

EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

European Commission: 5 millions euros call for proposals on Roma inclusion

The European Commission - DG Regional Policy has issued a call for proposals to develop a pilot project approved by the European Parliament that seeks to promote integration of Roma across the European Union. The budget allocated is 5,000,000 euros. The purpose of the call is to improve the pilot project of the European Parliament following a call for proposals that includes three independent separate themes corresponding to the following fields of intervention: early childhood education and care, self-employment and microcredit, and information and awareness raising. Non-profit organizations, both NGO's and public bodies, interested in the call should submit their proposals by September 25, 2009 to the Directorate General for Regional Policy of the European Commission.

Please find more information on: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/tender/proposition_en.htm

EU hopes for swift end to Czech-Canada visa row

Brussels - The European Union is hoping that Canada will quickly drop its demand that Czech citizens apply for visas, EU officials said after three-party talks in Brussels on Friday. The meeting between Czech and Canadian diplomats and officials from the European Commission, the EU's executive, was 'extremely constructive' and has 'started a process which we hope will lead to a quick solution,' commission spokesman Michele Cercone said. The row concerns Canada's decision to make Czechs apply for visas following a surge in the number of asylum applications from Roma bearers of Czech passports. The Czech government has already retaliated by making Canadian diplomats and businessmen apply for visas, but it also wants EU member states to bring in similar measures in a show of solidarity. The Czech foreign minister is set to raise the issue with EU counterparts at a meeting in Brussels on Monday. But a number of EU member states are reluctant to strain ties with Canada just as the summer tourist season reaches its height. Britain, in particular, sees Canada as a key ally both in NATO and within the Commonwealth, making it unlikely that London would impose visa requirements on its former colony. Commission officials say that the Canadian visa requirement is unacceptable, but stress that they will not recommend retaliatory measures as long as there is a chance for dialogue.

Read more: http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/europe/news/article_1491671.php/Brussels_eyes_swift_end_to_Czech-Canada_visa_row_#ixzz0MenMCDSE

Coe, Hammarberg: searches on ethnic or religious grounds are not effective

Strasbourg, 27/07/09 - Members of minorities are more often than others stopped by the police, asked for identity papers, questioned and searched. They are victims of "ethnic profiling", a form of discrimination which is widespread in today's Europe. Such methods clash with agreed human rights standards. They tend also to be counter-productive as they discourage people from cooperating with Police efforts to detect real crimes. A broad survey conducted by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) indicates that minority groups feel targeted by the manner in which the police select persons for stop and search procedures. Not surprisingly, many among them see this tendency as a sign that they are suspected, badly regarded and not welcomed by society at large. The recent FRA report on Muslims (based on interviews in 14 European countries)

showed that one out of every four Muslim respondent had been stopped by the police during the past year and that 40 % of them believed that this was because of their immigrant or minority status. Many of them had been stopped more than once during the last 12 months (the average was three times).

Full version: http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/viewpoints/default_EN.asp

ROMA NEWS FROM AROUND EUROPE

Spain: FSG publishes the report made to the UN on women

New York, 24/07/09 – The Fundación Secretariado Gitano presented the July 20 report on discrimination faced by Roma women in Spain, at the 44th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in the office of UN High Commissioner on New York.

Read its abstract here:

http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/ngos/FundacionSecretariadoGitano_Spain44.pdf

and the full version here:

http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/ngos/FundacionSecretariadoGitanoReport_Spain44.pdf

Spain: agreement between Radio Television of Andalusia (RTVA) and FIGG.

The director general of Radio Television of Andalusia (RTVA), Pablo García Carrasco, and the president of the Fundación Instituto de Cultura Gitana (FIGG), Diego Fernández Jiménez, have signed in Seville a collaboration agreement under which the agency supports the development and promotion of the history, culture and language of Roma people. The two years' agreement will allow the FIGG to make academic and historiographic use of the RTVA audiovisual funds related to Gypsy culture. Therefore, both Canal Sur Television and Canal Sur Radio authorize the aforementioned cultural institution to consult its archive material for researchers. After signing the agreement Diego Fernandez announced that the institution he presides intends to launch a documentary about Gypsy culture that aims at being of a national and international reference. Fundación Instituto de Cultura Gitana, based in Madrid, was founded in 2007 to promote and disseminate the history, culture and the Roma language, with the development of studies and relevant research and implementation initiatives, events, etc.. to foster the integration of the Roma community.

