



PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF ROMA AND TRAVELLERS



” *The Roma are
what we strive to be:
real Europeans*

Günter Grass,
Nobel prize in literature

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Fact sheet 1

What's in a name?

10 to 12 million Roma and Travellers in Europe

There are an estimated 10 to 12 million Roma and Travellers in Europe, within the meaning of the definition used at the Council of Europe,¹ living in almost all Council of Europe member states, and particularly in Bulgaria and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (between 9% and 10%), Slovakia, Romania, Serbia (excluding Kosovo²), Hungary (between 7% and 8%), Turkey and Greece (between 2% and 3%) and Spain (approximately 1.5%).

1. The terms “Roma and Travellers” are used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term “Gens du voyage”, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.
2. All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

Roma, Travellers, Gypsies, Manush, Sinti, Kale ... a multitude of names

■ “Roma”, the term chosen at the 1st World Romani Congress in 1971, covers a wide variety of population groups. Mostly, the way these groups refer to themselves is different from the way non-Roma or public authorities refer to them. Long years of discrimination have also given rise to pejorative terms. The term “Gypsy” is especially pejorative in eastern Europe, but still used to refer to Roma music.

■ It is important to differentiate between the Roma/Sinti/Kale, whose ancestors came from northern India, and indigenous communities such as the Travellers in Ireland and the United Kingdom, and the Yenish in Switzerland and France, even though they have points in common in terms of lifestyle or difficulties.

■ Roma, Sinti and Kale are the three main branches. Sinti are found mainly in German-speaking regions, Benelux and certain Scandinavian countries, northern Italy, as well as in France, where they are known as Manush. The Kale (commonly known as “Spanish Gypsies”) are to be found in the Iberian peninsula and the south of France (Provence). They also live in the north of Wales and in Finland (Kaale). The term “Travellers” (at the administrative level), used in France, Switzerland and Belgium, also includes non-Roma groups having an itinerant lifestyle. There may be different communities in the same country: for example, in Germany and Italy, the communities are referred to as “Roma and Sinti”.

■ In the Council of Europe, although there have been various terms in use since the 1970s, Roma and Travellers are presently used as a generic names used to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Organisation. The Council of Europe has produced a glossary that takes into account the Roma and Travellers’ point of view.

” The glossary can be found at:
www.coe.int/roma (in Tools and reference texts)

Fact sheet 2

Persecution and migration: a long history

■ Ever since they left India between the 6th and 11th centuries, the Roma have suffered from persecution, prompting massive waves of migration.

From India to Byzantium: pre-European history

■ At the time of the Byzantine Empire, Roma groups migrated from India to Europe via Persia, Armenia and Asia Minor. The eastern branches of the Roma are still to be found in the Caucasus, Turkey and the Middle East, where they are known as “Lom” or “Dom”.

Arrival in Europe and first experiences of discrimination

■ From the 15th to the 17th century, the Roma who had settled in Europe had their first experiences of discrimination in the Ottoman Empire and central Europe, in particular serfdom and slavery in Wallachia and Moldavia for five centuries (between the 14th century and 1864). In western Europe, too they were marginalised and persecuted.

Discrimination during the “Enlightenment”

■ In the 18th century, the period of the “Enlightenment” in European history, the Roma faced new methods of discrimination: in Spain they were interned and forbidden to speak their language; in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, various laws ordered their forced assimilation; and in France they were sent to the galleys. In Russia, however, they were considered as equal subjects of the Tsar and were accordingly granted all civil rights.

Second migration period and more intense discrimination

— A second wave of migration took place in the 19th century, with Roma groups in central and eastern Europe leaving for other parts of Europe. Some even crossed the sea. In 1860, Roma slavery was abolished in the Romanian principalities. Nonetheless, at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, discrimination became more intense, especially in those regions which had been part of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The “Samudaripen” or the genocide of Roma

— Discrimination reached its peak during the Second World War, with a genocide orchestrated by the Nazis. It is estimated that at least 500 000 Roma and Sinti were massacred by the Third Reich. During the Nuremberg Trials, no mention was made of this genocide and no assistance or compensation was given to the Roma who had survived the concentration camps. Some communities and associations use the terms “Pharrajmos”, “Porajmos” or “Kalí Traš” instead of “Samudaripen”,

Third wave of migration and emancipation

— Migration of Roma from eastern Europe to western Europe and then to the United States, Canada and Australia, was initially part of the movement of migrant workers. This took on much larger proportions in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellites, and the disintegration of Yugoslavia. The wars in the Balkans in the 1990s affected the Roma in a number of ways: they were war victims, they were expelled (in particular from the province of Kosovo in 1999) and they were granted only “economic refugee” status in the countries of destination.

