

RAXEN
Thematic Study
Housing Conditions
of Roma and Travellers

Cyprus

By Nicos Trimikliniotis & Corina Demetriou

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Executive summary

Overview: policy and legal framework

- [1]. The Roma of Cyprus, whose number is estimated to be between 1,500 and 2,500, are of Cypriot origin and have been residing in Cyprus for several hundreds of years. When Cyprus was granted independence from British colonial rule, the Roma were deemed to be part of the Turkish-Cypriot community because of their Muslim faith, although they were not asked if that was how they wished to be self-determined. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, a number of Roma crossed from the Turkish-controlled north to the Greek-Cypriot-controlled south and settled in the old Turkish quarter of Limassol. They did so in properties abandoned by Turkish Cypriots many decades ago, which are in a poor state of repair. There, they faced extreme poverty, exclusion and hostility from the host population and were treated with suspicion and intolerance by the authorities. A plan to relocate them in order to appease the local communities was partly implemented with the setting up of special settlements of prefabricated houses in remote rural areas. Over the years, the houses inhabited by the Roma have been maintained and repaired by the government, but the pace of repairs is slow and the condition of the houses remains substandard and often unfit for human habitation.
- [2]. National legislation makes no special provision for the Roma but there are laws of a more general nature providing for: protection against discrimination in housing; housing benefit; public assistance to persons with insufficient means; protection against eviction under certain conditions; the right to housing for persons with disabilities. There is no special complaints mechanism for processing complaints about housing discrimination, other than the national equality body appointed under the law transposing the EU anti-discrimination acquis, dealing with discrimination on all grounds and in all fields. There is also no data collection mechanism on housing discrimination instances or complaints. Low awareness of rights, illiteracy and underreporting are severely limiting the impact of anti-discrimination legislation on the Roma.
- [3]. The vulnerable position of the Roma in housing is reflected in a number of reports such as the Third ECRI report for Cyprus, two investigations carried out by the Ombudsman in 2003 and the annual report of the US State Department in human rights practices in Cyprus.

- [4]. There is no quantitative study on the housing situation or indeed any other more general study on the general situation of the Roma in Cyprus. Although the Ombudsman's report refers to them as 'one of the most vulnerable groups in society' and they are included in the ECRI Cyprus Country report, they are not recognised as such by the Republic's National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.
- [5]. National legislation does not provide for collecting data generally disaggregated by ethnicity but only for data about those constitutionally designated groups defined as 'communities' (i.e. Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots) and 'religious groups' (Maronites, Armenians and Latins). With the granting of independence and the drafting of the constitution in 1959, most Roma were designated as belonging to the Turkish-Cypriot community due to their religious affiliation, whilst a small group of Christian Roma were designated as Greek Cypriots. Despite the ratification of the Framework Convention on National Minorities, the Cypriot Roma are not afforded recognition as a national minority but are considered to be part of the Turkish-Cypriot community.
- [6]. There are some qualitative studies that deal with specific aspects of Roma life in Cyprus as well as on education issues, but there is no qualitative study specifically on housing. Nevertheless, from the research and data available, it emerges that housing is one of the more needy aspects of Roma life in Cyprus.

Quantitative data

- [7]. In the absence of systematic data on the precise number of Roma residing in Cyprus and data on housing conditions, this section attempts to provide figures and information about the number of Roma in the south of Cyprus and the amounts expended by the government for the repair and maintenance of residences, based on: reports compiled by experts; the Ombudsman; the government for the purposes of the Third ECRI report; and the National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2004-2006. Information on the number of Roma residents are also derived from interviews with government officials.
- [8]. Available data suggest that there are no halting sites (regulated or unregulated encampments of Roma) since they have not travelled in large groups around the country for several decades. Instead, they move mostly from the Turkish-controlled north to the Greek-Cypriot-controlled south in small groups (i.e. families) and then settle either in the old Turkish quarter of Limassol. Here, welfare services offer them old Turkish-Cypriot houses or prefabricated homes in specially

designated Roma settlements in rural and segregated settings; these latter, however, only include the most basic amenities.

- [9]. Roma children have access to schools which, due to their location in deprived areas, are classified as ‘Education Priority Zones’, an institution introduced by the Ministry of Education in order to promote special measures for schools with a high concentration of non-Greek-speaking pupils.

Qualitative information

- [10]. A number of scholarly articles offer insight into the origins, religion and language of the Roma of Cyprus (the term by which they are known) and the change to their nomadic lifestyle after the war of 1974.
- [11]. This section makes extensive reference to a self-initiated investigation by the Ombudsman in 2003 into the living conditions of the Roma in one of the specially designated government settlements. The Ombudsman’s report illustrated the unsuitability of the accommodation offered and addressed various social issues regarding the general situation of the Roma in Cyprus. Reference is also made to the findings of international reports on Roma housing in Cyprus, namely: the 2006 Third ECRI Report on Cyprus; the Report of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe on Cyprus in 2006; and the United States Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Cyprus. We also refer to an incident in 2005 where the parents of Greek-Cypriot children attending a school with Romani pupils forcibly closed the establishment, suspecting those pupils of suffering from hepatitis.
- [12]. The issue of the **habitability** of dwellings inhabited by the Roma is riddled with contradictory information; government officials present a better picture than independent researchers. The NFP’s on-site visit to a Roma district confirmed the existence of a mixed situation, with some houses in a good state of repair and others in a derelict condition. **Accessibility** is, according to government officials, granted to the most vulnerable Roma, although no concrete evidence of this policy is apparent. **Location** is more problematic, as the designated settlements were purposely set up in remote rural areas to appease hostile local communities, but the Turkish quarter where most Roma reside offers access to amenities including schools, hospitals and employment options, including an unused community centre. The **cultural adequacy** of the dwellings has not been taken into consideration by policy makers. Spatial and social **segregation** was examined in a 2008 scholarly study which illustrated the absence of

any governmental policy aimed at addressing Roma needs, whilst school segregation became evident from both studies and interviews conducted for the purposes of this report. Whilst obtaining housing in the **private** sector is an almost impossible exercise for the Roma, access to **social** housing does not constitute a problem.

- [13]. Qualitative data on the impact of housing segregation on the Roma is examined through the perspective of the historical origins of the Cypriot Roma and through the perceptions of Roma identity by the Cypriot authorities and the Greek-Cypriot population; these perceptions are riddled with suspicion and hostility.

Case law and complaints

- [14]. There is no particular mechanism for processing complaints for housing discrimination, other than the procedure provided by the Race Equality Directive, which has not been utilised by or on behalf of the Roma so far. This bears witness to the low awareness amongst the Roma communities of their rights. Indeed, the only complaint received by the Ombudsman regarding Roma housing was from a group of Greek-Cypriot residents of the old Turkish quarter, who complained about the presence of the Roma. A complaint was, for the first time, submitted recently to the Equality Body on discrimination against the Roma in the field of education. There is no case law on the subject.

Good practices

- [15]. The only integration measures that can be reported are in the field of education, consisting mainly of support Turkish-language classes, provision of free school uniforms, free meals and free transport to school; there are, however, no classes on Roma culture or history. In one particular school where there is a high concentration of Romani pupils, a number of additional measures aiming for more inclusive and multi-cultural education are now beginning to bear fruit, and have even won the school the 2006 Commonwealth Education Good Practice Award.
- [16]. More generally, this section discusses the institution of the Educational Priority Zones, introduced not only for the Roma, but for all schools located within deprived areas. In addition, the efforts to set up a separate school for Turkish-speaking pupils are described briefly.
- [17]. An employment scheme introduced by the municipality to assist with Roma labour integration is described in this section.

Major projects

- [18]. The only major project that can be reported is the implementation of the Council of Ministers' decision of 2000 to house all Cypriot Roma in the old Turkish quarter of Limassol, and to set up specially designated Roma settlements.

1. Desk research

1.1. Legal and policy framework

[19]. According to estimates, there are currently approximately 1,500¹-2,500² Roma living in Cyprus, all of whom are of Cypriot origin.³ There are no travellers in Cyprus. The overwhelming majority of the Cypriot Roma are Turkish-speaking and have been classified as belonging to the Turkish-Cypriot community primarily because of their Muslim faith (even though they were never called to choose the community they would belong to as had other minorities).⁴ Various groups of Roma have lived in Cyprus for over 500 years, but their nomadic lifestyle changed with the *de facto* partitioning of the island in 1974.⁵ In 1999-2001, many Roma⁶ crossed from the Turkish-controlled north of Cyprus to the Greek-Cypriot-controlled south and now reside in government-designated concentrations such as the old Turkish quarter of Limassol, and special Roma settlements. These are made of temporary structures and are usually located in isolated areas.

¹ This is the figure referred to in the self-initiated investigation of the Ombudsman under ref. AYT/E 3/2003 regarding the living conditions of the Roma who have settled in the village of Makounda (30.06.2003).

² Figure according to the researchers' own estimates, given that there are over a thousand Roma living in the south of Cyprus at the moment.

³ The researchers have been unofficially informed that there are Romanian and other Balkan Roma living in Cyprus; however, there is no official data about their number or status in Cyprus.

⁴ The Cypriot Constitution does not recognise any 'minorities', but only 'religious groups' which must necessarily belong to one of the two 'communities', i.e. the Greek or the Turkish community. As a community, the Roma are not constitutionally recognised.

⁵ The occupation of the northern part of the island by the Turkish army in 1974 marked a change from the nomadic life to a more settled existence. The largest groups of Roma are now settled in the towns of Morphou and Famagusta, both cities in the northern part of the island, where approximately 600 Roma settled. The Roma are Muslims with more affinity to the Turkish people, hence the generally accepted rationale for their moving to the northern part after the Turkish invasion in 1974. See: D. Kenrick, and G. Taylor (1986) 'Gypsies in Cyprus', *Roma*, January (1986), 24, pp. 36-38, available at <http://www.domresearchcenter.com/reprints/body4.html>

⁶ Newspaper Reports quote CIA figures that in 2001 some 700 Roma and Turkish-Cypriots crossed over to the Republic-controlled south, most of whom now reside in the old Turkish quarter of Limassol. The wave of crossing over has since reduced. See: M. Hadjicostis, 'Gypsies in Limassol "explosive" situation', in: *The Cyprus Weekly*, (14-20.06.2002).

- [20]. When they crossed from north to south in the late 1990s, the Roma initially settled in abandoned and derelict properties within the old Turkish quarter of Limassol, which Turkish Cypriots had been forced to vacate several decades earlier. Many of these houses were without doors or windows, a sanitary system, electricity or water supply. By 2003, approximately 360 Roma persons had settled in these properties, without any preceding repair works having been done. Twelve families were regarded as trespassers, since they had occupied abandoned Turkish-Cypriot homes without a permit from the competent authorities. However, the majority of families were granted necessary permits, despite the bad state of repair of these houses;⁷ a study carried out by the Welfare Office in 2001 found that most houses were derelict and recommended that they be demolished because they were hazardous and dangerous for their inhabitants.⁸ Various newspaper reports have also pointed to the squalor and poverty of these houses.⁹
- [21]. The arrival of the Roma families in 1990-2001 in the south was greeted with fear and suspicion by the local communities as well as by the authorities.¹⁰ The then Minister of Justice alleged in a public statement that the Roma families may well be ‘Turkish spies’,¹¹ whilst the Minister of the Interior at the time assured Greek Cypriots that the authorities would ‘ensure that they will be moved to an area that is far away from any place where there are people living.’¹² The Third ECRI Report on Cyprus notes: ‘the Cypriot authorities have used language and displayed attitudes vis-à-vis these persons that were not conducive to defusing tensions and promoting acceptance of Roma by the local communities.’¹³ At the beginning of this influx, some Roma families

⁷ Information from the Ombudsman’s Report on the Gypsies of the Turkish-Cypriot quarter of Limassol, File No. A/P 839/2003, 10.12.2003.

⁸ Confidential Report on the housing in the Turkish quarter of Limassol 27.9.2001.

⁹ See M. Frangou (1998), ‘Τι έγιναν οι κούλλουφοι της Κύπρου’, in: *Σελίδες*, 06.02.1998; G. Savvides, (2001), ‘Ο καιρός των τσιγγάνων’, in: *Χαραυγή*, 4.11.2001.

¹⁰ M. Hadjicosta (2001) ‘Fears over gypsy influx’, in: *The Cyprus Weekly*, 13-19.04.2001, available at *Dom Research Center* <http://www.domresearchcenter.com/news/cyprus/index.html>

¹¹ Remarks by the then Justice Minister Koshis in J. Matthews (2001) ‘More gypsies crossing from north as Koshis warns about spies’, *The Cyprus Mail*, 03/04/2001, available at <http://www.domresearchcenter.com/news/cyprus/index.html>

¹² Editorial (2001) ‘Our reaction to Gypsies raises some awkward questions’, in: *The Cyprus Mail* (10.04.2001) available at <http://www.domresearchcenter.com/news/cyprus/index.html> (26.03.2009)

¹³ Third ECRI Report on Cyprus, adopted on 16.12.2005, Strasbourg 16.05.2006, Council of Europe, p. 25.

were detained in Central Prison; this practice was discontinued when the Attorney General ruled it as illegal.¹⁴

[22]. Following the arrival of Roma families, the Council of Ministers decided that suitable spaces must be found for the temporary placement of the Roma moving from north to south, in order to investigate whether they were indeed Cypriot citizens (Turkish Cypriots) and to try and find them employment if that was the case.¹⁵ This decision was never implemented and no holistic plan was ever compiled for the social integration and demarginalisation of the Roma, for their housing needs or for the provision of social welfare. Instead, upon their arrival in the Republic-controlled areas, the authorities subjected the Roma to medical tests to ensure that they were not carriers of contagious diseases. Also, the Ombudsman speaks of excessive policing of the Roma for ‘security reasons’ and the efforts to remove them from local communities where they had temporarily been settled, because of the reaction of the local inhabitants.¹⁶

[23]. A plan for the relocation of Roma and dispersing them away from the urban centre of Limassol was compiled by the Interior Minister in 2002. It was intended to address the demands of the local communities who were opposing the settlement of the Roma in their area, rather than address the housing problem of the Roma. In August 2002 the plan was approved by the Council of Ministers, who also approved an expenditure of CYP 255,000 (approximately EUR 440,000) for its implementation. The plan was never implemented, as it met with resistance from the local communities inhabiting areas where the Roma were to be relocated. It was also resisted by Roma themselves, who wanted to be close to urban centres in order to be near their places of work and also near the areas they originated from. As a result, the Roma families were left to reside in the old Turkish quarter of Limassol, where many houses (up until recently) continued to be in a bad state of repair. However, during the researchers’ last visit to the quarter for the purposes of this study, there has been a noticeable improvement in some of the houses, whilst others have remained in the same bad state. In addition, two more settlements were created in two remote villages within the Paphos district (Makounda/Polis Chrysochoos and Stavrokonnou) where the housing conditions are said to be appalling.¹⁷ Ministry officials we spoke to for the purposes

¹⁴ M. Hadjicosta (2001) ‘Gypsies released from remand cells’, in: *The Cyprus Weekly*, 20-26.04.2001.

¹⁵ Council of Ministers’ Decision no. 51.378 dated 08.03.2000.

¹⁶ Self-initiated investigation of the Ombudsman ref. AYT/E 3/2003 regarding the living conditions of Roma who have settled in the village of Makounda.

