

# ECRI

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance  
Commission européenne contre le racisme et l'intolérance

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## **European Commission against Racism and Intolerance**

### **PRACTICAL EXAMPLES IN COMBATING RACISM AND INTOLERANCE AGAINST ROMA/GYPSIES**

Strasbourg, October 2001



COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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## FOREWORD

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The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) is a mechanism which was established by the first Summit of Heads of State and Government of the member States of the Council of Europe (October 1993). ECRI's task is to combat racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance at the level of greater Europe and from the perspective of the protection of human rights. ECRI's members are independent experts, nominated on the basis of their moral authority and recognised expertise in dealing with matters related to the fight against racism and intolerance. ECRI's programme of activities comprises three aspects: country-by-country approach; work on general themes; activities in relation to civil society.

One of ECRI's activities, falling under the second element of its programme of work on general themes, is to collect examples of current "good practices" in member States for combating racism and intolerance in different areas. ECRI publishes these examples in a series of collected "good practices", which are distributed among those circles interested in combating racism and

intolerance, to serve as a source of inspiration.

The present publication contains practical examples in combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies. The examples cited have been compiled by an independent consultant, Mr Robin OAKLEY. This publication is intended to accompany ECRI general policy recommendation N° 3 on Combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies, which was adopted on 6 March 1998, and which provides guidelines for the development of comprehensive national policies in this respect.

Readers of this publication are asked to note that its status is that of a **compilation** of examples presented in the form of a catalogue. The examples should in no respect be considered as having the status of recommendations to member States of the Council of Europe. Furthermore, since ECRI itself has chosen not to make any value judgments concerning these examples, they are presented here solely for information purposes, to provide inspiration to interested parties.



## INTRODUCTION

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The aim of this booklet is to present examples of Roma-specific practical measures that may assist with implementation of ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No.3, on combating racism and discrimination against Roma/Gypsies.

The booklet does not attempt to cover all areas of Policy Recommendation No.3, but focuses on the following three priority fields: (a) Roma empowerment, (b) education and youth, and (c) policing and justice.<sup>1</sup> A set of main examples of 'good practice' are outlined for each field, and similar examples are also listed briefly in some instances. Contact details have been provided, to enable further information to be obtained.

The examples have been drawn from across Europe. Roma/Gypsies and related groups<sup>2</sup> are represented in varying numbers in all countries of Europe. The fact that most Roma in Europe live in countries in Central and Eastern Europe is reflected in the majority of examples being drawn from this area. On the other hand, that some countries are not included, or that some projects do not feature on the list, is not in any way a negative judgement about them. The examples have been selected to illustrate the range and diversity of possible initiatives, and not to provide a comprehensive overview or appraisal. Some are measures introduced by governments, some are projects initiated by NGOs, and some are of a more mixed character. Priority has been given to initiatives that are potentially replicable in other local and national contexts.

Documentation about current initiatives relates to late 2000 or early 2001, which is the period during which information was collected.

During the preparation of this booklet, the issue of what constitutes 'good practice' has been raised many times. Four criteria have been used as guidelines: (a) whether the initiative addresses an identified need; (b) whether it has been successfully established over a period of time, and has been documented; (c) whether it is subjectively regarded as 'good practice' by Roma and professionals working in the field who are familiar with it; and (d) whether it has been shown to be effective by independent evaluation. At the present time, very few projects have been subject to independent evaluation. For the most part, therefore, only the first three criteria could be used to guide the selection of examples, and the assessment of them as 'good practices' must consequently be regarded as provisional. It is recommended that, in future, more resources should be allocated for systematic evaluation of the kinds of initiatives cited as 'good practices' in this document.

The Consultant would like to acknowledge the assistance of members of ECRI and of the Council of Europe Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies (MG-S-ROM), of the Office of the Coordinator for Roma/Gypsy Affairs and the European Youth Centre, and of numerous other individuals and representatives of NGOs and other bodies, for contributing advice and information on which this booklet is based. He would also like to acknowledge that such a small selection of examples can in no way do justice to the wide range of efforts currently being made to address Roma issues across Europe, especially by Roma NGOs.

Robin Oakley  
Consultant

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<sup>1</sup> Other fields, such as housing, community development and employment are already covered by separate good practice documents, e.g. *Breaking the Vicious Circle*, published by SPOLU International and the CEGA Foundation, Sofia 2000.

<sup>2</sup> In this booklet, the term Roma is used to refer collectively to a wide diversity of ethnic groups who identify themselves as Roma, Sinti, Gypsies, Travellers or by other names.



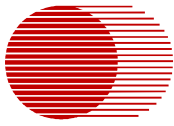
## **SECTION A – ROMA EMPOWERMENT MEASURES**

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## **INTRODUCTION: ROMA EMPOWERMENT MEASURES**

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The fundamental challenge for pluralistic societies in Europe is to ensure that minorities participate on an equal basis in the exercise of power. If minorities have limited access to, or are excluded from the exercise of power, this violates the principles of democracy and human rights and creates a society based on ethnic domination and subordination.

Roma across Europe have experienced exclusion from the exercise of power in society for centuries. The means have been either direct oppression and segregation rooted in anti-gypsyism, or enforced assimilation as under the communist system. The effect, varying in degree from country to country, has been the destruction of traditional resources, skills and identity, leading in turn to social and economic marginalisation and dependence.

