



T +33(0)388412560

www.coe.int

pressunit@coe.int

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European Commission and Council of Europe step up work for Roma with Mediators agreement

Strasbourg, 06.07.2011 - The Council of Europe and the European Commission today intensified their efforts to improve the place of the Roma minority within European society by agreeing joint action for training Roma Mediators.

Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjorn Jagland and EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth Androulla Vassiliou officially endorsed the agreement launching the Programme at a meeting of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers with the signature of a joint declaration.

A document for the first of two funding agreements was also signed, which will see the EU make one million Euros available to the Council of Europe for 2011 and 2012, allowing a total of 1000 mediators to be trained.

This will reinforce the Roma Mediator Training Programme (Romed) launched at the beginning of 2011 by the Council of Europe. The training sessions equip people with a Roma background, either from Roma communities or with a good knowledge of Roma issues, to act as mediators between the Roma and public institutions. It has so far been carried out in 15 countries¹ and Kosovo² with 427 mediators trained. The mediators are now working in the field, with a second series of training sessions to review their work organised in the second half of the year.

Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjorn Jagland said: "Roma still face prejudice, intolerance, abuse and social exclusion every day. The agreement signed today will help to improve the situation of Roma and their integration into European societies."

Commissioner Vassiliou added: "Education holds the key to breaking the vicious circle of disadvantage and social exclusion which keeps millions of Roma at the margins of European society. The 1,000 mediators will work with families and children in towns and villages across Europe. They will focus on health care, job agencies and schools. At present, far too many Roma children leave school early, before completing their studies, and this damages their personal development and job prospects. "

For more information: http://www.coe.int/t/dc/roma/default_EN.asp

^[1] Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Italy, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Turkey, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Spain, France and Serbia.

^[2] All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.