

BUSINESSES WITHDRAW ADVERTISING FROM HUNGARIAN NEWSPAPER OVER ANTI-ROMA STATEMENTS

Magyar Hírlap, a conservative Hungarian newspaper, published an editorial penned by Zsolt Bayer on 5 January 2013. This **editorial** expressed very strong anti-Roma views. Bayer, an influential journalist and co-founder of the ruling Fidesz party, compared Roma to 'animals' and called for a solution, saying "This must be dealt with – immediately, and by any means necessary".

Bayer's article triggered sharp criticism and reaction domestically and internationally. An alliance of NGOs, including the European Roma Rights Centre, called on 15 domestic companies and Hungarian divisions of multinationals that were advertising in the newspaper to demonstrate that they will not tolerate racism. In letters sent to companies, the NGOs asked them to review their advertising policies and to consider withdrawing all advertising from Magyar Hírlap until its editors explicitly condemned the op-ed, and the newspaper ceases publishing racist, anti-semitic

or homophobic articles. The civil organisations also asked the companies to explicitly inform the management of Magyar Hírlap that their decision to withdraw advertising is linked to its policy on publishing articles containing racist, anti-semitic and discriminatory speech.

By the end of February, five companies had responded positively to this call. Erste Bank blacklisted Magyar Hírlap after the NGOs' letter, and expressly brought it to their media agency's attention to "act more prudently next time" when dealing with the publication of their advertisements. They also emphasised that the bank will not advertise in any media whose content "hurts the dignity of others, or uses an inflammatory tone regarding any minority, ethnicity, or religious group". The leaders of CIB Bank said that the CIB Group will refrain from advertising in Magyar Hírlap and its portal "until the editorial staff categorically condemns Zsolt Bayer's writing and ensures that

both publications are free from writings that include hate speech". IKEA, FedEx, and GDF Suez also distanced themselves from the article, and stated they do not plan to advertise in the online version of the newspaper in the future.

The companies mostly place their Internet advertisements in packages through a media buyer, and some were not aware their advertising had appeared in Magyar Hírlap. Other advertisers responded non-committally, or did not respond at all. The NGOs have now approached the parent companies and head offices of multinationals, asking them to take their corporate social responsibility commitments seriously.

The NGO campaign sends a clear signal that racist anti-Roma statements will not be tolerated by businesses, who risk alienating their customers by continuing to support media outlets that publish provocative and offensive material.

EUROPEAN COURT CONFIRMED ITS POSITION ON DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION

The European Court of Human Rights ruled that Hungary has violated the European Convention on Human Rights in a case on the segregated education of Romani children in a special school. The court delivered its judgment in **Horváth and Kiss v Hungary** on 29 January 2013 and this decision manifested once more the Court's stance against discrimination in education.

The recent decision came in the case *Horváth and Kiss v Hungary*, litigated in 2000 by **Chance for Children Foundation** (CFCF) and the ERRC, on behalf of two young Romani men, who complained that they had been wrongly placed in a school for mentally disabled children due to their Romani ethnic origin and placement in this school amounted to ethnic discrimination in the enjoyment of their right to education. They alleged that the tests used for their placement had been outdated and culturally biased, putting Roma children at a particular disadvantage.

In its judgment on the case, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Hungary

violated the European Convention on Human Rights by placing the applicants, due to their ethnic origin, in a school for the mentally disabled and that their education there had amounted to discrimination.

The Court found a violation of Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 (right to education) to the European Convention on Human Rights read in conjunction with Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination). The Court underlined that there was a long history of wrongful placement of Romani children in special schools in Hungary and that the State must change this practice. The Court noted that as a result of this practice the applicants had been isolated and had received an education which made their integration into society at large difficult. It concluded that 'positive obligations incumbent on the State in a situation where there is a history of discrimination against ethnic minority children' would have required Hungary to 'provide the necessary safeguards against misdiagnosis'. The Court 'shares the disquiet of

THE ERRC COMBATS RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ROMA AND EMPOWERS ROMA TO DEFEND THEIR OWN RIGHTS.

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the other Council of Europe institutions who have expressed concerns about the more basic curriculum followed in these schools and, in particular, the segregation which the system causes’.

