

# Education of Roma Children in Europe

*Implementation of the  
Recommendation 2000(4)  
on the education  
of Roma children in Europe*



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# How the Council

## Political and Legal Framework

*The Council of Europe began its involvement with the Roma in 1969 by adopting the first official text on the "situation of Gypsies and other Travellers in Europe".*

*In 1983 the Council organised the first training seminar for teachers working with Roma children. In 1993 the Roma population was declared a European minority.*

*The Recommendation (2000)<sup>4</sup> on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe was adopted by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers.*

*The project Education of Roma children began in 2002 with the aim to practically implement this official text. The main chapters of the recommendation refer to: the recognition of Roma as a minority, training for teachers and other Roma education staff, development and distribution of teaching material, language teaching, studies and dissemination of information on Roma history and culture, involvement of families, highlighting positive experiences, setting up a European study programme and a training centre.*

## Methods and Goals

### ► Policy Making

The Council of Europe created a Reference Framework document to supplement the Recommendation (2000) 4 on the Education of Roma/Gypsy Children in Europe. The text contains concrete proposals which can be translated into government policy that recognises the



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Roma minority; it proposes educational strategies with four inter-related goals: schooling, social inclusion, promotion of Roma cultural identity and cultural heritage, and empowerment and participation of Roma communities. The Reference Framework is aimed at political decision-makers, educational professionals, civil society, Roma communities and interested citizens.

## ► Practical Methods

### European Workshops

In an effort to support the education of the Roma, the Council of Europe organises European workshops and seminars on the following themes: teacher training on Roma history and culture, training of Roma school mediators/assistants, on the relationship between families and schools, access to quality education, preschool education, and vocational training. A number of workshops have been held in the framework of the Council of Europe "Pestalozzi training programme" for education professionals. Please see the Web site for a list of publications and workshop reports:

<http://www.coe.int/Training>



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# Involved

## Teaching Materials

### *Pedagogical Fact Sheets*

The Council of Europe produces a collection of pedagogical fact sheets on Roma history, culture and language. As the Roma have been marginalised and discriminated against for centuries, public knowledge of their history and culture is still marginal or non-existent. In its efforts to defeat segregation, stigmatisation and marginalisation of the Roma the Council of Europe tries to fully integrate them into society. An integral part of this educational process of integration is mutual knowledge of the common history of Roma and non-Roma in Europe. The fact sheets are intended to support this process of integration through education. They are aimed at the training of education professionals; to enhance their knowledge of the Roma minority in Europe; to inform the wider public, and create awareness of Roma history, culture and language. They can also be used as pedagogical materials in schools.

### *Preschool teaching kit*

The Council of Europe has developed a preschool teaching kit, an education programme designed to prepare children for entry into school, (as many Roma, Sinti, Traveller children do not attend nursery school for different reasons). The teaching kit helps facilitate an intellectual, emotional and social development within Roma communities by building up an educational tool for children between the ages of 5 and 7. This educational aid helps children develop the basic skills needed to start primary school, learn how to study, educate parents about the necessity of knowledge, improve children's analytical and reasoning skills, and encourage their imagination. The teaching kit is available as a CD-Rom with fact sheets for the individual activities and a methodological handbook for the tutor and/or mediator.





#### *Publication: Roma on the Screen*

"Roma on screen: how to teach Roma history and culture through cinema" is the pedagogical outcome of the "Fortnight of Roma cinema" organised in the framework of the project "Education of Roma children in Europe" and the "Dosta" Campaign, in 2006.

The publication is a work of "cultural history". Its aim is to investigate the ways and means by which European film-makers have evoked or portrayed the life of the Roma people and embodied it in fictional characters. The goal is to encourage a collective analysis, conducted by the pupils under their teachers' supervision, of a whole array of images viewed on large or small screens in order to deconstruct the processes of representation, question the bases on which they are founded and compare them as far as possible with the reality. This type of approach will help pupils have a critical interpretation of films or television programmes.

#### **Working Tools**

«*The Guide for Roma mediators and assistants*» has been created to help the mediators in their daily work, to ease the relationships between the Roma community (children, parents), and the school administrators and teachers by establishing a rapport of trust and open and effective communication. The role of the mediator is to facilitate communication between the school and Roma parents, and to foster an environment that supports intercultural communication and dialogue. The results of a recent survey showed the need for further progress in the training of Roma mediators and assistants.





### Work on "teaching Roma Remembrance"

Work is being done to enhance recognition and increase awareness of the Samudaripen (in Romani, this word means «(the) murder of all», collective murder) and refers to the genocide of the Roma, Sinté and Kalé during the Second World War, and the need to prevent similar future crimes against humanity. Remembrance, particularly remembrance of the events which occurred during the second world war, remains a sensitive and painful issue for Roma. The project includes the production of teaching materials on Roma history and culture, the organisation of events and working meetings, and the setting-up of a website devoted to Roma remembrance. The website's main function will be to provide instruction on the genocide of Roma. It will comprise a database on this period of Roma history, with a virtual library of the best-known and most useful publications, and an interactive map on which countries can indicate their special/distinctive features at national level. The website will also provide information on curricula, available teaching materials, school textbooks, places of remembrance, and innovative practices introduced by ministries, civil society, international organisations, museums and schools.

The Council of Europe is implementing this work in co-operation with the OSCE/ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues.

