

DECISION No. 3/03
ACTION PLAN ON IMPROVING THE SITUATION
OF ROMA AND SINTI WITHIN THE OSCE AREA
(MC.DEC/3/03)

The Ministerial Council,

Committed to respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without adverse distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion or belief, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status,

Supporting the adoption and implementation of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation to promote full equality of opportunities for all,

Recognizing the particular difficulties faced by Roma and Sinti people and the need to undertake effective measures in order to eradicate discrimination against them and to bring about equality of opportunities, consistent with OSCE commitments,

Recognizing that progress has been achieved in national legislation and in programmes for action and that substantial efforts have been undertaken by the participating States to this end,

Aware at the same time that resolute action is still required to improve the situation of the Roma and Sinti population across the OSCE region,

Noting the rich cultural, linguistic and historical diversity among Roma and Sinti people within the OSCE area, as well as the diversity of national structures and traditions in the OSCE area,

Noting the outcome of important recent governmental and non-governmental conferences and initiatives on Roma and Sinti in Europe, including, *inter alia*, the launching of a Decade of Roma Inclusion and the possible creation of a European Forum for Roma and Travellers,

Convinced that Roma and Sinti populations should have an ever-increasing degree of ownership of the policies focusing on them,

Decides to endorse the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, adopted by the Permanent Council in its Decision No. 566 on 27 November 2003, and annexed to this Decision.

ACTION PLAN ON IMPROVING THE SITUATION OF ROMA AND SINTI WITHIN THE OSCE AREA

I. Scope and objectives

1. The Action Plan is intended to reinforce the efforts of the participating States and relevant OSCE institutions and structures aimed at ensuring that Roma and Sinti people are able to play a full and equal part in our societies, and at eradicating discrimination against them.
2. The Action Plan relies on the framework of international and regional human rights law, existing OSCE commitments and examples of best practices from countries throughout Europe, where these are in place, and aims at fostering such practices elsewhere. The special measures foreseen by the Action Plan with a view to improving the situation of Roma and Sinti people are based on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination¹.
3. Both the participating States and OSCE institutions are called upon to implement the Action Plan. Roma and Sinti communities in the participating States are invited to draw upon and contribute actively to the implementation of the Action Plan's provisions.

II. General context: for Roma, with Roma

4. Each national policy or implementation strategy should: (1) respond to the real problems, needs and priorities of Roma and Sinti communities; (2) be comprehensive; (3) introduce a balanced and sustainable approach to combining human rights goals with social policies; and (4) maximize Roma ownership of the policies that affect them. At the same time, national policies or implementation strategies should be adapted and implemented according to the specific needs of Roma and Sinti populations in particular situations in participating States. Implementation strategies should also include mechanisms to ensure that national policies are implemented at the local level.

1 Article I, paragraph 4 reads: "Special measures taken for the sole purpose of securing adequate advancement of certain racial or ethnic groups or individuals requiring such protection as may be necessary in order to ensure such groups or individuals equal enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms shall not be deemed racial discrimination, provided, however, that such measures do not, as a consequence, lead to the maintenance of separate rights for different racial groups and that they shall not be continued after the objectives for which they were taken have been achieved."

5. The guiding principle in the efforts of participating States and relevant OSCE institutions should be that each policy and implementation strategy should be elaborated and implemented with the active participation of Roma and Sinti communities. It is essential to ensure real participation by Roma and Sinti people in all the decisions that affect their lives. Roma and Sinti people should work alongside local, national and international authorities in the development of these strategies. Equally, Roma communities should be equal partners and should share the responsibility for the betterment of their welfare.

6. The particular situation of Roma and Sinti women should be taken into account in the design and implementation of all policies and programmes. Where consultative and other mechanisms exist to facilitate Roma and Sinti people's participation in such policy-making processes, women should be able to participate on an equal basis with men. Roma women's issues should be systematically mainstreamed in all relevant policies designed for the population as a whole.

III. Combating racism and discrimination

In order to counter prejudice against Roma and Sinti and to effectively elaborate and implement policies to combat discrimination and racial violence, the following actions are recommended:

Legislation and law enforcement

Recommended action by participating States:

7. Consider ratifying the relevant international treaties as soon as possible, if they have not already done so, *inter alia*, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

8. Adopt and implement effective anti-discrimination legislation to combat racial and ethnic discrimination in all fields, including, *inter alia*, access to housing, citizenship and residence, education, employment, health and social services. Involve Roma and Sinti representatives in the design, implementation and evaluation processes.

