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Dosta!-Congress Prize Awarded to 3 Cities and Regions

Strasbourg 31 October 2013 - The 4th Dosta!-Congress Prize for Municipalities has been awarded to the city of Obrnice (Czech Republic), the city of Heraklion (Greece), and the regional authority of Kocaeli (Turkey) in the framework of the 25th session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg (France).

"Dosta", a Romani word meaning "enough", is an awareness raising campaign for the Council of Europe which aims at bringing non-Roma closer to Roma citizens. Following the success of previous editions, the Congress is once again partnering the campaign. The Congress-prize is awarded biannually for innovative municipal projects promoting Roma integration, combating discrimination against Roma, and raising awareness of Roma culture and rights. In 2013, over 20 municipalities from 15 European countries participated in the contest.

1st prize: Obrnice (Czech Republic)

The municipality of Obrnice, situated in the North-West of the Czech Republic, was awarded the first place. Obrnice, where about 45% of its 2.300 inhabitants are Roma, has launched the project "Community life in Obrnice – an integrated approach" in 2007. This initiative comprises several interlocking projects in the fields of education, housing, employment, social services, security and leisure activities. The innovative aspect of this project is the involvement of Roma and non-Roma population in joint activities. This approach contributes significantly to the elimination of prejudices and barriers, increasing a sense of belonging to the broader community.

The project is an example of peaceful co-habitation with no segregation and low rates of criminality. It can be shared as an example of a good practice to be used as an inspiration not only by the other problematic areas in Czech Republic, but also by the European cities and regions.

2nd prize: Heraklion (Greece)

The second place has been awarded to the city of Heraklion, a Greek city with a population of approximately 170.000 people situated on the island of Crete. Based on the work of the "I am a Roma" Local Action Group, the municipal programme for Roma inclusion comprises concrete support actions, such as combating illiteracy of children and adults, mediator seminars and the establishing of a socio-medical center for Roma issues. Programmes in the field of education include vocational and entrepreneurship training. In addition, the project contributes significantly to anti-discrimination campaigning by targeting children through school events and by intercultural dialogue events.

3rd prize: Kocaeli (Turkey)

This campaign of the regional authority of Kocaeli in western Turkey pursues a comprehensive approach with concrete and visible outcomes. Kocaeli has implemented education programmes including vocational training, informal training and sportive training in order to minimize school drop-outs and promote sports. Cultural projects, such as an international Roma festival, events on the International Roma Day, the formation of a Roma theatre, the founding of a violin orchestra, musical competitions and expositions, contribute significantly to intercultural dialogue between Roma and non-Roma.

This programme includes several different projects with a considerable number of beneficiaries and a wide scope of actions. It focuses on "local solutions" based on research conducted on local level and promotes involvement of local actors (Roma and non-Roma

NGOs, local authorities) and a sustainable structure.

The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions.

It brings together 318 full and 318 substitute members representing more than 200 000 European territorial communities.

President of the Congress: Herwig Van Staa (Austria, EPP/DC), President of the Chamber of Regions: Nataliya Romanova (Ukraine, IDLG), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC)

Political Groups: Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD), Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG), European Conservatives & Reformists Group (ECR)