



International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

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Summary record of the 2756th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 19 August 2019, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Amir
later: Mr. Murillo Martínez (Vice-Chair)
later: Mr. Amir

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention *(continued)*

Combined twelfth and thirteenth periodic reports of Czechia (continued)
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1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Czechia took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Baršová** (Czechia), responding to the Committee’s questions on Roma issues, said that the decision to move the Agency for Social Inclusion from the Office of the Government to the Ministry of Regional Development was not surprising, given that the Agency’s place had been under discussion for many years. She recalled that, in addition to its responsibilities for regional development and housing, the Ministry of Regional Development served as the coordinating body for the allocation of European funds for the whole public administration and it helped municipalities to access those funds, which were important for financing social cohesion plans. She did not anticipate that the Agency’s situation would deteriorate as a result of the decision.

3. The Permanent Commission on Family Issues, Equal Opportunities and National Minorities of the lower chamber of Parliament, the Chamber of Deputies, had held a public consultation on unlawful sterilization on 25 June 2019, following which it had adopted a resolution recommending the Minister of Health to deal with the issue and to address compensation for victims. Sterilized women were represented and participated in the activities of the unlawful sterilization working party that had been established by the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs in 2016.

4. Regarding the concerns that had been raised about access to housing benefits, ostensibly because local authorities had been empowered to restrict such access, she recalled that Czechia provided two types of housing benefit, one of which was aimed at people in material need. Restrictions of that benefit could be applied on a regional basis but did not target individuals; rather, they were designed to prevent excessive concentrations of persons in material need. A group of senators had challenged the legality of the measures before the Constitutional Court and it was hoped that a judgment would be rendered within the coming months.

5. Although the Government did not implement large-scale affirmative action in the sphere of employment, it did carry out many programmes and projects intended for Roma people in regional and local contexts. In that regard it was important to draw a distinction between, on the one hand, upholding minority rights in areas such as culture and language, and on the other, taking affirmative action to address social issues such as housing and employment.

6. **Ms. Modlitbová** (Czechia) said that the steep increase in the number of “socially excluded localities” recorded between 2006 and 2015 reflected the different methodologies of the surveys conducted in those years. In particular, the 2015 survey had used a much broader characterization of the term “social excluded locality”. Given that the redefined term might refer to houses, streets or whole neighbourhoods, the Agency for Social Inclusion had begun to prepare a methodology for the stratification of socially excluded localities, so as to help the general public and professionals to better understand their different characteristics and the issues affecting them. Furthermore, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs had certified a new tool for the identification of residential segregation, devised by experts from the Faculty of Science of Charles University. Using a range of data on the social exclusion, housing status and educational background of the residents of a given locality, the tool developed a comprehensive map which could then be used to help municipalities decide where to build new social housing. The tool had already been piloted in 10 municipalities and its application was due to be expanded in 2020. Preventing the emergence of new socially excluded localities formed part of the Government’s Social Inclusion Strategy, a new version of which was in preparation and due to be submitted for approval in autumn 2019.

7. **Ms. Štěpánková** (Czechia) said that the Czech economy had performed well during the previous four years and that the labour market was strong. Indeed, Czechia had the lowest unemployment rate of all States members of the European Union, which in turn presented the challenge of meeting the demand for labour. Generally speaking, all persons who were willing and able to work did so; the number of vacancies far outstripped the number of jobseekers, about 200,000 of whom were registered with the Labour Office. About one quarter of unemployed persons were considered long-term unemployed; a group that the Government targeted through active labour market policies. Employment statistics drew on objective personal data such as age, education level and health status, but not ethnicity, so that it was not possible to give precise figures on the number of Roma who were long-term unemployed. However, the Government believed that a significant proportion were indeed Roma and that many of those individuals suffered disabilities. In the previous 18 months, the Government had succeeded in reducing the number of long-term unemployed by more than one third. The difference between the two main instruments deployed for that purpose, namely community service and “socially purposeful jobs”, was that the former was performed in public spaces under the direction of municipal or church authorities and involved such tasks as cleaning, gardening or clearing snow. In 2018, more than 16,000 people had participated in community service, which was designed to help individuals maintain a daily routine during periods of unemployment. Conversely, socially purposeful jobs closely resembled traditional employment. Any employer might choose to participate in that initiative, which had benefited more than 12,000 people in 2018. Active labour market policy measures were funded 50 per cent from the State budget and 50 per cent from the European Social Fund.

