



Confidence building in the OSCE

Sports and the spirit of co-operation

Voices: Listening to the cries of the world



**Time to act
on Roma inclusion**

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On the cover: Boyz in da Hood, a rap and dance group founded by two musicians from the Konik Roma refugee camp near Podgorica, Montenegro has been recognized as a best practice by the OSCE-EU project Best Practices for Roma Inclusion launched in June of this year. (HELP - Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe e.V.)



The OSCE's Community Security Initiative (CSI) builds confidence between police and communities in Kyrgyzstan. Here, CSI officers and police officers in Isfana meet and interact with the local population, March 2012. (OSCE/Eric Gourlan)

Confidence building in the OSCE

by Claus Neukirch

Confidence building lies at the heart of what the OSCE does. The term was first used during the Cold War to denote measures taken to reduce the fear of attack between East and West. Some of the first confidence-building measures are contained in the Helsinki Final Act, agreed in 1975 by the 35 countries participating in the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE, predecessor of the OSCE). They still form the basis of current arrangements to ensure transparency and build trust between participating States. In addition, since the early 1990s, the OSCE has developed measures to build confidence between communities within participating States.

In the early years of the CSCE, confidence building focused primarily on hard security. The confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) agreed in the Helsinki Final Act and at subsequent meetings in Stockholm and Vienna dealt with military matters such as data exchanges, pre-notification of military movements or

exercises and limitations on the deployment of troops and armaments in a particular area.

But non-military measures for building confidence have also been a part of the OSCE since the beginning. Often called confidence-building measures (CBMs) in contrast to the classical CSBMs, these focus on changing perceptions and (re)building relations between adversaries. The Helsinki Final Act contains provisions on co-operation in the fields of economics, science, technology and the environment “as a means to contribute to the reinforcement of peace and security in Europe and the world as a whole.” As a matter of fact, the entire process of talks leading to the Helsinki Final Act was an unprecedented exercise of building confidence between the two Cold War camps. Over the years, CBMs have been used more, although not exclusively, in the context of intra-state conflicts, for instance in South-Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus, Moldova and Kyrgyzstan.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD CBM?

CBMs can take many different forms, depending on the stage of the conflict cycle at which they are used, how deep the conflict between the two sides is and whether they are used in intra-State or inter-State conflicts. They can be initiated top-down by elites, like the current CBM process in Moldova, or bottom-up by affected communities, as in the multi-ethnic mediation networks or cross-border water management projects supported by the OSCE in Kyrgyzstan. They can start up as unilateral measures of good will, like German Chancellor Willy Brandt's spontaneous genuflection in Warsaw in 1970 before a monument to the victims of the Nazi-era Warsaw Ghetto uprising, or take the form of an international agreement, like the Open Skies treaty. What matters is that they take root at all levels of both affected communities. The Northern Ireland peace process, where peace movements from within the affected societies were complemented by strong leadership by the political elite, is a case in point.

CBMs, by their very nature, are incremental. In order to make a difference, they need to be long-term. Once feelings of fear or hatred between conflicting parties have taken root, one-time measures or projects of short duration will have little effect. Confidence is best built by combining several CBMs reaching out to different layers of society in a cumulative process. Reciprocity and local ownership are essential elements. They also need to be consistent: contradictory actions and signals could destroy rather than build confidence. In Moldova, an initiative by then-President Voronin to create working groups on CBMs in 2007 was shortly afterwards neutralized by a government official's announcement that the Moldovan authorities would crack down on drivers using Transdnistrian

license plates on Chisinau-controlled territory. Following this bumpy start, policies on both sides gradually became more consistent, and five years later the CBM process in Moldova is well on track.

WHAT CBMS CANNOT ACHIEVE

CBMs, taken by themselves, cannot solve a conflict. They cannot eliminate the social and economic root causes of a conflict. They will not change existing balances or imbalances of power and are unlikely to affect the core interests of the conflict actors.

Whether or not they can get off the ground at all depends on political will, financial and human resources and the prevailing mindsets of the sides.

And even once they do, the potential obstacles are many. Spoilers may aim to derail a process they dislike or consider a threat to their vested interests. Legal requirements or changes to them might hamper creative solutions. Policy changes, perhaps triggered by issues not directly related to the conflict, might likewise create obstacles.

CBMs are difficult to embed in environments where the rule of law and the administration of justice are weak, where there are pervasive human rights violations, particularly if they are perceived to target primarily one group, and where there is a court system in which segments of the population feel they cannot seek justice. Individuals are unlikely to participate in CBMs if they perceive that they may risk arrest or imprisonment.

OSCE SUCCESS STORIES

Despite these pitfalls, the OSCE, through its various field operations and institutions, has managed to implement quite a number of CBMs, across the OSCE area and

Confidence is best built by combining several CBMs reaching out to different layers of society in a cumulative process.



in all three security dimensions. Here are some examples:

- In Kyrgyzstan the Community Security Initiative has facilitated police-public partnership initiatives to re-establish a dialogue between the police and local communities as well as between ethnic Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbek communities. In a separate project, the Osh Field Office of the OSCE Centre in Bishkek launched a pilot project of multi-ethnic mediator teams providing early warning and conflict prevention through mediation in cases of latent and acute conflict involving ethnic Kyrgyz and ethnic Uzbek communities.
- In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the work of the confidence-building monitors of the OSCE field mission there and the Mission's police reform programme were instrumental in creating the mutual trust needed for the re-deployment of police forces in Albanian neighbourhoods following the violent conflict between ethnic Albanian fighters and state security forces in 2001.
- In southern Serbia and in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, together with the OSCE field operations in both countries, has contributed to confidence building between majority and minority representatives by fostering several multi-ethnic education programmes over the past decade.
- Following consensus within the framework of the Geneva International Discussions in 2010, the OSCE started to implement EU-funded water projects in areas affected by the August 2008 conflict in Georgia. The projects aim at facilitating access to water for people living on both sides. They also help to promote dialogue and co-operation on practical issues for the

mutual benefit of people living on both sides, which is essential for long-term stability in the area.

- In Moldova, the OSCE Mission has been instrumental in promoting and assisting the work of joint CBM groups bringing together Moldovan officials and their Transdnistrian counterparts. At the same time the Mission has been reaching out to journalists, civil society and local inhabitants from both sides by supporting joint concerts, summer schools, sport events and projects bringing together journalists from both banks of the Dniestr/Nistru River.
- In Central Asia, the field operations and the Office of the OSCE Co-ordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA) have promoted local and regional confidence building through cross-border water management initiatives, such as the Chui-Talas water commission between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.
- In the South Caucasus, the OCEEA has promoted confidence building in the framework of joint projects on fighting wildfires, bringing together among others fire fighters from Russia, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Some of these CMBs have been more successful than others. But each of them has helped to overcome divisions, open communication channels and increase trust between the sides — all of which are needed to build lasting peace.

Claus Neukirch is Deputy Director for Operations Service in the OSCE Secretariat's Conflict Prevention Centre. The OSCE Guide on Non-military Confidence Building Measures (CBMs), published in 2012, is available at <http://www.osce.org/cpc/91082>.



The CBM process in Moldova covers a wide range of issues, from improving railway connections and telecommunication links, over information exchanges between law enforcement agencies to improved health care access for residents from Transdnistria, and involves officials and economic agents from both sides. In addition, the OSCE Mission to Moldova fosters grass-root contacts between the populations from both banks by organizing cultural events, summer schools, workshops and joint media projects.

