**Questionnaire of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues to Member States**

1. Please, provide specific information about the Roma communities living in your country. What is the estimated size of the Roma population? Are Roma communities concentrated in certain parts of the country? Please attach any relevant data.

Information and data in the present Report concern the Government-controlled areas[[1]](#footnote-1). It should be noted that according to Protocol No.10 on Cyprus Annexed to the 2003 Act concerning the conditions of accession of the Republic of Cyprus and the adjustments to the Treaties on which the European Union is founded, the application of the acquis communautaire is “suspended in those areas of the Republic of Cyprus in which the Government does not exercise effective control”.

In the Republic of Cyprus, there are three religious groups, namely: the Armenians, the Maronites and the Latins. These groups had a traditional presence on the island at the time of the establishment of the Republic in 1960 and according to the Constitution they are described as such. At the time, the aforementioned groups were given time to decide which community they preferred to belong to. They chose the Greek Cypriot community.

The term Roma has not traditionally been used in Cyprus. The Cyprus Roma are members of the Turkish Cypriot community and actually designate themselves as ‘Kurbet’. The equivalent term in Greek is ‘Athigganoi’ or ‘Tsigganoi’.

Within the framework of the 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, the Athingani / Tsingani living in Cyprus were automatically deemed to be citizens of the Republic, members of the Turkish Community, as they fell within the definition of Article 2 paragraph (2) thereof, which reads:

“For the purposes of this Constitution-

(1) …………………………………

(2) the Turkish Community comprises all citizens of the Republic who are of Turkish origin and whose mother tongue is Turkish or who share the Turkish cultural traditions or who are Moslems;”

For the purposes of this questionnaire, the term ‘Roma’ will be used to refer to the above mentioned Turkish Cypriot citizens.

In 1960 the number of Athingani / Tsingani living in Cyprus was 502. After the events of 1974, they moved to the occupied areas of the Island. In recent years, Athingani / Tsingani accompanied by their families have crossed to the Government controlled areas in search of better living conditions, job opportunities, etc.

It is difficult to record and officially ascertain the exact number of this population, including any Roma migrants and other Roma related groups present in Cyprus in the most recent years, although relevant official data is available. According to the Ministry of Interior data (2012), the number of Cyprus Roma in the Government-controlled areas is estimated between 650 and 700.

Regarding possible concentration of Roma in certain parts of the country, it is estimated that in the Government-controlled areas, Cyprus Roma reside in the district of Limassol and Pafos.

However, no official statistical data is available at this time.

1. Does your State collect socio-economic data such as poverty and unemployment rates, healthcare data, living conditions, educational levels, income levels or rates of economic participation disaggregated by different population groups, including Roma? What does such data reveal in regard to the situation of Roma? Please, attach relevant data if available. In the absence of such data what is the source of information your State relies upon to develop various measures and programmes for Roma inclusion?

Since Cyprus Roma are integrated within the Turkish-Cypriot community no distinct data is collected. The overall government policy approach as regards programmes for Roma inclusion is to promote the integration of the Cyprus Roma through horizontal policy measures targeting vulnerable groups within existing broader social inclusion policies and structures.

1. Is there any ongoing national policy / strategy / action plan to ensure Roma inclusion in the political, social, economic and cultural life of your country? Is so, explain how these measures are developed, designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated in consultation with, and with the effective participation of Roma, including Roma women. If your State has already reported on similar issues to other international or regional organisations, please share existing relevant report and /or documentation.

In the framework of the EU Strategy on Roma population, the Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance have been designated by Council of Ministers Decision No. 72.892 of 2.12.2011 as the national contact point for the coordination of these policies to be implemented by governmental bodies for the Roma population.

In January 2012 Cyprus submitted to the European Commission the “Policy measures for the social inclusion of Roma” describing the approach taken on the matter, the overarching principle and the policies promoted in the four policy areas (education, employment, healthcare – including social support, housing and essential services). Cyprus regularly reports within this framework any progress made.

Additionally, Cyprus has already reported on similar issues to the Council of Europe (Cyprus report on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Cyprus Report on the Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Cyprus response to ECRI’s request for information on measures taken to implement its recommendations).