The Court previously ruled in 2007 in a similar case, **DH and Others v the Czech Republic**, that the Czech Republic had violated the right of Romani children to an education free from discrimination, by placing them in “special schools”, which offered lower quality education. Furthermore with its judgments in the cases of **Oršuš and Others v.**

Croatia and Sampanis and Others v. Greece the Court has clearly established that that segregated education of Romani children is illegal. The recent ruling reaffirms that no difference in treatment, which is based exclusively or to a decisive extent on a person’s ethnic origin, can be objectively justified. It also underlines that Roma, as a particularly vulnerable group; enjoy special protection under the Convention.

The ERRC is of the view that only a framework for implementing a rights-based approach can lead to the inclusion

of Romani children within the mainstream education system on an equal basis with all other children, without discrimination. Specials schools with an inferior curriculum isolate pupils regardless of their mental ability, as well as on racial or gender grounds. They compromise the personal development of children instead of ensuring integration in ordinary schools that would facilitate life among the majority population. All children - Roma and non-Roma, those with special learning needs and those without – must receive a good quality education studying together in truly inclusive schools.

ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE SITUATION IN PATA-RÂT IS NOT ACCEPTABLE

Two years after 56 Romani families from Coastei Street were evicted from the centre of Cluj-Napoca to Pata-Rât, the Romanian government finally **acknowledged** that the situation of Roma living on and near a rubbish dump in Pata Rât is ‘unacceptable’. This acknowledgment came from Liviu Dragnea, the Minister of Regional Development, during a meeting with non-governmental organisations (NGO) on 13 February 2013.

The Minister, who met with delegates from Amnesty International (AI) the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), and Fundatia Desire (a founder member of the Working Group of Civil Society Organizations, gLOC) said that the meeting was a strong signal that there is a desire from within the Ministry to resolve the issue of access of Roma communities to housing. He expressed a commitment to creating partnerships on technical, financial and conceptual aspects with local authorities to address the issues. At the meeting, the organisations raised their concerns that these conditions amount to breaches of Romania’s domestic legislation, EU legislation and policies. They also constitute violations of international human rights law and standards with respect to the right to adequate housing applicable in Romania.

On 17 December 2010, after living in Coastei Street for over 20 years, municipal authorities forcibly relocated a number of families to Pata-Rât, a polluted industrial area which is also the location of the city’s rubbish dump. Romania’s National Council for Combating Discrimination declared that the eviction and relocation of the families to Pata-Rât constituted discrimination.

Since the eviction, the ERRC and other human rights organisations have acted to



Romani families were evicted from the centre of Cluj-Napoca to Pata-Rât in December 2010. More than two years after the eviction, the Romanian government finally admitted the situation was unacceptable.

PHOTO CREDIT: ERRC

raise awareness on the problems of the evicted community and to support people from the former Coastei Street in their struggle for justice and dignity.

In December 2012 the ERRC participated in a series of **events** in Cluj-Napoca, to mark the second anniversary of the eviction. On 17-18 December, the ERRC, Amnesty International, and gLOC, collaborated to organise a number of events in Cluj-Napoca. On 17 December 2012, a peaceful demonstration was held in front of the City Hall. This gathering had an artistic flavour, and involved projections of photos, and displaying images from Pata-Rât.

In November 2012, the ERRC’s Romani-an monitor conducted extensive research with the participation of the evicted families. The results of this research were

published in a report, **Taken from the City**, which was presented at a public debate on 18 December 2012 in the Babes-Bolyai University. This report highlights the impact of the evictions on these families two years later, and draws attention to the inadequacy of the housing provided, which is overcrowded and lacks basic facilities such as running water. The report also draws attention to the broader impact of the evictions and the relocation of these families to an isolated and polluted environment. This has led to isolation, loss of income and employment, difficulty in accessing healthcare and education, and an increase in discrimination associated with the stigma of living on the site of a garbage dump.

The ERRC, gLOC and Amnesty International sent an open **letter** to the Romanian Parliament and Government on the right

to adequate housing with regard to the marginalised Romani communities, drawing attention in particular to the situation in Pata-Rât. The ERRC's report, *Taken from*

the City, was also referred to by the US Representative to the Permanent Council of the OSCE in his statement on discrimination against Roma in Europe.