9. The anti-discrimination legislation should ensure:

- Prohibition of both direct and indirect racial discrimination;
- Imposition of effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions for discriminatory acts or practices;
- Imposition of heavier sentences for racially motivated crimes by both private individuals and public officials;

- Equal access to effective remedies (judicial, administrative, conciliation or mediation procedures).
10. It should be ensured that national legislation prohibits all kinds of discriminatory acts and that all cases of suspected discrimination are thoroughly and objectively investigated.
 11. Create, where appropriate, specialized institutions to ensure the implementation of such legislation, as well as domestic mechanisms to monitor and report regularly and with transparency on the progress achieved in its implementation. Encourage participation of Roma and Sinti representatives in such bodies, whose work should be accessible to the public.
 12. Develop, where necessary, comprehensive national strategies or action plans to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti people, which include specific measures to tackle discrimination in all fields of life.
 13. Assess on a regular basis, especially at the local level, the results of these strategies and involve Roma and Sinti communities in the evaluation process.
 14. Endeavour, by encouraging a genuine dialogue or consultations or through other appropriate means, to improve the relations between Roma and Sinti people and other inhabitants, with a view to promoting tolerance and overcoming prejudices and negative stereotypes on both sides.
 15. Document, consistent with national and international standards on the protection of data, all types and relevant cases of discrimination in order to better assess the situation and respond to the needs of Roma and Sinti people.
 16. Ensure the vigorous and effective investigation of acts of violence against Roma and Sinti people, especially where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that they were racially motivated, and prosecute those responsible in accordance with domestic law and consistent with relevant standards of human rights.
 17. Ensure no impunity for perpetrators of discriminatory or violent acts, *inter alia*, by taking prompt and effective investigative and punitive action on the part of the police.
 18. Facilitate access to justice for Roma and Sinti people through measures such as legal aid and the provision of information in the Romani language.
 19. Take into account in all measures and programmes, the situation of Roma and Sinti women, who are often victims of discrimination on the basis of both ethnicity and sex.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

20. The ODIHR and, where appropriate, other OSCE institutions and structures, including OSCE field operations, will assist participating States, at their request, in developing anti-discrimination legislation, as well as in establishing anti-discrimination bodies.
21. The HCNM, within its mandate, will continue to follow the development of anti-discrimination legislation and provide advice and assistance to the participating States in this respect, as appropriate.
22. Upon request, the ODIHR will provide advice on how a participating State's existing mechanisms, such as ombudsman offices, commissions for combating discrimination, police disciplinary commissions, and other relevant bodies can alleviate tensions between Roma and Sinti and non-Roma communities.
23. The ODIHR/Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues (CPRSI) will promote better relations between Roma and Sinti non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the participating States.
24. The ODIHR-CPRSI will serve as a clearing house on initiatives undertaken by participating States and facilitate exchanges of information on best practices.
25. The ODIHR-CPRSI will, in close co-operation with participating States, Roma and Sinti communities, and where possible with other international organizations, and in full respect of the laws on the protection of personal data, collect documentation for the purpose of developing more precisely targeted policies.

Police

Recommended action by participating States:

26. Develop policies that promote awareness among law-enforcement institutions regarding the situation of Roma and Sinti people and that counter prejudice and negative stereotypes.
27. Develop training programmes to prevent excessive use of force and to promote awareness of and respect for human rights.
28. Develop policies: (1) to improve relations between Roma and Sinti communities and the police, so as to prevent police abuse and violence against Roma and Sinti people; and (2) to improve trust and confidence in the police among Roma and Sinti people.
29. Develop policies and procedures to ensure an effective police response to racially motivated violence against Roma and Sinti people.

30. Assess the gap between international standards on police and currently existing national practices in consultation with national police forces, NGOs and representatives of Roma and Sinti communities.

31. Elaborate, where appropriate, and in close partnership with international organizations and Roma NGOs, policy statements, codes of conduct, practical guidance manuals and training programmes.

32. Encourage Roma and Sinti people to work in law-enforcement institutions as a sustainable means of promoting tolerance and diversity.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

33. The Strategic Police Matters Unit in the Secretariat and the ODIHR will assist participating States in developing programmes and confidence-building measures — such as community policing — to improve the relations between Roma and Sinti people and the police, particularly at the local level.

