



OBČIANSKE ZDRUŽENIE
NA PODPORU A ROZVOJ REGIÓNOV

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To:

Mrs Iveta Radičová
Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic

Mr Rudolf Chmel
Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for Human Rights and National Minorities

Mr Pavel Kandráč
Public Defender of Rights

Mr Ján Slota
President of the Slovak National Party

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) is writing to express concern over the unwarranted and unfounded targeting of the Roma minority in the Slovak National Party's election materials.

The ERRC is concerned that the election posters, which make reference to the 'cost' of supporting Roma, have a racist undercurrent and foster unhelpful prejudices.

In 2009, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) reported on the situation of Roma in Slovakia.¹ It called on the Slovak authorities to take into account the recommendations of the Charter of European Parties for a Non-Racist Society and its Declaration on the use of racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse.²

In this declaration, the ECRI points out the negative consequences of racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic political discourse: 1) ill-considered measures which impact disproportionately on particular groups or affect the latter's effective enjoyment of human rights are being adopted; 2) the long-term cohesion of society is damaged; 3) racial discrimination gains ground, and 4) racist violence is encouraged.

The ERRC also notes that there have been at least 13 attacks against Roma in the last four years.³ In this context, it is even more important not to encourage harmful prejudices towards this minority.

Romani communities in Slovakia face many barriers in access to education and employment. According to a 2009 report there is a large economic cost due to the non-inclusion of the Roma in society. It is estimated that the inclusion of the Roma in Slovak society would bring an increase of seven to 11% of GDP per year.⁴ In this regard, political parties would be better served by encouraging inclusion efforts than by encouraging anti-Roma attitudes.

¹ ECRI report on Slovakia (fourth monitoring cycle) adopted on 19 December 2008, para. 98

² ECRI Declaration on the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse, adopted on 17 March 2005.

³ ERRC monitoring of media reports of attacks on Roma in Slovakia

⁴ Anton Marcinčin and Ľubica Marcinčinová, *Slovak Roma: The Cost of Non-Inclusion*, (2009), p. 5 available at: www.romadecade.org/files/ftp/Publications/2_cost_of_non_inclusion.pdf

Political parties also have a responsibility to consider the Slovak National Constitution, which assures basic rights for all citizens. "Basic rights and liberties on the territory of the Slovak Republic are guaranteed to everyone regardless of sex, race, colour of skin, language, creed and religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, affiliation to a nation or ethnic group, property, descent, or another status. No one must be harmed, preferred, or discriminated against on these grounds."⁵

The ERRC recommends that:

- Political parties should take into account the recommendations of the Charter of European Parties for a Non-Racist Society and its Declaration on the use of racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse.
- Election materials should not fuel negative attitudes towards any particular group in society;
- Political parties should refrain from mentioning national minorities in a context that has the potential to create tension and cause a hostile attitude; and
- Political parties should conduct their elections campaigns in a manner that does not expose any national minority to an unwarranted and prejudiced attention from the majority.

Sincerely,

Dezideriu Gergely
ERRC Executive Director

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Rómsky inštitút, n.o.

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Roman Čonka
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Dušan Ondrušek
PDCS, o.z.

Ras'ŕo Kužel
MEMO 98

⁵ Slovakia National Constitution, Article 12, http://www.servat.unibe.ch/icl/lo00000_.html