

National collective organisation for human rights Romeurope :

ALPIL (*Action pour l'insertion sociale par le logement*) - ASAV (*Association pour l'accueil des voyageurs*) - ASET (*Aide à la scolarisation des enfants tsiganes*) - CIMADE (*Comité intermouvements auprès des évacués*) - GISTI (*Groupe d'information et de soutien avec les travailleurs immigrés*) - Identité rrom - LDH (*Ligue des Droits de l'Homme*)- MdM (*Médecins du Monde*) - MRAP (*Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples*) - Mouvement catholique des gens du voyage - Rencontres tsiganes - Une famille un toit 44 - URAVIF (*Union régionale des associations voyageurs d'Ile de France*) -

And the support committees of Bonneuil, Choisy le Roi, Fontenay-sous-Bois, Montreuil, In the north-west of Paris, of Saint-Maur, Saint Michel sur Orge, Savigny-Lieusaint-Melun, Vitry-sur-Seine and Val de Marne.



2005 REPORT ON THE SITUATION OF THE ROMA IMMIGRANTS IN FRANCE

Introductory Note

Formed in October 2000 in Paris, the Romeurope Committee aims to improve access for Roma immigrants to basic rights in France and to combat discrimination and any violations of human rights suffered while in France

Its members support local Roma families in difficult and terrible living conditions in squats and shanty-towns. . They maintain continual contact with the Roma, advising them what Romeurope does and by drawing on the aspirations of the Roma , to suggest any measures and organize any activities that might help.

Romeurope's main work is keeping a watch, providing warnings, providing information, exchanging information and asking questions. .

Note

Romeurope only currently deals with issues relating to Roma immigrants, but maintains permanent contact with associations that work with Travelers, especially on living conditions (see the note on right to lodging) and discrimination.

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1 – The Roma immigrants in France : developments in 2005

There is general agreement as to the place of origin of the Roma who are trying to visit or settle down in France. Most of them come from Romania. Bulgarians make up some of the small groups that occasionally visit. There are a few more from the Balkan area in Lyon area and in the south-east of France. The Roms from Kosovo have settled in Tours.

It cannot be confirmed that there have been any significant numbers of Roma arriving from the new member countries in the European Union such as Hungary, the Czech Republic or Slovakia.

It is still difficult to determine the total number of migrant Roma in France. The impression is that the numbers are more or less steady (1), but somewhere few thousands at the most in France, despite many individual cases of people being returned to the country of origin (see chapter 5 below); new arrivals replace those who have left.

The reasons for migration have not changed, for it is true to say that the discrimination, the humiliation, and the violence that appears sometimes as racism persists in the countries of origin. This is the case in those countries that are due to join the European Union in 2007: Romania and Bulgaria.

Romeurope has acknowledged and welcomed the steps taken in Europe in 2005 which acknowledge this drastic fact and which are aimed at putting forward solutions.

M. Gil-Robles, Human Rights Commissioner for the Council of Europe published his final report on the situation of the Roma, the Sintis and Travelers in Europe on the 15th February 2006. He concluded his report by « stressing the seriousness of the situation and the need to resolve the situation without delay », outlining a series of practical recommendations for the European governments.

Also, a resolution issued by the European Parliament on 29 April 2005, that estimates that the numbers of Roma living in Europe is between twelve and fifteen million, including seven to nine million in the European Union, has condemned racism, and in many cases serious structural discrimination, poverty and social exclusion suffered by the Roma.

It underlines the need to give equal social and political rights to migrants who are of Roma origin and invites States member to implement a series of measures based on the principle of equality of treatment of people regardless race or ethnic origin.

In parallel to this, the initiative named the « Decade for the integration of the Roma », to which five States member and candidates to the European Union have added their signatures, calls on the Commission to work with the governments involved to provide financing for European Union programs designed to this initiative.

There is an increase in the number of projects, there is money, institutional responsible. , Members of Parliament begin to support the idea of improving the conditions of the Roma in Europe. However, it takes time for these initiatives to take effect. The Roma, who choice to exile have always discrimination to gain access to basic rights in their own country.

Romeurope shared this conclusion with one of the main associations for the Roma of Romania, Romani Criss, when they had a meeting in December 2005. This association saw a small progress, when one of its members was appointed to the Anti- Discrimination National Council. Yet it

¹ The stability of the total number has been corroborated by the statements made by Médecins du Monde in the Ile de France, Lyon, Nantes, Strasbourg.

concluded that despite the setting up of a national Agency responsible for drawing up positive discrimination programs, especially programs designed to help gain employment, there was no indication of any progress in the field.

Also it has to be said that, at least on the basis of information reported in the media, that the European Union, when it questioned candidate countries about the conditions required for entry to the Union, it is never mentioned on the serious delays in achieving the integration of the Roma.

In France, the position as detailed in the following chapters shows a deterioration in the living conditions of the Roma because the State takes a harder attitude towards foreigners.

On 9 December 2004, the Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin condemned those who are in the country illegally and said to the prefects :

« I am going to make the campaign to stop illegal immigration ...That is my absolute priority in 2005....We have to step up repatriation...In 2005, I have even more ambitious target² of 20,000 repatriations..... »

On 20 June 2005, the Minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy went further :

« I am giving all of you an ambitious goal: achieve a 50% increase over 2004 in the number of expatriations of foreigners who are in the country illegally; if you do this you will then be able to expel 23,000 illegal immigrants this year »

On the 15th September, this very person, Nicolas Sarkozy, showed to the Prefects his initial report on this deportation policy, a policy that he intended to speed up by excluding any measures that would provide any leniency.

« Over eight months , 56% of the objectives have been achieved. I would like to invite those Prefects who are achieving results below the average to contact the National Promotion and Resource Center to receive help...you have been charged with the task of achieving results....please resist any pressure from any kind of «group » or « committee» that only represents itself ».

Also a statement that really is worrying Roma:

« I would like to point out that the Romanian or Bulgarian nationals who are here illegally do not enjoy any special protection from repatriation: the fact that Romania and Bulgaria are candidates for membership of the European Union changes nothing. I would also like to point out that the European Court of Human Rights has never recognized anyone's right to lead a family life where life appears to be good! ».

In a report produced in France in September 2005, the Human Rights Commissioner for the Council of Europe specifically criticized the intolerable living conditions the Roma experienced in France and the attitude of the French government towards the Roma migrants. The Government's terse response to the many recommendations , to ensure that the basic rights of the Roma were observed and that issue ought to come under the jurisdiction of bilateral agreements to develop the country of origin.

At the time this report was prepared, the members of the Romeurope committee were very concerned about the new draft legislation relating to the conditions for admission of aliens and asylum seekers (CEDESA-Code for the admission of aliens and the right of asylum). This draft intends to restrict to a considerable extent the entry of foreigners, adding to the insecurity of foreigners living in France. It would become possible only in exceptional circumstances to enter France legally for whatever reason, even for health reasons.

² In relation to the removal of 13,000 people in 2004

In response to this consistently tougher stance taken by the government towards migrants, some local politicians have attempted to do something about the disgraceful conditions in which too many Roma families live.

In île de France, about 25 politicians from the various local authorities met on 16 December 2004 agreed to attack the Government for not providing them, with any help to deal with the problems relating to the presence of groups of Roma immigrants in their commune or department. It was proposed to implement a series of joint initiatives. None of these initiatives actually came to anything. There were only three people at a meeting on 23 February 2005; this is an indication of the difficulty of effectively maintaining support for an initiative without the involvement of the State.

On the other hand, local initiatives have managed to improve the living conditions of several groups of Roma especially in Val de Marne department and Nantes ; we will mention these later.

It would be appropriate also to mention the increasingly significant efforts that have been mobilized by local people and associations to criticize the terrible conditions suffered by the Roma . The support and defense committees are being set up. These bodies have been formed locally with Roma families to help them in their dealings with the Government.

In Nantes area, three sites for Roma families from Romania have been allocated; in addition to individual families that have been accommodated in French families or by fellow-country people. The majority of the Roma families are located in towns .

As everywhere the living conditions are difficult,. Roma families are tolerated, they are very likely to be involved with the police, threatened with eviction and attract repeated convictions. Against this background, individuals, have decided to take action and have quickly formed themselves into associations. Since the end of December 2004, local support associations have been formed under a group called Solidaire Rrom, joined by the League of Human Rights, Médecins du Monde, the Restos du Cœur and Secours Catholique. This group involved in exchanging information's, in deliberating over issues but also in raising issues of a more political nature with local decision-makers.

In Lyon's region; joint and individual initiatives have helped to contribute to the efforts of associations that have supported the Roma for several years. One group that includes several associations (League of Human Rights, , ASET(help of schooling roma children), district groups, Resovigi, Medecins du Monde , Alpil.(association for social insertion by lodging).). They are looking at the issue of school attendance. The local residents are supporting a family or a group of families in their area etc...

In Provence-Alpes-Côtes d'Azur region, in contrast to Paris or Lyon regions, Roma families from the former countries of Eastern Europe have been relatively subdued up until recent months. There are not many group sites and these have been made available only recently. There are in fact two or three of them in Marseille and Avignon suburbs as well as in Fréjus that includes 150 to 200 people. Some families are also scattered throughout the run-down urban infrastructure of the large metropolis (Marseilles Toulon Avignon) or they squat in the industrial wastelands or sometimes in unsafe buildings in the center of town. Some, who have been in the region for about ten years, were able to obtain the proper legal documents to stay, but are preyed in unsafe buildings under co-ownership. These types of buildings are fast increasing in number, especially in Marseille. On the basis of the information already available, the families come from various countries in the former Yugoslavia, from Kosovo and only a few from Romania. For the most part, the families have already spent several years in Italy and they speak Italian. Now, some vehicles from the Paris suburbs have been seen.

Despite several appeals for support three or four years ago, the authorities (cities council, general council, prefecture) paid no attention to the terrible circumstances of these families, especially of

the children who live in conditions of poverty and on the inhuman fringes of society. The government agencies merely pointed to the reasons that, for the most part, these families are « neither able to be deported nor able to be processed as legal immigrants».

Without exception, as far as we are aware, no organized group has tried to engage an effort with these families in an effort to act as an intermediary between them and the authorities, especially with the cities councils and the general councils . Only charities have made attempt to provide support, but these organizations quickly wear themselves out trying to overcome the difficulties. However, the very useful part played by the Secours Catholique in Fréjus should be noted; this organization has been trying for two years to improve the lot of a group of about 70 Roma . it should also be appreciated that proceedings to deport a group still have not been instituted. In Fréjus proceedings introduced by the Town Hall are currently under appeal to a superior court.

These families, although they still have a discreet presence, nevertheless provoke hostility from the local people and local politicians. They clash with the French Roma who are there in large numbers despite the terrible local conditions in which they live. The general term used by the press and often by the local politicians «Travelers» is a source of conflict that can only make matters worse.

The association « Rencontres Tsiganes” is aware of these dangers and is trying to warn people of them by informing as wide an audience as possible and through discussion meetings. The first meeting comprising various groups took place last May. A further meeting took place on the 15th February 2006 ; this was designed to let people exchange information and where possible to share their methods.

2 – Administrative and legal situation

In 2005 more restrictions and constraints were placed on the admission and periods of residence of the Roma than in 2004.

In practical terms, the status of asylum seeker for those at risk has disappeared just as the requirements for asylum have become more restrictive. Only a few Roma from the Balkan countries are still able to apply for asylum but only a few can ever hope for a positive answer. In Tours, while a few families from Kosovo have obtained asylum in past years, the families that have arrived recently have had their applications refused.

This channel for seeking residency is nowadays very much limited because of the adoption of the notion of a «secure » country of origin. This has a bearing on all member states of the European Union and those countries that are in the process of joining. In addition to this there is the dropping of the idea of territorial asylum; this has been replaced by « subsidiary protection » controlled also by OFPRA(office for asylum seek registrations).

Unable to apply for a long stay residence permit by going through the existing processes, most Roma are forced to live in a state of insecurity while they make attempts to reside in the country legally, even if this means losing their residency period status in France.

As a result, the Roma from Bulgaria and Romania, who are not required to obtain a visa to enter a country in the European Union, have, in the main, chosen to make frequent trips backwards and forwards between France and their country of origin and so only stay in France for periods of less

than three months. In this way they have papers that are valid for both their own country as well as the host country.

France is not ignoring this situation. It is in fact engaged in a lot of legal wrangling to justify any prefectural orders made to remove illegal immigrants, using as a basis for its action Article 5C of the Schengen agreements, on the grounds that these immigrants do not have enough resources. (see the second part of chapter 1). It is quite valid to rely on this clause on the basis of the fact that the immigrants are begging, reclaiming metal, selling flowers on the public highway or quite simply squatting or living in shanty-towns. When some have resources, inevitably in cash but with no bank account, this is seized on the basis that it has been acquired by fraudulent means....