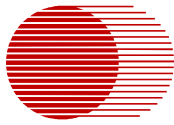
To rectify this exclusion, there is a need for Roma to become empowered at all levels and in all spheres so that they can participate fully in determining both their own future and that of the wider society in which they live. This is recognised in ECRI's Policy Recommendation No.3, as well as in other international documents and programmes, including the EU Accession Guidelines adopted at the Tampere Summit in 1999 and the programmes of the Open Society Institute. In particular, the ECRI document stresses the need for institutional arrangements for Roma participation in decision-making at local and national levels, for establishing consultative mechanisms and partnership structures, for training provision to equip Roma with knowledge and skills to implement their rights, and for support for Roma organisations which can play an essential role in mobilising Roma opinion and participation.

The entries that follow provide examples of the above kinds of empowerment mechanisms at both national and local levels. Beginning with the national level, the first entry describes the Czech version of the type of 'inter-ministerial commission' on Roma issues that has now been established in a number of countries of Central/Eastern Europe. The second entry describes the currently unique post established in Slovakia of Government Commissioner on Roma Affairs. The third documents the Finnish version of the more conventional type of consultative or advisory body, of which a number of variants may be found across Europe. None of the above, however, have any significant executive authority, and remain essentially advisory structures. Other mechanisms for promoting Roma participation in decision-making include the Hungarian Roma Self-Government Councils (both national and local) and the seat in the Romanian Parliament allocated to the Roma community. There is an urgent need for the effectiveness of

these various government-led mechanisms, several of which have proven controversial within the Roma community, to be subject to monitoring and evaluation.

A further empowerment mechanism within the government structure, to date mainly at local rather than national levels, has been the introduction of posts of Romani Adviser. The fourth entry describes this scheme as introduced in the Czech Republic. The fifth entry focusses on empowerment at the local level by means advocacy on the part of Roma NGOs, whether legally-oriented or in the form of direct representation to public authorities. The sixth entry focuses on how the appointment of a Roma/Gypsy liaison officer at the local level can contribute to community empowerment and mediation with public authorities. The seventh entry presents an example in which the emphasis in the approach to Roma empowerment is placed firmly on the philosophy of 'self-help' and local community development, while the eight and final example focuses on women's empowerment at the local level.

The theme of 'Roma empowerment' should not be regarded as separate from other sections of this booklet. Several of the examples in the other sections also illustrate mechanisms for Roma empowerment, including the empowerment of women and young people. Once again it must be stressed that the examples given can only be a small sample of many initiatives across Europe, few of which have yet been adequately documented or evaluated.



## **1. INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMISSION ON ROMA, CZECH REPUBLIC**

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The Inter-Ministerial Commission for Roma Community Affairs, which was established in the Czech Republic in 1997, was the first of a number of inter-ministerial structures on Roma issues to be set up in Central/Eastern Europe. Its role is to advise on, initiate and coordinate policy of the Czech Government regarding the status of Roma in Czech society.

The Commission was established following a comprehensive report (the Bratinka Report) on the situation of Roma in the Czech Republic. Initially it was responsible directly to a Government Minister who acted as Chair. In 1998, however, the Government established a more broadly-based Council for Human Rights, and the Inter-Ministerial Commission is now chaired by the Commissioner for Human Rights. The Inter-Ministerial Commission is composed of an Executive Vice-Chairman (who is responsible for the Commission Office), twelve representatives of the main Government Departments, and twelve appointed representatives of the Roma community.

The functions of the Commission include the following: to review draft government measures concerning Roma; to evaluate the effectiveness of such measures; to propose, monitor and evaluate allocation of funds for the advancement of Roma; collect data and report on conditions in the Roma community; to inform Roma about government measures; and to cooperate with Roma/pro-Roma organisations in the development of projects and programmes. The Commission is therefore more than simply an advisory body, since it plays a potentially important role in communication and in initiating, monitoring and facilitating government policy and practice. However, it does not have any executive powers in these areas, and (as pointed out in the second ECRI report on the Czech Republic) its capacity is limited by the modest resources available to it.

► **Contact:**

Inter-Ministerial Commission for Roma Affairs  
Office of Government of the Czech Republic  
Vladislavova 4,  
110 00 Prague 1  
Tel: +420-2-9615.3573 - Fax: -2494.6615

**SIMILAR EXAMPLES:**

In **Romania**, the Government's Inter-Ministerial Commission on National Minorities is accompanied by a Sub-Commission for Roma Issues. Roma NGOs, concerned about their exclusion from policy-making, formed a Working Group (GLAR) to negotiate with the Government on the elaboration of its PHARE-funded national strategy for Roma. Roma representatives nominated by GLAR now participate in the Sub-Commission, which is chaired jointly by a GLAR representative and the Head of the Government Office for Roma.

▶ Contact: National Office for Roma, Department for Protection of National Minorities, 1 Victoria Square, Bucharest; Tel: +40-1-230.62.08 - Fax: -221.61.37

In **Bulgaria**, the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCEDI) has established a Roma Working Group composed of representatives of Roma NGOs. This Group has elected delegates to work jointly with ministerial officials to implement the various sections of the Government's 'Framework Programme for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society'.

▶ Contact: NCEDI, 1 Dondukov Blvd, 1000 Sofia; Tel: +359-2-987.83.26 - Fax: -986.27.32



## **2. GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONER ON ROMA AFFAIRS, SLOVAKIA**

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In Slovakia, the Government has established the post of 'Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for the Solution of Problems of the Roma Minority' (also referred to as 'Government Commissioner on Roma Affairs'). The post is located within the Office of the Government. The Commissioner has his own Advisory Board, and is supported by a small Secretariat.

This post expresses the Slovak Government's specific commitment to address issues concerning the Roma minority, within a broader policy framework focussing on human rights, and minority issues generally. Within the Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights, a Sub-Commission on Roma serves as an advisory body to the Government on Roma Issues. The Government has also established an Advisory Council on National Minorities and Ethnic Groups, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister who has responsibility for these issues. Three of the fourteen members of the Advisory Council are representatives of the Roma community.