Far left: Moldovan Prime Minister Vladimir Filat (left) and Transdnistrian leader Yevgeny Shevchuk speak on the margins of an OSCE conference in the German town of Rottach-Egern, 20 June 2012.

Centre: Young musicians from both sides of Dniestr/Nistru River gave joint concerts in Pervomaisk and Chisinau on 17 and 20 May 2011, part of an ongoing series of cultural events organized by the OSCE Mission to Moldova to build confidence across the Dniestr/Nistru River.

Right: A conductor at Chisinau railway station. The passenger route between Chisinau and Odessa via Transdnistria was restored in October 2010.

(Photos: OSCE/Igor Schimbător)

Voices

Ambassador Geneviève Renaux, Belgium Listening to the cries of the world

One day somebody asked a wise man how to promote peace on our beautiful planet. He replied "you must take the time to listen to the cries of the world".

Taking the time to listen to the cries coming from the OSCE region and its neighbouring countries is indeed one of the essential qualities of our Organization. We take the time each week in the Permanent Council to make known our views on all our security concerns and to listen to the responses that any one of us may wish to make. The regularity of this political dialogue and the numerous other more specific meetings, where we also exchange our good practices and our experiences in the implementation of OSCE commitments in the three dimensions, help to strengthen transparency in our political relations, which in turn contributes to the establishment of mutual trust.

Some people may think that taking the time to listen to the cries of the world is a luxury, especially in a time of financial crisis. This is to forget that it is precisely because we have not always taken

the time to listen to the cries of the world that some may have been led to take decisions which now appear hasty, and above all not always appropriate to the many transitions taking place.

The availability to listen, the development of transparency and the establishment of confidence are three of the OSCE's key concepts.

But they are also three basic criteria for every constructive human relationship. And this is also one of the strengths of the OSCE: to have succeeded in transferring the recipes for success in relations between human beings to relations between States and to multilateral co-operation. This is still helping today to ensure a peaceful transition from the spirit of the Cold War to the spirit of an increasingly globalized world. A new world where diversity will be the rule and where our availability to listen will be crucial in preventing potential conflicts. This is also why our Partners for Co-operation are expressing a growing interest in these confidence-building measures, as was demonstrated by the adoption in Kabul in mid June of seven such measures within the framework of the Istanbul Process to promote regional co-operation with Afghanistan. Their choice also demonstrates that confidence-building measures may take different forms: four of the seven measures concern the second, economic and environmental, dimension. Also crucial in this regard will be our willingness to respect others, whether man or woman, and to treat them as we treat ourselves, on an equal basis.

I therefore hope that the spirit of the OSCE will flourish in its participating States and beyond, and among their populations, of whatever origin they may be, so that in the future, the generations to come will be able – more often than we, but as we have nevertheless managed from time to time, during the Corfu Process, the preparations for the Astana Summit, the V-to-V Dialogue and on our way to Dublin – to listen, but also to hear, the laughing, the spontaneous bursts of laughter, of the world.

Ambassador Geneviève Renaux was Permanent Representative of Belgium to the OSCE from July 2008 to July 2012. She is currently UN Director at the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



René Magritte, *La chambre d'écoute*, 1958
© Photothèque R. Magritte - ADAGP, Paris 2012



A young Roma man in Hejoszalonta, north-eastern Hungary, looks on as members of the Hungarian Police attend an anti-Roma demonstration called by the radical right-wing party Jobbik, April 2, 2011.

Roma and Sinti under attack

by Andrzej Mirga

The past decade was a period of rising hopes among Roma and Sinti. It was a prolific time in terms of initiatives and programmes, including the 2003 OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area, and considerable funds were devoted to the improvement of their social and economic situation. Yet not enough of this has translated into tangible outcomes and lasting change for this community.

In fact, there has been a serious and dangerous rise in violence against Roma and Sinti in a number of countries, prompting international organizations to call on governments to step up efforts to promote their social inclusion.

After nearly two decades of engagement, independently and in co-operation with other international organizations, the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues in the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) has arrived at a simple and disquieting conclusion: it is very difficult to persuade stakeholders to move forward from saying the right things to doing them.

The last few years have been especially troubling. Surprisingly little attention is being paid to the way in which the economic and financial crisis is exacerbating the difficult situation of Roma and Sinti.

Some of the problems are deeply entrenched. There are no quick fixes for the low level of education and alarmingly high unemployment rate among Roma and Sinti, or the discrimination they regularly face in all areas of life.

But other problems are new, clearly triggered by the general rise in social tensions that persisting economic woes entail. Anti-Roma behaviour has changed. Violence is no longer limited to spontaneous escalations of community

tension. It is intentional, planned to scare off Roma residents or to "mete out justice". Protests or marches organized against Roma and Sinti attract significant numbers of spectators or sympathizers, both in village and urban settings. In Devecser, a village in western Hungary, for instance, more than 1,000 people gathered in August for an anti-Roma demonstration organized by the extreme-right political party Jobbik and extreme-right vigilante groups. Anti-Roma ideology is being deliberately spread by populist Neo-Nazi groups seeking to gain influence.

There has been an increase in hate-motivated attacks against members of Roma and Sinti communities, some even leading to death. To name just two recent examples: in June, an off-duty police officer in Hurbanova, Slovakia shot and killed three Roma; also in June, a Roma man died in Sandanski, Bulgaria as a result of a bomb that was set off in front of the headquarters of a Roma political party. The violence is not limited to eastern European countries: tensions with regard to Roma migrants have continued to spark attacks in France and Italy this year.

It is disconcerting that anti-Roma rhetoric has become a characteristic of political discourse in a number of OSCE participating States, at the national and local levels. When Roma and Sinti migration is treated as a matter of public security by some state authorities, when efforts are made to penalize begging or to identify it as a cultural characteristic of Roma, scapegoating is encouraged that in extreme cases can lead to open hostility and violence. While the OSCE and other international organizations have in the past concentrated their efforts on new democracies in crisis or post-crisis situations, there is a need to expand that

focus to include consolidated democracies.

Until the economic malaise gripping the entire OSCE region is remedied, the struggle against hate crimes targeting Roma and Sinti is likely to continue.

The European Union (EU) has taken important steps in recent years to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti. It established a Platform for Roma Inclusion as a forum for discussion and sharing good practices, held two EU Roma Summits (in Brussels in 2008 and in Cordoba in 2010), created a Task Force on Roma at the European Commission and adopted several European Parliament resolutions and European Council decisions on Roma. The European Commission's most recent communication on national Roma integration strategies in May 2012 points to the need for "stronger efforts (...), more concrete measures, explicit targets and measurable deliverables, clearly earmarked funding at national level and a sound national monitoring

and evaluation system."

Yet this comes at a time when governments are facing tough requirements to cut sovereign debts, reduce public spending and execute austerity programmes. It is to be expected that leaderships facing pressure for budgetary cuts will be slow to react or even be tempted to withdraw from previous welfare policies.

In the short and medium terms, therefore, there is cause for concern that human rights violations against Roma and Sinti will continue to rise. Ensuring the effective implementation of commitments to Roma inclusion will remain an important challenge.

