



General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

Follow-Up on Recommendations in the OSCE PA's Belgrade Declaration

Interim Report for the 2012 Winter Meeting

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Introduction

Around 240 parliamentarians representing 52 OSCE participating States met in Belgrade from 6 to 10 July 2011 to assess developments and challenges relating to security and co-operation, focusing on the general theme of *Strengthening the OSCE's Effectiveness and Efficiency – A New Start After the Astana Summit*.

In addition to addressing the human dimension of the general theme, the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions passed resolutions dealing with, *inter alia*, combating illicit trade in human organs, Belarus, international parental child abductions, women's representation at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and witness protection programmes.

This Interim Report considers actions taken over the past six months by the OSCE, including Institutions and field operations, and other members of the international community in relation to the OSCE PA's recommendations. Developments within participating States relating to the Belgrade Declaration's recommendations will be made available for the Annual Session in Monaco.

While the majority of the recommendations addressed here are found in the OSCE PA's Belgrade Declaration of July 2011, key themes from past Declarations have also been considered, to ensure greater continuity and scope. The International Secretariat appreciates the input on their work within these fields provided by the OSCE Secretary General, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

Strengthening Efforts to Combat Racism and Xenophobia and Foster Inclusion

I. Belgrade Declaration

Recognizing the need to develop a comprehensive strategy to address racism and xenophobia and foster inclusion in the OSCE region, the Belgrade Declaration called on the OSCE to work with the OSCE PA and affected communities to develop an action plan by 2013 to combat racism and xenophobia and foster inclusion across the OSCE region in concert with the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma.

II. OSCE Initiatives

OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting

The OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Prevention of Racism, Xenophobia, and Hate Crimes Through Educational and Awareness-Raising Initiatives was held in Vienna on 10-11 November 2011. The meeting, organized by the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), addressed the topic through the following three sessions: *Challenges and Perspectives for the Prevention of Racism and Xenophobia*; *Challenges in Combating Hate Crimes, Racism and Xenophobia: Role of Awareness-Raising Initiatives and Public Discourse*; and *Education for Tolerance and Mutual Respect and Understanding: Good Practices from IGOs, Governments and Civil Society*.¹ The meeting brought together representatives of OSCE participating States, OSCE Institutions and field operations, representatives of international governmental organizations, representatives of non-governmental organizations, and other civil society actors.²

Ambassador Renatas Norkus of Lithuania, the Chairperson of the OSCE's Permanent Council stressed the power of "education and awareness-raising initiatives" to combat racism and intolerance. "It can prevent escalation and promote mutual respect and understanding" he said.³ In his closing address, Ambassador Janez Lenarcic, the Director of ODIHR, praised the various initiatives implemented by state authorities in preventing racism, xenophobia and hate crimes. He also called on political leaders to speak out against all forms of violence motivated by racial hatred or xenophobia.⁴

Lithuanian Chairmanship's Priorities

¹ OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on 'Prevention of Racism, Xenophobia and Hate Crimes Through Educational and Awareness-Raising Initiatives,' 10-11 November 2011, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/83956>

² OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on 'Prevention of Racism, Xenophobia and Hate Crimes Through Educational and Awareness-Raising Initiatives,' 10-11 November 2011, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/83820>

³ Opening Remarks by Ambassador Renatas Norkus, the Chairperson of the Permanent Council, 10 November 2011, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/84896>

⁴ Closing Remarks by Ambassador Janez Lenarcic, 11 November 2011, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/84978>

In its Work Programme for 2011, the Lithuanian Chairmanship assigned high priority to preventing hate crimes, particularly through education and awareness-raising initiatives.⁵ Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism, on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, and on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions carried out visits throughout the OSCE area.⁶

