

**THE OBJECTIVES OF FINLAND FOR
ADVANCING THE EUROPEAN POLICY ON ROMA**

Finland's Handbook on the European Policy on Roma

**WORKING GROUP REPORT
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SUMMARY

The working group report "The Objectives of Finland for Advancing the European Policy on Roma," published as a handbook, responds to the proposal of the National Policy on Roma for Finland, approved by the Government's decision-in-principle in December 2010, to write a Finnish strategy for influencing the international Roma policy under the lead of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

It was set as the main objective that Finland would actively influence the formation of a European strategy on Roma by offering her models and experiences in advancing the participation and equality of the Roma while also learning from other countries' experiences and good practices. In this work, the representatives of Finland, state officials and other stakeholders, could rely on this strategy.

The vision of a European wide strategy on Roma is founded on the Strategy on Roma of the European Union, which complements national Roma Strategies of its Member States, and the coordinated undertakings of the Council of Europe and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) striving for similar human rights and socioeconomic goals.

Finland can influence the realization of the vision by actively and systematically eliciting her views and experiences on handling the Roma issue in the above-mentioned organizations as well as in her bilateral relations and other international connections (inter alia different United Nations organs, the World Bank and non-governmental organizations).

The vision and objectives are followed by the basic principles in the Finnish Roma policy. The most important of them is that the Roma are to be enabled to participate and effectively influence the planning, implementation, evaluation and monitoring on the measures that aim at improving their situation.

Subsequently, the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion of the European Union are presented along with Finland's policy guidelines and good practices from different sectors of Roma policy like education; housing; health; adult education and employment; language and culture; and promotion of equality and combating discrimination. A national database for these good practices will be created and linked to the Internet site of the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs. Separate guidelines regarding attitudes towards the travelling Roma and gathering statistics and conducting research on the Roma are presented.

The proposals that complement the handbook include, inter alia, the development of the Roma Platform and usage of the Structural Funds of the European Union, proposals for developing the activities in Roma questions in the Council of Europe and the OSCE and proposals for influencing the Roma issues bilaterally and within the UN system.

CONTENTS

	<i>Foreword</i>	6
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKING GROUP		
1	Objectives and Vision	10
2	Basic Principles	11
2.1	Finland's basic principles for advancing the inclusion and socioeconomic situation of the Roma	11
2.2	The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion of the European Union	12
3	Roma Policy Guidelines and Good Practices of Finland	13
3.1	Education of Roma children and youth	14
3.2	Roma adult education and employment	14
3.3	Housing of the Roma population	16
3.4	Health care of the Roma population	16
3.5	Preservation and development of the Romani language and culture	17
3.6	Promoting equal treatment of the Roma and preventing discrimination	18
3.7	Development of the administration structures for handling Romani affairs	19
3.8	Research and compilation of statistics	20
3.9	Attitudes towards the migrant Roma within the European Union	21
4	Recommendations for Advancing the European Union Policy on Roma	24
4.1	Platform for Roma Inclusion (Roma Platform)	25
4.2	The European Union Funds, particularly the Structural Funds	26
5	Recommendations for Advancing the Council of Europe Policy on Roma	28
6	Recommendations for Advancing the OSCE Policy on Roma	29
7	Recommendations for Advancing the United Nations Policy on Roma	30
8	Bilateral Influencing in Roma Affairs	30

Foreword

Finland's National Policy on Roma, approved by Government's decision-in-principle in December 2010, includes a proposal to draw up a Finnish strategy for influencing the international Roma policy under the lead of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and in co-operation with the central ministries, the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, Roma organizations and other stakeholders. The reason for the proposal was that the Roma are a pan-European minority whose standard of living and social inclusion have significantly fallen behind the living conditions of the major population and there has risen a need for developing a comprehensive Roma policy in Europe.

In many ways, Finland has been an initiator in raising the Roma questions in the European cooperation. The working group for drafting Finland's National Policy on Roma suggested that Finland should also in future actively influence the formation of the European strategy on Roma by offering her models and experiences in advancing the inclusion and equality of the Roma for wider usage in Europe. Given this background, an international strategy on Roma policy should be written. This strategy would define the objectives of the multilateral cooperation.

Separately, the working group set a goal that Finland should advance the development of the Roma strategy in the European Union. Finland can work actively in the Union for improving the status of the Roma so that when the representatives of Finland take part in the work of different programmes, divisions, committees and working groups, they know the situation of the Roma minority in Europe and can highlight the Roma point of view as part of this work. The representatives and state officials need political and administrative support. In this respect, the international strategy on Roma policy would meet their needs.

Responding to the proposal, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs set up a working group consisting of the representatives of the focal ministries (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of the Environment, and Ministry of Education and Culture), the National Board on Romani Affairs and the Finnish National Board of Education. As permanent experts the representatives of the key Roma organizations (Finnish Roma Association, Fintiko Romano Forum Federation, Kromana, Life and Light, Nevo Roma and Romano Missio) were invited to participate in the above-mentioned working group gathering the representatives of the State administration and the Roma.

The Grand Committee of the Parliament assessed in the "Committee Report Regarding the Government's Survey on the Ongoing Actions of the European Union and Finland for Improving the Roma Situation in Europe" that the guidelines of Finland's National Policy on Roma set a good ground for enhancing Finland's active role in international and bilateral cooperation. Furthermore, the Committee considered it important to finalize the strategy as soon as possible so that Finland can advance the co-operation for developing the European strategy on Roma.

Finland's handbook on the European policy on Roma "The Objectives of Finland for Advancing the European Policy on Roma," which is now completed, was written according to the above-mentioned instructions.

Firstly, the objective of a European strategy on Roma is described. This is best enhanced in the European Union, the Council of Europe and the OSCE. The European Union is essential for these activities because it has the best legal and economic preconditions for creating an own strategy within the Union. Furthermore, the EU can influence the countries applying or planning to apply to join the EU that also participate in the activities of the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

The last-mentioned organizations have their own traditional Roma activities. The participation of Finland in developing those activities, as well as the bilateral co-operation in Europe and other international activities are expedient to be carried out coherently.

For this reason the most important basic principles in Roma policy adopted by Finland and the so-called 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma inclusion are presented. These are followed by Finland's policy guidelines and good practices from different sectors of Roma policy like education; housing; health; adult education and employment; language and culture; and advancement of equality and prevention of discrimination. A national database for these good practices will be created and linked to the Internet site of the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs. Separate guidelines regarding attitudes towards the travelling Roma and gathering statistics and conducting research on the Roma are presented.