Andrzej Mirga is Senior Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues at the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues in the OSCE/ODIHR.

To make a tangible difference

by Rasmus Barndorff

The living conditions of the Roma people in the OSCE area can only be improved if socio-economic conditions and problems of discrimination are addressed together. You simply cannot treat these issues separately. This was one conclusion of a symposium entitled *To Make a Tangible Difference to Roma People's Lives*, organized by the Danish EU Presidency, the EU delegation to the OSCE and the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) at the OSCE/Hofburg in Vienna on 22 June 2012. The attending government delegations, international organizations and NGOs emphasized the urgency to move beyond discussing action plans on Roma inclusion to actually implementing them.

Morten Kjaerum, Director of the FRA, presented a groundbreaking study conducted in 11 EU member states this year that shows an alarming picture. In some countries, more than 50 per cent of the Roma population live in households in which someone went to bed hungry at least once in the examined month. Eighty per cent or more live in households at risk of poverty. "No matter where we look the Roma population live in poorer conditions than their non-Roma neighbours," Kjaerum said.

"The OSCE is the only institution that can fully take the issue on board and address the necessary topics," Željko Jovanović, Director of the Open Society Roma Initiatives, said. "Anti Roma rhetoric is not found exclusively on the extreme right of the political spectre, but also in decision-making bodies. That is why many governments have failed to take proper action. The OSCE should address the issue of negative rhetoric in elections as being a driver for Anti-Roma sentiment," he said.

"It is important to build on the many experiences already gathered and keep the topic high on the agenda, also of the OSCE," Torben Brylle, the Danish Ambassador to the OSCE, concluded.

Rasmus Barndorff was a Political Assistant at the Permanent Representation of Denmark in Vienna. The FRA study "The situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States" can be found at http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf.

The OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti

The OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area, endorsed by the participating States in 2003, contains specific recommendations for OSCE participating States and for OSCE institutions, on:

- combating racism and discrimination, including legislation and law enforcement, police and the media;
- addressing socio-economic issues, including housing and living conditions, unemployment and economic problems and health care;
- improving access to education;
- enhancing participation in public and political life;
- ensuring Roma and Sinti rights in crisis and post-crisis situations.

A status report on the implementation of the Action Plan by participating States was published by the OSCE/ODIHR in 2008. A second status report is planned for next year, the tenth anniversary of the Action Plan.

More information on the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues and links to the Action Plan and relevant publications can be found at: <http://www.osce.org/odihhr/roma>.

Breaking out

A new OSCE-EU project is seeking to multiply solutions for Roma integration

The Konik refugee camp on the outskirts of Podgorica, the capital of Montenegro, is home to more than 2,000 Roma who fled Kosovo after the conflict in 1999. Some, like Redzep Beganaj and his family, first found safe haven in Germany before they were slated for repatriation. Redzep was raised and went to school in Germany, and when he came to Konik, he found himself doubly excluded: by many Montenegrins because he was Roma and by the Roma because he spoke mainly German. Luckily, he had his music. He loved rap and began writing songs about life in the ghetto. He teamed up with another young Roma musician, also from Germany, who was into hip hop and together they formed a band, which they named Boyz in da Hood after the 1991 American cult movie depicting life in poor South Los Angeles, California.

The Boyz in da Hood made a few recordings and began to attract some young boys to dance and sing with them. They got funding from a German NGO, HELP, to do workshops and dancing lessons in the camp. A girl's group was also started, attended by girls up to 15 years old, in itself a small miracle in a context where forced marriage at a very early age is still a common practice.

These dancing lessons have initiated something that was never thought possible in Konik: girls from the Roma camp and girls from the neighbouring non-Roma settlement Vrela Ribnicka are attending the classes together. Communication between members of the two communities was previously non-existent; at best they ignored each other. Now parents are taking turns driving the girls home after their dancing classes.

This story is all the more remarkable as it has unfolded at a time when the prospects for Roma inclusion are not looking good. More than halfway through the Decade for Roma Inclusion (2005-2015), many of the programmes that were adopted by OSCE participating States and the European Union have not shown the desired results.

This realization has motivated an ambitious €3.3 million joint OSCE-EU regional project for the Western Balkans launched in July this year, called Best Practices for Roma Integration (BPRI). Based on the premise that innovative solutions for Roma integration do exist in Albania, Bosnia



and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo*, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, the project's goal is to identify them and to promote their replication. Funded by the EU (90 per cent) and the OSCE (10 per cent), it is implemented by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which can capitalize on the experience and contacts of the OSCE's long-standing field operations in each of these countries.

The OSCE Mission to Serbia, for instance, has for the past four years assisted its host country in engaging health mediators to help Roma overcome barriers in accessing healthcare services. Under the BPRI project, a similar initiative has been launched in Croatia. Two young Roma

* All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

women are working within the Medjimurje County Hospital to assist members of the Roma community in obtaining personal documentation and health insurance, refer them to medical and social services and provide information on health issues.

Education is another field in which the OSCE field missions have gathered experience, for instance with supporting pedagogical assistants in Serbia and in Kosovo. A major problem, which has no easy solutions, is discrimination in schools. Bullying is one of the main reasons why young Roma children quit attending classes. Shortly before the new school year started this autumn, 26 primary school teachers from schools with many Roma pupils met in Tirana, Albania, under the BPRI project for a training course on different methods for combating discrimination. The trainer, Ruth Friedman, emphasized the idea that under their different exteriors all people represent a common humanity. An important topic was how to deal with children's parents, who very often are the ones conveying discriminatory sentiments to their children.

Unresolved settlement issues are often a major obstacle to Roma inclusion. In most jurisdictions in the Western Balkan region, having a legal residence is a prerequisite for accessing civil registration, education and other public services. Experts and representatives of over 20 municipalities taking part in the BPRI project gathered in Zagreb, Croatia, on 12 and 13 September for a regional roundtable meeting on legislation for settlement legalization, social housing policies, housing development and settlement improvement. The participants discussed how municipalities could help Roma overcome obstacles to legalization, for instance by reclassifying land, lowering application fees, introducing Roma municipal co-ordinators, donating land or investing in infrastructure improvement. They visited the nearby city of Sisak, where the previously informal settlement of Capraske poljane, housing 150 Roma families, has successfully been formalized after the city acted, first to acquire the land from the Croatian forest company, and later to reclassify it from public to residential land. As a result, the city has been able to provide water, electricity and garbage collection.

Sometimes a settlement is so run down it cannot be improved. In such cases, it is important that Roma have access to social housing. One of the first events held under the BPRI project was a roundtable discussion in Podgorica on Montenegro's current development of a law on social housing. The meeting was given a special sense of urgency by a fire that broke out in the Konik camp just days before the meeting. The fire burned most of the shacks in the camp and the population had to take shelter in tents. (The Montenegro Ministry of Labour and Social Policy has now bought

containers for temporary stay, for more than €1 million.) A key topic of discussion was the importance of including a mention of Roma in the draft legislation as a vulnerable group likely to require housing.

An even more basic requirement than a legal domicile for accessing public services is the possession of personal registration documents, something that many Roma are lacking. Personal documentation is the topic of two research projects by Roma researchers that are being funded under the BPRI project. One is a survey of some 150 young people between 14 and 30 years of age in the community of Veliki Rit in Novi Sad, Serbia. The other is looking at Roma communities in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to determine the extent of their access to documentation, their awareness of the necessity of the same and the effectiveness of schemes to assist persons that are not registered.