¹⁷ Although the Interior Ministry claims that it has successfully carried out a housing plan for the setting up of pre-fabricated units in various communities in Limassol and Paphos with all necessary facilities, hepatitis incidents in 2005 and incidents of

of this study assured us that the housing is in a habitable and good state¹⁸; however, other independent experts insist that there is a serious problem of spatial segregation, exclusion and isolation for the Roma communities in the villages.¹⁹ In the Ombudsman's Annual Report for 2003, there was reference to an investigation carried out by her office into these settlements earlier in the year where most families were residing in temporary structures set up themselves, made of corrugated iron, wood, cardboard and plastic, and without electricity. It was pointed out that for the purpose of harmonisation with the EU acquis, the authorities would have to compile an action plan using a holistic approach to eliminate ethnic segregation and respect Roma diversity.²⁰ However, disadvantaged groups such as children, the elderly and the were obviously adversely affected by residing in such structures. The Ombudsman's report of 30 June 2003 expressed concerns about the failure of the authorities to implement policies decided upon in March 2000 that had been designed to tackle homelessness and unemployment among Roma. The report also noted that the Roma had problems accessing medical and education services in Makounda, and it criticised the authorities' refusal to grant Roma the rights that they should enjoy as Cypriot citizens. We have no data to assess the actual impact of restricted access to medical and education services on the Roma, but one can infer that these may have resulted in possible discriminatory exclusion.

- [24]. There are no special laws addressing the particular situation of the Roma either in housing or in any other field. The issue of racism and discrimination in housing due to race or ethnic origin *in general* is covered by the law transposing the Race Equality Directive, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin in accessing goods and services (including housing).²¹ The second ECRI report on Cyprus for the year 2000 urges the Cyprus government to develop a mechanism for the collection of reliable and comparable data broken down by ethnic origin, in order to better assess and evaluate the situation from the perspective of the minority groups.²² This proposal was not implemented, nor has another procedure been

visceral leishmaniasis in 2006 in the Roma settlement of Makounda are attributed to poor hygienic conditions in the settlement. See: C. Nanos (2005): 'Σε εξέταση οι Αθήγγοι' in *Πολίτης* (24.09.2005); J. Theodoulou (2006): 'Authorities play down rare disease in Gypsy camp' in *the Cyprus Mail* (26.05.2006).

¹⁸ See list of interviews TCP1, TCP2, MI.

¹⁹ Interview with EI, 27.3.2009.

²⁰ Cyprus Ombudsman Annual Report 2003, p.37.

²¹ Cyprus: The Equal Treatment (Racial or Ethnic Origin) Law No. 59(I)/2004 (31.3.2004) Section 4(1).

²² European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, Second Report on Cyprus adopted on 15.12.2000, Strasbourg 03.07.2001, Council of Europe, p. 10.

introduced for data collection or for monitoring housing discrimination.

- [25]. Although not a number one priority, the specialised body is concerned with the situation of the Roma and has on a couple of occasions initiated its own investigations. However, the government's apparent reluctance to allocate human and financial resources to the specialised body adversely affects the overall effectiveness of the body and prevents it from carrying out many tasks of the mandate vested in it by the law.²³ The lack of resources is also the reason why little or no measures have been taken to bring to the Roma's attention new legal developments and the new complaint procedures open to them. The lack of NGO activity in this area, though, coupled with the lack of education and social exclusion of the Roma, would make dissemination very difficult indeed, even if appropriate funds were available.
- [26]. No actions were taken either by the state or other actors to inform the Roma community of their rights, or the complaints procedures available to them. There are no NGOs promoting the rights of the Roma, and trade unions have no activity with the community of Roma, who are almost exclusively unemployed. The limited dissemination of information and the phenomenon of underreporting restrict the impact of the new legislation enacted in order to transpose the EU acquis. The ever-present Cyprus problem is the main force behind policies towards Turkish Cypriots and Roma who are deemed to be part of the same community. Long-term policies regarding integration are still non-existent in Cyprus.
- [27]. National legislation on the provision of public assistance to vulnerable groups provides for the payment of public benefits to persons whose income and other financial means are insufficient to cover his/her basic and special needs.²⁴ Persons gainfully employed, or with a full occupation are excluded from this provision unless the Director of Social Insurance decides not to exclude them because, *inter alia*, they have at least four children under the age of 18 residing with them.²⁵ This is often the case with the Roma. The Cypriot Roma are automatically entitled to Cypriot citizenship like any other Cypriot. Policymakers have followed the 'mixed' principle that combines *ius*

²³ In its third report on Cyprus, ECRI stresses the need for resources to be made available to the Ombudsman to enable her to respond to her tasks. See: Third ECRI Report on Cyprus, adopted on 16.12.2005, Strasbourg 16.05.2006, Council of Europe.

²⁴ Cyprus/Law Unifying Laws on Public Assistance and Services N.8/1991, section 3(1).

²⁵ Cyprus/Law Unifying Laws on Public Assistance and Services N.8/1991, section 3(2)(a)(iii).

solis and *ius sanguinis*. However, *ius sanguinis* is far more important in the regulations than *ius solis*, as Cypriot descent is the primary criterion for acquisition of citizenship (as will be shown later). Citizenship can be acquired automatically, via registration and naturalisation, but at the core of citizenship policy remains the notion that all persons of Cypriot descent are entitled to apply. However, the concept of citizenship is not only ethnically/communally defined by the Constitution, but is also a sharply divisive issue between the Greeks and Turks, having acquired strong ethnic and nationalistic overtones. Following the annexation of Cyprus by the UK in 1878, all Ottoman citizens who were born in or normally resided in Cyprus became British subjects. From that day on, the basic law regarding the granting of nationality in Cyprus was the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act of 1914, and later the 1948 British Nationality Act, the essential provisions of which carried on post-independence²⁶; this regulates the initial determination of citizenry and the granting of citizenship or nationality. In 2002, a new law²⁷ unified all provisions regarding the archiving of births and deaths, registration of residents, registration of constituent voters and the registration of citizens. It also introduced special provisions for the issuing of passports or travel documents and identity cards for refugees.²⁸

- [28]. The housing of the Roma community is regulated by a Council of Ministers decision issued on 8 March 2000 (decision no. 51.378) which decided that housing would be provided for all Roma moving into the Republic-controlled section of the country who are citizens of the Republic of Cyprus. The housing offered to them would be in: specifically designated settlements comprising prefabricated houses; Turkish-Cypriot properties vacated by their owners and now administered by the Ministry of Interior; houses which the Welfare Service of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance had rented from the private sector before being offered to the Roma.²⁹ No rent is paid by the Roma for any accommodation offered to them. The provision of accommodation to the Roma is not regulated by primary

²⁶ Cyprus/art. 198 of the Constitution of the Cyprus Republic, and Annex D of the Treaty of Establishment was annexed to the Constitution.

²⁷ Cyprus/Law on the Population Data Archives No. 141(I)/2002.

²⁸ For more details on citizenship and nationality laws in Cyprus, see: N. Trimikliniotis (2007) 'Nationality and Citizenship in Cyprus since 1945: Communal Citizenship, Gendered Nationality and the Adventures of a Post-Colonial Subject in a Divided Country', Rainer Bauböck, Bernhard Perchinig, Wiebke Sievers (eds.), *Citizenship in the New Europe*, Amsterdam University Press, pp. 284-292.

²⁹ There have been allegations that landlords in the private sector are reluctant to lease their properties to the Ministry of Labour when they know that their properties will be allocated to any Roma people. The Ministry of Labour do not take up these issues in order to investigate the possibility of discrimination, but instead try to find amicable compromise solutions with the landlords.

or subsidiary legislation, but only with policy decisions which are subject to change at any time.

- The vast majority of Roma in the government-controlled southern part of the country resides in government-administered properties, therefore the laws regulating the leasing of private properties, rents and evictions do not affect them. However, in the event that a member of the Roma community decides to lease or purchase a property from the private sector and not under a state program, normal laws apply. In this situation, the general provisions of the anti-discrimination acquis regarding access to housing apply. The Cypriot law purporting to transpose the Race Equality Directive prohibits ‘direct’³⁰ and ‘indirect discrimination’,³¹ ‘harassment’³² and ‘instruction to discriminate’. The scope is wide, covering, *inter alia*, access to goods and services including housing.³³
- The Roma, as members of the Turkish-Cypriot community are affected by the government’s general treatment of Turkish Cypriots who reside in the northern territories, particularly regarding their right to access their properties, deemed to have been be ‘abandoned’ following the inter-ethnic violence of 1964-1974. Therefore, a member of the Roma community owning property in the government-controlled south, but residing in the northern part of the country, will be denied access to his/her property in the same way that Turkish Cypriots who reside in the north are not entitled to access their properties. Moreover, a recent decision by the Supreme Court interpreted the right to non-discrimination in the field of housing to not encompass the right to property. The Supreme Court denied an application to refer a property issue to the ECJ to advise on the compatibility with Cypriot law; it placed all Turkish-Cypriot properties in the south

³⁰ ‘Direct discrimination’ is defined in the Law as “less favourable treatment afforded to a person due to racial or ethnic origin than the treatment afforded to another person in a similar situation” [Cyprus/ The Equal Treatment (Racial or Ethnic Origin) Law No. 59(I)/2004 (31.3.2004), Section 2].

³¹ ‘Indirect discrimination’ is defined as “any apparently neutral regulation, criterion or practice which may place a person from a specific racial or ethnic origin in a disadvantageous position compared to another person, unless such regulation, criterion or practice is objectively justified by a legitimate purpose and the means for achieving such purpose are productive and necessary” [Cyprus/ The Equal Treatment (Racial or Ethnic Origin) Law No. 59(I)/2004 (31.3.2004) Section 2].

³² ‘Harassment’ is defined as “unwanted behaviour due to racial or ethnic origin aimed or having as a result the offending of human dignity and the creation of a threatening, hostile, humiliating or aggressive environment” [Cyprus/ The Equal Treatment (Racial or Ethnic Origin) Law No. 59(I)/2004 (31.3.2004), Section 2].

³³ Cyprus/ The Equal Treatment (Racial or Ethnic Origin) Law No. 59(I)/2004 (31.3.2004) Section 4(1).

under the custody of the Greek-Cypriot-controlled Republic of Cyprus, with the Race Equality Directive.³⁴ The case concerned a Turkish-Cypriot property owner who was denied the right to sell his property, as a result of which, an *ex tempore* application was filed asking for a referral to the ECJ as to whether Article 2 of the Racial Equality Directive could be interpreted so that a EU member state could deny the lawful owner of a property the right to sell it. The application was rejected on the grounds of abuse of process (the appellant had filed and withdrawn two similar, in 2005 and 2007 respectively), and also because the Court found that the scope of the Directive did not include the issue at hand, which was access to property. In describing the scope of the Directive, the Court mentioned only ‘conditions for access to employment, working conditions, social protection, including social security and social advantages’.

- It should be noted, however, that in Cyprus it is possible to evict a tenant from leased premises only with a Court order, which is issued only if certain preconditions are met. According to the legislation, Court orders for the eviction of statutory tenants may only be issued for the following reasons: non-payment of rent at least 21 days after receipt by the tenant of a notice in writing; for continuing nuisance; for severe damage to the premises carried out by a wilful reckless act; where the tenant has breached his/her obligation not to sub-let the premises; and where the Court deems that an eviction order is reasonable under the circumstances, etc.³⁵

[29]. National legislation empowers the Director of Social Insurance to provide accommodation, welfare and treatment to persons over 18 years who require such services due to their advanced age, disability or other personal circumstances.³⁶ However, the unique regulation that governs the provision of housing to the Roma and its flexible and unregulated nature mean that the vast majority of Roma are not affected by the general legislation regarding housing; government policy at the moment appears to address the issue of Roma housing separately from other housing issues. We have no information with which to perform any assessment on Roma who are disabled, elderly, or belong other vulnerable groups, as to whether they can sufficiently benefit from national legislation which provides accommodation and

³⁴ Supreme Court of Cyprus, 17.12.2007, Case No. 303/2006, Perihan Mustafa Korkut or Eyiam Perihan v. Apostolos Georgiou through his attorney Charalambos Zoppos.

³⁵ Cyprus/Law Amending, Codifying and Integrating the Rent Control Laws; the Law on Rental of Properties for the Accommodation of Displaced Persons and Related Matters N.23/1983 as amended from 1983 to 2007.

³⁶ Cyprus/Law Unifying Laws on Public Assistance and Services N.8/1991, section 14(1).

welfare treatment. Government officials interviewed consider that vulnerable groups are sufficiently cared for; however, there are no statistical or other data or studies to corroborate this.

- [30]. National legislation or policy on gender equality does not address issues of housing or any Roma-related issues.
- [31]. National legislation on disability provides for certain rights for persons with disabilities, going beyond the minimum standards of Directive 2000/78/EC, but no special reference is made to Roma persons with a disability. These rights include: accessibility to housing, buildings, streets and generally to the natural environment;³⁷ or personal support with auxiliary equipment and other means and services which assist a person in their everyday life, with an interpreter or an escort as well as other required support where deemed necessary.³⁸ These rights, however, are not absolute; they are enforceable through the taking of 'reasonable measures', which are, according to Article 9(1) of the law, obligatory only if the preconditions of the law are met.³⁹ They are not, in other words, absolute rights in the ordinary sense of the word. Article 6(1) of the law establishes the right to equal treatment in the provision of goods, facilities and services (including housing), unless otherwise 'justified'. Article 6(2) defines what does *not* constitute 'equal treatment' for the purpose of this provision, and is therefore prohibited, as follows: refusal to provide services; provision of services of a lower standard; provision of services with substandard conditions; the failure to carry out changes in services or facilities which render their use by a person with disability difficult or impossible. All the rights created by Article 6 are, once more, subject to the 'reasonable measure' restriction of Article 9(1) referred to above. Article 8(1) provides that the competent governmental services must proceed 'within a short period of time' to the installation of a special telephone service for persons with a hearing disability, so as to enable these persons to communicate in the same manner as persons without such disability. Article 8(3) provides

³⁷ Cyprus/ Law on Persons with Disability 127(I)/2000, article 4(2)(c).

³⁸ Cyprus/Law on Persons with Disability 127(I)/2000, article 4(2)(b).

³⁹ Article 9(1) of the Law on Persons with Disabilities N.127(I)2000, as amended by Law 72(I)/2007. The factors which must be taken into account in order to determine whether a measure is reasonable or not, are as follows: (1) the nature and required cost for the adoption of the measures; (2) the financial sources of the person who has the obligation to adopt the measures; (3) the financial situation and other obligations of the state in those cases where the obligation for the adoption of measures refers to the state; (4) the provision of donations by the state or other sources as a contribution towards the total cost of said measures; (5) the socio-economic situation of the person with the disability concerned. The law provides that the aforesaid factor (socio-economic situation of the disabled claimant) must not be taken into account as regards the principle of non-discrimination in employment.

that television stations must offer sign language interpretation to a news broadcast once a day. The rights of Article 8 are also enforceable only through the adoption of ‘reasonable measures’ in accordance with Article 9(1), the scope of which is so wide that it does not create a mandatory regime. No data are available concerning special measures applying to Roma persons with disabilities.

- [32]. According to the annual report of the US State Department into human rights practices in Cyprus, a local NGO reported that Romani families living in Limassol faced housing problems, and that many of their children did not attend school. The report further notes that a program run by the social welfare services for the integration of Roma into society was suspended following protests from neighbours who objected to the presence of the Roma in their area.⁴⁰
- [33]. On the issue of Roma housing, in 2006 the Cypriot Ministry of Interior informed the NFP⁴¹, that on the basis of a housing plan compiled by the state and approved by the Council of Ministers, pre-fabricated units were set up in various locations in Limassol and Paphos with all necessary amenities, in order to house the Roma, and that many residences accommodating Roma families were repaired, without supplying details as to how many were repaired and how many remained in need of repair. No details about the nature or extent of repairs carried out by the government were provided. However, the hepatitis incident of June 2005⁴² and the incident of visceral leishmaniasis of May 2006, both of which appeared in the Roma settlement of Makounda and were attributed to poor hygiene conditions in the settlement⁴³ suggest that at the time there was still room for improvement.

