

IMADR Statement on Segregation and Exclusion of Sinti and Roma in Europe

During the IMADR Board of Directors Meeting held in Tokyo on September 11 and 12, 2011, the Board adopted the following statement concerning the segregation and exclusion of Sinti and Roma in Europe. On September 14, a copy of the statement was given to Ms. Angela Dorothea Merkel, Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, through the courtesy of Dr. Volker Stanzel, Ambassador of the German Embassy in Japan.

IMADR welcomes the European Union's *Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, which the European Council adopted on the 19th of May, 2011. The Council invites the Member States to improve the social and economic situation of Roma in Europe and stresses that combating discrimination and segregation is essential for any national and European policy. The European Union (EU) is aware of the situation of the Roma and Sinti from a variety of documentations; The EU makes numerous possible sources of funding available on a legal basis, as well as provides special EU-Funds and programmes. The EU also knows the problems of implementation, especially that the programmes hardly show any impact at the local level. IMADR underlines that this deficient execution of national strategies must not result in attempts where individual countries try to pass their direct responsibility onto the EU while portraying the Roma as a "European problem" and demanding a "European solution." IMADR understands that the Roma are not a "European minority", but a national minority in their native countries respectively. They have to be acknowledged not only by law but also by political and social praxis as national minorities in their native countries, and like other national minorities, should receive the protection and support of the responsible governments. The labelling of Roma and Sinti as a "European minority" even in official statements of European institutions and organisations is questioning the responsibility of the respective home states.

At the same time, the members of IMADR are deeply concerned about on-going racial discrimination against Roma minorities in Europe. For years now, there has been an increase in racism and right-wing extremism, especially directed at the Roma, and this is widely spread across Europe. In several countries, the Roma have become victims of racially-motivated murder attempts. Right-wing political parties conduct campaigns against Jews and Roma, culminating in racist violence and murderous attacks against members of the Roma. It is most disturbing that such racist positions have been adopted by representatives of a number of European states and, therefore, are being accepted again in the broader society.

In a multitude of countries of the European community, there are frequent discriminations by public authorities. We are alarmed to note public statements made by ministers of various states establishing a connection between ethnic affiliation and criminality. To guarantee effective protection and for necessary suitable injunctive relief (and recovery of damages) against actions of state authorities and offices, an extension of the existing guidelines would be necessary. An adequate extension of the existing guidelines would oblige the states to work out legal regulations, to protect the persons concerned against discriminatory or racial state practices of any kind – including protection against discriminatory statements made by government agencies, police and other authorities.

Furthermore, protection against discrimination is necessary regarding racial propaganda spread via the Internet. Neo-Nazis are using the Internet platform extensively to spread racial propaganda about Roma and Sinti, and Jews. EU-member states have to commit themselves more resolutely against this and agree within the international guidelines to do whatever possible to control the Internet to prevent the dissemination of racial propaganda.

Therefore, IMADR emphasises the need to take immediate action in establishing supporting autonomous structures on the side of the Roma minorities in Europe in order to enable effective and direct participation in the development and implementation of national and local strategies. This includes the option for NGOs to apply for and participate in EU-programmes for the improvement of the situation of Roma in Europe.