For many of the Roma originally from Kosovo and now living in the Konik camp, the lack of registration documents is a major impediment to starting a new life in Montenegro. The OSCE Mission to Montenegro, together with the UNHCR and Montenegrin authorities, has on several occasions this year organized bus trips for displaced persons to Kosovo to obtain the documents they need to regulate their legal stay, most recently on 20 June. The Montenegrin authorities are allowing displaced persons to apply until the end of 2012 for the status of a foreigner with permanent or temporary residence.

The dancing groups in Konik are still in full swing, and there are plans for a performance on Human Rights Day in December. They have been recognized under the BPRI project as a best practice for their success in breaking out of established patterns of mistrust between Roma and non-Roma. Supporting these young people is important, not least because for the short time they are dancing, the problems that beset them can fade away and make room for living the kind of freedom the BPRI project is ultimately aiming to achieve for all Roma: the freedom to pursue a goal, under conditions that give them a fair chance, to excel at something they love to do, as full members of their societies.

This article was prepared on the basis of information provided by Judith Kiers, Project Manager, Milena Isaković, Regional Co-ordinator, and Nedjeljka Sindik, Aleksandar Lazovski, Mirjeta Ramizi and Jasmina Viteskić, National Project Officers of the Best Practices for Roma Integration Project at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.



INTERVIEW WITH ANGELA KÓCZÉ

Research subjects should be partners

Angela Kóczé is a Hungarian Roma sociologist and activist. Currently a research fellow at the Hungarian Academy of Science, she has worked as a policy maker on Roma and gender equality in the Hungarian Government, as a founding director of the European Roma Information Office in Brussels and as director of the human rights education programme at the European Roma Rights Centre in Budapest. She shared her views on the margins of the OSCE expert roundtable “Women as Agents of Change” in Vienna on 6 and 7 September 2012, where she was an invited speaker.

OSCE Magazine: You are a sociologist, a university teacher, a policy maker. What drives you to work for the cause of Roma and Roma women?

Angela Kóczé: I think it was very much given in my life, because you can choose many things in your life, but you cannot choose your family. I was born in a Roma settlement in Kispalád, a little village of 500 people in an underdeveloped area of eastern Hungary. My father had two years of elementary school, my mother had four; basically

both were illiterate. I always had a kind of inner drive telling me I wanted to do something different. I think what really sparked my spirit was the trust I got from my family and from my elementary school teachers as well. I finished secondary school, but I didn't have the courage right away to apply to a university. I went to Budapest and got a job in the heavy metal industry, doing some menial work and administrative assistance. Then I started attending teacher training college, and afterwards I went to the university to study sociology. Later, I studied human rights at the Central European University. At that time, I was already working for a Romani NGO.

How have things changed for the Roma since you were a child?

I think that there has been a paradoxical development. In terms of legislation and policy one has the feeling that things are getting better, but one can't really say that the situation has improved for the people living at the grassroots level. The change in the political system after 1989 was definitely a positive one insofar as it gave us freedom

Angela Kóczé addresses the OSCE roundtable discussion “Women as Agents of Change” as Andrzej Mirga, OSCE/ODIHR Senior Adviser on Roma and Sinti Issues, looks on, Vienna, 7 September 2012. (OSCE/ Ursula Froese)



Building bridges between Roma and non-Roma. During a flood in north-eastern Hungary in 2010, the city of Szikszó was under water for several days. After the floodwaters subsided, the local Romani women's organization provided food and household necessities to local Roma and non-Roma inhabitants alike. (Angela Kóczé)

and rights. But meanwhile, people were not able to use their rights because basically they did not have the means. Many people lost their jobs and fell out of the social system, so that their material situation has become much worse than it was during Socialism. That is why I think that not only in Hungary but also in other South-Eastern and Central European countries, particularly in the rural areas, people have a strong nostalgia for the old times.

For example, all the members of my family have been unemployed for ages. They had jobs in the late 1980s and early 1990s and from then on they haven't had a job. Not because they haven't tried, but because they are living in an area where people are completely outside of the market system. And now, as we experience the dark side of the economic crisis, anti-Gypsy rhetoric is becoming really harsh and is shattering many people's lives at the local level.

What needs to be done to decrease Roma segregation and what can Roma women do?

Segregation cannot be overcome through any one factor alone, such as education. All kinds of different policies are needed, a housing policy, an employment policy, and also education and health policies. Roma women can certainly play a leadership role in their local communities and they can

build bridges between Roma and non-Roma. But I think it is unrealistic to see them as major "agents of change". They can make small steps, but to change the system structurally, you need people in powerful positions. People who can ensure, for instance, that money earmarked for Roma integration policies actually reaches the communities that need it most.

How have you used your own research to benefit Roma communities?

In 2009 and 2010, I did a research project in two micro-regions in Hungary, the Szikszó and the Monor regions, in which I compared the social and economic status of Romani women with non-Romani women from the same social class. I used the results for my doctoral dissertation, but I also made them available to the community members to use as an advocacy tool. Being a Romani activist, I have always felt that my research methods should be a reflection of my philosophy, which is to consider the research subject as a partner who can be an active participant in the project. The research results are a help for the community members because they give them the language they need to express their experiential knowledge in an official way, which can be used to apply for EU funding, for instance.

Often, money that is meant for Roma inclusion doesn't reach the communities that are most in need because the NGOs that are in place in these communities do not fulfil required criteria. Being able to refer to the results of a study as background documentation is an important element of writing a grant application.

This seminar has been about women, their problems and their potential as agents of change. What about Roma men?

Many young Roma men, especially those living in segregated areas, are in huge trouble. They have no money, no opportunities in their lives, and naturally they are likely to turn to all kinds of illegal stuff, anything that can give them any kind of hope and perspective. One interesting thing about the current macroeconomic shift is that many multinational companies are more willing to give low-level jobs to Roma women than to men. When you see cleaning personnel in a shopping centre, for instance, they are mostly women. So I think that men are really in a horrible situation. And the frustration that they are experiencing every day can spark tensions inside their families and inside their micro-communities. These are things we need to understand, also from a social and a psychological perspective.

This article was prepared with the assistance of Karolina Hyza, intern at the Press and Public Information Section of the OSCE Secretariat.

For further reading:

Missing Intersectionality: Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in Current Research and Policies on Romani Women in Europe by Angela Kóczé with contribution from Raluca Maria Popa, Policy Papers, Central European University (CEU) Center for Policy Studies, CEU Press, 2009

"Pro-Roma global civil society: acting for, with or instead of Roma?" by Angela Kóczé and Martin Rövid, in Mary Kaldor, Henrietta L. Moore and Sabine Selchow (eds.), *Global Civil Society 2012: Ten Years of Critical Reflection*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 110-122.

Roma inclusion in Serbia

by Obrad Grković

“When other countries express interest in your work, you know you must be doing something right; when they begin modelling their programmes on yours, that’s when you need to start doing things even better,” declares Matthew Newton, Roma Programme and Policy Co-ordinator at the OSCE Mission to Serbia.

