

Madam Chair.

We would like to share some examples of best practices on Austrian Roma policy. The Austrian Roma population constitutes as a so called invisible minority. Its members are not readily recognisable, in every-day life they don't belong to any special social segment and do not live in segregated areas, although both subgroups of Austrian Roma – the smaller group of [autochthonous] Austrian Roma, Sinti as well as a post for immigrants from CEE countries both share the same historical and cultural traditions as the Roma populations of Eastern and Central Europe. They have both become an integral part of Austrian society, in stark contrast to some of Austria's neighbouring countries. Several reasons can be identified for this.

In accordance with Article 1; 2,3 and 7 of the Declaration Austria was one of the first countries to recognise Roma in 1993 as an official minority. Austria has created a representative institution for the Roma within its political framework, the so called Ethnic Advisory Board with the Austrian Chancellery. Cultural, social and educational questions are negotiated through its elected Chairman, Professor Rudolph Schakute today here present. In accordance with Article 4,4 – programs to raise awareness to the special situation of Austrian Roma have been implemented into teacher training mechanisms. When necessary, Austria has taken steps to overcome historical marginalization of Roma populations. This was especially the case in eastern province, of Burgenland annexed to Austria in 1921 and exhibiting the typical social structures of many CEE countries, with strong ethnic segregation and economic marginalization of Roma populations. The Roma of Burgenland where 'till 1980 economically marginalized and heavily discriminated by the local educational system resulting in near illiteracy in most of its members. The introduction of a special educational program, the funding of extra mural supplementary education for Roma children have solved this problem within a decade.

In accordance with the Article 4,3 the Roma language has been introduced as an official language tuition in the province of Burgenland in 1994. One of the few instances in Europe where this has happened.

In Accordance with Article 4.1, in the case of the Roma populations immigrating to Austria between 1960 and 1990 Austria has taken a stance of strict separation of questions of social inclusion and access to labour market from questions of language policy and cultural policy. Clientele systems, so typical of many CEE Roma populations could not evolve. Large groups of Roma thus live in Austrian cities and provinces without being recognisable to fellow citizens if they do not want to be. Just as citizens of Hungarian, American or any other origin for that matter. Adherence in Declaration, group solidarity is purely voluntary. Being or not being a Roma has no direct economic or social consequences in Austrian society, at least not on the institutional level.

Thank you very much.