1.2. Quantitative data on the housing situation of Roma

- [34]. The number of the Roma living in Cyprus is uncertain. There are different accounts providing contradictory figures. Moreover, the issue of the number is connected to the question of who is included and who is excluded from the Roma category. According to a recent report to the European Parliament, ‘only few Roma [were] counted

⁴⁰ Issued by the U.S. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor on 8 March 2006, www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61643.htm (26.03.2009).

⁴¹ By their letter to the NFP dated 09.05.2006.

⁴² C. Nanos (2005) ‘Σε εξετάσεις όλοι οι Αθίγγανοι’ in *Πολίτης* (24.09.2005).

⁴³ J. Theodoulou (2006) ‘Authorities play down rare disease in Gypsy camp’ in the *Cyprus Mail* (26.05.2006).

(500-1,000), and no information [was] found on country of origin'.⁴⁴ This must certainly be an underestimate, as there are about 1,000 currently residing in the southern part of the country and it is estimated that there are at least as many living in the north. The Ombudsman's Report (AYT/3/2003, p. 1) estimates that there are 1,400-1,500. The observations of the Ministry of Interior attached to the Third ECRI Report⁴⁵ provide figures up until 2006 about the number of Roma residing in each district, the amounts expended for the repairs of the house inhabited by the Roma, the number of pre-fabricated houses erected for their housing, etc. According to this document, 83 'Gipsy'⁴⁶ families (360 persons) reside in the Limassol District and 73 families (259 persons) reside in the Paphos District. We have contradictory figures from different departments, which indicate the numbers of Roma who reside in different types of publicly administered dwellings. The table offered below is indicative. The figures provided as to the number of Roma residents are as follows:

Area of Residence	TCP1 (officer from the Department of Turkish-Cypriot Properties at the Ministry of Interior) ⁴⁷	MI 2009 (Ministry of Interior officer) ⁴⁸	ECRI Cyprus Report 2006
Old Turkish-Cypriot quarter of Limassol	600	(approx.) 320	83 families or 360 persons reside in the Limassol district
Polemida in Limassol	16 families x 7 = approx. 110 <u>Another</u> four families are about to be housed elsewhere		
Makounda in Paphos	N/A	259	73 families or 259 persons reside in the Limassol district
Stavrokonnou in Paphos	N/A		
Total		620-650	619

⁴⁴ Istituto per la Ricerca Sociale (2008) *The social situation of the Roma and their improved access to the labour market in the EU*, study requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), (IP/A/EMPL/FWC/2006-05/SC4), IP/A/EMPL/ST/2008-02 PE 408.582, p. 5.

⁴⁵ Third ECRI Report on Cyprus, adopted on 16.12.2005, Strasbourg 16.05.2006, Council of Europe, p. 52.

⁴⁶ 'Gipsy' is the term commonly used in Cyprus to denote the Roma community of Cyprus. The term originates from 'Egyptian' and it is sometimes, although not necessarily always, used in order to convey that the Roma origin of this group is not recognised.

⁴⁷ Information provided during the interview with TCP1.

⁴⁸ We were informed that the data were collected for the purposes of a report in December 2008. Information provided during the interview with MI1.

- [35]. According to observations the Ministry of Interior attached to the Third ECRI Report,⁴⁹ the Cypriot government pays for the improvement and repair of Turkish-Cypriot houses where the ‘Gipsy’ families reside. In 2005, 20 Turkish-Cypriot houses inhabited by Roma families in Limassol were repaired at the cost of CYP 80,000 (EUR 136,705). During the same year (2005) an unspecified number of Turkish-Cypriot houses inhabited by Roma in Paphos were repaired at the cost of CYP 20,000 (EUR 34,176). The year before (2004) the government had spent CYP 80,000 (EUR 136,705) for the repair of Turkish-Cypriot houses inhabited by Roma in Paphos. The government also carried out two ‘housing projects’, one in Limassol and one in Paphos, consisting of 16 and 24 pre-fabricated housing units respectively for the Cypriot Roma, which hosted about 40 Roma families. Both are located in remote areas, segregated from other communities.
- [36]. There is no systematic quantitative data collected on the housing conditions and general housing situation of the Roma in Cyprus.
- [37]. According to the National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008-2010,⁵⁰ ‘people living in rural areas and disadvantaged urban areas’ are considered to be a group at risk: the Roma qualify under this category, although they are not specifically mentioned in the report.
- [38]. The accommodation provided to the Roma is leased to them by the Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour, who rent the accommodation either from the private sector or from the Administration of Turkish Cypriot Properties of the Ministry of Interior. The conditions of rental could not be ascertained and it is likely that a flexible system applies without fixed contractual terms.
- [39]. No Roma are living in regulated or unregulated encampments. Available data indicate that the Cypriot Roma reside in government-administrated homes, such as Turkish-Cypriot-owned properties administered by the government allocated to them, or in pre-fabricated houses in specially designated Roma settlements.
- [40]. The specially designated Roma settlements of pre-fabricated houses are all located in segregated settings. However, Roma families living in the old Turkish quarter of Limassol, although impoverished, are residing in the same neighbourhood as Greek Cypriots, Turkish

⁴⁹ Third ECRI Report on Cyprus, adopted on 16.12.2005, Strasbourg 16.05.2006, Council of Europe, p. 52.

⁵⁰ Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, Lefkosia, September 2006, available at http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2008/nap/cyprus_en.pdf

Cypriots and migrants. This is not to say that Roma families residing in the old Turkish quarter of Limassol are necessarily well-integrated into the local communities, as relations are often strained and the Roma are sometimes shunned by the other inhabitants.

- [41]. Whilst we have no exact data on household type and size, it is widely acknowledged even by government officials that there is a problem of overcrowding.⁵¹
- [42]. There are no data on forced evictions and, given the declared policy of housing all Cypriot Roma, it is doubtful that there is a policy of forced eviction of Roma, although there is ample evidence of efforts to relocate them in areas far from communities where Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots reside.
- [43]. There are no quantitative data disaggregated by ethnicity and other aspects such as disability, age, etc.
- [44]. No systematic data are available regarding the access of Roma to public utilities. The observations of the Ministry of Interior attached to the Third ECRI Report⁵² states that the accommodation offered to the Roma includes ‘all basic amenities such as water (drinking water included) and electricity supply, telephone line installation, sewage, etc’.
- [45]. There are no data on available halting sites, and one may safely assume that there are no halting sites for the Roma in Cyprus. After the *de facto* partition of the island in 1974, the Roma of Cyprus do not travel around the country in large groups as they used to, but they do tend to move back and forth from north to south and vice-versa, albeit as families or in small groups, depending on the availability of work, their family situation, etc.
- [46]. We have no official, non-official or research statistical data that demonstrate the impact of housing conditions on the right to employment of the Roma, on the right to the highest attainable level of health, and the right to education.⁵³ On the question of the right to education, the quantitative data available concern the operation of a special education program under the Education Priority Zones (EPZs),

⁵¹ Overcrowding means ‘that the size of the dwelling is not suitable in the light of the number of persons and the composition of the household in residence’ (Economic Committee of Social Rights, Conclusions 2003, France).

⁵² Third ECRI Report on Cyprus, adopted on 16.12.2005, Strasbourg 16.05.2006, Council of Europe, p. 52.

⁵³ Examples can include, but not be limited to, unemployment data per type of settlement, housing ownership or number of rooms per education level, etc. See UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset for examples at <http://vulnerability.undp.sk/>

which has a bearing on the school of Ayios Antonios (Limassol), attended largely by Roma pupils. The 2006-2008 National Report on strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion⁵⁴ illustrates that the pilot operation of EPZs had positive results for local communities, including the Roma community residing there:

- in the school units covered by EPZs there has been a reduction of pupil drop-outs, of school failure (referrals and failures) and of referrals to the Educational Psychology Service, as well as improvement of school success;
- support of the foreign-language-speaking pupils has led to increasing their entry into the educational system of Cyprus, to reducing the number of drop-outs and to improving their performance;
- increase of school presence and of the proportion of enrolment and attendance of Roma pupils.

1.3. Qualitative information on the housing situation of Roma

[47]. A number of specialist publications by Romani studies experts and researchers and some media reports highlight the marginality, and exclusion of, as well as the economic, social and cultural deprivation of the Roma communities in Cyprus, but there is no up-to-date study on the housing situation (see bibliography). Over the last decade we have witnessed increasing interest in researching the situation of the Cypriot Roma, as they are indeed ‘the “Other” Cypriots’, as one scholar referred to them.⁵⁵ These ‘Other’ Cypriots face ‘*their* Cyprus problems’, which cannot be subsumed within the all-absorbing ‘Cyprus problem’, as is often the case with social and political issues in the country.

[48]. The origins and language of the Cypriot Roma have interested some scholars who write that various groups of Roma have lived in Cyprus for over 500 years.⁵⁶ Their nomadic lifestyle changed with the *de facto*

⁵⁴ Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, Lefkosia, September 2006, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/docs/social_inclusion/2008/nap/cyprus_en.pdf

⁵⁵ Emel Akçali (2007) ‘The “other” Cypriots and their Cyprus questions’, *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 19, Fall 2007, No. 2, pp. 57-82. The Roma are discussed in the last section of the paper (pp. 77-78).

⁵⁶ Kenrick and Taylor claim that ‘although there are no official records confirming the arrival of Gypsies in Cyprus, it has been estimated by historical calculation that the

partitioning of the island in 1974⁵⁷ when they were forced to change their life from a nomadic to a more settled existence mostly in the north. The larger groups of Roma are now settled in the towns of Morphou/Guzelyurt and Famagusta, both cities in the Turkish-controlled northern part of the island where approximately 600 Roma were settled. Current total population estimates for the entire island range between 1,000-2,000 Roma people. The Roma were Muslims with a greater affinity to the Turkish-Cypriot people, hence the generally accepted rationale for their moving to the northern area after the Turkish invasion in 1974. The names by which the Roma are referred to are ‘Gypsies’ or ‘Roma’ in English and ‘Tsiggani’, ‘Athiggani’, ‘Yifti’, ‘Kouroupetti’, ‘Fellahi’ in Greek. ‘Çingane’, ‘Fellah’ or ‘Kurbet’ in Turkish⁵⁸. The term of their self-designation in their own language is ‘Kurbet’. According to one expert: ‘The Roma [sic] accept these designations from outsiders, but when asked what they call themselves they responded, “Kurbet” and their language “Kurbetcha”. Turkish [as a language] has basically displaced Kurbetcha [...]. Some of them said they understood a few words of Kurbetcha, but they did not speak it. In fact, their knowledge of the language was so limited that they did not realise there is a distinct numeric system. Only one “older” woman who was approximately 455 years of age knew some of the numbers—at least the first three numbers. [...] They generally agreed that only the older people who

first immigrants came between 1322 and 1400, when Cyprus was under the rule of the Lusignan (Crusader) kings. These Gypsies were part of a general movement from Asia Minor to Europe. Those who landed on Cyprus probably came across from the Crusader colonies on the eastern Mediterranean coast (present day Lebanon and Israel)’. See also: C. Kyrris (1969) ‘Οι Αθίγγανοι εν Κύπρω’, *Morfosis*, September-October-November 1969.

⁵⁷ See D. Kenrick and G. Taylor (1986) ‘Gypsies in Cyprus’, *Roma*, January 1986, 24 pp. 36-38, available at: <http://www.domresearchcenter.com/reprints/body4.html>

⁵⁸ The scholars Kenrick and Taylor refer to a number of terms used by the host population: ‘Tsingos: The official term used in Greek documents and written material. It comes from the term “Cingani” (used already in the text of 1468) which in turn comes from the archaic word “Adsincan” used in medieval Byzantium. “Yieftos”: The Cypriot dialect form of mainland Greek “Giftos”. This is common in speech and comes from earlier “Aigiptos”, a reference to the earlier belief that the Gypsies came from Egypt. “Kouloufos”. From the root “koul”. This is a pejorative term meaning “untidy”, not settled. “Kilinghros” (also, “Kollingogy”). This may be connected with the term “Kaliguri” (plus “ghir”, turning) which means “nomad”. “Cingane”: The Turkish version of “Adsincan”. The word has no pejorative meaning in Cypriot Turkish.’ (D. Kenrick and G. Taylor, G. (1986) ‘Gypsies in Cyprus’, *Roma*, January (1986), 24, pp. 36-38, available at: <http://www.domresearchcenter.com/reprints/body4.html> (26.03.2009).

are still in the occupied area know the language [of *Kurbetcha*] well. Everyone else has adopted Turkish.⁵⁹

- [49]. In 2003 the Ombudsman initiated an investigation into the living conditions of the Roma residing in a government-designated settlement in the rural village of Makounda.⁶⁰ The resulting report recognised the Roma as ‘one of the most vulnerable social groups in Cyprus’. The report refers to the problems resulting from the failure to provide suitable dwellings as decided by the Council of Ministers.⁶¹ According to the Ombudsman, up until the issuing of her report in 2003, the above decision was ‘never implemented, nor has there been any comprehensive plan for their social integration, de-marginalisation and the appropriate housing and the provision of measures of social welfare’ (p.2). The report contends that whatever piecemeal measures were adopted, they were aimed at appeasing the hostile local communities rather than to benefit the Roma: they were required to take health tests so as ‘not to spread contagious diseases’, they were heavily policed ‘for reasons of security’ and they were relocated as far from the local communities as possible due to the reactions from the latter (p.2). In terms of the houses inhabited by the Roma in the old Turkish quarter in Limassol, the report states that these were essentially ‘abandoned Turkish-Cypriot houses, mostly in the centre of Limassol, without the necessary repairs, often without electricity, water or a toilet and in conditions of unbelievable overcrowding.’ We have no details or other data on the extent or nature of various repairs made to public works and paid for by the government.
- [50]. In her Annual Report for 2003, the Ombudsman referred to an investigation carried out by her office into the Roma settlements where most families were residing in self-made temporary structures of corrugated iron, wood, cardboard and plastic, and without electricity. She pointed out that for the purpose of harmonisation with the EU acquis, the authorities would have to compile an action plan using a holistic approach for eliminating ethnic segregation and for respecting the diversity of the Roma.⁶²

⁵⁹ A. Williams (2000) ‘The Gypsies of Cyprus’, a DRC update, *KURI*, Vol. 1 No 2 Spring/Summer 2000, available at: <http://www.domresearchcenter.com/Kuri> (26.03.2009). In his paper, this expert refers to the Roma as ‘Rroma’.

⁶⁰ Αυτεπάγγελτη έρευνα της Επιτροπής Διοικήσεως αναφορικά με τις συνθήκες διαβίωσης των Αθιγγάνων που έχουν εγκατασταθεί στο χωριό Μακούντα (AYT/3/2003) [Self-initiated investigation of the Ombudsman under ref. AYT/E 3/2003 regarding the living conditions of the Gypsies who have settled in the village of Makounda, 30 June 2003] (p.7).

⁶¹ Decision No. 51.378, (08.03.2000).

⁶² Cyprus Ombudsman Annual Report 2003, p.37.