With around 300 Roma employed in Serbia as pedagogic assistants, health mediators and municipal co-ordinators and another 200 soon to be employed, other countries in South-Eastern Europe have been motivated to look and learn from their neighbour’s experience in putting the National Strategy and Action Plan for Roma Inclusion it adopted four years ago into practice. The Mission to Serbia has been supporting the process.

One hundred and seventy Roma teacher assistants are creating a more inclusive environment in schools across Serbia for Roma pupils and more individualized support for their families, in a pilot scheme that was introduced into schools by the Ministry of Education and is now an integral part of the school system. The Mission to Serbia provided vocational training for the initial cohort of assistants in 2008 and recently conducted a five-day training course on effective co-ordination between schools and Roma parents. The programme is good for the young Roma pupils, who are staying in school, and good for the assistants, who are given the opportunity to earn a degree through the University of Kragujevac’s Centre for Life-long Learning. In the longer term, as the Roma community integrates further, it is envisaged that the teacher assistants will also work with children with developmental disabilities. “This is the sustainability the government is striving for,” Matthew underlines.

The OSCE is also providing vocational training to 75 Roma health mediators who are helping Roma register with the health system and get the opportunity to see a family doctor or have a general check-up, in a programme initiated by the Ministry of Health. The mediators also educate their community on topics such as reproductive health care. “Next year, Roma health mediators will become a permanent part of the health system,” Matthew explains.

More than 40 Roma municipal co-ordinators are working to improve the access of Roma to local services and information. The co-ordinators are currently taking part in a Serbia-wide peer review of Roma inclusion practices conducted by the government’s Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Team and local-self governments. The OSCE has participated in this process and, based on the findings, will help to reinforce effective ways of promoting Roma participation at the local level.

Each of these programmes for Roma inclusion has been recognized as a model for emulation by governments of

neighbouring countries. As an example, in 2011, representatives from the Health Ministry of Bosnia and Herzegovina visited Serbia to learn more about the health mediators’ scheme. Roma health mediators are also being introduced in Croatia this year as part of the regional OSCE-EU project Best Practices for Roma Integration.

But the issues are complex and there is no room for complacency. With some 300,000 Roma in Serbia in more than 600 settlements, the needs are daunting. At present, each of the three programmes the OSCE supports is administered separately. To maximize limited resources, co-ordination could be improved. For example, health centres that conduct vaccination schemes could share information about school-aged children with schools and pedagogical assistants. The OSCE Mission is promoting the creation of joint mobile teams that would provide health, pedagogical and employment assistance simultaneously. This could be the next source inspiration for Serbia’s regional neighbours.

Obrad Grković was an intern at the OSCE Mission to Serbia.

The OSCE’s assistance to Serbia’s National Strategy and Action Plan for Roma Inclusion has been funded by extra-budgetary contributions from the European Union (CARDS) in the amount of €2 million and by Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency in the amount of €3.2 million.



“The presence of Roma health mediators makes my job as a nurse so much easier. Being a Roma myself, I greatly appreciate what they are doing for my community. Their ability to communicate and help register individuals into the system helps us to carry out our work more efficiently,” says Mara Djordjević, a nurse from a Roma community in Belgrade. (OSCE/Milan Obradović)

“Every day I have five primary school classes in different grades. I teach them Serbian and mathematics. When they come to me and say ‘Teacher, do we have a class today?’ – it’s a happiness I can’t explain,” says Manuela Alić, an economics student who has been working as a pedagogical assistant in Pirot in south-eastern Serbia as part of a programme run by the Serbian Roma Women’s Network and supported by the OSCE Mission to Serbia. (OSCE/Ursula Froese)



Education in the Roma Mahalla, Kosovo

by Edita Buçaj

When I met her, Sheherzade Mustafa was busy browsing her Facebook account and chatting with friends on the Internet. She told me that just two months earlier all she knew was how to turn the computer on and off. She is one of twelve Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian young people who learned to use office software applications in an OSCE computer training course last month.

At the education centre in the Roma Mahalla, a settlement in southern Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Sheherzade and her colleagues are sharing their new computer skills with the children that attend day care here or come after school for courses. Eventually, she hopes, the skills she acquired in the course will help her find permanent employment.

The Roma Mahalla comprises some 200 households, around 1,000 people. Many have come here from the lead-contaminated camps in northern Mitrovica/Mitrovicë where they ended up after the 1999 conflict when thousands of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian families were displaced within and outside Kosovo. The Česmin Lug camp was closed in 2010 and the Osterode camp is due to be closed in December 2012.

“Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities are the most disadvantaged and marginalized groups in Kosovo, as their basic rights are not respected and they face entrenched prejudices,” says Nikola Petrovski, a Human Dimension Officer at the OSCE Mission in Kosovo.

Sheherzade returned to the Mahalla from the Osterode camp in 2005. She admits that coming back has not been easy for most Roma families. Children have had to learn to communicate in another language; for some the language of school instruction has switched from Serbian to Albanian. Youth, even those who have had vocational training, remain unable to find jobs, and the older generation, often illiterate and lacking documents or information, still has problems getting social assistance and healthcare.

A shocking 95 per cent of Roma Mahalla residents are unemployed and reliant on handouts from local institutions or international organizations for their livelihood. Often they are not even able to pay utility bills, many living in unacceptable conditions.

The OSCE Mission is educating the residents of the Mahalla about their rights, existing protection mechanisms and possible social assistance entitlements, including free blood tests for lead contamination. By urging municipalities to simplify civil registration procedures, the Mission is helping them to obtain social assistance. It has organized meetings at which residents, the municipality and the police discuss common concerns. As a result,

the police have re-established a permanent presence in the Mahalla. The municipality has agreed to facilitate the election of community leaders, as residents feel they are not being properly represented at municipal and other forums.

EMPHASIS ON EDUCATION

In order to affirm their rights, articulate their concerns, and have a fair chance on the job market, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities need education. Ultimately, it is education that will help them to find employment and build sustainable livelihoods.

In addition to offering computer courses, the Mission has been working to promote the integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children through inclusive education and awareness-raising among the communities themselves on the importance of education. Since 2010, the Mission has engaged school mediators in nine municipalities in order to encourage school attendance.

As members of the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, the mediators provide a valuable and culturally sensitive link between their respective communities and educational institutions. They help with school registration, follow up on cases of children not registered on time, monitor attendance and, most importantly, work with parents to raise awareness and tackle obstacles to education. In 2011, after undertaking a house-to-house campaign, the mediators managed to bring 110 children back to school, including 39 who had already dropped out for the second time.

Education, inclusion and equal opportunities: these are crucial to solving problems faced by the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities. They are goals worth fighting for, every day, Petrovski concludes.

Edita Buçaj is Deputy Spokesperson of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo.



Sheherzade Mustafa explains how OSCE computer training has been useful for her. “I can send and receive e-mails; I love making tables. I am sure this will help me find a good job in the future,” she says. Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, 14 August 2012. (OSCE/Hasan Sopa)

Defeating racism and intolerance in sports

by Larry Olomofe

“We need to continue to be vigilant and raise awareness of the deleterious impact of discrimination and intolerance in sports. Sports can and should be used more effectively to counter stereotypes and negative perceptions of those who are usually the victims of discrimination.”

— Janez Lenarčič, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights



GETTY IMAGES

Nearly 50 years after the adoption of the UN’s International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, racism and other forms of intolerance are far from dead in the OSCE region and beyond. Premised upon social inequalities, they affects all spheres of society and are manifest also in sports, where, sadly, they are often magnified, both in the playing field and among spectators.