” For more details, see the fact sheets on the history of the Roma, beginning with the first wave of migration, then covering the major periods of discrimination and extermination, and finally outlining the current emancipation process:

www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/histoculture_en.asp



Fact sheet 3

Roma identity ("Romanipen" in Romani)

The Romani language

— Romani, the language spoken by the Roma, derives from a language spoken in northern India, close to Sanskrit. There are numerous variants with vocabulary borrowed from the languages with which Romani came into contact: Persian, Armenian, Turkish and Greek prior to the 14th century and then Romanian, the languages of the south-eastern Balkans and German. Romani is mostly spoken in the Balkans and south-eastern Europe. It is included in the list of languages protected by the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (see Fact sheet 8).

The family

— The family is traditionally the basis on which Roma society, economic activity and education are organised. It is a closely-knit, cohesive unit. Housing problems and the changing role of women are leading to smaller families, and young people often have their own aspirations or obligations causing them to move away from the family unit.

Religion

There are various religions practised by the Roma, tending to follow the dominant religion in the areas in which these communities have settled. For example, in Italy and Ireland, most Roma would say they are Catholic, while in Romania and Russia they would be Orthodox and in Albania and Kosovo they would be Muslim. In some countries, the religion they subscribe to and the religious festivities observed may involve different faiths, as for example in Bulgaria where certain groups are baptised by an Orthodox priest and buried by a Muslim imam. Rituals revolve mainly around birth and death, and pilgrimages are an opportunity for family groups to meet up. The Gypsy Evangelical Movement has grown considerably since the mid-20th century and also plays a political role in bringing claims to the attention of states and ensuring respect for certain values.

Lifestyle

The Roma comprise diverse communities and in the course of their migration they have been influenced by a variety of cultures. Theirs is an identity shaped by diversity and they are among the most European of all population groups. Since the Middle Ages, they have maintained transnational family ties, criss-crossing Europe's borders.

With such great diversity, a single Romani culture is hard to pin down. A common feature is the importance of family as the basis for economic and social organisation, a pride in being different, independence in carrying out an occupation, the absence of roots or an affiliation to any particular area, and education within the family.



■ The very strengths of the Roma way of life – communal living, a marginal economy, living for the present, mobility, dispersal, linguistic variety, community solidarity – can become barriers in societies characterised by individualism, accumulation of capital, sedentary living, standardisation, and competitiveness. Globalisation has had an impact on Roma identity, diluting it as groups have borrowed from local culture. The tightening of regulations in various countries, crack-downs on camps and tighter accommodation conditions impact the Romani cultural development, and consequently their identity. Isolation, crime, alcoholism, drugs and family fragmentation can be the consequence.

Culture and art

■ Art among the Roma is above all a way of life. It is linked to mobility, to travelling, trading, making transportable objects, and playing music. Most of the time, the art of the Roma merges with the immediate environment, and traditional gatherings form an opportunity for sharing. Traditional expression was mainly oral: modern life – and new technology – is proving a challenge. Roma are now experimenting with new forms of art such as painting, sculpture or publishing traditional folk tales.

■ The Roma are best known for their music, and many Roma artists enjoy major international careers. The two most well-known combinations are Manush jazz and Andalusian flamenco. There is a tendency among non-Roma to stereotype the whole community through their colourful cultural life – this is leading to increased politicisation of culture by the Roma as they struggle to assert their identity.

Roma Culture and Heritage Routes

■ The itinerant culture of the Roma has not left tangible traces such as churches or monuments. Instead, the Roma have marked the landscape as they have in turn been marked by the places they passed through.

■ The Council of Europe's Roma Cultural Routes retraces the migration of the Roma, providing opportunities to discover Roma artists, musicians and writers. The route seeks to promote Roma culture, familiarise the public with their living conditions and project a positive image of a people who have often been viewed negatively.

” Map of the route:
www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/routes/roma_en.asp



Fact sheet 4

Powerful symbols

Travelling versus sedentary lifestyle

■ Unlike for Traveller communities, for whom a nomadic lifestyle is part of their identity, travelling has never been an inherent Roma characteristic: the constant moving came through persecution and expulsion – including the recent deportations of the Second World War and more recent evictions and removals from national territories.

■ Roma are mobile rather than nomadic, adapting to employment conditions, such as seasonal work that helps them survive economically, or travelling to bring scattered families together for important events. For them, travelling is not just an economic necessity but a state of mind and even when they are obliged to stay in one place, Roma remain travellers in their hearts and minds. Nonetheless, only a minority of European Roma have opted for an itinerant lifestyle; the majority (almost 85%) are settled, although mostly under conditions of extreme hardship.

■ The Roma define themselves as a nation, but as a nation “with no compact territory and with no claim to such a territory” (5th Congress of the International Romani Union, Prague, 2000). They are generally citizens of the countries in which they live. They do not claim territory, but the same rights as any other citizen.

The flag and what it symbolises

■ The first World Romani Congress held in London in 1971 asserted the Roma claim to be recognised as a full-fledged people. It adopted a flag, an anthem and an International Roma Day.