The ERRC continues to assist the evicted families in legal proceedings, and has supported the community as they set up an NGO to advocate for their own needs.

SLOVAKIA: FORCED EVICTIONS OF ROMA ON ENVIRONMENTAL GROUNDS ARE ON THE RISE

Evictions targeting Romani communities in Slovakia are an ongoing problem. Slovak authorities have attempted justifying evictions through several arguments. Recently, Slovak authorities started targeting Romani communities for forced evictions under the pretext of environmental law.

More than 400 mayors of towns and villages have signed up to a movement called *Zobudme sa!* (Let's wake up!). The movement aspires to coordinate a targeted programme of demolition aimed at Roma settlements by defining them as waste dumps.

On 19 December 2012, the European Roma Rights Centre **highlighted** the problem with two letters of concern to authorities on a previous and planned forced eviction, which see Roma settlements designated as communal waste.

One of the **letters** concerned the eviction of more than 150 people, including more than 60 children, from their homes in the district of Nižné Kapuštníky (Kosice) on 30 October 2012. The second **letter** reflected the ERRC's concerns over the planned eviction of around 200 Romani people from the Pod

Hrádkom neighbourhood in Prešov, and the demolition of the three blocks of flats where they live. In these letters, the ERRC called on the Slovak authorities to assist the Romani people who have already been evicted as a matter of urgency, and to stop any further forced evictions which are not in line with international human rights standards.

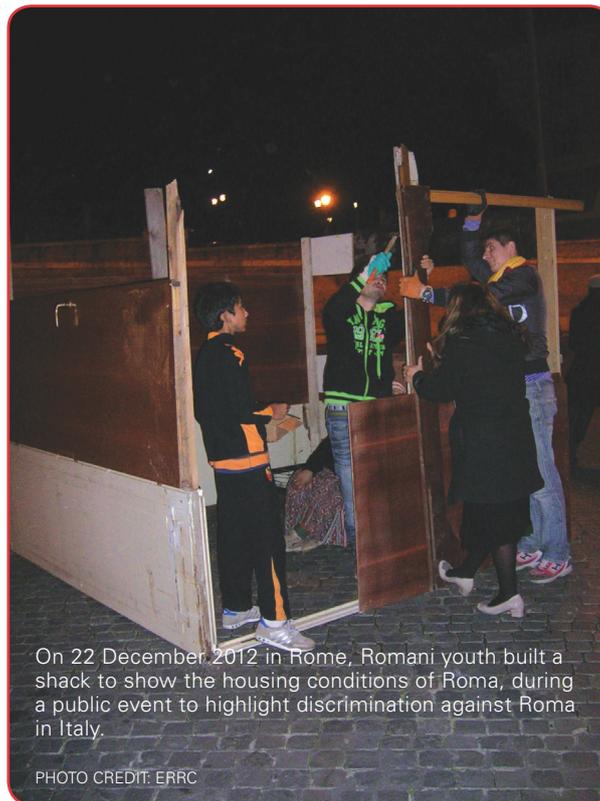
The Slovak Republic does not have a moratorium on forced evictions during winter months. Evicting Roma in freezing temperatures and failing to provide adequate alternative accommodation is not acceptable.

ITALY INTRODUCED NEW DISCRIMINATORY MEASURES AGAINST ROMA

Romani individuals and communities have been facing severe difficulties in all fields of life in Italy. In recent years, Roma in Italy have been subject to various human rights violations including ongoing evictions, hate speech, physical attacks, and even fingerprinting. Despite several commitments, Italian authorities failed so far to improve the situation of Roma. On the contrary, a recent measure will even worsen the discrimination against Roma. According to new guidance from the local authorities, Romani families living in formal camps in Rome will not be able to gain access to social housing. Scores of families had already filed their applications and many more were about to do so, when news of the discriminatory new guidance emerged.

On 27 February 2013, the ERRC, together with Amnesty International, Associazione 21 Luglio, and the Open Society Foundations (OSF) sent a **letter** to the local authorities in Rome. The letter highlighted that the recently adopted policies on housing, which prevent Romani families from escaping segregated formal camps in the city, breach international and EU legislation and represent a new low in discrimination against Roma in the country.