Recently, there has been a series of high-profile cases of racism expressed by sporting personalities. The Greek triple-jumper Parskevi “Voula” Papachristou was expelled from the 2012 Olympic team for posting racist jokes on her Twitter account. Uruguayan footballer Luis Suarez was fined £40,000s for calling the footballer Parice Evra, of French-African descent, “Negrito” during a football match in 2011.

Incidents like these are not only shocking in themselves, but also a worrying indicator of persistent and widespread acceptance of intolerant behaviour in sports at all levels. Racist slurs and jokes in the locker-rooms of amateur sports clubs and schools don’t make the headlines, but the harm they do to the targeted individuals and to social cohesion is considerable.

Our societies are becoming increasingly pluralistic, and people, especially young people, need to be prepared for living in them. There is an urgent need for raising sensitivity in schools and in homes to the fact that racist, ethnic or other forms of intolerance, in sports or elsewhere, are absolutely unacceptable forms of behaviour.

There are groups and individuals in the OSCE region who have risen to this challenge and whose work to fight intolerance in sports deserves to be recognized and emulated. Last April, representatives of 55 NGOs, four international organizations and 44 participating States met in Vienna at a meeting organized by the OSCE Office for Democratic

Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to share good practices and, importantly, to consider them in the context of the more general need to promote diversity, integration and equality in the OSCE region.

As announced by its title, *Combating Racism, Intolerance and Discrimination in Society through Sport*, a major part of the meeting was devoted to exploring ways in which sports, while prone to racist behaviour, can also be an excellent tool for combating the xenophobic attitudes in society that are at the root of it. Millions in the OSCE region are engaged in sporting activities, both as spectators and participants, at the amateur and professional levels. These activities can be an important vehicle for promoting mutual understanding and tolerance.

Several examples were showcased at the OSCE meeting. The Open Fun Football summer schools have since 1998 brought together more than 250,000 children from South-Eastern Europe and the Middle East in a safe environment to learn to appreciate their differences and discover similarities. The Policy Centre for Roma and Minorities in Bucharest uses football and other sports to empower ghetto children to build self-esteem and strive for a better life.

Despite such encouraging initiatives, serious challenges remain. We need to tackle them boldly and with courage, commitment and innovation. The potential of sports for spreading the values of tolerance and inclusiveness must be seized and used wisely.

Larry Olomofe is Adviser on Combating Racism and Xenophobia and Training Co-ordinator in the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. More information on the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Combating Racism, Intolerance and Discrimination in Society through Sport can be found : www.osce.org/odihhr/88528.



Kids, the ghetto and the magic of sports

by Valeriu Nicolae

When I was a child, I loved sports. I played football and basketball in some of the best teams in my town, Craiova, in southern Romania. I ran the 800 metres and I was a decent swimmer and tennis player. For the poor Roma child I was, the state rations of food received in the Communist times by youngsters playing sports was an extremely strong incentive. Hot showers, equipment as well as warm gyms and training camps were some other things I thought to be almost magical, especially during the cold winters or summer holidays.

But what I liked most was that in my teams I never felt I was the stinky Gypsy most of the people around me said I was. I was just a good player and my teammates treated me with friendship and respect. Some of my friendships created then remain strong after three decades. I learned most things I know about hard work, discipline, competitiveness, ambition and respect from sports.

No wonder I focused on sports when I started working with ghetto children in Bucharest. Drugs, violence, prostitution and petty criminality infest the ghetto. Everybody I talked with told me that I was crazy to try to work there. I asked a friend from the European football governing body UEFA to give me some T-shirts and I told the children in the ghetto that I was starting a UEFA-sponsored team. My colleagues and I at the Policy Centre for Roma and Minorities organized street-dance, basketball and volleyball classes. The

children got hooked. No drugs, no violence — just sports was our motto.

It is less than two years since we started working in the ghetto and we have some great results. Our children (around 200) stay in school — their attendance has improved dramatically. We have a national vice-champion in street-dance and very good football and street dance teams. None of our children abuses drugs.

Violence and racism in and around football stadiums are still a huge problem. The last game of the Romanian season at the end of May 2012 saw two teams from Bucharest, Rapid and Dinamo, playing for the Romanian Cup. I took my son to the game. At one point over 10,000 people in the stadium started to chant against the Rapid team — perceived in Romania as a team of Gypsies. “We’ve always hated the Gypsies, f--- you Rapid,” reverberated around the stadium. My child, a 10-year-old who loves sports, froze and started crying. He asked me if we were going to be killed. I tried to calm him down and I yelled at the people who were chanting around me. Some of them seemed thunderstruck and deeply ashamed. My child doesn’t want to watch football anymore. Words can kill not just innocence and love, they can kill people. Racism has been the motive for abject killings — some of those crimes have had sports people as victims.

Some of the most famous football, basketball and volleyball players in Romania have come to

Miodrag Belodedici of the Romanian Football Federation trains with the children from the Bucharest ghetto. (Valeriu Nicolae)

the ghetto and played with or trained the children we work with. Twice a year, together with the Romanian Football Federation, we conduct children's tournaments against racism and violence and we also organize exhibition games with famous journalists and personalities. UEFA has in the past years sent a very strong message against racism and violence in the stadiums. Stronger than any European government. UEFA's president is the only visible European leading figure who has dared to say openly and bluntly that anti-gypsyism is a problem that needs to be fought seriously.

I still believe sports are magic. But I have learned that magic is simply not enough to stop violence and racism. For that we need serious and

constant campaigning and education. We need governments and inter-governmental institutions to step in and do what some sports bodies have already been doing for years. Recognizing that there is racism and violence in our societies and in sports is important, but only a first step. What we need most now is to fight against them, openly and efficiently. We need to feel that we are all playing in the same team.

Valeriu Nicolae, a Romanian Roma, is the president and founder of the Policy Center for Roma and Minorities in Bucharest. The Centre won the 2012 UNICEF Sport for Education Beyond Sport Award for its work. More information can be found at www.policycenter.eu.

Eurocup 2012

Red card for human trafficking in Ukraine

When a record one and a half million fans streamed to the cities of Poland and Ukraine this summer for the UEFA European Football Championship, the party spirit ran high. But international crowds like this also represent an opportunity for traffickers in human beings. Years before the first kick-off in Kyiv, the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine began working with the Ukrainian law enforcement agencies to ensure that the Eurocup, an occasion for celebration for many, would not become the beginning of a nightmare for others, women abducted for prostitution, men subjected to forced labour or children forced into begging.

Taking advantage of the experience of Germany, host of the World Cup in 2006, and Austria, co-host with Switzerland of the Eurocup in 2008, which were both successful in using tighter police controls and campaigns by NGOs to prevent the number of trafficking victims from rising, the Project Co-ordinator organized study trips to these countries for representatives of Ukrainian law enforcement agencies.

After the visits, a working group of law enforcement representatives worked with the Project Co-ordinator to develop anti-trafficking provisions, which were included in Ukraine's official action plan for ensuring the security of the Eurocup 2012. They included stepping up prevention of trafficking and illegal migration, building the capacity of the Interior Ministry to protect fans from these crimes and informing visitors arriving in Ukraine about the dangers and measures taken.