34. The ODIHR-CPRSI and the Strategic Police Matters Unit will, within their respective mandates, produce a compilation of police “best practices” in the OSCE region with respect to policing and Roma and Sinti communities.

35. The HCNM, the ODIHR-CPRSI and the Strategic Police Matters Unit will assist the participating States in developing codes of conduct to prevent racial profiling and improve interethnic relations.

Mass Media

Recommended action by participating States:

36. Launch information and awareness-raising campaigns with a view to countering prejudices and negative stereotypes of Roma and Sinti people.

37. In order to foster freedom of expression, encourage training of Roma and Sinti journalists and their employment in media outlets with a view to facilitating wider access to the media for Roma and Sinti people.

38. Encourage the media to show positive aspects and present a balanced portrayal of Roma life, refrain from stereotyping Roma and Sinti people and avoid inciting tension between various ethnic groups. Organize round tables between media representatives and Roma and Sinti representatives to promote this objective.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

39. In co-operation with the ODIHR as well as relevant international organizations, the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM) should consider how the OSCE

could contribute to the establishment of a European Roma Radio which would broadcast throughout Europe. The ODIHR and the RFOM should organize public debates, anti-discrimination campaigns and joint training programmes with and for the media.

40. The RFOM should consider facilitating training seminars for Roma journalists.
41. The ODIHR-CPRSI and the RFOM will organize round tables with journalists on the image that Roma and Sinti communities have in society.
42. The HCNM will continue to elaborate and disseminate guidelines for policy-makers on the use of the State broadcast media in multicultural communities, aimed, *inter alia*, at encouraging support for minority broadcasters, including Roma and Sinti broadcasters, and improving their access to the media.

IV. Addressing socio-economic issues

Action is required to ensure that Roma and Sinti people enjoy social and economic rights on a par with others. Measures at the grass-roots level, particularly those originating from Roma groups themselves, are particularly needed in order to promote the integration of Roma and Sinti people into social and economic life and to combat their isolation and poverty. The OSCE and its participating States should continue to facilitate such integration.

Housing and living conditions

Recommended action by participating States:

43. Put in place mechanisms and institutional procedures to clarify property rights, resolve questions of ownership and regularize the legal status of Roma and Sinti people living in circumstances of unsettled legality (e.g., Roma neighbourhoods lacking land rights or which are not included in the urban plans of the main locality; families and houses without legal residence status in settlements where the people have been living *de facto* for decades).
44. Involve Roma and Sinti people in the design of housing policies, as well as in the construction, rehabilitation and/or maintenance of public housing projects meant to benefit them. Ensure that housing projects do not foster ethnic and/or racial segregation.
45. Consider the possibility of guaranteeing loans to participating States that may be available from international organizations and financial institutions for low-income housing projects.
46. Promote the option of co-operative housing schemes for Roma communities and provide appropriate training for the maintenance of such facilities.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

47. The ODIHR-CPRSI and the Office of the Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) are encouraged to play a larger role in facilitating the provision of information about and access to resources made available by foreign donors for specific projects, particularly those generated by Roma and Sinti groups, addressing the social and economic development of Roma and Sinti communities.

Unemployment and economic problems

Recommended action by participating States:

48. Promote increased representation of qualified Roma and Sinti people in public employment.

49. Develop training programmes to prepare under-represented groups such as Roma and Sinti for employment in local public administration and other areas, and develop policies to encourage employment of the graduates of these programmes as civil servants.

50. Reassess the impact of subsidized employment programmes, paying particular attention to their educational components, to ensure that these will aim to increase the competitiveness of Roma and Sinti people on the labour market.

51. Develop policies and programmes, including vocational training, to improve the marketable skills and employability of Roma and Sinti people, particularly young people and women.

52. Adopt social policies that strengthen incentives to seek employment, as a sustainable way to avoid dependency on social benefits.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

53. At the request of participating States, the OCEEA, together with relevant international organizations, will contribute to developing approaches designed to overcome obstacles and discrimination that prevent Roma and Sinti people from fulfilling their potential in the economic sphere.

54. At the request of participating States, the ODIHR-CPRSI and the OCEEA will support development of the employability and entrepreneurial skills of Roma and Sinti people through the establishment of training and retraining programmes in participating States. Successful practices, particularly relating to the development of entrepreneurial skills and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (e.g., the Youth Entrepreneurship Seminars programme) could be adapted to the needs of Roma and Sinti people. The OCEEA could also facilitate economic and social insertion by acting as a catalyst for support by partner organizations and financial institutions of micro-credit programmes, in the form of small loans for the establishment of small-scale businesses.

