

Exclusive but not explicit

Complementary civil society report on the National Roma Inclusion Strategy paper provided by the Federal German Government in December 2011

March 12, 2012

—Summary—

German Sinti and Roma would be all well integrated, therefore a National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) as requested by the EU by the end of last year is not necessary in Germany, says the German government in their report to the EU. Foreign Roma in Germany would not need explicit measures either, as they could easily access numerous programmes for all immigrants. Asked to describe the situation of Roma and Sinti in Germany, the federal government recurs the fact that ethnical belonging is not registered, to prevent any repetition of historic state persecution of ethnic minorities. Furthermore, the report says, the minority itself would not want any research to examine the situation of Roma and Sinti in Germany, either. Therefore no data would be available to give a picture of Sinti and Roma in Germany.

Having just finished a survey on the educational situation of German Sinti and Roma in 2011, RomnoKher and their partners RAA and Madhouse felt, that the reality of Sinti and Roma families in their regions is completely different from the one described in the government's report. The education survey reveals a disastrous situation with just 15% of people leaving school with a professional training certificate and far more than 50% can tell terrific stories of racial discrimination in their school time. The situation of foreign Roma in Germany which was just researched a few months ago by UNICEF is not better.

Reading the German NRIS report one must wonder in what evidence the government's view on Roma being well integrated is developed, as the comment of the „Zentralrat der Deutschen Sinti und Roma“, representing the minority politically, says nothing like that. On the contrary: their opinion paper that is attached to the government report lists a long list of urgently needed measures to improve the situation of disadvantaged families, which is currently characterized by exclusion and heavy discrimination.

The principle that all citizens have to be treated equally, says the report, has to be considered when planning measures to overcome Roma exclusion. Therefore, existing measures for immigrants seem to be enough, especially as with the lack of data there is no proof that the education and labour market situation of Roma immigrants is not affected by those measures.

Last but not least the German NRIS report does not contain or even touch civil society's voices, or the analysis of regional and local authorities as requested by the European Council. Four NGOs have been addressed for a statement one of which only, namely the „Zentralrat der Deutschen Sinti und Roma“, answered and is cited—a response that is not further considered in the overall report's information at all.

Thus RAA, RomnoKher and Madhouse, supported by the Freudenberg Foundation, decided to conduct a small opinion poll amongst Roma and Non Roma NGOs, experts, and activists about their view on the current situation of Sinti and Roma in Germany. The questionnaire follows the differentiation of the Europeans Council's request to report and design a strategy concerning: education, labour market, health care, and housing. It discerns the situation of German Sinti and Roma, who have national minority status from that of immigrant Roma after 1945, who have no special group rights. 26 of about 50 questionnaires were answered. Eight bigger NGOs, amongst them the Zentralrat and Amnesty International, responded to not have sufficient local experience to form an opinion about the situation.

Even though the poll was conducted in very short time its results already substantially contradict the statement of the German Government, German Sinti and Roma were all well integrated and Roma immigrants would problem-free benefit from support offered to immigrants in general.

Almost undivided, the NGOs interviewed answered that access to education, labour, and housing in Germany is exclusive and by far less accessible for German and immigrant Sinti and Roma. Many of them state a need of special support measures which are explicitly but not exclusively directed to disadvantaged Roma and Sinti families. Here the answers match with the view of the "Zentralrat der Deutschen Sinti und Roma" who put a long list of proposals in their opinion paper as well. For health care still half of the respondents see unequal access and discrimination. In the field of education the picture changes along the education phases: access to child care and primary school is seen much easier than the transition from school to labour market or access to university, where almost no one sees equality. First labour market is not seen as equally accessible either. A narrow majority even thinks that also Roma businesses and freelance workers are discriminated against in the economic sphere.

Proposed support measures headline the mediator's and other approaches that involve Roma themselves in designing, planning and implementing interventions. Investment in better structures is seen more efficient than short term projects. The need to combat widespread anti-gypsy stereotypes in population and administration is another common ground within the poll. Labour market access though is beside stereotypes a matter of lack of qualification, too. That's why most suggestions here go into the direction of adapted professional training for people of all ages.



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