8. In Czechia all forms of work, including domestic work, were regulated by the Labour Code. Most domestic work in the country was carried out by self-employed workers whose services were offered through different agencies, while the inviolability of the home meant that it was practically impossible for the Labour Inspectorate to monitor such employment. The Government therefore did not envisage the ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) in the near future.

9. Regarding the pension entitlements of refugees, the general requirement for a person to receive a retirement pension was that he or she should have accrued 35 years of insurance contributions. However, there were alternatives to that system; for example, a person with 15 years of contributions could also access an old-age pension, albeit not until 5 years after the usual retirement age. Most refugees who found work in Czechia were able to fulfil the qualifying conditions.

10. **Ms. Grabmüllerová** (Czechia) said that the Ministry of Regional Development had prepared an English-language brochure on housing in the Czech Republic, which was available on its website. Current housing policy was based on the principles of solidarity and equality and took vulnerable groups and people who were unable to acquire housing into account. All people, including foreigners, had the same right to rent an apartment. Relations between landlords and tenants were of a contractual nature and were strictly regulated by the Civil Code, with tenants receiving a high level of protection. In reality, forced eviction was only possible when a person was using a property without a legal basis for doing so. Such evictions were in keeping with a judgment of the European Court of Human Rights that had concluded that it was legitimate to recover property from persons who had occupied it unlawfully. Moreover, landlords could not evict unlawful occupants directly, but had to apply to the courts for an eviction order.

11. The aforementioned brochure on housing policy provided an overview of the most important State housing support programmes. Municipalities were legally obliged to meet the housing needs of citizens and the Government helped them to discharge that obligation through several subsidy programmes aimed at specific target groups. All subsidized newly constructed rental apartments were required to meet quality standards and technical regulations and their rents had to be below the market. The level of housing support provided by the State had remained stable in recent years at about 20 billion Czech koruny (CZK) per year – equivalent to almost 1 billion dollars, or almost 0.5 per cent of Czech GDP. European funds were also used to subsidize social housing.

12. **Ms. Konopásková** (Czechia), speaking in relation to the sexual and reproductive health of Roma women and undocumented migrant women, said that health care was available equally to all participants in the public health insurance system, regardless of race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation or other considerations. By law, health-care service providers were obliged to respect patients' rights and were not entitled to refuse to provide childbirth or emergency care for patients who were not participants in the public health insurance system.

13. In 2018, a nationwide project, financed by the European Social Fund, was developed with a view to increasing access to health care for homeless persons and persons at risk of homelessness, primarily those living in socially excluded localities near large cities, where a high percentage of Roma lived. Under the project, a field health-care service would provide the target group of patients with basic medical and nursing care and treatment for chronic or acute injuries, while field social services would address any social problems they faced. The project also had a preventive component, whereby information would be provided about infectious diseases, the risks associated with the use of addictive substances, and the location of health and social services. Moreover, it was envisaged that a national network of 14 regional centres for health promotion would be created, employing 28 health promotion mediators to assist in the provision of health services for persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The centres would be charged with delivering 66 newly created health support programmes, which could be implemented through individual interventions or by organizing healthy lifestyle courses and health days in public buildings.

14. For several years, the Ministry of Health had provided grants to support the project "Health Promotion in Excluded Communities – Reducing Inequalities in Health". In that context, in 2017 the Ministry had carried out 62 interventions in socially excluded localities, benefiting over 1,300 children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The project's goals included strengthening the prevention of infectious and sexually transmitted diseases, enhancing reproductive health and developing links with key partners. The Ministry was currently engaged in discussions on the resolution adopted by the Chamber of Deputies on the subject of unlawful sterilization.