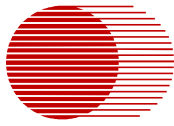
The role of the Commissioner is to coordinate the Government's policies on Roma issues, and to make recommendations to individual ministries. Following his appointment, the Commissioner conducted a fact-finding mission in eastern Slovakia. Based on his findings, he prepared a proposal for a long-term government programme to improve the situation of Roma in the Slovak Republic. In September 1999, the programme was adopted by the Slovak Government as the 'Strategy of the Government for the Solution of Problems of the Roma National Minority, and a Set of Measures for its Implementation - Stage 1'. The latter cover areas such as education, language and culture, employment, housing, health and social welfare.

Following a further programme of meetings with mayors, regional and district authorities, and representatives of Roma organisations, the Commissioner drew up a more elaborated package of measures for the implementation of the strategy. This 'Stage II Package of Concrete measures for the Year 2000' was approved by the Government in May 2000. The measures require action by both central and local authorities, and provide for extensive participation by NGOs and the Roma community.

This unique and relatively new post has allowed a member of the Roma community to spearhead government policy initiatives on Roma issues. How effective the role of the Commissioner can be in ensuring the implementation of these initiatives remains to be seen. As ECRI has pointed out in its second report on Slovakia, it will be essential for the Government to ensure that the Commissioner's office has the necessary powers and resources to fulfil its task.

►► **Contact:**

Commissioner of the Government of the Slovak  
Republic for the Romany Affairs  
Office of Government SR  
Namestie slobody 1  
SK - 813 70 BRATISLAVA 1  
Tel: +421 7 59 364 305 - Fax: +421 7 59 364 421



### 3. ADVISORY BOARD ON ROMANI AFFAIRS, FINLAND

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In Finland, which has a population of approximately 10,000 Roma, a national advisory structure has been in existence since 1956. The present 'Advisory Board on Romani Affairs' was established by the Council of State in 1989. Its purpose is to promote equal opportunities for the participation of Roma in Finnish society, and to improve their social, cultural, economic and educational circumstances. The Board advises on both the development and implementation of government policy. It also monitors and advises on the implementation of the rights of Roma under international agreements and conventions.

Members of the Board are appointed for a period of three years. Half of the 18 members are appointed on recommendations from the main Romani associations. The other members are representatives of government, and consist mainly of representatives of national Ministries, including Social Affairs and Health, Education, Labour, Environment, Interior, and Foreign Affairs. The Board has a Secretary-General, who is herself a member of the Finnish Romani community. The Board is located within the Ministry for Social Affairs and Health, which has overall responsibility for Romani Affairs within the governmental structure.

Within the Ministry of Education, there is also a Romani Education Unit in the National Board of Education. The role of this Unit is to develop and implement national-level policy on the education of Roma, and to promote Romani language and culture. An executive group, which includes representatives of the Romani community, directs the activities of the Unit. The Unit also organises seminars and courses (for both Roma and the majority population), provides training for contact persons, and publishes a bulletin and learning materials.

Provincial Advisory Boards were established on an experimental basis in 1996, and aim to strengthen Roma participation at municipal and county levels. The Provincial Advisory Boards aim to stimulate new initiatives and projects at local and county levels across a wide range of fields: education, housing, employment, health and welfare, and so on. The Boards bring together Roma and local and county officials, and meet the need to disseminate information, promote tolerance, combat prejudice and racism, and mediate between public authorities and Roma.

In 1999, on the recommendation of the national Advisory Board, the Ministry of Social Affairs commissioned a comprehensive review of the situation of Roma in Finland, with the requirement that it should make proposals for the future development of government policy regarding the Romani community. Its report, *Strategies of the Policy on Roma*, contains a wide range of recommendations. These include that the legal status and resourcing of the national Advisory Board should be strengthened, and that it should be relocated within the Ministry of Education. It also recommends that the Provincial Advisory Boards should be formalised, and that mechanisms for Romani participation and joint-planning at municipal level should be introduced.

► **Contact:**

The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs in Finland  
Ministry of Social Affairs and Health  
PO Box 33, FIN-00023 GOVERNMENT  
Finland  
Tel: +358-9-160.4306/4308 - Fax: +358-9-160.4312

**SIMILAR EXAMPLES:**

**Sweden:** Since 1996, the Swedish Government has been cooperating via a government-appointed Working Group with the national umbrella organisation, the Roma National Union. The aim is to improve the situation of Roma in Sweden, and raise awareness of Roma issues.

► **Contact:** Cissi Storck, Secretary to the Working Group, Division for Immigrant Integration and Diversity, Ministry of Industry, S-10333 Stockholm,  
Tel: +46-8-405.11.96

**Spain:** A Consultative Commission advises the Spanish Government on its Gitano Development Programme which was established in 1988. Its membership is comprised of representatives of national NGOs concerned with Gitano issues, and of Gitano NGOs operating at the level of the autonomous regional administrations. The Government provides substantial funding to NGOs to implement this programme, and the Commission advises on the allocation of these funds. While the Spanish approach directly involves Gitano representatives in policy development and implementation, there has been concern that it can also create conflicts of interest for the participating bodies.

► **Contact:** Comisión Consultativa del Programa de Desarrollo Gitano, Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, C./José Abascal 39, 28003 Madrid; Tel: +34-91-347.74.77 - Fax: -347.74.58

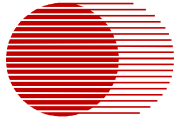
**Switzerland:** The Swiss Government finances the umbrella organisation of the Swiss Jenish/Manush Travellers community, the '*Radgenossenschaft der Landstrasse*'. It has also created and finances a tripartite 'Foundation for the Future of Swiss Travellers', on whose board are represented the federal government, cantons, communes and the *Radgenossenschaft der Landstrasse*. The Foundation's role is tackle discrimination against Travellers in fields such as education and the provision of local stopping-places.

