

Fighting Anti-Gypsism by education
Synthesis of "The Voice of the Roms" intervention NGOs Forum
Sevilla 7 June 2005

ENGLISH only

Definition of Anti-Gypsism. The Anti-Gypsism is the racism against the **Rromani people**, which is composed of the **Rroms**, the **Sinti** (also called Manouches) and the **Kale** (also called Gitanos).

The Rromani people, estimated to be approximately **12 million in Europe**, is confronted with many challenges. One of the problems that have increased with the years is the Anti-Gypsism. This explains why many Rromani NGOs concentrate their efforts in fighting this plague. Contrary to what one can think, Anti-Gypsism does not concern only the Rroms. Although they are the direct victims, Anti-Gypsism affects, more generally, the social cohesion. There are different manners to fight Anti-Gypsism, but the two most important ones are the following:

- **Mainstream society education.** In many cases, an Anti-Gypsist does not know the Rroms. The experiences show that prejudices on Rroms are common place and perceived as normal. Thus, informing people on the real identity, values and contribution of the Rroms to the societies they live in, is a way to combat Anti-Gypsism.
- **Including Rromani related education in the mainstream formal curricula.** This second approach is far more likely to bring sustainable and long term effects. It has a double aim: (a) giving to Rromani pupils a solid education in/on their language, their history and their culture, which means, in simple terms, assuring a fair equality in education for all, and (b) giving to every pupil all the necessary elements of reflection in order to make an objective opinion on the Rroms, which means avoiding the risk of prejudices.

Both ways include education, and they are complementary. The first one responds to the urgent needs – meaning combating the existing Anti-Gypsism, which existence is widely recognized. The second one is more profound, as it touches the younger generation.

Moreover, the Action Plan of the OSCE on improving the situation of Roma and Sinti especially provides in its chapter 5 (Education) for such actions. Indeed, with such an approach, the probabilities of eradicating possible existing prejudices and having long-lasting results are higher.

What is needed to achieve these two forms of education?

- **Expertise.** Identifying expertise is an action which in itself can express the Anti-Gypsism of the person who looks for it. It is equally racist to state "there are no experts" or to say "every Rrom is an expert". In reality, expertise on Rroms is quite scarce, but it exists. Thus, one should fully use the existing expertise while developing new human resources. European programs should give the possibility to the numerous candidates to study in high quality universities in Western Europe, who also offer quality formation on Rromani subjects.
- **Concrete political will for cooperation.** This is the sine qua non condition for any step in any of the ways exposed above. Actually, very often the existing expertise is not used, while some so called "experts" with no expertise neither on their field, nor on the Rroms, feel free and are supported to state anything on Rroms. The cooperation between decision makers and Rroms should be based on honest basis in a spirit of a real contract: Rroms can, and wish, to contribute with their expertise (formalized or not, but in any case real), while the decision makers contribute to this common enterprise with the necessary financial and institutional means.