15. **Ms. Konopásková** (Czechia) said that the Government was taking steps to hire health care workers of Roma origin to ensure a more sensitive approach to Roma patients. However, health-care personnel in general also needed to be educated on that topic. For that reason, physicians were obliged to take a basic course in legislation, ethics and communication to assist them in their work with national minorities and foreigners. Non-medical personnel were also required to attend a basic module on how to ensure that socially excluded persons had access to health-care services. In addition, lifelong learning courses were available which catered specifically to the provision of care for foreigners and minorities. The role of a health promotion mediator would be established in the near future to assist persons at risk of social exclusion or poverty. The mediator would be required to have an in-depth knowledge of the target communities.

16. **Mr. Faltýn** (Czechia) said that, following the case of *D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic*, in which the European Court of Human Rights had judged that Czechia had discriminated against 18 Roma pupils in the education system, an action plan had been implemented to promote a more inclusive education system. Regulatory and legislative amendments had been introduced to that end. For example, under amendments to the Schools Act in 2016, children with health or social disadvantages could no longer be placed in classes with children who had special educational needs. Compensation had been paid to the 18 students who had filed the above-mentioned court case. More generally, there had been an overhaul of the approach to the education of Roma children. Since 2016, State-funded support measures were being provided to socially disadvantaged children. For instance, more than 30,000 such children had undergone a mandatory re-diagnosis of their educational needs since 2018 by independent school counselling services. The budget for support measures had increased by 80 million euros in 2019. Tutoring services were another form of support offered to children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Those measures could only be provided with the consent of the pupil or his or her legal guardian. Support measures were regularly evaluated to ensure their continued

effectiveness. In addition, pupils or their legal guardians could request a change in support measure if necessary.

17. Subsidy programmes developed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports were specifically targeted at the Roma population. Six such programmes were currently being implemented. The first offered grants to socially disadvantaged Roma children in secondary schools and higher vocational institutes and had been allocated a budget of 260,000 euros for 2019. The second offered grants to assist Roma children in their preparation for preschool, education at elementary school, transition to secondary school and leisure activities. In 2019, over 450,000 euros had been earmarked for that programme. The third programme provided grants to socially disadvantaged pupils for school meals with an allocated budget of 1.1 million euros in 2019. The fourth was a development programme for school counselling facilities, which aimed to enhance support measures offered to ethnically diverse individual learners, with an annual budget of roughly 175,000 euros. The fifth was a development programme to support the capacity building of school counselling facilities, for which almost 4.5 million euros had been earmarked in 2018. The sixth programme focused on promoting the inclusion and social integration of children with special educational needs and benefited from European Structural Funds, bringing the annual budget to 65.5 million euros in 2018.

18. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports did not collect data disaggregated by ethnicity although estimates were provided by school headmasters. The estimates between 2018 and 2019 indicated that there had been a slight improvement in the number of Roma children attending school, subject to marked regional differences. Roma pupils were estimated to account for 3.7 per cent of all basic school pupils in 2019. The highest proportion of Roma students was to be found in the Ústí region (11.8 per cent) and the lowest in Prague (1 per cent). Special focus was placed on promoting compulsory school attendance in the Ústí region. The number of Roma children being taught under the special curriculum for pupils with mild mental disabilities had fallen from over 2,500 students in 2016 to just over 950 in 2018. That special curriculum would be completely phased out by September 2020. The number of Roma children taught under the mainstream curriculum had more than doubled between 2016 and 2018. None of the Government statistics could corroborate the claims that there had been a decrease in the number of Roma children attending secondary school.

19. Following the case of two Roma students in Ostrava who had been refused enrolment in a primary school in 2014, the Ombudsman had agreed that the headmaster of the school in question had discriminated against the two students. Since that incident, the school had amended its admission criteria and was following the recommendations of the Ombudsman. Since 2015, the Czech School Inspectorate had been employing representatives of Roma civil society organizations to carry out inspections of schools across all regions of Czechia.