In addition to these there are listed the matters and methods that Finland should pursue especially in the European Union, the Council of Europe and the OSCE (most importantly the cooperation in Roma affairs complementary to each other) but also in bilateral connections and within the United Nations system.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKING GROUP

1 OBJECTIVES AND VISION

The overall low status of the Roma is a European wide human rights and development problem, and one of the largest challenges in improving the position of minorities and promoting equality. The issue is not only about abolishing the discrimination based on ethnic origin but it is equally important to correct the socioeconomic situation of the Roma. The activities intended to promote the inclusion and equality of the Roma need to be supported by strong political will for attaining real changes.

In promoting the inclusion and equality of the Roma, the European Union and its Member States should proceed to persistent and strategic Roma policy. A Roma strategy should be drafted for the European Union to complement and support the activities of the Member States. In the strategy, concrete and forward-looking activities for improving the inclusion of the Roma would be presented. The strategy should be built on comprehensive approach and cooperation between the Commission, Member States and Roma organizations.

As part of this process, cooperation between the EU, the Council of Europe and the OSCE as well as mutual coordination of handling the Roma affairs is to be pursued. The added value of the OSCE is especially in its local knowledge and NGO competence. The Council of Europe, for one, has a long-term and in-depth experience in promoting the equality and human rights of the Roma population.

Furthermore, the Council of Europe and the OSCE cover the European countries outside the European Union of which many are already candidate countries and more consider the EU membership as their future goal. These countries' Roma population is numerically probably bigger than the one already living within the Union and lives in equally meagre or even more squalid living conditions than the Roma of the European Union.

Accordingly, the vision of a European wide strategy on Roma is founded on the Strategy on Roma of the European Union, which complements national Roma Strategies of its Member States, and the coordinated undertakings of the Council of Europe and the OSCE striving for similar human rights and socioeconomic goals.

Finland can influence the realization of the vision by actively and systematically eliciting her views and experiences on handling the Roma issue in the above-mentioned organizations as well as in her bilateral relations and other international connections (inter alia different United Nations organs, the World Bank and non-governmental organizations). The promotion of equality and inclusion of the Roma is a multilateral learning process where also Finland has opportunities to learn from other countries' experiences and good practices.

The vision will not come to fruition overnight but obtaining it requires multifaceted consultation processes. Proceeding according to the objectives in some areas is already a great step towards the formation of the European Strategy on Roma that Finland pursues. Moreover, the consultation process as such can be an important opinion building process for all stakeholders.

The realization of the vision requires political will of the decision-makers of the European organizations, European countries and the administration; cooperation between different

administrative sectors; the Roma people's own influencing and commitment; and structures that strengthen cooperation and interaction at international, national, regional and local level.

2 BASIC PRINCIPLES

2.1 Finland's basic principles for advancing the inclusion and socioeconomic situation of the Roma

In discussions concerning the improvement of the inclusion, equality and socioeconomic situation of the Roma, Finland's opinions are based on the following principles:

1. The Roma should be enabled to participate and effectively influence the planning, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of the measures that aim at improving their situation. The participation and commitment of the Roma people in matters concerning themselves are decisive for the success of the developmental activities.
2. An essential prerequisite for acting thus is strengthening the capacity and competence of Roma organizations and communities, as well as their readiness to collaborate with authorities. Furthermore, it is important to enhance the cooperation between the Roma organizations and other non-governmental organizations.
3. It is an objective to mainstream the promotion of Roma inclusion and equality as part of the societal activities and services designated for everybody. This requires making visible the situation and needs of the Roma people, identifying the barriers to equality and actions to remove these obstacles.
4. Special measures and positive actions towards the Roma are needed in situations where they are in a disadvantaged position compared with other population groups. Positive action refers to temporary measures aimed at those in an unequal position with the purpose of realizing factual equality or decreasing disadvantages caused by discrimination. The aim is to attain permanent improvements.
5. The Roma do not constitute the worst-off people in Europe alone but in many countries – especially in Central and Eastern Europe – they constitute the majority of these people. When planning positive actions for improving the living conditions of the Roma, it should be taken care of that these actions do not exclude other people in vulnerable position.
6. Short-spanned projects for improving the socio-economic situation of the Roma do not bring about structural changes in the society. Therefore, single projects should be based on wider, comprehensive and concrete action plans. The implementation of the Roma policy is to be anchored to national development in different spheres of life.
7. Finland is ready to share information on operational models and practices proven practical and designed in Finland to advance equality and inclusion of the Roma, and to learn from other countries' experiences. This requires mechanisms and forums that strengthen mutual interaction and learning. The ability of the governments and non-

governmental organizations to share and adopt good practices is to be further developed.

8. In practice, human rights and integration of the Roma into society are realized at the local level. Therefore, it is important to secure that the regional and local authorities understand the benefits of advancing the Roma situation in the long run, commit themselves to the actions and get enough support in this regard. To strengthen the interaction and inclusion, it is important to develop especially local structures for cooperation and action.
9. In Roma societies, central factors defining social standing are age and gender that are affiliated with strong cultural habits and roles. Life situations of Roma women, men, different age groups and minorities alike are affiliated with special characteristics that are important to be identified when designing actions for advancing equality and inclusion. Finland supports advancement of gender and minority equality also within the Roma people in national and European cooperation.
10. From the high-level Roma political declarations, a way to concrete actions should be found. The actions directed towards the Roma should be practical and meet the needs of the Roma people.

2.2 The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion of the European Union

The above-mentioned basic principles are included in slightly different words and order in the European Union 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion that guide the EU organs, Member States and possible future Member States. The principles are not legally binding but in the references to the principles in Council conclusions the Member States have committed to take them into account when planning, implementing or evaluating activities and policies aimed at promoting the inclusion of the Roma. The 10 Common Basic Principles were approved in a Roma Platform meeting held in Prague in 2009 during the Czech Presidency¹:

1. Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies – following of these principles assure the Roma equal opportunities in Member State societies.
2. Explicit but not exclusive targeting – this approach does not single out Roma as a separate group. Nor does it prevent the implementation of special actions to support inclusion of the Roma when necessary.
3. An inter-cultural approach – mutual interaction and learning of the Roma and other people is important for abolishing prejudices and stereotypes.
4. Aiming for the mainstream – Roma inclusion is supported in all activities and services designated for everyone. In addition, segregation in housing, education and the labour market is prevented.

