



OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Conference

Warsaw, 22 September- 3 October 2014

Working session 12 –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).

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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.

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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. Emphasis is on the facilitation of exchanges and the creation of an interface between the academic community and policy making bodies, such as National Ministries of Education, Culture and Social Affairs of the European Union and the Council of Europe Member States, international organisations, and other transnational actors in policy making. By also promoting and improving the existing resources on the European Roma communities, the Network shall ultimately allow for the implementation of better conceived policy initiatives based on reliable evidence.

As part of the 2013-2015 agenda, the Scientific Committee, as steering body of the network, held 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.

On 7 and 8 April 2014 the Scientific Committee held its 6th meeting in Conjunction with the MigRom Consortium meeting in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. A series of workshops in 2014/15 to bridge the gap between Academia and Policy making has been decided upon.

The Secretary of the Network attended the European Roma Summit “Going local on Roma Inclusion”, Brussels, 4 April 2014. Three meetings with National Contact Points for the Inclusion of Roma (NCP) have been organised, two in Italy and one in the United Kingdom. Two members of the SC were invited to present the Network in an exchange of views organised to enhance cooperation between the Network and CAHROM at the 7th CAHROM meeting, 14-16 May 2014, Strasbourg. The presentations were preceded and followed by a series of bilateral meetings between members of the SC with Roma-related entities of the CoE.

Grants to early career researchers are an important part of the 2014 work agenda. The grants offered 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>) is being renewed in spring/summer 2014 to improve access to the full list of more than 370 members of the network and their main publications. The site will also offer a database of experts and official documents as well as regularly updated news reports; the network page on the Council of Europe portal (www.coe.int/romastudies); the email-group of the membership (romani_studies_network@yahoo.com); and the Facebook page (www.facebook.com/romanistudies.eu) of the network with more than 1000 regular followers.

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www.coe.int/romastudies - <http://romanistudies.eu>