Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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Final version

Ending discrimination against Roma children

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Discrimination against Roma in Europe is widespread and affects members of this community already at a very young age. It takes a variety of forms, including lack of adequate prenatal and infant health care, statelessness, child poverty, inadequate housing conditions, unequal access to education and an increased risk of being subjected to bullying, violence and trafficking.

2. Efforts aimed at addressing this state of affairs are all the more urgent when one considers that around 50% of the Roma population in Europe, which corresponds to about 5 to 6 million people, is under 18 years of age. These efforts should be aimed at improving the material living conditions of Roma families through investment in housing, sanitation and job creation, and at changing stereotyped and discriminatory attitudes towards Roma. The ultimate objective should be ensuring that Roma children are given the same opportunities as any other children, and supporting their ability to make decisions freely about their future.

3. If Roma are given equal opportunities during their childhood, as adults they will be in a position to contribute to the workforce and economic activity in Europe as qualified professionals in various fields. Being more integrated in society, they will act as bridges to promote tolerance and diversity on the continent. They will engage in political and social activism, playing a leading role in improving the situation of the Roma and other disadvantaged communities in Europe.

4. The Parliamentary Assembly underlines that discrimination is a two-way process. To eradicate it, it is necessary to address both sides of the equation. Those who are discriminated against should be provided with opportunities and their self-confidence should be improved by encouraging rhetoric and targeted policies. At the same time, awareness-raising activities and opportunities to engage with "others" should be put in place in order to develop mutual understanding and tolerance.

5. Empowering Roma children and their families implies not only working and supporting Roma, but working with them and creating the conditions for community organisation and active participation in the development of policies, including in the decision-making process. Many non-governmental organisations (NGOs), both at international and national level, work effectively on Roma issues and it is essential that national governments co-operate with them to devise relevant policies.

6. The Assembly refers to its Recommendation 2003 (2012) on Roma migrants in Europe and Resolution 1740 (2010) on the situation of Roma in Europe and relevant activities of the Council of Europe, and reiterates its call to all Council of Europe member States to face up to their responsibilities and tackle the issue of the situation of Roma in a serious and sustainable manner.

7. The Assembly urges its member States to take concrete measures to end discrimination against Roma children, and in particular to:

7.1. expand access to integrated early childhood services by:

7.1.1. enabling easier registration of births and issuing of birth certificates;

1. *Assembly debate* on 23 April 2013 (13th Sitting) (see Doc. 13158, report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Memecan). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 23 April 2013 (13th Sitting).

7.1.2. strengthening outreach services for young children and families from isolated communities; addressing maternal health, food security, child-rearing and the family environment, health protection, responsibility for and care of new-born infants; sending mobile health care units to visit Roma neighbourhoods and communities for screening on dental care, childcare and reproductive health; sending officials to inform Roma women about their rights, health care services, and educational opportunities for their children;

7.1.3. helping poor Roma families to promote the growth and development of their young children at home in a safe and stimulating physical and psycho-social environment;

7.1.4. regularly informing the Roma communities about public services such as health provision and educational opportunities, by using the media, and especially television, for awareness raising;

7.1.5. training Roma mothers on childcare, health care and education directly within their own communities or providing free transportation to training centres where such training sessions can be organised;

7.2. make school more accessible by:

7.2.1. providing at least two years of inclusive, mandatory and affordable high-quality preschool education;

7.2.2. providing all teachers and professional trainers with anti-discrimination training, information and materials;

7.2.3. preparing schools at all levels to welcome Roma children and promote their development on an equal basis with other children; by including intercultural values and diversity in the curriculum, training the teachers to deal with a diverse group of children, providing individual instruction adapted to children's development level, creating a democratic learning environment in which every child feels the right to participate, and establishing a physically and emotionally secure environment free from violence;

7.2.4. paying special attention to confidence building at an early age by ensuring that Roma children are included in class work and in extracurricular activities, are provided with classroom materials if they do not have the means to purchase them, rewarding them for positive behaviour and achievements, and encouraging them and their parents to work on improving their talents;

