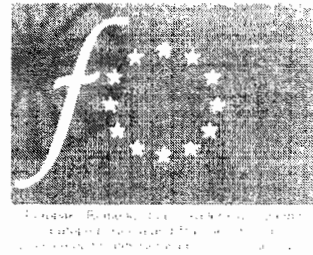


## EUROPEAN ROMA AND TRAVELLERS FORUM

### DG-II Social Cohesion

Educational and Cultural Commission of ERTF  
Director Stanislaw Stankiewicz



**Białystok, August 9-10, 2007/Poland/**

### **First Draft - Some Strategic Elements of Roma Education**

Several directorates were formed by the European Roma and Travellers Forum (hereinafter ERTF or Forum), with the task of coordinating and organising the Forum's work in specific policy areas. To date, three such directorates exist each including several commissions:

- I-Human Rights, Social Cohesion, Migration and Refugee
- II- Education and Culture
- III-EU-Policy and Enlargement

The Directorate of Education, Culture, History and Holocaust had its first meeting in Białystok 9-10. August 2007. In the first planning meeting it started to prepare the educational strategy of the Forum and drafted guidelines for the near future activities.

The first draft of a policy paper on Educational Strategy including the Action Plan for 2007 - 2008, has the goal to reach the level of close cooperation with the Steering Committee of Education in Council of Europe and all other relevant sources working with the development of Roma Education.

### **I. Educational problems of Roma in European countries**

The main challenges of Roma Education are crystallized with few main priorities to be developed, which can be named as follows:

1. Overcome through resourced integration measures the deep poverty circle and social segregation, which leads to obstacles on equal participation for education (no proper housing, no shoes and cloths, no money for food and School-books and for travel to school, no proper road and no school bus transport to the school)
2. The objective have to be free access to day-care and pre-school /zero-class training for all Roma children
2. Desegregation of separate Roma (Gypsy) sub-standard school environments to a normal Mixed school systems with quality learning opportunities
3. Right to maintain plurilingual and multicultural abilities; such as right to learn own Mother tongue romani in parallel with the official national language

4. Maintenance of cultural diversity between home and school; romani-school mediators, Romani language teachers
5. Increasing tolerance and equality among different population groups by incorporating Information of Roma population to the national teacher training programs and teaching Material production from day-care and pre-school level up to higher education
5. Preservation of romani history including the remembrance of holocaust and development/ Maintenance of romani culture by establishment of Roma cultural centers and museums

The first preparatory meeting of the Commission of Roma Education and Culture pinned down some near future actions, which can give clarity to the practical situation regarding Roma children's rights to the education provisions, laid down through legal reforms or other means by Council of Europe member states.

The Council of Europe, DG-III Social Cohesion Roma and Travellers Division, made an evaluation year 2003, on the request of the Committee of Ministers, related to the level of opportunities to Roma, for participation in the member states, which was one of the first steps in the preparation process of the establishment of the European Roma and Travellers Forum.

The Education Commission intends to ask, the DG-III Roma and Travellers Division to assist them in clearing out and evaluating the:

- Educational laws in European countries regarding Roma education
- What is done and what resources are used
- What are the problems?
- What are the legal reforms /education law concerning tuition of romani language as mother tongue

This information is part of the ground clarification package, which will guide the work of Education Commission in its future task, to raise the theme of Roma education needs on higher political level of the European Ministers of Education and on the political commitment of correcting the still existing vulnerable education situation of Roma.

### **International Co-operation on Roma education issues**

Keeping in mind all work done already, by many active partners in the Roma education matters, the Commission don't want to turn the wheel backwards, on the contrary. It does seek a strategic partnerships and sharing of the information by those who have worked on roma children's education field during many years. The Commission is planning to do this, by aiming to build a net-work of cooperation between institutions and NGO actors during the next coming two years. The Steering Committee of Education in the CoE have run a large Roma Education project since 2002 and education is one of the four main priority areas of the Roma Decade. Unisef have during many years supported both survey and teaching material production on Roma education field. Development of Roma education has been one of the funding priorities for EU since 1989, once the EC made its first Resolution on Roma Children's Education. European Roma Rights Center has done pilot research and follow-up on Roma children and segregation-desegregation matters for years. The newly established Roma Education Fund is aiming to support Roma related education projects. All these work, is to be taken account and collected for ground base of political evaluation and further development plans on the field of Roma education.