Social housing in Rome is allocated with a points-based system. In recent



On 22 December 2012 in Rome, Romani youth built a shack to show the housing conditions of Roma, during a public event to highlight discrimination against Roma in Italy.

PHOTO CREDIT: ERRC

camps are fenced in and monitored by cameras and guards. Segregated camps, which offer no chance of integration or social inclusion, are the most noticeable results of Rome's "Nomad Plan". The authorities of Rome have continued with this widely discredited approach, despite the fact that Italy's 'nomad emergency' was declared unlawful by the Council of State, Italy's highest administrative court, in November 2011.

The NGOs called on the Rome authorities to withdraw these measures and give access to social housing to Roma living in formal camps on equal terms as provided to others living in similar circumstances. They also asked the new national government to address this situation with urgency, and called on European institutions to raise their voice against these blatant breaches of EU anti-discrimination law.

40.000 signatures for Roma

weeks, Romani families who live in formal camps in Rome have been told by Rome's authorities they cannot receive the points they need to give them a concrete chance to access social housing, as they are already living in 'permanent structures'. Roma living in formal camps are segregated from the rest of the city, often far from basic services. The distance from the centre makes it difficult to get to school or find work. Almost all

On 22 December 2012, the ERRC attended a public event in Rome organised by several NGOs including Amnesty International Italia, Associazione 21 Luglio, Popica Onlus, Cheja Celen, Federazione delle Chiese evangeliche in Italia (FCEI), Progetto Sàr San, Cooperativa Zajedno, Monteverde Antirazzista and Beato Zeffirino. The aim was to highlight discrimination against Roma

in Italy and raise awareness. The event was linked to a petition campaign initiated by the Amnesty International Italia, signed by more than 40,000 people from around the world, which calls on authorities to end discrimination against Roma. The public event took place in Piazza del Popolo and included theatre and music shows, as well as creating a human chain around a Romani flag.

Human Rights Agenda for Italy

Italy went to the polls on 24-25 February 2013 to elect a new government. Before the elections, the ERRC took part in a campaign led by Amnesty International Italia titled **“Ricordati che devi rispondere”**

(Remember that you have to respond). The campaign targeted five political leaders and asked them to commit themselves to a “Human Rights Agenda for Italy”, a document which listed 10 areas where change is needed urgently and recommended measures on how to improve human rights in the country. The Agenda included a point on Roma: “Stop discrimination, forced evictions and ethnic segregation of Roma”. Organisations expect that the newly elected leaders of the country will take this document into consideration and implement the recommendations.

Similarly, Associazione 21 Luglio, prepared a document called “The Roma and Sinti Agenda”, for the upcoming

local elections in Rome which will take place in spring 2013. The document outlines the current practices and their shortcoming and it provides a variety of recommendations to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti communities. Among others, it advises closing down eight “equipped villages” of the Comune of Rome, where approximately 3,700 Roma live in conditions of segregation and discrimination. The document has been signed by **44 signatories**, including ERRC, scholars and two national Romani federations. The document will be presented to the candidates for mayor in the city of Rome and to political movements, asking for a formal adherence to its contents.

ERRC SUBMITTED WRITTEN COMMENTS TO UN COMMITTEES

In January 2013, the ERRC submitted parallel reports on the Russian Federation and Slovakia to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and on Macedonia and Hungary to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Russia

On 30 January 2013, the ERRC submitted its **written comments** on the Russian Federation to CERD for its 82nd session held from 11 February to 1 March 2013. The ERRC submission highlighted main concerns in regard to the persistent problem of the lack of personal documents for Roma minority in the Russian Federation, using as a combined evidence field research conducted in summer 2012 in South Federal District of the Russian Federation (Rostov-on-Don) and analysis of Russian laws and regulations, governing the process of applying for and obtaining personal documents. The ERRC reiterated that lack of personal documentation (birth certificates, passports, residence permits and residence registration) prevents Roma from accessing employment, social allowances and healthcare or from voting in the Russian Federation, and from accessing education in some schools due to local practices of school authorities. Discrimination has been stressed as one of the main cornerstone problems preventing Roma from obtaining personal documents and thus enjoying basic human rights. The ERRC indicated the lack of any Government initiatives or policies to address the problem, and concluded its submission with the list of practical recommendations and measures to tackle lack of personal documents for the Roma minority as a matter of priority and urgency.