The Romeurope organisation is concerned about the current policy towards foreigners; this aims to deny them any basic rights including the right to a private and family life, guaranteed by Article 8 of the European Court of Human Rights, the right to health...by once more amending the legislation relating to this area. The draft legislation reforming the Code for the admission and residence of foreigners and the right to asylum (CESEDA) currently under consideration is based on a suspicion of all people who choose to come to France for reasons of security or because they have family and private connections in our country, whilst looking favourably on a category of foreigners who have never had any problems obtaining residence permits: scientists and other well qualified foreigners and top sportsmen and women...:

Most of the Roma we met will be, from member Europeans of the European Union in 2007. A recent European Commission report indicated that the restrictive measures imposed on these « new entrants », especially those measures imposed by France, had a negative impact on the host countries, while the States that had not any transitional arrangements relating mainly to finding jobs achieved generally good results.

Despite the risks, a minority of the Roma choose to stay in the country beyond the three month period that is theoretically permitted, often for health reasons, so becoming effectively illegal immigrants. Without any doubt, we have some work to do and have to provide a report on the imminent membership of Romania to the European Union in an effort to make possible for these people to live in France and to become a part of French society and not to suffer deportation.

In the second part of this report a technical specification sheet provides a review of this basic issue (see chapter 2 part 1).

With the exception of Paris and Marseille, children born in France represent an added administrative complication for Romanian parents residing in France. In fact, these children are Romanian nationals and have to have a separate Romanian passport issued only at the embassy or the consul. Without this document, mothers are pressurized by the French police, who can threaten to separate them from their child at the border either when they are leaving or when they are in Romania, because without papers they are unable to prove their identity and the lawful relationship that the child has to the parents. This may occur despite the fact that a birth certificate is issued by the local authority for the area where the child was born.

The trip to complete this administrative process is often too onerous for the family or even too dangerous, if the journey is illegal the mother can be easily arrested in transit and in the worst case separated from her child.

This whole scenario prevents these families going voluntarily to Romania voluntarily, preferring forced removal.

3 – Living conditions

In the case of over 90% of Roma immigrants in France, health and living conditions are very poor; they survive in shanty towns where they crowd in to run-down caravans or huts made of scrap wood and metal.

However, mention should be made of a number of innovative measures taken by the local authorities to meet the needs of some of the families in their area.

Ile de France Regional Council tried to provide housing for these vulnerable people, explicitly Roma families. Several meetings, attended by representatives of Romeurope, produced a project called « eradication of shanty towns»; a budget of one million euros was voted for this project on 23 June 2005.

These funds represent investment's grants allocated to Cities, or General Councils. These bodies could then submit projects allowing groups of 80 to 100 people to leave a shanty-town and live in conditions that comply with the minimum standards in terms of housing and personal facilities. It should be pointed out that there is also the possibility of negotiating a budget to provide the necessary support from the social services.

In spite of these financial incentives, the communes have hesitated in committing themselves and no project took place in 2005.

In the Nantes region, encouraged by those organizations supporting Roma families, the Nantes City Council and General Council of the department of Loire Atlantique agreed as a first step to contract in support for families that are legal immigrants, then to develop an area of land for 18 familie's homes. . The Vice Chairwoman of the Social s Committee in Nantes commented «While this initiative is a step in the right direction, it does not solve the problems of the Roma in France nor does it solve the problems of the Roma in Nantes » (see the next paragraph).

3 - 1 Shanty towns and squats

The rubbish, that often lied around the place they used as shelters in these neglected areas, litters the ground or accumulates in large piles bringing with it real health risks. Because there is no regular collection by the city authorities , the situation is deteriorating daily. In Aubervilliers, (Val de Marne), in an area covering less than a hectare where about 200 people live, the amount gathered rubbish was considered to be 650 tons !. Naturally this location has become a « paradise » for rats.

There is only one water point for groups of 100 to 200 people and this water point is located outside the area. At another site in Aubervilliers (Val de Marne) the water point is 2000 meters from the area and a stairway of 50 steps has to be climbed to reach it. In November in Réau (77) a man was knocked down by a car and died during his walk to get water.

The only electricity supply is provided by a temporary connection witch is dangerous. Lighting provided by candle also brings the risk of fire. For your information, the lack of electricity supply cost the lives of two young girls in the shanty town Surville (Lyon area)in 2004 .Every winter the Medecins du Monde teams see people with burns, especially children.

The most common method of heating is the butane gas hotplate used for cooking that is working on all the day long; it is sometimes even laid on the ground and this is potentially dangerous to children

who live and play near it. Some people have managed to build stoves, using wood and metal tubes to serve as chimneys, but often the smoke flows back into the hut, making the atmosphere stifling. These methods of heating carry a permanent risk of fire. At the end of December 2005, in Aubervilliers (Val de Marne) 44 huts went on fire as a result of wood stoves not working properly.

Lack of sanitary facilities is the worst thing experienced by the Rom people and this is what they need as a priority. In some areas, depending on the type of soil, they can manage to dig holes and lay some planks of wood around about to form a w-c hut. However, in the town where such makeshift systems are not possible to erect, the situation is a lot worse and hum humiliating: people have to go at night to some corners to try to hide themselves but sometimes they are seen and gestured to the effect that they have no dignity.

In Val de Marne, « Longs Rideaux » site³

"The rue des Longs Rideaux site in Limeil Brévannes /Bonneuil has been operating since 2002 and has 17 caravans on it. This is the last shanty town in Val de Marne. The conditions are very difficult. The water outlet is 1 kilometre away (fire hydrant) and there is no electricity. There are risks of fire. Rats are an ongoing problem. Situated between a motorway (above it) and the railway line, this site is not under threat of removal at present because the SNCF case has been dismissed (but the DDE-Department -Road Maintenance Services -can request eviction). There is hardly any variation in the number of families. The Bonneuil commune has had sanitary facilities installed and Limeil has provided a water tank (non-drinking water). A rubbish skip is regularly emptied. The support committee, in association with the cities of Limeil and Bonneuil is active in all areas: schooling, health, hygiene, literacy, solidarity... with partners in the public services and charities. The city of Limeil has agreed to make payments at the CCAS (The Commune Centre for Social Action). A housing or a installation project on a development site is absolutely necessary and urgent! ».

Villeurbanne (Lyon suburb)

"In Villeurbanne, in the avenue Paul Kruger, not far from the place Grandclément which is an important crossroads in the town, alongside the tracks of the future tramway extension that is currently under construction, there used to be one of those villages in the town that had all the components that urban engineering rejects or that hurried mechanical engineers cleverly salvage, deform, stretch and deploy, if not with skill but as a matter of excessive need. Along a high wall, a wide rusty gate used to provide access to the site, a former station and SNCF repair shed. The whole site was divided into two specific areas, separated by a rubbish dump, a no man's land where in the middle there was the unic water point. At the right entrance a large covered shed which housed few caravans and dozens of huts, between the train repair pits and the old railway lines. On the side and at the back, «rooms» had also

³ When this report was being printed a police operation resulted in the evacuation of this site. The facts have been reported in chapter 4-4

been built in the former station premises. On the left hand side as you enter the site, there were dozens of huts some built below a few roof overhangs or located for protection at the back of the building built with non-temporary materials on this side.

In general, the huts and other shelters were constructed using an ingenious combination of materials of all types, such as wood, cardboard boxes, grating used on construction sites, tarpaulins. Skillfully made stoves of sheet metal provided heating and seemed to be used as cookers, and sometimes with any luck there was a light bulb in the middle of the ceiling giving off, in between ill-timed electricity power cuts, inadequate light. There always seemed to be one or several beds, the same single blanket used by several people, filthy sheets and on the ground, there were the cooking utensils, one single saucepan, some pathetic broken toys, small wooden boards roughly broken by hand and finally a large bundle of synthetic cloth that might contain the family's remaining possessions, if there were any remaining.

Life on the site sometimes could appear to be all right. Children would play in one part, some people around a fire in another part and then there was the continual movement to and fro of people from one abode to the other, going through one door and coming out another, and diving under a curtain with their backs doubled, half-opening a side of a door to get their head in. Although this might look all right, we shuddered to think that such conditions were the norm. The worst thing was the length of time that this site remained in existence. There was nothing else worse than to remain in such great misery for such a long time. The huts stank of filth and the faces of the residents looked sunken with tiredness.

On the site we noticed each time more waste of all types. We were first of all reassured when we saw that the organic waste was rigorously put in bins outside the camp and gathered by the dustmen. The fact is that bricklayers and other workers (I was told « zidari » : bricklayers) emptied their construction waste in these sites : doing this they avoided paying the charges for using the near-by waste refuse site and also the wood and other materials were reclaimed to build the houses and to provide the heating material. There were also the shells of cars which the children used as play areas all day long before being taken away (?).

We were sometimes told that despite the difficult conditions they would not return to Romania for anything. In that country although there are a few relatives who may miss them (they sometimes left sons and daughters, parents and grand-parents), they had not that recognition that we gave them and they would make this point by pointing to the blue badge of our Medecins du Monde waistcoats. We would hear more and more of what we had only been able to believe from the start.

"- Here, it is getting worse than Romania »

"-The people in the prefecture have no conscience ("lipseste de constienta", translated literally) in keeping us out... »

"- We asked the police where we can go with the children and they said « I do not give a damn"...».

Eviction from the site was on everybody's mind and had been so for a few weeks ; the conditions on the site were getting considerably worse. Organic waste was left in pits within the site . Those who had left had skimmed on the work that had to be done , and they had neither any thought for others nor of the future on the site. That is why we found the pits full of waste of all kinds, pathetically covered with canvas sheeting.

In fact, many were leaving. Probably going back to Romania. Many were leaving because they were afraid of the police. Of the over 300 people in November (including nearly 170 children) in the end less than 90 people were left in mid-January (about 50 children). Those who remained were families

| *with « the least resources », if it is possible to say so...with no possibility of returning and with no future*

3 - 2 – A made-up site in Nantes

The Nantes town hall owns a site where about twenty Roma families from Romania have settled. The town hall is calling for evacuation of the site and the families have nowhere to go; volunteers and associations have joined together to look after the families.

In the beginning, there was discussion about the prospects of re-housing, accommodation or providing a site for the families who are considered to be in the country legally; that is five families out of the twenty. In fact, the local courts could only deal with the families who were in the country legally. Within the Nantes town hall and the General Council of the Loire Atlantique, the politicians positioned themselves in relation to the information provided by the prefecture on the families that were regarded as being in the country legally. Some efforts had been made together with the town hall and the Nantes CCAS (Commune Center for Social Action) to find housing or a site that could take the five families involved. An agreement between the « One family One roof 44 » association, the Nantes CCAS, and the General Council of Loire Atlantique was signed to provide for and encourage dialogue between the Rom families and the services involved in providing physical and financial support, educational facilities and healthcare but also to seek options for looking after and find some housing for these families which is compatible with the state of their health and the temporary status of each family.

We managed very quickly to establish that the five families were not in the same group and consequently that the option of a site specifically allocated to these five families would present organizational problems on the site mentioned. Also, these five families were not necessarily on good terms with each other. They had rather affinities or clan relations with other families who are, “illegally”, in the country . The notions of solidarity and support between families are not as obvious as appears; these families are on the same site more because of a lack of solutions, a need for safety and because of a feeling of being together, rather than as a result of a deliberate decision. For the most part, the situation is tolerated.

Consequently, this background together with the efforts of families, volunteers and associations, have led to further discussions with the town hall of Nantes to arrive at a limited solution for five families . The action taken and the views of the families reported by the press, the lack of co-ordination in the administrative procedures and the processes involved, demand a global approach for dealing with these families.

Since then discussion has focused on the general removal of the site. The City Council has suggested an area of ground near the existing site. This would undergo a complete redevelopment to include: ground stabilization, connection to the drainage system, to the electricity grid and to the water supply. There was discussion about the conditions under which the families could be supported: these would be the same whatever the circumstances for them being in France or their legal status. It emerged that, although the question of the status of the people is a issue that continues to develop and status is the issue that is most often questioned and is questionable, it was important that the conditions proposed for their accommodation or for parking their caravans be adapted to suit each family and be related to the status of each family. This would therefore not

raise expectations, nor mislead families as to their status, nor interpret the measure for accommodating them, as agreed by the town hall and supported by the General Council, as being a legal measure designed to legalise their stay in France.

The area is therefore being developed (4) under the good offices of the town hall of Nantes and is being assigned to the « One family One roof 44 » association for a one-year lease. The facilities and equipment (5) are being bought by the association « One family One roof 44 » with a grant from the Nantes CCAS (Commune Center for Social Action) and the General Council of Loire Atlantique.

Each family has, depending on its status when it is admitted to the new site, either a mobile home or a caravan. These facilities are for sleeping in, and a second caravan is available for each family and this is for cooking.