- [51]. The Third ECRI Report on Cyprus states that ‘although the disadvantaged position of Roma is reflected in virtually all areas of life, it is reported to be particularly serious in housing’ and recommends that the Cypriot authorities take steps to improve the situation, drawing its attention to Policy Recommendation No. 326 and to the measures proposed therein.⁶³ ECRI expressed its concern over the ‘hostility and rejection by the local non-Roma population [towards the Roma] which is reported to be high and to have in some cases resulted in physical violence. In these cases, the racist dimension of the incidents has reportedly been played down or neglected’ (p.25).
- [52]. The absence of statistical data, figures, initiatives or measures addressing the problems is particularly notable in the area of housing, where the only information available is to be derived from major international reports, such as the Third ECRI Report on Cyprus of 2006⁶⁴, the 2006 Report of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe for Cyprus⁶⁵ and the United States Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Cyprus for 2005.⁶⁶ These reports make reference to the housing problems faced by the Roma, in terms of the bad state of repair of the housing made available to them.
- [53]. The hostility facing the Roma communities who have been dispersed to the villages of Makounda and Polis Chrysochoos, becomes apparent when one examines the events which took place in the Paphos villages in September 2005, when the parents’ association of the school arbitrarily closed it down, demanding that the Education Ministry suspend Roma pupils’ attendance to the school until they received confirmation that none of them suffered from hepatitis (following some hepatitis incidents in a nearby village three months earlier). Out of a total of 341 pupils attending this particular school, 120 were non-Cypriots and 18 were Roma. The parents’ association, protesting at the large number of Roma in this school, demanded that the Roma pupils also be dispersed to other schools in the region. Overall, the authorities expressed disagreement over the parents’ action and gave their assurance over the health and sanitary safety of the school. However, they did nothing to prevent the closure of the school by the parents or to support and protect the Roma pupils from this outburst.

⁶³ Third ECRI Report on Cyprus, adopted on 16 December 2005, Strasbourg 16.05.06, Council of Europe, paragraphs 83-84.

⁶⁴ ECRI (2006), Third Report on Cyprus, Adopted on 16 December 2005, Strasbourg 16.05.06.

⁶⁵ Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe (2006) Follow-up Report on Cyprus (2003-2005): Assessment of the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Strasbourg, 29.03.06.

⁶⁶ Issued by the U.S. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor on 8 March 2006, available at: www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61643.htm

Whilst the authorities called on the parents to terminate the closure of the school and to enter into a dialogue with them on how to solve the problem, they conformed to the parents' demands to submit the Roma pupils, as well as the residents of a Roma settlement in neighbouring Makounda, to blood tests to establish whether any of them suffered from hepatitis. In an effort to appease the parents, the Paphos District Officer convinced a seven-member Roma family residing in the Roma settlement of the neighbouring Makounda, some of whose members had suffered from hepatitis but had successfully been treated, to move back to the village they had come from, and resettle into a home that had recently been restored. On 26 September 2005, the parents agreed to allow the school to re-open but only on the condition that Roma pupils would not attend the school. The Minister of Education succumbed to this request. On 28 September, the blood tests showed that none of the Roma pupils suffered from hepatitis and were thus allowed to return to their school. The Ombudsman started to investigate this incident, but decided to discontinue with the case, claiming that the problem had already been resolved.

- [54]. **Affordability** is not an issue for the Cypriot Roma residing in the south, since they are all offered free accommodation in publicly owned, publicly rented or publicly administered properties. In principle, the measures taken regarding Roma housing could be abandoned at any time. However, there have been three different governments in office under three presidents of different political/ideological leanings, who have not only accepted the basic idea of free accommodation for the Roma, but have further enhanced these provisions as time has gone by. It can therefore be safely assumed that the measures are rather entrenched within the political system, at least as long as the political problem of the *de facto* division of the country persists. With a possible settlement, the question of housing and resettlement of the Roma will be subject to the general provisions of resettlement of displaced persons, an issue to be addressed on the basis of development, social housing and in line with human rights and principles.
- [55]. There is no comprehensive survey or research on the issue of **habitability** of the accommodation inhabited by the Roma. The available data which covers only up to 2005 (e.g. ECRI Report 2006, two reports by the Ombudsman in 2003) show that there is a serious problem when it comes to habitability: the Cypriot government's comments to the Third ECRI Report on Cyprus of 2006 (p. 52) state that the housing units inhabited by the Roma in Limassol and Paphos are equipped with all basic amenities (water, electricity supply, telephone line installations, sewage etc. However, in 2004, a study conducted by an independent expert points to 'a number of serious problems' faced by the Roma in Limassol, the most important being

housing. The study states that ‘some houses in the community lack basic necessities such as electricity and water as well as basic hygiene; large numbers of individuals are crammed under the same roof and children very often share their sleeping space with their parents.’⁶⁷ Along the same lines, the Third ECRI Report on Cyprus states that ‘although the disadvantaged position of Roma is reflected in virtually all areas of life, it is reported to be particularly serious in housing’ and recommends that the Cypriot authorities take steps to improve the situation, drawing its attention to Policy Recommendation No. 326 and to the measures proposed therein.⁶⁸

- [56]. The government officials dealing with the publicly administered properties offered to the Roma could not refer to any specific study or other objective analysis of the general situation in the four areas where the Roma reside. Officials claim that the overall situation meets acceptable standards. Unofficial reports from key informants, however, tell a different story: one of overcrowding, squalor and almost derelict housing (EI, 27.3.2009). We are informed that in the village locations where the Roma have been dispersed (Polemídia, Makounda and Stavrokonnou), the housing conditions of their dwellings is substandard, with questionable habitability (EI, 27.3.2009). Also the dwellings in the Polemídia village offered to the Roma are all one-bedroom units, which is far too small for families with four or five children, as is often the situation with the Roma (TC1 24.2.2009). Government officials insist that whilst there may be some delays in carrying out repair works, the pre-fabricated homes are of good quality and the conditions acceptable (TCP1 24.2.2009; TCP2 9.3.2009; MI 9.3.2009). We have not been able to verify these conflicting reports with any additional data. However, the NFP has personally visited the Roma dwellings in the Turkish quarter of Limassol on two occasions (24 February and 4 March 2009), where the largest numbers of Roma reside, and can confirm this mixed situation: of a partial improvement in some dwellings, but also of substandard housing conditions for others. Since the NFP’s last visits in 2004⁶⁹ and 2005,⁷⁰ there has been a marked improvement in the

⁶⁷ S. Spyrou (2004) *Educational Needs of Turkish-speaking Children in Limassol*, UNOPS, February-March 2004, Nicosia. Research conducted in 2003 shows that the Roma themselves consider housing to be their most serious concern. See: N. Trimikliniotis (2005) *A European Dilemma: Racism, Discrimination and the Politics of Hatred in an Enlarged EU*, forthcoming.

⁶⁸ Third ECRI Report on Cyprus, adopted 16.12.2005, Strasbourg 16.05.2006, Council of Europe, paragraphs 83-84.

⁶⁹ The researchers made on-site visits to the Turkish-Cypriot sector of Limassol in September and October 2004, when preparing the Raxen study: N. Trimikliniotis and C. Demetriou (2004) *Roma, Sindi, Gypsies and Travellers in public education in Cyprus- RAXEN Special Study*, Report by the Cyprus National Focal Point for the

general situation of housing with some renovations having taken place. It can be reported that the general climate has certainly improved in the neighbourhoods in terms of the attitudes towards the Roma, compared to the period 2000-2006: this is confirmed by all accounts of Roma persons with whom the NFP spoke, government officials, teachers and experts. Many officials interviewed acknowledged that until 2006, there was a very tense and negative situation, where the Roma were treated (at least) with suspicion and hostility. As outlined in this report,⁷¹ it is well-documented⁷² that some overall improvement can be observed in attitudes towards the Cypriot Roma, but this is not to suggest that the Roma are integrated or respected. In fact, as is shown in this report, the Cypriot Roma remain a marginalised, impoverished and excluded group, who are not recognised as a national minority with distinct cultural and social characteristics; neither are they socially integrated. This is partly reflected in their housing conditions. The NFP visited the inside of two Turkish-Cypriot houses⁷³ inhabited by Roma. One had previously been visited by the NFP in 2005, when it was in an uninhabitable condition, with major cracks on the walls and ceiling, leakages in different places, broken windows and doors. On the new visit, it was

EUMC written on behalf of the Cyprus Labour Institute as a special study for the EUMC.

⁷⁰ The researchers accompanied the ECRI experts to the Turkish-Cypriot quarter during their visit to Cyprus.

⁷¹ See para. 21-22.

⁷² See the Ombudsman Report of 2003, the Third ECRI Country Report on Cyprus (2006); N. Trimikliniotis and C. Demetriou (2008) 'Evaluating the Anti-discrimination Law in the Republic of Cyprus: A Critical Reflection', *The Cyprus Review*, Volume 20: 2, Autumn 2008, pp. 79-116; N. Trimikliniotis and C. Demetriou (2009) 'The Cypriot Roma and the Failure of Education: Anti-Discrimination and Multiculturalism as a Post-accession Challenge', Nicholas Coureas and Andrekos Varnava (eds.) *The Minorities of Cyprus: Development Patterns and the Identity of the Internal-Exclusion*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, forthcoming (2009); N. Trimikliniotis and C. Demetriou (2004) *Roma, Sindi, Gypsies and Travellers in public education in Cyprus- RAXEN Special Study*, Report by the Cyprus National Focal Point for the EUMC written on behalf of the Cyprus Labour Institute as a special study for the EUMC; N. Trimikliniotis (2005) 'Discriminated Voices - Cyprus Report' Work Package 2, *The European Dilemma: Institutional Patterns and the Politics of 'Racial' Discrimination*, Research Project Xenophob, EU Fifth Framework Program 2002-2005; K. Iacovidou (2008) 'Cultural difference and the politics of recognition: The case of the Roma of Cyprus', G. Titley and A. Lentin (eds.) *The Politics of Diversity in Europe*, Council of Europe Publishing, pp. 73-90, accessed on 27.3.2009, available at http://youth-partnership.coe.int/export/sites/default/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/Diversity/Iacovidou.pdf

⁷³ Turkish Cypriot properties are deemed by law to have been abandoned by their owners and are now administered by the Minister of Interior in his capacity as the Custodian of Turkish Cypriot properties.

found to be in good condition, having recently been renovated, a marked improvement since 2005. The other house was still in a very bad state, with some windows remaining broken for several months, and the balcony in a very dangerous state (apparently a piece had recently fallen). In both cases the houses were resided in by extended families. In the first house lived the father (in his 50s) with his teenage son in one bedroom with a double bed, and in the other bedroom his daughter with her three-year old child. In the other house lived a mother with her son and his wife and four-year old son and her daughter who had been separated from her husband two months after the birth of their baby.

- [57]. As for the issue of **accessibility**, the authorities consider that the pressing need of sheltering the Roma communities has been resolved, but they do recognise that there is a problem of overcrowding. Given that the Roma are considered to be a ‘disadvantaged group’ they are afforded priority access to housing resources. Moreover, we are informed that such disadvantaged groups as the elderly, children, the physically or mentally disabled, the terminally ill, those HIV-positive, persons with persistent medical problems, victims of natural disasters, people living in disaster-prone areas, and other groups are further prioritised (TC1 24.2.2009). However, the NFP has not been provided with any information on whether Roma belonging in one of the aforesaid vulnerable groups are afforded greater access to housing resources than Roma not falling into these categories, as the officials interviewed did not maintain such data. In fact, the question remains whether the dwellings accorded are sustainable and adequate for their needs (EI 27.3.2009). In the absence of specific data, no conclusions can be drawn.
- [58]. **Location** is a problematic issue, as discussed earlier in this report. The Ombudsman’s self-initiated investigation into the living conditions of the Roma in the village of Makounda in 2003 found that the selection of the sites for setting up the Roma settlements was made in the framework of a dispersal policy intended to satisfy the demands of hostile local communities who did not wish to live close to the Roma. The old Turkish-Cypriot sector of Limassol, where the majority of the Roma reside, is an urban location which, although a deprived area, is central and allows access to employment opportunities, health-care services, schools and other social facilities. The interviews conducted for the purposes of this study show that in recent years, the school attended by the Romani children residing the Turkish quarter has adopted significant measures towards their integration and has contributed to the development of a cooperation network between parents and the local community (HM 27.3.2009; FG/seminar 4.3.2009). This marks a sharp improvement since the NFP researched

the primary education of the Roma in 2004.⁷⁴ From the interviews, it also emerged that the residents of the Turkish quarter have access to health-care services (TC1 24.2.2009; HOM 24.2.2009; MI 9.3.2009). During the NFP's site visit to the quarter, a local community centre was visited which intended to serve as a leisure/activities centre to promote Roma integration. However, no funds were allocated for its operation and it remains shut unless there are specific activities or meetings held. One of the key interviewees stated that 'it is a great shame that there are such facilities, but they are not operating: when there are so many Roma youths, who the education system has failed, who have no jobs or prospects for the future, it is unacceptable not have any employment training schemes' (EI 27.3.2009). The interviews also provide information about a particular employment scheme which is currently operated in the Turkish quarter of Limassol by the municipality: every summer the municipality employs Roma to clean up public areas (HOM 24.3.2009). All interviewees, including government officers, agreed that there is a very high unemployment rate, particularly amongst men, and access to employment options for the Roma in general are bleak. There is a divergence of opinion as to why this is the case: whilst it is agreed that in general their low education levels and absence of necessary skills hinder their professional and social integration, officials claim that many Roma are registered as unemployed but carry out some quasi-occupational activity such as collecting and selling scrap metal for recycling. This activity, which is common amongst the Roma, is regarded as petty fraud because it provides them with some undeclared income (meagre though this may be, at the same time they claim unemployment benefit). However, in the NFP's opinion this kind of work is a highly valuable environmental practice which the authorities (local and central) could subsidise and further develop into a social project that could potentially receive European funding. There is still no general program for Roma social integration. For the NFP, there is a strong connection between the locations where Roma reside, their access to education and training, their employment status, and their general marginal position in the local community and society in general. Since

⁷⁴See N. Trimikliniotis and C. Demetriou (2009) 'The Cypriot Roma and the Failure of Education: Anti-Discrimination and Multiculturalism as a Post-accession Challenge', Nicholas Coureas and Andrekos Varnava (eds.) *The Minorities of Cyprus: Development Patterns and the Identity of the Internal-Exclusion*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, forthcoming, (2009); N. Trimikliniotis and C. Demetriou (2004) *Roma, Sindi, Gypsies and Travellers in public education in Cyprus - RAXEN Special Study*, Report by the Cyprus National Focal Point for the EUMC written on behalf of the Cyprus Labour Institute as a special study for the EUMC.

Roma live in isolated areas, or are isolated within local communities, this perpetuates their marginal position.

- [59]. The issue of **cultural adequacy** is far from having been addressed. The provision of housing is of a much more basic level: the policy regarding available dwellings has certainly not taken into account CDESCR General Comment 4; nor are there any other policies in place ensuring that housing is at such a level as to enable the expression of cultural identity and diversity of housing.
- [60]. A crucial dimension in understanding the housing and general social situation of the Roma in Cyprus is to examine the issues of spatial and social **segregation**. We have little data on *housing segregation* as such, but here is some data on broader issues of spatial and social segregation, which is very much related to housing segregation. The Ombudsman Reports of 2003, the Third ECRI Country Report on Cyprus of 2006, and all relevant studies reveal that this is an area which illustrates the marginality of the Cyprus Roma. One scholar considers how the categorisations of cultural difference which moderate ethno-religious relations in Cyprus have never been extended to the Roma, whose threatening nomadism falls foul of Cyprus border politics.⁷⁵ She argues that ‘their subsequent isolation in small, deserted villages that give the impression of ghettos, along with the government’s arrangements to accommodate them in small houses of poor and questionable quality, prove the lack of an organised official policy to address their needs. An example of this lack of policy was the answer given by the Cypriot Minister of Internal Affairs at the time, Mr Christodoulou, to the intense hostility of the residents of Kotsiatis, a small village a few kilometres away from the capital, to the programmed settlement of a Roma group.’ The scholar points out that ‘such an action would have resulted in a Roma ghetto, and that locals would be forbidden to approach. Furthermore, it would intensify the spread of inaccurate stereotypes of the Roma, which would consequently lead to the cultivation of fear, aggressiveness and acts of violence towards them. All this coming from a republic that claims to be a providential state which cares for its citizens’ primary needs and supports them financially and psychologically in difficult times. The efforts made by the government were spasmodic and isolated whereas the rejection of the locals was continuous. All this confusion is revealed in a typical heading of an online newspaper in

⁷⁵ K. Iacovidou (2008) ‘Cultural difference and the politics of recognition: The case of the Roma of Cyprus’, G. Titley and A. Lentin (eds.) *The Politics of Diversity in Europe*, Council of Europe Publishing, pp. 73-90, available at: http://youth-partnership.coe.int/export/sites/default/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/Diversity/Iacovidou.pdf (22.03.2009).

which the Roma are referred to as a “political hot potato in Cyprus” (Cyprus Mail, 24 April 2001).