¹ European Commission: Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2010. *Vademecum: The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

5. Awareness of the gender dimension – Roma inclusion policy initiatives need to take account of the needs and circumstances of Roma women as well as the effects of the multiple discrimination they face.
6. Transfer of evidence-based policies – it is essential that Member States collect data and evaluate the effects of their actions directed towards the Roma. This data must be disseminated to other countries, in addition to which it is important learn from other countries' experiences.
7. Use of European Union instruments – in the policies aiming at Roma inclusion, it is crucial that the Member States make full use of European Union legal and financial instruments and coordination mechanisms. It must be ensured that the use of the financial instruments accords with these 10 Common Basic Principles, and make use of the results of evaluations of previous financing.
8. Involvement of regional and local authorities – Roma inclusion policy initiatives need to be designed, developed, implemented and evaluated in close cooperation with regional and local authorities.
9. Involvement of civil society – involvement of civil society actors such as non-governmental organizations, social partners and researchers in design, implementation and evaluation of the Roma-related policies is essential for ensuring multi-faceted expertise and discussion.
10. Active participation of the Roma – active involvement of the Roma must be ensured in different phases of the processes so that they would be open and transparent and tackle difficult subjects in an appropriate and effective manner. Support for the full participation of Roma people in public life, stimulation of their active citizenship and development of their human resources are also essential.

3 ROMA POLICY GUIDELINES AND GOOD PRACTICES OF FINLAND

The Roma policy guidelines of Finland presented in this chapter are based on the National Policy on Roma, approved by the Government's decision-in-principle in December 2010.

It is estimated that there are from 10,000 to 12,000 Roma in Finland and they live dispersed all over the country. The situation of the Roma population has been influenced by granting them citizenship on the basis of the Nationality Act in 1919, post-World War II evolution of human rights, the construction of the welfare state and the awakening of the Roma to fight for their rights. The cultural and linguistic rights of the Roma minority that has lived in the country for almost 500 years are secured by the Constitution.

The operation models generated in Finland can be applied also elsewhere with good results. This handbook contains some of the Finnish good practices. More information on these models and good practices can be found in Finland's National Policy on Roma and in a

national database of good practices that will be available on the Internet site of the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs.²

3.1 Education of Roma children and youth

All over Europe, raising the level of education of the Roma has been recognized as a central viable means to preventing, on a permanent basis, the marginalization of the Roma population and their dependence on various forms of social support.

The educational differentiation of the Roma population starts already in early childhood. This is why participation in childhood and pre-school education is of primary importance. To develop childhood education of the Roma children, the training of personnel, the increase of knowledge about the Roma population, the recruiting of personnel with Roma background, special support for the Roma parents and enhancing co-operation with the families of the children are needed.

The participation in education of the Roma children and youth, supporting their school attendance, and the transition from basic education into upper secondary education are key areas of development. It is an objective to promote such actions and operational procedures in the school community that support the education of Roma children and youth. It is also important to enhance studying capacity. Furthermore, it is essential to identify learning difficulties at an early stage and start measures of support. Transfer to special needs education classes should always take place according to the principles of equality.

In Finland, employing personnel with Romani background has proven a particularly effective means of supporting Roma children and families. Professionally qualified early childhood educational and special needs assistants support the children and youth at school while bringing new expertise into cooperation with the Roma community and Roma parents. This kind of support promotes Roma children in their studies and reduces absenteeism and school drop-outs. A special needs assistant with a Roma background is also an inspiring role model for Roma children in terms of reconciling Romani identity with the demands of working life. The professionally qualified special needs assistants provide support for non-Roma pupils as well. The feedback on this operational model shows that it supports the development of equal treatment and cultural diversity in the whole school community.

Starting from 2008, the National Board of Education has invited municipalities to submit applications for a special state grant for enhancing Roma children's basic education. The grant allows municipalities to draw up, in cooperation with Roma actors, a comprehensive support plan for Roma children's basic education and to implement this plan. The aim is to establish the operational models developed in the project as a standard practice.

3.2 Roma adult education and employment

Roma adult education is an essential way to enhance inclusion and active participation of the Roma population and create necessary conditions for better access to the labour market.

² Internet page of the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs <<http://www.romani.fi>>.

Furthermore, it is necessary to develop various forms of training, personal support needed for studies and means of income while studying.

Many Roma establish a family at a very early age, partly due to which they seek for educational opportunities later as adults. This causes challenges and special needs regarding family and income. Accordingly, there is a need for opportunities to access basic education and thus preconditions for further postgraduate studies.

In Finland, various education models that take into account the Roma population have been developed in projects co-funded by the European Social Fund. Good experiences have been achieved from recruiting a support person of Roma background for each group of students in vocational education and in other training aimed at Roma. Experiences show that this has led to fewer drop-outs and helped the students in solving many problems in their personal lives, which often tend to have a negative effect on motivation to study or prevent the student from participating in education altogether.

In 2008, a three-year project was initiated to provide support for the staff in local employment offices in supporting the employment process of the Roma and immigrants. In this project, a personal support person provided support and counselling for long-term unemployed persons with low educational background in accessing to further education and training or directly to the labour market. The project provided the participants with job coaching, career planning and counselling on studies, information on available services, and psychosocial support, for example. The project instructors were in direct contact with employers, informing them of the various forms of support and issues related to the employment of individuals with a Roma or immigrant background. If necessary, the project instructors could accompany the job seekers in their first meeting with the employer. This type of support and guidance has been found valuable in enhancing the Roma population's access to the labour market.

Moreover, for adult Roma, an educational model has been developed where the core idea is the development of the educational process itself and ways of supporting it. The essential components of the model are an extensive orientation phase preparing the students for vocational studies, competence-based vocational studies according to an individual study plan, and the alternation of theoretical studies and practical training. While studying, the students are supported by a person familiar with Roma culture, whereas in practical training they are supported by a mentor in the workplace.

The Finnish National Board of Education confirmed in 2006 the curricula for vocational qualifications of Romani Culture Instructors. Specialized vocational qualification for Romani Culture Instructors deepens the competence of those working with Roma-related issues, for example in municipalities and civil-society organizations, and offers them an occupational title. Further vocational qualification for Romani Culture Instructors is a means for deepening and demonstrating the expertise in Roma-related work, cultural interaction, entrepreneurship or knowledge of Romani language. Vocational qualifications are designed for adults in working life and they are performed as competence based examinations.

3.3 Housing of the Roma population

In Finland, it has been a goal both at the national and municipal level that the residential structure of the settlements would be as balanced as possible. In Finland – unlike in many other European countries – no segregated Roma settlements have developed. In housing policy and community planning, all actions that prevent residential segregation should be promoted.

The Roma are to a significant degree dependent on state-subsidized housing, as it is difficult for them to secure housing in the private rental market because of prejudices and their low economic status. To remove these problems and to ensure an equal treatment of the Roma, national directions and local actions are needed.

In Finland, the living conditions of the Roma population were significantly influenced by the housing-related social policy decisions made in the 1970s. The necessary conditions for enhancing the living conditions of the Roma population were created during 1975 –1981 through temporary special legislation. A special statute obligated all Finnish municipalities to improve the living conditions of the Roma in their area, and a special state financial system was created to subsidize this process. Some Roma still live in owned or rental housing acquired with a special grant allocated for the improvement of the Roma housing situation, at that time.

