



THEME 2: Intercultural Dialogue

Teaching and learning aids

Bulgaria

Taking the law into their own hands in a Roma ghetto

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Since the 15th century Roma have lived in Bulgaria, coming originally from India and entering the country along with Turkish migrants via Iran. After liberation from the Ottoman Empire in 1878 up till the time after the World War II – i.e. within about 100 years – a large number of Turkish people (about 1 million) left. The Roma however stayed, and at 360,000 inhabitants they make up about 4.5% of the Bulgarian population.

Although the Roma lived economically and socially at the margin of Bulgarian society, people tried to live together in peace and harmony. After the fall of communism in Bulgaria economic circumstances for the Roma worsened and social tension has been increasing. First of all, it was difficult to enforce compulsory school attendance for Roma children, and recently there have been increased problems with security, which frightens the rest of the population.

The case described in the daily paper Trud (s. Tf 220, Materialien) is typical of the situation we find ourselves in. Unfortunately, our politicians also do not do enough to improve things. At election times they are more interested in their own rating than in solving problems. Many citizens of our country see a sign in this that, if things reach a point of crisis, they will be forgotten and will have to defend their rights themselves.

This also affects our system of values. Which values are involved?

- Economic solidarity in place of a decreed collective
- Education and social responsibility
- Law and justice as a monopoly of the state (the rule of law), i.e., there must be no taking the law into one's own hands.
- Justice in criminal trials, i.e. sentences passed must be fair and in accordance with laws.
- Protection of minorities, i.e. protection from discrimination because of membership to a particular social group.

How can the present problems be solved?

- Compulsory school attendance for Roma children must be enforced, i.e., the presence of Roma children must be registered/checked and any continued absenteeism punished.
- For the Roma jobs must be found under worthy working conditions.
- Police and law courts must work more efficiently so that the authority of the state is restored to protect all citizens.

Possible exercises/tasks for pupils:

(these depend on how much lesson time is available, the age and level of understanding of the pupils)

1. What do the neighbours in your part of town say about the Roma in general?
2. Is this what you will also hear generally in Bulgaria? What are these opinions based on ?
(perhaps provide proof from other newspapers or crime statistics)
3. Was the punishment that the two Roma received from the court for smashing the bar's windows fair?
4. What do you think of the way the restaurant owner Emil Georgiev behaved?
5. What socio-economic factors explain the way the conflicting parties behaved?
How could these be improved?
6. Where in Europe can similar problems be found?
7. Are attempts being made to solve the problems at official EU level?
(Look in the Internet)
8. Find suitable key words and expressions (also in foreign languages) which will help you to find out even more about this in the Internet.

Translated from the original German by: *Sandy Pirie*