



Youth Bridging the Gap: Reaching Out to the Roma

International seminar 2007

Ljubljana, Slovenia

22nd – 28th of July

Roma – Crossing the Bridge

The 33 young active citizens from across Europe, all with a committed passion to promoting the integration of Roma and a mutual understanding between Roma and non-Roma, make this declaration towards effecting change following their conference 22nd-28th July 2007, Ljubljana Slovenia. The conference was, organised by the IAPSS, supported by the Council of Europe, European Roma Rights Centre, European Economic and Social Committee, and the EU Commission. This declaration will be disseminated to all Member State Governments and EU Institutions, plus organisations active in the field of Roma.

Across Europe live exceptional disperse Roma communities with traditions, culture and language unique to them. They are citizens of Europe and face distinctive racism and prejudice. Their plights for their right to equal access to health, housing, education, services, employment, justice and political representation as well as their poverty and social isolation are well documented. Now is the time to cross the bridge to a better existence, with human dignity and pride for Roma and we will support the integration process through our activities.

It is true that EU Member States and institutions, as well as other European countries, have mechanisms and tools, and have invested millions of euros into research and to support the integration of Roma. However, the effectiveness of many of these policies and projects is debatable and the return on investment questionable. Actions relating to concrete recommendations from renowned institutions and organisations are absent. We will seek to start actions, and encourage others, through different initiatives and projects.

Legal structures in place, the European Convention of Human Rights from the Council of Europe, and the European Court of Human Rights; are now starting to be utilised to implement change alongside the European Race Directive. However, what is most required is effective political leverage to ensure a complete change creating true equality for the Roma. Intercultural dialogue and radical change is required to address the root causes of their discrimination and social exclusion. We will listen and understand in order to influence others to make the necessary changes.

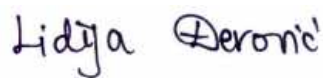
The use of allocated funds must be evaluated and monitored with a clear and transparent line of accountability. They must set realistic targets, making changes at the core and must not be superficial, consulting and cooperating with the Roma communities throughout. Where projects fulfil their goals and achieve positive change the funds should be extended to allow long term sustainability and the dissemination of best practice. We commit to supporting the dissemination process within our organisations and beyond.

Priority areas must focus on the implementation of adopted strategies on education, housing, health and employment, with more resources being dedicated to education to raise attainment levels. However, only a truly fully integrated approach will achieve success, changing the infrastructure and

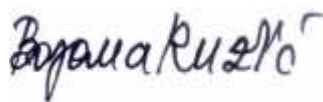
access to services, whilst retaining the Roma's rights to their cultural environment. "Separate but equal" is inherently discriminatory, with many structures and administration processes, including educational testing, not cognisant of cultural background or culturally sensitive. Through the promotion of Roma participation in all levels of society, where it is not tokenistic, change can be made for the better. Within our organisations we will seek to support and integrate Roma at all levels and encourage them to participate at all levels.

We, the undersigned, commit to starting projects and activities which promote diversity, fighting against stereotypes, raising awareness, encouraging intercultural dialogue and cooperation, fostering youth participation, capacity building, facilitating social inclusion and networking, encouraging unbiased and fair media representation and promoting the involvement of Roma in decision making processes.

Lidija Đerović



Bojana Ružić



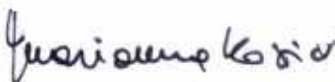
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Aurel Boriçi



Ömar Naşit



Ilke Gürdal



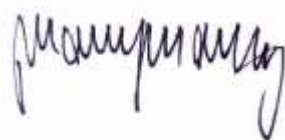
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Maren Kraushaar



Marius Wamsiedel



Rimona Afana



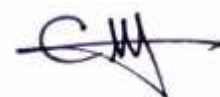
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Corina Murafa



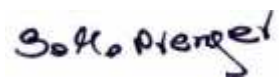
Velichka Dimitrova



Emil Metodiev



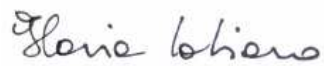
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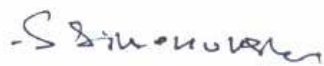
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