In some localities, services have been developed as projects regarding housing advice for the Roma. The aim has been to develop cooperation between various bodies, as well as the creation and training of a network of housing advisors and housing company social managers to act between the owners of the rental housing, social welfare and health services and the third sector.

Projects where working methods have been developed arising from everyday needs have advanced the cooperation of the authorities and the Roma, and led to a decrease in the number of housing-related problems. New working methods are, inter alia, regional information sessions on housing issues, plans to secure long-term housing, handbooks of household management and conciliation procedures in the payment of rent arrears.

3.4 Health care of the Roma population

It has been found in many European countries that the morbidity of Roma is higher than that of the majority population and that their life expectancy is up to ten years lower in some areas.³ Of the various reasons for the worse health situation, the lack of health information, insufficient health care services, difficult access to health care, low income and squalid living conditions can be mentioned. In addition, communication problems related to cultural and linguistic differences between the Roma and the health care personnel can create further obstacles for accessing to treatment and complicate concrete situations of interaction and nursing.

It is important that the health care and social service workers are aware of the cultural factors in order to improve interaction and customer service. In some European countries, the usage

³ Sepkowitz, Kent, 2006. "Health of the World's Roma population", pp. 1707–1708, *The Lancet*, 367(9524).

of health mediators has been well perceived in health care-related communication problems. The special needs of the Roma should be taken into account more extensively in the training of health care professionals. In addition, more information material for the health care personnel should be produced. Furthermore, an important factor in closing the gap in health disparities is directing health education to the Roma, including information about the services and how to seek them.

Often, the data on the living conditions and welfare-related issues of the Roma population are insufficient or incomplete, as are the data on their needs for social welfare and health services and the allocation of the services. This is why ad hoc studies and reports are needed to get an overview of the situation and to direct development measures correctly.

In Finland, equal access of the Roma to public health care is realized, but challenges exist regarding the lack of health information and related cultural matters. In order to improve inter-cultural communication, various guides have been prepared for health care professionals. For social welfare professionals there has been compiled a guide, which includes an extensive presentation of the history and culture of the Roma and employee-customer encounters with them.⁴ The guide focuses particularly on special issues relating to social welfare work involving the Roma and highlights the best practices. A guide for informal carers has also been published⁵, and a guide for dental nurses is in preparation to enhance services for the Roma customers.

3.5 Preservation and development of the Romani language and culture

Developing the teaching of Romani and reviving the language are central challenges in preserving the Romani culture. Also, cultural and creative activities as well as participation in art and culture underpin the realization of equality of the Roma population. In terms of identity of both the Roma minority and individual Roma, knowing their history and cultural heritage and being able to speak Romani are of vital importance. Moreover, there is a need for wider awareness raising on generally little known Romani culture that has been over 700 years a part of European culture and history.

For raising awareness, common actions of many actors, including the Roma, are needed to strengthen the positive visibility and participation of the Roma, to dissolve negative stereotypes, and to increase interaction between the Roma and other population groups. Most naturally awareness raising on the Romani culture and history takes place as part of all education. To support the education, also learning materials should be produced. Furthermore, various awareness-raising campaigns that use different media are good means to increase general knowledge about the Romani culture and history.

In Finland, there are ever fewer speakers of Romani among the Finnish Roma. In order to revive the endangered Romani language, the Finnish National Board of Education has initiated language nest activities that are designated to Roma of all ages. In addition to language practice, language nest activity also aids in transmitting Romani culture from generation to generation. The Finnish National Board of Education has also organized Romani summer language courses with separate adult and children's programmes. For teaching Romani at

⁴ Luttinen, Katri et al. (ed.), 2007. Vast vastensa: Opas romanien kanssa työskenteleville sosiaalialan ammattilaisille. Oulu: Ajatus.

⁵ Grönfors, Janette & Majaniemi, Päivi, 2008. Vanhinta ei unohdeta – opas romanivanhusten omaishoidosta. Suomen Romaniyhdistys ry.

schools, there is a state grant available for two lessons a week. The minimum size of the group is two pupils.

Among other tasks, Research Institute for the Languages of Finland that is administered by the Ministry of Education and Culture, is devoted to the study and language planning of Romani. The Romani Language Board that operates under the Research Institute prepared and published a National Policy on the Romani Language in 2009. The Policy includes various proposals for support measures for the revival of the Romani language and securing the linguistic rights of the Roma.⁶ The Research Institute drafts yearly a follow-up report on realization of the Policy.

Moreover, there is currently an on-going History of Finnish Roma Project, funded by the Ministry of Culture and Education, realized and prepared in close cooperation with the representatives of the Roma population. By writing the history of the Roma, deep-rooted erroneous impressions about the life of the Roma in Finland can be corrected. In addition, knowing one's own history is an important factor that supports the self-comprehension of the Roma. Also, knowing the historic facts makes it easier to make good minority policy.

3.6 Promoting equal treatment of the Roma and combating discrimination

Partly due to discrimination and negative prejudices, the Roma on average are in a worse position than the majority population as regards access to the labour market, housing, and services that meet their needs.

Discrimination and mutual distrust between the majority population and the Roma originates partly from the lack of knowledge. In addition to sharing cultural knowledge, there is a need to raise awareness on different forms of discrimination experienced by the Roma, as well as on social changes that often have weakened the situation of the Roma. Moreover, it is important to recognize the historical persecutions directed against the Roma and the dangers that are affiliated with the increasing anti-Gypsyism. In addition, the cost of non-inclusion, neglecting the management of the Roma question, is not acknowledged widely enough.

Equally, among the Roma, there exists distrust towards the majority population and especially towards the authorities representing it. At worst, this can lead to a total exclusion from the society, which is especially harmful for children's future and can easily lead to social exclusion passing on from generation to generation. The Roma population is not sufficiently aware of their rights and is often unable to identify the discrimination directed against them. Erroneous misconceptions and inaccurate information can be corrected by awareness raising activities directed towards the Roma.

Equal possibilities and equal treatment can and must be promoted by strengthening the implementation of the national equality legislations with which the so-called "Employment Equality Directive" (2000/78/EC) and "Race Equality Directive" (2000/43/EC) have been enforced; and by preventing discrimination directed against the Roma.

In order to promote equal opportunities, there is often a need for positive action and temporary special measures of support for ensuring that the Roma have an equal footing in

⁶ Kotimaisten kielten tutkimuskeskus, 2009. Romanikielen kielipoliittinen ohjelma. Helsinki: Multiprint.

education, labour market and services. By means of positive action, it is possible to remove or alleviate the disadvantages caused by discrimination directed against the Roma.