■ The Roma flag represents a people and not a state with defined borders. The colour blue symbolises the sky, freedom, spirituality, what is eternal; green symbolises nature, the earth, fertility and the tangible aspects of life. The red 16-spoke wheel symbolises not only the horse-drawn caravan, travelling, growth and progress, but also refers to the Indian origin of the Roma, their “motherland” from whence they migrated, since the wheel is inspired by the chakra, found on the Indian flag, which has 24 spokes just like the number of hours in a day.

*“Blue, like the sky and the sea,
Green, like the forests and the prairies Red,
like the blood shed in the persecution
we have suffered over the centuries.”»*

Vania de Gila-Kochanowski, Huguette Tanguy,
Let's speak Gypsy: history, culture and language of the Gypsy people

Anthem

■ “Gelem, Gelem” is the Roma anthem. The words were written by Jarko Jovanović, a Roma poet from the former Yugoslavia, most of whose family were deported and perished in Auschwitz during the Second World War. The music is based on a traditional Roma melody.

8 April: International Roma Day

■ As the Congress was held on 8 April, it was logical that this date should be declared International Roma Day. This date also refers to a traditional festival of the Roma of Transylvania, the “day of the horses”; when horses were led out of their winter shelters and decorated with garlands. Cultural events take place throughout the world.



2 August: International Day to commemorate the Roma and Sinti Victims of the Holocaust (Samudaripen/Pharrajmos/Porrajmos/Kalí Traš)

— The Roma commemorate the Samudaripen on 2 August, the date that 3 000 Roma were killed in Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1945.

— This tragedy remains overlooked. The Council of Europe is working to ensure that it is included in school curricular as part of its project “Education of Roma Children in Europe” (see Fact sheet 5). Teaching material has been drawn up and events and working meetings are also held. A website created in co-operation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) contains a database on this period in Roma history, a virtual library and an informative interactive map.

” www.roma-genocide.org

5 November: World Day of Romani Language

— At its 7th Congress in Croatia in 2008, the International Romani Union adopted 5 November as World Day of Romani Language. The Day is promoted by a number of member states which have ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

” www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/default_en.asp



Fact sheet 5

Housing, jobs, education and health

Traditional economic activities

Traditionally the Roma made their living through metal-working, collecting and re-selling various materials, performance and circus-related work, fairground work and second-hand trading, market trading, seasonal work on farms or in the building sector. Throughout history, the need to adapt to the job market, the Roma's versatility acquired from a very young age and their desire for freedom have prompted them to move about constantly and perform seasonal jobs.

The high levels of unemployment experienced today by Roma communities and their need to beg to survive is the result of the decline in their traditional occupations, segregation of living areas, low skill levels, unequal access to education and economic transition in the countries of central and eastern Europe where the Roma were the first to be dismissed from the state-run companies. However, there are also Roma who work as managers, lawyers, teachers, local councillors, shopkeepers, hairdressers, etc. They try to keep a low profile, however, and no longer assert their Roma identity for fear of losing customers.

Housing hardships, depending on their surroundings

■ Roma housing situations are very diverse. Some families have been settled for several centuries in one area and live in bungalows, small houses or apartments. Others live in a caravan or mixed accommodation (house and caravan or mobile home), although horse-drawn caravans are now rare. Some families live in very cramped social housing.

■ Housing conditions therefore depend very much on the immediate surroundings, neighbouring populations' attitudes towards them and the sometimes stringent regulations which mean that the Roma have to limit the time they can remain in one place.

■ There are many Roma families in Europe who are obliged to live in shanty towns, on the streets in cities, alongside motorways or on industrial estates in makeshift housing made from recycled material, with no drinking water, electricity or means of waste disposal. Roma families wishing to engage in an itinerant life have extreme difficulty finding suitable, unpolluted sites, not too far away from schools, forcing them to camp illegally or be continually on the move.

Continuing inadequate access to education and segregation

■ Half the Roma in Europe are of school age but, even today, nearly half of these children have never attended school. Of those in school, many receive a low-quality education in segregated classes. Among adult Roma, the illiteracy rate is often over 50%.

■ In most regions of Europe, Roma children have no access to high-quality education of an equivalent standard to that available to other children. Absenteeism and drop-out rates are at unacceptable levels and are rising. Poverty and the traditions of certain communities – including child/early marriages – create additional obstacles to education.

■ Discrimination and prejudice are at the heart of this deep-rooted inequality in access to education. Certain Roma children cannot get to school because they live too far away. Others are placed in schools cut off from the rest of society, or in classes for children with special needs, without any psychological or educational assessment. Segregated education excludes Roma from the rest of society from an early age and prevents contacts between Roma and non-Roma.

■ The Council of Europe launched a project on Roma education in 2001, aimed at fostering best practice and providing teachers with training on how to integrate pupils from Roma communities. It has created teaching material, especially for pre-school age children for attending primary school.