OSCE Field Activities

On 16 November 2011, Acting Head of the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina Andrea Cellino, marking the International Day for Tolerance, highlighted the continuing need to promote tolerance and non-discrimination in all spheres of life in the country. “Respect for the human rights of all citizens, particularly of vulnerable groups and minorities, is the cornerstone of a democratic, stable and peaceful society,” said Cellino. “This requires the elimination of institutional and other forms of discrimination, as well as a swift response to violence and other criminal acts based on prejudice.” The Mission continues to assist BiH authorities and civil society towards achieving a more inclusive educational system, combating discrimination in public services, respecting the rights of minorities, and responding more appropriately to bias-motivated crimes.⁷

The OSCE Centre in Bishkek, together with Kyrgyzstan’s State Commission for Religious Affairs, organized an Iftar – the evening meal breaking the daily fast during the month of Ramadan – with local and regional state officials, police authorities, and members of different ethnic and religious communities. The Iftar was supported as part of an OSCE-funded project on “enhancing dialogue by promoting freedom of religion as a basic human right”.⁸

Combating Illicit Trade in Human Organs

I. Belgrade Declaration

The resolution on Combating Illicit Trade in Human Organs “invites the OSCE participating States to combat determinedly organized criminal groups dealing with illicit trade in human organs and human trafficking for the purpose of the removal of organs, and recommends for this purpose the establishment of closer co-operation, including exchange of information, and more efficient actions by the institutions of the OSCE participating States in combating illicit trade in human organs.”

⁵ 2011 Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship Work Programme, 12 January 2011 http://www.delegfrance-osce.org/IMG/pdf/ciogal0004r1_cio_work_programme_2011.pdf

⁶ Meaningful Steps: Report on progress made during Lithuania’s Chairmanship of the OSCE, 7 December 2011, <http://www.osce.org/mc/86008>

⁷ OSCE Press Release: “OSCE Mission to BiH concerned by manifestations of intolerance”, 16 November 2011, <http://www.osce.org/bih/85109>

⁸ ODIHR Press Release: “OSCE supports reconciliation in southern Kyrgyzstan during month of Ramadan”, 25 August 2011, <http://www.osce.org/bishkek/81940>

In the resolution, the OSCE PA also “recommends that a comprehensive investigation be undertaken of abductions and crimes connected with the removal and sale of human organs allegedly committed in Kosovo during the armed conflicts in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999 and immediately afterwards, and invites full co-operation with UNMIK and EULEX, as well as the relevant national institutions, and in particular the provision of all information, facts and documents on crimes concerning abductions and trade in human organs in the territory of Kosovo.” The PA proposes that the OSCE investigate and record the cases of illicit trade in human organs in the area of OSCE with the aim of preparing a study indicating the scope of this phenomenon.⁹

II. OSCE Initiatives

Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

On 15 December 2011, Maria Giammarinaro, the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, released the Annual Report for 2011 under the title “*An Agenda for Prevention: Activities and Challenges*” highlighting the work of the Office of the Special Representative with the participating States, OSCE structures, Institutions and field operations, as well as with international and non-governmental organizations regarding trafficking in human beings.

In 2011, the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR/CTHB) together with the Strategic Police Matters Unit (SPMU) initiated a joint research project into trafficking in human beings for the purpose of the removal of organs. According to the 2011 Annual Report, the research will help identify crime patterns, how criminal networks engage in this crime, and profiles of trafficked persons and perpetrators. The study also aims to identify obstacles to effective investigation and prosecution of this crime, including the lack of sufficient witness protection systems.¹⁰

During 2011, the Special Representative and Co-ordinator visited the United Kingdom, Canada and Moldova; and joined the Chairperson-in-Office's Special Representative on Gender Issues in a visit to Kyrgyzstan. During these visits, Giammarinaro held high-level meetings with representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, Immigration, Justice, Social and Labour Affairs and others. The joint country visit to Kyrgyzstan included a meeting with former President Roza Otunbayeva.