1. How strategies or policy measures for inclusion take into systematic consideration the specific conditions, situations and needs of Roma women, including in the areas of access to adequate education, healthcare and reproductive rights? Please attach the most relevant information including, if applicable, specific measures taken to combat segregation and / or multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by Roma women, as well as the main measureable achievements in these areas.

Regarding **healthcare,** according to the Cyprus legislation, access to governmental medical institutions is provided to everyone, regardless of residence or other status. The healthcare system in Cyprus is accessible to all citizens under certain criteria or by payment (set prices). Special medical or cultural needs of certain group of people are taken into account in order to improve the services provided by the healthcare system. The healthcare rights of European citizens are based on European Regulations, while asylum seekers and recognized refugees are treated as Cypriots and, therefore, are entitled to healthcare benefits. Third country nationals employed in Cyprus are covered by private health insurance contracts.

In exceptional cases, the Minister of Health authorises the provision of medical treatment services free of charge to persons illegally residing in Cyprus, based on the specific conditions of each case, especially when pregnant women or children are involved.

Roma people healthcare is fully incorporated and covered within the mainstream measures.

In the field of **education and culture**, the MOEC gives great emphasis on ensuring equal access to education for all children living on the island, taking into account that the right to education is safeguarded in the Republic’s Constitution. Towards this end, free and accessible education is offered to all pupils without prejudice based on gender, abilities, language, color, religion, political beliefs or ethnic background. All necessary measures are taken so that effective access to basic education for all is guaranteed.

Pursuant to national legislation pupils must enroll at the school nearest to their place of residence. During previous school years, a systematic effort was made by the authorities to locate and enroll Roma children to the nearest primary school, though, with little success as to their continuous school attendance, due to their families’ constant movement to and from the occupied areas of Cyprus. Currently children are enrolled to the nearest public schools to their place of residence.

The MOEC ispromoting several measures to cater for the particular needs of Roma pupils enrolled in public schools. Empirical and theoretical research related to minority education and specific educational initiatives have guided the Ministry to develop and implement programmes for the education of Roma and other non-native language speaking pupils, such as:

- Provision of bilingual teachers who facilitate the communication between teachers, pupils and parents.

- Provision of special support and attention from the Educational Psychology Service and the Social Welfare Services.

- Organising of a number of intercultural activities and events.

- Organising of education seminars for parents and legal guardians on a subject matter of their interest based on the distinctive characteristics of each local community in which they reside.

In pre-primary and primary education, Roma children have a priority for admission to public kindergartens, whereas families receiving a public allowance are exempted from paying fees in public kindergartens. During the school year 2013-2014, the school where a great number of Roma pupils were enrolled (Agios Antonios Primary School in Limassol) implemented the following actions:

* Extra physical education classes were offered, with the participation of Roma pupils in order to have a more relaxed programme that meets their specific needs.
* A dance and theatre programme was implemented in order to improve pupils’ behaviour and self-discipline.
* The school’s Art counselor has prepared an intervention programme, which was implemented to improve the education provided to pupils.
* A series of books on the teaching of the Turkish language that is adapted to pupil’s abilities was bought.
* The school’s English counselors have prepared sample lessons for the two Turkish-Cypriot teachers, aiming at presenting various activities which they have applied to their lessons in order to be more effective.
* Extra support lessons were offered to pupils in the afternoon, including the Roma.

The school, on its own initiative, is involved in the Comenius lifelong education programme, with a special theme: *"All different all the same Europe's children"*. The school unit is also implementing projects that involve all children and the diversity of each separate group of children, including the Roma, is respected. Such activities are:

1. Video recording of poems, songs and other cultural elements;
2. Organisation of food festivals from children’s different countries and
3. Celebration of the International Roma Day.

These as well as other activities are organised with the participation of children and parental involvement, where possible. During the current school year 2014-2015, the school is organising various activities and actions in order to facilitate pupils’ learning and maximize their potential, while other in-service training for teachers is planned.

