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**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION
FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES**

**COMMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SLOVENIA
ON THE OPINION OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE
PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES
IN SLOVENIA**

(received on 14 March 2003)

Comments to the opinion of the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the implementation of Article 3 of the FCPNM of 12 September 2002, items 83- 84

83. The Romany community does not enjoy the status of a national minority in the Republic of Slovenia. It is an ethnic community or a minority with special ethnic characteristics (it has its own language, culture and other special features). The legal basis for the special rights of the Romany community in Slovenia is provided for in Article 65 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia: "the status and special rights of the Romany community living in Slovenia shall be regulated by law".

In a review of constitutionality and legality of the Statute of the Novo Mesto Municipality of 22 March 2001, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Slovenia established *inter alia* that the Local Government Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 70/2000) does not conform with the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia since it does not set the criteria and conditions for the efficient implementation of Article 39, Paragraph 5 of the Act, which introduces a special Romany councillor to the local government. A Romany councillor had nevertheless been elected for two mandates (1994, 1998) in the Murska Sobota Municipality even before this Act was amended in 2002 and the municipalities defined in which Roma must have their councillor.

Thanks to all this, the unconstitutionality of this Act has been remedied. Article 101.a of the Act Amending the Local Government Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 51/2002) thus stipulates, "By the regular elections in 2002, the municipalities of Beltinci, Cankova, Črenšovci, Črnomelj, Dobrovnik, Grosuplje, Kočevje, Kuzma, Lendava, Metlika, Murska Sobota, Novo Mesto, Puconci, Rogašovci, Semič, Šentjernej, Tišina, Trebnje and Turnišče must guarantee to the Romany community settled in their respective municipalities the right to one representative in the municipal council." In order to facilitate the implementation of the Act, the legislator decided to list the twenty municipalities for which the expert material indicated that they met the conditions and criteria (including autochthonous settlement specially mentioned in Article 39, Paragraph 5) and which the Constitutional Court used as examples in its decision of 2001.

84. Upon ratification of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia made the following statement, "The Framework Convention does not include the definition of the notion 'national minority' and leaves it to the states parties to define the groups to be considered as national minorities. The Constitution and national legislation of the Republic of Slovenia define as such the Italian and Hungarian national minorities. Pursuant to the Constitution and national legislation of the Republic of Slovenia, the provisions of the Framework Convention will also apply to members of the Romany community residing in Slovenia."

Comments to the opinion of the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the implementation of Article 4 of the FCPNM of 12 September 2002, items 85-87

85. Due to historical and other circumstances, there are great differences between Roma in Slovenia, arising from tradition, their specific ways of life and from the level of their integration with society and the environment. We assess the situation of Roma in the northeast of Slovenia to be considerably better than that in the southern part of Slovenia. Despite certain differences, some features can be found that are common to the majority of

the Romany population. Roma represent a group without, or with a low, education and are mostly unemployed.

The Republic of Slovenia is aware that the 1995 Government Programme of Measures for Assisting Roma must be consistently implemented.

- *Employment*

Employment is one of the basic preconditions for the improvement of the social and economic situation of Roma and their integration with society. The situation in the labour market, with a relatively high level of unemployment (both structural and regional), is particularly unfavourable for Roma due to the supply and demand imbalances in the labour market. The Programme for the Employment of Roma adopted by the Government at its session in May 2000 indicates great differences between working activities of Roma and of the majority population. Roma are only rarely permanently employed, they are mostly engaged with unorganised types of work. Roma have considerably lower level of education, which is a great disadvantage when seeking a job.

In past years, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs has defined special measures, projects and programmes primarily aimed at employing Roma.

- **Equal Employment Opportunities for Roma – Our Common Challenge;** a programme carried out in the regions of Dolenjska and Prekmurje in 2000 involved approximately 200 Roma. Its implementation was funded from the national budget, budgets of local communities and PHARE funds.
- **Public Works Programmes in 2000–2001;** the Novo Mesto Regional Office carried out nine public works programmes for Roma. 55 Roma were involved in public works programmes in 2001.
- **Subsidised Employment: Thousand New Opportunities Programme;** the programme was carried out by a society from Krško (Društvo zaveznikov mehkega pristanka Krško) and was aimed at assisting the youth and members of the Romany community (“Gypsy pot” for 150 participants).

Employment programmes included 330 Roma in 2000 and 550 Roma in 2001.

