

## **Romani CRISS**

*Bucharest, September 23, 2011*

**To:** Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland  
Jyrki Katainen, Prime Minister  
Erkki Tuomioja, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Ulla Vaisto, HE the Ambassador of Finland to Romania

### **OPEN LETTER**

Romani CRISS notes with concern the information presented by the media which concludes that Romanian Roma in Finland are the reason for the decision of the Government of Finland to refuse the accession of Romania to the Schengen.

In a public statement on a nation-wide TV station given yesterday<sup>1</sup>, the Romanian President Traian Basescu explained the rejection for the accession to the Schengen zone as follows: *„Listen to me a little, because without explanations ... Holland. We knew there was a position from Holland, we also knew the motivation. All due attention was paid to Holland, including to the Minister of Justice, because their problem was regarding the Mechanism for Cooperation and Verification, he went to the Dutch Parliament not even two weeks ago, ten days. He talked to the MPs, he presented them the situation in a real manner, the way it is. We did not succeed to convince them, even though Predoiu left a good impression in the Dutch Parliament, I have all the information regarding this situation. Diplomacy has its limits. For example, you cannot say to the Finnish << it is not true, gypsies were not in downtown Helsinki and did not beg>>.”*

Romani CRISS is concerned by the fact that Roma are blamed for the decision of the Finnish Government and that the Romanian state is easily evading responsibility by using this kind of prejudice undertaking.

We kindly present you with the request to communicate your official position on this matter, and more concretely to express if the issue of the Romanian Roma begging in Finland has played a role in the decision of the Finnish Government as to the accession of Romania to the Schengen zone.

We kindly stress that in many European countries, acts of violence and extremism against Roma have multiplied: In Hungary, extreme-right forces protested in Roma neighborhoods such as Gyöngyöspata, forcing Roma to flee

---

<sup>1</sup> TV Show “The lass word (Ultimul cuvânt)”, broadcasted on September 22, 2011, at 21.00, on B1 TV station, moderated by Mr. Ion Cristoiu.

their homes; in the Czech Republic and Hungary racially-motivated crimes, including murder, do occur against Roma; in Romania, many local communities separate Roma from the rest of the society by building walls (Baia Mare, Sfantu Gheroghe etc) or by moving the Roma at the outskirts of the localities (Zalau, Piatra Neamt, Cluj-Napoca etc), and the fundamental human rights of the Roma continue to be violated as international institutions show in their reports.

In this context, we would kindly appreciate your point of view on the matter.

Please accept the expression of my most distinguished salutations.

Sincerely,  
Margareta Matache

Executive Director  
Romani CRISS

---

Romani CRISS – Roma Center for Social Intervention and Studies is a Non-governmental organization which fights for the protection and respect of human rights in general and of the Roma minority, in particular. In 2008, Romani CRISS was accorded ECOSOC Consultative status with the United Nations, being the first Roma organization from Romania and the fifth organization from Romania to receive such status. Since its inception in 1993, Romani CRISS has developed long-term relations in Roma communities and with authorities in all of Romania, with intergovernmental organizations, with partners of the civil society from Romania and abroad, as well as with donors, relations maintained through a close communication, institutional transparency and advocacy. Romani CRISS combines local civic militancy with influencing and monitoring public policies addressing Roma, from a human rights and minority rights perspective.