► **Contact:** Federal Commission Against Racism, 3003 Bern; Tel: +41-31-324.1283, Fax: -322.4437

**Ireland:** The government has encouraged the participation of Traveller organisations in consultative and advisory committees at national and local levels. Traveller organisations participate in bodies such as the National Economic and Social Forum, the National Economic and Social Council, and the National Agreement negotiations. This ensures that the concerns of Travellers are brought to the attention of bodies that predominantly represent the interests of the settled community. Traveller organisations also participate in the national and local advisory/consultative bodies that focus specifically on Traveller issues, e.g. in education, accommodation and health.

► **Contact:** Equal Status Division, Department of Justice, 43-49 Mespil Road, Dublin 4; Tel: +353-1-663.2615





## **4. ROMANI ADVISERS IN GOVERNMENT, CZECH REPUBLIC**

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Several national governments have sought to promote Romani participation by means of the appointment of Romani Advisers. Hungary, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic have all appointed Romani Advisers to national ministries, although the precise role, terminology used, and specific ministries vary between different countries.

However, the main effort in the Czech Republic has been to appoint Romani Advisers at the local level of administration. This reflects the fact that most decisions affecting Roma are made locally, and that national policy is anyway highly dependent for its implementation on actions taken at this level. Moreover, the specific needs and circumstances of Roma vary from locality to locality, and Roma community development is most appropriately undertaken at this level.

Under a government resolution of 1997, Romani Advisers have been appointed to all Districts of the Czech Republic with substantial Roma populations, as well as in the three largest cities (Prague, Brno, Ostrava). In some instances the Advisers also have Assistants working with them. Appointments have been made at the local level, but training courses have been organised at the national level to provide support.

The main function of the Advisers has been to improve the communication between the public authorities and the Roma, to support Roma community development, and to help Roma to gain access to services and to secure their rights. In practice, Romani Advisers have mainly been engaged in 'social work' activities, providing assistance to Roma clients.

It is widely recognised that the introduction of Romani Advisers has been an important step forward, but some limitations of the original scheme have also been identified. For example, the quality of those appointed to the post has been variable, and many were not themselves Roma by ethnic background. Also, the concentration on social case-work has meant that less attention has been paid to issues of local government policy and to improving mainstream practice with regard to the Roma community. Recent proposals submitted to the Czech Government by the Ministry of the Interior envisage a strengthening of the Romani Adviser role by establishing Coordinators of Romani Advisers at the regional level.

► **Contact:**

Inter-Ministerial Commission for Roma Affairs  
Government Office of Czech Republic  
Vladislavova 4  
110 00 Prague 1  
Tel: +420-2-9615.3573 - Fax: -2494.6615

**SIMILAR EXAMPLE:**

**Bulgaria:** More recently in Bulgaria, Romani Advisers have also been appointed to each of the 28 administrative regions. As a network, they are coordinated by the National Council for Ethnic and Demographic Issues (NCEDI), and national training courses have also been provided. At the same time, Regional Councils on Ethnic Issues are being established in each region.

► **Contact:** NCEDI, 1 Dondoukov Boulevard, 1000 Sofia; Tel: +359-2-987.8326  
- Fax: -986.2732



## 5. LOCAL-LEVEL ADVOCACY: ROMANI BAHT, SOFIA, BULGARIA

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The 'Fakulteta' District of Sofia is the largest Roma district in Bulgaria, with around 35,000 inhabitants. Although it has been established for many decades, the settlement does not have a proper legal status, and basic public services are almost entirely lacking. The area is characterised by extreme poverty, with around 95% of the population being unemployed and therefore dependent on welfare benefits. Relationships between Roma and the public authorities are generally poor, and marked by ignorance and mistrust on both sides.

The 'Romani Baht' Foundation is a Roma NGO based in the Fakulteta District and formally established in 1996. The staff consists of both Roma and non-Roma. The Foundation aims to support the local Roma population and represent their interests to the public authorities. Its approach is to remain fully independent of the authorities, and to maintain close and continuous contact with the everyday life of the local residents. Over time, it has built up trust and confidence with the local Roma community. It has also gained the respect of the local state institutions, who seek its assistance with mediation and problem-solving.

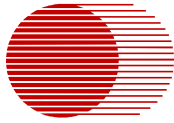
A major component of Romani Baht's work programme is the "Godi e Romenge" Project. The aim of this Project is to assist Roma to exercise their basic rights as citizens. Much of the work involves providing legal assistance and advocacy. The Project provides *pro bono* legal assistance for Roma people, especially in cases where human rights abuse occurs. Consultation sessions are held daily by the Legal Programme Director and her Assistants, and a network of lawyers with different specialisms helps with individual cases. Advocacy is undertaken by the Project on behalf of Roma before both local and state administrations. Romani Baht's 'Public Council', composed of Roma leaders in Fakulteta, decides which cases will be prioritised and taken forward. The basic goal is to ensure equal access for, and equal treatment of Roma before the administrative offices and the courts.

Successful resolution of cases is important not only for Roma clients, but also for promoting good practice by the public authorities. The Project routinely monitors breaches of rights by police and others, and notifies the competent authorities of incidents that come to its notice. It also monitors the progress and outcomes of cases. From time to time the Project organises public meetings to draw attention to violations and the need for them to cease.