” www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/Source/leaflet_EN.pdf

Unfavourable health indicators

■ In many countries of Europe there are significant disparities between the health indicators of the Roma and those of the majority. Life expectancy is in general 8 to 15 years lower, and the mortality rate and infectious and chronic disease rates are much higher. In certain cases, an improvement in the Roma health situation is a matter of urgency.

■ Many Roma live in areas far removed from health-care centres and find it very difficult to get to them. If there is an emergency, the situation can be serious. Furthermore, the Roma do not always have identity papers, which can make it even more difficult to obtain ordinary health care. There are also cases of discrimination by health-care professionals, particularly general practitioners who refuse to go to Roma neighbourhoods or encampments. Lastly, in some countries, forced sterilisation of Roma women (many of them illiterate) continued into the 21st century.



Fact sheet 6

Stereotypes and discrimination

Anti-Gypsyism – A specific form of racism

■ The Council of Europe recognises anti-Gypsyism as a specific form of racism. A definition is given in General Policy Recommendation No. 13 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma.

” www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/GeneralThemes_en.asp

■ Roma and Travellers are the most persecuted groups in Europe. Majority populations have for centuries harboured stereotypes about them, misreading their itinerant lifestyles and traditions and seeing them as dirty, asocial thieves. In contrast, they are romanticised in popular cultures, obscuring the harsh reality of their lives.

■ Frequently scapegoats, their present situation looks grim against a backdrop of the world economic crisis, the rise of extremism, discriminatory laws on migration and inflammatory media reports of European Union enlargement leading to an influx of Roma. Many communities refuse to allow Roma families to settle, pushing them away to live in shanty towns and makeshift encampments, thus reinforcing the stereotype of the Roma as people who live in unsanitary conditions and disrepair is further entrenched.

■ The Council of Europe is combating these prejudices with an awareness-raising campaign called Dosta! (“Enough!” in Romani). The campaign shows Roma as people who provide value to society in their own right. Run in 18 European countries since 2006, it has an interactive website, TV spots, school projects, training for the media and teachers, and awards a prize for local authorities which have taken steps to uphold and protect the rights of the Roma.

” www.dosta.org/en

Diminished rights

■ The vast majority of Roma and Travellers are citizens of the country in which they live but they do not always enjoy the same rights as other citizens. Isolation, illiteracy, poverty, lack of trust in the police and the judicial system, and a lack of awareness of how to defend their rights mean they are isolated and can potentially become victims of abuse by the authorities. Where they are not citizens of the country in which they are living, Roma and Travellers have real difficulties in gaining recognition as a minority.

■ Roma and Traveller women and girls are particularly marginalised. Along with the general negative stereotype, and practices such as forced sterilisation by the authorities and the majority population, they are forced into lower-status positions and suffer child/early or forced marriages in their own community.



The Council of Europe is taking action to promote entrepreneurship and economic empowerment of women, and regularly co-organises international conferences on the topic.

” www.coe.int/en/web/portal/roma-women

The trap of trafficking networks

■ Due to their extreme poverty and marginalisation, Roma are particularly at risk of being trafficked by criminal gangs – especially those who fled their homes because of the wars in the Balkans in the 1990s. Women and children are particularly exposed to the dangers of trafficking for sexual exploitation, begging, forced labour, illegal adoption and organ removals. Two Council of Europe treaties help to protect against this: the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2008), focusing mainly on the protection of victims of trafficking, safeguarding their rights and the prosecution of traffickers; and the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2010), the first international treaty to criminalise sexual abuse.



Fact sheet 7

Roma and Travellers representation

Emancipation

■ The Roma political movement began to take real shape in the 1960s. This was made possible by the setting up of Roma organisations, international awareness-raising campaigns, co-operation with international organisations and initiatives such as the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, supported by the World Bank and the Open Society Foundations (see Fact sheet 10).

The European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF)

■ The European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) was set up in 2004 in response to an appeal made by Finnish President Tarja Halonen during a speech at the Council of Europe in 2001. Its main objectives are to give Roma and Travellers a voice, enable them to express their hopes and concerns at European level and take part in decisions directly concerning them. The ERTF, which has its headquarters in Strasbourg, is totally independent of governments. It brings together representatives of international Roma and Traveller organisations to promote the rights of Roma and Travellers and monitor respect for them.

” www.ertf.org/

The Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP)

Young European Roma suffer not only from human rights violations, but also from a lack of recognition of their civil rights and responsibilities. This forum, an international NGO based in Strasbourg, supports the representation of young Roma people, defending their interests in the European institutions, and promotes co-operation and training for young Roma NGO leaders.