7.2.5. adapting curricula to embrace inclusion as a core goal of education, free of gender stereotypes;

7.2.6. including, where appropriate, the teaching of Roma culture and history and, when necessary, providing support for Romani to be taught as a second language;

7.2.7. introducing appropriately trained and paid Roma assistants and mediators in classrooms and encouraging greater numbers of Roma to become teachers;

7.2.8. ensuring that Roma children are taught the core curriculum on an equal basis with other children;

7.2.9. investing in promoting parental literacy, especially of the mother, to strengthen support for children's education, and conducting training programmes such as vocational or language training for mothers to better equip them to become active members of society;

7.2.10. introducing measures to ensure that Roma girls are given the same opportunities to receive formal education as Roma boys;

7.2.11. if necessary, providing transportation, clothing, food and other basic necessities in order to facilitate integration and acceptance of Roma children in classrooms;

7.2.12. providing after-school activities of interest to Roma children and encouraging the students and their families to take advantage of these activities to improve their talents, and providing children with the necessary tools and training so that they can participate in these activities;

7.3. end school segregation and promote inclusion by:

7.3.1. ensuring that all students start learning about equality, respect and teamwork in their early years at school and that the curriculum, as well as extracurricular activities, reinforce these values, thus encouraging the students to learn from and appreciate each other in order not to develop prejudices in the future;

7.3.2. executing, where appropriate, judgments of the European Court of Human Rights relating to discrimination in the enjoyment of the applicants' right to education due to their assignment to special schools;

7.3.3. setting up comprehensive policies to implement a long-term commitment to inclusive education that include national and local action plans to promote inclusion, supported by financial, legal and administrative measures and requiring local municipalities to produce desegregation plans;

7.3.4. setting up awareness-raising campaigns to inform Roma about their rights and responsibilities and introducing complaints mechanisms for Roma families to challenge breaches of their right to inclusion;

7.3.5. engaging Roma families in parental activities in schools, for example as chaperones or members of parents' associations;

7.3.6. familiarising teachers with Roma children, their culture and identity during their training, in addition to designing teaching methods that prevent discrimination and promote diversity; ensuring that teachers are trained to overcome personal biases and prejudices;

7.4. remove the socio-economic barriers to education by:

7.4.1. introducing preparatory programmes and additional academic support for Roma children to facilitate readiness for school, to support the transitions from one educational level to the next and to re-engage those who drop out of school;

7.4.2. providing scholarships and financial support for Roma students to attend school; designing incentives and engaging the private sector to offer scholarships to Roma children;

7.4.3. encouraging the promotion of role models for the Roma communities including successful Roma students, businessmen and artists; creating opportunities and designing events for them to engage with the Roma communities to share experiences and serve as a source of inspiration;

7.4.4. supporting internship programs for Roma in government offices, or in the private sector during the summer, which will facilitate their entry into the job market and inclusion in the business world;

7.4.5. encouraging Roma students to take part in school trips, in order to expose them to the outside world, by covering their expenses if necessary;

7.5. protect Roma children's right to respect for their personal and physical integrity by:

7.5.1. ensuring that legal prohibition of all forms of violence and manifestations of racism and anti-Gypsyism in schools is effectively enforced;

7.5.2. promoting in Roma communities awareness of values and standards relating to gender equality, non-discrimination and human rights;

7.6. provide sufficient state financing to ensure the activities mentioned in paragraphs 7.1 to 7.5 are effective and efficient.

8. The Assembly also believes that governmental measures to promote good governance form the minimum foundation on which such specific measures must be based to achieve maximum results. Member States should therefore encourage initiatives to improve the accountability and transparency of different levels of government and actors, to enhance access to justice and the rule of law, to empower human rights institutions, such as ombudspersons, and to better monitor and address complaints from Roma children.

9. In order to address the root cause of discrimination, politicians and public opinion leaders must act responsibly. They have an important role to play in reversing stereotyping and discriminatory attitudes towards Roma and in promoting a culture of diversity and respect between different groups.