OSCE Ministerial Conference

In December at the 18th OSCE Ministerial Council in Vilnius, OSCE foreign ministers agreed to the Declaration on Combating all Forms of Human Trafficking. Ministers “declared their strong and unwavering determination to combat human trafficking in all its forms.”¹¹ Participants expressed deep concern that human trafficking for the removal of organs, for the

⁹ OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, “Belgrade Declaration of the Parliamentary Assembly and Resolutions Adopted at the Twentieth Annual Session,” Belgrade, 6-10 July 2011, pp.38-39

¹⁰ 2011 Annual Report of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, “*An Agenda for Prevention: Activities and Challenges*”, 15 December 2011, <http://www.osce.org/cthb/86292>

¹¹ OSCE Ministerial Declaration on Combating All Forms of Human Trafficking, 7 December 2011, <http://www.osce.org/mc/86373>

purpose of sexual exploitation, and for the purpose of labour exploitation, including domestic servitude, remains a serious problem.

Special Representative Giammarinaro called the Vilnius Declaration “an important achievement for the OSCE as a whole, as it reconfirms the political commitment to fight trafficking as an integral part of OSCE efforts towards common and comprehensive security, which includes full respect of human rights.”¹² She told the ambassadors of OSCE participating States the declaration could underpin efforts to achieve more effective results in the fight against all forms of trafficking, including the least addressed, such as trafficking for the removal of organs, forced begging and forced criminality, while continuing to develop innovative approaches to prevent child trafficking, sexual and labour exploitation.¹³

Belarus

I. Belgrade Declaration

The resolution on Belarus is aimed at renewing dialogue with Minsk and called on the Belarusian authorities to release all political prisoners detained following the 19 December 2010 post-election protest in Minsk and allow them legal counsel, family visits, and medical care. The resolution called on Belarus to carefully review and implement the extensive recommendations in the OSCE Moscow Mechanism Report, to reconsider its decision to close the OSCE field presence in Minsk, to co-operate closely with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to resolve problems concerning the threatened closure of independent media outlets, and develop a media law in line with OSCE principles.

II. OSCE Initiatives

On 3 October 2011, the lower chamber of the Belarusian parliament adopted three draft amendments, including the draft law “on amendments to the law of the Republic of Belarus on bodies of state security of the Republic of Belarus”, which aimed to extend the powers of the State Security Committee. Two others, which change crucial provisions of the Law on Mass Events and the Law on Public Associations, approved on 21 October, further restrict fundamental freedoms of assembly and impose criminal responsibility for foreign financing of NGOs.

OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Ažubalis condemned the adopted amendments to existing laws on public assemblies and the security services, saying they will further limit the fundamental freedoms of assembly and association in Belarus. “I am deeply concerned over these new restrictions on civil liberties in Belarus and call, once again, on the Belarusian President to allow a vibrant civil society and cease political persecutions. By worsening the human rights situation in the country and

¹² OSCE Press Release: “OSCE Special Representative presents annual report, agenda for preventing trafficking for labour exploitation,” 15 December 2011, <http://www.osce.org/cthb/86276>

¹³ Ibid.

systematically limiting fundamental freedoms, Belarus can only isolate itself further from the international arena”, Ažubalis said.¹⁴

The OSCE published on 10 November a 114-page report on trial monitoring in Belarus from March to July 2011, which identified a number of shortcomings in the country's criminal justice system. The report presented findings from trials observed by ODIHR that involved a total of 41 defendants, including five presidential candidates, who were criminally charged in the aftermath of the election-related demonstrations in Minsk in December 2010. “Our monitoring revealed a number of significant concerns in the application of fair trial standards”, Amb. Lenarcic said. “These concerns point to systemic shortcomings in Belarus' justice system that need to be addressed.”¹⁵

“Significant concerns emerged over the right to the presumption of innocence, and the failure of judges to follow up allegations that statements were obtained under duress, intimidation, inhuman treatment and possibly torture. Defence motions to exclude evidence based on alleged maltreatment were ignored or denied”, the ODIHR observers concluded.¹⁶

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM)

The situation in Belarus was actively discussed at the opening of the plenary session of the OSCE Review Conference in Warsaw on 26 September 2011. The aim of the Conference was to review the implementation of OSCE human dimension commitments by participating states.