In order to upgrade the programme of employing Roma, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs and the Institute for Ethnic Studies drew up the project Development of Models for Education and Training of Roma Aimed at Ensuring Their Permanent Employment in 2001. The project has been carried out within the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe as part of a broader international project – Roma in Integration Processes. One of the basic findings of research conducted to date on the situation of Roma is that education and employment are vital for the improvement of their situation. Better education and permanent employment of Roma create possibilities for their active involvement in the society. A publication containing studies of good practice examples of Roma employment in Slovenia, Austria and Croatia is expected to be published in the first half of 2003.

Regional Offices for Employment (Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs) will conduct a public works programme for improving the employability of Roma in 2003. This programme will also serve as a basis for drawing up a national programme for improving the employability of Roma.

- *Accommodation*

The Ministry of the Environment, Spatial Planning and Energy has in the recent years helped in drawing up spatial plans; it has provided expert help and co-financed location permits for Romany settlements in some municipalities. In 1998, the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning produced a study which, *inter alia*, refers to the legalisation and improvement of Romany settlements (allocating additional budgetary funds to municipalities with a Romany population): The legal basis for resolving spatial problems and legalising Romany settlements is provided by two newly adopted acts, i.e. Spatial Planning Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 110/2002), and the Construction Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 110/2002).

The 2002 Annual Working Programme for the Area of Regional Development, prepared by the Ministry of the Economy, pays special attention to Co-operation in Resolving Problems of the Romany Community¹ and provides for financial assistance to municipalities which have been actively engaged with settling the Romany issues. The Ministry has also been involved in providing the concentrated Romany settlements with the basic public utility infrastructure.

Slovenia adopted the Programme to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion in February 2000, and the Implementing Strategy with the Report on Carrying Out the Programme to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion in April 2002. In this context, in September 2002 Slovenia signed the Joint Inclusion Memorandum with the European Community to combat social exclusion. When drafting the memorandum, Slovenia also considered and analysed in detail the social position of Roma, who represent one of the most vulnerable groups in society.

87. It has not been noticed that Roma who come from the territory of the Republic of Slovenia and are traditionally settled in Slovenia have major difficulties in obtaining citizenship or regulating their status of a foreigner.

Roma who have citizenship of one of the former Yugoslav republics and are not members of the Romany community traditionally residing in Slovenia do not have Slovenian citizenship and are legally treated in the same way as other foreigners in Slovenia. The Ministry of the Interior has, on several occasions, received representatives of Romany associations that presently reside in Slovenia but have arrived, especially after 1991, from the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Representatives of the Ministry explained to these Roma the procedures of obtaining permanent residence permits or citizenship. Legal basis for these issues is clearly defined in the Act Amending the Citizenship of the Republic of Slovenia Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 96/2002) and in the Aliens Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 96/99).

¹ 2002 Annual Working Programme – Area of Regional Development, Ministry of the Economy, January 2002

Comments to the opinion of the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the implementation of Article 5 of the FCPNM of 12 September 2002, items 88-89

88. Being aware of the problem of the financing of local communities with a Romany population in Slovenia, the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted a special decision on 30 May 2002 and called upon the Government to adopt the act amending the Financing of Municipalities Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 80/94 ... 89/99) so as to recognise the special status and special rights of the Romany community. The Article to be amended is Article 26 of the Act so as to define the criteria for co-financing 20 municipalities with autochthonous Romany communities.

89. The legal basis for the statutory regulation of special rights of Roma is provided by Article 65 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia. The Government of Slovenia adopted a position in 1995 that it would be sensible if the protection of the Romany community were governed by sector-specific legislation. With regard to the statutory protection of Roma, the Committee of the National Assembly on Home Affairs adopted the following decision on 12 October 1995, "No global law is necessary at the moment to govern the issues vital for the regulation of the situation of Roma in the Republic of Slovenia. These issues should be governed on the basis of equality by sector-specific legislation in accordance with the proposals of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and other measures." The protection of rights of the Romany community has thus far been regulated by nine sector-specific acts:

- Act amending Local Government Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 51/2002)
- Act amending Local Elections Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 51/2002)
- Voting Rights Register Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 52/2002)
- Organisation and Financing of Education Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 12/96)
- Kindergarten Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 12/96)
- Primary School Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 95/2002)
- Mass Media Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 34/2001)
- Librarianship Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 87/2001)
- Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 96/2002)

In addition to the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe for the Protection of National Minorities, Slovenia also ratified the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages in 2000. In the Charter, Slovenia committed itself to apply certain Articles *mutatis mutandis* to the Romany community residing in the territory of Slovenia. The following two instruments also apply to Roma: the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1965, and the Statutory Resolution on the Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, which is relevant with regard to facilitating the integration of Roma in the local communities. Slovenia furthermore actively follows all recommendations, resolutions and other documents of the Council of Europe referring to Roma.