55. The OCEEA, working in close contact and in co-operation with other international organizations, so as to avoid overlapping, can assist governments in assessing the impact of economic policies and processes on Roma and Sinti communities (by developing policy performance/assessment indicators).

56. The ODIHR-CPRSI and the OCEEA will draw upon the research developed by UNDP and other agencies to assess the needs of Roma and Sinti people with a view to fostering policies that take into account the extent and nature of their specific needs in each participating State.

57. In co-ordination with relevant international organizations (in particular UNDP and the World Bank), the ODIHR-CPRSI and the OCEEA will examine ways to stimulate better access by Roma and Sinti people to regular training programmes. Workshops or round-table discussions tailored to the needs of Roma and Sinti people can be organized, with a view to informing and educating community members regarding the economic and social rights of individuals and entrepreneurs.

Health care

Recommended action by participating States:

58. Ensure that Roma and Sinti people have access to health care services on a non-discriminatory basis.

59. Promote awareness about the specific needs of the Roma and Sinti population amongst health care personnel.

60. Address the high incidence of disease and malnutrition among Roma communities.

61. Encourage access by Roma and Sinti populations to general public health services at an early stage by:

- (a) Informing Roma and Sinti people about the availability of such services and telling them how to take advantage of them;
- (b) Strengthening the confidence of Roma and Sinti people towards public health care providers, including through: punishing incidents of direct or indirect discrimination experienced by Roma and Sinti; training health care workers to understand relevant aspects of Roma culture; and supporting mediators who can play an important role in bridging the gap between Roma communities and public health care service providers.

62. Pay special attention to the health of women and girls, *inter alia*, by:

- (a) Promoting and/or developing programmes aimed at providing information on health care (including nutrition, neonatal care and domestic violence, etc.);
 - (b) Improving access to gynaecological health care, including prenatal, delivery and postnatal health care services, *inter alia*, through the provision of information and training.
63. Pay special attention to the health of Roma and Sinti children through the provision of appropriate paediatric care, including preventive measures such as offering vaccinations in Roma settlements.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

64. In co-operation with other international organizations and NGOs, the ODIHR will draw upon existing research data to identify socio-economic, political and cultural factors that have an impact on the health status of particular Roma and Sinti populations, and will advise participating States regarding public health programmes which would respond to needs identified.

65. The ODIHR-CPRSI and, where appropriate, other OSCE institutions and structures, including OSCE field operations, will assist participating States in launching educational initiatives to help Roma and Sinti people make full use of regular health services. They will, *inter alia*, collect, produce and disseminate relevant information on good practices.

66. The ODIHR-CPRSI will pay special attention to ensuring that Roma and Sinti people have access to programmes aimed at prevention and/or treatment of drug abuse and addiction and AIDS and related diseases.

V. Improving access to education

Education is a prerequisite to the participation of Roma and Sinti people in the political, social and economic life of their respective countries on a footing of equality with others. Strong immediate measures in this field, particularly those that foster school attendance and combat illiteracy, should be assigned the highest priority both by decision-makers and by Roma and Sinti communities. Educational policies should aim to integrate Roma and Sinti people into mainstream education by providing full and equal access at all levels, while remaining sensitive to cultural differences.

Recommended action by participating States:

67. Ensure that national legislation includes adequate provisions banning racial segregation and discrimination in education and provides effective remedies for violations of such legislation.

68. Consult Roma and Sinti representatives when designing educational policies affecting them.
69. Actively promote equal opportunities in the field of education for Roma and Sinti children, particularly by providing them with language-related or other assistance.
70. Take special measures to enhance the quality and effectiveness of education for Roma and Sinti children. Encourage increased representation of Roma and Sinti people among school teachers.
71. Include Roma history and culture in educational texts, with particular consideration given to the experience of Roma and Sinti people during the Holocaust.
72. Consider measures to ensure the respect, protection and promotion of the Romani language and its teaching, and of Roma culture as an integral part of the Roma and Sinti cultural heritage.
73. Develop and implement comprehensive school desegregation programmes aiming at: (1) discontinuing the practice of systematically routing Roma children to special schools or classes (e.g., schools for mentally disabled persons, schools and classes exclusively designed for Roma and Sinti children); and (2) transferring Roma children from special schools to mainstream schools.
74. Allocate financial resources for the transfer of the Roma children to mainstream education and for the development of school support programmes to ease the transition to mainstream education.
75. Facilitate Roma children's access to mainstream education by taking measures such as:
 - (a) Taking measures to eradicate manifestations of prejudice against Roma and Sinti people in schools;
 - (b) Training of educators regarding multicultural education and ways of dealing with ethnically mixed classes;
 - (c) Developing strategies to gain wider community support for the desegregation of schools;
 - (d) Providing support to bridge the gap between Roma and Sinti children and other pupils, including through pre-school programmes designed to prepare Roma and Sinti children for primary school;
 - (e) Providing support to increase the number of mediators/trainers and teachers from within the Roma communities.