In his address to the HDIM, Matteo Mecacci, Chair of the OSCE PA Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions, called on the Belarusian authorities to release all political prisoners. He mentioned the fact the Parliamentary Assembly's Working Group on Belarus has been unable to visit Minsk and civil society representatives in the country since the December 2010 protests.¹⁷

International Parental Child Abductions

I. Belgrade Declaration

The resolution on International Parental Child Abductions urged those participating states, as well as OSCE Partners for Co-operation, who are not parties to the Hague Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction to ratify or accede to it and urged full implementation of its provisions. The resolution also urged that parental child abduction be considered at the 2011 OSCE Ministerial Council in Vilnius.

II. OSCE Initiatives

¹⁴ ODIHR Press Release: “Chairperson condemns new restrictions on freedom of assembly and association in Belarus.” 24 October 2011, <http://www.osce.org/cio/84273>

¹⁵ ODIHR Press Release: “Belarus trials highlight need for substantial justice reform, OSCE human rights chief says.” 10 November 2011, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/84872>

¹⁶ OSCE/ODIHR Report: Trial Monitoring in Belarus (March-July 2011), 10 November 2011, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/84873>

¹⁷ ODIHR Press Release: “Press release issued by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly”, 26 September 2011, <http://www.osce.org/pa/82879>

On 4 October, the U.S. Delegation to the 2011 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting hosted a side event on the Hague Convention of 25 October 1980 on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction in Warsaw. The event, introduced by Ambassador David Johnson, Head of the U.S. Delegation, was also attended by Professor Ellen Teitz, First Secretary, Hague Conference on Private International Law from the Hague Permanent Bureau; Corrin Ferber, Attorney Advisor from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs; and Linda Hoover, Consul General from U.S. Embassy Warsaw.

The OSCE Office in Yerevan supported a regional NGO, Armenian Constitutional Right-Protective Centre (ACRPC), in hosting a three-week intensive course on human rights in Armenia. The course involving 30 secondary school teachers from many regions of Armenia focused on raising awareness of children's rights.²¹

In a U.S. Helsinki Commission hearing on 8 February featuring the OSCE Chair-in-Office, Irish Deputy Prime Minister Eamon Gilmore, the Head of the OSCE PA's U.S. Delegation Chris Smith reiterated the PA's recommendation regarding the issue of child abductions, and said that it is a key issue that the Helsinki Commission is focusing on in 2012.

"Last year, the Parliamentary Assembly passed a resolution urging the OSCE to take up the issue of international parental child abduction and urging a ministerial decision on that issue," said Smith, Chairman of the Helsinki Commission and OSCE PA Special Representative on Human Trafficking. "Governments and national courts need to do more to live up to their obligations under the Hague Convention."²²

Women's Representation at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

I. Belgrade Declaration

The resolution on Women's Representation at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly called on the national parliaments to improve the representation of women in the OSCE PA national delegations in order to promote women's empowerment.

II. OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

From 2011 to 2012, the number of women serving as heads of delegations has increased from ten to 11. National parliaments have, on the other hand, decreased the overall number of women appointed to serve as Members of the Assembly.

In February 2011, there were 73 female Members of the Assembly. There are now 64.

²¹ OSCE Office in Yerevan "OSCE Office promotes human rights education in Armenia", 26 July 2011, <http://www.osce.org/yerevan/81298>

²² OSCE PA Press Release, "Smith highlights Assembly work in Helsinki Commission hearing", 9 February 2012, <http://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/883-smith-highlights-assembly-work-in-helsinki-commission-hearing>

OSCE PA statistics:

- 79 out of 384 members of the Assembly are women.
- 39 women are alternate members of delegation.
- 11 women are heads of delegation.
- Four women are deputy heads of delegation.

The Work of the Committee on the Human Dimension of the Permanent Council of the OSCE

I. Belgrade Declaration

The Belgrade Declaration encourages the Permanent Council to “further intensify its dialogue with the Committee on the Human Dimension in order to move towards full and complete implementation of the norms, principles and undertakings of the OSCE.” The Declaration also urges the Committee on the Human Dimension to “intensify and institutionalize co-operation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions.”

