

Foreword

Minority protection has been a concern of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) since the conclusion of the historic Helsinki Accords in 1975. Since its inception, monitoring respect for the Accords and for the human and minority rights commitments undertaken by OSCE Member States in successive OSCE Documents has been key to its mission. OSCE ODIHR, including the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, has engaged in case by case monitoring across the OSCE region, combining fact-finding with practical advice in shaping governmental policies for Roma.

The adoption of the Copenhagen criteria by the EU in 1993, which included “respect for and protection of minority rights,” *inter alia*, opened another chapter in minority rights protection in Europe. With the adoption of the Copenhagen criteria, the EU joined the OSCE, the Council of Europe, and other international organisations in the endeavour to articulate the content of minority rights, and to press States to respect those rights in practice.

Although the European Union is only one segment of the OSCE framework, it is nevertheless an extremely important segment, with capacity to influence the development of policies far beyond its political borders. Thus there is a critical need to streamline the EU’s own standards and practices, and monitoring is an optimal tool to this end.

The monitoring activity initiated by EU Accession Monitoring Program (EUMAP) of the Open Society Institute in 2000 is implemented in the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act. It encourages independent monitoring of governmental efforts to comply with the human rights principles to which they have expressed their adherence. Like OSCE commitments, EU candidate State commitments cannot be “met” once and for all; they must be revisited time and time again, and the role of independent, non-governmental monitors in ensuring that Governments remain honest in revisiting their commitments is key to the health of all democracies. Among EUMAP’s recommendations in its 2001 reports were the following:

- Make clear that the political criteria for membership in the European Union are applicable equally to candidates for EU accession and to EU member States.
- Undertake systematic monitoring of governmental policies and practices on a continuous basis throughout the EU and in the candidate States.

As revealed by EUMAP 2002 reports, which have taken up these recommendations by monitoring policies to protect Roma as well as the situation of Muslims and Roma in

five EU member States, there are new challenges to minority protection in Europe. Roma in EU member States face similar issues to those that have been highlighted in candidate States; member States must also find ways to affirm their commitment to protection of Muslim minorities, in the context of widespread anti-Muslim public sentiment and Islamophobia.

EU enlargement has drawn one step closer with the Commission's recommendation for the admission of ten new members, yet it is increasingly clear that enlargement will not in itself provide instant or easy solutions to the problems that Roma currently face in both candidate and member States. Indeed, as the OSCE has affirmed throughout its existence, and as EUMAP underlines through its reports, ongoing monitoring is more important than ever. It is the means by which international organisations can press States to honour their human rights commitments, by which States can ensure that public goods and benefits flow to all members of society; and by which citizens can hold their Governments to the highest standard of performance. I particularly welcome EUMAP's attempt actively to involve Roma, Muslims, Russian-speakers, and other minorities in monitoring State minority rights commitments; this is the only way to ensure that these commitments are judged to have been met in practice.

I welcome the EUMAP reports as a contribution to our joint efforts better to define and implement minority rights standards, and to the development of a culture of monitoring in Europe.

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