20. Since 2016, preschool education was compulsory. The total participation of children in preschool had increased since then from 95 per cent to over 97 per cent. Support was also being offered to children who did not speak Czech. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports funded Czech language courses for foreign students, which provided 70 hours of teaching per child. All children who required additional classes were reimbursed. In 2019, discussions were under way as to whether to increase the teaching hours to 200 per child. A reference framework for teaching Czech as a foreign language was currently being prepared. Regional support centres had been established to integrate non-Czech speakers at school and the centres were maintained by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

21. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports had a number of priorities for the future, including: an annual increase in the budget to address the issue of the education of Roma children; targeting measures at preschools in socially excluded areas; modifying the mainstream curriculum to ensure it met the needs of socially disadvantaged pupils; implementing the Inclusive Education Action Plan 2018–2020; evaluating the effectiveness of programmes and supporting the professional development of teachers so that they are capable of working with socially disadvantaged children and children with special educational needs.

22. *Mr. Murillo Martínez (Vice-Chair) took the Chair.*

23. **Mr. Novotný** (Czechia) said that data on asylum seekers were published annually and that a document containing the most recent statistics had been made available to the Committee for their perusal. In 2018, over 1,700 applications for international protection had been submitted and 47 of those applicants had been granted asylum. The top five nationalities of asylum seekers in 2018 were Ukrainian, Georgian, Cuban, Armenian and Vietnamese. A document on foreign migrant statistics in Czechia had also been published and provided to the Committee. The document contained information on the different economic activities of foreigners, their education and their countries of origin.

24. The State Integration Programme had been operational since 2017 and proposed voluntary integration tools to international protection beneficiaries. One component was a Czech language course established by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. Beneficiaries were entitled to 400 hours of instruction over 12 months after which they were required to sit a certified examination. Beneficiaries were assisted in finding accommodation and could stay for up to 18 months in an integration asylum centre. Once they completed the programme, the Ministry of the Interior provided them with rental assistance by paying their first rent and deposit. Other components included an introduction into Czech society and the operations of State authorities, preparing for an independent life and seeking employment. Persons could also choose to create a 12-month individual integration plan which focused on the priority integration goals of housing, employment, education and the elimination of language barriers. Over 120 beneficiaries had entered the programme in 2018, which was a 20 per cent increase in comparison to 2017.

25. The Government was making efforts to combat prejudices and stereotypes against foreigners, such as through the HateFree campaign. The Refugee Facilities Administration (RFA) held regular events, during which the Czech public could meet and communicate with refugees to gain a better understanding of their lives. Other events that had been organized across different regions to facilitate communication between locals and foreigners included ceramic workshops, music contests and volunteer-led community clean-up efforts of public areas. The RFA held meetings with the mayors of different towns to gauge public opinion towards foreigners and was very active on the social media. It also cooperated with foreign partners, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Frontex and Germany, in order to learn best practices.

26. In accordance with the Dublin Regulation, Czechia only detained asylum seekers subject to a transfer procedure if they were at serious risk of absconding and alternative measures could not be applied effectively. It was not true that undocumented pregnant women were obliged to pay for their health care in all cases. If they were being held in detention or had been issued a return decision in line with the European Union (EU) Return Directive, their health care was paid for by the State.

27. Children born to Czech mothers were automatically granted citizenship, regardless of the nationality of the father, because the identity of the mother could not be in any doubt. If a child was born to a Czech father and a foreign national mother out of wedlock, it was necessary to establish paternity by means of a declaration to the administrative authorities. That did not pose an obstacle to citizenship.

28. A child could avoid statelessness and gain Czech citizenship under many circumstances. Under the Czech Citizenship Act, a child could obtain Czech citizenship on condition that: it was born in Czechia and would otherwise be stateless; at least one of its parents was a Czech citizen on the day of its birth; or the child was under three years of age and was found in the territory of Czechia.

