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Responses to Information Requests

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16 January 2018

HUN106041.E

Hungary: Community support organizations that assist Roma in Miskolc in accessing social services, including healthcare, education, housing, employment assistance and social protection programs (2016-December 2017)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Organizations that Assist Roma in Miskolc in Accessing Social Services

Information on community support organizations that assist Roma in Miskolc in accessing social services was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to information provided to the Research Directorate by the Hungarian Embassy in Ottawa, the State Secretariat for Social Affairs and Social Inclusion of the Ministry of Human Capacities of Hungary stated that, "[i]n general terms, national human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) provide assistance to Roma and non-Roma citizens in case they experience a breach of their rights" (Hungary 8 Jan. 2018). The same source stated, without providing further details, that

family and children service centres are available in the entire territory of the country, and provide specialized individual and group services and programs tailored to the needs of the children, including legal clinics and psychological counselling... (Hungary 8 Jan. 2018)

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Hungarian Anti-Poverty Network (HAPN) [Magyar Szegénységellenes Hálózat], whose "goal is to represent people living in poverty and social exclusion" (HAPN 2015), stated that the family and children service centres are institutions that are able to provide "constant help," although these centres are "seriously overburdened and state-led" (HAPN 12 Jan. 2018). According to the same source, "the most personal, and efficient, help for Roma people comes from NGOs, but most of them work on [a] project basis and sometimes have problems with finances" (HAPN 12 Jan. 2018).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the Legal Officer of the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU) [Társaság a Szabadságjogokért, TASZ], a Hungarian human rights NGO founded in 1994 (HCLU n.d.a), stated that "there are just a few organizations that support the Roma community members in Miskolc" and they "work with low capacity" (HCLU 5 Jan. 2018). The same source indicated that because NGOs in Miskolc are "weak," "Roma people face obstacles in soliciting assistance, especially legal assistance" (HCLU 5 Jan. 2018). However, in contrast, the State Secretariat for Social Affairs and Social Inclusion of the Ministry of Human Capacities of Hungary stated that "[t]here are no obstacles to the Roma population's access to support services in Miskolc and its vicinity" (Hungary 8 Jan. 2018). Without providing further details, the same source further stated that "legal remedies are in place" and that "those concerned have recourse to them by themselves or with the assistance of NGOs, and [that] the authorities act according to the law" (Hungary 8 Jan. 2018).

Without providing further details, the HAPN Representative stated that key NGOs that raise awareness about poverty issues may face pushback from politicians in Miskolc (HAPN 12 Jan. 2018). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.1. Advocacy Organizations

1.1.1 Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (HCLU)

According to the Legal Officer of HCLU, HCLU is based in Budapest, but has connections with NGOs in Miskolc (HCLU 5 Jan. 2018). HCLU's website indicates that, through its Roma Program, HCLU carries out strategic litigation and legal advocacy activities to address institutional discrimination (HCLU n.d.b). Without providing details, the Legal Officer of HCLU stated that HCLU has an ongoing *actio popularis* anti-discrimination lawsuit, representing the interests of the Roma population in Miskolc (HCLU 5 Jan. 2018). Sources report that HCLU interceded in a housing dispute in Miskolc that started in 2014 in which discrimination against Roma was alleged (Housing Rights Watch 8 Dec. 2016; Hungary 12 June 2015, para. 1). For further information on the housing situation in Miskolc, see Response to Information Request HUN105586 of 11 August 2016. For further information on support provided to those evicted in Miskolc, see Response to Information Request HUN105743 of 11 May 2017.

According to its website, HCLU "provides free legal aid assistance in more than 2000 [human rights] cases per year" (HCLU n.d.a). The Legal Officer of HCLU indicated, without providing further details, that HCLU provides legal aid to the Roma population in Miskolc, by helping them with filing complaints against discrimination to the Equal Treatment Authority [Egyenlő Bánásmód Hatóság] (HCLU 5 Jan. 2018). For further information on the Equal Treatment Authority, see Response to Information Request HUN105743 of 11 May 2017.

1.1.2 National Ethnic and Minority Protection Institute (NEKI)

Sources report that the National Ethnic and Minority Protection Institute (NEKI) [Nemzeti és Etnikai Kisebbségi Jogvédő Iroda] interceded on behalf of Roma during the Miskolc housing dispute that started in 2014 (Housing Rights Watch 8 Dec. 2016; Cronkite News 11 July 2016; Amnesty International 18 May 2015). Sources indicate that the HCLU and the NEKI filed a lawsuit against the municipality of Miskolc, the mayor's office and the municipality police for discriminatory measures against Roma in Miskolc (HCLU 17 Mar. 2017; Hungary 12 June 2015, para. 1). Further information, including the status of the lawsuit and services offered by NEKI, could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.1.3 European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC)

According to its website, the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) is a Budapest-based "Roma-led international public interest law organisation working to combat anti-Romani racism and human rights abuse of Roma through strategic litigation, research and policy development, advocacy and human rights education" (ERRC n.d). Sources report that the ERRC interceded on behalf of Roma during the Miskolc housing dispute that started in 2014 (Housing Rights Watch 8 Dec. 2016; Hungary 15 June 2015, para. 1).