As well as providing practical legal assistance, the project also has an educational component. This is designed to increase the legal awareness of Roma people, covering both their rights and obligations. Partly this is achieved by informing individuals who come to the Project for personal advice or assistance. A second method is to hold meetings to advise residents on legal means of solving problems, as opposed to criminal solutions (e.g. obtaining access to electricity supplies). The third, and in the long run the most important method, is undertaking legal education programmes in schools. The Project has been working with high school students in '75 School' in Fakulteta, using a curriculum created at Georgetown University in Washington DC and adapted by the Legal Programme Director to the Bulgarian context. Interactive methods and debates are used as well as giving basic information on civil and legal rights.

►► **Contact:**

'Romani Baht' Foundation  
8 Nov Zivot St, 1373 Sofia  
Bulgaria  
Tel/fax: (359-2-) 23-13-03  
E-mail: [baht2000@rtsonline.net](mailto:baht2000@rtsonline.net)



## **6. LIAISON OFFICER POST, PETERBOROUGH, ENGLAND**

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The Peterborough District of East Anglia, together with its adjacent County of Cambridgeshire, is an area of England with one of the largest populations of Gypsies and other Travellers. The East Anglian Gypsy Council (EAGC) was formed to represent this group: it currently has a membership of some 700 families, and represents the interests of many others as well.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, a recognised local community leader, Mr Peter Mercer, was acting regularly in a voluntary capacity on behalf of the EAGC as a liaison worker and mediator between Gypsy/Traveller families and the public authorities. At this time there was no formal recognition of his work, and he was paid no fee although his expenses were covered.

In 1988, the Peterborough City Council acknowledged the importance of this work by formally establishing the post of Gypsy/Traveller Liaison Officer, and engaging Mr Mercer to undertake this role. The post involves liaising with the full range of public and voluntary sector organisations on behalf of members of the local Gypsy and Traveller population. The scope of the Liaison Officer's work includes provision of advice to Gypsies and Travellers regarding employment, education, housing, planning and environmental issues, health, policing, and the courts.

The Liaison Officer both acts as an adviser to and representative of individual Gypsy/Travellers and their families, and also advises the public authorities directly on policy and practice. However, although a member of a local authority team, Mr Mercer (as an established resident on a local traveller site) has also remained firmly a member of and a leader within the Gypsy/Traveller community, thereby enabling him to represent the interests of this community effectively and with high credibility.

For example, with regard to matters of policing and justice, his role would include: advising and assisting members of the community of their rights as victims or suspects with regard to crime; mediation in any incidents involving police presence on travellers sites or disputes of any kind; assisting members of the community attending court; liaising with other relevant professionals such as probation officers; attending local police-community consultation meetings; and contributing to training courses for police and other public officials.

This form of structured local partnership, rooted in a community development approach, for managing the relations between the civic authorities and the Gypsy/Traveller community has been seen as a model of good practice within the UK. However, Mr Mercer has recently retired from this post, and its future in Peterborough is uncertain.

▶ **Contact:**

Mr Peter Mercer,  
East Anglian Gypsy Council,  
Oxney Road Traveller Site,  
Peterborough, PE1 5NX, England  
Fax: +44-1733-893.418

**RELATED EXAMPLES:**

**Italy:**

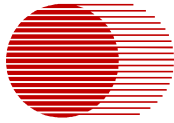
Opera Nomadi, based in Rome, is an established NGO with long experience of acting as mediator between state agencies and Roma communities, both in order to protect their rights and to promote interventions by public authorities designed to improve the conditions of Roma.

▶ Contact: Via di Porta Labicana, 00185  
Rome, Italy; Tel: +39-06-4470.4749,  
or -4470.0166;  
<http://operanomadilazio.supereva.it>

**Ireland:**

Pavee Point Traveller Centre, a well-established NGO based in Dublin, provides a mediation service which was set up to resolve disputes between Travellers and other sectors of the population. It brings together the various stakeholders involved in potential or actual conflicts, including police, politicians and local government officials, and seeks to develop innovative approaches, as well as providing educational and training workshops.

▶ Contact: 46 North Great Charles St.,  
Dublin 1; Tel: +353-1-878.0255 -  
Fax: -874.2626



## 7. ROMA SELF-HELP BUREAU, LOM, BULGARIA

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Following an initiative by CEGA (Creating Effective Grassroots Alternatives) and Roma activists in 1994, a number of Roma-Self Bureaus have been set up in various areas of Bulgaria, including Sofia, Plovdiv, and Lom. In each area the Bureau has been established by local Roma organisations, with the aim of developing an integrated programme of community-based work. The project as a whole is currently supported by Novib and Matra as an integrated large-scale programme.

In Lom the Bureau is operated by the Roma-Lom Foundation. Lom is a municipality on the Danube in northern Bulgaria, with a population of 40,000. One-third of the population are Roma, who live in four isolated neighbourhoods. The industries on which Lom depended have collapsed, leaving more than two-thirds of the populace unemployed, and an estimated 95% unemployed in the Roma neighbourhoods.

The long-term goal of the project in Lom is "the higher social emancipation of the Roma population through stimulating its self-organisation potential and self-help initiatives". The short-term objectives are to increase the educational level of Roma children, to promote the creation of self-help groups, to provide technical assistance for solving social and economic problems of the community, and to develop partnership relations with local authorities and other civic associations.

To achieve these objectives, the Roma-Lom Foundation has developed a wide-ranging programme of activities. In the field of education, activities include pre-school preparatory classes, parent-teacher cooperation, provision of meals and other practical support for school attendance, interest clubs within schools, and a wide range of school-linked extra-curricular activities. In the '*Romiteli*' football team, for example, participation is dependent on school attendance and good class scores, and the captain is the one with the best class scores not the best soccer player.

