



**SÜDOSTEUROPA-
GESELLSCHAFT**

DEUTSCHE WELLE




Bundesministerium für
wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit
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International Conference

**Roma -
(Southeast) Europe's Unknown Minority**

Berlin, December 1 – 2, 2008

Draft Program

Conference Languages: German, English (simultaneous translation)

Background of the conference

„Roma“, „Zigeuner“, „Gypsies“, „Cigani“ – the people who are referred to by these and other collective names have recently attracted much attention and publicity on the part of international institutions and the media. Reports and analyses disclose appalling poverty and inhuman living conditions of Roma in post-socialist countries of the macro-region “Southeast Europe”, they deal with migration to old member states of the European Union and with high crime rates. Public discussions about delinquency, the right of residence and deportation flared up in countries of Western Europe. In January 2008 the European Parliament issued a resolution inviting the EU to elaborate a Strategy for the Roma. In May the EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities emphasized the European Union’s willingness to support the creation of equal opportunities for the members of this group. As part of the renewed Social Agenda the European Commission has come forward with a Staff Working Paper on Roma in July. On September 16 the Commission convened its first-ever high-level Roma summit in Brussels to address the specific problems of this minority. Roma leaders and human rights advocates were among 400 people attending the event. The EC has repeatedly specified community instruments and policies for Roma inclusion and called for joint efforts by the EU and its member countries to bring Roma into mainstream society.

Anyway and despite the rising international awareness, there is still little knowledge about the Roma across the EU27. Can they be classified by common ethno-cultural and socio-economic characteristics? Why are they a unique group within and beyond the enlarged European Union? What are the key issues with which large segments of Southeast Europe’s Roma population are confronted in their daily lives and which are the political challenges? In which way do Roma themselves bring about change in the *status quo* by political and civic self-organization? Which role do international organizations play in the fight against marginalization and for the creation of equal opportunities for this group which is comprised of millions of members throughout the continent and which is sometimes referred to as Europe’s largest ethnic minority? In which way do institutions such as the World Bank, the EU, the European Parliament and international civic organizations take on Roma issues as a “true European agenda”?

The conference shall contribute to the dissemination of information about a minority which represents an integral part of Europe’s cultural landscape. It tries to help raise public awareness in Germany and beyond concerning the importance of Roma issues. Last but not least it intends to provoke discussions concerning the elaboration and implementation of problem-solving strategies which really correspond to the broad needs of the Roma people.

The conference addresses a broad audience of officials, experts and interested representatives active in political life, academia, media and civil society.

Monday, 1 December 2008

Arrival of the participants

17:00 hrs Welcome / Opening

Gernot Erler, MP, Minister of State at the German Federal Foreign Office / President Southeast Europe Association, Berlin

Erik Bettermann, General Manager, Deutsche Welle, Bonn

Leo Kreuz, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Bonn

brief statements by other co-sponsors

17:30 hrs Introduction: „Who are Sinti and Roma“?

Historical Background, Cultural Diversity, Controversial Issues

Bernhard Streck, Institute of Ethnology, University of Leipzig

18:00 hrs Part I – Ethno-Cultural, Socioeconomic and Political Aspects

Integration of Roma in Germany

Herta Däubler-Gmelin, Chair, Committee for Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid of the German Bundestag, Berlin

Living Conditions, Social Perception and State Policy in the Macro-Region of “Eastern Europe” before and after 1989

Zoltan Barany, Dept. of Government, University of Texas at Austin

Everyday Life and Work with Roma: Examples from Transylvania

Eginald Schlattner, Pastor and Writer, Roşia/Rothberg; Sibiu/Hermannstadt

19:30 hrs Reception

Tuesday, 2 December 2008

9:30 hrs Part II – Key Issues and Policy in Selected SEE-Countries after 1989

Bulgaria: Education and Employment

Ilona Tomova, Institute of Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia

Romania: Living Conditions and Health Aspects

Mariana Buceanu, National Agency for the Roma, Bucharest

Kosovo: Roma under Changing Political and Institutional Conditions

Zuzana Finger, Project Coordinator, Südost-Europa Kultur e.V., Berlin

12:00 hrs Lunch

**13:00 hrs Part III – The Role of Political and Civic Self-Organization -
Examples from “Old” and “New” EU-members**

Speakers:

Will Guy, Department of Sociology, University of Bristol

Miklos Barczy, Senior Advisor, Local Roma- Self-Government, Hungary

Costel Bercuş, Chair, Roma Education Fund, Board Swiss Foundation, Budapest

Inés Cedrón, Fundacion Secretariado Gitano, Madrid

15:00 hrs Coffee Break

15:30 hrs Part IV – Equal Opportunities as a Challenge for the International Community

Speakers:

Andre Wilkens, Director, Open Society Institute, Brussels

Andrzej Mirga, Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, OSCE, Warsaw

Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Director General – Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport, Council of Europe, Strasbourg

Ljuan Koko, Head, Roma National Strategy Secretariat, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, Belgrade

Christian Petry, Executive Director, Freudenberg Foundation, Weinheim/Bergstraße

17:45 hrs Break

**18:00 hrs
Part V - Panel Discussion:**

Which Future for the Roma in Southeast Europe?

Shigeo Katsu, Vice President, Europe and Central Asia Region, World Bank, Washington

Livia Jaroka, Member of the European People`s Party, European Parliament, Strasbourg

Vladimir Špidla, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs & Equal Opportunities, Brussels

Krassimir Kanev, Member of the Executive Committee of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF), Sofia

t.b.c., representative of an international Roma organization

19:30 hrs End of the Conference