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Education for Roma: achievements, opportunities and challenges for the future

***Council of Europe Conference
held in the framework of the Slovenian Chairmanship
of the Council of Europe (May-November 2009)***

Brdo, Slovenia, 25-26 May 2009

DRAFT AGENDA

Date and place

Slovenia, Conference centre in Brdo
25-26 May 2009
Accommodation will be organised in Bled

Conference aims and objectives

The conference is organised in the framework of the Council of Europe's project "Education of Roma children in Europe" and the Slovenian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The conference will bring together senior officials from member state governments dealing with issues concerning Roma as well as the senior key players from both a range of international organisations and Roma and Traveller Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs). It aims at serving the needs and interests of all these players in securing rapid and continuing progress towards the realisation of the rights to quality education for all members of Roma and Traveller communities across Europe.

Within this general context and aim, the conference will provide for an evaluative focus on the work and outcomes of the Council of Europe Roma Education Project. Given the crucial importance of the issue of Roma education for all Member States, it is vital that the strengths and successes of the project are identified and replicated within any further actions and programmes initiated by the Council of Europe and other key players, including member states, NGOs and international organisations. Any less successful aspects of the project also need to be taken into consideration so that future actions and projects are able to benefit from past experience and that scarce resources are used as efficiently as possible.

In addition to reviewing the outcomes of the Roma Education Project, the conference will also be proactive in identifying a range of future actions that can be initiated and strengthened. Such actions will be directly linked to the on-going assessment of needs in relation to education for Roma and Traveller communities. As part of this objective, conference participants will be asked to identify the courses of action best suited to the effective and successful dissemination of the many project outcomes. A further focus will be on exploring strategies for the sustainability of the existing project outcomes, to keep them up-to-date; noting any need for additions and or revisions; their distribution and availability of supply.

Conference participants will be asked to use their collective wisdom and experience to identify any areas in which further research is required in the wide field of Roma and Traveller education, not forgetting the issues of early childhood education and life long learning opportunities. Research considerations will be purposeful in terms of their potential for informing and driving forward policy, provision and practice in Member States.

An additional objective of the conference will be to identify the short-term and long term implications of the project for the Council of Europe and other key players.

Participants

- 1) 2-3 persons from each member state. A balanced representation of officials from Education Ministries or other Ministries dealing with Roma issues, as well as of Roma organisations is expected.
- 2) Moderators, rapporteurs and the general rapporteur (experts)
- 3) The following international organisations (IGOs and INGOs) and institutions will be invited: UNESCO, UNICEF, OECD, OSCE/ODIHR, European Commission, Save the Children, Roma Education Fund, Fundamental Rights Agency, ERRC, ERTF, the Wergeland Centre for education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship, FERYP, etc.
- 4) Council of Europe bodies: Office of the Commissioner of Human Rights, Steering Committee for Education, ECRI, MG-S-ROM, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention on Minorities, Language Policy Division, etc.

Organisation and working groups

The conference will be organised in a way that will allow for keynote speeches and presentations in plenary as well as working groups. Working groups will focus on specific key areas and will represent a comprehensive agenda of all appropriate and relevant issues. The processes of the Working Groups will aim at achieving the identification of a prioritised list of urgent actions for member states and international organisations that are necessary to achieve a real and lasting change in the educational situation of Roma and Traveller communities. The whole afternoon of 25 May will be devoted to working groups (see the draft programme which follows hereafter).

The conference programme will also include a number of innovative approaches to the display and dissemination of the material available including a 'Market Place' occasion where participants may become familiar with the full range of project outcomes.

The Information market will be open at all times during the conference: It will be composed of the following: 1) Council of Europe materials which have been developed through the Roma Education project as well as other materials from the Council of Europe regarding Roma; 2) A special stand on the Council of Europe "Dosta" campaign; 3) General information about the Council of Europe; 4) Slovenian experience regarding Roma education and other Roma issues; 5) Material from other international organisations and INGOs. It is expected that information videos will be running permanently throughout the market.

In terms of expected outcomes, it is anticipated that the conference will provide a unique opportunity for the individuals in the three representative groups invited, namely senior government officials, senior officers from both the international organisations and Roma and Traveller NGOs, to prepare an action plan for how they propose to use and disseminate the outcomes of the Council of Europe's and other international organisation's work.

A conference report will be published by the Council of Europe following the event.

Monday 25 May 2009

9:00	<p>Opening of the conference</p> <p>Welcome addresses by the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe (tbc) and Slovene authorities</p> <p>Keynote speeches</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Broader context of social policies (Slovenian expert)- Rights perspective on Roma education (Council of Europe)
10.30	Coffee break
11:00	<p>Brief presentation of the Council of Europe's project "Education of Roma children in Europe" and the revised Recommendation on Education of Roma Children</p> <p>Presentation of the goals and expected outcomes of the Conference</p> <p>Aurora Ailincai (Council of Europe), Jean-Pierre Liégeois (CoE expert) and Calin Rus (CoE expert)</p>
12.10	Introduction to the workshops by Mirko Zorman, National Education Institute, Slovenia
12:30	Lunch
14:00	Visit of the Market Place
15:00	<p>Working groups on the following themes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. preschool education and early childcare2. recognition of non-formal and informal learning3. school – community cooperation: Roma assistants and mediators4. cultural recognition: history, culture and language5. policies to facilitate access and ensure equal access to quality education, including teacher training <p>Issues to be tackled in all working groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take stock of the project and reflect on how to build on experiences• Which perspectives for the future? Implementation of the Recommendation on Education for Roma children, questions and recommendations to international organisations• Transversal issues such as gender, empowerment of Roma, equality of opportunities and outcomes, combating discrimination, positive action, training of professionals will be discussed in all working groups <p>There will be a flexible break for each working group</p> <p>Each group will start with instructions by a moderator and a presentation of the relevant Council of Europe product/materials.</p>

	The last 30 minutes will be devoted to reaching an agreement on the key elements to be reported on in the plenary session the following day. A predefined structure in powerpoint format will be prepared for the reporting
18:00	End of the working day and departure of the bus for Bled Evening: cultural event

Tuesday 26 May 2009

9:00	Reports of working groups. Chair: César Birzea, Romania
10:00	Feedback from Miranda Vuolasranta, representative of the ERTF (tbc) Comments and general discussion
10:30	Keynote intervention by a Roma personality
11:00	Coffee break
11:30	Panel with international institutions on follow-up (Roma Education Fund, European Commission, UNESCO, OSCE, UNICEF) and a Roma representative. Chair: representative of the Education Ministry, Slovenia
13:00	Short summary by the general rapporteur Final remarks by participants Closing by the Minister of Education, Slovenia and Gabriele Mazza, Director of Education and Languages, Council of Europe
13:30	Lunch and departure