76. Develop and implement anti-racist curricula for schools, and anti-racism campaigns for the media.
77. Develop policies that address the full range of factors which contribute to low-school attendance by Roma and Sinti children. This includes, *inter alia*, ensuring that Roma and Sinti families have the necessary documentation for registration as any other inhabitants.
78. Consider elaborating social support programmes for low-income Roma families with school-aged children.
79. Promote regular school attendance by Roma and Sinti children, *inter alia*, through the involvement of family and social mediators, the promotion of awareness by Roma and Sinti parents and elders of their responsibility to facilitate children's school attendance and, in particular, equal access to education for girls.
80. Pay special attention to providing Roma and Sinti girls with equal opportunities for educational and social inclusion and develop programmes to counter their particularly high drop-out rate.
81. Consider developing appropriate programmes for those who have not completed primary school or are illiterate.
82. Develop, where necessary, scholarship programmes for Roma students and encourage their increased participation in existing scholarship programmes.
83. Encourage computer literacy among Roma and Sinti people through the setting up of information web-sites.
84. Evaluate periodically the effectiveness of educational policies.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

85. The HCNM will encourage participating States to comply with their commitments to provide free and equal access to public education to all members of society, and will encourage them to take steps to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti people in this respect.
86. The HCNM will continue to provide guidance on educational models, curriculum content and the teaching of, or in, the mother tongue, including the Romani language.

VI. Enhancing participation in public and political life

Roma and Sinti people face special challenges in their efforts to participate in the public — and particularly the political — life of their respective countries. Low levels of

education and, in certain cases, discrimination against them contribute substantially to the under-representation of Roma and Sinti people at all levels of government. Roma and Sinti people have an equal right to participate in public affairs. This includes the rights to vote, stand for election, participate in public affairs and form political parties without discrimination. Efforts made in recent years to foster Roma political participation should be encouraged, particularly those originating from the Roma groups themselves.

Recommended action by participating States:

87. Participating States must be proactive in ensuring that Roma and Sinti people, like any other inhabitants, have all the necessary documents, including birth certificates, identity documents and health insurance certificates. In resolving problems related to the lack of basic documents, participating States are strongly advised to work in partnership with Roma and Sinti civil organizations.

88. Participating States are encouraged to take into account the following basic conditions for ensuring effective participation by Roma and Sinti people in public and political life:

— *Early involvement:*

Any initiative relating to Roma and Sinti people should involve them at the earliest stages in the development, implementation and evaluation phases;

— *Inclusiveness:*

Roma and Sinti people should be included in formal consultative processes, and the effectiveness of mechanisms established for their participation in shaping major policy initiatives should be ensured by involving them in a broadly representative process;

— *Transparency:*

Programmes and proposals should be circulated sufficiently in advance of decision-making deadlines to allow for meaningful analysis and input from representatives of Roma and Sinti communities;

— *Meaningful participation by Roma and Sinti people at all levels of government:*

Participation by Roma and Sinti people in local government is essential for the effective implementation of policies affecting them;

— *Ownership:*

Roma and Sinti people play an essential and irreplaceable role in ensuring that the right to participate in the political process is observed in practice.