Comments to the opinion of the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the implementation of Article 6 of the FCPNM of 12 September 2002, items 90-94

90. In response to the negative attitude of the majority of the population to Roma in the Dolenjska region, the Government Office for Nationalities conducted consultations on

Roma issues in the Dolenjska region on 5 October 2000. The consultations were attended by all the mayors of the municipalities, representatives of residents and the invited representatives of state bodies. The talks were held in two parts – representatives of the Dolenjska region first outlined the Roma situation and issues and related difficulties, upon which representatives of government agencies and ministries assessed the situation and adopted certain decisions about the measures to be taken in resolving the problems of the Romany community in the region.

It is a fact that Roma residing in certain regions are less adaptable and their lifestyle sometimes disrupts co-existence with the majority of the population.

91. Pursuant to the Mass Media Act, the Republic of Slovenia supports the mass media in the dissemination of programming important to Roma. Article 8 of the Mass Media Act also prohibits incitement to inequality and intolerance. The Ministry of Culture monitors reporting on Roma, and occasionally apprises the media of their inappropriate reporting. Simplifications and generalisations can sometimes be noticed in newspapers where additional information is added to the initials of the perpetrator that he/she is a member of the Romany community.

The Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act, adopted in 2002, provides this minority group with further opportunities for integration in the majority cultural area. It also stipulates that Roma should co-formulate the measures intended for them.

The attitude towards Roma has recently become more favourable in Slovenia, thanks also to positive reporting on Roma in the media.

92. Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the Government of the Republic of Austria on Co-operation in the Fields of Culture, Education and Science, was signed in Ljubljana on 30 April 2001. The provision of Article 15 of the Agreement reads, “The Contracting Parties will always include in the programmes of the Mixed Commission established under Article 20, Paragraph (1), and in the given case in the joint work programmes of the ministries of both sides under Article 20, Paragraph (3), projects for the benefit of wishes and needs of the members of the German-speaking ethnic group in Slovenia, important in terms of culture, education and science (e.g. projects in the fields of language learning and preservation of monuments, scholarships, etc.).”²

The past intolerance or rejection of the German-speaking ethnic group was the consequence of historical circumstances experienced by the two communities (period prior to and during World War Two). This attitude is, however, no longer present in Slovenia. On the contrary, a strong connection can be noticed between the German and Slovenian environments (many Slovenians went to Germany as working emigrants in the 1960s).

93. Ethnic characteristics, ethnic differences, culture and language are also developed within organisations of “members of nations from the former common state”. This process of cultural pluralism can be counted among conjunctive processes facilitating the participation and self-government of ethnic communities. The process of such cultural pluralism is promoted by the Ministry of Culture, which finances the activities of associations of

² Act Ratifying the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the Government of the Republic of Austria on Cooperation in the Fields of Culture, Education and Science, Official Gazette RS, no. 5/2002.

“members of nations from the former Yugoslavia” (e.g. Croatian Cultural Association in Maribor, Bosnian Cultural Association of Slovenia, Association of the Serbian Community, Lilijan, Association of Bosnian-Herzegovinian and Slovenian Friendship, Union of Macedonian Cultural Associations of Slovenia – the Makedonija and the St. Cyril and Methodius Macedonian cultural associations)³.

The cable TV system available in the territory of Slovenia also provides TV programmes in the languages of the nations from the former Yugoslavia. The following TV channels can be received: 1st, 2nd and 3rd channel of Croatian TV, RTV Brača Karić (Serbia), TV PINK (Serbia), TV Montenegro, TV Macedonia, TV Kosovo.

Members of the nations of the former SFRY and of the German-speaking ethnic community have the possibility of learning their mother tongue and familiarising themselves with their culture in accordance with all applicable international regulations and the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia. The German language is the second foreign language thought in Slovenian schools according to the number of students who learn it, and in some primary and secondary schools it is taught as the first foreign language.

Comments to the opinion of the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the implementation of Article 9 of the FCPNM of 12 September 2002, items 94-96

94. The reproach as to the technical difficulties in receiving RTV Koper's programmes in some regions near the Croatian border is unjustified. Slovenian broadcasting stations cover the entire area in which members of the Italian national community in the Republic of Slovenia reside.