Admission to the new site started on 1st May 2005 and it hosted 18 families that were to be provided with professional support from the association « One family One roof 44 » to help with housing as well as a mediator/interpreter. A local association closely monitors daily progress.

3 - 3 – In the former headquarter of the “ gendarmes” (Saint-Maur, Val de Marne)

Introductory comments :

The situation of the Rom families in Val de Marne has seen some improvements since 1999, after the joint efforts made by the Rom families, the support committees and the local authorities. Between 1999 and 2006 several hundreds of Rom people lived in shanty-towns, squats, and were evicted many times. ...roaming between Orly, Choisy le Roi, Créteil Vitry-sur-Seine... and Bonneuil/Limeil.

A section of these families were housed, others had to return to Romania or settle in other cities in France or other West European countries.

If there is a shanty town (see the extract on Limeil/Bonneuil above), the other families (in total nearly 200 people) currently have accommodation built with non-temporary materials that has been provided by the committees. This is temporary accommodation (buildings designated for demolition). The situation varies: joint accommodation (by the General Council 94 in St Maur), family accommodation (by the General Council 94 in Vitry/Villejuif/Joinville and by the cities of Vitry and Choisy le Roi) or even accommodation in hotels (as part of the Assistance to Children system). The accommodation provided in hotels is a difficult arrangement (continual moves, often removal from schools, prohibition on cooking...) and about ten families are involved in this arrangement.

Accommodation in housing with non-temporary materials has the same limitations as elsewhere while the people have no residence permits and so no legal right to obtain employment. Some families have a residence permit and are therefore on the applicant's list for social housing (long

⁴ The site will be emptied, stabilised and five pitches will be connected to the drainage system, electricity grid and water supply. In the central part a housing for electricity distribution will provide connections for the caravans

⁵ The association has acquired five mobile homes , thirteen caravans and two sanitary blocks They have been provided for the families accommodated in the caravans

waits before allocation of accommodation); these residence permits are basically obtained because of illness.

Collective accommodation in the St Maur police station

"Since 20 November 2004, the Rom people who have been placed on a site provided by the General Council of Val de Marne in Saint Maur des Fossés have been accommodated in the former police station owned by the Local Council. The General Council and the support committee signed an acquisition agreement for temporary possession of ownerless property and free of charge for a period of a year and not subject to tacit renewal. On the 20th November 2005 this lease for temporary possession was renewed up to the end of November 2006.

As soon as people were admitted to these premises an internal set of rules defining a joint undertaking by the Support Committee and the ROMA families was drawn up and signed by the two parties; this undertaking included in particular the sharing by the families in the expenditure associated with the occupancy so that the costs could be met (water, electricity, insurance, maintenance of the building).

In addition to the four committees operating on the site (education, health, daily initiatives and management) a « security committee » was set up to manage the security of the premises belonging to the commune and the four flats. The support committee and the families are bound in law by a six-month agreement. This second agreement, signed in June 2005, was attached to an initial assessment report to cover the six months period spent in the former police station. When this initial assessment was issued the support committee wanted the families to think more positively of their future especially their plans for obtaining employment.

Every Wednesday there is a local meeting. A representative of the Roma appointed to represent each flat meets every fortnight a few members of the support committee in order to examine thoroughly those problems they face on a daily basis. In between time, the office and the member of the support committee meet to consider the various difficulties faced. Four meetings each month help to ensure that everyday life is managed in the best way possible and discusses more general questions such as obtaining papers, housing, health issues and schooling of children. In addition to these meetings it is necessary to have some people there on a daily basis; these are people who are actively committed to help the Roma and to provide some educational support and also help with problems that arise from time to time and which cannot wait until the Wednesday meeting

As mentioned at the start of the internal rules, the Support Committee continues to consider and investigate with the families, who have indicated their intention to settle in France over a long period of time, all the available options for integration. This includes ;

- temporary accommodation in the boulevard Rabelais*
- compulsory school attendance for children as well as support during school attendance*
- assistance with obtaining residence permits in compliance with French legislation*
- doing everything possible to improve their situation : learning the language , looking for vocational training, access to healthcare, to housing:*

After a year spent in the premises of the former police station , the support committee made an objective assessment on the progress achieved but also an assessment on the limited aspect of collective accommodation.

- the regular attendance by children at school with educational support for each child is real progress. The first term results for children in primary and secondary school are encouraging and rather satisfactory. The five very small children of three years of age in the infant school have been integrated with no difficulty. |

A disagreement between the support committee and one family, after repeated absenteeism of one teenage girl made the family realize how difficult it is for her to integrate for a long period of time. With no desire for the teenager to be at school on a regular basis her family has preferred to leave the accommodation that we have set up and leave for Romania.

- while we had insisted the previous year that adults learn French, we had few applicants. This year we have noted that there has been a good demand from adult applicants to join the literacy class. This demand may be partly due to the stable situation and to the relative security of the families who have got themselves organized and who have more time and partly to the fact that the children are going to school; this makes the adults and especially their mothers want to learn French.

- Adults, both men and women have managed to find regular work but clearly their situation is still not secure. One family that had the means to obtain social housing cannot apply for it, as it does not have a residence permit.

- one family from the former police station is housed in a detached house owned by the General Council. This family with four members (two parents, two teenagers of twelve and sixteen) moved in to the house in July 2005. Like other families we asked for an occupation rent in order to meet the costs of electricity, water and insurance etc . This family has a monthly income of about 350/400 euros and it is clearly difficult for them to manage. This family which used to live for eleven years in campsites or shanty towns spent a few weeks distancing itself from the house not daring to invest itself in it, then things happened (development, improvement, maintenance). Of course, having a house is not something secure because this family does not have a residence permit. The father was arrested in the middle of December and had to leave before the end of December after an APRF (prefectural order for the removal of an illegal immigrant); this will make his wife and children the more vulnerable. The two teenagers are attending school and are showing a real desire to stick at it. They are helped at school by a member of the support committee who regularly works with them and the results look satisfactory. . Since they moved in to this house we have noted a very small decrease in their somatoform disorders . In fact the young girl used to have fairly repeated asthma attacks which have disappeared, the headaches seem to be decreasing and the local health center is monitoring health on a more regular basis.

Our support committee has always kept a watchful eye on the number of people housed. We have not accepted any further people, as we are aware that the prime restriction on collective accommodation is overpopulation. Living together is extremely complicated as it is subject to rules that are particularly difficult to observe given the fact that there are a great number of people. Even if we are aware that we have in some way «made the occupants poor » by asking for a contribution towards the costs associated with the building, this is for us a basic matter of principle as we want them to have their own house to enable them to be part of the population in general; that will have a cost, that they have to meet.

3 - 4 – Houses or apartments “abandoned” ”

In the autumn of 2004 in Choisy –le roi, as some families with children at school had the desire to carry on living in the commune despite being evicted on a regular basis, the local authority decided to provide them, through a local housing association, four abandoned detached houses in the commune housing estate.

A few months later the mayor of Vitry offered to eight families the same type of accommodation , the General Council of Val de Marne to two families, the mayor of Saint-Denis to three families.

These measures, which do not encroach on the social housing stock, signify a certain degree of progress for families who have a roof over their heads, and with « normal » individual sanitary facilities. At the same time there are problems, because the families have to meet the costs at least of fluids. For the support committee the task is complicated by the geographic spread of the families.

The situation of families re-housed in Val de Marne's department

The re-housing project is situated in Vitry and in Villejuif. This began in November 2004. Since then one family only has been a problem and it had to leave.

The positive aspects

- in contrast to families out on the shanty towns : for these families there have been significant improvements in terms of comfort and hygiene ;*
- good school attendance by children that is well managed (many of the children are supported by the support committee together with staff in the Ministry of Education)*
- for several families a start has been made to integrate families; for others this is more difficult ;*

The assistance provided by associations demands the involvement of many active helpers in the field and a lot of time; this assistance is still necessary but it should be gradually lessen - this would allow the families to gain a certain independence.

The negative aspects

- the families have the same uncertainties, the same constraints as the other illegal immigrants except that the families that have chosen to return every three months to Romania in order to comply with the « tourist » visa cannot have medical assistance from the State and cannot prove that they have been in the country for ten years to rectify this procedural difficulty. They are also in a worse financial position because of their new accommodation. In fact this accommodation is an additional heavy burden (water, electricity, etc)*
- Also as they are forbidden to work, their main income is tied up with begging, and because their children are at school and because the requirement to attend school affects all families, these families are without an important money earner.*

We have the reasonable expectation of obtaining from the General Council a child's allowance to be paid to the families to offset the new charges.

Also, electricity charges resulting from heating the houses are prohibitive. We are looking for solutions from the families (to limit temperatures to 20°C) and from EDF (the French electricity company-changing the rate or the special rate)

Finally, given the concern that has emerged from families and associations about extending the occupancy of the accommodation until a longer-term solution has been arranged, the General Council have assured us that there would be no removals without an acceptable solution.

We have to stress the excellent relations we have with the General Council of Val de Marne, who on their part understand the need for this operation to run smoothly. We have fixed a meeting timetable with them and this should enable us to tackle the problems related to residence permits, employment, and State benefits.

Family in danger in Saint-Denis

Iosif B. and Angelica G and their four children (the last one being four years old and born in France) are at present living in a house belonging to the city council of Saint -Denis (department of Seine-Saint-Denis); this house has been provided to them through an agreement signed with a housing association. They have to pay an occupation rent to cover water and electricity charges. The three older children go to school on a regular basis. Silvio goes to the secondary school, Alisa and Samuel to the primary school. Alisa who is nine years old has stood out because of her excellent marks at school. Sebastian who is four years old has enrolled at an infant school but, because his mother has overprotected him, has not attended this much.

After living in caravans on various shanty towns (the family arrived in 2000) this family appreciates the better living conditions, having an actual roof over their heads, but they have to find the money to feed the family and pay for « the rent ».

But what can you do when you do not have a residence permit and so you are not legally allowed to work.

Iosif and Angelica have lodged applications for asylum and these have been refused.

Iosif is a skilled mechanic: his qualifications have been recognised by the Technical Services Department of Saint -Denis . Not being able to do his trade, he is reclaiming scrap metal. While doing this work he was arrested recently as he drove his vehicle with the correct papers. After 36 hours in police custody he was released with an invitation to Leave the Country, however Iosif received a promise of a job.

Angelica is obliged to beg. She was arrested on two occasions on the Champs Elysées as she was with her youngest son (the over protected one) The law recognized the arguments of the defense who claimed that Angelica was especially concerned with the health of her child and that she had no other option than to keep this child with her. The acquittal will be confirmed in appeal then by the Court of Cassation (the court which decides appeals) . However, Angelica is hesitant about begging..

Iosif does not dare go out.

Should the family leave the house because they cannot pay for the water and the electricity. Should the children leave school?

3 - 5 A home « like everyone else »

They are not so many families who have been able to acquire a real home because they have not, a residence permit beforehand.

In Saint Michel sur Orge (department of Essonne), after a squat of twenty Roma families during 18 months in Technoparc , the support committee, after many months of negotiations has obtained from the Prefect (that is the prefect of the time) papers (for health reasons) for one family. The committee then found, thanks to the support of certain mayors in the district accommodation for this family and work in the Technical Service Department of a town for the head of the family.

Another family received paper six months later (not for health reasons, but because of a promise of a job and support from the mayor of Saint Michel with accommodation thrown in). To get papers renewed requires us putting a lot of pressure on the offices of the Prefecture.

The latest act by the support committee was, before the actual removal from the squat took place, to negotiate with the Prefect (a new prefect) to ensure that eight families were legally in the country, and to obtain with the help of the Chairman of the District eight promises of employment (one for each head of the family). We have had a lot of difficulties obtaining the papers but we finally managed to obtain them for seven families (one family had to go back to Romania).

No family has specific accommodation at the moment. Three have been housed kindly by the mayor of Saint Michel on a temporary basis. The other families are in a hotel, with the costs being met by the General Council. Employment is a complicated matter as well; three have an unlimited-term contract and no worries, the others have had limited-term contracts, in which case renewal takes a lot of time and there is a long process involved.

The support committee stresses that this experience has taught it, that when it had to talk about the issue of papers with the Prefect, they also had to discuss support for the families.

In Achères four families obtained residence permits . The first for health reasons. The second was regarded as an exceptional case after the town council fought a persistent battle with the prefecture; this lasted more than two years. Salcuca found work and found housing.

In Lieusaint, the project implemented in 2000 and started again in April 2002 is progressing well. At the end of 2005 the 39 families included in the project have all residence permits or have received an acknowledgement that an application for a permit has been received; all the men and a significant proportion of the women are working; 19 families have left the reception site and have been housed, in a detached house or an apartment; the children are attending school or pursuing vocational training. This outcome was achieved through an unprecedented level of activity and a partnership between the State, local authorities and associations and because of the constant support provided in terms of social services and provision of sanitary facilities.

