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Implementation of the European Social Charter by Greece: Forced evictions of Roma

Written question No 502 to the Committee of Ministers
presented by Mr Cilevičs

One year ago, replying to my questions, the Committee of Ministers reassured the Assembly that Greek authorities were working on finding a permanent solution to the housing problems of the Roma in Patras. They also stated that the information on how Greece complied with its obligations under Article 16 of the European Social Charter was to be evaluated by the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR). The Assembly was informed that, on the basis of the result of that evaluation, the Committee of Ministers was to decide on the follow-up.

However, in July 2006 the ECSR concluded that the situation in Greece has not been brought into conformity with Article 16 as there is still a shortage of adequate housing for Roma, who still do not have sufficient legal protection. Citing the Commissioner for Human Rights March 2006 follow up report on Greece, as well as Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM) and Amnesty International reports, the ECSR mentioned that Roma continue to be evicted from settlements without being offered alternative housing.

Recently, GHM information provided to competent UN and Council of Europe agencies and international NGOs indicates that relocation plans for Patras Roma failed because of strong local community reactions. Instead, between 27 July and 25 August 2006, the Municipality of Patras demolished the homes of Roma families in the Makrigianni district who were absent for seasonal work, served the remaining families with notices of emergency police measures of eviction, and without waiting for their confirmation by a prosecutor proceeded to forced evictions. Furthermore, in June 2006, all Roma families of the Riganokampos district were referred to a criminal trial for illegal squatting on state land, while in August 2006 they were told to leave. All that despite the protocols of eviction for both Roma communities had been overturned as abusive in October 2005 by magistrates. In June 2006, the Chief Appeals Prosecutor of Patras announced an obviously intimidating criminal investigation of the magistrates who issued these rulings and of GHM who offered legal support to the Roma. GHM also provided information on several evictions elsewhere in Greece and quoted official Hellenic Police statistics indicating that its officers were involved in 60 eviction procedures in 2005 and in another 121 in 2004.

Mr Cilevičs,

To ask the Committee of Ministers,

What urgent action does the Committee of Ministers intend to take on Greece's continuing non-compliance with Article 16, the widespread evictions which violate fundamental human rights and the mounting antigypsyism accompanying these evictions?

What mechanisms of effective supervision of the implementation by states of Social Charter rulings does the Committee of Ministers intend to introduce?

*Signed*¹:

CILEVIČS, Boriss, Latvia, SOC

¹ SOC: Socialist Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democratic Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left
NR: not registered in a group