



OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Warsaw, 23 September- 4 October 2013

Working session 16 –Roma and Sinti issues, including: Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti

Contribution of the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe Project “Education of Roma Children in Europe” (2002-2009) and the follow-up of its results: new programme on intercultural mediation for Roma communities (ROMED) and the International Task Force for the Education of Roma

The project “Education of Roma children in Europe” came to an end after the evaluation conference was held in Bled, Slovenia in May 2009. The conference report is available in English [DGIV/EDU/ROM\(2009\)5](#).

The internet site of the project provides all the results achieved: guidelines for educational policies in favour of Roma, publications, manuals and teaching materials www.coe.int/education/roma

A website dedicated to the genocide against Roma is constantly updated with the necessary information. This site is a unique database existing on this theme. It is the result of Council of Europe/OSCE-ODIHR co-operation: www.romagenocide.org

Outcomes of the Project “Education of Roma Children in Europe”

The future of Roma communities hinges very much on arrangements for the schooling of their children, as education is a key factor in understanding modern reality and in social integration.

That is why **in 2002, the Council of Europe started the “Education of Roma children in Europe” project**, with the aim of implementing the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers’ **Recommendation 2000/4 on the education of Roma in Europe**. The aim of the project was to support and guide, through co-ordination, synthesis and evaluation, information and training, the integration of Roma communities into the mainstream education system. The originality of the project lied in the fact that the Roma themselves were/are actively involved at every stage, mainly through participation in the design and execution of the policies concerning them.

A range of **products** was produced which show the concrete manner of the Council of Europe’s contribution to improving **access to education** for Roma.

Some examples:

- **Strategies for developing national education policies for the Roma.** Specifically, it describes the particular educational context of the Roma and the role of the school. It proposes, via a grid, strategies for implementing those policies. The result is a comprehensive vision of education policy for the Roma, that covers schooling, social inclusion, cultural identity and the promotion of Roma cultural heritage as well as the empowerment and participation of the Roma community.
- **Teaching kit for Roma pre-school children.** This kit prepares Roma and Traveller children who have not attended nursery school and are neither ready nor sufficiently mature for the first primary school class to start school so that they do not fall too far behind.
- **Training seminars in the framework of the “Pestalozzi” programme for education professionals of the Council of Europe.** Every year training seminars are devoted to Roma issues (use of teaching material, Roma culture and history in schools, Roma school mediators, community/family and school, etc.).
- **Guide for Roma school mediators.** Positions such as that of a Roma mediator or school assistant can be made more effective by promoting high-quality initial training geared to the needs on the ground. This Guide contains an occupational profile, training modules for mediators and other essential practical information.
- **Teaching material suitable for use by Roma and non-Roma teachers working with classes made up of both Roma and other children.** This material, in the form of publications or sets of educational fact sheets covering a number of topics, such as history, culture, language, will foster mutual understanding of differences, which is the basic principle underlying the intercultural approach. It can be used in both formal education and non-formal educational settings such as cultural centres or museums of Roma culture and history. Some of this material can be used in the community by children and their parents.
- **The Roma Holocaust.** A section of the Roma website is dedicated to the Roma Holocaust. This work is done in co-operation with OSCE/ODIHR. It comprises 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.
- **Standard-setting tools for the teaching and learning of the Romani language were developed** including a *Curriculum Framework for Romani* and two *European Language Portfolio (ELP) models for Romani*, accompanied by a Teacher Handbook. These tools address different target groups. The *Curriculum Framework for Romani* can be used to design curricula, textbooks and other learning materials as well as for planning and organisation of learning and teaching of Romani in schools in Europe. The *ELP models* are a personal document for use by the learners. Both models were conceived in parallel with

the Framework as a tool to support language learning, promote plurilingualism, and develop intercultural awareness and intercultural competence.

The **International Task Force for the Education of Roma (ITFER)** was established by the Council of Europe, OSCE/ODIHR, UNESCO, UNICEF, the Roma Education Fund, the European Commission and the Open Society Institute. The main mission of the ITFER is to help achieve the education goals for Roma in a more efficient way, as well as to save time and funds. Professional networks and co-ordination between authorities, institutions and NGOs enable a more meaningful involvement of the key actors, especially governments. As a result, implementation of policies at all levels – local, regional, national and international – will be improved and specific problems will be detected more speedily.