As far as discrimination in general is concerned, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC), following a recommendation by the ECRI, and in collaboration with the ADB, has drafted a *"Code of Conduct Against Racism and Guide for Managing and Reporting Racist Incidents"* in schools, taking into account the views of experts in the field of intercultural and antiracist education. The Code discusses research and policy which identifies the need for a whole-school antiracist policy, with a broad conceptualization of racism in all forms, in order to include all sorts of discrimination. It also provides schools and teachers with a detailed plan on how to deal with and prevent racist incidents, which they may adjust to their specific needs before they adopt it and begin its implementation. It includes definitions of basic concepts, outlines the responsibilities and commitments expected by each member of the school community and provides the steps to be followed by schools in a practical rubric. The Code was officially presented to the public by the Minister of Education and Culture and the Head of the ADB at a press conference in June 2014. As the Code views diversity as a multiple phenomenon, involving various aspects of people’s identities, it is expected to contribute to the decrease of bullying and discrimination based on any form of diversity in schools. The Code has been reviewed and is now being applied on a pilot basis in five primary and two secondary schools during the current school year 2014-2015. A series of optional workshops is under way, focusing on supporting teachers who are participating in the pilot implementation of the Code and Guide. The pilot implementation as well as the workshops are enhanced by the ADB and the Cyprus Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

1. Is there any available information and data about violence against Roma population, especially women and children? If yes, what are the different forms of violence they experience and what measures have been taken to assist, protect, and compensate the victims?

We haven’t been informed of such violence taking place.

1. Has your Government identified the main priority areas for Roma inclusion? If yes, what are the main goals? Please provide relevant details in this respect, as well as an estimate of funds allocated on measures relating to national strategies and policies for Roma inclusion.

The overall government policy approach as regards programmes for Roma inclusion is to promote the integration of the Cyprus Roma through horizontal policy measures targeting vulnerable groups within existing broader social inclusion policies and structures. These are employment, housing, education and healthcare. The main goal is to safeguard that the Roma population has equal access to programmes implemented at national and local level as all citizens of the Republic. Regarding programme implementation and policy formation on education and healthcare please refer to question 4 above.

As regards, **access to employment,** the Roma residing in Cyprus are Cypriot and EU citizens and, thus, have free access to the labour market, equal to that of all Cypriot citizens. The Public Employment Services (PES) of the Department of Labour offer job seekers (including Roma) assistance in finding employment, through registration and placement services, as well as through vocational guidance, counseling and referrals to training programmes.

Regarding **housing,** the competent services of the Ministry of Interior pay regular visits to the housing facilities of the Roma population established in Limassol and Paphos. District Administration Officers respond to any requests in the framework of the application of maintenance services. In more particular, the District Administration receives on regular basis relevant information on the conditions of the housing facilities and from the population through the representatives of the local authorities. Additionally, the District Administration Office is in direct contact on a daily base with the Cyprus Roma to solve also problems on education and any other problems faced by them within the Government controlled area of the Republic.

Furthermore, within the spectrum of **social services** provided by the Social Welfare Services including social counseling services, Social Services Officers perform home visits in the houses of people who either they or the community may refer them for assistance. The Officer’s job is to investigate the living conditions and any needs that they may have and if these needs cannot be covered by the SWS programmes, then the Officer will divert him/her to the competent authorities. Special focus is provided in case the household has children which in this case specialized services are provided to address the issues of children such as education, protection or other practical issues (e.g. it is noticed that many Roma do not have birth certificates). The Officers must inform them of the processes existing in Cyprus and what must be done setting targets in each case and are also responsible to follow up in order to safeguard that that targets are fulfilled.

The Officer also acts as a liaison with key services such as schools in order to bring back to school Roma children, the District Administrations for housing issues etc. Furthermore, in case the household shows problems with cleanliness or needs some essential appliances or furniture, the SWS provides in the first case, home carers and in the second case it will provide the necessary funds for the purchase of required furniture / appliances.

Also, the SWS act as a liaison with social programmes run at local level or by local authorities in order to respond to specific needs that the household is facing and motivate the community so to develop social integration programmes. Currently, the SWS subsidise two social programmes which run specific programmes for the Roma and/or act as Counselling Centres. The one is in Limassol (the Bi-communal Centre) and the other is a co-operation between Pano and Kato Polemidia (Iraklitos). It is within our overall policy plans to further elaborate the co-operation with local authorities and NGOs so that there is better needs evaluation and establishment of appropriate programmes.