Source (in Spanish): <http://www.infoperiodistas.info/busqueda/noticia/resnot.jsp?idNoticia=8438>

UK: regional plan addresses Gypsy and Traveller site shortage

London, 27/07/09 - Gypsies and Travellers will be provided with an 80 per cent increase in pitches in the north west under a draft review of the region's policy. The number of pitches across the north west must increase from 1,026 in 2007 to at least 1,851 by 2016 to meet an 'urgent need' for places to set up camp, the draft North West Plan Partial Review states. And travelling show people will be given an extra 245 sites by the same date under the plan, an increase of 64 per cent on the 444 provided in 2007. If the plan is approved after a consultation period, it will be up to individual planning authorities to arrange locations and designs of sites, but they must include access to services as well as sanitation and power supplies. The document states that the chronic shortage of sites must be addressed. 'This shortage creates additional problems for the Gypsy and Traveller community in terms of access to health, education, employment and other opportunities. It can also create tensions over the use of pitches without planning permission,' it

says. The document has been submitted to government and is now under public consultation until October.

Source: <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/story.aspx?storycode=6505623>

UK: Gypsy families stand firm against eviction

Wedmore, 28/07/09 - Gypsy families near Wedmore are fighting against an enforcement notice in a bid to stay on the land. Kirsty Bishop and Marie Hughes are appealing against a planning decision to stay on the land next to Yeo Moor Drove in Theale. A mobile home and two touring caravans arrived over the Easter Bank holiday and after 30 letters of objection Sedgemoor District Council refused planning permission for them to stay. A spokesman from Wedmore Parish Council said: "The Parish considers it a shame that the applicants felt that they needed to occupy and develop the site without first going through the due lawful process of applying for Planning Permission in the normal way." The two applicants are understood to be two couples with children and one applicant, who owns the field, is from the area. The appeal has now officially been put forward to the Planning Inspectorate and will be dealt with at a public inquiry. This will take place at The Princess Hall in Burnham on September 24 and 25.

Source: <http://www.thewestonmercury.co.uk/content/twm/news/story.aspx?brand=Westonmercury&category=news&tBrand=westonmercury&tCategory=znews&itemid=WeED28%20Jul%202009%2016:15:20:957>

Czech Republic: Canadian probe finds Czech Roma mistreated

28/07 Two weeks after Canada imposed visas on Czech travellers to stop a flood of Roma refugee seekers, Canada's refugee board has released a report outlining neo-Nazi brutality and harsh lives experienced by Roma in the central European country. Roma, often derisively called "Gypsies," are forced to live in what the report calls "socially excluded localities" – ghettos – where they have "limited access to formal employment, acceptable education and adequate housing." Roma children also get poor educations or are herded into schools for the learning disabled, Canadian investigators with the Immigration and Refugee Board said in the second part of a two-stage report. The first part, dealing with the Czech government's treatment of refugees, was released in June. Investigators did find improvements: the number of Czechs who would not want Roma neighbours has fallen from 70 per cent in the late 1990s to 60 per cent this year. In addition, political extremism in the Czech Republic wasn't as pervasive as in neighbouring countries and the number of reported neo-Nazi attacks had fallen from 473 in 2002 to 217 in 2008. Skinheads also attack Jews, dark-skinned foreigners, homosexuals and the homeless, the report found. On July 13, Immigration Minister Jason Kenney announced travellers from the Czech Republic and Mexico, the top two sources of thousands of refugee claims each year, would require visas. "The sheer volume of these claims is undermining our ability to help people fleeing real persecution," Kenney said at the time.