A [Recommendation Rec\(2009\)4 to member states on the education of Roma and Travellers](#) in Europe was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 17 June 2009. It is the most recent international official text covering all aspects of the education of Roma and Travellers. This document includes the recommendation on mediation in education: School mediators and/or assistants recruited from Roma and Traveller communities should be employed to facilitate the relations between teachers and Roma or Traveller families, as well as between schools and the Roma or Traveller community. They should be provided with adequate training and support and be accepted as far as possible as full members of the school's *professional team*.

The European Training Programme for Roma Mediators (ROMED)

In the **Strasbourg Declaration** on Roma, adopted in October 2010 at the High Level Meeting on Roma, representatives of Member States agreed that the Council of Europe should implement a **European Training Programme for Roma Mediators** in order to consolidate the existing training programmes and more effectively use existing Council of Europe resources, standards, methodology, networks and infrastructure, in close co-operation with national and local authorities. ROMED has been created.

General aim of the ROMED: To improve the quality and effectiveness of the work of school/health/employment mediators, with a view to supporting better communication and co-operation between Roma and public institutions (school / healthcare providers / employment offices).

Objectives of the ROMED:

- To promote *real and effective intercultural mediation*
- To ensure the integration of a *rights-based approach*
- To support the work of mediators by providing *tools* for planning and implementation of their activities which *encourage democratic participation* while generating *empowerment* of Roma communities and increased *accountability* of public institutions.

The ROMED is not replacing or duplicating the existing training programmes at local or national levels, but is complementing them, providing additional tools and methodologies, and contributing to the development of the core competencies all mediators need. The ROMED will also assist some countries in setting up training programmes.

A framework curriculum: The training will rely on a curriculum with a strong focus on practice and adaptable to specific training needs of mediators working in different contexts and with different institutions and Roma communities.

A European Code of Ethics for Mediators

A set of core principles and norms to guide the work of mediators has been identified as a key tool for protecting the mediator against abuse and for enhancing the quality of the services provided. A first draft, inspired by experiences in various countries, has been drawn up and will be submitted for feedback to mediators attending the trainings.

A pool of trainers and European networking:

A first group of trainers, selected on the basis of an open call, was trained in Strasbourg from 26 to 29 January 2011. A Focal Point has been identified in each country (wherever possible, a Roma organisation with experience on working with mediators). Networking and peer learning will be stimulated via an online platform.

First group of beneficiary countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Turkey, Ukraine. In 2012 the Programme was expanded to other countries (Albania, Belgium, Portugal, the Russian Federation and United Kingdom).

Contact:

Ms Aurora Ailincăi (aurora.ailincăi@coe.int)

Roma Youth Action Plan

The **Roma Youth Action Plan** is a response of the Council of Europe to the challenges faced by Roma young people in Europe, particularly in relation to their empowerment, participation in policy decision-making processes and structures at European level and the realities of discrimination and particularly antigypsyism that they are confronted with.

The action plan includes activities of the Youth Department and of other sectors of the Council of Europe as well as activities by other partners – intergovernmental and non-governmental – cooperating with the Council of Europe and interested in securing a maximum of impact of their activities by avoiding double work and creating synergies between their activities.

Among the activities included in the Plan for 2012 – 2013, several include training of youth leaders and the development of dialogue between youth organisations and civil society in general and local authorities to fight discrimination faced by Roma people.

The Training for Roma youth leaders on taking action against discrimination (October 2012) focussed particularly on training youth leaders and members of civil society on developing actions involving also local and governmental authorities.

A **report** is under preparation by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and the Youth Department on the specific situation of Roma young

people, seeking particularly to identify responses by local authorities for dealing with the specific situations of Roma communities and particularly young people.

In 2013, the Youth Department organised a **seminar on the role of youth policy in tackling the situation of discrimination faced by Roma young people**, with a focus on the situation in Central and Eastern European countries.