To tackle discrimination against the Roma, it is necessary to develop measures to identify discrimination, both among the Roma and other population. Also, it is important to collect data and conduct research, which measures discrimination against the Roma for making it visible so that it can be intervened explicitly. Moreover, in addition to supervising the rule of law, it is indispensable to combat discrimination by information sharing and education.

In Finland, a good example of anti-discrimination work is a joint project of several organizations representing various minorities, carried out in the city of Turku between 2007 and 2008. The project included information sessions for the Roma population. The sessions were organized by local Roma organizations and their aim was to enhance the Roma population's ability to better identify discrimination and to learn how to intervene in it. Together with local organizations representing other minorities, the Roma organizations organized a campaign, which was visible on local buses, and on posters placed in public areas. The organizations also produced a book with profiles and biographies of Turku residents with a minority background.

For raising awareness, learning material regarding the Roma population has been produced as part of training of the central professions. For instance, the Roma culture is a regular theme in police training as part of training aimed at promoting multiculturalism and preventing racism. In teacher training and in-service training for teachers, the Roma theme is handled in special lectures. Moreover, for teaching personnel, there is the guide "Encountering Romani child in preschool and basic education". The lecture series "The Roma, an Unknown Minority", developed by the University of Turku, has also increased undergraduates' knowledge about the Roma.

3.7 Development of the administration structures for handling Romani affairs

Realizing sustained policy on Roma requires both strengthening of the administrative structures and continuous evaluation of the objectives, implementation and results of the Roma policy.

In practice, equality and social integration of the Roma population are realized at the local level. For strengthening interaction and inclusion, it is necessary to develop especially the local structures of cooperation and action. Moreover, it is important to strengthen competence and capacity of the Roma organizations; and to provide Roma children and youth with opportunities to have their voices heard and have their say in matters concerning them.

In the European context, Finland has been a forerunner in developing the administrative structures for working with the Roma affairs. Such administrative structures are especially the National Advisory Board on Romani Affairs and the Regional Advisory Boards on Romani Affairs that function as cooperation bodies for authorities and the Roma.

In Finland, the National Advisory Board on Romani Affairs has functioned within the Ministry of Social Affairs since 1956. The chair or the vice chair of the Advisory Board and half of the other members must represent the Roma population. The tasks of the National Advisory Board on Romani Affairs are to:

- monitor on the development of the social participation and living conditions of the Roma in order to promote equality, and to issue statements on these issues for various authorities
- improve the social and economic position and promote the culture and employment of the Roma population by taking initiative and making proposals
- work to eliminate discrimination against the Roma
- promote the enhancement of Romani language and culture
- support the activities of the Regional Advisory Boards on Romani Affairs
- take part in Nordic, European and other international cooperation in order to enhance the rights of the Roma and improve their conditions.

The four Regional Boards are responsible for the same tasks as the National Board and minimum half of their members represent the Roma population. In the municipalities, where there are big Roma communities, voluntary local Roma working groups have been established to facilitate cooperation between the Roma population, authorities and other stakeholders.

Moreover, it is necessary that there are both civil servants with Roma background and non-Roma civil servants acquainted with Roma affairs in state administration. For instance, since 1994 the Roma Education Unit has functioned under the Finnish National Board of Education, being responsible for developing the education of the Roma and advancing Romani language and culture. Part of the civil servants of the Roma Education Unit are Roma.

3.8 Research and compilation of statistics

There is information on the situation of the Roma in Europe available from surveys, studies and reports made by different stakeholders. However, in Roma studies, there are wide gaps regarding the number and definition of the Roma. These gaps exist due to the legislation that does not allow the collection of data on the basis of ethnicity. Also, out of the fear of discrimination the Roma are often reluctant to get registered as Roma when censuses are carried out, for instance.

Several countries and international organizations have conducted Roma-related data collection and research and launched projects for developing new information gathering methods. So far, the information gathering has been project-specific and only met the information needs of the project in question. At the European level, there should be prepared a study on advancing Roma-related data gathering based on good practices and create guidelines for data gathering. The national statistical authorities could cooperate in this project. Better data collection would enable good quality research on important themes like Roma demography, socioeconomic situation and discrimination.

Even if the lack of statistical data makes planning and implementation of the undertakings aimed at advancing the inclusion and equality of the Roma more difficult, it should not affect the development of the socioeconomic situation of the Roma nor hinder research on it. The concept "Roma" covers a rather heterogeneous group of people who have diverse needs. Accordingly, research tools should be developed in such a way that the people in the most unfavourable situation would be identified and effective actions could be directed to prevent their poverty and social exclusion. Furthermore, already existing studies like micro region and qualitative studies should be used more effectively to develop positive methods.

The Roma should be able to participate in research and compilation of statistics concerning them. For example, in various interview studies and censuses, it may be easier for a research worker with Roma background to obtain the confidence of the interviewee. Special cultural characteristics and linguistic abilities of the Roma should be taken into consideration when designing and carrying out different psychological and aptitude tests.

In Finland, the Finnish National Board of Education will conduct a report on the situation of Roma children's basic education during the school year 2010 – 2011 in cooperation with school authorities and Roma population. An electronic questionnaire will be sent to all comprehensive schools in Finland. Also, Roma parents and pupils will be interviewed to obtain a general view. The interviewers are of Romani background in order to keep the threshold for answering as low as possible. The interviewees will be chosen so that they represent proportionately Finland's Roma population. The report will be ready by the end of the year 2011.

3.9 Attitudes towards the migrant Roma within the European Union

Inside the European Union, the attitudes towards the Roma coming from other EU Member States have varied by countries and even by cities and towns. In the summer of 2010, the situation culminated in mass expulsions of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma, committed by France. The Commission interfered with the expulsions after having found that France had failed to transpose "the Directive of Freedom of Movement" into its national legislation.

Through the ages, striving for a better standard of living has led to migration. Within the European Union, transnational mobility is also encouraged. Even if part of the European migrant Roma commits property crimes and some live in temporary camps, the group of migrant Roma is not homogeneous. Among them, there are also families looking for a more permanent migration. The most common reasons for the Roma migration are extreme poverty, serious lack of future perspectives and extensive discrimination. The current living conditions of the Roma are indispensable to be improved so that the above-mentioned reasons would not be the main motivation for migration.

Each member state is primarily responsible for its own citizens' – also Roma citizens' – well-being and living conditions like housing, education, health care and right for non-discriminatory treatment. In the case of the Roma, the question is about a developmental and political challenge. This is why European Union actions are needed for strengthening Member States' undertakings in advancing Roma inclusion. These actions could, as described in the 10 Basic Principles approved by the Member States, be linked to the implementation of the EU legislation and improved usage of the Community financial instruments such as the Structural Funds.