A family in a detached house in Lieusaint

M.S. who is currently 36 years old arrived for the first time in France in 1992. by himself. At the end of a year and a half he went back to Romania to be with his family and he returned to France with his wife and two older children in 1994 and never return. He settled down in Seine et Marne where he found some of his fellow countrymen who came from the same town of Cheveresu Mare. He bought a caravan and lived on several sites in the communes of Cesson, Combs la Ville before coming to Lieusaint to settle at a small site near the church. Since 1999, and like all those who used to live on this site, he joined the integration project involving Romanian families; this project was set up in partnership with the SAN of Melun Sénart and the town hall of Lieusaint and is supported by the State. The early difficulties are specially tied with inadequate

⁶ The report can be requested from San de Sénart- Service RTAGV- 100 rue de Paris- BP6- 77567 Lieusaint Cedex

assessment of the support provision described in a previous report and is the reason why it has taken more than five years to reach the present situation.

So today, family S has grown up with three daughters, aged 16, 14 and 10 and a boy of 6; the two latter children were born in France. A grand-mother lives with them.

S. has had an unlimited-term contract since 2002 and has a job as an industrial cleaner. His wife does the housework. They have income of 1592 euros plus the housing allowance, say in total 1931 euros. They received housing, a nice little house, an entrance hall, a living room, and four bedrooms with a small garden, situated in an area of detached houses in the town of Lieusaint, for which they pay rent of 416 euros. They have a car. The daughter of 14 goes to the secondary school and the two younger children are at the primary school. On the other hand, the eldest daughter of 16 stopped at the end of the secondary school. She should be doing some work-based vocational training but according to S has not found a boss. However S does not appear to be worried with this problem. S says he is very satisfied with his life even if the type of job he does means that he has to get up at 1.30 a.m. He has no problems at work. He has no problems with his neighbors. He has not kept in touch with Romania and he is not thinking of returning there. However he maintains very friendly ties with his neighbors. When we visited him, about ten of them were together drinking a fizzy drink. They were aware that they were in a privileged position as « the Romanians are not very well thought of by the law in France and because of those who have done silly things, the situation has become more difficult »

C. a young mother of two children who was in the group and who lived in another small house has had less luck as she had not managed to find work. With no qualifications she works as a cleaning lady but she has been asked if she has a driving license which she does not have. She is taking French lessons, as she has to be able to order i

The admission of Romania to the European Union ? “Yes, it’s a good thing ...” but the impression is that this thought is far removed from their concerns which are the same as those of any modest French family.

4 – Eviction from living sites

Police harassment

The Government's priority of combating illegal immigration has in reality turned into victimization of people with no identity documents, in particular the Roma.

Because they could not legally all be expelled from the land and in order to force them to return voluntarily, the committee Romeurope has noted a strategy of intimidation and harassment by systematic eviction from sites with greatly increased police presence often by violent means, creating a climate of terror among the families.

4 – 1 “Classic” Evictions

They are the result of a legal decision following the request by the owner of the property. The judge may grant a delay. To our knowledge - on two occasions - the judge has instructed the owner to find a suitable solution.

These cases have been reported in Seine-Port (77) and Nantes (44), where in the context of repeated demands for the eviction of a group of Roma families the President of the TGI (County

Court) clearly indicated to the complainant, i.e. the Town Hall of Nantes, that it was desirable to work towards finding solutions rather than repeatedly initiating procedures which go no way towards solving the problem for the individuals concerned, particularly when partner organizations are present on the ground.

Most often, when the legal ruling has been delivered, the Prefecture in question, in a more or less lengthy period, if it has not achieved the departure of the Roma by intimidation, (see below), decides to mobilize the forces of the law and proceed to eviction.

This year there have again been numerous evictions from camps and shanty towns with massive intervention of the forces of law and order forcing the families to flee, without in most cases their being offered alternative accommodation even during the winter period.

Sometimes a few nights in hotels spread round the department have been proposed by the social services just to the families with children. These have often been refused as they know that three days later they will be turned out into the street without any help and isolated from their community.

Under police pressure to clear the sites as soon as possible, families have to leave behind, most of their things, including their medication and their identity papers. As the committee Romeurope regularly complains, these evictions have a cumulative effect on the precarious situation in which these families find themselves. All the links which have been laboriously built up with the Child Medical Services, consultations in the community, educational establishments, social services and all other social networks are broken.

Some examples

In Montreuil (Seine-Saint-Denis) about twenty Roma families who had arrived in the commune in 2000 were removed in April 2003 from a first squat. After wandering around for a few weeks they had settled in another empty building.

On 28 February 2005 an accidental fire destroyed part of the building, fortunately claiming no lives; one family was put up in a hotel for a fortnight, the others were crowded into the intact part of the building without electricity. At that point the eviction was programmed and announced to the families.

When it took place on the morning of 3 May 2005 about sixty people were still present in the building including babies, young children and pregnant women.

The only proposal made by the DDASS (Health and Social Services Department) was to put them up for three nights in hotels a long way from Montreuil which the families from the town refused as their children attended schools in Montreuil.

For a few weeks there was nothing else that they could do but camp on the Town Hall Square without being allowed to put up tents or temporary buildings. Access to the grass on which they slept in sleeping bags was barred by fencing. The water of the town fountain was dyed blue to make it unusable.

The Roma of Montreuil

Some of them have settled in a shed next to a piece of cleared ground. We visited them in late afternoon. Catriona who had done a puppet workshop with some of the Roma children last year, had contacted me; Yann was there too, the neighbour Philippe who had tried to help them and Sylvain.

We told them in advance that we wanted a meeting with them to find out what their wishes were. Since they had set up camp on this site in September 2005 they had received two

*visits: one from the mayor and the police in October and one from the owner also with an escort of police who had tried to evict them: mid December.
This last visit had not achieved its objective, proof no doubt that the eviction was not legal. The owner has given them until mid January. Faced with the threat of eviction some of them have already left the squat. There are about thirty of them there, perhaps more with those outside.*

With Catriona we visited the places where they are living: no electricity, no water, a few isolated rooms in this big empty shed which is freezing cold. The ones on the second floor have made themselves a stove to keep themselves warm by pulling up the boards on the floor they are on. Soon there will be nothing but a big empty space in the room next to the one they are occupying...

None of them speaks French well enough; Argentina (Yann's wife) translates and explains to them that the French cannot guarantee that they can stay in the squat. They pass the message to us that they do not want us to be there when they are evicted; some are thinking of leaving. Some of them do not know where to go and will stay until the last minute!

What you can see on their faces is not sadness, not desolation nor surrender but something much worse. I feel that they have nothing left. They certainly look like human beings but they are outside all civilization: they are just surviving, abandoned beings...in the one town they have grasped because they were able to think for a moment that this town accepted them and with all the dreadful experiences that they have undergone: evictions and more and more unworthy habitats, they are becoming dehumanized: their clothes are dirty, their faces unsure, living becomes a test of endurance for there is no recognition anywhere, no welcoming place.

As they tell us to our faces that they do not want us to be there on the day of their expulsion, I sense the remains of their pride, but above all, something else: "We don't need anyone because no-one can do anything for us, don't be there when we are further degraded, when we are driven out like people who have no right to be here!"

At the same time Catriona has the same feeling I have: we are the French people who have not been able to do anything for them, so they do not want anything more to do with us. We have shown our incompetence!

When Philippe the neighbor who is new, comes up to say something, their faces turn towards him and the dialogue starts again. They do want help. The hope is there, ready to be reborn. But also, what can we really offer them? We leave them our telephone numbers.

I leave with Catriona. I wonder: how can people, human beings live like this, next to us? It reminds me of stories I have heard of individuals left alone in a forest who gradually go back to a wild state but here it is worse as they have not even got the opportunity to live in the forest in the middle of nature. They live in a town where most people are accepted, integrated, take advantage of the advantages of civilization and they are pushed to the farthest limits and live on the margin where gradually they lose hope in their equals, their human brothers. Those who are looking at them are affluent and they, well, they do not want to look at them any more! J.S. January 06.

In Saint-Denis (Seine-Saint-Denis), on 12 July, two groups of about thirty people were evicted from their living quarters and given the verbal instruction to go the neighboring department of Val d'Oise and were escorted to the border by the forces of law and order. As usual all attempts to set up camp were thwarted by the police and they spent several days wandering from place to place.

The committee Romeurope was all the more indignant about the principle and conditions of this eviction since the municipality of Saint-Denis had placed itself at the head of a list of signatories of a movement demanding a moratorium on evictions without providing a solution.

This eviction was motivated by a planning project containing daycare and social housing; this fine pretext did not however prevent the town, as it demanded of others, from looking for a solution as a precondition of this forced departure. Negotiations are still ongoing with the group of Roma. The mayor of Saint Denis is involved in trying to establish a plan which could be encompassed within that of the Regional Council of Ile de France.

In Nantes a group of about ten Romanian Roma families, 40 to 50 people, was evicted for the first time in October 2005, leading to them setting up camp again a few hundred yards away. On the same day, the site which had been evacuated was blocked by boulders; in November 2005 a new eviction measure forced the Roma families to move a few yards; there too, on the same day, a ditch was dug round the evacuated site. Three days later they were firmly told to leave; a possible site was suggested to them. They go there but at the end of December 2005 they are subjected to another measure aimed at their eviction. In this group two people (at least) are on a legal visit within the three months' validity of their tourist visa. A young teenager, 16 years old, gave birth to her first child between the second and third evictions. Others are being treated regularly at the hospital in Nantes.

On two occasions, the procedures carried out relied on the refusal of the Roma families to give their identity. In these conditions, the procedures were not specified by name and without hearing the parties. The intervention of the families in court could not therefore be organized until after the eviction and not at the time of the request for the eviction. The judgment noted the validity of the procedures, but the presiding magistrate at the time of the hearing in the context of the second procedure required the Mayor of Nantes to find "a more just measure"; more to follow.

4 – 2 Evictions under the pretext of health and safety problems

The Prefects can decide on eviction without a previous decision of the court if they decree that there is a risk of public order offences or risks to health. In this case, all they have to do is to inform the Public Prosecutor in writing.

The pretext of health and safety was used to justify the decision for the eviction of Achères in April 2003 whereas the town which owned the property was not demanding expulsion.

In some cases the health and safety problem is "engineered"; either by forcing the Roma to settle on polluted land or by leaving rubbish to pile up, the land does in fact become a health hazard.

4 – 3 Evictions by intimidation

A new strategy of intimidation is now being applied when the eviction of a site is decided and validated by a decision of the administrative court: every day the police go to the site and tell the families the date by which they have to be out, accompanying this information with threats to destroy their caravans and their belongings if they do not comply. Occasionally these threats are accompanied by violence as in Grigny in the Essonne department (see below).

In some cases a few arrests have served to make the threats even more precise. Most often, the stressed Roma comply and when they leave the site they are pursued by police who prevent them from stopping anywhere else at least until they leave the area that they are in charge of.

The consequences of these scandalous practices are the same as genuine evictions in terms of jeopardizing families.

In Lyon (Rhône) the consequences of the eviction from the big shanty town of Surville ended in the spreading of residential sites over more than forty camps and squats which also complicates the work of support workers. When a municipality asks for an eviction the situation is explained to them in these terms: "You allow people to live in a shanty town. Their life is in danger, you evict them without a solution and they will recreate several squats some of which will be even more dangerous; the only solution is to find a site where these people will be sheltered in basic conditions of dignity."

In Grigny (Essonne) three groups of about fifty people had been living for a year on a piece of land at the side of the National 7 trunk road in housing consisting of huts and old caravans. One of these groups had been victims of an eviction at Saint Michel sur Orge (Essonne).

During the week of 1-5 August the police turn up at the site on several occasions and proceed to carry out checks accompanied by threats. On Saturday 5 August, the police chief gives an ultimatum: the Roma must be off the site by 12 August.

But on Monday 8 August a group of police officers arrive accompanied by the police chief to tell the Roma that they have 24 hours to leave. The chief goes away, leaving behind several police officers.

That is the point at which the situation degenerates. One of them starts to shout and bang on the doors of the huts and caravans with truncheons. Several musical instruments are smashed. A woman is struck in the chest; passports are snatched out of their hands and thrown away. Of course, panic ensues and the Roma try to hide. In the afternoon the support groups make a note of the damage.

The next morning, when the police take control of the area the 80 or so people who are still there are ordered to leave the area immediately and disappear from Grigny. They are forbidden to collect their belongings including their medication. Photos bear witness to these facts. That same evening bulldozers are used to protect the access to the site.

The Romeurope committee together with the Hors La Rue association has established a link which has been sent to a Member of Parliament for a submission of the Commission of Professional Ethics for the Security Forces.

