playing at a Love Music Hate Racism concert at the Oh Yeah Music Centre in Belfast on 4th July. Read a band statement, "Just over a week ago members of the arts and music community in Belfast decided on an event that was not only a demonstration of disgust at racism, but also as a way to say welcome to our migrant friends and neighbours living and working here in Northern Ireland.

Source: http://www.crossrhythms.co.uk/articles/news/No_To_Racism/36691/p1/

Czech Republic: town gets EU subsidy for Roma-inhabited housing estate

Litvinov, 30/06/09 - Litvinov has received an EU subsidy of eight million crowns for a project in support of socially excluded communities in the problematic housing estate Janov inhabited mainly by Romanies, deputy mayor Martin Klika (Social Democrats, CSSD) told CTK Monday. The three-year "Future for Janov" project will focus on its inhabitants with a low education level and the long-term unemployed. The town in cooperation with NGOs will secure consultancy in social, legal and financial issues well as re-qualification and motivation courses, said Klika. The project will comprise a target group of 400 people, Klika added. He highlighted the motivation courses whose participants should improve their social habits, including their willingness to accept and keep an offered job. Some 6000 people live in the Janov housing estate where socially deprived people from various parts of the country were moved. A high number of them are unemployed, mainly Romanies who are not much interested in education and face problems with debts. Right-wing extremists have abused the situation and repeatedly staged their events aimed against Romanies in the site. The far-right Workers' Party (DS) has organised meetings and patrolling in Litvinov's Janov and other North Bohemian towns that have problems with socially excluded localities.

Source: CTK, <http://praguemonitor.com/2009/06/30/town-gets-eu-subsidy-romani-inhabited-housing-estate>

Kosovo: ethnic minority communities struggle to break a cycle of poverty

Pristina, 29/06/09 – In a desolate corner on the outskirts of Pristina, Kosovo, two men sit on the

bare ground, mending a bicycle that is a lifeline for their families. Without their bicycles they could not earn the money they need to keep their large families alive. And what they earn is little enough because their days are spent sifting through the city's garbage for what others throw away.

Full article on: http://www.unicef.org/girlseducation/index_50107.html

Canada: Ottawa report finds evidence of Czech discrimination against Roma

Ottawa: 25/06/09 - Canadian immigration officials say they have found evidence that members of the Czech Republic's Roma minority face persecution and discrimination back home amid increasing violence against them. Hundreds of Roma have fled to Canada to escape what they claim are frequent attacks at the hands of right-wing groups and skinheads. The Immigration and Refugee Board sent two immigration officers to the Czech Republic in March to gather background and help process the rising number of asylum claims. The officers visited 24 government and non-government organizations, and conducted interviews with more than 30 experts and professionals. In a report released Wednesday, the immigration officers said they found that at times, Roma are not protected by the government and often face discrimination from local police, despite programs aimed at improving relations between authorities and socially excluded communities. Some of those interviewed asserted that Czech police tend to view Roma as criminals, rather than victims of crime, while a mutual distrust has led to many Roma refusing to co-operate with Czech authorities.

Full article on: <http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2009/06/25/roma-czech-asylum062509.html>

Czech FM: Canada considers re-imposing visa requirements for Czech nationals

Prague, 01/07/09 - The Czech foreign minister says Canada is considering re-imposing visa requirements for Czech citizens. Jan Kohout says Immigration Minister Jason Kenney informed him Canada may choose to do so because of a growing number of asylum seekers, particularly Gypsies. Kohout warns visa restrictions would harm Canada's relations with the Czech Republic and the European Union. Canada's Embassy in Prague says 653 refugee claims were made in the first quarter of 2009. Human rights organizations have repeatedly accused the country of discriminating against its 250,000 Gypsies, citing discrimination and frequent attacks. Canada lifted visa requirements for Czechs in 2007.

Source: AP, <http://www.google.com/hostednews/canadianpress/article/ALeqM5hBsEFvZ5KERkNLMjgtJ1B69TaayQ>

Romania: project for Roma women activism in the trade unions

Bucharest, 29/06/2009 - The Agency for Community Development "Impreuna" (Together), develops in partnership with the National Trade Union Alliance, CNSRL Fratia and the National Agency for Equal Chances, the project entitled "Empowering women belonging to ethnic minorities in the trade unions", project financed by the FSA program and the Embassy of Nederland. According to a press release, the project continues an initiative of Impreuna Agency from 2008 represented by the research "The trade unions at the crossroad between gender and ethnicity". The purpose of this project is to empower the voice of women belonging to ethnic minorities or to vulnerable groups on the employment market in the trade unions' structures from Romania.

For other details regarding this project visit the site www.agentiaimpreuna.ro the section on projects.

EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

OSCE: Call for suggestions of police officers and law enforcement practitioners experienced in working with Roma and Sinti communities

The OSCE Strategic Police Matters Unit (SPMU) in close co-operation with the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues (CPRSI) is developing a brochure on good practices on policing in Roma and Sinti communities. The booklet will focus on those practices identified as most effective in promoting dialogue, building trust and confidence between police and Roma and facilitating partnership in addressing the existing challenges regarding the police and Roma relation. The SPMU will organize a workshop, in autumn (date to be confirmed) in order to facilitate an exchange of information and sharing of experiences of police agencies with respect to improving the relations with Roma and Sinti communities. The SPMU and the ODIHR-CPRSI would appreciate it if you could send us your suggestions of police officers and law enforcement practitioners who could attend and make their contribution to the workshops' discussions. The ideal profile of participants in this workshop would be:

- officers working on a daily basis, or frequently, in Roma communities and/ or in the de facto Roma districts;
- officers with good knowledge of the specific of the Roma community in which they work, who managed to develop and establish a good dialogue with the Roma people, and are respected by the Roma community;
- officers who by their professional behavior and promptness in action have contributed to alleviating situations of tension and/ or conflicts/ clashes between the Roma community and majority population, and prevented further escalation of violence;
- officers who by their actions have contributed to protecting Roma communities and families from collective violence and attacks of majority population and/ or extremist groups; officers of whose professional investigation of crimes (including those racially motivated) have contributed to ensuring access of Roma to justice.

Please send your suggestions to the email address: Roma@odihr.pl by 15 July 2009

EUROPEAN ROUTE OF ROMA CULTURE AND HERITAGE

LAUNCH and PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Lendava and Kamenci, Slovenia, 7 and 8 October 2009: Discover the Route of Roma Culture and Heritage and partner organisations, visit the Roma settlement Kamenci.

Roma culture is an integral part of Europe's cultural landscape and has made an important contribution to the continent's diverse heritage but this fact is seldom recognised. The Route of Roma Culture and Heritage will help to familiarise the public with Roma culture by providing opportunities for direct encounters with Roma communities and artists, in Roma settlements or in the context of creative and educational events. The Route will originally link places where founding organisations are based, and will eventually grow as new partners join in. The Route will also seek to empower Roma themselves to be presenters ("ambassadors") of their own culture by face-to-face encounters and thought media. During the Slovenian Chairmanship to the Council of Europe Slovenia has decided to pay special attention also to the rights of minorities, especially Roma. Therefore on 7 and 8 October Slovenia will host and together with the Council of Europe organize the official launching of the Roma Route project, enabling its presentation for the first time to the public and the press. Roma cultural, educational and advocacy organisations, cultural and tour-

ism institutions, tourism agencies, foundations, artists, academic, journalists, politicians and interested members of the public are invited to take part in the meeting. This will be an opportunity to look at the Roma Route project from a broader perspective and initiate new partnerships.

MAIN PARTNERS: Council of Europe, Government Office for National Minorities (SLO), European Cultural Routes institute (LUX), Slovenski etnografski muzej (SLO), Romano Pejtaušago Kamenci / Roma Friendship (SLO), Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens (GR), Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum deutscher Sinti und Roma (DE), Surrey History Centre (UK), The Rural Media Company (UK), Gypsy Media Company (UK), Muzeul de Istorie si Arheologie Maramures (RO), Presencia Gitana (ES). Working languages English, Slovenian and Romani

Conditions: Participation in the meeting is free of charge but due to limited capacity, registration is essential. Accommodation will be available in the Lendava Spa hotels at special rates. Transport between the hotels and the meeting venues will be provided. Meals will be provided on a complimentary basis.

The Council of Europe Cultural Routes programme has developed, for over 20 years, a methodology for promoting specific aspects or elements of European culture and heritage by means of research, networking, cultural and educational activities and cultural tourism. The Route of Roma Culture and Heritage will be based on the Council of Europe Cultural Routes methodology, including expert support by the European Cultural Routes Institute, and in synergy with the different Roma-related programmes carried out by the Council of Europe. The Route is open for partnership with organisations throughout Europe.

More info on: WWW.COE.INT/ROUTES

Italy: Workshop for Roma and Sinti youngsters in Tuscany

From July 13-16 in Cecina various youth groups affiliated to the Federation Romani participate in the workshop "Immaginare il futuro con i giovani rom e sinti" ("Picture the future with young Roma and Sinti") promoted by ARCI Toscana under the 2009 anti-racism meeting. The main objective of this course is to develop a collaboration between young Roma, Sinti and Gage, stimulating cooperation in achieving common objectives, the use of the media and networking, making it possible to develop new social projects and systems support within a context of participation and activism in Italian politics. The workshop will last 4 days, for a total of 12 hours.

Source and more info (in Italian): <http://federazioneromani.wordpress.com/2009/07/01/i-giovani-ed-il-meeting-antirazzista-2009/>



The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) is an international advocacy organization, which promotes political and public discussion on Roma issues by providing factual and in-dept information on a range of policy issues to the European Union institutions, Roma civil organizations, governmental authorities and intergovernmental bodies. ERIO cooperates with a network of a large number of organizations and acts to combat racial discrimination and social exclusion through awareness raising, lobbying and policy development.

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