Slovakia

On 29 January 2013, the ERRC, together with the **Milana Šimečka Foundation** and the **Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture (CVEK)** submitted a parallel **report** concerning Slovakia to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination for its 82nd session, held from 11 February to 1 March 2013. The submission highlighted issues of housing, education, non-state actors' and police violation against Roma and over representation of Romani children in state care institutions. The submitting organisations stated that, in its 2010 Concluding Observations the Committee touched upon all of the above-mentioned issues and provided recommendations but the Slovak government has done little to address the Committee's concerns and recommendations and that progress in complying with the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination is slow and insufficient. Furthermore, the organisations underlined that in January 2012 the Slovak Roma Integration strategy was developed in consultation with the World Bank, the UNDP and Slovak civil society but the Slovak Government, elected in April 2012, has decided not to implement the

existing strategy (which is in line with the EC Framework). Instead it has prepared a new strategy called “Roma Reform” which consists of 100 measures.

Macedonia

On 30 January 2013, the ERRC submitted its **report** on Macedonia to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women for its 54th session held from 11 February - 1 March 2013. The report provided information on education, employment, housing and violence. Although the submission did not constitute a comprehensive assessment of all issues experienced by Romani women in Macedonia, it aimed to highlight some areas of concern for Romani women related to rights enshrined in the Convention. The parallel report underlined that Romani women in Macedonia face serious problems with regard to their status within society, as well as within their domestic/family environments. Discrimination in access to education, health care, employment and issues of violence are amongst the main problems experienced by Romani women in Macedonia.

Hungary

In January 2013, the **Hungarian Women's Lobby** and the European Roma Rights Centre jointly submitted a parallel **report** on Hungary to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women for its 54th session held from 11 February - 1 March 2013. The organisations stated in the submission that there has been insufficient progress in Hungary towards accomplishing women's human rights norms and standards set by the UN CEDAW Convention and the Committee. Most of the recommendations of the

CEDAW Committee relating to the Periodic Reports of Hungary have not been fulfilled by any government up to the present. The report also emphasised that multiple discrimination against women has never been addressed. Policy documents on the inclusion of Roma have not yet resulted in any

substantive improvement in the situation of most Romani women or have failed to address the particular situation of those women. The organisations recommended, among other things, establishing a national machinery on gender equality at the highest level of the government, equipped with

a clear mandate to comply with international norms, and with appropriate human and financial resources, and implementing the “National Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality – Guidelines and Objectives 2010-2021” by elaborating and implementing its action plans.

ERRC ORGANISED SEMINAR FOR SERBIAN JUDGES ON HOUSING RIGHTS



Eighteen judges and judges’ assistants from courts attended a two day seminar to discuss the domestic and international legal framework for the protection of housing rights in Serbia.

PHOTO CREDIT: ERRC

The European Roma Rights Centre, together with the Serbian Judicial Academy, organised a two day seminar entitled, ***Housing Rights and the Protection of Minorities: International and Constitutional Perspectives*** in Belgrade, Serbia on 22-23 February 2013.

The focus of the seminar was the human rights standards regarding housing rights,

in particular those on forced evictions, a problem very pertinent to the Romani community in Serbia.

Eighteen judges and judges’ assistants from administrative and basic courts of general jurisdiction from Belgrade, Nis and Šabac attended. They discussed developments in the UN and the European Court of Human Rights’ case law

regarding forced evictions and how it relates to the position of Roma in Serbia.

A special contribution to the seminar was the presence of prominent guest lecturers. Marija Draškić, a Constitutional Court judge, discussed with the participants the principles of direct implementation of international law by the judiciary; Dragoljub Popović, the Serbian judge of the European Court of the Human Rights (ECtHR), presented the problem of forced evictions in the light of the right to respect for private and family life, the concept of home, the status of Roma as a vulnerable group and relevant case law of the Court; while Ivana Krstić, professor of International Public Law at the Belgrade University Faculty of Law and Marija Rauš, OHCHR human rights advisor, presented the protection of the right to adequate housing under the UN system and the relevant cases which occurred before different UN committees.