29. While it was true that the Government had made a reservation to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, stateless persons were issued a travel identity card and a long-term humanitarian visa. Consequently, stateless persons enjoyed the full list of rights enshrined in that Convention, including with regard to access to the labour market and public health care.

30. There was no definition of statelessness in the national legislation. Nevertheless, under article 10 of the Constitution, international conventions were directly applicable and

took precedence over the national legislation. The absence of a definition did not prevent the granting of stateless status. That issue would be further discussed in 2019 at a roundtable discussion on planned amendments to the Asylum Act. Progress had nevertheless been made regarding the process for identifying and granting stateless status. The Ministry of the Interior and the police force had come to an agreement regarding a new procedure, which was based on the provisions of the Asylum Act and the Administrative Code. That issue would also be discussed at the roundtable on the revision of the Asylum Act. The outcome of those discussions would determine the introduction of new procedures for the granting of statelessness. Since 2017, there had been only 20 applications for stateless status, of which 10 had been approved. The remaining 10 had been unsuccessful because the applicants had not cooperated with the authorities.

31. **Mr. Potměšil** (Czechia) said that the National Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings was evaluated twice a year by a coordination group comprising representatives of government ministries, the public prosecutor, the police force and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). A report on trafficking in human beings was issued once a year. The actions set out in the National Strategy had been completed and a new four-year strategy was being developed.

32. The Support and Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings Programme had provided assistance to 24 persons in 2017, 17 persons in 2018 and 13 persons in 2019. In 2018, 15 persons had been prosecuted for human trafficking, 33 persons for procuring sex workers or organizing prostitution and 10 persons for the illegal employment of foreign nationals.

33. In order to receive assistance from the Support and Protection of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings Programme, victims had to cease all contact with their traffickers and be willing to engage with the programme. To date, no one had been denied access. Victims were guaranteed assistance for at least 60 days. That assistance included food, clothing, accommodation and social services, while their legal status as a resident would be prolonged if they cooperated with the police with regard to human trafficking. The services were paid for by the Government but provided by NGOs. Following the police reform of 2016, human trafficking was dealt with by the national unit for organized crime. More applications for the programme were lodged by the police force than by NGOs. While other measures were in place, the programme was the primary tool used to assist victims of human trafficking. Special protections were available for children, who were offered psychological assistance on an urgent basis.

34. While there had been 374 incidences of anti-Semitism, the majority of cases consisted of online attacks. In 2018, there had been two violent incidents and three cases of devaluation of property motivated by anti-Semitism. The anonymity of Internet posed a challenge for the legal system. Nevertheless, there had been successful prosecutions of open hate speech. Perpetrators of hate speech, including some politicians, had been sanctioned by the courts.

35. **Mr. Avtonomov** (Country Rapporteur) said that he would like to know whether there were any special measures of affirmative action in place in the country. Such measures might be needed to address deep-rooted discrimination.

36. The delegation should comment on the fact that the national legislation regulating employment did not prohibit discrimination on the ground of colour, which was stipulated in article 1 of the Convention. He wished to gain a greater understanding of how that issue was addressed in the country.

37. The delegation had explained that the Government did not plan to ratify the International Labour Organization Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). However, in paragraph 7 of the periodic report it was stated that consultation documents were being drafted with a view to the ratification of that Convention. He would therefore appreciate some clarification in that regard.

38. He remained concerned about the overturning by the Constitutional Court of the sentence of a hotel proprietor in Ostrava, who had banned Russians in 2014 in protest at the situation that had arisen in Crimea. He recalled that national origin was one of the

prohibited grounds of discrimination under the Convention. He suggested that the Government might undertake further reflection with regard to that case.

39. *Mr. Amir resumed the Chair.*

40. **Ms. Izsák-Ndiaye** said that affirmative action was part of any minority rights framework. It was justified in order to increase the representation of ethnic minorities in public institutions, as ethnic minority communities were more likely to trust institutions in which they were fairly represented.