1.2 Community Support Organizations in Miskolc

When asked about community support organizations in Miskolc, the Legal Officer of HCLU identified the organizations described in the following sections (HCLU 5 Jan. 2018):

1.2.1 Roma Minority Self-Government Miskolc

HCLU indicated that the Roma Minority Self-Government Miskolc [Miskolc Megyei Jogú Város Roma Nemzetiségi Önkormányzata] is the "best-known body in Miskolc" (HCLU 5 Jan. 2018). According to HCLU, the Roma Minority Self-Government Miskolc is not an NGO, but supports the Roma population in Miskolc, for example, by filling out forms and giving advice, and provides assistance, including with administrative procedures and with job-searching (HCLU 5 Jan. 2018). Further

information on services offered by the Roma Minority Self-Government Miskolc could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.2.2 Regina Foundation Miskolc [Regina Alapítvány Miskolc]

According to sources, Regina Foundation Miskolc [Regina Alapítvány Miskolc] works with Roma women in and around Miskolc (Regina Foundation Miskolc 25 June 2016; HAPN 9 Jan. 2018), including in Halmaj (Regina Foundation Miskolc 25 June 2016). According to HCLU's Legal Officer, Regina Foundation Miskolc "deals with community organizing, educational activities for Roma children, trainings for adults, particularly Romani women, [and] organizing sensitizing campaigns" (HCLU 5 Jan. 2018). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.2.3 One For All, All For One Association [Egy mindenkiért, mindenki egyért Egyesület]

According to HCLU's Legal Officer, the One For All, All For One Association [Egy mindenkiért, mindenki egyért Egyesület] deals with "community organizing, summer camps for Roma children, support in administrative procedures, trainings/education for adults, [and] job searching" (HCLU 5 Jan. 2018). The same source added that, the association also gives "advice and basic help in discrimination cases" (HCLU 5 Jan. 2018). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.2.4 Roma Civil Right Movement Miskolc

According to HCLU's Legal Officer, the Roma Civil Right Movement Miskolc provides legal aid services to Roma in Miskolc, but its capacity is "low" (HCLU 5 Jan. 2018). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.2.5 Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta

According to the website of the Order of Malta, a "lay religious order of the Catholic Church since 1113" (Order of Malta n.d.a), the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta [Magyar Máltai Szeretetszolgálat] is a "major welfare organisation" in Hungary and a "trusted partner of Hungarian institutions" with "350 branches, 130 local volunteer groups, 220 institutes, and 2,200 employees" (Order of Malta 21 Dec. 2017).

According to a statement by the Hungarian government, presented during a working session of a meeting of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in September 2016, "the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta - in cooperation with the Municipality of Miskolc - established a social housing agency in Miskolc" (Hungary 28 Sept. 2016). According to the same source, "[t]his agency helps to facilitate the housing situation of those families whose houses were unbuilt" (Hungary 28 Sept. 2016). According to the State Secretariat for Social Affairs and Social Inclusion of the Ministry of Human Capacities of Hungary, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta carries out a programme in close cooperation with the local city council of Miskolc in Lyukóvölgy (Lyukó Valley), in the Avas residential district, and in the Numbered Streets area called "Presence" [Jelenlét] (Hungary 8 Jan. 2018). According to the same source, the programme, whose budget is provided by the Municipality of Miskolc, is based on "the day-to-day presence of social workers of the charity service on site, enabling them to draw up the social diagnose and offer assistance tailored to individual needs" (Hungary 8 Jan. 2018).

Similarly, the HCLU's Legal Officer stated that the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, which is based in the Numbered Streets [Számozott utcák] area in Miskolc, provides support to Roma in the area of housing (HCLU 5 Jan. 2018). According to the same source, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta has a contract with the Miskolc municipality and receives financial support from it (HCLU 5 Jan. 2018).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Oral sources: Amnesty International; Chance for Children Foundation; European Roma Grassroots Organization Network; European Roma Information Office; European Roma Rights Centre; Hungarian Association of NGOs for Development and Humanitarian Aid; Hungarian Helsinki Committee; Hungarian human rights advocate and attorney-at-law; Hungarian Maltese Charity Service; Hungary – Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights; Lengyel Allen & Overy Ügyvédi Iroda; Miskolc – The Mayor's Office; National Ethnic and Minority Protection Institute; Open Society Foundations Roma Initiatives Office; OSCE – Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; Rákóczi Ferenc Megyei és Városi Könyvtár; Roma Activist in Miskolc; Roma Minority Government of Miskolc; Romedia Foundation; Rotary Club Miskolc; UN – Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, Special Rapporteur on minority issues; Researchers in labour law and social law at the University of Miskolc.

Internet sites, including: Agencia EFE; Al Jazeera; Autonomia Foundation; BBC; Borsod Online; Budapest Beacon; Daily News Hungary; De Volkskrant; Deutsche Welle; ecoi.net; EU – Equinet Secretariat, European Asylum Support Office Country of Origin Portal; European Roma Grassroots Organization Network; European Roma Information Office; *The Globe and Mail*; *The Guardian*; Foreign Policy; Human Rights Watch; Hungarian Anti-Poverty Network; Hungarian Association of NGOs for Development and Humanitarian Aid; Hungarian Free Press; Hungarian Helsinki Committee; Hungarian Maltese Charity Service; Hungary – Embassy in Ottawa, Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights; Lengyel Allen & Overy Ügyvédi Iroda; IRIN News; Minority Rights Group International; Miskolc – The Mayor's Office; *The New York Times*; NOS Journaal; Open Society Foundations Roma Initiatives Office; Radio France internationale; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty; Rákóczi Ferenc Megyei és Városi Könyvtár; Reuters; Romedia Foundation; Rotary Club Miskolc; UN – OHCHR; US – Department of State.

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