At the end of the seminar, participants expressed the need for more and better information sharing and interest in further such seminars, in particular in relation to the direct applicability of international human rights standards and the evolving practice of the ECtHR. However, participants also noted the need for more judges, in particular higher court judges, to be included in the seminars and trainings devoted to these issues.

ERRC BRIEFS GROUPS ON ROMA RIGHTS

In January 2013 the ERRC received four study visits from international programmes of universities across Europe and US. The students were interested in the general human rights situation of Roma communities across Europe, with a focus on the historical roots of prejudice and discrimination, as well as on hate speech/hate crime and freedom of migration issues that Roma are facing nowadays.

There is an increased interest in the human rights based approach of the ERRC

and the results, challenges and impact of this approach. Some of the most talked about topics are inclusive education (with a focus on special education facilities) and hate crimes/hate speech. Our visitors are highly interested in the daily work of an NGO, and especially in the case of ERRC in the advocacy work it carries out at an international level. Groups are also very interested in the empowerment component of our work when it comes to Romani individuals and structures (such as organisations, political parties, networks, etc).

These visits provide an opportunity for the ERRC to be exposed to a diversity of practices coming from the academic sphere.

Overall, the study group visits are a healthy component of the ERRC’s communications work. They offer an opportunity to welcome and engage in dialogue with academia on struggles, limitations and successes of the human rights movement against discrimination, with a particular focus on the Roma population in Europe.

ICG OF ROMA YOUTH ACTION PLAN AGREED ON PRIORITIES

The Informal Contact Group of the Roma Youth Action Plan met for the third time on 7-8 December 2012 in Strasbourg, France.

The ERRC, together with several other international organisations such as the Council of Europe (organiser), OSCE, OSF and many more, established the ICG in order to monitor and push forward the implementation of the Roma Youth Action Plan, to raise awareness within European institutions and at the national and regional level on the existence of this action plan and to ensure that all activities

achieve maximum impact without duplication of efforts and by creating synergies between activities.

The Roma Youth Action Plan is a programmatic document of the Council of Europe which is intended as a response to the issues young Roma face in Europe, with a focus on empowerment, participation in policy decision-making processes and structures at the European level and the realities of discrimination, particularly antigypsyism, that they are confronted with.

The third meeting focused on analysing lessons learned a year on from the adoption of the Roma Youth Action Plan and on establishing the objectives of 2013's activities. Three working groups were set up to look at political and strategic partnerships, at the 2013 activities and role of the partners within this framework and working methods and coordination of ICG. The ICG agreed on 2014/2015 priority areas: 1. Identity, diversity and a stronger Roma youth movement, 2. Anti-discrimination, human rights education and policy input and 3. Youth participation.

PROMOTING POSITIVE IMAGES OF ROMA AND TRAVELLERS – ERRC ATTENDS STEERING GROUP FOR MEDIA SEASON



Activists, artists, academics and film-makers came together to discuss the content of the Media Trust's "Gypsy, Roma and Traveller" season to be aired on its community channel.

PHOTO CREDIT: ERRC

On 5 March, the ERRC joined the first meeting of a steering group comprised of

activists, artists, academics, film-makers and others who work with Roma, Gypsy

and Traveller groups in the UK and across Europe. The group was convened in London by the Media Trust, which is planning to air a "Gypsy, Roma and Traveller season" on its **Community Channel**. The season will be the second of its type and aims, in part, to debunk the negative portrayals of Roma, Gypsies and Travellers often encountered in the press and in television programmes in the UK, such as the widely criticised (but still popular) series 'My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding'.

The group discussed films, documentaries and news pieces for the season, topics they would like to see explored in the content and the audiences they should target. The season will run throughout May 2013 and the Media Trust is still on the look out for existing content they can air.