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights has studied and discussed the attitudes of the receiving states towards the migrant Roma in its meetings and studies. The Roma are primarily perceived as a security or public order issue. However, in some countries like Spain and United Kingdom the immigrants have been received openly and actions have been taken to integrate them into the local society. Also, in France there are towns where part of the foreign Roma, who used to live in the now-demolished camps, have been settled down in

towns where they have got work and sent their children to school.⁷ In Finland, too, there are some successful experiences on employing the immigrant Roma.

The Council of Europe Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers discussed in its autumn meeting 2010 the migration of the Roma and freedom of movement, issuing inter alia the following proposals:

- Council of Europe Member States should ensure that their domestic law, policies and practices on migration are in full compliance with relevant international law, in particular with the relevant articles of the European Convention on Human Rights, and take due account of Council of Europe Recommendations on Roma and/or migration in developing their domestic policies and legislation.
- European Union Member States ensure that any measures taken that affect directly or indirectly EU citizens of Roma origin are in compliance with principles laid out in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, Directive 2004/38/EC on the rights of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the member States and in conformity with Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin.
- European Union Member States should take appropriate measures to “*disseminate information concerning the rights and obligations of Union citizens and their family members on the subjects covered by the Free Movement Directive, particularly by means of awareness-raising campaigns conducted through national and local media and other means of communication*” (Article 34 of the Directive 2004/38/EC). Information on the requirements and processes for exercising their rights as EU citizens should also be included.
- Local and regional authorities should be encouraged to work with relevant local agencies, civil society (including Roma) and local employers, to develop and implement interventions specifically supporting the integration of Roma citizens in the local labour market. Equally, local and regional authorities should be encouraged to create networks of municipalities having Roma migrant populations to provide forums for the exchange of good practice on the management of Roma migrants. Roma migrant representatives should be fully involved in this process.
- Any expulsion should be undertaken in accordance with international human rights law and fully respect the dignity of the individuals concerned.⁸

In Finland, the most visible activity of the Romanian Roma, who can be seen on streets, is begging. In the spring of 2008, the City of Helsinki Social Services Department asked the Helsinki Deaconess Institute to found a project to get into close contact with the Roma, and to find out reasons for their arrival. The name of the project became *Rom po drom* ('Roma on the road') and it was underway for two years.

⁷ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2009. Selected Positive Initiatives: The Situation of Roma EU Citizens Moving to and Settling in Other EU Member States. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

⁸ Council of Europe, Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers (MG-S-ROM), 2010. Opinion on Migration and Freedom of Movement of Roma in Europe (MG-S-ROM (2010) 14), 7 December 2010, Strasbourg.

In the final report of the project, it is concluded that the most important factor for improving the situation of the Roma is the advancement of the social development in their countries of origin. In Finland, the street level social work should address the immediate humanitarian need. Furthermore, arrivals in the country tend to have false information and erroneous assumptions about Finland's working, education and living conditions as well as about the functioning of the social and health care system.

One of the conclusions of the *Rom po drom* project was that beggars, street vendors and street artists should be able to be met in a place where their life situation could be thoroughly discussed. A goal was set to establish a meeting place in the City of Helsinki real estate that would offer the following services:

- confidential and intimate (contraceptive advice, for instance) discussions
- small medical operations and state of health evaluations
- bathing and laundry facilities
- counselling appointments
- distribution of information material
- group meetings (information and networking meetings)
- distribution of clothes and toys donated for the project.

Furthermore, together with the City of Helsinki Social Services Department, the Helsinki Deaconess Institute has applied funding from the EU programme *Interreg IV A Central Baltic* for a wider project for improving the living conditions of migrants (*Human Rights of Roma and Other New Arrivals in Finland, Estonia and Latvia*). An aim is to incorporate the street work designated for the Roma and other migrants and the work of the meeting point with this international project.

As regards the migrant Roma, the working group recommends that:

- The European Union should support and, if necessary, pressure Member States to take such actions to improve the position of the Roma as they had committed to take when entering the Union.
- The activities at both national and international level carried out by the third sector actors for improving the living conditions of the Roma should be supported both in the countries of departure and arrival.
- Cooperation between authorities (social welfare, health, police and educational authorities, for instance) in the countries of departure and arrival should be increased in order to obtain a realistic picture, and to increase access to information services.
- Migrant Roma, who are EU citizens, should be treated as individuals and potential job seekers in the countries of arrival. Even though the Roma often travel in groups, collective interventions (like expulsions) should not be carried out.
- Possible crimes and public disturbance should be interfered and those found guilty should be punished in the same manner as other EU citizens.
- National and international networking between such rural municipalities and cities that have experience on short or long term Roma migration is worth endorsing. Within

the network, good practices on inter-cultural communication with the Roma, services provision and possible integration measures would be shared. Moreover, the network could develop information services designated to the Roma about their rights and responsibilities.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADVANCING THE EUROPEAN UNION POLICY ON ROMA

In the first half of 2011, Roma policy has been up for lively discussion in the European Union: the Commission is preparing a Communication on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, especially on enhancing the usage of the Structural Funds. The Communication will be presented on the 6th of April 2011, right before the Roma Platform meeting held in Budapest on the International Day of the Roma, the April 8th. Hungary, the EU President, has raised the Roma affairs as one of the priorities during her Presidency and prepares to take the resolutions regarding the Roma situation to the European Council in June 2011. In addition, in the European Parliament, there is being prepared a resolution calling for a European Union Roma strategy based on a survey made by Lívía Járóka, a Hungarian Member of the European Parliament.

On longer term, important undertakings related to Roma policy are included in the Europe 2020 Strategy, approved by the European Council in June 2010. One of the five main objectives is to exclude at least 20 million people from the risk of poverty and exclusion. European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion, one of the flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, contains also actions related to the social inclusion of the Roma.

Finland's objective is the advancement of the European Union Strategy on Roma. By this, we mean long-spanned and systematic actions for strengthening the socioeconomic and social inclusion of the Roma. For this, the European Union has all possibilities due to its Member States binding legislation and financial resources. The Strategy should be drafted in cooperation with the Commission, Member States and representatives of the Roma organizations. Starting point in drafting the strategy and in the strategy itself has to be that the Roma are citizens of the Union Member States and responsibility for realizing their fundamental rights and developing their living conditions belongs to the Member States. The Strategy should be able to answer the special characteristics of the problems of the Roma without excluding other people in vulnerable position.

- The European Union Roma Strategy should contain concrete recommendations for national Roma policy programmes. The following issues would be important to cover:
 - cooperation mechanisms between authorities and Roma organizations at national, regional and local level
 - financing of national Roma policy programmes
 - political commitment to implementing national policy programmes
 - evaluation and monitoring on the programmes
 - supporting and empowerment of the Roma communities to influence in decision-making processes.