- [61]. There is no study on segregation as such. However, some studies do point to the existence of at least a degree of segregation, in spite of statements to the contrary by officials in the Ministry of the Interior. The Third ECRI Report on Cyprus refers to ‘reports of *de facto* school segregation’, whilst other studies on racism and education record stereotypes and discrimination against Turkish-Cypriots and Roma⁷⁶ amongst the pupil population. Many Greek-Cypriot parents try to transfer their children away from schools attended by Romani children⁷⁷ and if they cannot succeed, they instruct them to avoid contact with Roma children; many Greek-Cypriot children do in fact demonstrate racial prejudice towards the Roma children.⁷⁸ It is

⁷⁶ N. Trimikliniotis (2001) ‘The Educational Problems of the Pontians in Cyprus: Preliminary Research and Report on Primary Education’, *Report on behalf of the Cyprus Association of Sociologists submitted to the Ministry of Education 2001*; Trimikliniotis (2004) ‘Mapping Discriminatory Landscapes: Ethnic Discrimination in a divided Education System’, in: *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring 2004; Trimikliniotis (2004) ‘Institutional Discrimination’ WP 4, *The European Dilemma: Institutional Patterns and the Politics of ‘Racial’ Discrimination* and Trimikliniotis (2003) ‘Discriminated Voices - Cyprus Report’, Work Package 2, *The European Dilemma: Institutional Patterns and the Politics of ‘Racial’ Discrimination*, Research Project Xenophob, EU Fifth Framework Program 2002-2005; S. Spyrou (2004) *Educational Needs of Turkish-speaking Children in Limassol*, Nicosia: UNOPS, (February-March 2004); K. Charakis, and A. Sitas (2004) ‘Racist Tendencies Among Cypriot Youth 1999-2001’, *The Cyprus Journal of Science and Technology*, No. 2, 2004, Frederick Research centre, Nicosia, pp. 145-155; K. Charakis, A. Sitas, K. Sotiriades, I. Demetriou, C. Charakis, E. Alexandrou, (ed. Kristis Charakis) (2005) *Αντικοινωνική Συμπεριφορά των Νέων της Κύπρου - Ρατσιστικές Τάσεις*, Athens: Sakoulas.

⁷⁷ Hence there is a concentration of these groups in certain schools. For more details see N. Trimikliniotis (2004) ‘Mapping Discriminatory Landscapes: Ethnic Discrimination in a divided Education System’, *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring 2004 and N. Trimikliniotis, and C. Demetriou, (2009) ‘The Cypriot Roma and the Failure of Education: Anti-Discrimination and Multiculturalism as a Post-accession Challenge’, Nicholas Coureas and Andrekos Varnava (eds.) *The Minorities of Cyprus: Development Patterns and the Identity of the Internal-Exclusion*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, forthcoming, 2009. N. Trimikliniotis and C. Demetriou (2004) *Roma, Sindi, Gypsies and Travellers in public education in Cyprus - RAXEN Special Study*, Report by the Cyprus National Focal Point for the EUMC written on behalf of the Cyprus Labour Institute as a special study for the EUMC.

⁷⁸ N. Trimikliniotis (2003) ‘Discriminated Voices - Cyprus Report’, Work Package 2, *The European Dilemma: Institutional Patterns and the Politics of ‘Racial’ Discrimination*, Research Project Xenophob, EU Fifth Framework Program 2002-2005; S. Spyrou. (2004) *Educational Needs of Turkish-speaking Children in Limassol*, UNOPS (February-March 2004); A. Keskenidou. and M. Tsakiri (2003) *H*

apparent that ‘family and socioeconomic problems’ penetrate school life with a vengeance. Studies show there is segregation between schools, in part reflecting the wealth or poverty of the surrounding neighbourhood with certain schools becoming the schools of the poor, migrants, the Turkish-Cypriots and the Roma.⁷⁹ The primary school with the highest concentration of Roma in the south, the 18th primary school, apparently has a large number of children from many families under the supervision of the Social Welfare Office (e.g. families with divorced or imprisoned parents), with problems that had been in existence before the arrival of large numbers of Turkish-speaking children.⁸⁰ In research conducted at a school in Limassol,⁸¹ the principal stated that there were problems because Greek-Cypriot parents reacted very negatively to the fact that Turkish-Cypriot and Roma students were studying there, claiming that ‘gypsy children have something violent attached to their character’. As many as 25 Greek-Cypriot pupils were moved from the school by their parents because of the presence of Turkish-Cypriot and Roma children.⁸² During the same interview, the head teacher rejected claims of any discrimination taking place, but was critical of systemic failure; moreover, the principal seemed worried that there were children not able to integrate into the school system: ‘A lot of gypsies learned to read and write but up to a point. What puzzles us is that they don’t integrate. They don’t feel that this school has rules, which they have to obey.’⁸³

- [62]. Given the absence of existing research on housing segregation, as well as an absence of an organised Roma community (organisations, leaders, etc), it was decided to examine the general social situation by utilizing the local primary school, which is attended by the local community children, including the Roma children. The NFP

επερότητα του πολιτισμικού κεφαλαίου των Αθιγγάνων ως πλαίσιο συμμετοχής στην εκπαίδευση, University of Cyprus.

⁷⁹ N. Trimikliniotis (2004) ‘Mapping Discriminatory Landscapes: Ethnic Discrimination in a Divided Education System’, *The Cyprus Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring 2004.

⁸⁰ S. Spyrou (2004) *Educational Needs of Turkish-speaking Children in Limassol*, UNOPS, February-March 2004.

⁸¹ N. Trimikliniotis (2004) ‘Institutional Discrimination in Cyprus’, Work Package 4, *The European Dilemma: Institutional Patterns and the Politics of ‘Racial’ Discrimination*, Research Project Xenophob, EU Fifth Framework Program 2002-2005.

⁸² N. Trimikliniotis (2004) ‘Institutional Discrimination in Cyprus’, Work Package 4, *The European Dilemma: Institutional Patterns and the Politics of ‘Racial’ Discrimination*, Research Project Xenophob, EU Fifth Framework Program 2002-2005.

⁸³ N. Trimikliniotis (2004) ‘Institutional Discrimination in Cyprus’, Work Package 4, *The European Dilemma: Institutional Patterns and the Politics of ‘Racial’ Discrimination*, Research Project Xenophob, EU Fifth Framework Program 2002-2005.

interviewed the head teacher and held a seminar with teachers who addressed questions on the educational and general conditions of the Roma children. Information on housing can therefore be inferred from the knowledge of teachers, who have daily contact with Roma children, as indirect general social data, or in some instances proxy data.⁸⁴ The NFP's visit to the 18th Primary School of Ayios Antonios in March 2009 in the framework of this study revealed that there has been a marked improvement in the general climate, in the school ethos and the approach taken to integrate Roma children and their parents. A number of positive measures taken by the school and the current head teacher in particular have created the necessary trust from Roma and other parents for the school to progress (interview with head teacher). Many teachers expressed satisfaction that there has been a significant improvement in the attendance, understanding and better cooperation between Roma and non-Roma children (interview with head teacher; focus group/seminar with primary school teachers in Limassol, 4 March 2009). However, many teachers expressed concern over the inadequacy of the curriculum for Roma children: most simply fall through the system, leaving the school before having learned much, or having developed their own skills and potential, since the whole school system, its curriculum and ethos does not correspond to their experiences and lifestyles. Some appear to do very well, but these are in a tiny minority; most do not learn much. Teachers argued that the generally low educational attainment of Roma pupils marginalises them further and reduces their own self-confidence, whilst it reinforces the prejudices and stereotypes of Greek-Cypriot, Turkish-Cypriots and migrant pupils about the Roma as 'stupid', 'lazy' and 'losers' (focus group/seminar with primary school teachers in Limassol, 4 March 2009). It was pointed out that despite the great progress made, the problem is that the current centralised core framework does not allow a major departure from a centralised system of setting the curriculum; moreover, the fact that the state does not recognise the Roma as a distinct minority group or culture creates problems which are particularly relevant to integration. This is likely to continue for future generations unless policies are changed to allow for an educational program more relevant to Roma experiences, culture and lifestyles. The question of housing is pertinent both to the cultural aspects of Roma lifestyle as well as their marginal, impoverished position. As such, social policies for development, cultural policies and educational measures to recognise, enhance and develop the Roma cultural identity can be of immense assistance in developing a culturally and socially sensitive policy on housing.

⁸⁴ Obviously, for the purposes of this report, we can only provide some general points.

- [63]. Access to **private** housing is problematic. There is evidence that Roma are directly, and in other cases indirectly, excluded from obtaining housing from landlords in the private sector. We are informed that the difficulty the Welfare Services in Limassol have in finding rental accommodation is the result of Roma being excluded by private landlords. Landlords refuse to rent out their properties to Roma (even when the properties are sought by Welfare Services), as private landlords ‘do not accept [Roma] because of their way of life’⁸⁵ we were told by one of our interviewees (TCP1, 24.2.2009). The officer said that ‘there had been problems before’. When the researchers made further enquiries, we were told that, although it is the Welfare Services who are responsible for renting out such properties,⁸⁶ the officer said: ‘if it is Greek-Cypriots or Turkish-Cypriots who would be housed, there is no problem; however when it comes to Roma, because they know of their way of life, they have a problem.’⁸⁷
- [64]. Access to **social** housing is not a problem, that is to say we have found no evidence of discrimination.
- [65]. The Roma in the south now settle in one of the four areas referred to in the study. There are no other informal settlements. The same applies to movement, encampment facilities and use of private land.
- [66]. There are no qualitative data on access to public utilities, particularly public transport, or issues of infrastructure and sanitation. There are no data on issues concerning access to housing or quality of housing for third-country Roma/Traveller immigrants, Roma asylum seekers or Roma/Traveller EU nationals moving to/from another member state.
- [67]. Neither the authorities, nor any of the interested parties or researchers have informed us of any campaigns undertaken in order to inform Roma communities of their right to adequate housing; nor have any such campaigns ever taken place.

⁸⁵ ‘Δεν τους δέχονται λόγω του τρόπου ζωής τους’ [They do not accept them because of their lifestyle], the officer said.

⁸⁶ We wrote to the Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour enquiring about this issue but we have not received a reply yet. In the meantime, we filed a complaint to the Anti-discrimination Authority of the Equality Body, asking for the issue to be investigated.

⁸⁷ K. Iacovidou (2008) ‘Cultural difference and the politics of recognition. The case of the Roma of Cyprus’; G. Tittley and A. Lentin (eds.) *The Politics of Diversity in Europe*, Council of Europe Publishing, pp. 73-90, 27.3.2009, available at http://youth-partnership.coe.int/export/sites/default/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/Diversity/Iacovidou.pdf, pp. 80-81.

- [68]. Housing deprivation is the result of the marginalisation of the Cypriot Roma, but this also impacts negatively to perpetuate their marginal status and vulnerability. The cycle of social exclusion has to be understood within the specific historical context. The Cypriot Roma have always been a marginal and excluded community. The numerically fewer Christian Roma, known as the ‘Mantides’ of Lamaca, were eventually assimilated with the Greek-Cypriots.⁸⁸ It is not coincidental to their marginality that with independence from British colonial rule in 1960 the Roma were not given the same status as other minority groups (Maronites, Armenians and Latins) which were classified as ‘religious groups’, but were divided according to their religion: most of them were Muslim and were therefore considered to be part of the Turkish-Cypriot community. Their traditional occupations were tin plating, making and trading cooking utensils, and being artisans, dancers and musicians.⁸⁹ In 1974 they were moved to the north together with the Turkish-Cypriots. Until 1999, what happened to the Roma was not an issue for the Greek-Cypriots, as they had been moved to the north. The reappearance of the Roma in the south became a hot political and social issue in 1999-2000, with the migration of Roma families to Limassol. Between 1999 and 2004 there were serious problems but there has been some improvement of the situation in more recent years.
- [69]. The cultural dimension of Cypriot-Roma life is an issue that is treated differently depending on the perspective, the context and the subject matter under examination. On some occasions, officials and lay persons refuse to recognise that these cultural difference are worthy of *respect* from the wider community; at times it is considered that references to ‘cultural aspects’ of Roma social life are simply an attempt to unjustifiably excuse what they consider to be a ‘lack of responsibility’ of Roma communities towards their neighbours, or a way for Roma to take advantage of situations for their own benefit (e.g. unemployment benefits, or other state benefits for single parents etc.). On other occasions their lifestyle is used to explain poor living conditions: for example, officials would claim that it is not possible to provide Roma with adequate housing when they constantly move from one settlement to the other, as well as from south to north and vice versa. The failure of policies to properly integrate Roma is reflected in that community’s slow educational advancement, low attainment at school, and high dropout rates, etc. An article published in 2003 in the journal of the Dom Research Centre examines the attitude of the Cypriot government towards the Roma at that time. In

⁸⁸ C. Kyrris (1978) «Οι Μάντηδες της Λάρνακας», A. Rousounides (ed.) *Πρακτικά του πρώτου Συμποσίου Λαογραφίας, Λεμεσός 20-25 Μαΐου*, Nicosia: 1978.

⁸⁹ C. Kyrris (1969) «ΟΙ Ατσίκανοι εν Κύπρω» *Μόρφωσις*, September-October-November 1969.

particular, it referred to statements by public officials that Roma will 'no longer get government handouts or state-sponsored housing' and that there are 'occupation regime spies hiding amongst the gypsies [sic]' who are generally assumed by the Greek-Cypriots to be 'scroungers and undesirables', whilst in fact the reality for Roma is characterised by longer-term unemployment for males, and widespread illiteracy through non-attendance at school, which was the norm at the time. Reference is made to the prevalent discourse at the time which was 'permeated with analogies of uncontrollability, chaos and disorder'. The prejudice of the Greek-Cypriots against the Roma was fed by statements of public officials who clearly viewed the Roma as 'economic migrants', very similar to the way in which the tabloid press portrayed asylum seekers in Western Europe in the early 1990s, and dismissed the Roma's legitimate right as Cypriot citizens to free movement.⁹⁰ Another researcher refers to the same issue: 'The way they move from the north to the south side of Cyprus reveals a realisation, on their part, of how negatively charged and problematic their identity is. They act as if they were illegal immigrants trying to pass secretly the frontiers of another country to escape from a negative situation. The difference with the Roma is that they cannot be considered as illegal immigrants; they are Cypriot citizens and as such they should be treated as equals with their Cypriot counterparts. The unorthodox ways they use to cross over to the south part of the island make their identity even more problematic and questionable in the eyes of the Greek Cypriots.'⁹¹ The same researcher (who has conducted fieldwork on the Cypriot Roma reports regarding the suspicion towards the Roma by the Greek-Cypriot population, and the fact that it has resulted in the Roma moving secretly) states: 'The only consistent and sure thing that I could observe in their behaviour was their secrecy; they are filled with an oppressed fear that has always dictated their choice of new places so as to protect themselves from the dominant "Others". They characteristically said "What can we do?