II. OSCE Initiatives

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

On 14 November 2011 Third Committee Chair Matteo Mecacci addressed the OSCE Human Dimension Committee, drawing attention to the work of the OSCE PA on democracy and human rights, and urging that the Ministerial decisions reflect the fact that the political priorities of our organization are “in direct connection with the problems faced by our people”. Several draft decisions included language from previous Parliamentary Assembly declarations, he said. He offered the Assembly as a resource to ambassadors working on drafting language for the Ministerial, highlighting the “wealth of substance, legitimacy, and intellectual capacity [that] exists in the Parliamentary Assembly”.²³

In September 2011, OSCE PA Vice-President Walburga Habsburg Douglas, OSCE PA Human Rights Committee Rapporteur Coskun Coruz and OSCE PA Special Representative on Migration Kathleen Ferrier visited the OSCE Centre in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The delegation met with Andrew Tesoriere, the Head of the OSCE Centre, representatives of Kyrgyzstan's Parliament and the non-governmental organization Parliament of Political Parties, and discussed the role of parliaments in ensuring election transparency and how parliamentarians can contribute to conducting free, fair and inclusive elections.²⁴

²³ OSCE Parliamentary Assembly “Mecacci addresses Human Dimension Committee in preparation for Ministerial Council”, 15 November 2011, <http://www.oscepa.org/parliamentary-diplomacy/committee-visits/850-mecacci-addresses-human-dimension-committee-in-preparation-for-ministerial-council>

²⁴ OSCE Parliamentary Assembly “Kyrgyzstan focus on parliamentary role in elections”, 12 September 2011, <http://www.oscepa.org/election-observation/past-election-observations/478-kyrgyzstan-focus-on-parliamentary-role-in-elections>

The OSCE

Mecacci addressed the 15th annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting and pointed to OSCE expertise in election processes, rule of law, migration, and human rights as areas that need attention in countries now in transition following the Arab Spring. He mentioned the Parliamentary Assembly's Working Group on Belarus and the fact that the Group has been unable to visit Minsk for the past year and raised cases in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan and the United States on a variety of human rights issues, including press freedom, freedom to assemble, fair elections and the death penalty.

Coskun Coruz, Rapporteur of the Third Committee, addressed the Meeting's working session on the rule of law, emphasizing the role of the OSCE PA in fostering parliamentary oversight.

The working sessions focused on fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. The working sessions of the second week were devoted to discussion of the human dimension activities including the presentation of activities of the ODIHR and other OSCE institutions and field operations.²⁶

On 11 October 2011 OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Maria Grazia Giammarinaro addressed the Human Dimension Committee about trafficking of children. In her speech, Giammarinaro reiterated the importance of the action points included in the *Alliance against Trafficking in Persons* Joint Statement on child protection to enhance the prevention of child trafficking which was presented at the 2010 OSCE Review Conference in Warsaw.

On 25 October 2011, the Lithuanian Chairmanship and the Swiss Chair of the Human Dimension Committee jointly organized the Human Dimension Committee Away Day, which was aimed at further strengthening the cohesion of the OSCE human dimension community and to facilitate the exchange of views in an informal setting. Former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, Professor Manfred Nowak, gave a presentation followed by a discussion with the participants.²⁷

Switzerland, Chair of the Human Dimension Committee, has commissioned a study by a Swiss think tank, *Ximpulse*, to identify and recommend options on how to make the human dimension events more attractive, effective and focused. The final report will be available by the end of the first quarter of 2012.²⁸

OSCE Field Activities

In July 2011, the OSCE Office in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, held its fifth annual OSCE Preparatory Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in co-operation with the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman of Tajikistan and the Department on Constitutional Guarantees of Citizen Rights within the Executive Office of the President, as well as with civil society organizations from all over the country. The annual meetings serve as an open

²⁶ OSCE, "Human Dimension Implementation Meeting", 26 September 2011, http://www.osce.org/event/hdim_2011

²⁷ OSCE, Human Dimension Away Day, 12 October 2011, CIO.GAL/197/11

²⁸ Delegation of Switzerland to the OSCE, 13 October 2011, PC/DEL/921/11

forum to examine topical issues in human rights and the rule of law. In 2011, the sessions focused on mechanisms for human rights protection, freedom from torture, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, access to justice, human rights and counter-terrorism, property rights and forced resettlement, rights of individuals belonging to national minorities and rights of persons with disabilities.