” www.feryp.org

The International Roma Women’s Network (IRWN-Phenjalipe)

The Council of Europe supports the International Roma Women’s Network, set up in 2003 in partnership with the OSCE European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC). The network, which initially focused its action on access by Roma women to health care, now covers other areas, such as access to employment and the fight against discrimination. The IRWN is a driving force for change in the Roma community on matters which for a long time were taboo, such as early marriages, education of girls and homosexuality.

Following the International Conference of Roma Women in Helsinki in September 2013, which was held jointly by the Council of Europe and the Finnish Government, a new network of Roma women called “Phenjalipe” was set up. It devised its own strategy and action plan.

In late 2015 the proposal was made to merge IRWN and Phenjalipe into a single Roma women’s network.

” Contacts:
phenjalipe@gmail.com / Phenjalipe on Facebook

Key dates in the political history of the Roma

- ▶ **1967:** Creation of the International Gypsy Committee.
- ▶ **1971:** Adoption of the term “Roma” at the 1st World Romani Congress in London. Adoption of the flag, anthem and International Roma Day (8 April).
- ▶ **1978:** The World Romani Congress meeting in Geneva in 1978 establishes the International Romani Union (Romani Ekhipé).

- ▶ **1979:** The International Romani Union obtains consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.
- ▶ **1980s:** Period of stabilisation and consolidation of Roma organisations.
- ▶ **1990s:** Significant increase in the number of Roma political and cultural organisations.
- ▶ **1994:** Juan de Dios Ramírez-Heredia becomes the first Roma member of the European Parliament, after being the first Roma member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe between 1983 and 1985.
- ▶ **2000:** Launch, at the Prague Congress, of the idea of a Roma nation. Creation of an international Roma parliament, based in Vienna.
- ▶ **2004:** Establishment of the European Roma and Travellers Forum and signature of a partnership agreement between the Forum and the Council of Europe.
- ▶ **2005:** Nine states in central and south-east Europe join the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and undertake to improve the socio-economic conditions and status of the Roma minority. Three other states join subsequently in 2008-2009.
- ▶ **2008:** Two Hungarian members of the European Parliament of Roma origin, Ms Lívía Járóka and Ms Viktória Mohácsi, encourage all EU member states to join the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Ms Lívía Járóka will be the only Roma woman to be elected to the European Parliament at the next elections.
- ▶ **2008:** The International Romani Union adopts 5 November as World Day of the Romani Language.
- ▶ **2013:** Establishment of Phenjalipe, an informal international network of Roma women.
- ▶ **2014:** Two new Roma candidates are elected to the European Parliament, namely Ms Soraya Post, from Sweden, the former Chair of IRWN, and Mr Damian Draghici, from Romania, former adviser to the Romanian President, senator and, for a short period, a member of the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.
- ▶ **2015:** the Council of Europe Secretary General supports the initiative of the Open Society Foundations to set up a European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC).



Fact sheet 8

The Roma and Travellers and the Council of Europe

The Parliamentary Assembly, pioneering Roma rights

■ In 1969, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe was the first institution to adopt a text on Roma.

■ In 1963, it highlighted the Roma's contribution to Europe's cultural diversity and the need to guarantee their rights. In 2002, it focused on the new wave of Roma migration in Europe and the importance of their legal status.

■ Two new texts in 2003 and 2005 dealt with the forced returns from Council of Europe member states of the former Yugoslavia and on the situation in Kosovo.

Targeted action from the Committee of Ministers

■ Since 1975, the Committee of Ministers has addressed the problems of statelessness, education, employment, mobility, housing and health care.

” www.coe.int/t/cm/home_en.asp

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

■ The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is a hub for action on Roma issues. In 1993, the Congress set out the role and responsibilities of local and regional authorities in protecting Roma communities. Through its “Dosta!” prize, the Congress rewards best practices at regional and local levels in promoting Roma rights.

” www.coe.int/t/Congress/default_en.asp

The Commissioner for Human Rights

■ The Commissioner for Human Rights includes Roma settlements in his regular visits in the member states. He has stressed the need to stop forced deportations, statelessness, anti-Gypsyism and segregation, and to ensure decent housing, access to amenities, schooling, access to health care and representation of Roma communities on policy-making bodies.

” www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner

The European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights

■ As of June 2010, the Court had delivered 20 judgments on the Roma lifestyle, the right to a home, ill-treatment by the police and the placement of children in special schools. Protocol No. 4 to the European Convention on Human Rights forbids collective deportations.

■ For 15 years, the Council of Europe and the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) have organised annual training sessions in Strasbourg for lawyers on Roma-related case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the European Social Charter. Since 2011, national training sessions have been

held for lawyers, prosecutors and other legal specialists in countries including Bulgaria, France, Greece, Italy, Romania and Turkey.

” www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/thematic-work/roma-and-travellers

The European Social Charter

— The Charter covers economic and social rights and is increasingly used by the Roma. The first case was in 2003 and concerned family rights to social, legal and economic protection.