Starting in November 2011, 48 public trolleybuses in the four Ukrainian cities hosting the games, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Kyiv and Lviv, carried large advertisements on their sides proclaiming the criminal nature of trafficking offences and naming the services offered by the Ukrainian state to assist victims.

A month before the start of the Eurocup games, the Project Co-ordinator, in co-operation with the Interior Ministry and the State Border Guard Service, produced 500,000 information cards warning of the dangers of human trafficking, including legal and penal aspects of the crime. Visitors entering Ukraine to see the games received a card upon passing the state border.

The Project Co-ordinator has been conducting a larger anti-trafficking campaign since 2009 to help Ukraine implement the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings. An important achievement of the three-year project has been Ukraine's adoption of a comprehensive anti-trafficking law in September 2011 and a regulation on a national referral mechanism early this year. The Eurocup host city Donetsk is located in one of two regions in which a pilot victim referral mechanism was developed under the project.

This article was prepared on the basis of information provided by Tetyana Rudenko and Oksana Polyuga of the office of the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine. The anti-trafficking information card distributed to football fans at state borders can be seen at www.osce.org/ukraine/90545.



Mini-Paralympic games in Kosovo

Story and photos by Hasan Sopa

It is estimated that there are over 150,000 people with disabilities in Kosovo. Coming from many different communities, with different cultural and religious backgrounds, they all share similar challenges, often living on the margins of society.

The Kosovo Mini-Olympics for young people with disabilities are an opportunity to fight prejudice and let these members of society show what they can do. Organized by Kosovo's Para-Olympics Committee and the Academy for Public Safety, they have been held annually in Kosovo since 2005. The OSCE Mission in Kosovo has been supporting them from the start.

The games take place in the town of Vushtrri/Vucitrn, in the north-western



The opening festivities saw Kosovo police officers dancing with participants. Developing understanding between the police and people with disabilities is one of the purposes of the event.



"We as a society — and this includes people with disabilities as well — have the responsibility to recognize, acknowledge, appreciate and respect the abilities of all people, suppress prejudice and see people for what they really are," said Njomza Emini, the head of Kosovo's Para-Olympics Committee.

Apart from being a chance to compete, the Mini-Olympics are also an opportunity to make new friends, share experiences and learn new things.

Some of the chess matches pitted players with players without disabilities. In this one, the blind player beat the odds to achieve a draw against his sighted opponent.



part of Kosovo. This year, they were held on 16 and 17 June and gathered 450 young people with disabilities and their families, who competed in wheelchair races, basketball, handball, shooting, artistic drawing, darts and chess.

“By competing with your peers, some with and some without disabilities, you will be sending out a very important message to the whole of Kosovo, that you are all very important and contributing members of society and don’t let anyone tell you otherwise,” said Carsten Twelmeier, Director of the Department for Security and Public Safety at the OSCE Mission to Kosovo, at the opening ceremony.



The games begin with the wheelchair race, which is widely covered in the media. It is open to teams of male and female participants with physical disabilities. The number of participants per team varies depending on the scale of disability. The team with the highest number of participants making it to the finish line is declared the winner.

The OSCE’s project manager, Shpresa Muharremi, congratulated racers at the closing ceremony of the Mini-Olympics.



The skills and talent displayed by Mini-Olympics participants in this wheelchair basketball game were clear proof that there is no room for prejudice.

Twelmeier pledged the OSCE’s further support. “The Mini-Olympics are a perfect example to show that all is possible if you put your mind to it and if society as a whole is open minded and accepts differences,” he concluded.



Hasan Sopa is a National Public Information Officer at the OSCE Mission in Kosovo.



Geoff Cole, Deputy Head of the UK Delegation and Andrey Rudenko, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, reaffirm their support for the UNGA Olympic Truce resolution at the OSCE Annual Security Review Conference, Vienna, 27 June 2012.
(UK in Austria: All rights reserved)

The OSCE and the Olympic Truce

This summer, London proudly hosted the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The whole country embraced the spirit of the Games, and towns and cities across the United Kingdom (UK) that hosted Games events were alive with excitement. Along with putting in place state of the art sports venues, a beautiful Olympic Park and a world-class international legacy programme, the UK has been active in taking the ideals of the Olympic Truce around the world, including through working with the hosts of future Games.

The Olympic Truce was originally established between states in ancient Greece to allow athletes to travel to and from the Games free of conflict and violence. Sadly, the challenges of the modern world mean that the Truce remains more relevant than ever.

In October 2011 for the first time all 193 Member States of the United Nations (UN) co-sponsored a General Assembly resolution on the Olympic Truce, which reinforced the importance of respecting the Truce during the Games, and promoted the ideal of using sport, culture, education and public engagement to promote conflict prevention and the importance of peaceful societies.

In June 2012, the Foreign Ministers of the Russian Federation, host of the 2014 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games in Sochi, and the UK declared that they would work together to promote the ideals of the Olympic Truce.

We believe those ideals are worth celebrating and promoting. Over recent months British diplomatic missions across the world have been active in making them real. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the UK funded a short documentary on the Olympic Truce, filmed by young people from different communities, which premiered in Mostar. The UK organized basketball matches in Kosovo in co-operation with local ministries and municipalities. The events brought together children from different ethnic backgrounds through their shared love of the sport. In Sri Lanka, the UK hosted a Paralympic-style sports day for disabled soldiers, disabled ex-Tamil Tiger combatants and disabled civilians. Sport acted as a “quiet diplomat”, bringing together former adversaries to understand each

others’ perspectives, embracing diversity and encouraging inclusivity.

In the countdown to the Winter Olympics 2014 in Sochi, while work is in full swing to prepare the most compact, innovative and the “greenest” Games in the history of the Olympic Movement, Russia strives to cherish the meaning and spirit of the Olympic Truce legacy, and to increase international public interest and involvement in the ideals of the Olympic Truce. Baron Pierre de Coubertin, father of the Modern Olympic Games, intended for them to be “a period of concord in which all differences of status, religion, politics and race would be forgotten”.

In December last year, the Vilnius Ministerial Council recalled that the OSCE is a key instrument for addressing the challenges of the conflict cycle. So the ideals of the Olympic Truce are particularly relevant for the OSCE and its participating States, and deserve wider exposure within the Organization. With that in mind, the UK hosted an event at the Annual Security Review Conference on 27 June 2012 to raise awareness of the Truce. Geoff Cole, Deputy Head of the UK Delegation, and Andrey Rudenko, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, addressed Ambassadors to highlight its continuing significance and provoke discussion about it. We also encouraged participating States to sign a copy of the UN Olympic Truce resolution to reaffirm their support.

It is important that the ideals of the Olympic Truce continue to resonate at each Games and within the OSCE. We hope that participating States can find opportunities to use sport, culture, education and public engagement to bridge differences, promote understanding, and support peace and stability. As the UN Secretary General put it: “If people and nations can set aside their differences, if they can place harmony over hostility, if they can do it for one day, or for one event, they can do it forever.”

This article was contributed by the Delegations of the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation to the OSCE.

Conference interpreters love speakers who submit statements in advance

by Javier del Pino



Relatively little is known about how conference interpreters work, even among those who use their services.

How many foreign languages is an interpreter proficient in?