Work with community initiatives and self-help groups is mainly focussed on mobilising young people to plan and implement projects in the various Roma neighbourhoods. Projects have included street-cleaning, construction of sports facilities, and the establishment of a youth centre in a local school. Assistance with social problems extends from provision of information leaflets, consultations and mediation, to work on public health, drugs prevention and tackling juvenile

crime. On the employment side, assistance with finding jobs and provision of training have been complemented by an innovative project in which some 40 families have become engaged in farming on land supplied by the municipality.

Much of the above has only been possible through the effective cooperation of the Bureau and the Municipality. Signed agreements are made with the various institutions, and various premises and access to facilities have been provided free of charge. A joint initiative with the local Police Department provides assistance for Roma to obtain the new identity cards being required in Bulgaria. In these and a variety of other ways the Bureau has developed a complex programme of integrated activities designed to empower Roma to help themselves and to engage effectively with the public authorities.

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**SIMILAR EXAMPLE:**

**Romania:**

In the small town of Nusfalau, in Salaj County, the NGO Romani CRISS and (subsequently) the 'Impreuna' Community Development Agency worked with the SPOLU Foundation and Medicines Sans Frontiers to assist a self-help programme which has enabled Roma to develop a brick-producing project and other income-generating initiatives. This then led to the development of a social housing project, and in due course to the preparation of a local comprehensive development plan aimed at improving living conditions of Roma. The project demonstrated the capacity of community development methods to empower Roma at the local level, and to promote their integration with the local authorities and the majority society.

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## **8. WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PROJECT, FIRENZE, ITALY**

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In her report on "The Situation of Roma/Gypsy Women", prepared for the Council of Europe, Nicoleta Bitu observes that little attention has been paid to the issue of Romani women, whether by governments, international organisations, Roma NGOs, or women's organisations generally. She identifies a need to raise awareness on the issue, and to identify practical measures to help empower Romani women.

One important type of initiative is to provide support for Romani women activists, and in particular for women among the young generation of Romani leaders. A second is to ensure that there is a gender dimension in all policies and strategies relating to Roma. However, for many Romani women, their opportunities are shaped by traditional Romani culture and expectations regarding women's roles. As a result, their future lies mainly within their local communities, together with some rather specific forms of interaction with the wider society. Women's empowerment programmes therefore need to take account of this social and economic reality, and include measures for empowering Romani women within the context of family and local community settings.

An example of a very local initiative of this latter type was undertaken in the Fourth Quarter of the City of Firenze (Florence) in Italy. The project Laboratorio Donne Rom "Kimeta" (Roma Women's Workshop "Kimeta") provided training in sewing skills to Romani women living in the Campo Rom Poderaccio, to enable them to make and then sell items of clothing and ornamentation in local markets. It was organised by the Centro Educativo Popolare of the Comunità dell'Isoletto, in association with the training agency IAL Toscana.

The locality is one with high levels of poverty and unemployment. In addition, the Romani women's lives and opportunities tend to be highly constrained, not simply by their lack of formal education and training, but by the boundaries imposed by conventional gender roles and their practical responsibilities for the rearing of children. The project aimed to empower the women by providing them with skills which would in turn produce a financial return and increased autonomy while still being compatible with traditional Romani culture.

It was soon discovered that the workshop needed to address a broader agenda of skills than simply sewing. Firstly, in order to produce garments the women needed to be skilled in cutting, pressing, embroidery and other techniques required for the production of garments. Secondly, basic literacy and numeracy needed to be provided to enable them to manage the purchase and

sale of materials, deal with banks, and for basic record-keeping. Thirdly, there were the skills and confidence required to form a cooperative to support and promote their work, and to conduct business effectively in interactions with Gaje (non-Roma).

Following a two-year formative period, the Laboratorio 'Kimeta' is now functioning as a productive unit, and has been established on a legal basis within the framework of a regional non-profit association (Associazione Genitori Comunità Incontro di Pistoia).

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**OTHER EXAMPLES:**

In **Romania**, the NGO Romani CRISS, with funding support from the EU, has developed a project to train Romani women to act as health mediators. As well as helping to improve health conditions among Roma, the project has assisted Romani women who have some basic education to return to work and play a developmental role in Romani communities.

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In **Spain**, the Gitano National Development Programme includes specific provisions for women. The Programme of the Autonomous Government of Andalusia offers a particularly good example as it prioritises the situation of Gitano women, and includes provisions covering all aspects of life and also a section of equal opportunities for women.

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## **SECTION B – EDUCATION AND YOUTH**

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## **INTRODUCTION: EDUCATION & YOUTH**

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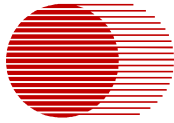
In modern European society, education is the most important means in the longer term for minorities to secure social inclusion and access to rights and opportunities. Yet Roma, throughout Europe, continue to experience serious levels of educational disadvantage. Discrimination, segregation, biased assessments, lack of recognition of Romani language and culture, pressures to assimilate, irregular attendance, high drop-out rates, low qualifications - these are some of the features which continue to characterise the experience of Roma in the school systems of Europe. This situation has been extensively documented in reports by international bodies such as the Council of Europe and the OSCE, as well by researchers, NGOs and Roma activists working at national and local levels.

In its Policy Recommendation No.3, ECRI identifies education as one of the main areas in which action needs to be undertaken in order to combat racism and discrimination against Roma and to secure equality and justice for Romani communities. Relevant actions that are recommended include implementation of anti-discrimination legislation in relation to education, combating school segregation and ensuring equal access to education, incorporating Romani history and culture into school curricula, providing training for teachers, promoting dialogue with and participation by Roma, and ensuring that the needs of travelling groups are not overlooked. A key challenge is how to balance a focus on Roma-specific issues with integration of Roma into the mainstream education system.