This process has become so common that it is possible to give many more examples.

4 – 4 Police operations to obtain site evacuations

At least four times this year another scenario has been used to force "voluntary" departures.

The forces of law and order intervene in the context of Letters of Request ordered by the public prosecutor. The means employed are then exceptional and totally disproportionate to the official objective.

Some individuals are arrested in the framework of these legal proceedings but all those present have their papers checked for the legality of their residence. Dozens are arrested and taken to holding centres. APRF (prefectural orders for repatriation) are issued to those whose presence is illegal.

The consequence of this enormous deployment of police resources (with helicopter!) is panic on the ground. Those who can escape the checks run off and try to hide. At that point the local police intervene to order them to evacuate the site. In the following hours in the face of this intimidation the

site is empty and the bulldozers come to destroy the huts and caravans without the previous occupants being able to retrieve their belongings.

In Saint-Denis (Seine-Saint-Denis) about forty families had been living in a shanty town for about a year and a half when on 17 May last a police operation of this type ended with 60 arrests 37 of which were related solely to illegal residence. The terrorized families who had all had at least one member arrested have for the most part gone back to Romania before coming back a few months later. By 31 May the site was demolished.

In Vitry (Val de Marne) in the context of an operation of the same type the police arrests the parents and leaves their young children on their own without informing the relevant social services as the provisions however stipulate that they should.

On 26 July 2005 the shanty town situated on the edge of the N305 main road at Vitry sur Seine in which about thirty families were living was surrounded by a large number of police officers while a helicopter flew overhead.

The forces of law and order were acting within the context of Letters of Request decided by the public prosecutor of Créteil. Eighteen people were arrested within the context of this procedure, several of whom were minors. Only three adults had committed a criminal offence. The others were nevertheless not released and were put with the other thirty or so arrested at the same time for...illegal residence.

On the pretext of legal action this has in reality turned into victimization of people with no identity documents.

However, most of the people arrested did have them, being in possession of a passport allowing one entry into the territory with a date of less than three months. The APRF (prefectural orders for repatriation) were issued for lack of resources considered as evident by the police since these people were living in a shanty town.

The procedure, a great show of strength and a diversion from the legal aim of the operation, with a large number of arrests was similar to one which had been used in May in Saint Denis (93).

But in Vitry the behaviour of the police reached new heights of the unacceptable by arresting the parents (both or the only one living in France) of teenagers or very young children of 5, 7 or 10 years of age abandoning them in the shanty towns in absolute violation of the Rights of the Child and of the law which requires that in such circumstances minors are entrusted to the child protection services.

About thirty children were thus left alone on the site without anyone checking whether they were with their parents or not or if they were in need of protection.

None of them were directed to the child welfare services. All the latter could do was to appeal to the voluntary and citizens' aid organizations to ask them to help them to find these abandoned children in order to give them the required legal protection. It took several days to find a dozen of them with no news of the others.

Romeurope denounced this appalling situation of endangering minors in a press statement and report addressed to Mr Gil-Robles Human Rights Commissioner at the Council of Europe .

In Aubervilliers (Seine-Saint-Denis) two operations of the same type took place in December a fortnight apart. There were numerous arrests, more than 80 people and there were systematic repatriations to Romania despite having recourse to the courts. Only two people were released. One person was repatriated despite having a hospital appointment for a serious illness. Those who escaped fled the site which is now being guarded to prevent them from moving back in. Many of them

went back to Romania waiting to be able to return. The others have scattered round the department particularly in Saint -Ouen.

In Limeil-Brévannes/Bonneuil (94) on 24 January 2006 still on Letters of Request, the forces of law and order intervened and arrested 30 adults and 8 minors. At the time of writing this report the total number was not settled but at least 12 adults were not involved in the procedure and were sent back to the holding centre before being returned to Romania for lack of resources. Be that as it may, the processes set in motion are unjustifiable: wrecking of the caravans to make them uninhabitable with doors and windows broken; abandoning young children (3,5 and 6 years old) on the site when their parents have been arrested without the departmental child protection services being informed. Romeurope has protested vigorously in a press statement about the expulsion of people with no documents and about operations of police intimidation.

4 – 5 Other form of police harassment

Police officers (again!) against the Roma in Marseille

On Sunday 17 July late in the day the musicians of the professional band Vagabontu [Roma mainly from Romania], who are well known and well liked, were resting in a squat in Frais Vallon. Between 6.30 and 7.00 pm six police officers, two in plain clothes with armbands, arrived in two cars, one of them was unmarked. Climbing the gate and wielding weapons they gathered all those present into one room and took two of them separately into another room to undress them. Checking of identities was rapidly interrupted when the officers noticed some money. Without checking the validity of their identification the officers gave the order to put the bags that they had searched into another room without making a report. There was more than 1500 euros from concert contracts that the band Vagabontu had given in the region, which the officers had removed without leaving any traces of seizure. The organization charged with investigating police violence has demanded an enquiry by the chief of police responsible.

5 - Arrests and repatriations

Roma are very often victims of “facial” checks and of real police harassment. Numerous witnesses report arbitrary questioning and humiliating behavior by security forces during routine identity checking. These abuses of authority on weak and frightened people are often accompanied by acts of doubtful legality.

These people do not dare to demand their rights nor make complaints against officials. On the contrary, these constant operations of intimidation and threats lead some of them to leave France, which is certainly the object of the exercise...

Likewise, following such arrests, evictions aimed at one member of a family are carried out under emergency procedures in often doubtful legal conditions with the hope somehow that the rest of the family will decide to join him.

At the bus stop

“Madame Livia L. is 45 years old. For medical reasons, an application has been made to the Prefecture for her to stay to be legalized. She is suffering from severe metabolic disorders which need constant care and supervision. After battling to receive State Medical Aid she has begun a course of regular monitoring in a municipal health centre. She walks there which takes her a good hour in the course of which she stops to rest on benches near bus stops to catch her breath. The day in question, while she was sitting with another woman who was accompanying her, she was questioned by the police to check her papers. As her papers show that she has overstayed the three months authorized, she is taken to the police station. The Roma woman who was with her is not worried. You ask why? As soon as we are informed we gather together all the documents (housing certificate, medical reports etc) which we pass on to the police. More than four hours later Livia is released.

This situation is quite commonplace. What is less so is what the police chief said to us: “the security forces questioned them because they were watching the comings and goings from a house...”

Two teenagers “in order”

“M and L are two teenager girls who attend a school in a different town from where they live. They are in possession of travel passes and so are not travelling illegally when they take the bus home.

On the bus home there is a police officer in plain clothes. When they get off the bus in front of where they live one of them is questioned. The second asks for an explanation and immediately they are handcuffed and taken in handcuffs to the police station for resisting. On arrival they are separated and questioned separately. Three hours later they are released and tell us that they were undressed and photographed by male police officers. L reports that the officer who questioned her made humiliating suggestions such as ‘Do you eat in the canteen?’ ‘Yes but I don’t eat much because it’s not very nice’ ‘That’s surprising, seeing you are so fat’. The following week the support committee arranged a meeting with the deputy police chief to get an explanation. At first he insisted that the girls had not been taken to that police station and in any case he knew nothing about it. When we insisted, he ended up saying that they were almost certainly officers of the Crime Squad and that consequently he had no power to check how the questioning had proceeded.

We would have liked to bring this matter to the attention of the Police Ethics Committee but for different reasons we have not been able to bring this about. It does however seem very important to us to inform this commission when situations like these arise so that the police services intervene strictly within the framework of the law.”

Sick and father of three children...

Ana Maria (7 old), Claudio (10 old) and Michaël (12 old) are three small children whose only crime is to be Roma.

For a year, despite difficult living conditions they were happy and proud to “go to school in France”. In a nature class they had discovered the volcanoes of

Auvergne and Ana Maria had even spent holidays there. In one year they were getting sufficient knowledge of the language to be able to act as interpreters for their parents.

Taking the good times with the bad, their school life could have continued among their French school friends. Unfortunately on 26 July 2005 their hopes were brutally dashed.

Their seriously ill father had been sent back on a charter flight to Romania and the caravan which they used as a home had been totally destroyed and also their belongings, their toys and their clothes; they managed to salvage the most precious of their things: their schoolbags.

Let us point out that just before this the mother of this family had received a repatriation order as a result of being arrested for the sale of "perishable goods" – cowslips to be specific – we appealed to the court in Paris and obtained the cancellation of the order because of the father's state of health. It must also be pointed out that when the ground was evacuated a slow insulin diffuser which the man in question was supposed to wear permanently was "confiscated" by the police and never returned.

Of course the mother could not stay in France on her own, with no work or home and with three children; she was obliged to return at her own expense to be with her husband in Romania.

Once there, that will be the end of schooling for Ana Maria, Claudio and Michaël: they will have enough to do rooting through the dustbins of the rich for enough food to last until tomorrow!

For these children it's organized chaos. Unless the efforts of the activists of the support committee who have stayed in contact with the family can organize the return of Ana Maria, Claudio and Michaël to their class.

Housed but expelled

Moïse C and Catita R have three children, Constantin (16 old), Ancuta (17) and Bianca (18), the latter is married to Calin P, their baby Amando aged eight months was born in France. As soon as the family arrived in France in March 2000 Constantin and Ancuta were put in school in a CLIN (class for the integration of immigrants) until 2002. Their schooling was taken up again and continued in 2004 (following an interruption due to eviction and ensuing housing problems) thanks to the intervention of the General Council of Val de Marne which allowed them to find a roof over their heads by offering them housing in Vitry sur Seine. This family has always shown a willingness to integrate and a desire to stay in France to escape the persecution that Roma are subjected to in Romania and to allow their children to study and get employment. An application for residence is proceeding. The two teenagers attend school, one in the secondary school in Vitry and the other at college in Orly on the CAP Hairdressing course. The latter has found a placement which, once her studies are complete, may result in employment. However, brutally, just as their situation was settling down, the father of the family Mr C following identity checks was subjected to being taken to the border on 8 November 2005 without having the time to appeal against the decision which was taken by Article 35 bis in contravention of the circular Sarkozy for the protection of children in school. This family behaved in an exemplary manner at the time of the eviction from the land at the side of the N305, this summer, gathering together in their home up to twenty women and children in distress. On this matter the General Council of Val de Marne at the Prefecture of Créteil gave its thanks to Mrs R for her help and her community spirit: this family, which we are following very closely, has shown a real willingness to integrate into society has become literate and aspires

only to obtain the necessary documentation to be able to work regularly and legally.

Handicapped and expelled!

Gabi is a young woman of 23, a deaf mute and suffering from mild psychological difficulties, she is not independent in her daily life.

Thus she was living with her father, her mother and her brothers in one of the huts of the shanty town of the Villeurbanne station. One Tuesday morning in December during a police raid, she was taken to the holding centre of Satolas with a view to being sent back to Romania as soon as possible. Despite being present in France for less than three months, she was arrested because she could not prove that she had the resources necessary for a tourist in France.

She was sent back a week later, on a charter flight, without money, without knowing why and without there being anyone arrested the same day as her who could help her to sort herself out when she arrived in Bucharest to at least return to the village she was from, which was about 700km from the capital.

That day about ten people were arrested. The deliberate choice of these arrests was essentially to send back people on their own, knowing full well that their families would make their own way back to Romania to be with them.

6 – Minors

The associations and support groups participating in Romeurope are very worried about the arrest of minors against which they are often powerless. The general impression is that, under the pretext of protecting minors which might be exploited by gangs, in many cases very young teenagers are put in danger. The International Convention on the Rights of the Child, despite being signed by France, is being flouted.

The committee Romeurope does not deny that some minors can be in danger and forced into crime. Some groups have occasionally provided information themselves and links have been formed with specialist organizations for example Hors La Rue.

But our reports are often worrying. As reported about (Chapter 4 - 4, Vitry, Limeil/Bonneuil) at least twice this year, police raids have led to very young minors whose parents had been arrested being left alone in shanty towns.

The minors who are arrested during these raids are very quickly placed in care from where they run away to go back to the shanty towns. No protective or educational measure is put in place.

No distinction is made between minors potentially exploited by gangs and those who beg to make a contribution to the family income. Of course, Romeurope disapproves of this activity and puts great effort into enabling young people to attend school regularly, which is the best preventive measure. But it does happen that these minors are arrested even while they are on their way to school.

Considering the importance of this, a specific record has been written: 2nd part, Chapter 6.

7 – Resources

A special chapter is devoted to this basic question in the 2nd part Chapter 2.

The lack of resources is now the main cause of repatriation orders . It is also the origin of numerous arrests carried out while people are trying to earn the money which is necessary to feed their families by survival activities: selling flowers, selling newspapers like “L’Itinérant”, salvaging objects and metal left on the public highway.