## **II. Roma education situation in the European countries from NGO point of view and their chances to act and influence in mainstream schooling**

The Education Commission does also see as an important goal, to prepare a questionnaire during autumn 2008, to the Roma NGOs network related to the Forum, regarding the educational problems of Roma, need of assistance from Roma point of view and level of interest to give expertise for local school municipalities in the European countries. The Commission intends to analyze the answers and develop a strategy for finding solutions on the issues foreseen as obstacles for Roma education

- A. analyze the questionnaire and the information coming from Roma NGO-s
- B. clarifying the role of Roma teaching assistants, school-mediators, romani Language teachers in the schools and their status
- C. evaluation of the educational process of schooling for Roma in European Countries

## **III. Communication and relation between the Commission of Education (CE) and the CoE- DGIV Education, Steering Committee on Education (SCE) and the Ministers of Education (MoE) in European countries and other high level educational institutions**

### **These strategy goals are foreseen for work period of 2007-2010**

The Education Commission seeks to build a permanent cooperation with the CoE-DGIV Education, CoE Steering Committee of Education, Expert Committee on Charter for Regional and Minority Language, Framework Committee on Protection of National Minorities and other similar bodies as this is explicitly encouraged in the ERTF-CoE Partnership Agreement.

Therefore the Education Commission calls upon the following goals in its cooperation with the all the above mentioned sources and the preparations of the annual conferences of the Ministers of Education of the Coe member states:

- A. quality education of Romani children.
- B. systemic desegregation of Roma children to a mixed school classes
- C. the mainstream schools have to teach about Roma origins and History and to enlarge the elements of intercultural by hiring Roma school Assistants, school mediators and romani language teachers
- D. the Romani history should be drawn from Romani historians and literature
- E. invite parents and other members of Roma communities to visit school, use the inter-Ethnic cultural diversity aspects in relation with the annual school festivals and yearly celebrations organized by school personnel and school environment
- F. Romani language must be recognized as a mother tongue of Roma accordingly to the National ratification of the Charter of Minority languages in every member state; Roma and, Sinti and Travellers children must have the right to choose the bilingual Education - to have education in the national language and in their own language. This

- Must be a choice of the parents and not of the school system or other sources  
 Romani culture and language need's to be integrated in the ordinary school curriculum.
- G. general school education and teaching materials needs also to take into account the History of Roma and their contribution to the national cultural and historical heritage
  - H. the history of holocaust and persecution of Roma needs to be systematically taught And included in the school curriculum
  - I. schools education should tackle the phenomenon of anti-Gypsyism and rise Awareness about its dangers
  - J. language education needs to be handled in a flexible way in order to take into account The specific situation of children growing up with a mother tongue different from the Mother tongue of the majority or with two and more languages.
  - K. Roma should be encouraged to take professions related to education and training
  - L. Roma acting as mediators in these fields should be given the possibility to upgrade Their skills and embrace regular posts within the educational system
  - M. the Commission aims to influence the SCE to use the expertise of Roma education Experts and romani teachers in conferences and seminars, preparations of national Mainstream curriculums and preparations of national romani curriculums (accordingly to the given CoE the Framework of Romani Curriculum)
  - N. the Commission aims to work closely with media structures to rise Awareness and tolerance towards Roma educational needs
  - O. the Commission aims to search for people (Roma education experts) on local, regional and national level in the European countries ready to help and cooperate with Roma Education
  - P. Autumn 2007, the ERTF/DGII-CE is applying a permanent seat/observer-expert seat in the Steering Committee of the Education
  - Q. Autumn 2007, the ERTF/DGII-CE is applying a permanent seat/observer-expert seat in The Expert Committee of the Charter for Regional and minority languages; consultationon education issues of the ERFT-EC at any stage during the monitoring exercise to obtain information on the situation in a specific country. The ERTF-EC may draw the attention of the Committee of Experts to information relating to the use of the Romani languages in a State Party in cooperation with a legally established national body or association;
  - R. Autumn 2007, the ERTF/DGII-CE is applying a permanent seat/observer-expert seat in The Expert Committee of the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities; consultation on the national reports submitted by member States regarding education issues
  - S. The ERF should serve as a resource for Roma education issues, providing information to all above mentioned Committees and give advice on specific situations in the implementation of recommendations made.