⁹⁰ A. Marsh and E. Strand (2003) "'...spies, deserters and undesirable persons...'", the Gypsies of Cyprus, 1322-2003' in: *Kuri Journal of the Dom Research Centre*, Vol. 1 No. 8 Spring/Summer 2003, available at: <http://www.domresearchcenter.com/journal/countries/cyprus/index.html> (26.03.2009).

⁹¹ K. Iacovidou (2008) 'Cultural difference and the politics of recognition. The case of the Roma of Cyprus', in: G. Titley and A. Lentin (eds.) *The Politics of Diversity in Europe*, Council of Europe Publishing, pp. 73-90, 27.3.2009, available at: http://youth-partnership.coe.int/export/sites/default/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/Diversity/Iacovidou.pdf (26.03.2009), p. 80.

We leave secretly to save ourselves. I have done that ever since I was a child” (Interview with Ibrahim, 23 November 2005).⁹²

- [70]. The identity of the Roma is intertwined with their lifestyle, and this is intimately related to their housing conditions. In Cyprus, one of the markers of social difference and social status is the size and wealth demonstrated by one's home. Its size, quality and cost is a status symbol: the Roma are ranked at the bottom because of their relation to their 'home'. But there is a more general question that relates to their identity as Roma, since the state tends to categorise them as Turkish Cypriots. In fact, they themselves often feel the need to downplay their Roma identity to claim equal rights. As Iacovidou points out: 'The Roma people of Makounda are Gypsies who are recognised as Turkish Cypriots. They insist that they are Muslims but in reality they have their own religion. They use the Muslim identity in order to avoid problems with the "Turkish government" in the north of the island. Most of them were born in Morfou (north Cyprus), where they insist that they have properties. They speak Turkish and some of them Greek as well, but the commissioner and some of the oldest members of that Roma group claim that they have their own special language too, maybe Romanitsib, the language of Roma. The Turkish linguist at their school who helps the Turkish-speaking students to learn the Greek language points out that she finds it very difficult to understand what the Roma children are saying, as they use words and syntax which come from other languages. It is remarkable that young Roma say that they are not Gypsies but only Turkish Cypriots, most probably because this identity gives them more rights, allowances, recognition and protection. However, the older ones do not hesitate to clarify that they are Gypsies. According to their stories, after the sad events following the destruction of Asia Minor, a lot of Roma people escaped to Cyprus and they stayed. Of course, they have no historic memory whatsoever. It is proven that due to the lack of written reports, the Roma have no memory of more than three or four generations. When asked "how do you know that you are Gypsies?", most of them answered that they were told so by their grandparents. It fascinates me that their relationship with the state is totally impersonal. They have never spoken with the authorities and all their needs are discussed between them. It is obvious that they do not have the necessary abilities to handle power relationships with the state. This is one of the reasons for which they have never negotiated with the authorities concerning the recognition of their identity. I feel that

⁹² K. Iacovidou (2008) 'Cultural difference and the politics of recognition. The case of the Roma of Cyprus', in: G. Titley and A. Lentin (eds.) *The Politics of Diversity in Europe*, Council of Europe Publishing, p. 80 available at: http://youth-partnership.coe.int/export/sites/default/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/Diversity/Iacovidou.pdf (26.03.2009)

any encounter with the state produces a fear in them and this fear leads to their marginalisation. In the end, where is their voice?" (Author's notes).⁹³ As argued in paragraph 62 above, cultural identity issues are connected to housing; however, such cultural arguments ought not to be used as excuses for failing to address the social and economic deprivation of the Roma community as merely 'a reflection of a distinct lifestyle'. The NFP considers that the question of cultural identity must be addressed when dealing with housing issues so as to provide a proper context and a better understanding of the cultural underpinnings of Roma lifestyle. In this way, possible developmental strategies can be developed that will appropriately address the communal and individual needs of the Cypriot Roma.

- [71]. As reported earlier, there has been an improvement in the general climate and attitude regarding the Roma over the last couple of years. However, they are still as marginal and excluded as ever. Relations with non-Roma neighbours are often riddled with tensions and problems. A Ministry of the Interior officer⁹⁴ informed us that just before our interview had started, a Greek-Cypriot neighbour, who is also resident in the Turkish-Cypriot quarter, had telephoned to complain about the behaviour of the Roma family next door for causing a nuisance, forcing the neighbour to call the police on numerous occasions: 'They speak very loudly and this makes others think they are shouting; they gather in numbers together to talk, quarrel and party and they light fires in the house or in the middle of the street to cook a barbecue or to keep warm. It's just their way of life. But the Greek-Cypriot neighbours who have just put their babies to bed and have to get up in the morning to go to work cannot easily come to terms with this. But we are improving the situation. When the matter comes to my attention, I go to see the Roma family and let them know that there is a problem with what they are doing. Now they are cooperating and showing understanding.' There seems to have been an improvement in communication between the Greek-Cypriot neighbours and the Roma: 'Four years ago when such a thing happened, there was so much tension and sometimes there were threats and violence. We no longer see this. There is more tolerance, understanding and communication from all sides.'⁹⁵ We are informed that the situation is in the process of being positively transformed, compared to five years ago: 'You no longer find the racism one would

⁹³ K. Iacovidou (2008) 'Cultural difference and the politics of recognition. The case of the Roma of Cyprus', G. Titley and A. Lentin (eds.) *The Politics of Diversity in Europe*, Council of Europe Publishing, pp. 73-90, 27.3.2009, available at: http://youth-partnership.coe.int/export/sites/default/youth-partnership/documents/EKCYP/Youth_Policy/docs/Diversity/Iacovidou.pdf, pp. 81-82.

⁹⁴ TC1.

⁹⁵ HOM, 24.2.2009.

witness five years ago. There was so much tension then that it was constant warfare; now you find gestures of goodwill such as support from the Greek-Cypriot neighbours in offering the Roma food, clothes and anything needed.⁹⁶ The Roma families the NFP spoke to confirmed this trend.⁹⁷ We cannot be certain whether this is the result of a policy change, or whether it indicates a gradual attitude change by the local communities towards the Roma, as the NFP had not conducted any comparative research in this specific area during the two periods under question. However, the NFP's researchers who have been monitoring racism and the media over the last five years can safely assert that there has been a positive discourse change in the way the Roma are depicted in the media. In any case, we can safely assert that the Greek-Cypriot media is less concerned with issues relating to the presence of the Cypriot-Roma today than they were a few years ago.⁹⁸

- [72]. We have no data on Roma women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities. One can safely assume that they are likely to be in a more vulnerable position within their communities.

1.4. Case law and complaints relating to the housing of Roma

- [73]. There is no special public body recording or processing complaints regarding housing, which is one of the several fields of competence of the equality body, under the law transposing the Race Equality Directive.
- [74]. No complaints have ever been submitted to the equality body complaining of housing discrimination against the Roma.
- [75]. The Roma in Cyprus are to a large extent uneducated, unemployed and destitute; they do not speak the local language (Greek) and are socially excluded, avoided and marginalised. There are no NGOs or any other organisations defending the rights of the Roma. Given this,

⁹⁶ TCP1 24.2.2009.

⁹⁷ This was confirmed by conversations we had with a number of Romani persons during our on-site visit on 4 March 2009. Some referred to specific neighbours who used to swear at them, harass and threaten them but have since ceased to do so or moved.

⁹⁸ The researchers have followed closely issues related to racism and xenophobia since 2000 and as part of the RAXEN network since 2004.

it should come as no surprise that there have been no cases ever brought by (or on behalf of)⁹⁹ Roma alleging discrimination or indeed raising any other issue concerning them. On the contrary, the Ombudsman, who acts as Cyprus' specialised body, has received a complaint from residents of an area close to the Roma settlement in Limassol against the authorities for allegedly ignoring the residents' request to relocate the Roma settlement, complaining about the Roma lifestyle with overtly racist language. In response, the Ombudsman's report found the complainants' allegations of higher crime rates in the area (owing to the presence of the Roma), as unfounded, indicating that police records did not support the allegation. The Ombudsman went a step further and stressed the rights of the Roma community, condemned the authorities for lacking the political will to solve their problems and for yielding to the unreasonable reactions of the local communities; a set of measures were recommended for the social integration of Roma.¹⁰⁰

- [76]. As a measure, litigation is in practice not available to the large majority of vulnerable groups in Cyprus, due to the cost and length of time involved,¹⁰¹ least of all to the Roma who are perhaps more marginalised than any other vulnerable group. Information about the new rights and procedures created by the set of laws which came into effect in 2004 transposing the two anti-discrimination Directives has not been disseminated sufficiently enough to encourage at least *some* recourse by the Roma to the specialised body. Nothing was printed in Turkish, the language spoken by the Roma, with the exception of a short leaflet issued by the Equality Body, which however, was not disseminated amongst the Roma settlements.
- [77]. In addition to the lack of awareness of complaint channels, the phenomenon of under-reporting appears to be prevalent within the Roma community. Whilst the Third ECRI report mentions that 'hostility and rejection by the local non-Roma population [towards the Roma] is reported to be high and to have in some cases resulted in physical violence', no single complaint has ever been filed.¹⁰² In July 2004, a Greek-Cypriot man killed a ten-year-old Roma boy in an unprovoked cold-blooded incident, which took place in a public area in Limassol. Even before the conclusion of the inquest, the Cyprus

⁹⁹ A complaint recently submitted to the Equality Body by the Cyprus RAXEN national focal point, complaining of discrimination against the Roma (in general) in education.

¹⁰⁰ Cyprus Ombudsman's Report on the Gypsies of the Turkish-Cypriot quarter of Limassol, File No. A/P 839/2003, 10.12.2003.

¹⁰¹ Hence the conspicuous absence of any court decisions in the field of discrimination, based on the laws transposing the two directives.

¹⁰² Third ECRI Report on Cyprus, adopted on 16.12.2005, Strasbourg 16.05.2006, Council of Europe, p. 25.

government and all political parties rushed to condemn the incident as an isolated crime committed by a psychopath with a criminal record, who was also a drug addict, obviously fearing retaliations and further violence from members of the Turkish-Cypriot community. In a press release after the incident, one human rights NGO¹⁰³ regretted the interpretation offered by the authorities. It argued that psychopathologic conditions or drug abuse do not automatically turn a person into a murderer, nor do they justify the apparently nationalist and racist motives of the murderer. In the court action that followed, the judge also rejected the authorities' position of the perpetrator being a person of diminished responsibility.

[78]. Currently there is one complaint pending before the Anti-discrimination Authority of the Equality Body, which was submitted by the NFP, and which claims discrimination against the Roma in education. At the same time, this complaint requests an investigation into wider and contextual issues regarding education. In particular, the complaint claims that the authorities are failing to recognise the minority rights of the Roma, in that:

- they fail to recognise the Roma as a particular ethnic minority group and their language *Kurbetcha* as a minority language;
- they fail to promote the culture of the Roma, in violation of Article 12 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities¹⁰⁴ and Article 8 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages;¹⁰⁵
- by ignoring and failing to adhere to important recommendations of the ECRI, the Council of Europe and the OSCE, the Cypriot authorities perpetuate the marginalisation, exclusion and cultural deprivation of the Cypriot Roma. The recommendations include the ECRI General Policy Recommendation No.3¹⁰⁶; the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe,¹⁰⁷ and the OSCE

¹⁰³ KISA press release 16.07.2004.

¹⁰⁴ Strasbourg, 1.II.1995. Cyprus signed this Convention on 1 February 1995. It entered into force on 1 February 1998.

¹⁰⁵ Strasbourg, 5.XI.1992. Signed by the Republic of Cyprus on 12 November 1992. It entered into force on 1 December 2002.

¹⁰⁶ CRI (98)29 rev.

¹⁰⁷ Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 3 February 2000 at the 696th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies
http://www.coe.int/T/DG3/RomaTravellers/documentation/recommendations/receducation20004_en.asp (29.09.2009)

Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area.¹⁰⁸

1.5. Identifying good practices

- [79]. The policy of providing free housing accommodation for the Roma can be regarded as a positive measure, as a governmental policy; whether it can be referred to as a ‘good practice’, in meeting the FRA criteria is open to interpretation. We have chosen to include this as a ‘major national project targeting the housing situation of Roma and Travellers’, which is focused on in the next section.
- [80]. No other direct housing-related measures can be recorded. The only other integration measures are found in the field of education, which can assist in bridging the knowledge gap and potentially reduce the social and cultural segregation of Roma children in the longer term, or at least potentially for future generations. Measures for the integration of Romani children are taken in the field of education, albeit targeting all ‘Turkish-speaking’ pupils and not specifically Roma; there is nothing in the school curriculum on Roma culture or history. These measures consist mainly of Turkish-language support teaching, pursuant to the government’s constitutional obligation to provide education for the Turkish-Cypriot community in their mother tongue. A few other measures are also in place, such as free school uniforms, lunch offered at school, transport to school, etc, in order to encourage attendance. In spite of all this, a study conducted by the Limassol Regional Welfare Office in 2004 concerning the social exclusion of Turkish Cypriots residing in Limassol (of whom 75% are Roma) found that there is clearly a pattern of low educational attainment within this specific group and a lack of parental interest regarding the educational opportunities of their children.¹⁰⁹ The study notes that the severe economic problems faced by these families, the squalid living conditions, the low educational level of the parents, and widespread anti-Turkish and anti-Roma prejudice all generate a negative attitude within these groups towards the educational system. The eventual outcome is a swift school exit, seeking to enter the labour market either as beggars or in difficult manual occupations. Another study in 2005 showed that linguistic barriers often drive Roma pupils out of

¹⁰⁸ Decision No. 566, PC.DEC/566, 27.11.2003

¹⁰⁹ Interview with an officer of the Anti-discrimination Authority of the Equality Body, 16.06.04.

school, as they do not understand a word of what is being said in the classroom.¹¹⁰

- [81]. Regarding the education of Roma children, in recent years the 18th Primary School of Ayios Antonios in Limassol (Cyprus' second largest city, and the one hosting the largest Roma population), has adopted a number of measures for Roma inclusion and multicultural education. Extra classes in the Greek language are offered to pupils whose mother tongue is not Greek (children of migrants, Turkish Cypriots, Roma, etc). For the school year 2005-2006, a total of 1,356 hours of extra Greek-language classes were offered in schools across Cyprus. For the school year 2007-2008 a total of 1,395 hours of extra Greek-language classes were offered. This measure involved the hiring of additional 48 teachers. The books being used for teaching Greek to non-native Greek speakers have been brought from Greece, where they were being used under similar situations. Although these measures have not been evaluated to gauge their impact, one such school undertaking these practices, namely the 18th Primary School of Ayios Antonios in Limassol, which is attended by a large number of Turkish-speaking pupils, was awarded the Commonwealth Education Good Practice Award in 2006.¹¹¹
- [82]. The institution of Educational Priority Zones (EPZ) was introduced by the Cypriot Ministry of Education for the first time during the school year 2003-2004. It aims at promoting literacy and school achievement in economically and socially depressed areas. One of the criteria as to whether a certain area is deemed an Educational Priority Zone is the number of non-Greek-speaking residents. This measure aims at placing in a special category those schools where special attention and particular methods are needed to address certain educational needs (such as pupils coming from particularly poverty-stricken areas, high concentrations of non-native Greek speakers, high drop-out rates, etc.). Schools classified as falling within an EPZ receive extra teaching hours and other measures where needed. The institution of the EPZ aims at reducing inequalities for pupils attending schools in disadvantaged areas with an increased proportion of immigrants and ethnic communities, and combating school failure and illiteracy. There

¹¹⁰ N. Trimikliniotis (2005) 'Discriminated Voices - Cyprus Report', Work Package 2, *The European Dilemma: Institutional Patterns and the Politics of 'Racial' Discrimination*, Research Project 'Xenophob', EU Fifth Framework Program 2002-2005.