41. Given that the Government had officially no means of gathering data on ethnicity, she wondered how the very precise data on ethnicity and education presented by the delegation had been collected.

42. **Ms. Baršová** (Czechia) said that, from a legal perspective, the Government took affirmative action. In addition, a range of measures were taken in favour of ethnic minorities with regard to language and culture, which were not considered to be affirmative action because they were permanent in nature.

43. She wished to point out that, under Czech law, citizenship and national origin were two very different concepts.

44. **Mr. Machačka** (Czechia) said that the inspection bodies in the country had examined the decision of the Constitutional Court, about which Mr. Avtonomov had expressed concern. That decision guided the work of the inspection bodies when it came to cases of discrimination. While the ground of national origin was not included in the Anti-Discrimination Act, it had been decided that discrimination for that reason could, and should, be prosecuted. The Constitutional Court had confirmed that decision. The inspection bodies would continue to investigate and sanction discrimination.

45. While a parliamentary commission had met to discuss the issue of sterilization, the delegation could not confirm that any changes would be taking place in the near future.

46. **Ms. Baršová** (Czechia) said that, as stated in paragraph 17 of the periodic report, data on ethnicity was gathered by means of population censuses and research surveys.

47. **Mr. Faltýn** (Czechia) said that the Ministry of Education collected data on ethnicity by means of informed estimates by school directors. Consequently, that data was not precise. Educational facilities that diagnosed learning difficulties collected much more accurate data, but the data only covered children who had been brought to such facilities by their parents.

48. **Ms. Štěpánková** (Czechia) said that, while colour was not mentioned in the Employment Act, the notion of racial discrimination was, but she could not confirm whether racial discrimination would also cover colour.

49. **Ms. McDougall** said that the unemployment figures provided by the delegation suggested that there was a large group of people in the State party who had given up looking for work all together. The State party should gather statistics on their ethnicities and backgrounds in order to better understand why they were not being included in employment schemes. If, as the Committee had been led to believe, the so-called socially excluded localities were predominantly for members of minority groups, such as the Roma, it was likely that residential segregation was holding people back. Moreover, it seemed that the socially excluded localities resembled ghettos, with the same attendant problems. The State party should take action, with reference to article 3 of the Convention, to develop a coherent social inclusion strategy.

50. The delegation claimed that the State party was implementing the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *D.H. and others v. the Czech Republic*. However, she wished to know whether the Government had taken into account the strong possibility that non-Roma parents would resist its planned reform of the education system. Unless the Government had a way to counter such resistance, it risked being barred from achieving progress.

51. **Mr. Diaby** said that he was still waiting to hear about the measures taken by the Government to combat xenophobia and racial discrimination in football and other sports.

52. **The Chair** said that he was keen to know how many of the thousands of job vacancies in the State party had been or would be given to Roma people. The Committee was concerned about potential discrimination in the workplace and in recruitment, and would appreciate confirmation that the Roma and other ethnic minorities were able to apply for and secure such jobs. Moreover, he would welcome information on the types of jobs being offered, the qualifications required to obtain them, and the degree of social mobility that such jobs allowed.

53. **Ms. Baršová** (Czechia) agreed that the socially excluded localities had some of the same problems as ghettos, insofar as they contained a concentration of people under economic pressure, which gave rise to higher crime rates and social problems. However, people were not forced to live there, and the localities did not contain only one ethnic group. Many such localities had either no Roma residents or very few.

54. The so-called socially excluded localities ranged in size from a few houses to whole neighbourhoods. The Government was endeavouring to gain a deeper understanding of the structural reasons behind their development in order to ensure, through its new housing programme, that people from different ethnic and economic backgrounds could live side by side.

55. **Ms. Modlitbová** (Czechia) said that she wished to reiterate that the divides between socially excluded localities and normal neighbourhoods were often drawn not along ethnic but rather along socioeconomic lines. In recent years, the proportion of the majority population living in socially excluded localities had risen. The Government was aware that symbolic exclusion was also of huge significance to marginalized populations, and was looking at ways of tackling that problem.