#### **IV. Education of young Roma and their chances to continue education at University; educational programs for official language education and the status of Romani language education at University level.**

1. The goal of the Education Commission (EC) is to have a subjective right to day care and pre-school/ preparatory class opportunity for Roma children in all CoE member states
2. EC aims to encourage relevant education authorities to research and make surveys' on the existing obstacles for the postgraduate studies of the young Roma; aiming to clarify how many of them continue their education at university level and what are the obstacles to continue education at university
3. EC aims to include fixed-term quota's for Roma students (as a positive discrimination measure) on the national Roma Development Strategies on certain Roma relevant profession fields
4. EC aims to promote scholarship programs for talented young Roma students coming from poor social conditions
5. EC aims to develop a strategy to fight the discrimination in school and at the university level jointly with the national education structures and CoE- SCE
6. EC aims to promote the awareness of the Framework Curriculum on Romani developed by Council of Europe jointly with ERTF and other CoE-DG IV Roma Education program instructions, publication, hand-books related to the guidance of Roma education policies
7. EC aims to reach the recognition of the European Education Ministers, in their next joint European conference, on the romani language as the mother tongue of the pan-European Roma children and the Framework Curriculum of Romani drawn by CoE and ERTF

#### **V. Developing educational programs on Romani language, history and culture in schools**

1. The EC aims to consult and collect information formal relevant institutions and other Parties working in the field of Romani language education
2. The EC aims to organize a joint meeting jointly with Council of Europe DGIV, May 2008 on launching the Framework Curriculum of Romani to all CoE member states
3. The EC aims to organize a meeting with group of experts with authors of textbooks on Romani language, culture and history to coordinate the content of the school textbooks And text books for University students, year 2009

## **Action Plan of the Education Commission 2007 - first half of 2008**

The Education Commission intends to ask, the DG-III Roma and Travellers Division to assist them in clearing out and evaluating- Educational laws in European countries regarding Roma education

- What is done and what resources are used
- What are the problems?
- What are the legal reforms /education law concerning tuition of romani language as mother tongue

This information is part of the ground clarification package, which will guide the work of Education Commission in its future task, to raise the theme of Roma education needs on higher political level of the European Ministers of Education and on the political commitment of correcting the still existing vulnerable education situation of Roma.

To contact the Ministries of Education and inform them about the Education Commission of ERTF

December 2007

To contact the Roma educational NGO-s to ask for information about education situation in the respected countries

December 2007

To prepare a working program for 2007-2010 of the Educational Committee of ERTF

November 2007

To find financial support for the activities during 2007 and 2008

October 2007

Lobbing among Roma politicians and Roma NGO-s to make known the strategy of Roma education

December 2007

To seek / apply a way to cooperate with the Steering Committee of Education (CoE) and other institutions (UN-UNICEF, EU, Roma Decade, Roma Education Fund, European Roma Rights Centre) and to ask for a position for a representative of ERTF.

December 2007

ERTF/DGII-CE is applying a permanent seat/observer-expert seat in The Steering Committee of the Education

Autumn 2007

ERTF/DGII-CE is applying a permanent seat/observer-expert seat in The Expert Committee of the Charter for Regional and minority languages

Autumn 2007

ERTF/DGII-CE is applying a permanent seat/observer-expert seat in the Expert Committee of the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities

Autumn 2007

## **Year 2008**

Preparation of the questionnaire to be send to Roma NGOs on the educational situation obstacles of Roma children

April 2008

Joint conference with the CoE - DGIV on the piloting of the Curriculum for Romani and launching it to the Council of Europe member states; evaluation future cooperation and policies on this issue

May 2008

Stanislaw Stankiewicz (Chair) / Poland  
Miranda Vuolasranta (Cordinator) /Finland  
Hristo Kuchikov/Bulgaria  
Perić Jasar Rabie from Macedonia

## **HEARING OF THE EUROPEAN ROMA AND TRAVELLERS FORUM**

### **European Roma and Travellers Forum**

Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 14 November 2005  
MIN-LANG (2005) 19  
Appendix I

### **POLICY PAPER ON THE ROMANI LANGUAGE**

#### **October 2005**

It is the view of the ERTF that;

- The Romani language must be recognized as a language, according to the Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, in every member state. It must be allocated a position in the national curriculum and afforded an appropriate budget.
- It is the belief of the ERTF that the Romani language should also have status as an European language.
- The lack of an internationally recognized 'standard dialect' is not a barrier to a state's implementation of rights related to language use and learning. Roma and Travellers, like others have language-related rights which can and should be respected.
- Roma and Travellers must have the opportunity to choose bilingual education, so that they may learn both in the national language and in their own language. This must be a choice of parents and not of the schooling system or others.
- Romani language teaching must be available in different forms for pupils who speak the language at home and pupils with no prior basis in the language.
- The goal of teaching Romani language is not only to enable a student to speak one dialect well but also to understand and have some knowledge of the Romani used by others across Europe. While a Standard Dialect is not needed, mutual comprehension and 'linguistic pluralism' are essential.
- It is desirable to pursue international networking for the production of texts and teaching materials in Romani, even if one accepts that material creation is ultimately regional, national or local. There is every reason to draw on a wider pool of talent, experience and expertise and pursue the development of language resources for Romani in an international context.