In Western Europe, as Jean-Pierre Liégeois and others have documented, there is a long history of uneven and uncoordinated efforts to meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers, many of whom maintain a travelling life-style. In Central/Eastern Europe, however, following the collapse of the communist system, the relation of Roma to the education system has changed dramatically. In place of the paternalistic, assimilationist approach and the state-managed employment system, Roma now need to develop marketable skills and self-help solutions in order to survive and succeed in the new 'open' society. There is therefore an urgent search for new educational methods and structures to enable Roma to participate effectively in this new environment while still maintaining their culture and ethnic identity.

The entries that follow present practical examples of types of action to help implement Policy Recommendation No.3 in the education field. The initial examples illustrate ways in which support may be provided to ensure Romani children can enter and participate effectively in the school system. Pre-school and in-school educational and linguistic support, the provision of 'Romani Assistants' to work alongside teachers, and external support for children with difficulties are covered. The fourth entry focuses on the teaching of Romani language and culture, while the fifth features the Gandhi School in Hungary as an example of a school designed specifically to meet the needs of Romani children. The sixth entry provides an example of a school which provides a 'second chance' for Roma who dropped out of school earlier and now wish to secure educational or training qualifications. The seventh entry (which like many others includes some brief additional examples) focuses specifically on how modern school systems designed for settled communities can also meet the needs of children from travelling families. The final entry illustrates initiatives aimed to further empower young Roma who have already proven themselves successful in the educational system.

This small number of examples cannot reflect adequately the full range of actions that need to be taken in the educational field. For example, a review of the use of psychological tests in assessing Romani children is being conducted by a team at Masaryk University in Brno, Czech Republic. Also, the 'Tolerance Project' in the Czech Republic offers a valuable example of a programme designed for public education generally on Roma/minority issues. There is also a wide range of experience of educational initiatives in Western Europe (see references in publications by Liégeois and others at the end of this booklet).



## 1. LINGUISTIC & CULTURAL SUPPORT, 'DIVERSITY' FOUNDATION, BULGARIA

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In many countries of Europe, language and culture are major factors which influence the educational opportunities of Romani children in school, especially at the point of entry. Many Romani children are disadvantaged from the outset by not having the same level of competence as Gaje children in the national language that is the medium of communication in the school system. As well as encountering a 'language barrier', they may also be disadvantaged by the fact that Gaje culture in general is the dominant culture in the school system, influencing expectations of behaviour in many significant ways, and either ignoring Romani culture or viewing it as deviant.

Supporting bilingual competence, and minority cultural identity, are therefore essential actions that must be taken if Romani children are to have the chance of educational success in what are in fact multi-cultural situations. The Balkan Foundation for Cross-Cultural Education and Understanding "Diversity" is an NGO, based in Sofia, which presents an example of the kinds of targeted projects and initiatives that are required in this field.

Broadly speaking, the aims of the Foundation 'Diversity' are to strengthen the bilingual and multi-cultural capabilities of children, and to support teachers and schools working with children from minority ethnic communities. Although its mission and some of its initiatives address the broad field of multi-cultural education, most of its work is in practice focussed on meeting the needs of Romani children.

Achieving bilingual competence is seen as fundamental. The Foundation has developed experimental research and projects in schools to assist children from ethnic minorities to acquire the Bulgarian language, but to do so by also developing their mother tongue. Courses and seminars for teachers on bilingualism and teaching Bulgarian to Romani and other minority children are organised. The Foundation has produced a number of publications designed particularly to help teachers working with Roma children, exploring the background to language issues, and providing practical guidance and resource materials for teachers in Bulgarian schools. Various series of publications explore issues around bilingualism, give guidance to teachers on appropriate methodologies for language teaching, and provide text-books and work programmes for Romani children for learning both Bulgarian and Romani languages.

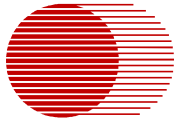
However, language cannot be divorced from culture generally and from identity. The Foundation also works to promote understanding of the Romani cultural background among teachers, through lectures, seminars and publications. Its publications in Romani language for children

include collections of poems, stories and songs. Aimed at the age-range 3-10 years, these are developed within the project "Children's Fiction in Romani Language", and are distributed in schools and among Romani families. The Foundation has also organised Romani cultural festivals within the corrective boarding schools in Bulgaria as part of their educational programme. As well as the above, the Foundation 'Diversity' has been involved in training programmes for young Roma leaders, in providing education for Roma who have dropped out of school, in promoting literacy among Romani women, in various media projects and activities, and in international activities.

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## 2. ROMANI ASSISTANTS IN SCHOOLS, CZECH REPUBLIC

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In the Czech Republic, as in many other Central/Eastern European countries, the majority of Romani children leave school without completing their basic education - and therefore without qualifications or skills. The reasons include low estimation in the Romani community of the value of formal education, limited Czech language ability of Romani children, negative stereotypes of Romani children among teachers, and a lack of recognition and understanding of Romani culture generally within schools.

The Czech government has introduced a range of initiatives designed to address this problem. They include the introduction of a 'zero grade' preliminary year's schooling for disadvantaged children, a special training programme for teachers, and the provision of Romani language textbooks in schools.

Another important initiative is the introduction of 'Romani Assistants' in schools. The principal function of Romani Assistants is to help teachers communicate with Romani pupils, and to encourage cooperation between schools and Romani parents.

Romani Assistants are particularly important in the 'zero grades', when Romani children enter an environment that is strange and unfamiliar. The Romani Assistant can help with language difficulties, and generally facilitate the adjustment of the Romani child to the school. The Romani Assistant does not do the job of the teacher, but rather operates as an adviser and assistant to the teacher. The Romani Assistant's role is also to get to know all the Romani children and their parents personally, so he or she can give them advice and support.