Source: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/article/672685>

Czech Rep.: Pecina: Janov housing estate to be patrolled by 10 more police officers

Janov, 25/07/09 - Interior Minister Martin Pecina has promised the Litvínov town leadership that he will strengthen the local police force by 10 officers for the problematic Janov housing estate. The decision accommodates the town's longstanding request, one which Police President Oldřich Martinů distanced himself from in May. According to local police officers and the mayor, the strengthening of patrol services at the housing estate is necessary, and Pecina told journalists it

will take place within a few weeks at the latest. "I will discuss increasing the number of these positions with the police president. We will find a solution so that this is addressed as quickly as possible. It is clear to me that the police president has historically had problems with the budget, as it has been gradually reduced over time. However, we are planning that next year's budget will be set at an appropriate level," Pecina said. Pecina believes many other things can be done for the Janov housing estate and for the region: "However, I must first discuss specific proposals with the heads of the other ministries involved, as well as with the head of the Ústí region. Only then will I have something to say." Mayor of Litvínov Daniel Volák (ODS) welcomed the interior minister's promise. "The minister is the first state representative to accommodate the town's plea that the security situation be enhanced. I consider it a great success and I thank the minister," he said. The town is already addressing the situation at the Janov housing estate through its own efforts. For example, it has increased the number of patrol officers allocated to Janov by four. Since the start of July, a police assistant from the local Roma community has also been working at the housing estate. She is meant to be a contact point between people from the socially excluded locality and the municipal and state police.

Full article: http://www.romea.cz/english/index.php?id=detail&detail=2007_1299

EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Call for Papers: Extremism and the Roma and Sinti in Europe: Challenges, Risks and Responses

A conference and publication supported and funded by OSCE/ODIHR

In past few years we have observed a rise in racism and xenophobia in Europe. These find fertile ground in the economic crisis in which populist, nationalist and extremist views gain public support. The gains of the extreme right in the last elections to the European Parliament vividly illustrate this. Such a turn concerns the international community, policy makers, civil society and various minorities. They are also troubled by a rise in aggressive incidents and violent acts against Roma and Sinti populations in a number of European states. The current situation in this regard raises a number of questions: Are the Roma and Sinti especially targeted by these forces or movements in Europe? If so, why? Are we witnessing a resurgence of past patterns of hate speech and violence or new forms – offering greater political returns for the extreme and marginal forces than they have managed to date? In order to raise awareness of these issues and analyze the potential threat to social stability and security the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) together with University College London intend to prepare a publication on this topic. We would, therefore, like to invite scholars of diverse academic interests specializations to provide analysis and case studies elaborating on the following (non-exhaustive) list of issues for inclusion into this publication:

- Anti-Roma racism and violence in Europe: forms and extent; causes of current proliferation;
- Public discourses, media representations and political campaigns in periods of social distress and economic recession: what feeds the extremist movements and the actions targeting Roma and Sinti?
- Roma and Sinti in the local reality: decentralization, local authorities, local politics and extremist views in the local community – what leads to their radicalization?
- Social cohesion, extremist movements and security concerns – do current trends endanger the very fabric of society and democracy? In what ways may they come to do so?
- Legal and mainstream political responses to extremism: how far are anti-discrimination leg-

isolation and campaigns and hate-crime legislation effective in defusing or eliminating such attitudes and/or movements?

- Roma and Sinti responses to extremism;
- The responsibility and role of state institutions, international organizations and human rights civil organizations; possible measures for combating extremist movements.

You are invited to submit a paper abstract by 5th August 2009 (ten lines-one page maximum outlining the conceptual contribution and its empirical content, in English, submitted to m.stewart@ucl.ac.uk). Michael Stewart and Andrzej Mirga will make a selection of the most appropriate and stimulating of these by 10th August requesting the selected authors to provide short papers (6 pages-20 maximum) by August 31 for pre-circulation for a conference at University College London, scheduled for 10-11 September. Brief presentations allowing time for significant discussion. The organizers/ODIHR aims to finalize publication of these in a volume by the end of the year.



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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