¹¹¹ http://www.cedol.org/cgi-in/items.cgi?_item=static&_article=200611161334545298 (28.03.2009)

are currently three such zones operating in Cyprus, covering 17 school units, and including those with a high concentration of Roma pupils.¹¹²

- [83]. Efforts initiated in 2004 by the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) to convince the Cypriot government to set up a Turkish school for the Turkish-speaking pupils of Limassol (mostly comprising Roma but also Turkish Cypriots and Kurds) have so far not produced results, as the government claims that a survey it conducted showed that none of the families of the Turkish-speaking pupils of Limassol wished to have their children moved to a Turkish school.
- [84]. In the field of employment, a policy put in place by the Limassol Municipality in 2008, which is now being practiced each summer, is to employ Roma to clean up fields and side-street ditches in the Turkish-Cypriot quarter. The measure has been successful and enjoys a high degree of participation from the Roma.
- [85]. No good practice can be identified on addressing the situation of those Roma who are elderly, women, children, or with disabilities.

1.6. Major national projects targeting the housing situation of Roma and Travellers not included in the previous section

- [86]. Cyprus did not participate in the ‘Decade of Roma Inclusion’ project.
- [87]. Title: Παροχή κρατικής στέγης στους Κύπριους Ρόμα [Provision of government housing to Cypriot Roma]
- Υπουργείο Εσωτερικών [Ministry of the Interior];
 - government initiative;
 - no Internet link is available;
 - type of initiative: provision of free housing;

¹¹² http://www2.cytanet.com.cy/fanerom-dim/zep/html/ie_aead_ooci_eydni.html
(28.03.2009)

- the budget allocated varies from year to year;
- rationale and objective: to meet the housing needs and avoid homelessness of the Cypriot Roma;
- target group: the Cypriot Roma community, particularly those travelling from the north and settling in the south;
- time frame and location: the project has been running since 2000 and it is located in various spots in the districts of Limassol and Paphos;
- there was no involvement of Roma in the project's design and implementation;
- no specific focus on Roma women, children, the elderly or those with disabilities;
- difficulties and limitations encountered: the budget is not sufficient to adequately maintain the housing provided; the units are overcrowded and often in isolated and segregated areas;
- no impact assessment or other evaluation has been carried out;
- sustainability: the project is sustainable so long as state funding continues;
- possibilities for transferability and mainstreaming: it is possible for the same policy to be implemented everywhere where there are Roma in need of housing;
- description: the most important major project funded mainly through national funds targeting the housing situation of Roma is the decision to finance (and practice of financing) their access to publicly administered accommodation in abandoned Turkish-Cypriot houses and pre-fabricated homes. The housing policy is to provide all Cypriot Roma with publicly administered housing. This takes the one of the following forms:
 - (a) 'abandoned' Turkish-Cypriot property administered by the Custodian of Turkish-Cypriot Property, i.e. the Minister of the Interior;
 - (b) pre-fabricated houses in specially designated settlements in remote areas near villages;

(c) rented accommodation which is leased from landlords to the Welfare Services Department, which then offers it to Roma under terms which were not communicated to the researchers.

- [88]. There are no projects that involved Roma at the design, implementation or assessment stages. This is obviously a negative state of affairs in the development of a culturally sensitive and needs-based policy on the subject, and reflects the marginality of the Roma, and the fact that the Cypriot Roma community is impoverished, vulnerable and without organisation.
- [89]. Government officials interviewed¹¹³ have informed the NFP that the needs of such disadvantaged groups as the elderly, children, the physically disabled, the terminally ill, HIV-positive individuals, persons with persistent medical problems, the mentally ill, victims of natural disasters, people living in disaster-prone areas, and other groups are prioritised, but we have no tangible evidence that supports this contention.
- [90]. There is no impact assessment, and at the same time no studies that evaluate or monitor any major outcomes or lessons learned, nor is there any other system of formal evaluation. Some information provided by interviewees may, however, be illuminating. According to a key informant involved in fieldwork with the Roma and in policy development, the housing provided is neither sustainable nor adequate for their needs (EI 27.3.2009): 'The houses provided in the villages are totally inadequate. If one goes to the Roma settlement they set up in Makounda, for instance, one finds a number of Roma persons all dumped together in houses which can be described as appalling. I spoke to officials who have never visited the Roma settlements and yet they are dealing with Roma issues and policy development. They are definitely segregated and isolated from the rest of society.'

2. Field research - interviews

2.1. Brief description of the methodology

- [91]. The researchers have utilised available resources in order to gain an insight into the field researched. Seven persons were interviewed according the guidelines, as well as four Romani persons (whose

¹¹³ For instance, TC1, 24.2.2009.

interviews were not recorded); a seminar/focus was organised with teachers in the local primary school, where the guidelines required only five interviews. Moreover, the field research involved not only interviews but also two on-site visits to the old Turkish-Cypriot quarter of Limassol, which has the highest concentration of Roma in the south. We conducted a number of interviews with: officials from the government (Ministry of the Interior and the Custodian for Turkish-Cypriot properties centrally and in Limassol); a health officer of the municipality of the city of Limassol; an officer from the Anti-discrimination Authority of the Equality Body; and a representative of the 18th Primary School of Limassol, which has about a 60 per cent Roma pupil population, the highest concentration of Roma pupils in the country. We also conducted a seminar on Roma issues with teachers at the aforementioned school, which we used as a focus group for discussing education for Roma and the wider housing issues affecting them. Finally, we interviewed a key figure carrying out fieldwork with the Roma, who prefers to remain anonymous (see list of interviews after bibliography). The anonymity of all those interviewed is respected. All interviewees were well placed to answer relevant questions. The interview list is as follows:

- [TCP1] officer, administration of Turkish-Cypriot Properties, Ministry of the Interior, Limassol, 24 February 2009;
- [HMO] health officer, Municipality of Limassol, 24 February 2009;
- [MI], Ministry of the Interior, Nicosia, 9 March 2009;
- [TCP2] officer, Turkish-Cypriot Properties Administration, Ministry of the Interior, Nicosia, 9 March 2009;
- [AA] officer, Anti-discrimination Authority of the Equality Body, 3 March 2009;
- [EI] [Expert] from an organisation which prefers to remain anonymous, Nicosia, 27 March 2009;
- [HM] representative, 18th Primary School of Limassol, 24 February 2009. [FG/seminar];
- focus group/seminar with primary school teachers in Limassol, 4 March 2009.

[92]. The main difficulty in researching the Cypriot case was the fact that, such is the vulnerable position of the Roma in Cyprus that there is no organisation of the Roma themselves, or any prominent Roma figure that one can address. However, over and above the prescribed methodology, the researchers made two on-site visits to the Turkish-Cypriot quarter of Limassol, where about half the Roma population of Cyprus resides. There we spoke to members of two families of Roma

and we visited two houses after being taken on a short tour of the quarter to observe its general situation, neighbourhood and attitudes. The NFP interviewed two Romani women¹¹⁴ and two Romani men (a 40-year-old¹¹⁵ and a 22-year-old).¹¹⁶ We addressed the relevant issues regarding their own housing situation and needs, relations with their neighbours, their treatment by the authorities (police, municipality authorities, etc.), the employment situation, and their family situation, as well as being shown their homes. For the interviews with the Romani persons, we employed a more ethnographic approach rather than following the formal system used to interview state officials. It was the NFP's view that the use of any recording device with these people was inappropriate, and therefore the researchers made notes during and after the interviews, which allowed for a freer interaction and an opportunity to see for ourselves the situation inside their homes. In any case the interview schedule was designed for conducting interviews with officials, NGOs and community leaders rather than individual Romani persons. Such interviews went beyond the minimum required for the research methodology; however, we consider the insights from these sources as extremely valuable given the absence of any organisation which specialises in the Cypriot Roma and the fact they remain an unrepresented community.¹¹⁷

- [93]. We interviewed the government and municipality officials at their offices in Limassol and Nicosia. We also visited the local primary school twice. During our first visit we interviewed one teacher, and during our second we held a seminar on Roma educational issues in Cyprus, which we used as a focus group with teachers. However, Welfare Services failed to come back to us in time about our inquiry on allegations of discrimination by Greek-Cypriot landlords against Roma Cypriots.
- [94]. During the on-site visits, we visited two houses where extended families were residing, and we observed the quality of the dwellings. Also we spoke to a number of Roma persons from the two families. We communicated with them in Greek and Turkish.

¹¹⁴ Both were interviewed on 04 March 2009.

¹¹⁵ Interviewed on 24 February 2009.

¹¹⁶ Interviewed on 04 March 2009.

¹¹⁷ We thus consider any view that we have departed from the questionnaire guidelines as failing to appreciate the fact that it was impossible to follow them to the letter, rather we used all available resources and improvisation in order to elicit whatever data were available.

2.2. Summary of main points including exemplary illustrative quotes

- [95]. It has emerged from our interviews that government officials consider that the decision to house the Roma in publicly administered properties is a good practice that fulfils the Roma's basic need for shelter. However, it is generally accepted that the quality of the housing is often substandard. They claim that the funds devoted to repairs are adequate to improve standards and repair any damage to the properties or repair new Turkish-Cypriot properties to house any new tenants. Of course, the policy decision of using Turkish-Cypriot properties for Roma housing may prove to be problematic if and when the Turkish-Cypriot owners come to reclaim it. A number of measures have been reported by government officials aimed at increasing school attendance by Roma children, particularly over the last couple of years. The officials recognise that the social climate when the Roma first arrived to the south in 1999-2000, and up until 2006, had been hostile towards the Roma who were facing problems of isolation and exclusion. Indirectly, they recognise that the decision to disperse them in various areas may contribute to their spatial segregation, and hence they propose to take measures to ensure that they are allocated accommodation in the old Turkish-Cypriot quarter of Limassol, which is inhabited not only by Roma but also by Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots and migrants. Indicative of this is what interviewee TCP2 stated: 'In order to house six families from the village of Polemidia, we are considering the option of repairing new Turkish-Cypriot houses in other villages. However, we are concerned about the risks of spatial segregation; therefore we will try to house them near other Roma settlements.'
- [96]. When the Roma first started to arrive to the south in 1999, they faced hostility and were even imprisoned for a period. Following the decision to house them in Turkish-Cypriot properties in 2000, which was in itself a positive measure, the general hostility worsened with public quarrelling and with host communities demanding the relocation of the Roma. In an effort to appease those communities, the government developed the dispersal plan, which contributed to Roma segregation and isolation.
- [97]. Over the last couple of years there has been an effort to regenerate the old Turkish-Cypriot quarter of Limassol, and some of the old houses have been repaired. Also, a multipurpose community centre was set up in the Turkish quarter, which aimed at taking action towards integrating the Roma and promoting their participation with the local community. However, the building remains closed most of the time as there is no arrangement for it to remain open, and there is no budget

allocated for a full-time member of staff to be present. The most important integration measure, however, is the comprehensive approach for full and equal participation of all members of the pupil and parent population at the local primary school (the 18th Primary School of Ayios Antonios). The results of the school initiative have been very encouraging in ensuring the school attendance of Roma children, the participation of Roma parents in the schooling of their children, and building trust between teachers and parents. However, the educational system is unable to cater for the majority of Roma children as it is not designed to accommodate and develop curricula more relevant to their experience and lifestyle.

- [98]. Whilst recognising that the general situation has improved over the last year or so, the Roma communities remain isolated, excluded and segregated. They are impoverished, and the majority of the Roma population appears to be unemployed; the prospects of work for the young appear bleak. There are no training or skills programmes for young or more mature workers to enable them to be properly integrated into the labour market or society at large. One key interviewee informed the researchers that the situation with the Roma is unacceptable: ‘They are people who fell through the cracks of the system. They were originally taken to the north and thrown at the edge of the river in Morfou on the excuse that this is part of their culture. When they started coming to the south, they were similarly segregated and again we claimed that this was part of their culture. But the Roma are almost totally illiterate, they cannot read or write, nor do they possess any arithmetic skills. They face enormous social and family problems in an environment which is not supporting them. A visit to the remote villages of Makounda or Stavrokonnou reveals the absolute segregation of these people. This has nothing to do with culture but with social segregation.’
- [99]. During the on-site visits, the following information was supplied by members of the residing families.
- We were told that there were other children who were at school at the time. A man we spoke to (22 years old) told us that most men are working on scrap metal, as he was at the time we met him. He does this, and has taken many manual jobs in the past, but now it is difficult to find a job due to the gradation of expertise. He came to the south when he was five years old and received no schooling, he told us, because he was ‘scared’ of the new place. He knew nothing of the ‘ins and outs’ of society and has been working since he was 12. He had a car accident many years ago, has a broken clavicle, and has been to the hospital many times. However, he complains that he has problems in getting proper

care and has not been able to get a proper job since. We are uncertain if he meant he can lift heavy weights.

- Another man interviewed by the NFP (about 40 years old) had visited the local municipal office and required that he be moved to a bigger home, as the house he was allocated was too small for his family needs. He was in a precarious employment situation and was out of work. He told the NFP that he was unemployed and looking for a job as a manual worker. He has a family with four children. The researchers could not conduct an in-depth interview with him as his Greek was only very basic.¹¹⁸
- We spoke to a Romani woman, a mother in her 20s, who told us about the Roma relations with the authorities. Although her story was unclear, she told us about a health benefit arrangement which had failed because the paperwork needed was difficult to secure. She showed us her very poorly maintained house with broken windows which had not been fixed in the last six years, and a first-floor veranda in a very bad state.
- We also spoke to a woman in her 60s who told us about her relations with neighbours. She offered us coffee and told us that things were better now, pointing to a house across the street. The Greek Cypriot living there had one once pointed a shotgun at her, but now he had gone. Relations were OK, we were told, but she did not elaborate. She also told us about the schooling of her children, who were then at school, proudly and emphatically telling us, that they knew how to read.

The most important features of the Roma housing and accommodation situation in Cyprus

[100]. Government officials consider that the Roma's 'main' or primary need for shelter and basic housing have been met by the free accommodation provided as a result of the government decision. However, there is some discrepancy in the figures as to the number of Roma residing in this accommodation, with different officers offering different numbers in the specific areas designated for Roma settlement. Government officials point out that it is impossible to ascertain the exact numbers of Roma in the different housing, as they are constantly on the move.

The figures provided as to the number of Roma residents are as follows:

Area	of	TCP1	(officer	from	the	MI	2009	ECRI Cyprus Report 2006
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¹¹⁸ The Turkish speaker was not present at that meeting (Limassol, 24 February 2009).

Residence	Department of Turkish Cypriot Properties at the Ministry of the Interior) ¹¹⁹	(Ministry of the Interior officer) ¹²⁰	
Old Turkish-Cypriot quarter of Limassol	600	320	83 families or 360 persons reside in the Limassol district
Polemida in Limassol	16 families x 7 = approx. 110 <u>Another</u> four families are about to be housed elsewhere		
Makounda in Paphos		259	73 families or 259 persons reside in the Limassol district
Stavrokonnou in Paphos			
Total		620-650	619

[101]. According to some interviewees, at this moment there is no problem in terms of providing *shelter* to the Roma (as opposed to proper living accommodation). However, government officials recognise that there are problems of overcrowding, but reject allegations that the dwellings are unfit. One government official talked about the shortages in suitable accommodation, as families of between five and seven members are currently housed in one- or two-bedroom dwellings due to a lack of more suitable dwellings. Another government official referred to six families in Polemida who were residing in unsuitable dwellings which he described as ‘degrading’, he stated that there were plans to re-house these families by 2010. The same official stated that there had been a decline in the number of Roma coming from the north during 2007, attributed to the economic boom there, but this had changed with the economic crisis of 2008, which saw an increase in the number of Roma crossing from north to south.

