

INTERVENTION

Dženita Brčvak / Centre for Democracy and Human Rights

MONTENEGRO

AGENDA ITEM # 5: Challenges and problems encountered in the practical implementation of the Declaration

Thank you, Madam Chair.

My name is Dženita Brčvak. I speak on behalf of the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights – CEDEM, an NGO from Montenegro.

I will talk today about the social exclusion of Roma and Egyptian community in Montenegro, in particular the lack of adequate research on their overall socio-economic situation and the limited effect of social policies implemented to date.

This situation is most relevant to Draft Recommendations no. 25, 27 and 28:

We believe that the systematic conduct of adequate, ethnically sensitive research is of an essential importance for the Government to be fully aware of the specific needs and challenges of any minority group and particularly in this case the Roma and Egyptians.

The Government of Montenegro has shown a clear commitment to addressing the issues of Roma and Egyptian minority and has adopted a number of legal and strategic provisions¹. These provisions were, however, not drafted based on updated, precise and comprehensive research data. In particular where data does exist, there is no mechanism for correlating different information. Therefore, there is no analysis which actually connects the system of social protection to the causes of social exclusion of this population. Further, without proper research; there is no measure of sustainable results in the practice; this undermines the accountability of these measures undertaken for the benefit of Roma and Egyptians. A comprehensive approach to Social Inclusion of the Roma, as practiced in other countries, would for example have been better able to identify the issue of the need for possession of personal documents and being registered citizen, which are obligatory preconditions for exercising the rights to social protection. Since many Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro do not fulfil these conditions, they cannot benefit and this lack of analyses has contributed to the limited

¹ Law on Minority Rights and Freedoms (Sl. list RCG 51/06), Law on Prohibition of Discrimination (Sl. list 46/2010), Action Plan for Implementing *Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 – 2015*, as well as Strategy for Improvement of position of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro, 2012

effectiveness and slow implementation of certain policies, such as the Strategy for Improving the Status of Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro 2012-2016.²

The social position of the Roma and Egyptians in Montenegro is highly marginalised. Statistical data shows that almost half of the population lives in poverty, whilst 2/3 of Roma children live below poverty line. Social exclusion of the Roma is shown to be the result of chronic, long-term marginalisation and inequality in all aspects of social life. In fact, according to research we conducted in 2011, citizens of Montenegro have the highest level of social distance between themselves and this minority community.³

The need for strengthening social inclusion based on desegregated research data was recognised both by the EU and the Council of Europe. The latest EU Progress Report on Montenegro stated that **“little progress has been made on social inclusion”** and that **“measures and policies for poverty reduction and for Roma inclusion need to be strengthened”**.⁴

Without thorough analysis and evaluation of social protection measures, and the creation of policies based on the needs of the target population and directed towards their sustainable integration, there is no sustainable development.

I urge this Forum to adopt the above mentioned recommendations and the Government of Montenegro begin to undertake systematic analysis on the socio-economic needs of the Roma and Egyptian community in order to improve development and implementation of effective policies for integration.

Thank you for your attention.

² Strategy with incorporated Action Plan for 2012 available at: <http://www.minmanj.gov.me/rubrike/strategija-za-poboljsanje-polozaja-roma/113270/Strategija-za-poboljsanje-polozaja-Roma-i-Egipcana-u-Crnoj-Gori-2012-2016-sa-akcionim-planom-za-sprovođenje-za-2012-godinu.html>

³ CEDEM, *Public opinion research on discrimination of minority population and marginalized social groups in Montenegro*

<http://cedem.me/en/programmes/empirical-research/other-opinion-polls/finish/41-other-opinion-polls/223-public-opinion-research-on-discrimination-of-minority-population-and-marginalized-social-groups-june-2011.html>

⁴ European Commission, Montenegro Progress Report 2012,

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2012/package/mn_rapport_2012_en.pdf