Good interpreters always have an excellent command of the language they translate into, but they may not speak the languages they translate from (their passive languages), or speak them poorly. Interpreters employed at international organizations typically work from three passive languages into their active language, which is usually their mother tongue.

What does an interpreter's training consist of?

A Bachelor's degree in interpretation lasts four to five years. Topics such as law, economics, history, art and philosophy are just as important as intensive training in consecutive and simultaneous interpretation and sight-translation. There are also one-year Master's programmes for university

graduates who already have a good knowledge of foreign languages.

How do interpreters prepare for a conference?

The work of a good interpreter is not limited to the time spent in the booth. Being well prepared for meetings entails being abreast of current affairs and well acquainted with the subject matter to be discussed. In the OSCE context, interpreters read the relevant OSCE decisions and documents in their active language and compile lists of terms and abbreviations.

Interpreters frequently arrive long before the meeting starts, to have time to study written statements submitted by speakers in advance and any other papers circulated among the delegations for that session. Interpreters usually work in rotation with their colleague for approximately half an hour at a time. While one colleague is working, the other prepares the statements that are to be read out subsequently, or follows the discussions.

Why do interpreters request written statements?

Successful interpretation is a collaborative exercise. When the speaker provides the text of statements or other materials such as slides or keywords in advance, it is easier for the interpreter to understand his or her intentions and be faithful to these.

When written material is not made available, the interpreter tires more quickly due to the more complex nature of written language, compounded by the speed at which delegates tend to read prepared speeches since they don't have to reflect on their wording on the spot.

An interpreter cannot be expected to provide, in tenths of a second, a perfectly accurate rendition equal in quality to a paper prepared beforehand by an expert who has had all the time in the world to choose his or her words. That is why interpreters request that they be given written statements in advance.

What are some difficulties encountered in interpreting?

One might imagine specialized terminology to be a problem, but for a good interpreter this is as good as never the case – unless a statement contains a neologism not listed in any dictionary.

“In a foreign language, you say what you can; in your mother tongue, you say what you want.”



Once in a while, linguistic difficulties occur. Speakers not using their mother tongue may make errors in pronunciation, semantics or syntax. Poems, proverbs, figures of speech such as puns or humor unique to the speaker's culture can be hard to translate.

The most frequent difficulties are due simply to bad acoustics – interference from speakers' mobile phones; bad sound quality when a delegate does not speak directly into the microphone; background noise when several microphones are switched on at the same time; acoustic feedback from earphones placed near a microphone; the speaker being too close to the microphone; noise in the interpreter's booth.

Do interpreters make mistakes?

Occasionally (primarily when written statements are not provided in advance!) an interpreter might come across a word he or she does not know. If this happens, the interpreter's colleague sometimes knows the word and jots it down. Sometimes, its meaning can be inferred from the context. And sometimes, but that is left to the reader's imagination...

Relay translation, a practice akin to the party game "Chinese whispers", is an invitation to error and is discouraged by all interpreters'

associations. In relay translation, an interpreter who does not know the speaker's language listens to a colleague's rendition and interprets that. It should never be necessary in the OSCE, where two interpreters with the appropriate language combination can cover all six official languages.

Why do interpreters work for half an hour at a time? Why is it necessary to limit the duration of meetings with interpretation to three hours?

Interpretation requires extreme concentration. Scientific studies have proven that after half an hour's work, concentration wanes and the quality of interpretation suffers. An interpreter can develop a severe headache after working for more than 30 minutes at a stretch or after meetings that run over three hours. The three-hour duration for working sessions is standard practice not only at the OSCE, but also at the United Nations and all other international organizations.

What rules should speakers at international conferences observe in order to ensure that their messages are properly conveyed?

Speakers should: switch on their microphones and make sure they work before they start speaking. They should speak directly into the microphone, without getting too close or too far away; speak at a reasonable speed; place their earphones far from the microphone so as to avoid whistling and other feedback noise; and switch off their mobile phones or put them on silent or vibrating mode.

They should try, whenever possible, to speak spontaneously and not read out prepared statements. Should the latter be the case, they should hand in a copy in advance to the document distribution or interpretation services.

Are interpreters indispensable? Are the costs of interpretation justified?

In a foreign language, you say what you can; in your mother tongue, you say what you want.



Can one do without interpreters and make savings in times of crisis? Of course one can. One could likewise do without members of any other profession, but then the world would not be what it is today.

Loreto Bravo recounts that when the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), where she was head of Conference Services for many years, was created in The Hague in 1997, her superior, a diplomat, told her that delegations felt the cost of interpretation was too high and asked her what she thought about the suggestion of one of the delegates to hire student interpreters to reduce costs. Loreto told him that it seemed to her to be a great idea, as long as the delegations of the States Parties would also integrate students of diplomacy among their ranks.

Obviously, when the message was transmitted to delegations, the idea was abandoned.

In the European Union, a study conducted on the cost of its translation and interpretation services came to the conclusion that, given the 11,000 plus meetings held during the year, the annual cost of its interpretation services, which are the largest in the world, amount to € 0.21 per EU citizen*.

Javier del Pino is a Spanish interpreter at the OSCE Hofburg in Vienna. This is a brief summary of a 12-page article of which the full original Spanish version can be found at www.javierdelpino.com.

* http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/scic/about-dg-interpretation/index_es.htm

OSCE Appointments



Ivo Petrov from Bulgaria was appointed Head of the OSCE Centre in Ashgabat on 9 July 2012. A career diplomat, he was Ambassador to Germany from 2009 to 2012. From 1993 to 1998 and again from 2002 to 2005 he headed the Bulgarian delegation to the OSCE and other international organizations in Vienna and chaired the OSCE Permanent Council during the Bulgarian Chairmanship in 2004. He participated in the CSCE follow-up meetings in Belgrade from 1977 to 1978 and in Madrid from 1980 to 1981. Ambassador Petrov has also occupied senior UN positions, in Georgia as Deputy Special Representative of the UNSG and Deputy Head of the UN Observer Mission from 2005 to 2009, and in Tajikistan as Special Representative of the UNSG and Head of the UN Observer Mission, later Head of the UN Office for Peace-building from 1999 to 2002.



Madina Jarbussynova from Kazakhstan took up her post as OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine on 18 June 2012. She was Ambassador-at-Large at the Foreign Ministry of Kazakhstan from 2003 to 2012 and Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations from 1999 to 2003. Prior to that, she served as Vice Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan from 1998 to 1999 and Head of the Foreign Ministry's Department of Multilateral Relations and International Organizations from 1995 to 1999. During Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship in 2010, she headed the Human Dimension Group in the Chairmanship Task Force. Ambassador Jarbussynova has worked to promote human rights and gender equality as a member of the UNIFEM Advisory Board, the Bureau of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and the SOS Kinderdorf International Senate in Vienna.



Jean-Claude Schlumberger from France is taking up his post as Head of the Mission in Kosovo on 1 October 2012. A career diplomat, he comes to the OSCE from Skopje, where he served as Ambassador of France from 2009 to 2012. Ambassador Schlumberger has also been posted to Germany, Algeria, the United States, Laos and Haiti. From 2006 to 2009, he was assigned to the Inspectorate-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other senior positions in the Ministry have been in the department responsible for the United Nations and other international organizations and as chief of staff for Foreign Ministers Hervé de Charette in 1996 and Alain Juppé in 1993.

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