89. Elected officials should establish close working relations with Roma and Sinti communities.
90. Establish mechanisms to ensure equal, direct and open communication between Roma and Sinti representatives and government authorities, including advisory and consultative bodies.
91. Facilitate interaction between political leaders at the local and national levels and diverse Roma groups.
92. Organize election-awareness campaigns so as to increase participation of the Roma electorate in elections.
93. Ensure that Roma voters can make free and informed choices in elections.
94. Take measures to guarantee the equal voting rights of women, including by enforcing prohibitions on so-called “family voting”.
95. Encourage Roma and Sinti people to engage more actively in public service, including, where necessary, through the introduction of special measures to promote their participation in the civil service.
96. Encourage the representation of Roma and Sinti people in elected and appointed office at all levels of government.
97. Empower and integrate Roma and Sinti individuals into decision-making processes of States and localities as elected representatives of their communities and as citizens of their respective countries.
98. Promote Roma women’s participation in public and political life; Roma women should be able to participate on an equal basis with men in consultative and other mechanisms designed to increase access to all areas of public and political life.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

99. The ODIHR and, where appropriate, other OSCE institutions and structures, including OSCE field operations, will develop programmes aimed at fostering the registration necessary for full political participation.
100. The ODIHR-CPRSI should help to organize training for and by Roma NGOs, including media organizations, for wider Roma communities on the issues of democratic processes and participation.

101. The ODIHR and, where appropriate, other OSCE institutions and structures, including OSCE field operations, will develop and implement voter education and voter registration programmes.

102. The ODIHR will act as a catalyst for exchanges of information and best practices among participating States and other international organizations.

103. The ODIHR will continue and strengthen the practice of examining the involvement of Roma people in voting and election processes, and will continue the practice of including Roma and Sinti experts in its election observation missions in the OSCE area.

104. The HCNM, within its mandate, will continue to advise States on appropriate ways and means of facilitating the participation of Roma and Sinti people in all areas of public life.

105. The ODIHR-CPRSI and, where appropriate, other OSCE institutions and structures, including OSCE field operations, will design programmes that encourage Roma and Sinti representatives to stand as candidates for elected bodies or will identify creative solutions that would ensure the participation of Roma and Sinti representatives in national and local decision-making processes.

106. The ODIHR will devote particular attention to activities aimed at increasing access by Roma women to all areas of public and political life.

VII. Roma and Sinti in crisis and post-crisis situations

The participating States have an obligation to ensure that, even in crisis and post-crisis situations, all the fundamental rights, including the rights of refugees deriving from relevant international instruments, in particular the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, are secured without discrimination. They take into account the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement as a useful framework for the work of the OSCE and their endeavours in dealing with internal displacement.

Recommended action by participating States:

107. Consult Roma and Sinti populations when defining crisis situations in order to facilitate adequate procedures and to identify specific geographical areas from which refugees and internally displaced persons flee, as well as to ensure that the specific situation of Roma and Sinti people are addressed.

108. Ensure that Roma and Sinti populations in a forced displacement situation (refugees and IDPs) are duly registered and provided with the relevant documents.

109. The participating States should ensure that programmes are in place to promote informed choice regarding the decision of Roma and Sinti refugees and IDPs concerning durable solutions to their situations, including the exercise of their right to safe, decent and sustainable return. Such programmes should provide concrete information regarding each subject of concern to refugees and IDPs and should be made available in the relevant languages.

110. Ensure that Roma and Sinti refugees are treated in accordance with the relevant international norms and standards of protection, and in a non-discriminatory manner.

111. Make use of the ODIHR's role in conflict prevention and identification of areas of early intervention, and draw on the expertise of the OSCE HCNM in this regard.

112. Pay special attention to the needs of Roma and Sinti women and children in crisis and post-crisis situations, particularly by providing them with access to health care, housing and schooling.

Recommended action by OSCE institutions and structures:

113. The ODIHR will make use of its specific role in addressing conflict prevention and identifying areas of potential crisis requiring early intervention.

114. In accordance with its mandate, the ODIHR-CPRSI is called upon to respond effectively to crisis situations by, *inter alia*, co-operating with relevant governments, inter-governmental bodies and international organizations, in particular the UNHCR, to ensure protection of Roma communities at risk.

115. The ODIHR-CPRSI will raise awareness among public officials, journalists and others of the situation of Roma and Sinti people in crisis or conflict areas.

116. The ODIHR will assume a proactive role in analysing measures undertaken by participating States relating to Roma and Sinti people and offer its advice with a view to better tackling those elements of tension in particular local contexts which may evolve, if not prevented, into open conflict situations.

117. The HCNM will continue to exercise his mandate of conflict prevention at the earliest possible stage.

VIII. Enhancing co-operation and co-ordination with other international organizations and NGOs

Given the increased attention being paid to issues concerning Roma and Sinti people by various international organizations, co-ordination and co-operation is required to avoid duplication of effort. With a view to ensuring effective implementation of the

Action Plan, the OSCE, and in particular the ODIHR, will closely co-operate with international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

118. The ODIHR-CPRSI will continue to participate actively in the *Informal Contact Group on Roma of the Intergovernmental Organisations*².