The Roma Youth Action is run in close connection with other activities of the Council of Europe and of other stakeholders towards and with Roma youth. An Informal Contact Group meets at least once a year to strategise the activities in the action plan with other programmes and initiatives. OSCE/ODIHR is invited to take part in in the work of the contact group.

Contact:

*Rui Gomes, rui.gomes@coe.int
www.coe.int/youth/roma*

European Academic Network on Romani Studies

The European Academic Network on Romani Studies, a joint Action of the Council of Europe and the European Union, seeks to facilitate intercultural dialogue and support efforts towards the social inclusion of the Roma population in Europe, by offering an interface between academic researchers and political decision makers. The project raises the visibility of existing research and fosters cooperation with policymakers in order to allow for the implementation of better conceived policy initiatives, based on reliable evidence. One of its key roles is thus to provide references and guidance to policymakers but also to young researchers, by mapping relevant research in the field of Romani studies and developing a scientifically reliable knowledge database on Roma.

In June 2013, the project has entered its second phase. As part of the 2013 agenda, the Scientific Committee, as steering body of the network, will hold its 5th meeting on 25 and 26 September 2013 in Marseille, France, followed by an academic seminar on the “European dimension of Roma Culture: scientific and political discourses”, involving approx. 40 experts, as well as a public conference, organised to disseminate the outcomes of the seminar to a broader audience.

Grants to young career researchers are an important part of the 2013 work agenda. The grants will encourage young career researchers in Roma and Roma-related areas to travel, publish and participate in major international events.

The communication platforms of the network have become significant visibility tools: the interactive website (<http://romanistudies.eu>), comprising a full list of the more than 300 members of the network and their main publications, a database of experts and official documents as well as regularly updated news reports; the network domain on the Council of Europe portal (www.coe.int/romastudies); the Facebook page (www.facebook.com/romanistudies.eu) of the network.

Contact:

*Kathrin MERKLE, kathrin.merkle@coe.int
www.coe.int/romastudies - <http://romanistudies.eu>*

Cultural resources for Roma inclusion

The project aims at working with five Roma settlements in Europe on the development of detailed business plans inspired by the successful experience of Roma settlement Kamenci¹ in North-Eastern Slovenia. Kamenci succeeded in creating a sustainable set of activities which enable non-Roma visitors to experience Roma culture and engage in a dialogue with the members of the Roma community.

During the feasibility phase (August 2012 – January 2013), five Roma settlements in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Hungary and Slovenia have been selected to take part in the project. These settlements are working on the identification of the cultural and artistic activities to be developed. The mapping process has already shown that there is an important potential of cultural heritage that has so far not been sufficiently exploited and which constitutes an interesting cultural tourism offer to be developed in these countries and regions.

By December 2013, all settlements will have finalised the business plans listing the needs in material and operational requirements, training, defining the role and tasks of the Roma partner for the implementation of the project. A special attention will be paid to the role Roma women should play and it is foreseen that some activities are managed by them.

At the final meeting in Budapest in December 2013, the business plans will be discussed and presented to potential funders for the implementation phase starting in 2014 – 2016.

Contact:

*Irène WEIDMANN, irene.weidmann@coe.int
www.coe.int/Romainclusion*

¹ In Kamenci a series of cultural activities and resources have been developed by the Roma inhabitants with the help of facilitators and artists. These activities involve cultural workshops for non-Roma visitors such as herbs and gardening, legends, music and poetry, photography workshops for children, summer camps for a mix of Roma and non-Roma children, a museum of Roma heritage and a cultural events centre. The activities have been established on a more or less permanent basis, attracting over 5000 visitors a year, providing sustainable income for families, recognition of Roma culture and empowerment of Roma inhabitants as decision-makers and managers of their activity. The results in terms of community cohesion, organisation and stability and improvement of working conditions for families are impressive. The artistic workshops and activities provide a positive environment for encounters and dialogue between Roma and non-Roma. Several EU-funded projects have been carried out in Kamenci – as a result, the infrastructure of the settlement and the livelihood of the people were greatly improved.