” www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/default_en.asp

Action against racism and intolerance

— The Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has worked consistently to report anti-Gypsyism and discrimination. ECRI has also urged the media to report responsibly on Roma issues.

” www.coe.int/t/democracy/migration/bodies/ecri_en.asp

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

— The Charter, which was adopted in 1992 and entered into force in 1998, ensures protection for Romani and promotes it as one of the protected languages.

” www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/default_en.asp

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

— This treaty seeks to preserve and develop minority cultures and identities. Some countries make specific reference to the Roma in their list of minorities living on their territory.

” www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/default_en.asp



Fact sheet 9

Latest steps in the fight for the rights of Roma and Travellers

The “Strasbourg Declaration”

■ The events of 2010, which saw the removal of Roma from western Europe, prompted Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland to step up action to help the Roma in a more targeted, better co-ordinated and more cross-dimensional way.

■ He called representatives of the 47 Council of Europe member states, the European Union and the Roma community to Strasbourg to condemn the widespread discrimination and pledge to make improvements. The “Strasbourg Declaration” was adopted, providing for a raft of new initiatives on Roma. A Special Representative for Roma Issues was appointed and a dedicated team set up to spearhead work.

” Strasbourg Declaration
<https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1691607>

ROMED programme

■ At the beginning of 2011, the Council of Europe launched a joint project with the European Commission to train mediators – most of whom are from Roma communities – to facilitate communication between communities and public institutions on practical issues such as schooling, access to health care, housing and employment. Council of Europe experts and specialised trainers equip the mediators with the skills they need to work effectively and impartially between local authorities and the Roma community. 22 countries take part in the programme. Other countries are due to join, thanks in part to financial assistance from the European Union since the programme became a joint project between the two organisations in mid-2011.

” <http://coe-romed.org/>

ROMACT programme

■ The aim of this common Council of Europe–European Commission programme, which has been running since 2013, is to enhance the capacity of local and regional authorities (both elected representatives and senior local government officers) to devise and implement projects that promote Roma inclusion. Six member states take part in this joint programme.

” <http://coe-romact.org>

Sharing tactics and successes

■ Work has begun on a database where national, regional and local authorities, along with NGOs or anyone working with the Roma, can find current best practices. The idea is to build a pool of projects and policies that work and that can be adapted for use in different countries and contexts, creating momentum for continuous positive change throughout Europe.

” <http://goodpracticeroma.ppa.coe.int/>

Ad Hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues

■ At the same time, a group of experts appointed at the highest level by the 47 Council of Europe member states meet twice a year. The Ad Hoc Committee

of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues, which succeeded the MG-S-ROM in 2011, is a means for member states to exchange and pool their experience and good practices, particularly through the publication of thematic reports on subjects such as social housing, the legalisation of informal settlements, desegregation of the school system, measures to prevent school drop-out, anti-Gypsyism and hate speech, prevention of child/early marriages and human trafficking within Roma communities, improving the legal status, preserving and protecting the Romani language, empowering Roma women and youth, etc. Reporting directly to the Committee of Ministers, the CAHROM can submit opinions and recommendations for adoption and alert the Ministers to new issues requiring urgent attention.

Updated Council of Europe agenda on Roma Inclusion (2015-2019)

■ In April 2015, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted the updated strategy of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Roma Inclusion.

■ On 3 March 2016, a new Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019) was approved by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers. It kicks off 21 innovative measures and actions to address three major priorities: tackling anti-Gypsyism, discrimination and hate crimes; protecting and empowering the most vulnerable among Roma and Travellers, such as women, children and youth; and promoting innovative models for local-level solutions.

■ The action plan is based on 45 years of experience and knowhow of the Council of Europe on Roma and Traveller inclusion and follows on from the "Strasbourg Declaration on Roma (2010)", which set out a roadmap for legislation, policy and practice to ensure protection of Roma and Travellers' human rights and dignity, provide equal opportunities and improve their living conditions.

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Roma and Travellers and other international institutions

The new European Union strategic framework

■ Several resolutions have been adopted by the European Parliament on Roma since the 1970s. Programmes (particularly the Phare programme) and conferences have also been organised to promote policies to secure Roma rights.

■ The emotion aroused in summer 2010 by Roma communities being removed from western Europe prompted the European Commission to set up a framework for Roma focusing on education, employment, health care and housing. States must ensure that all Roma children complete primary school, that the employment gap between Roma and non-Roma is reduced, that the infant mortality rate among the Roma community is lowered, that greater emphasis is placed on providing access to housing and that the funds already provided are better used.

” The EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu>

” The European Union and the Roma
http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm

Fundamental Rights Agency

■ Surveys conducted by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), such as EU-MIDIS, have shown that prejudice, intolerance and discrimination affect a large proportion of Roma, most of whom are EU citizens, living in EU member states.

