

Brussels, 13 August 2013

Dear Mr Raši,

I remember with great pleasure my visit to Košice last January. I was impressed with the scope and ambition of a programme that promised to be the largest cultural project in the history of Slovakia. It is therefore with a certain degree of disappointment that I have read recent press reports concerning the erection of walls intended to segregate Roma people in the very city of Košice, a city that bears the title of European Capital of Culture for 2013.

I strongly believe that the construction of physical barriers represents a breach with the values on which our European Union is founded, notably respect for human dignity and human rights, including those of people belonging to minorities. Pursuant to article 3 of the Treaty on European Union and to article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Union has always been strongly committed to fighting all forms of racism and xenophobia. And the European Commission is always ready to take action, within the remit of its competences, to reaffirm the principle of non-discrimination.

An initiative intended to achieve, or merely resulting in, segregation of populations is also at odds with the very *raison d'être* of the title of "European Capital of Culture", which seeks to highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures and to promote deeper mutual understanding between European citizens.

"Košice, European Capital of Culture 2013" committed to involve minorities in its programming through its strategic line *Open Public Space* and to include specific events concentrating on Roma culture. This was one of the main elements that determined the selection of the city for the 2013 title and one that must be implemented as planned in the bid.

I therefore hereby convey to you my strong concerns and ask you, as a matter of urgency, to inform me about your plans to remedy this unfortunate situation.

Yours sincerely,



Cc.: H.E. Mr Ivan Korčok
Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the EU

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