119. The strengthening and up-grading of this informal body will be agreed upon and implemented in co-operation with all the relevant partners, particularly by ensuring the inclusion of representatives of OSCE participating States. Regular meetings of the Informal Contact Group at the expert level, or a higher level when deemed necessary, will be considered with a view to furthering this aim.

120. The Informal Contact Group should establish common orientations and priorities, as well as better co-ordination and co-operation in order to avoid duplication of effort.

121. The ODIHR-CPRSI will seek to consolidate the “International Roma Contact Group”³ and will further contribute to the Council of Europe’s initiative for a possible European Forum for Roma and Travellers.

122. The ODIHR-CPRSI will provide information and co-ordination services to relevant national and international institutions, and will facilitate dialogue among them and with Roma NGOs.

123. The ODIHR-CPRSI will seek to develop relations with Roma and Sinti organizations and help them to co-ordinate their efforts and resources, both within individual States and across borders, and to avail themselves fully of opportunities provided by existing national and international policies affecting Roma and Sinti people.

124. The ODIHR-CPRSI will draw upon the experience and input of existing monitoring projects developed by other international organizations.

IX. The ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues

125. Where necessary, the ODIHR-CPRSI will facilitate information-sharing among OSCE participating States that have developed or are seeking to improve national policies on Roma and Sinti people.

2 The *Informal Contact Group on Roma of the Intergovernmental Organisations* is composed of representatives from OSCE/ODIHR, the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the European Union.

3 The International Roma Contact Group was established in October 2000 at the initiative of the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues. The Contact Group includes representatives of the International Romani Union, the Roma National Congress, elected Romani representatives, Romani experts and the ODIHR-CPRSI.

126. Upon request, ODIHR-CPRSI will advise participating States on future policies related to Roma and Sinti people and will stimulate debates between governments and Roma NGOs.

127. The ODIHR-CPRSI will support capacity-building for Roma and Sinti NGOs.

128. The ODIHR-CPRSI will establish a database of best practices in OSCE participating States.

129. The ODIHR-CPRSI should assume a proactive role in analysing measures undertaken by participating States, as well as in particular situations and incidents relating to Roma and Sinti people. Towards this end CPRSI will establish and develop direct contacts with participating States and will offer advice and opinions to them.

130. Governments concerned will co-operate with the ODIHR-CPRSI in identifying effective solutions to crisis situations.

131. The ODIHR-CPRSI will provide Roma and Sinti communities with more information on OSCE resources and activities.

132. In co-operation with relevant OSCE institutions and structures, the ODIHR will develop appropriate action aimed at tackling the root causes of trafficking in human beings, especially in children, and raise awareness of its consequences among Roma and Sinti communities.

X. Implementation: review and assessment

133. The implementation of the Action Plan's provisions will be reviewed at the Human Dimension Implementation Meetings, Review Conferences and other relevant human dimension events.

134. Drawing on the outcome of the above-mentioned meetings, as well as on input from the consolidated Informal Contact Group on Roma of the Intergovernmental Organisations and the International Roma Contact Group, the Director of the ODIHR will report to the Permanent Council, which may recommend to participating States and OSCE institutions priorities for co-operation and co-ordination.

135. The Permanent Council will periodically organize informal briefings by the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues on the areas covered by the present Action Plan in order to assess the impact at the national and local levels of the measures foreseen by it.

136. With a view to facilitating the implementation review process, OSCE participating States are encouraged to provide information on recent developments in the situation of Roma and Sinti people and/or measures inspired by this Action Plan at the

Human Dimension Implementation Meetings, prior to Review Conferences and to the Permanent Council, where appropriate.

137. All relevant OSCE institutions and structures, including OSCE field operations, will continue to interact closely with participating States in order to assist them in implementing the Action Plan.

138. The ODIHR-CPRSI will disseminate information on this Plan to Roma and Sinti communities and organizations as well as to other international organizations.

139. In order to enable ODIHR-CPRSI to carry out the tasks entrusted to it in the present Action Plan, the OSCE Permanent Council will address providing adequate human and financial resources. The details will be worked out by the Advisory Committee on Management and Finance and will be submitted to the Permanent Council.