

REPLY FROM GOVERNMENT
OF HUNGARY

88

I wish to make some reflections on the comments of the representative of the European Roma rights Centre made yesterday on the situation of Roma people in Hungary. We have to admit that there is still a lot to do in this field, but for giving a more balanced and clear idea, we have to add that there have been many improvements that prove the real commitment of the Hungarian Government to help the social integration of Roma people.

This autumn local elections will take place in Hungary including the election of local self governments of national minorities. In the run/up to these elections more than 100 thousand persons – on a voluntary basis – declared officially to belong to the Roma community, which means that this year more than 1300 local self governments of Roma will be elected, 300 more than during the last elections four years ago. Note- on a voluntary basis, because according to the Hungarian Constitution nobody can be forced to declare whether she/he belongs to a national minority.

As for the education of the Roma, beside the national programmes Hungary takes part in various international programmes launched to improve Roma education such as the international Roma Education fund targeting the improvement of the position and accomplishment of Roma schoolchildren. Hungarian institutions are also contributing to the programme launched by the European Union combating social marginalization of the Roma. It started in 2002 and it will end this year. The second phase of this programme between 2003/2005 specifically targeted the exchange of information of the Roma and Travellers.

In 2003 the Hungarian ministry of Economy and transportation launched a special programme to aid micro, small and medium sized Roma business ventures, encourage entrepreneurship as such and facilitate the employment of Roma people. Between 2003/2005 approx. 2 billions HUF (about 7 million euros) were invested into different types of Roma businesses and 400 new jobs created. This year the amount allocated to the same purpose by the Hungarian Government has been increased by 25% .

At the first stage of the Roma Decade Programme which has been launched in 2005 with the support of the World Bank and the Council of Europe Development Bank, 20 million HUF were allocated in the state budget to the co/operation between Roma local self governments and regional employment centers.

In 2004 Hungary held its first elections of representatives to the European Parliament. As a result of it, Hungary delegated the first ever Roma representatives to the European Parliament.

At the end of this June the Independent Expert on Minorities Issues visited to Hungary. We hope that her report prepared on her visit (will be published in the near future) will help to have a more detailed, balanced and objective picture on the situation of the Roma in Hungary.