[102]. One government official also referred to the unwillingness of Greek-Cypriot landlords to rent out properties if they were to be inhabited by Roma, for fear that they may cause severe damage to the houses. However, this issue was raised with other government officials, who denied knowledge of such allegations.

[103]. These officials disagree with allegations of intended or inadvertent segregation of the Roma and, instead, referred to a number of measures taken to integrate them, such as offering them seasonal jobs in local government, motivational measures to encourage school attendance, etc. With regard to the claim that the original plan for dispersing them has created problems, TCP2 stated: ‘We don’t really

¹¹⁹ Information provided during the interview with TCP1, 24 February 2009.

¹²⁰ We were informed that the data were collected for the purposes of a report in December 2008. Information provided during the interview with MI1.

want them to be segregated; we are therefore looking for Turkish-Cypriot properties that can be made available once we carry out the basic repairs there.’

- [104]. Officials noted that since 1999/2000, when the first wave of Roma arrived, there has been a marked improvement in the general climate, increased sense of acceptance from neighbours, improved schooling of children, etc. Also they note that there have been considerable repairs made to the dwellings; there is more to be done due to a waiting list and backlog of repairs for all publicly owned or publicly administered housing. They also point to a general plan for regeneration of these neighbourhoods, particularly policies for inner-city regeneration in the old Turkish quarter of Limassol.

National, regional or local housing and accommodation policies related to Roma housing and actual impact on the situation

- [105]. The housing policy applicable as from 2000 is to provide all Cypriot Roma with publicly administered housing. This takes one of these forms:
- ‘abandoned’ Turkish-Cypriot property administered by the Custodian of Turkish-Cypriot Property, who is the Minister of the Interior;
 - pre-fabricated houses in specially designated settlements in remote areas near villages;
 - rented accommodation which is leased from the landlords to the Welfare Services Department, which then offers it to Roma for accommodation under terms which were not communicated to the researchers.

Examples of “good practice” related to Roma

- [106]. A policy put in place by the Limassol Municipality in 2008, practiced every summer since, is to employ Roma to clean up fields and side-street ditches in the Turkish-Cypriot quarter (HOM 24.3.2009). No further details were available in respect of this policy.
- [107]. Disadvantaged groups as the elderly, children, the physically disabled, the terminally ill, HIV-positive individuals, persons with persistent medical problems, the mentally ill, victims of natural disasters, people

living in disaster-prone areas and other groups are, according to one government official, prioritised (TC1 24.2.2009).

- [108]. Another good practice focuses on subsidies for school uniforms and school meals, and free school transport for Roma children (TC1 24.2.2009).

Cases of housing discrimination or other violations of the housing rights of Roma

- [109]. Officials interviewed state there has been no incident of racism or other form of discrimination in housing or other violations of the housing rights of Roma. There have been problems of racism in the neighbourhood, but they have been resolved.
- [110]. Officials claim that the overall situation as regards the habitability of the dwellings provided meets the acceptable standards. However, there are unofficial reports of overcrowding, squalor and almost derelict housing (EI, 27.3.2009). In the village locations where the Roma have been dispersed (Polemia, Makounda and Stavrokonnou) housing conditions are substandard and of questionable habitability (EI, 27.3.2009). Officials insist that whilst there may be some delays in repairing some of the properties in cases where they are damaged, the pre-fabricated homes are of good quality and conditions meet acceptable standards (TCP1 24.2.2009; TCP2 9.3.2009; MI 9.3.2009). Also the dwellings in Polemia are far too small to accommodate families with many children, as is often the case with the Roma (TC1 24.2.2009).
- [111]. The shortages in accommodation in Limassol are the result of the exclusion of Roma by private landlords. Landlords refuse to rent out their properties to Roma, even when the properties are sought by the Welfare Services as private landlords: '[the landlords] do not accept [the Roma] because of their way of life' (TCP1, 24.2.2009). The officer said that 'there had been problems before' and that whenever the private landlord is made aware that the Welfare Services are seeking to rent accommodation in order to house Roma families, they are not interested: 'if it is Greek Cypriots or Turkish Cypriots who would be housed there is no problem; however, when it comes to Roma, because they know of their way of life [the landlords] have a problem.'¹²¹

¹²¹ The NFP has sought the view of Welfare Services on this issue but has received no reply. In the meantime, the NFP filed a complaint to the Anti-discrimination Authority to investigate the issue.

- [112]. A Ministry of Interior officer (TC1) informed us that Greek-Cypriot neighbours of Roma in the old Turkish quarter of Limassol often complain about the behaviour of the Roma for being a nuisance or causing noise. In such cases, the mediation of the government official who visits the Roma and tries to reason with them has recently begun to bear fruit. Roma are becoming increasingly cooperative and willing to communicate: ‘four years ago when such a thing happened there was so much tension and sometimes there were threats and violence. We no longer see this. There is more tolerance, understanding and communication from all sides’ (HOM, 24.2.2009); (TCP1 24.2.2009).
- [113]. An additional problem that has emerged is that, in the old Turkish quarter of Limassol, the Roma are not even tolerated by the 400 Turkish Cypriots residing there.¹²² One government official said: ‘if we offer to a Turkish Cypriot a dwelling which has Roma next to it, they do not want the house. The Greek Cypriot will accept it but the Turkish Cypriot would never accept this. They say that “they are not Turkish Cypriots, they are gypsies and we don’t want to live next to them.”’¹²³

2.2.1. The most important features of the Roma housing and accommodation situation in Cyprus

- [114]. The key problem is that we are dealing with an impoverished, or what is best described as a socially excluded group in society. It is a politically, socially, educationally, and economically deprived and excluded community. It is not even recognised as a ‘Roma’ community by the state, but merely as part of the T/C community.
- [115]. According to a key informant involved in fieldwork with the Roma and in policy development, the housing provided to them is not sustainable or adequate for their needs (EI 27.3.2009): ‘The houses provided in the villages are totally inadequate. If one goes to the Roma settlement they set up in Makounda, for instance, one finds a number of Roma persons all dumped together in houses which can be described as appalling. I spoke to officials who have never visited the Roma settlements and yet they are dealing with Roma issues and policy development. They are definitely segregated and isolated from the rest of society.’
- [116]. According to NGOs, some of the characteristics and stereotypes often attributed to the Roma community are:

¹²² TCP1, 24 February 2009.

¹²³ TCP1, 24 February 2009.

- they marry young and have many children;
- they are long-term unemployed with few employment skills;
- they are mostly or wholly illiterate. moving and seeking employment in groups;
- they are involved in petty crime and often have family quarrels as a result of which they move to other areas;
- although unemployed, they express the wish to find jobs and register with local job centres, but with little success;
- the unemployed tend to find occupations (and small income) in collecting and reselling scrap metal for recycling;
- they file bogus applications in order to claim various state benefits;
- financial support from the state has rendered them clientelistic and dependent on state subsidies.

National, regional or local housing and accommodation policies related to Roma housing and actual impact on the situation

- [117]. Interviewees have stated that although it is positive that shelter is provided free of charge, the housing policy which was based on dispersing them to remote areas to appease local communities negatively impacts on their lives by segregating them and perpetuating their marginality. Moreover, although there have been efforts to create centres for their leisure and recreational activities, these are kept shut and are unused. One interview stated: ‘It is a great shame that there are facilities [at the multipurpose community centre] that are not utilized; when there are so many Roma youths, who the education system has failed, with no jobs or prospects for the future, it is unacceptable not to have any employment training schemes in place for them.’¹²⁴

Examples of “good practice” related to Roma

- [118]. Efforts are currently underway to set up a centre for the recreation of the children of the Roma settlement of Stavrokonnou. Efforts have also been made to set up recreation centres in other Roma settlements as well, such as Makounda. There are also plans to provide training to adults for ‘domesticity skills’, such as basic cooking, cleaning,

¹²⁴ [EI], (27.3.2009).

looking after children and other techniques for everyday survival in the house. In the past, efforts were made to create adult education centres to assist Roma parents with basic numeracy skills, but they were not successful as the Roma stopped attending after some weeks. The greatest problem is the fact there were not stable numbers, and families would move from one settlement to the other, and to and from the north.

- [119]. The Turkish-Cypriot quarter of Limassol is undergoing urban regeneration, and there are renovation projects that would support Roma housing.

Cases of housing discrimination

- [120]. There is no special organisation involved in processing complaints of housing discrimination or other violations of the housing rights of Roma. These issues fall within the wider mandate of the Equality Body.

ANNEX 1 – Statistical data and tables

Please complete the table below (covering period 2000-2009)

	2000-2009
Number of complaints regarding ethnic discrimination received by complaints authorities (such as Ombudsperson's offices and national equality bodies)	One (concerning discrimination in education)
Number of instances where ethnic discrimination was established by complaints authorities (such as Ombudsperson's offices and national equality bodies)	There were two reports by the Ombudsman, following self-initiated investigations where discrimination in housing was established. This complaint is still pending.
Follow-up activities of complaints authorities (such as Ombudsperson's offices and national equality bodies), once discrimination was established (please disaggregate according to type of follow-up activity: settlement, warning issued, opinion issued, sanction issued, etc.)	None
Number of sanctions and/or compensation payment in ethnic discrimination cases (please disaggregate between court, equality body, other authorities or tribunals, etc.) regarding access to housing (if possible, disaggregated by gender and age)	No sanctions
Range of sanctions and/or compensation in your country (please disaggregate according to type of sanction/compensation)	The law provides for small fines by the national equality body and for fines and compensation from the courts

ANNEX 2 – Court, specialised body or tribunal decisions

There have been no such decisions.

ANNEX 3 – Interviews

Questionnaire: Interviewing authorities

Please introduce yourself stating your name and organisation.

Explain the purpose of the interview (briefly describing the study) and ask permission for recording it and/or taking notes.

Present the consent form and explain the reason for completing it.

Question 1:

What would you consider as the most important features of Roma/Traveller housing and accommodation situation in your country?

Possible probing questions:

1.a. What would you say are the most pressing issues currently facing Roma/Travellers in the field of housing and accommodation?

1.b. What are the factors contributing to these pressing issues?

1.c. Are there any regional differences? Please elaborate.

1.d. Regarding particular groups of Roma/Travellers, like women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities, have you identified any particular issues that specifically affect them and are linked to housing?

Question 2:

Could you describe briefly your institution's work on Roma/Traveller housing and accommodation issues?

Possible probing questions:

2.a. What are the key priorities of your institution regarding housing and accommodation issues of Roma/Travellers?

2.b. Would you say that the financial and human resources of your institution are adequate to address housing and accommodation issues of Roma/Travellers effectively?

Question 3:

Are there any national, regional or local housing and accommodation policies related to Roma/Traveller housing? What would you say is their actual impact on the situation?

Possible probing questions:

- 3.a. Could you give examples of positive impact?
- 3.b. Could you give examples of negative impact?
- 3.c. Are you aware of any specific impact that these policies might have on particular Roma/Traveller groups, such as women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities?
- 3.d. Has your institution or any other body performed an impact assessment of such policies? What were the results and where could we find the documents?

Question 4:

Could you identify any examples of ‘good practice’ related to Roma/Traveller housing?

As an illustration, good practices might be:

- projects combating spatial segregation;
- urban regeneration or renovation projects improving Roma/Traveller housing;
- other innovative projects improving Roma/Traveller housing;
- codes of conduct for housing authorities, banks providing housing loans or others involved in Roma/Traveller housing;
- specific measures to facilitate access to social housing;
- projects improving neighbourhood relationships between Roma and Traveller communities and other communities;
- major awareness-raising events or training activities.

Possible probing questions for ‘good practice’ mentioned, as appropriate:

- 4.a. How did this improve equality of opportunity for Roma/Traveller housing?
- 4.b. Did it help ‘mainstream’ Roma/Traveller issues in general housing policies and how?
- 4.c. How did this take into account the concerns of different Roma/Traveller groups, for example women or children or the elderly or the disabled?
- 4.d. Did civil society organisations actively participate in this? How?
- 4.e. Did Roma/Travellers actively participate in this? How?

4.f. Are you aware of any positive feedback from Roma/Travellers for this?

Question 5:

Has your organisation been involved in any cases of housing discrimination or other violations of the housing rights of Roma/Travellers?

Possible probing questions:

5.a. Could you tell us more about any action taken by your organisation in any of these cases?

5.b. Do you know if any Romani/Traveller group, like women, children, the elderly or the disabled were particularly affected?

Final comment:

Thank you for taking part in our research!

2.2.1. Questionnaire: Interviewing civil society representatives

Question 1:

What would you consider the most important features of the Roma/Traveller housing and accommodation situation in your country?

Possible probing questions:

1.a. What would you say are the most pressing issues currently facing Roma/Travellers in the field of housing and accommodation?

1.b. What are the factors contributing to these pressing issues?

1.c. Are there any regional differences? Please elaborate.

1.d. Regarding particular groups of Roma/Travellers, like women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities, have you identified any particular issues that specifically affect them and are linked to housing?

Question 2:

Could you describe briefly your organisation's work on Roma/Traveller housing and accommodation issues?

Question 3:

Are there any national, regional or local housing and accommodation policies related to Roma/Traveller housing? What would you say is their actual impact on the situation?

Possible probing questions:

3.a. Could you give examples of positive impact?

- 3.b. Could you give examples of negative impact?
- 3.c. Are you aware of any specific impact that these policies might have on particular Roma/Traveller groups, such as women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities?
- 3.d. Do you think that state institutions adequately prioritise policies on housing and accommodation issues of Roma/Travellers?
- 3.e. Do you think that the implementation of state policies on housing and accommodation issues of Roma/Travellers is sufficiently supported in terms of human and financial resources?
- 3.f. Has your organisation performed an impact assessment of such policies? What were the results and where could we find the documents?

Question 4:

Could you identify any examples of ‘good practice’ related to Roma/Traveller housing?

As an illustration, good practices might be:

- projects combating spatial segregation;
- urban regeneration or renovation projects in support of Roma/Traveller housing;
- other innovative projects improving Roma/Traveller housing;
- codes of conduct for housing authorities, banks providing housing loans or others involved in Roma/Traveller housing;
- specific measures to facilitate access to social housing;
- projects improving neighbourhood relationships between Roma and Traveller communities and other communities;
- major awareness-raising events or training activities.

Possible probing questions for ‘good practice’ mentioned, as appropriate:

- 4.a. How did this improve equality of opportunity for Roma/Traveller housing?
- 4.b. Did it help mainstream Roma/Traveller issues in general housing policies and how?
- 4.c. How did this take into account the concerns of different Roma/Traveller groups, for example women or children or the elderly or the disabled?
- 4.d. Did your or other civil society organisations actively participate in this? How?
- 4.e. Did Roma/Travellers actively participate in this? How?
- 4.f. Are you aware of any positive feedback from Roma/Travellers for this?

Question 5:

Has your organisation been involved in any cases of housing discrimination or other violations of the housing rights of Roma/Travellers?

Possible probing questions:

5.a. Could you tell us more about any action taken by your organisation in any of these cases?

5.b. Are you aware of any actions taken by the relevant authorities in these cases?

5.c. Do you know if any Romani/Traveller group, like women, children, the elderly or the disabled were particularly affected?

Final comment:

Thank you for taking part in our research!

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