ERRC COUNTRY MONITORS MET IN BUDAPEST



The ERRC country monitors met in Budapest on 19-20 February to discuss ERRC's strategy for 2013 and 2014. During the two-day meeting, several topics including documenting and reporting mechanisms, human rights training and hate crimes were discussed. The monitors also received photography training. Furthermore, country monitors also held small group meetings with the ERRC staff working on their countries to discuss country-specific matters. ERRC monitors in France, Italy, Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, Turkey, the Czech Republic and Ukraine attended the meeting.

ERRC WELCOMES NEW TEAM MEMBERS



Stephan Müller
Programmes Director

He is a political scientist, graduated from the Freie Universität Berlin. He has been working on Roma-related issues in a variety of settings and in several countries for more than 20 years. In the last decade, he has been working as a consultant for organisations such as the OSCE, Council of Europe, CARE, OSI Roma Initiative, and so on. He was involved in starting up the Decade of Roma Inclusion, and he has assisted governments and civil society organisations in developing and implementing Roma inclusion policies and conducted and coordinated research projects. He joined the ERRC in March 2013.

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Tefik Mahmut
Legal Trainee

He joined the ERRC in January 2013 as a Legal Trainee. He holds a BA in Law from the Faculty of Law at the European University of Macedonia, and is currently a second year MA candidate in Judiciary. He worked as a Debate and Street Law teacher and as a Legal Trainee in NGOs in Macedonia. He was recognised as one of the best three orators in Macedonia in the national oratorical competition organised by European Commission in the Republic of Macedonia. He is a human right activist and has organised many initiatives, public debates and protests related to human/Roma right issues.



INTERNS



Cristina Marian (Moldova)

I decided to apply for an internship at the ERRC as I was interested in its strategic litigation component. As the ERRC has exceptional experience in this field and in promoting and protecting the human rights of Roma, I decided to enhance my knowledge, to learn how exactly to tackle the cases when they reach the litigation stage. My interest was motivated especially by the recent attacks against Roma in Hungary. As a student in the Master program of Law in Human Rights (LLM degree) at the Central European University in Budapest, I witnessed several hate speech statements against Roma in Hungary made by well-known figures, as well as the rise of extremist groups.. More than that, my experience of more than four years as a Human Rights programme coordinator at the Roma National Center in Moldova and as a fellow within the project

Capacitating Moldovan Human Rights activists for effective Human Rights advocacy, established by the Moldova Soros Foundation and OSF Budapest during 2010-2011, allowed me to address and report a range of cases of discrimination and hate speech against Roma. The abuses against Roma continue and even escalate. Therefore, I considered that experience at the ERRC will help me to deal with new challenges when tackling Roma issues. Roma face the same fate in Central and Eastern Europe: systematic human rights infringements at the institutional level, indifference of authorities and offensive language used in political discourse. The ERRC's work is essential in addressing these issues and in my opinion it represents an example of how Roma (Human Rights) NGO's should work to change the situation of Roma and other vulnerable groups in Europe.

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Katarína Medlová (Slovakia)

I had an opportunity to do a short-term internship with the ERRC in February and March 2013. I have been always interested in minority rights in the Slovak Republic and the perception of minorities as a threat to the Slovak nation-building policies. I personally believe that discrimination, mistreatment and stigmatisation of Romani communities is the most shameful issue for my country. I refuse to simply overlook how the state violates the rights of its own citizens, so I am trying to help to raise awareness on the issue by research and my education in the human rights field. The internship at the ERRC provided me with very important practical skills in advocacy and research. Under the supervision of an ERRC team member, I worked on the issue of discrimination in education. I was an equal partner in the research and I have been constantly encouraged to work independently with all the background help I needed. I was very satisfied with the organisation and its whole team. I would recommend this internship wholeheartedly.





Giorgi Maruashvili (Georgia)

I have been working at the ERRC as a Human Rights Intern since 7 January 2013. In 2010 I did volunteer work for a local organisation in Transylvania, Romania, where I focused on Romani children's rights. My particular interest was helping Romani children to cope with the difficulties they face and ensuring that they have equal opportunities regardless of their ethnicity, religion, disability or social status. This opportunity convinced me that I wanted to contribute more to Roma rights and so I decided to join the ERRC. During my time at the ERRC, I will also undertake research on Romani people in Georgia, which in my opinion, will be a positive addition for the protection and promotion of Roma rights across Europe.