95. The area of radio and television activities performed as a public service is regulated by the Radiotelevizija Slovenija Act. According to this Act, public service is defined as the creation, production and broadcasting of “one radio and television channel for the Italian ethnic minority and one radio and television channel for the Hungarian ethnic minority (hereinafter minority channels).” By creating these channels, RTV guarantees “fulfilment of constitutional rights of the Italian and Hungarian ethnic minorities with regard to public radio and television communication, establishing ties between the ethnic community and the mother country and incorporation of cultural and other achievements of the Italian and Hungarian nations into the minority channels”. This activity has been provided by RTV Slovenia “chiefly through its units based in Maribor, Koper and Lendava and through the local channels of Murski Val based in Murska Sobota (...).” The minority channels must be broadcast in 90% of the territory inhabited by the Italian and Hungarian national communities. RTV Slovenia acquires part of the funding necessary for the creation, production, broadcasting and transmission of minority channels from the state budget and the rest from RTV Slovenia income. In fact, the scope and conditions for the media activity of the Italian and Hungarian national communities go well beyond those provided by law, namely: programmes for the Hungarian national community in Slovenia are prepared in the Maribor Regional Centre for the Hungarian programmes studio at Lendava (the TV studio and the Hungarian Pomurje radio broadcast, within RTV Slovenia, a thirty-minute TV programme MOSTOVI – HIDAK twice a week and a daily radio programme in the Hungarian language for members of the Hungarian national community, as well as a regular

³ Miran Komac, Protection of National Minorities, Institute for Ethnic Studies, Ljubljana, 2002

TV information programme in the Hungarian language four days a week from Monday to Thursday in the Maribor regional studio of RTV Slovenia). Members of the two national communities (Italian and Hungarian) are also represented on the Board of RTV Slovenia by one representative each.

A greater share of RTV production for the Hungarian national community will be made possible when the Lendava studio moves to new premises (tentatively in 2003), which will increase production in terms of content and technical capacities. Slovenia allocated for that purpose SIT 80 million in 2002, SIT 100 million in 2003, and will provide additional SIT 58 million from its budget in 2004.

96. More attention is being paid to informing Roma and about Roma. Members of the Romany community are periodically also provided with information in the Romany language. In addition, information in the media as well as radio and occasional TV broadcasts contribute on the one hand to raising awareness and educating members of the Romany community and, on the other, to providing Slovenian population with information on the situation, life and problems of Roma, their characteristics and differences.

Radio *Murski val Murska Sobota* and *Studio D* from Novo Mesto have been preparing weekly radio broadcasts for Roma for the seventh year running. These broadcasts have been partly realised in Slovenian and partly in the Romany language. As to the content, they cover information from the work and life of Roma, reports on cultural, sports and other events, include Romany music and original contributions by Romany authors. The broadcasts have been well received among Roma themselves and the rest of audience. Radio broadcasts have been financed by the Office for Nationalities from the budget of the Republic of Slovenia.

In 2002, *Studio TV AS* from Murska Sobota started to prepare programmes on the work, life and problems of the Romany community in Slovenia, broadcast by commercial cable TV stations in the areas in which the Romany population is dense (Prekmurje, Dolenjska and Maribor). The extension of programmes for Roma is planned for this year (increase in the number of TV broadcasts also in other areas), so that there will be a monthly TV broadcast.

It should be stressed that Roma co-operate with the editorial staff preparing Romany programmes (President of the Romany Association of Slovenia with his associates in Prekmurje, and Romany poet R. Šajnovič in the Dolenjska region).

Comments to the opinion of the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the implementation of Article 10 of the FCPNM of 12 September 2002, item 97

97. The use of minority languages by members of the Italian and Hungarian national communities in public affairs, and in all other areas, is regulated by constitutional law and other statutes. In practice, however, deviations from this legal framework occur.

Comments to the opinion of the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the implementation of Article 12 of the FCPNM of 12 September 2002, items 98-100

98. Textbooks for Hungarian minority have been prepared for the nine-year elementary school programme up to the fourth grade, and, in line with the gradual introduction of this programme, the preparation of textbooks for the fifth and seventh grade is underway. Due to the small print run and occasional difficulties with providing translators, the Ministry endeavours to solve such problems as and when they occur, in consultation with headmasters.

99. Due to problems with providing staff at the schools with Italian as the language of instruction, Slovenia promotes the study of the Italian national community in Italy in accordance with bilateral agreements. Furthermore, part of the programme at the Faculty of Education in Koper is also conducted in the Italian language.