According to the law of internal security passed in 2003, begging with a child can give rise to a prosecution for neglect. However, occasionally the mother who takes her child with her does not have any other choice: she does not have any access to childminding facilities and there is no-one with whom she can leave her child. In such conditions, taking the child with her is the best she can do for which repressive legislation provides no solution. Other responses would be more effective like the right to work, the allocation of a subsistence allowance to the parents, immediate access to school, particularly nursery school and day nurseries.

The law upheld this argument, acquitting a young woman (confirmed on appeal and by the Council of State). The “preamble” to the judgment noted that there had not been deprivation of care but the impossibility of acting otherwise. From now on a medical certificate of this poor treatment is necessary to pursue this type of accusation. That was a case of exemplary justice which completely satisfies the Romeurope Collective because it leaves open the possibility of dealing with child cruelty which can occur with the Roma as with any other section of the population without a priori criminalizing a woman asking for the generosity of the public with her child.

8 – The Roma immigrants in the French medias

8 – 1 TV show “C dans l’air”

On 11 February 2005 the French culture channel France 5 broadcast for an hour to a peak viewing audience as part of its series “C dans l’air” a programme the title of which already showed a doubtful editorial bias: “Delinquency: the Road of the Roma”. For more than an hour the presenter of the programme Yves Calvi “produced a composite of ideas, racial prejudice and false information to lead the viewers to believe that the Roma are all criminals and therefore a danger to society or at the very least cannot be integrated into a modern society”.(7)

All the associations and citizens’ groups participating in the Romeurope committee were extremely shocked and appalled and expressed their indignation. The Roma organizations were particularly traumatized. Discussions were started about the possibility of legal action. The Roma organizations wanted to mount a civil action which was not possible given the legal risk with financial constraints linked to this type of action with regard to incitement to racial hatred. There followed a difference of opinion which led to three Roma organizations leaving the Romeurope committee at a meeting on 27 April 2005.

⁷ In press statement of five NGO roms of 010405

Both the Roma organizations and the Romeurope committee wrote separately to the management of the television channel, to the CSA (French broadcasting regulatory body) and the Public Prosecutor. The CSA actively condemned the channel. Negotiations were set up with the management of France 5 and ended with the offer of a two-sided debate which was not what the Roma organizations wanted. However one offer was made as a gesture, which all parties agreed could not be valued as reparation, to broadcast several times two films which aimed to enlighten the viewers about another point of view of the Roma: "Gypsies, Roma, Traveling people" by Roland Cottet and "Caravan 55" by Anna Pitoun and Valérie Mitteau which traces the history of the expulsion from Achères in April 2004 and the struggle of the City Council with the Roma.

The Council of Europe had sent a letter to the President of French Television to denounce the composite films which punctuate the program, to express its regrets at the absence of Roma and Traveling People and to ask for a debate in which representatives of their community would participate.

8 – 2 Caravan 55

"Caravan 55" is a 52 minute documentary film by Anna Pitoun and Valérie Mitteau. By means of a live broadcast, it recounts the eviction of a group of families who were camped in the city of Achères (78) and the resistance of the whole village. Live reports of Roma witnesses, in particular that of a young mother of two children, allow a better understanding of the problems and hopes of these families particularly with regard to getting their children into school and obtaining residence permits which will also give them the right to work, and why it is impossible for them to return to Romania.

In 2004 this documentary was awarded the special prize at the International Festival for Human Rights films, Paris 2004.

In 2005 it was shown on numerous occasions in Angoulême, Brive, Caen, La Ciotat, Clermont-Ferrand, Lyon, Marseille, Reims, Toulouse, in Ile de France in Achères, Bagnolet, Ivry, Les Lilas, Mantes la jolie, in Paris at various activist evenings and in the FNAC store in Saint-Lazare.

Each showing gathered a large audience and was followed by a debate to mobilize people into action.

8 – 3 Other movies

In October the documentary made in Ile de France by Bernard Kleindienst, "L'errance des Roms" was shown in Saint-Denis. This film shows the difficulties encountered by the Roma in finding a place to settle, gives a glimpse of the insulting stereotypes which conditions the perception of Roma by our fellow citizens.

In Nantes the association Une Famille un toit 44 (One Family one Roof 44) co-produced with Télé-Nantes a 26 minutes documentary entitled " Bon souvenir de la Souillarderie " which relates in the destruction of a so-called shanty town and the resettlement of the families on a converted site (cf Chapter 3-2). A public showing took place at the general assembly of the FAPIL (Federation of Associations for Social Insertion by lodging) on 3 June and then on various other occasions in Paris, Lyon, Besançon. As an extension, a written document was produced entitled: *Intervention with Gypsy families in the framework of joint actions: the experience of Nantes*, available on the FAPIL site or on request from the association Une Famille un toit 44.

8 – 4 Press and radio

The press, mainly in its regional columns, has very regularly related the year's events. It must be pointed out that, besides short news items still too often amalgamated together, several articles have drawn attention to the difficult living conditions of the Roma. Thus the repeated evictions or shanty towns abandoned by the authorities have been described in an informative way without giving way to easy prejudices.

8 – 5 Exhibitions

The exhibition of photos by David Delaporte taken in July 2003 in Romania at the time of the fact-finding mission carried out by Médecins du Monde and the International Federation for Human Rights has been used at many public meetings in Marseille, Lyon, Chambéry in the suburbs of Paris, at La Haÿ les roses, Savigny le Temple , Bonneuil. It has likewise been exhibited in Paris at the FNAC Saint Lazare on the occasion of the showing of "Caravan 55".

9 - Associative and Citizen Mobilization

Romeurope congratulates itself on the increasingly active mobilization of associations and citizen committees.

Firstly, we must salute the significant work done by the ERRC (European Roma Right Center), which published in November 2005 a well-documented report entitled: "Away from here! Anti-Gypsyism in France" The main of the work is dedicated to the French Gypsies and Travelers, and a very large chapter deals with the specific issue of Roma immigrants. The report underlines the discrimination of which these two populations are victims.

The "Gypsies, Roma, Manush, Travelers" symposium, organized on November 14 by the MRAP (movement against racism and for harmony among people), with the support of the town hall of the 2nd arrondissement of Paris, assembled 300 people. An exhibition was held. This day provided for very rich debates, particularly on a historical level. The following demands were made:

1. condemnation of the "Samidaripen" genocide of European gypsies perpetrated by the Nazis;
2. condemnation of the internment camps established in France by the Vichy regime, with the demand that the texts used in schools books these historical facts;
3. make the Besson law apply to Travelers in parking areas;
4. promote recognition of the gypsy people;
5. consider the demands of the Roma immigrants from Eastern Europe.

The CCFD (Committee against the hunger and for development), already involved in Romania in conjunction with the ASAV (association member of the Romeurope committee) and Romani Criss (Romanian organization) for the support of education and socio-sanitary mediation, has mobilized itself in France by choosing the Roma and Travelers as the thematic of their commitment to and with young people in 2006.

Secours Catholique is locally involved in numerous sites for sheltering, participating in the defense of rights, and offering emergency aid. Secours Populaire is also heavily mobilized for material aid.

FNASAT(National federation of travelers associations) and Etudes Tsiganes broadcast all the news concerning Roma immigrants on their networks.

The PECO committee created the Roma Collective with a research-action project on the culture in Romania and Bulgaria.

Roma immigrant support committees were established to come to the aid of families in great precarious situations. They began with citizen actions following some simple reports: one cannot in good conscious let people live like this.

These reports concern not only the habitats (shanty towns, squats, etc.), but also hygiene (no water, no electricity, no waste collection, etc.), lack of shelter from the cold or extreme heat, health (difficult access to care), education (families are unaware of the right to schooling for their children), risks of fires, presence of rats, etc.

These committees take different organizational forms depending on the places and situations. The actions will be different depending on whether the Roma families are in a long-term shanty town far from everything and without public aid, or if they are living in locations with social aid available.

All committees consist of citizens who may or may not be involved with associations (human rights, humanitarian, charitable, etc.), syndicates promoting solidarity, or political organizations working and struggling to integrate the most destitute and protect them against poverty.

Often, these committees help to improve the situation and replace public powers which neglect, and therefore endanger, these people.

These support actions also promote the involvement of the Roma themselves as they better understand which approaches to take. The meetings of the committees are also times to provide group support to get past the feeling (linked with the realities) of being submerged by their living conditions.

Their actions are organized according to several axes (which can sometimes take the form of work commissions):

- aid for daily life to respond to urgent demands: health, education, housing, etc. (cf. testimony below),
- aid with partners to provide nutrition, clothing, blankets, heating, cribs for babies, (social services, CCAS, charity organizations...),etc.,
- organization of time to educate the Roma (literacy training, work meetings to organize life in the locations where they live, learning to take responsibility for their actions),
- search for partners, thus solicitation of the State, local groups, and public services to advance the integration projects in terms of lodgings (making permanent locations available, hotels in terms of ASE), possible outfitting of the lots (waste removal, water, electricity, sanitation, locals, etc.), and education (struggle to overcome obstacles...),
- aid against the repression of the State (expulsions from places without solutions, evictions of people who are not legal immigrants, harassment of the Roma, musicians, begging, etc.) with legal support (services of antiracism associations, of human rights associations, and lawyers),
- more political and global actions for the improvement of the lives of Roma immigrants in conjunction with the struggles of illegal immigrants, the homeless, those without rights...for the application of elementary, non-respected rights which are essential for a dignified and decent life,
- actions within the framework of the Romeurope committee for regional, national and European plans, in as much as this situation is the same in several European states,
- information and communication work to present, with the Roma, not only their situation, but also their history, their culture, their projects, and their hopes. This will be done through public meetings, film screenings, festive musical events, and also with protest meetings.
- communication in the media. The situation has greatly progressed. The written and audiovisual media more frequently presents reports and articles on the situation of the Roma... but not

always the correct information! The committees are organizing media conferences and are regularly broadcasting press releases.

The journey of a combatant for education in 94

In Vitry, where I live, I am especially concerned about the children with regards to educating them and helping them to avoid the problems of kids that grow up on the streets.

Very quickly, I realized that for the youngest ones, of kindergarten and elementary school age, we needed to nip one problem in the bud, that's to say give vaccinations. The municipalities are in fact draconian if the vaccines are not complete. Three vaccines + BCG would take about three months to administer, and between doses (the PMIs(child medical services) are overflowing, as well as Médecins du Monde) it is necessary to maintain contact with the families in the hopes that they don't "disappear." Another frequent situation is this: the child is vaccinated abroad and has a health card from Romania, for example. It is necessary then to translate it by Médecins du monde, which is the quickest method, one month instead of three. When the sacrosanct pink paper from the town hall indicating that the vaccines are up to date is finally issued, the journey of the combatant begins: the town hall's educational service requires a "true" address, which means that, depending on the mood of the employee, of his bureau chief, of the head of the department and the official responsible for the problem, and depending on the time of year ("there is more space in kindergartens in March"), one is often refused lodgings in the church, at Secours catholique, or at public shelters. It is also necessary to find an individual in the community willing to house a Roma family, this individual having to travel with an identity card, utility bill, rent receipt or deed, and certificate of domiciliation, the whole family armed with identity papers with photos or birth certificates for the children. Anticipate an hour of waiting in line – if any document is missing from the file, everything has to be done over. Once the file is submitted, the child is assigned to a school with a special class (CLIN) during the following week, and then all goes well. But naturally the child's school will depend on the borrowed address - sometimes five or six km from the place where the child lives.

After long discussions and secret negotiations with the town hall, I succeeded, thanks to the adjunct to the mayor responsible for the school in Vitry, in making a distinction between domiciliation and place of residence, and the children were able to attend schools closer to the caravans (or hotels, certainly) where they live. Today the caravans have been broken up, families have been dispersed, many have returned to Romania, others are in hotels, and the problems of education are exactly the same as with the caravans. We continue to work as busy bees with the new ones who live in their cars or in flea-ridden hotels.

I still have much to say about the education of older children in middle and high schools, and about the necessary follow-up of these children for whom going to school is not an obvious thing, and attendance is always a problem. I would only like to highlight, from experience, that it is impossible for a Roma family, even if the parents speak perfect French, to manage alone in the education of a child. We need to speak up to the employees of the town hall, to brandish texts containing French law and the Convention on the Rights of a Child,

ratified by France – to always have it on us – and to have the tenacity of a pit bull. –D.A.

9 - Initiatives in 2005

9 – 1 Socio-sanitary Mediators Project

Médecins du Monde (a member of the Romeurope committee) was the natural administrator of this project. It consisted of forming four socio-sanitary mediators with the goal of ensuring bonds between the different socio-sanitary actors and the Roma families living in the shanty towns, and in particular to develop actions promoting health.