[www.coe.int/education/roma](http://www.coe.int/education/roma)

## Co-operation with national and international institutions

The Council of Europe works closely with UNESCO, OSCE-ODIHR, the Roma Education Fund, and the Roma Civil Society. The COE has also established contacts with the European Commission, the Task Force for International co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, the European Roma and



## Why the Cour

The Roma are Europe's largest minority, with a population of around 10 million. Due to a history of oppression, the Roma people suffer political, economic and social isolation. Roma voices have not yet been sufficiently heard. Most Roma live in extreme poverty and, even if numerous programmes to support their people have been established in recent years, many of these communities are basically invisible. Most Roma live below the poverty line and are not aware of any programmes that could help them to improve their lives. Education is crucial in the sense of acquiring knowledge as well as in the sense of providing these minority populations with awareness of the existing opportunities for the development of their communities.

The project "Education of Roma children in Europe" stems from the political will to put an end to the exclusion and sufferings endured by the Roma, to build a more humane and inclusive Europe as stated in the Council of Europe's Action Plan adopted at the Third Summit in Warsaw in 2005, and to promote equal access to education through treaties, declarations and

Travellers Forum, and the OECD. This co-operation is a coherent approach at an international level and is critical for the funding, visibility and organisation of the project and also for promoting new ideas in support of the education of Roma children.

The project should enable the Council of Europe to stimulate national initiatives, contribute to the design and implementation of new working methods and encourage the most promising innovative measures. In other words, the idea is not that the Council of Europe



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recommendations. In response to the above action framework, numerous member states, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, need to adopt national strategies to improve the situation of Roma people, to address their needs on a national level, and demonstrate the willingness to implement educational programmes for them.

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, in its Recommendation R(2000)4 adopted on 3 February 2000, recognised "that there is an urgent need to build new foundations for future educational strategies toward the Roma people in Europe". This recommendation provides the reference point and also the legal framework for the project.

The legitimacy of the project was once again recognised at the 20th session of the Standing Conference of European Education Ministers in October 2000, when the ministers invited the Council of Europe, in their final declaration, to give special attention to the Roma. They also emphasised the need to conduct exploratory work



should take the place of the member states whose role it is to implement the texts they have adopted, but to provide them with the assistance they may need in fulfilling their commitments to improve the situation of the Roma.

The Council of Europe Project is, therefore, aimed at providing both states and NGO's working in this area with instruments that will help them carry out their work.



## Involved

on the educational needs of the Roma. The Council of Europe recognises the importance of this issue and is continuing to make efforts to improve education for the Roma.

The key to a better future lies in the education of Roma children. The disadvantaged position of Roma in society today cannot be changed unless equal opportunities for education are provided to them. Schools need to work to overcome the distrust the Roma have for government institutions based on their history, and create an inclusive and supportive environment. Increasing literacy and school attendance are key to improving the future for the Roma minority.

## ► Publications

- L'éducation des enfants roms: les classes préparatoires, Martina Homakova, DGIV/EDU/ROM(2003)3
- La formation des enseignants et la recherche, Virginie Repaire, DGIV/EDU/ROM(2003)2
- Romani in Europe, 2003, Mihaela Zatreanu, Dieter Halwachs, DGIV/EDU/ROM(2003)7
- Training Modules for Teachers in the History, Culture and Language of the Roma, Pascale Faure – DGIV/EDU/ROM(2003)10
- The training for Roma school mediators and assistants, Calin Rus – DGIV/EDU/ROM(2004)11
- Education of Roma children in Europe – Official texts and activities of the Council of Europe concerning education, Council of Europe Publishing – ISBN 92-871-5978-5
- Access to education : teaching kit concept, François-Xavier Bernard, Dominique Steinberger – DGIV/EDU/ROM(2005)7
- Reference framework for educational policies in favour of Roma, Sintí and Travellers, Delia Grigore, Dominique Steinberger - DGIV/EDU/ROM (2005)8
- Political and Legislative Framework for the Education of Roma Children: Reference Texts and Support Systems – DGIV/EDU/ROM(2006)11
- The Route of Roma Culture and Heritage, Jean-Pierre Liégeois – DGIV/EDU/ROM(2004)8
- The situation of Roma School Mediators and Assistants in Europe, Calin Rus – DGIV/EDU/ROM(2006)3
- Guide for Roma school mediators/assistants, Calin Rus, Mihaela Zatreanu – DGIV/EDU/ROM(2006)12
- Mediator's handbook – Science activities for children, François-Xavier Bernard – DGIV/EDU/ROM(2007)7
- The innovatory practices in the field of education of Roma children, Diana Kirilova, Virginie Repaire – DGIV/EDU/ROM(2003)9
- Towards quality education for Roma children: transition from early childhood to primary education, Arthur Ivatts - DGIV/EDU/ROM(2007)5
- Council of Europe and UNESCO Guidelines on preschool education for Roma children, Arthur Ivatts, Hristo Kyuchukov – DGIV/EDU/ROM(2007)6
- Collection of pedagogical fact sheets on Roma history, Council of Europe, 2008
- Roma on screen, Dominique Chansel, Council of Europe Publishing, 2008



Education des enfants roms en Europe  
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**The Web site provides more information on the project and an up-to-date list of publications.**

**It is available in two languages:**

English: <http://www.coe.int/education/roma>

French: <http://www.coe.int/education/roms>

**For more information:**

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