- Moreover, the EU Strategy should give directions on different instruments and measures of the European Union, which can be used for the promotion of the better living conditions and equal treatment of the Roma across Europe. The Strategy should include recommendations on the usage of the Structural Funds for implementing Roma policy programmes in the Member States, and on follow-up of the usage of the Funds by setting development goals and measures to evaluate the results and effectivity.
- The drafting process of the European Union Strategy on Roma is as a mutual and international learning process equally important as the ready strategy itself. Accordingly, all Member States, the Commission and international and national Roma organizations as well as the international and European organizations that deal with Roma affairs (like the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the UN) should be able to contribute to the drafting process.
- On the whole, mainstreaming of Roma inclusion in all relevant EU policies should be strengthened. Advancing Roma inclusion should be clearly a part of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion activities and follow-up of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

4.1 Platform for Roma Inclusion (Roma Platform)

The best tool in designing and follow-up of the European Union Strategy on Roma is the Platform for Roma Inclusion, the so-called Roma Platform that was founded two years ago. The Roma Platform gathers the representatives of the Commission, national governments, and Roma and international organizations. The respective EU President Country leads it. By the end of the year 2010 the Roma Platform has gathered four times. Strengthened and more efficiently functioning Platform could considerably contribute to the formation and follow-up of the European Union Strategy on Roma.

Finland presents the following ideas on how to develop the Roma Platform:

- Currently a one-day event that gathers all stakeholders in the same venue could be divided into two days. On the first day the representatives of governments and Roma organizations would meet separately to discuss on the same background material. On the following day, a common discussion would be held. This is how common views and dissents are charted in, for instance, the High Level Group on Disability
- The above-mentioned working method would allow more open and profound exchange of opinions but would require more active expert participation of the Member States' governments in the work of the Platform, also from the Capitals.
- Suitable material for discussion in the Platform would be the Road Map for advancing Roma inclusion, approved during the Spanish Presidency, and the key issues defined in it, reports of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the national Roma policies of the Member States and the undertakings carried out by the EU Structural Funds, including evaluations and follow-up of the undertakings.

- The Commission should provide the Platform with meeting rooms and other technical support like interpretation services, also in Romani. Thus the Platform meetings would not depend on the human or material resources of the current EU Presidency.
- Regarding the previous proposal, Finland hopes that the Commission would take the lead of the Roma Platform, like it does with the high level expert groups concerned with disabilities and health issues, for instance. Thus, development of Roma affairs and continuity of the Platform would be ensured.
- Also, the role of successive Presidencies would still remain important in channelling the outputs of the Platform into the work of the Council. The recommendations and opinions prepared in the Platform should be reflected in the agendas of the future EU Presidencies and be fed into the contents of the conclusions of the relevant thematic Councils, in order to effectively mainstream Roma-specific questions into sectorial policies.
- Using the Informal Contact Group in preparations for the Roma Platform should be continued. The Informal Contact Group is an unofficial coordination group in Roma affairs of the EU, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and other international organizations.

4.2 The European Union Funds, particularly the Structural Funds

Finland welcomes the decision of the Commission to set up a Roma Task Force to promote better usage of the EU funds and national funding for advancing Roma inclusion in the Member States. The Commission's framework for national Roma political strategies can, for its own part, advance better coordination of Roma affairs and be a significant step towards the European Union Strategy on Roma. Finland hopes that the Task Force report and recommendations will give an impetus for better planning and administration of the Funds.

Each Member State is responsible for preparing and implementing the Structural Fund Programmes within the EU regulations and common strategy documents. Regarding the actions aimed at the Roma population, the following general points and aspects based on Finland's own experiences can be highlighted:

- The next Structural Fund programming period starts in 2014. When planning the programmes, special attention should be paid to the Roma as a group in a vulnerable position in the Commission guidelines and other documents guiding the programming work. In the preparations of the national programmes, special needs of the Roma at national, regional and local levels should be taken into account in the programmes and financing. One option would be to allocate a separate part for the groups living under the poverty line, thus also covering the Roma who belong to these groups.
- Positive action can be used for the promotion of the equality and inclusion of the Roma when taking into account their unfavourable position and discrimination against them within the Union area. This should be taken into account when allocating funds and drafting programme documents, depending upon the situation in each Member State.

- When designing, implementing or following the undertakings directed towards the Roma, those guidelines that are included or will be included in the EU or national Roma strategies should be followed. In addition, other commonly approved principles such as the European Union 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion should be taken into account.
- It is of particular importance to advance the active participation of the Roma in all actions that aim at enhancing their social and economic situation. In Finland, good experiences have been achieved from the active participation of the Roma in activities aimed at them – their role should not be only as external advisers or volunteer workers. If necessary, they should be provided with practical project training.
- In order to ensure the continuity of the results brought by the projects, financially stable intermediary organisations, umbrella organizations and project partnerships should be sought, created and supported. Authorities and representatives of the Roma organizations should plan and monitor on the activities together at the local level. Many Roma NGOs are relatively small and cannot meet the administrative demands required for the EU Funds. Moreover, low liquidity of the organizations and their lack of experience in project administration may become an obstacle for the usage of the Funds. By building partnerships and “umbrellas” and by providing project-training opportunities it would be possible to support Roma organizations to design and implement own projects.
- First and foremost, projects aiming at sustainable results and establishment of good practices should be financed. Good interventions may not lead to positive and long-lasting effects if they fail to achieve structural changes in the target community. One way to safeguard sustainable results is to finance well-planned and sufficiently long-lasting projects. Success is further enhanced by authorities’, organizations’ and other central stakeholders’ commitment to designing and implementation of the undertakings.
- Particularly, at all levels of administration, it should be ensured that *de facto* discriminatory projects such as building segregated schools for Roma children that have been carried out in some Member States, would not be financed. On the contrary, the projects financed by the Structural Funds should aim at desegregation both regionally and locally.
- In every Structural Fund activity, the Member States must follow the principles of equality and gender equality. Evaluation of these principles should be strengthened, and it should be ensured that groups in a weak position such as the Roma would be taken into account in a sufficient way when realizing the principles.
- The usage of the European Regional Development Funds for the housing of the Roma should be enhanced. Since July 2010, these funds have been available for the housing of excluded population groups like the Roma. Finland considers positive the principle annexed to the regulation amendment, according to which the actions directed towards the housing stock have to be carried out within the integrated approach, so that they also include actions aimed at improving living conditions (education, health care, employment, security and social activity, for example) realized with national or EU funds.