This is a pilot project developed in partnership with the Ministry in the struggle against marginalization. The mediators must speak the Roma language and know the Roma immigrant community in France: four people from the community who had been recruited and put through a six-week training program in French as a foreign language and in the field of mediation.

Unfortunately, despite the efforts taken by the Ministry in the struggle against marginalization, operating with the Ministry of the Interior, the latter refused to give authorizations for the necessary work projects. The project was abandoned.

The "One Family One Roof 44" association in Nantes hired a person from the Roma community to work under a 24 month contract subsidized by the State. The position is entitled: Interpreter/Translator of Roma languages. The primary mission is to be a liaison between the services of the city of Nantes, the collective, the administrations, and the Roma families, notably those housed in settled communities in Nantes. This initiative has also received support from the Regional FASILD (Federatin of the association for the insertion by lodging), the ABBE PIERRE foundation, and the Ministry of Social Cohesion.

9 -2 Letter to the Prime Minister requesting audience

On March 13, 2005, the Romeurope Collective wrote to the Prime Minister, Mr. Jean-Pierre Raffarin, to demand clarification of the actions that the government was expected to take at the recommendation of the Committee of the Ministers of the Council of Europe, given on February 23, 2005, relative to the improvement of Roma and Traveller housing conditions in Europe. A press release accompanied this letter. No follow-up was made by the services of the Prime Minister.

9 – 3 Audience at the Ministry of National Education

The Romeurope committee was received on February 1, 2005 at the Ministry of National Education (at the elementary and middle school levels) to get involved in the education of Roma children. This meeting was granted following the remittance of the 2004 Romeurope report.

In its intervention, the Romeurope delegation described how the living conditions of the families and regular expulsions such as evictions from lots or squats endanger educational projects. Precarity renders this situation very difficult, and the children as well as their parents often demonstrate exemplary willingness to maintain this education!

Data (mostly concerning Paris) were produced showing the large number of children enrolled in schools, ranging from kindergarten to high school. But there are still too many places where children do not have access to anything.

They highlighted the importance of support committees for these projects and the involvement of teachers in the schools concerned to push and support the students from Roma settlements.

The intervention also included the question of domiciliation as a true mode of inking to begin education and educational projects. This domiciliation can be a real obstacle! However, a National Education document (concerning the frequency of education, published in 2002) stipulates that the directors of schools can enroll the children even if the community is opposed. This was quoted by the representatives of the Ministry of National Education during this meeting. That said, the directors would have troubles in implementing this, alone against a municipality. They would need the support of their administration.

The Roma youth who participated in the delegation were able to present their situation and their hopes for life based on their education.

The issue of those over 16 years old was addressed as no longer being a problem. There must be solutions for all! The Ministry team provided contacts in the academies to find relevant solutions.

With regards to the structure of classes (CLIN, CLA, NSA, special classes for children who don't speak French or newly arrived or never previously enrolled in school), there are certain elements lacking which communities present as obstacles, in particular in the middle and high schools. The Ministry said that students should be accepted even if the structures are not in place, and that they can be put into place subsequently.

It committed to communicating on this subject with the Academy Inspectors .

Conclusion: It was interesting talking to the representatives of the Ministry, but they do not have a strong will to take any immediate actions (support for education for those who do not have it). They redirected us to the local contacts...

9 – 4 Press releases

The Romeurope Committee has used this means of communicating public opinion to:

- protest against the arrests of several Roma mothers while they were begging with their children,
- demand that the Olympic Committee (Paris was a candidate for 2012) does not execute evictions, but rather works to improve the living conditions of the Roma living near certain locations,
- denounce particularly traumatizing expulsions like those in downtown Paris, Saint-Denis, and Vitry, and more recently Limeil-Bonneuil, where the police arrest the parents and leave the children abandoned,
- support Roma associations for the recognition of genocide against the Roma,
- express its solidarity with the victims of fires that destroyed Parisian squatter villages in the fall, and associate with the organizations to demand a universal right to housing, legal citizen or not.

2nd Part

Access to fundamental rights: our reports and requirements

1 – Right to Freedom of movement and right to stay

The Roma immigrant populations, present in France and tracked by Romeurope, come from old eastern countries . Many of these States will be the next to accede to the European Union (Romania, Bulgaria) or are candidates for accession (countries of the former Yugoslavia).

These people belong to different categories with regard to their stay in France:

- beneficiary of the right to asylum,
- authorized presence with conventional visas,
- visit of less than three months with a valid passport,
- holder of a residency permit after becoming legal or a family grouping,
- request for asylum in process,
- illegal immigrant:
 - o did not get the right to asylum,
over the authorized period staying,
 - o withdrawal of paperwork upon conviction (common law, begging, etc.),
 - o insufficient resources with valid passport and presence of less than three months,
 - o illegal entry without passport or visa.

The position of the committee can be connected with background ideological responses, which are today impossible with the law and the current political majorities, and with demands reconcilable with the existing legislation.

Our requirements:

One essential and general principle over the long-term: total freedom of movement and establishment

This objective is even more evident and pressing for the nationals of the ten new members of the European Union, as well as for the two countries whose candidature has already been accepted, and whose entry is scheduled for 2007.

From that time on, the issue of the right to asylum would be moot, since everyone will have the ability leave his country of origin and settle legally in the country of his choice. Likewise, residents who were

not born in the country where they are staying will automatically have their immigration status regularized (i.e., deemed legal).

Since this is not the current situation, the predicted changes of the legislation on immigration have not yet occurred.

The freedom of settlement for those in France who come from the most recent members of the European Union will not be effective until 2014. These dates have not yet been set for Romania and Bulgaria.

In the meantime, if their freedom of movement is a priori guaranteed, the possibility of living in France remains limited and constrained by very restrictive administrative procedures.

Freedom of movement without hindrance linked to the resources or to a period between two stays abroad

For the countries which are not subject to a visa (Romania and Bulgaria), the conditions of financial resources cannot legitimately hinder the freedom to leave the territory and constitute an unacceptable social discrimination.

Imposing a minimum period between two stays abroad may be considered an outrage to this fundamental freedom recognized by international texts.

A global regularization for all Roma present in French territory who wish it.

This goes back to the general problem of the “undocumented.” It would possibly be subject to a minimum of time spent in the French territory following the example of what is done in Italy. However, conditions which are too strict, notably on the subject of employment or lodging as in Spain, would not be acceptable, risking exclusion of a large majority of Roma.

Specific responses must be introduced in the settlement after appraisal of individual cases, particularly according to the duration of their presence in France and their immigration status.

Individual access, free and guaranteed, to the procedures for requesting asylum

The right to asylum must be open to all Roma who prove that there is a direct threat against them in their country of origin, either by the public authorities (conventional asylum process) or by a third private party from which the State cannot guarantee their security (subsidiary protection).

Each case submission must be prepared in an in-depth manner, offering to any applicant the means to formalize his request. The notion of a “secure country” is unacceptable, disavowing this fundamental individual right. No State, even France, can guarantee a priori to all of its people total security and unity.

Guarantee of a legal stay without means of support conditions

The presence in France of holders of valid passports within the authorized three-month limit cannot be contested on the basis of insufficient resources.

The appraisal of this proof by the public authorities further reveals arbitrariness in the absence of any text defining the means of justification possible, limiting also the possibilities of recourse.

This condition, particularly used with regard to the Roma, is doubly condemnable as both social discrimination and discrimination based on place of origin.

Regularization for human rights reasons toward people under specific medical treatment

Because of deficiencies and the costs of health care systems for a number of illnesses in the countries from which the Roma have emigrated, any person having a recognized disease requiring medical treatment which is unavailable or inaccessible in their country of origin should be able to benefit from legal status and a residency permit on this basis.

The applications must be processed by the prefectures immediately and with priority status. The decision must be made by a commission including local and hospital doctors. It must offer the right to a second opinion.

Defense of the right to family life

Any spouse or child of a person with legal immigration status for a period of over three months should be able to maintain their right to a dignified family life.

A local request for regularization, in the case of presence in the territory of France, should be able to obtain a residency permit for the same duration. Otherwise, the family unit should be protected without restrictive conditions for lodging or financial support.

In all cases, expulsion of one or both parents of a child who is still in France is unacceptable when it leaves this minor child "stranded." In violation of the International Convention on the Rights of a Child, not only do such procedures detract from the right to live as a family, but can also be viewed as putting the child in danger.

The expulsion of parents of children enrolled in school should be forbidden, including during periods of school vacation. It could be required that children have regular attendance at the institutions where they are enrolled.

Recognition of social life and efforts toward "integration"

Continuous presence in France over several years with children enrolled in school and other signs of "integration" (literacy, employment, social life...) should be favorable factors for legalization of status.

2 – Right to work and financial support

The ability to provide, by one's own means and in a legal manner, for one's vital needs as well as the needs of their dependents, is a right and an absolute necessity relative to the respect of each individual.

This ability is closely linked to his status, and notably to his legal and administrative status with regard to the "migrant" people.

In this regard, the "tourist" status of the Roma forbids them to work, a prohibition often upheld and including people with an authorization to stay for health care in France, and inhibits all attempts to seek means of acquiring this ability to provide for their needs.

Under these conditions, even for people authorized to stay in the territory without the right to work, the means for survival are exclusively linked to social assistance and charity.

Social aid: the obligation to educate minors, protection under the status of “legal tuition of a minor” is imposed in local courts charged with social action, and in the case of the General Council to give each the minimum amount for subsistence.

Aid given to families with minor children for the protection of childhood under article L222-2 of the Social Action and Family Code (jurisdiction of the General Council)

The code notably provides for:

- household aid (educational support) upon request and with agreement of the family when security, health, sustenance or education of the children requires it.
- financial aid designated to support families who are experiencing financial difficulties with the objective of preserving equilibrium and/or to promote the support of children at home.
 1. for nutritional needs,
 2. to promote methods of care,
 3. to help with burdens such as lodging and healthcare,
 4. to temporarily help with financing of hotel costs when lodging falls through,
 5. for educational costs or school lunches,
 6. to promote the children’s access to recreation and vacations on a limited basis.

Since all users have the right to have their requests studied, they should submit their requests to social services, which will assess the opportunity of the request. Allocation of aid is not by right. All requests will receive an instruction based on established criteria (resources, expenses, test of common law aid, etc.)

This assistance is always delivered in the name of the children as part of their protection, since any minor child on French soil has the right to be protected.

We must systematically appeal to the Géeneral Council, especially regarding the immigrants’ three-month “tourist” stay.

The benefits: any person with legal status of residence in the territory of France may enjoy rights equal to those of regular citizens. As such, social and family benefits should be solicited and open to Roma people with legal immigration status.

The Caisses d’Allocations Familiales (CAF, Family Welfare Agency) opposes this, even when the application for legal status is in process. The applicants are then required to proceed via an application to the Tribunal of Sanitary and Social Affairs.

The position of the CAF, however, resulted from a court decision dated April 16, 2004. Since then, the object has been to discourage applications and to buy time. In fact, the whole procedure, from the first request to arriving at Social Security Tribunal (TASS) takes more than a year. In many situations, the authorization to stay has already expired, has not been renewed, will not be reexamined...before the TASS can even summon the applicant.

Being forbidden to work, with the delays and red tape associated with measures for getting aid for subsistence and refusal of the granting of rights to benefits, the Roma families naturally turn to charitable aid. Begging is therefore, by default, a means of subsistence. In itself, begging is not shocking, but at the same time it can be neither encouraged nor the result of the failure of institutions. Meanwhile, the practice of active begging is increasing, sometimes with the unacceptable use of underage children and use of false petitions to sign for donors. Such practices cannot be tolerated.

Charitable aid: especially with regard to nutrition with the strong involvement of the Resto du Coeur and the food bank. Secours Catholique and Secours Populaire are also very involved, especially through clothing.

Our requirements:

First, we require the right to work, to be able to perform a skilled activity, to have access to training, to be able to enter into an apprenticeship, and to integration.

Next, we demand access to rights for all, social and family benefits, and aid for subsistence to meet everyone's financial obligations. Finally, and assuming a total absence of other source of income, the practice of non-aggressive begging and selling of goods should not be viewed as an illegal offense and penalized.

3 – Right to lodging

The Roma immigrants present in the French territory and tracked by Romeurope come from eastern countries, a great majority from the States that are slated to join the European Union next (Romania and Bulgaria) or from eventual candidates for membership (countries of the former Yugoslavia).

In these countries, these populations are mostly sedentary and only marginally have an itinerant lifestyle. They live (or survive) on the periphery of cities or often in rural villages in unstable dwellings. Cob houses and makeshift shacks without facilities (running water, bathrooms, etc.) are numerous there.

Their demands with regard to housing in France are often very modest, even if the ideal of an individual, fully-equipped house remains universal.