The bilateral agreement between Slovenia and Italy facilitates the recognition of degrees for certain studies. Delay can occur with regard to certain studies that are not listed in the agreement and the procedure of establishing comparability is therefore required for their recognition. This procedure is conducted by institutes of higher education. The two countries discuss the possibility of settling this issue by an amendment to the bilateral agreement.

100. A desire to improve the situation of Roma in Slovenia led to a working group being established within the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport to prepare a strategy for integrating the Roma into the education system. The group consists of representatives from the Ministry, the Roma Association, the National Education Institute, and experts in the fields of pre-school education, elementary and secondary education and adult education. The group's tasks include making proposals on the efficient integration of the Roma into educational institutions, preparing guidelines for an optional subject on the Roma culture and language, proposals for teacher training, communication with parents and communication with the Roma community.

The Ministry requested that the commissions which, in accordance with the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act, decide on the placement of children in elementary schools with adapted programmes should pay particular attention to problems relating to the placement of Roma children. The placement tests are prepared so that experts may determine the environmental and cultural factors and mental abilities of the child. New criteria for the formation of classes in elementary schools are being prepared, which are intended to gradually introduce integrated classes.

A pilot course in the Romany language, in the Elementary School III in Murska Sobota, proved successful, so the school will continue to run it this year with an emphasis on Roma culture. At the Škocjan Elementary School (in the Dolenjska region), a beginner's course in the Romany language will start for pre-school teachers and teachers in elementary schools. Exercise books in the Romany language are also being prepared.

Due to the complex problems relating to the Roma, in 2002 the Ministry supported, within the framework of research and development projects, a three-year project titled "Providing Equal Education Opportunities for Roma Children", which was submitted for the approval

of the Educational Research Institute in Ljubljana. The basic goal of this project is to develop, introduce and evaluate a model for the integration of Roma children into regular elementary education classes. The objective of the first phase is to prepare suitable conditions for its implementation in three schools, including the Leskovec Elementary School near Krško. The project pays particular attention to overcoming prejudices, cooperation with and between parents, and training experts to implement inclusive and multicultural education.

In February 2003, the Leskovec Elementary School organised consultations on educational work with Roma children at the school level. The consultations were largely attended by representatives of schools with Roma pupils from the Dolenjska, Prekmurje and Maribor regions. At the consultations, the participants shared experiences, identified cases of best practice and endeavoured to find opportunities for further cooperation.

The Ministry would like to underline that its intention is to draw up the best possible model for the education of Roma children, and to plan most activities together with representatives of the Romany community.

Comments to the opinion of the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the implementation of Article 14 of the FCPNM of 12 September 2002, item 101

101. The Romany community in the Republic of Slovenia promotes its cultural activity, the preservation of its language and tradition through Romany associations (at present, 20 Romany associations have been officially registered) that have been established under the provisions of the Associations Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 89/99). The leaders of Romany associations at the local level communicate with municipalities, while representatives of the Union of Romany Associations of Slovenia of which these associations are members communicate with Slovenian national authorities.

By signing the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Slovenia undertook to apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to the Romany language the provisions listed in Article 7, Paragraphs 1 to 4. Attempts have been made in Slovenia to establish the grammar and vocabulary in the Romany language. The efforts made by Mr Rajko Šajnovič in the Dolenjska region and Mr Jožko Horvat-Muc in the Prekmurje region, where the Romany population is concentrated, deserve special mention; they have already prepared the first draft of the written Romany language.

It should be underlined that the Romany language has been used in a Romany newspaper ROMANO THEM – THE ROMANY WORLD, issued by the Union of the Roma of Slovenia where, in addition to the Slovenian language, part of the texts have been published in the Romany language, too.

The publishing activity of Roma has been promoted in past years. From 1993 to 2002, the Union of the Roma of Slovenia issued the following publications: LUNIN PRSTAN (THE MOON RING) – a collection of poems and plays by Jože Livijen and Jožek Horvat-Muc, POT – DROM (R. Šajnovič), KRVAVA VODA – BLOODY WATER (J. Horvat-Muc), THE ROMA ANTHOLOGY – I and II (contributions by authors from International Roma gatherings), VIOLINA – HEGEDUVA “The Violin” (J. Horvat-Muc).

At the end of 2002, the Union of the Roma of Slovenia issued a book entitled *The Romany Language – a Collection of Romany Words*, which analyses in detail the specific characteristics of the Romany language in Slovenia and contains a Romany-Slovenian glossary of selected words.