■ In April 2011, the European Commission published a Communication on an EU framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020, which asked FRA to set up a reliable monitoring system throughout the member states to help implement the European Roma integration programme at EU level and review progress regularly in the field. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union prohibits any discrimination based on race, colour or ethnic or social origin. The chapters on freedoms and solidarity establish the right to education and access to preventive health care and medical treatment. The Charter also guarantees respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.

” <http://fra.europa.eu/en/cooperation/council-of-europe>

The OSCE-ODIHR “Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues”

■ The OSCE has adopted several resolutions on Roma. In 1994 it decided to set up a “Contact point for Roma and Sinti issues” to promote the civil and political rights of these communities and help prevent or resolve conflicts in the countries of south-east Europe. The topics covered by this initiative include racism and discrimination, housing, health care and employment, access to education and Roma participation in public life.

” Roma issues at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
www.osce.org/odihr/roma

United Nations

■ The Roma began to be mentioned in the United Nations texts from 1977 onwards. In 1979, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) recognised the International Romani Union as a non-governmental organisation representing the Roma. UNESCO and UNICEF contribute to the discussions on the education of Roma children and are involved in projects relating to the Romani language. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has expressed concern

at the situation of the Roma in central and eastern Europe. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) is also there to notify countries where there are established cases of discrimination against the Roma.

” Roma Issues at the United Nations:
[www.unesco.org/new/en/education/
themes/strengthening-education-systems/
inclusive-education/roma-children/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/inclusive-education/roma-children/)

The Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015)

■ In 2005, nine eastern European countries signed up to an initiative to put an end to social exclusion faced by the Roma. This involved improving social and economic conditions. The initiative brought together governments, intergovernmental organisations such as the Council of Europe, and Roma NGOs. Emphasis was placed on education, employment, health, housing, and the elimination of poverty and racial and gender-based discrimination as cross-cutting topics. Twelve states were part of the Decade of Roma Inclusion once it ended in September 2015: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, the Slovak Republic, Spain and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. Slovenia had observer status. The Roma Education Fund – established under the Decade framework – continues to finance projects for Roma inclusion in national education systems. It receives funds from governments, multilateral organisations and private sources.

” www.romaeducationfund.hu

Fact sheet 11

Resources

Council of Europe

- ▶ Ad Hoc Committee of Expert on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM) and its thematic reports:
<http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/cahrom>
- ▶ Commissioner for Human Rights – Human Rights of Roma and Travellers page:
www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/thematic-work/roma-and-travellers
- ▶ Congress Summit of Mayors on Roma webpage:
www.coe.int/t/congress/Sessions/20110922-Roma-Summit/default_en.asp
- ▶ Council of Europe Roma-related adopted texts (recommendations and resolutions of the CM, PACE, and Congress; ECRI General Policy recommendations; Strasbourg Declaration; Summit of Mayors Declaration, Thematic Action Plan for the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers, etc.):
<http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/roma-related-texts>
- ▶ Portal of the Council of Europe Special Representative of the Secretary General on Roma Issues:
<http://www.coe.int/roma>
- ▶ Dosta! campaign for combating stereotypes and prejudice towards Roma: www.dosta.org/
- ▶ Education of Roma children:
www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/default_EN.asp?
- ▶ European Academic Network on Romani Studies (joint Council of Europe/ EU project): <http://romanistudies.eu/>
- ▶ European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion:
www.roma-alliance.org/en/

- ▶ European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML): www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/default_en.asp
- ▶ European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI): www.coe.int/t/dg4hl/monitoring/ecri/default_en.asp
- ▶ European Court of Human Rights Roma and Travellers case law factsheet: www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_Roma_ENG.pdf
- ▶ European online database of Roma-related policies and good practices: <http://goodpracticeroma.ppa.coe.int/>
- ▶ European Route of Roma culture and heritage: www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/routes/roma_EN.asp?
- ▶ European Social Charter and Roma Rights: <https://cs.coe.int/team20/cahrom/10%20CAHROM%20Plenary%20meeting/Item%2008%20-%20The%20European%20Social%20Charter%20and%20Roma%20and%20Travellers-related%20case%20law.pdf>
- ▶ Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM): <http://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/home>
- ▶ Joint CoE/EU programme for strengthening local and regional authorities's capacity for Roma inclusion (ROMACT): <http://coe-romact.org/>
- ▶ Joint CoE/EU Training Programme for Roma Mediators (ROMED): <http://coe-romed.org/>
- ▶ Language Policy Division Initiatives for the Teaching and Learning of Romani: www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/romani_EN.asp
- ▶ No hate speech movement and campaign: www.nohatespeechmovement.org/
- ▶ Roma history factsheets: www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/histoCulture_en.asp
- ▶ Roma women: <http://hub.coe.int/en/roma-women>
- ▶ Roma Youth Action Plan: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth-roma>
- ▶ Speak out against discrimination campaign: www.coe.int/t/DG4/ANTI-DISCRIMINATION-CAMPAIGN/
- ▶ Strasbourg Declaration on Roma webpage: <http://www.coe.int/roma>
- ▶ Teaching Roma genocide joint Council of Europe/OSCE-ODIHR website: <http://roma-genocide.org/>
- ▶ Thematic Action Plan for the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019) on Roma webpage: <http://www.coe.int/roma>