According to the law, different actions may be taken depending on the situations regarding their stay in France:

- beneficiary of the right to asylum,
- holder of a residency permit with authorization to work,
- holder of a residency permit without authorization to work,
- visit of less than three months with a valid passport,
- request for asylum is in process,
- illegal status.

As soon as these people have legal status, the response with regard to lodging should be as inscribed in the common law for any other resident and according to their financial resources, public housing, private location, access to property, etc.

Because of the difficulties of accessing this kind of lodging (shared with numerous other groups of French or foreign people), and because of their desire to maintain family and solidarity networks, many of them decide to settle in lots or in squats where the illegal Roma live.

These lot settlements monitored by the Romeurope committee and local support committees are generally located just outside of large French metropolitan areas (Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Lille, Nantes, St. Etienne, etc.).

Everywhere, it is the same report: deplorable living conditions combined with the permanent threat of expulsion organized by the local public authorities to push the problem into another jurisdiction.

Our requirements:

First, we must recall the necessity of distinguishing the problem of the immigrant Roma with that of the Travelers.

The Roma who settle in caravans make this choice because of the low cost of acquisition, without necessarily having a desire to move.

The Besson Law of July 2000 imposes on certain communities the recognition of the Travelers' rest areas and caravan parking areas. The people in question are those who traditionally live in mobile

residences and have a movement permit or card as defined by the law of 1969. These administrative documents can be obtained by documented foreign nationals as soon as they decide to adopt an itinerant lifestyle.

Save marginal cases of Roma immigrants making such a choice, access to these parking areas should not be encouraged. For one thing, the available spaces are already largely insufficient to respond to the needs of the Travelers (less than 10,000 accessible spots for a national need estimated at more than 20,000). For another thing, such an approach to community allocation would impose a lifestyle that does not meet the expectations of the Roma immigrants.

The catastrophic situation requires two types of responses: immediate responses and responses in the future to avoid a repeat of the current situation.

Urgency

Cessation of expulsions in the absence of a dignified, perennial alternative solution

Refusing to undertake background work, the State and local associations concerned too often decide on expulsion, forcing the Roma to settle at a new site.

The violence of these police actions is more and more frequently including destruction of the few possessions of the Roma. Other than the trauma caused, not without medical effect, these families find themselves in an unstable situation, having lost their homes, their personal affects, and sometimes their papers.

Programs such as education when it is available, pedagogical projects, sanitation, and healthcare for mothers and children are sharply cut and will need to be resumed.

Settlements to prevent sanitary risks and risk of fire

In these lots, families, both adults and children, are crowded into makeshift shelters or salvaged caravans. The absence of basic hygiene (a water supply point, sanitation, electricity, waste collection, etc.) increases sanitary risks.

The conditions on these sites are most often unfit to live in, and even dangerous, as the deadly fires that blazed in Vitry in Val de Marne, in Surville in the suburbs of Lyon, and in the region of Lille over the last few years can dramatically attest to.

We demand, regardless of the expected duration of the Roma settlement in a place, even if a judicial procedure for expulsion is in process, the immediate and regular collection of waste, a minimum of one watering point in the lot, the installation of a sufficient number of dry toilet facilities (at least one per twenty people, the norm for refugee camps), access to electricity via installation of electricity meters, and, depending on the situations and the season, measures to allow for heating of the shacks or caravans with minimal risks.

Background Measures

An universal right to housing independently of residency legal status

The right for everyone to have a roof should be affirmed and made effective regardless of the person's status with regard to residency. No adult, and especially no child, should be refused the benefit of decent housing.

This demand is set in the approach toward an opposable right to lodging, allowing every applicant to get an appropriate offering under penalty of recourse.

Appropriate responses should be applied to each case.

Housing of asylum seekers in CADAs (accommodation centers for asylum seekers)

As the government promised, it is the responsibility of the State to open necessary CADA spots to properly accommodate all asylum seekers and their families during the duration of the processing of the requests and any possible appeals.

Access to furnished social hotels and associative lodgings

Other than transitory and exceptional measures, or lack of willingness expressed by the interested parties, housing the Roma should not be viewed in terms of caravans but in permanent and autonomous habitats where each family can live decently.

Housing in a hotel should only be occasional. In addition to its excessive cost, even if it is financed by public social funds, it is also unsuitable, preventing cooking onsite, for example.

Joint projects between territorial collectives and the State should be initiated to develop housing opportunities accessible to people with few resources or at great risk.

Buildings and lots could be requisitioned or acquired to implement such programs. Intermediary or integration associations could, with adequate financing, manage apartment buildings or individual residences which would be offered to Roma regardless of their immigration status.

Facilitated access to domiciliation to allow for access to social services

Regardless of their living situations, everyone should be able to benefit from domiciliation, a necessary condition for access to social rights.

All local centers for social action should direct the applicant to an accredited association located near their place of residence. The prefectures should monitor the territory network to help secure this mission.

4 – Right to the protection of health

This report only deals with issues concerning access to health care and prevention, while highlighting that the protection of health clearly comes from access to other fundamental rights, the first of these being those of the right to decent housing with sanitary equipment.

Access to health care for all immigrants in France is determined by the legal status of these people, which affects allocation of access to health insurance:

- The beneficiaries of the right to asylum, applicants for asylum whose application is still being processed, and holders of a residency permit after regularization or family grouping have the right to CMU (Universal Illness Insurance),
- People with illegal status, those who have been denied asylum, and those whose authorized stays have expired have the right to AME (State Illness Insurance) if they have been in France for more than three months and can show proof. They must also provide an address,
- Those who have a short stay permit (less than three months) because of agreements made with their country of origin, have no right to any sort of assistance, since they are assumed to have coverage in their own country.

Roma coming from Romania or Bulgaria often find themselves in this last category. Since the agreements passed between their countries and the Schengen space on January 1, 2002, the Romanian and Bulgarian Roma, who no longer have access to asylum, have made the choice to come to France for stays shorter than three months in duration, and only stay in Romania or Bulgaria for a few days between stays. To cross the border they get health insurance in their own countries for very brief periods, a few days at most.

Therefore, these people do not have the right to either the CMU or the AME (Illness Insurance), and cannot receive care except in the case of vital urgency, applying the ministry letter of March 16, 2005 on urgent care, which is often difficult to implement due to finicky and restrictive interpretations.

This is therefore a very worrying situation in terms of health, with an accumulation of restrictions to access to health care in their own countries (this is one of the reasons for their emigration) and then in France.

For less numerous people with illegal immigration status who have overstayed their three month allowance, obtaining AME produces the same difficulties as for other immigrants, especially regarding the problem of domiciliation and possession of an identity document (passport or national identity card).

Our requirements:

- elimination of the three-month period to qualify for access to health care. This period is unacceptable to the humanitarian plan, and the alternative offered to patients is to become illegal in order to qualify for AME. This period is also a medical inanity; in three months, benign pathologies can become serious and, if untreated, may put a vital prognosis in danger. Consequently, this three-month period is dangerous in terms of public health when the illness is contagious.
- the best measure to take would be to grant CMU to everyone residing in the territory of France. AME is a measure that leaves an entire population outside of the common law. The CMU for all illegal immigrants would guarantee an equal access to health care for all, and would allow preventative medicine to be developed in the interest of the people concerned of public health. Finally, it would be a source of financial savings by killing progressive diseases more rapidly, simplifying administrative management, and improving the organization of health care.

5 – Right to access to culture, teaching, and education for children and adolescents

The situation of alienation and separation of the Roma immigrants in France does not encourage access to a cultural life including education and training.

The education of children is desired by the vast majority of Roma families, contrary to popular belief. Some of the parents were educated completely or partially in Romania. Others did not have the opportunity. Also, the families know the importance of school for their children. As soon as their living conditions improve to any degree, education becomes habitual. The obstacles described below disrupt schooling, but most of the time the parents make sure (with great difficulty!) that their children have a good attendance record.

French law stipulates that school is obligatory and thus becomes a right for children and adolescents and an obligation for national educational. It is inscribed in the preamble of the constitution.

In practice, the situation is very mixed depending on the city, the department, and, de facto, depending on the local citizen investments, since the journey to education is often difficult.

Some obstacles remains signifiant:

- enrollments are made by the cities, and are linked with domiciliation and to housing certificates. It is easier to depend on charity accommodations (like the accommodations in Val de Marne) than on public domiciliation (which depends on an association which is headquartered may be in aan other city). Domiciliation by the CCAS of the citeies where the lots or squats are located promotes education in these communities. Yet, there are very few CCAS which apply this law (1998). However, a national education newsletter (scholastic attendance of 2002) stipulates that the directors of schools can enroll students even if the city opposes. This was quoted by the representatives of MEN during a meeting between Romeurope and this ministry (date). That said, the directors have had trouble implementing this, alone against a municipality. They would also need the support of their administration.
- the expenses associated with schooling (cafeteria, transportation, fees, etc.) are significant for families without resources. When aid is given, attendance is simpler. Otherwise, this could really be a barrier to regular attendance. The fees become greater and greater as the students pass from kindergarten to elementary school, and then to middle and high school,
- residency permits for children over 18 are essential when they want to do internships (professional high school) or sit for exams,
- the lack of initial structures for foreign children may also be appealed by national education. This does not need to obstruct the law to be applied (reception in other classes or creation of classes),
- expulsion from shanty towns or expulsion of parents may be causes for interruption of schooling...the pursuit of education and studies after 16 years old implies that families are trying to live in stability. The Minister of the Interior has recognized that we need to let young people pursue education and therefore not to expel their parents because they are illegal! However, there are examples that demonstrate practices to the contrary,
- the precarious situation (no water, no electricity, no place to do their homework, etc.) in certain lots also remains a difficult factor because the children will not feel as much like a student as the children,
- families sometimes have trouble leaving their children at school, for fear of being separated from them in case of expulsion, for fear that other children will make fun of them (as in certain schools in Romania); others sometimes need their older children to help with selling flowers, selling newspapers, or begging to earn money to eat every day. Educational training is necessary to move these families beyond these behaviors.

The balance sheet for education is generally extremely positive: good attendance and rapid progresses, notably in learning French.

There have been some very interesting educational statistics since 1998. Youth educated from the age of ten years old in France have reached the level of professional high schools, and are in CAP or BEP programs.

We can imagine what their education may have been if these young people, poorly or barely educated in Romania because of discrimination, had been able to attend school since they were of kindergarten age.

This is why education for all is essential and should not suffer from the reluctance of the powers that be.

The teachers concerned should be aware that these students will not pose them any specific problems. The repercussions on the family are evident. The parents of educated children speak

better French. Bonds are formed between parents and children, accentuated by participation of the children in extra school activities.

Even in privileged places with educational opportunities, problems are more significant for adolescents due to a lack of appropriate structures. Middle schools educate fewer because of a low number of CLA or NSA classes (classes of reception for children newly arrived, who do not speak French-or who had never previously been enrolled in school). Certain children remain on waiting lists. They are in the same situation as a number of adolescent new arrivals, a situation regularly denounced in recent sociological surveys.

Access to cultural and recreational activities

In complement to education, the project of integrating children and adolescents should include access to cultural and athletic activities at various organizations and associations.

The children of Roma families in shanty towns are very often cut from activities at recreation centers, athletic activities, homework tutoring, artistic activities, etc.

It is less true in the places where families are lodged by local councils and associations, grouped or not into committees.

It is difficult to imagine cultural development with equality of opportunities if this access is not developed and supported by the State, which must also do its part.

The International Convention on the Rights of a Child stipulates in its article 3 that in all decisions concerning children, whether they are made by public or private institutions for social protection, courts, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the primary interest of the child should be the overriding consideration.

The report is that this convention is consistently violated in France when the public authorities leave Roma children in unacceptable living conditions in shanty towns, that they refuse the domiciliation necessary for access to health care, that they impede access to education, that they do nothing to prevent the exploitation of these children, and that they do not authorize their parents to legally acquire the financial resources that would allow them to ensure their physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development, as they should. This French situation was denounced by the international community (ECRI, UN, etc.).

Our requirements:

Access to education for all children, without impediment, from the earliest age

The implementation by National Education of necessary structures and specific aid for new arrivals

The inclusion of adolescents over 16 years old in an educational program

The improvement of living conditions for families: lodging, legal stay, work...

Access to cultural, athletic, and recreational activities

Grant based on revenue to support education (educational costs, transportation, nutrition...)

Literacy training

This action is very important to undertake the integration of parents and their future in France.

Education of the children is a desire of the parents, but its implementation is not simple. With the existing structures (in the cities), there is hesitation on the part of the Roma (questions of hours in the evening, when the settlement is far away, or the day, when they need to work or take care of their babies.).

It is easier when there are group projects within the cities.

We can hope for intermediary actions implemented with the support committees. This way we can organize courses in a city room, for example, adapting to the constraints of the Roma families, in order to integrate them little by little into the local structures with other people from other countries.

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