The Academy of Administration raises awareness among the minorities about their cultural rights. The academy organises a seminar on functional training.

The Ministry of Culture has mechanisms in place to implement the Framework Convention and other international documents and constitutional provisions, and to monitor that implementation. Any problems that arise are solved at a special coordinating meeting. By seeking out the opinions of the minority communities, the department acts preventively, and thus integrates and treats areas of potential tension very seriously. All minority communities participate in drawing up annual programmes.

The Ministry has started to use the same procedures in dealing with Roma issues, as when dealing with the issues of the national communities.

Comments to the opinion of the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the implementation of Article 15 of the FCPNM of 12 September 2002, items 102-103

102. Roma in the political area. By amending three acts - the Act Amending the Local Government Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 51/2002), the Act Amending the Local Elections Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 51/2002) and the Voting Rights Register Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 52/2002) - Roma were enabled to take part in political life, currently at the local level. This means integration of Roma into activities relating to public and social affairs, particularly in solving the problems of their social exclusion, which they face in the following areas: housing/living conditions, unemployment, a low level of education.

In the Act Amending the Local Government Act (Official Gazette RS, no. 51/2002), Article 101.a is added in Article 14, which should remedy the provision that was not in compliance with the Constitution and lays down the following: The municipalities Beltinci, Cankova, Črenšovci, Črnomelj, Dobrovnik, Grosuplje, Kočevje, Krško, Kuzma, Lendava, Metlika, Murska Sobota, Novo Mesto, Puconci, Rogašovci, Semič, Šentjernej, Tišina, Trebnje and Turnišče are obliged to guarantee – by regular local elections in 2002 – the right of the Romany community settled in their municipality to have one representative on the Municipal Council.

Fourteen municipalities amended their municipal statutes in compliance with the new Act by the date set, while six municipalities failed to do so. Representatives of four of these communities submitted a request to the Constitutional Court for a decision on the amended Article 14 of the new Local Government Act, on the grounds that it was not in compliance with the Constitution. In its decision (U-I-315/02-11) of 17 October 2002, the Constitutional Court ruled that the provision of Article 14 of the Local Government Act was in compliance with the Constitution.

In the review of the constitutionality and legality of statutes of the six municipalities that did not take into account the Act, initiated at the request of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, the Constitutional Court established in its decision (U-I-345/02-9) of 14

November 2002 that the statutes of the six municipalities were not in compliance with the Local Government Act since they did not stipulate that representatives of the Romany community were also members of municipal councils. The municipalities were ordered, in the decision, that no later than 45 days following the constitutive sessions of municipal councillors, this illegality should be abolished in their respective statutes. In addition, within 30 days after the publication of the amended municipal statutes they should call the elections of Romany community representatives under the provision applicable to early election.

At the last local elections held on 10 November 2002, 15 new Romany councillors were elected for the first time; in one municipality, the Romany councillor was elected despite the fact that its statutes had not been amended. Five municipalities have still not elected Romany councillors (in two of them, this will be remedied shortly). Three municipalities that are bound to elect a Romany councillor are still unwilling to implement legal provisions. These are, of course, the municipalities that are obliged by law to elect a special Romany councillor.

103. Slovenia has been co-financing programmes on the topic of socio-economic status (of an individual, family, group) and the protection of Roma, including:

- socialisation of Roma in the settlement (work with Roma in the settlements);
- group work with Roma;
- group work with Romany adolescents and children;
- training for Roma to succeed in life;
- counselling for young unemployed Roma;
- preventive programme of voluntary work with Roma;
- programme for improving the quality of life of Roma;
- socialisation of Roma;
- teaching and psychosocial assistance to Romany children;
- work with young Romany couples;
- various Romany camps;
- annual international Romany camp in Murska Sobota;

The Women's Forum, established in 2000, has been operating within the Union of the Roma of Slovenia and has about 20 members. The primary objective of the Forum is to improve the status of Romany women in the fields of human rights, health, social affairs, etc.

The international Romany camp, the eighth in succession, was held in Murska Sobota in July of 2002. It was devoted to topical issues relating to the situation of Roma, with special emphasis on issues relating to the Romany community in Slovenia: the question of the Romany language; Romany women and families; print and electronic media aimed at the Romany community.

Other events are held in Slovenia every year: e.g. the World Day of Roma, the Gipsy Night. Such cultural events have been organised under the auspices of the Union of the Roma of Slovenia, including 19 Romany associations from the areas in which members of the Romany community in Slovenia reside.