However, when needs arise explicitly for the Roma population the competent authorities react on meeting these needs. For example, regarding housing, the State budget of the Ministry of Interior to cover the maintenance costs of prefabricated elements, roads and green spaces in Limassol and Pafos from 2008 is presented in the below table. For the 2013 and onward budget, no needs were reported and so there was no budget provision.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| € 34.172 | €34.000 | €34.000 | €28.000 | €34.000 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

1. Does your Government monitor progress made in the area of Roma inclusion in the political, social, economic and culture life of the State? If so, what are the visible and measureable achievements of various efforts undertaken for Roma inclusion? Please provide details.

For reasons mentioned above, the Cypriot authorities, monitor overall progress of social inclusion measures but not distinct for Roma.

1. In the government’s view, if there are still persistent disparities among Roma and other population groups, what were the failures and what are the ongoing challenges to close the gap and achieve full inclusion of Roma? In which areas is there the biggest need to step up efforts?

New challenges especially for the education system arise from the increasingly multicultural nature of Cyprus society and on the observation that financially disadvantaged families (mostly non-Cypriots), tend to live in particular areas and, therefore, schools in those areas have a proportionally larger number of non-Cypriots than schools in other areas. Education is considered as the means for social mobility, inclusion and active participation of all in our society and a basic tool for effectively combating inequalities, various social problems and achieving social cohesion.

The key success of this challenge is the introduction of the institution of the Zones of Educational Priority (ZEP), deriving from UNESCO’s strategy for positive discrimination to address consequential matters and aims, as an ongoing process, to ensure all pupils’ uninterrupted school attendance, thus ensuring their right to education. Within the context of the above programme extra support services are anticipated for pupils, parents and teachers through the establishment of "Information and Social-emotional Support Centres". These Centres offer services and programmes from specialists with an ultimate aim the prevention of delinquency, use of substances, expression of dangerous behavior and violence, so that pupils who face psychological problems, mental disorders, family problems or adaptation problems in the school environment are effectively supported. The operation of this institution has had positive results, such as a reduction of pupil dropouts, of school failure (referrals and repetitions) and of referrals to the Educational Psychology Service, as well as improvement of school success. In 2013 the percentage of early leavers, that is the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education and training, was reduced to 9%, well below the headline target that was set to 10%. Moreover, in 2010-2011 school dropout was not existent in primary education, whereas in secondary education in 2010-2011, this percentage was 1,1%.

1. Is Roma history and culture part of the national curriculum? Is the International Roma Day celebrated and if yes, how?

The Adult Education Centres of the MOEC are organising two groups of Roma children, where their history and other elements of their cultural heritage are taught free of charge. The course titled "History - language - culture" is offered once a week (90 minutes) and lasts for 24 weeks. This course was also offered during the previous school year.

The school fully respects the Roma pupils’ religious holidays and every year, in the context the international children’s day, visits to various cultural centres take place (e.g. mosques). The above mentioned practices help Roma pupils become more self-confident and develop the sense of belonging to the school. The school, recognizing the value of cooperation and mutual understanding and respect, makes special effort to cooperate more with local stakeholders, such as the local bicommunal centre.

As far as the International Roma day is concerned, for the school year 2014-2015 the following activities have been scheduled at Agios Antonios Primary School:

i) Photo exhibition from international Roma activities

ii) Music concert with traditional Roma music, and

iii) Open dinner to the community and the parents of the school.

At Agios Antonios Secondary School, the Turkish studies teacher and the Turkish Cypriot teacher are going to involve pupils in classroom discussions on the occasion of the International Roma Day.

1. What channels for articulating, aggregating and representing the interests of Roma, including through body / institution / unit or other establishments do exist in your country? If applicable, please indicate how such initiatives include staff or representatives from Roma communities

Not applicable

*Please provide any additional information relevant to Roma population that may be informative to the work of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues and the OHCHR.*

6/3/2015

1. Due to the continued illegal occupation of 36.2% of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus since 1974, the Government does not exercise effective control over all of its national territory [↑](#footnote-ref-1)