



COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSAIRE AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME



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Ms Theodora TZAKRI

Deputy Minister of Interior, Decentralization and e-Governance of Greece

Strasbourg, 8 March 2010

Dear Minister,

Further to our meeting in Athens on 9 February 2010, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the constructive discussion that we had.

During our meeting, we referred to different aspects of the situation of the Roma population in Greece. One of these aspects was the need to combat anti-Gypsyism. I am convinced that without effectively tackling the anti-Roma prejudice and stereotypes that are deeply engrained in most European societies, policies aimed at improving the human rights of Roma can only be of very limited success. As a practical tool for combating anti-Gypsyism, you will find enclosed the Council of Europe's *Fact Sheets on Roma History*, to which I referred during our meeting. It would be very useful if, probably in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, you could envisage a way of introducing this pedagogical material into school curricula in Greece. I also reiterate the importance of awareness raising measures in this field and encourage in particular the launching of the Dosta! campaign in Greece, for which the Council of Europe stands ready to provide the necessary support.

The issue of Roma migration, especially within the EU, was also addressed in our discussions. Together with the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the OSCE, in April 2009, I published a study entitled "*Recent Migration of Roma in Europe*", a copy of which is enclosed. It provides an analysis of the existing human rights standards concerning migration in Europe and highlights discriminatory practices that Roma migrants face. It concludes with a set of recommendations for action by member states of the Council of Europe in order to enhance the effective protection of the human rights of Roma migrants. I hope you will find this publication useful and draw inspiration from its findings and recommendations.

As regards the issue of unauthorised Roma settlements, to which we also referred in our discussion, I enclose copies of two letters I sent to Mr Prokopis Pavlopoulos, former Minister of the Interior, in 2006 and 2007, to which I have not as yet received a reply. I would also like to draw your attention to the enclosed Recommendation on the implementation of the right to housing I published in June 2009, which provides an overview of the different components of the right to housing and the applicable international and Council of Europe standards.

Moreover, I would welcome further information on the restoration of Greek nationality for those persons who lost it on the basis of former Article 19 of the Greek Nationality Code. As mentioned in our meeting, these include stateless persons living in Greece and abroad. I would be grateful for any updated information you could provide on the number of former Greek citizens presently living as stateless persons in Greece and abroad, the extent to which they have been able to have their citizenship restored and any measures envisaged to facilitate the process of restoration of their Greek nationality.

Finally, I would like to reiterate my appreciation for the ongoing legislative work aimed at facilitating the acquisition of citizenship by, *inter alia*, children born in Greece to long-term foreign residents and children attending Greek schools, and extending the right to vote in local elections to long-term foreign residents. As mentioned at the meeting, this brings Greece into greater compliance with Council of Europe standards in the areas of acquisition of nationality and political participation of non-citizens at local level. I hope that it will soon be possible for Greece to become a party to the European Convention on Nationality and the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level.

I look forward to receiving your reply and to continuing our constructive dialogue on the above issues.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Hammarberg

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