European Union and Roma (European Commission, FRA)

- ▶ EU funding for Roma integration through European Structural and Investment Funds:
http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/eu-funding/index_en.htm
- ▶ European Commission DG Justice: EU and the Roma:
http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm
- ▶ European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA):
<http://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/roma>

Roma-related work of international organisations

- ▶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Regional Working Group on Roma: www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Minorities/Pages/UnitedNationsRegionalWGonRoma.aspx
- ▶ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE-ODIHR) Contact Point for Roma and Sinti: www.osce.org/odihr/roma
- ▶ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Roma in Central and Eastern Europe:
www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma.html
- ▶ World Bank and Roma Inclusion: <http://go.worldbank.org/91N33COO41>
- ▶ World Health Organisation (WHO) and Roma health:
www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/roma-health

International NGOs or NGO-coalitions working for/on Roma

- ▶ Amnesty International: www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/04/roma-europe-demanding-justice-and-protection-face-violence/
- ▶ Council of Europe (2006), *Education of Roma children in Europe – Official texts and activities of the Council of Europe concerning education*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.
- ▶ European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF): www.ertf.org/
- ▶ European Roma Information Office (ERIO): www.erionet.eu/
- ▶ European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC): www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3796
- ▶ European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC): www.errc.org/
- ▶ Glossary on Roma and Travellers: www.coe.int/roma (in Tools and texts of reference)

- ▶ Liégeois J.-P. (2007), *Roma in Europe*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.
- ▶ Liégeois J.-P. (2012), *The Council of Europe and Roma: 40 years of action*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.
- ▶ Making human rights for Roma a reality: www.coe.int/roma
- ▶ Open Society Foundations (OSF):
www.opensocietyfoundations.org/topics/roma
- ▶ Roma Education Fund (REF): www.romaeducationfund.hu/



Fact sheet 12

General resources

- ▶ Bibliography of the Swiss association Mesemrom: www.mesemrom.org/Biblio.pdf
“Me sem rom” is Romani for “I am a Rom”. The aim of Mesemrom, set up in June 2007 in Geneva, is to raise public and official awareness of the difficulties encountered by the Roma population.
- ▶ Bibliography of the FYI France site (in English): www.fyifrance.com/gypsybib.htm
- ▶ National Collective Human Rights Romeurope: www.romeurope.org
- ▶ Colorful but Colorblind: <http://roma.glocalstories.org>
A collection of 25 short films as part of an 18-month project to counter the hostile stereotypes about the Roma in central and eastern Europe.
- ▶ European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC): www.errc.org/
Established in 1996, the Centre provides Roma with the tools necessary to combat discrimination and obtain equal access to justice, education, housing, health care and public services. It has consultative status with the Council of Europe.
- ▶ Romani Socio-Cultural Foundation “Ion Cioaba”: www.icfoundation.ro/
This foundation promotes the Roma cultural identity throughout the world to foster peace, harmony and understanding between countries.
- ▶ Museum of Romani Culture: www.rommuz.cz/

- ▶ *Patrin* (Web journal on Romani culture): www.reocities.com/~patrin/
- ▶ Radio Prague: <http://romove.radio.cz/en/>
This site has a number of links to articles on the general history of the Roma, the situation of the Roma since 1989 and traditional family life.
- ▶ The European Union and the Roma: www.ec.europa.eu/roma
See in particular the European Union studies on minorities and discrimination (EU-MIDIS) carried out by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), which sought the views of groups of immigrants and ethnic minorities (Roma in particular) on their experiences of discrimination or criminal attacks in their day-to-day lives.
- ▶ Unión Romaní (Spain): www.unionromani.org/union_in.htm
Voix des Rroms (in French only): <http://rroms.blogspot.com/>
- ▶ Willers M. (2009), *Ensuring access to rights for Roma and Travellers: The role of the European Court of Human Rights*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg.
- ▶ World Bank (projects for Roma): www.worldbank.org/roma

It is estimated that there are some 10 to 12 million Roma and Travellers in Europe, living in every European country. They are one of Europe's most disadvantaged communities, having to cope every day with discrimination and racist insults.

The Council of Europe has been working for many years to combat this prejudice against the Roma and Travellers, taking measures such as co-ordinating a network of mediators who foster dialogue.

This leaflet highlights the many facets of their identity, but also the treatment they have undergone over the centuries. It also describes recent advances in the fight for the rights of Roma and Travellers and the role played by their representatives and major international organisations in framing the policies concerning them.

www.coe.int/roma

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

www.coe.int