56. **Ms. Baršová** (Czechia) said that an awareness-raising campaign would be re-initiated to combat prejudices and resistance among the population to the concept of inclusive education. It would be more effective to persuade people than to merely impose change, as parents wished to be free to make their own choices regarding the education of their children.

57. **Mr. Faltýn** (Czechia) said that, while the Ministry of Education did not have the mandate or capacity to change parents' mindsets, it was acting to counter discrimination in three main ways.

58. Firstly, the Ministry had a policy of providing preschool places for all children, regardless of their ethnicity or background, and of training preschool teachers about respect for diversity. The policy allowed Roma and non-Roma children to grow up together from a very young age.

59. Secondly, the Ministry had launched a pilot project, with support from the European Social Fund, to introduce the post of "social pedagogue" to preschools and primary schools. The role, which fell somewhere between teaching and social work, ensured liaison between schools and families and thus involved parents in the education of their children. Once the results of the pilot programme had been assessed, the role of social pedagogue would be added to the Education Act in order to provide for such posts, or the equivalent competencies, in schools where they were needed.

60. Thirdly, the Government was collaborating with NGOs across the country to reach Roma parents who wished their children to be enrolled in high quality schools. The activities undertaken promoted integration and provided concrete and effective means of addressing prejudices in disadvantaged regions.

61. **Mr. Potměšil** (Czechia) said that, with respect to action taken to combat xenophobia and racism in football, measures were first implemented at club level, in line with the disciplinary procedures prescribed by the Czech Football Federation. Such measures included internal disciplinary action, fines, and the order for a match to be played with no spectators. If those proved insufficient, there was scope for the Ministry of the Interior to initiate administrative proceedings, which could lead, in turn, to the imposition of further fines, and, in extreme cases, to the closure of the club's stadium.

62. Legislative amendments were currently being prepared to impose harsher penalties on football hooligans. In addition to monitoring the problem, the Government was investing law enforcement officials with the power to act to prevent and ultimately eradicate manifestations of hatred, racism and violence, both in football and in sport in general.

63. **Ms. Štěpánková** (Czechia) said that she wished to clarify that, while there were currently 360,000 job vacancies nationwide, there were only 200,000 registered jobseekers, which meant that the Government had found it necessary to set up economic migration programmes to attract workers from abroad. Two thirds of the job vacancies available were for low-qualified and low-skilled workers.

64. The public employment service worked with jobseekers regardless of their ethnic or racial backgrounds. It was important to note that around one third of jobseekers were physically disabled. Another large proportion were only two or three years away from retirement, meaning that they were more likely to have health problems and disabilities, and were less able or willing to move to a different part of the country for work. Many of the long-term unemployed had a low level of education and training, which limited the jobs for which they could apply.

65. The Government had increased the subsidies it awarded to employers who could hire jobseekers from disadvantaged groups. Those efforts had recently attracted approximately 30,000 of the long-term unemployed back into the job market.

66. **Ms. Baršová** (Czechia) said that an annual report on the participation of the Roma in all areas of life, including the labour market, was published in order to assess progress and gather examples of good practices. Often, NGOs were well placed to successfully influence minority populations and involve them in integration projects. Success had been achieved in reaching the Roma through the implementation of small-scale projects suited to local conditions.

67. **Mr. Avtonomov** said that it would be useful for the delegation to familiarize itself with the Committee's general recommendation No. 32 on the meaning and scope of special measures in the Convention. Certain minorities, such as the Roma, required special measures to be implemented on a short-term basis so that social injustices could be redressed.

68. **Ms. Baršová** (Czechia) said that the delegation believed that progress had been made during the reporting period, for example in relation to the commemoration of the Roma holocaust and the education of Roma children. The Committee's comments and recommendations would be conveyed to the authorities in Czechia so that plans and policies could be adapted to meet the challenges that remained.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.