The Human Dimension Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council has recently examined Tajikistan's preparatory meeting as a potential model for other field operations.³⁰

Witness Protection Programmes: A Challenge to Justice and Reconciliation

I. Belgrade Declaration

The Belgrade Declaration calls on the OSCE and other international organizations to strengthen their co-operation in order to optimize the financing, expertise and training programmes for witness protection in all vulnerable regions.

II. OSCE Initiatives

In October 2011, the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office, with the support of the OSCE Office in Yerevan, presented the final report of a study on the protection of witnesses in Armenia.

Representatives of the Government of Armenia, the National Assembly, law enforcement, civil society and international organizations attended the presentation of the report. The OSCE-supported study provides a thorough analysis of national legislative arrangements in light of international standards and the European Court on Human Rights case law, and provides an overview of its practical implementation.

Recommendations include enabling witnesses with financial resources to make use of the services of the public defender during the preliminary investigation, widening the scope of the application of witness protection measures when necessary, and registering witnesses' visits to investigative departments.

According to Chair of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor Office, Artur Sakunts, the study "helps to reveal the existing problems in this area." "Improving the witness protection system in Armenia will raise witnesses' trust in criminal justice system and hence will help prevent cases of human rights violations and corruption," he said.³¹

³⁰ OSCE Office in Tajikistan, "OSCE Office holds Preparatory Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Dushanbe", 21 July 2011, <http://www.osce.org/tajikistan/81123>

³¹ OSCE Office in Yerevan "Report on Witness Protection in Armenia", 13 October 2011, <http://www.osce.org/hy/yerevan/83916>

Promoting Policies in Favour of the Roma Population

I. Belgrade Declaration

The Resolution on Promoting Policies in Favour of the Roma Population emphasizes the need to make access to European Union Structural Funds conditional on desegregating policies.

II. European Commission

A Summit of Mayors on Roma organized by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Special Representative of the Council of Europe Secretary General for Roma issues was held in Strasbourg, France on 22 September 2011.³² The meeting brought together representatives of municipalities, regions and networks, Roma organizations as well as other relevant institutions, to create a co-operation framework that aims to improve the situation of Roma, the European Union's largest ethnic minority.

A sixth meeting of the European Roma Platform was held in Brussels on 17 November 2011 to continue the practice of including Roma in the policymaking process. EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion László Andor said, "The inclusion of our Roma population is a challenge for the European Union as a whole, but progress depends on efforts at national and local level."³³ Participants discussed the macroeconomic context and Europe 2020 as the framework for national strategies; the Commission's contribution to making Roma inclusion a reality; and key requirements for the success of national Roma integration strategies.

On 15 December, the European Commission, the EU Delegation to Albania and Albania's Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, with the support of the Ministry of European Integration, held a seminar in Tirana, Albania, on the inclusion of Roma and Egyptian communities, in the context of Albania's integration with the EU.³⁴ The main objective was to bring together representatives of the Albanian national and local governments, non-governmental organizations and international actors to discuss challenges to the effective inclusion of Roma and Egyptian persons in Albania and to identify potential solutions. The themes covered were: civil registration, education, social and health care, vocational training, employment, housing and infrastructure.

³² The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) Press Release, 22 December 2011, http://www.coe.int/t/congress/Sessions/20110922-Roma-Summit/default_en.asp

³³ European Commission "Mr. László ANDOR EU Commissioner responsible for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion Getting Member States to draw up their Roma integration strategies – Opening of Roma Platform Sixth meeting of the European Roma Platform Brussels, 17 November 2011 <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/11/771&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

³⁴ European Commission "Albania: inclusion of Roma and Egyptian communities", 15 December 2011 http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/whatsnew/news/111222_en.htm