- Finland supports forums strengthening mutual learning and exchange of experiences. In addition to the Roma Platform, an important forum is the EURoma network gathering together 12 EU Member States with the aim of promoting the use of the Structural Funds and exchange of experiences. Finland should take part in the activities of the EURoma more efficiently.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADVANCING THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE POLICY ON ROMA

As the oldest human rights organization in Europe and a cooperation organization for European governments, the Council of Europe has long traditions in advancing the human rights of the Roma. Also, Roma affairs have been one of the priorities of Finland in the Council of Europe.

It is important that the Council of Europe emphasizes Roma affairs also in future and that there remains expertise in that field.

- Finland considers it important to strengthen the structures and coordination of the Roma affairs in the Council of Europe.
- Finland supports an increase in cooperation between the Council of Europe, the European Union and the OSCE. Also, Finland considers it important to strengthen their connection with the Roma communities at the European, national, regional and local level. Parallel processes in various European organizations should be supportive of each other, not duplicative.
- Finland considers the goals and priorities of the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma, approved in the October 2010 Council of Europe High Level Meeting on Roma, positive and for her part commits herself to the objectives of the Declaration. Implementation of the Declaration should be evaluated within a reasonable time.
- The Council of Europe undertaking to train mediators to advance interaction and social integration of the Roma is worth endorsing. The mediators can act as bridge builders inter alia for advancing dialogue between Roma families and schools or facilitating Roma employment or entry into studies. The training should provide the mediators with professional competence and when designing the curriculum, readiness of the local authorities to use the competence of the mediators should be confirmed.
- Finland would welcome closer Interaction between the Council of Europe Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues (CAHROM) and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities for improving the situation of the Roma at the regional and local level.
- Finland hopes that the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities would include the Roma question as an integral part of its activities and would support cooperation between municipalities and towns as well as networking in Roma affairs, including in the migrant Roma issues, for exchanging good practices.

- The possibilities to restore representativeness of the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF), founded in 2005, should be charted.
- A pilot project for empowering Roma organizations for increasing their international influence in Europe would suit the profile of the Council of Europe.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADVANCING THE OSCE POLICY ON ROMA

Particularly the field missions of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE, enable evaluating the situation of vulnerable groups like the Roma at the regional and local level.

At the political level, the Organization has drafted in 2003 a comprehensive and consensual Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area to which all 56 Member States of the OSCE have committed themselves. The work of the OSCE opposing hate crimes and hate speech is important for weeding out anti-Gypsyism that has become alarmingly common.

- The OSCE Roma Action Plan from 2003 is a comprehensive document of which the implementation should be intensified. The OSCE Member States should, for instance, comprehensively report every two years on the implementation of recommendations on particular themes. Also, opinions of Roma organizations regarding the implementation of the Action plan should be heard.
- The OSCE Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, functioning under the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, should be strengthened and its connections with the Human Dimension Committee should be tightened. Moreover, there should be held evaluation discussions, including giving out possible recommendations on the above-mentioned implementation report in the Human Dimension Committee with contribution of the Contact Point.
- The OSCE should encourage its Member States to compile more comprehensive statistics on hate crimes directed against the Roma. Thus, the scale of the phenomenon would get more precisely known and combating it would be clearer. Furthermore, the Member States should conduct regular research on discrimination in different spheres of life experienced by the Roma. In different Member States, the OSCE has nominated hate crime reporting officers, of whose follow-up the annual Hate Crime Report is compiled.
- Considering the alarming rise of anti-Gypsyism also as a European security threat, the OSCE should emphasize and enhance its prevention efforts by, for instance, advancing the implementation of the Police and Roma and Sinti guidebook at the local level.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADVANCING THE UNITED NATIONS POLICY ON ROMA

The United Nations programmes and funds, particularly the UN Development Programme (UNDP), have done valuable work for resolving the development problems of the Roma with research and knowledge of the local setting. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process along with monitoring efforts of the human rights treaty bodies have proven an efficient tool for intervening human rights issues in different countries. Emphasizing the Roma affairs also at the political level, the UN could still enhance its work for benefiting the Roma.

- Finland hopes the Human Rights Council to speak out more explicitly for the human rights of the Roma. Unlike its predecessor (the Human Rights Commission), the Human Rights Council has not paid attention to the Roma situation in its resolutions.
- In the Human Rights Council's UPR process, the human rights issues of the Roma in central countries regarding the Roma affairs have been brought up also by Finland. This process is worth continuing and furthermore, it should be followed how the problems and deficiencies have been corrected in the given countries.

8 BILATERAL INFLUENCING IN ROMA AFFAIRS

Finland's objective is to seek support for her opinions regarding the Roma affairs and initiatives in the EU, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and other international forums also through her bilateral relations. Also, Finland wants to increase interaction and mutual learning in implementing the national Roma policies.

- European Roma affairs should be included in the discussion agendas of relevant high level, ministerial and civil servant political meetings.
- Finland can find supporters for her opinions and initiatives in countries that have similar national and European level views on the Roma affairs.
- Communication with Swedish authorities who are responsible for the Roma affairs is particularly important. In Sweden, there live nearly 4,000 Finnish Roma. Sweden released her own national Strategy on Roma, *Romers rätt* ('Rights of Roma'), in the summer of 2010.
- Finland can show interest in charting common interests, exchange of experiences and cooperation also with such countries whose approach to the Roma affairs need extra attention in our opinion.
- Finland should encourage other Council of Europe Member States to ratify the 12th Protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights (prohibition of discrimination).
- Visits of actors responsible for the Roma affairs, including Roma organizations, is a good means of exchanging views and good practices.

- Finnish embassies, especially in the East-Western Europe, should follow and report on the Roma affairs in their countries of posting and keep the Roma affairs on the agenda. As good practices have proven, inter alia:
 - excursions to Roma settlements either alone or with other embassies that are interested in the Roma affairs – during visits, Roma representatives and local authorities are met
 - organizing common meetings of NGOs and government officials in connection with lunches, seminars and other events
 - dissemination of information on the Finnish good practices, for instance when Finnish Roma experts make lecture visits
 - development of expert exchange in the fields of Roma language and culture; education; health and social care; and police, for instance
 - financing of Roma projects with local small grants in countries outside the European Union.

- Particularly, the influence opportunities in the EU candidate and would-be candidate countries must be taken into consideration. In the integration process of the EU, the Commission and Member States (including Finland) have a central role and the best influence opportunities in the minority issues. In the membership negotiations and Commission Progress Reports, human rights and minority questions, including the situation and treatment of the Roma, are centrally on the agenda.

- In cooperation between the EU Member States for evaluating and disseminating good practices regarding the Roma affairs the usage of the structural funds, especially the ESF and ERDF, should be increased and possibilities to support partnership projects between the Member States by their means should be strengthened.