Romani Assistants are present in both 'special' and mainstream schools; and they operate not only at zero grades, throughout primary schools and even in secondary schools. The Czech government reported that by late 1999, 140 Romani Assistants had been appointed in schools.

While the appointment of Romani Assistants is basically the responsibility of the education authorities, NGOs can help in various ways. In the city of Brno, the Moravian Romany Association recruited and initially funded the appointment of Romani Assistants, and continues to cooperate with the city authorities and schools. Training courses for Romani Assistants have also been provided by NGOs, for example the New School Association in Prague.

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**RELATED EXAMPLE:**

**Spain:**

The Spanish government initiated a programme of using Gitano mediators to build bridges between schools and Gitano communities. In Andalucia, this programme was carried out in cooperation with the Federation of Roma Associations in Andalucia (FARA). The programme was successful in increasing the enrolment of Gitanos in school, but it became clear that their retention was dependent also on the efforts made by schools internally.

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### 3. EDUCATION SUPPORT PROJECT, TIMIȘOARA, ROMANIA

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In 1997, an 'Association of Gypsy Women' was established in Timișoara, in western Romania, to provide educational support for Roma children, particularly those who had abandoned school. As a specifically women's association, it recognised that in the Romani community, "taking care of children is the role of women, so the woman has to take care of the children's education".

The Association was set up to meet the needs of children in the locality of Strand, which is inhabited by members of several different sub-groups of Roma. It has both cultural as well as educational aims. So, as well as setting up a centre where children can find educational support from qualified staff, it also aims to contribute to the development of Romani identity.

A particular concern has been to provide education for children left outside the formal system. Within Strand, there are families who migrated to western Europe: when they were repatriated, the children were not reintegrated into schools, and as teenagers remained illiterate. As a women's association, they have especially tried to support young girls who have not been allowed to go to school in accordance with Roma tradition. This has involved working also with the girls' parents.

The principal activities of the cultural and educational centre are as follows: providing assistance to school-age Roma children in the main school disciplines; school education for teenagers who have passed the main school age (14-18 year-olds); teaching of Romani language and culture; civic education, and medical and psychological counselling; and inter-cultural activities. As well as the regular day-time activities, a summer camp for children has been organised.

The Project Coordinator has provided a room in her own house in which the children's daily activities are undertaken. The project has received funding from the OSI since its beginning in 1997. However, like many enterprising local initiatives, unless it can obtain support from the local authorities its future will be in question.

► **Contact:**

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**SIMILAR EXAMPLES:**

**Germany:**

Förderverein Roma e.V., an NGO based in Frankfurt-am-Main, has cooperated with teachers and local education authorities in establishing a kindergarten for Roma children from Eastern Europe (especially Romania), with the name "Scharworalle" (in Romanes, "Hello Children"). The project, which is supported by the City's Department for Multi-Cultural Affairs (MKA), also undertakes preparation of children for school, participation by parents, leisure and sporting activities, and networking and mediation with schools and other agencies.

► Contact: Siolistrasse 6, 60323 Frankfurt-am-Main; Tel: +49-69-44.01.23 - Fax: - 15.05.79.52.

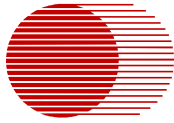
Or via Lorenzo Horvat at MKA, Walter-Kolb-Str. 9-11, D-60594 Frankfurt-am-Main;

Tel: +49-69-212.30145 - Fax -37946.

**Ukraine:**

The Roma Association in Izmail, in Odessa County, undertakes a variety of activities to help improve the conditions of the substantial Roma population of the area. These include opening the first Roma Sunday School in the Ukraine in 1997. The aim is to help children with educational and linguistic skills, to promote Romani culture, and to provide welfare and other kinds of support as needed. At present many Roma children are assigned to 'special schools', and the Sunday School attempts to compensate for their disadvantage and to increase their motivation towards education. In 1999, a second Sunday School was opened in Oziornoye, which is linked to secondary school level. The Association is currently seeking to expand its educational activities, especially in the field of teaching and producing materials on Roma language and literature.

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## **4. PROMOTING ROMANI LANGUAGE AND CULTURE, FINLAND**

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The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities requires that knowledge about the language and culture of minorities should be preserved, and that all members of a national minority have the right to learn the language of that minority. Generally speaking, across Europe, the steps taken by governments to implement the Convention with regard to Romani communities have been very limited.

In Finland, a Romani Education Unit has been established within the National Board of Education since 1994. The role of the Romani Education Unit is to develop and implement national-level policy for the education of the Romani population, and to promote Romani language and culture. The Unit is an operationally independent body, which is financed directly by a government grant earmarked for Romani education. It has its own management group which includes representatives of the Roma, and which has the responsibility to develop in a concrete manner educational issues affecting Roma and to approve the programme of work of the Unit.

The Romani Education Unit has a wide-ranging programme of activities. These include seminars, courses and conferences which are offered to both the Romani and the majority population. The Unit has developed the national Romani curriculum for both comprehensive and upper secondary schools, and also the vocational qualification 'Diploma in Romani Cultural Instruction'. It trains 'contact persons' to work in schools, and publishes teaching materials and an information bulletin. The teaching materials include a Romani language textbook for use in comprehensive schools, guidance for teachers on Romani students in school, a video presenting the home background and culture of Romani pupils, and booklets and tapes presenting songs and stories about Romani culture in the Romani language.

In Finland, as in many other countries, the responsibility for the provision of education is largely devolved to the level of the municipality. This presents a challenge for the implementation of national-level policy. For example, although the Government supports the teaching of the Romani language in schools, only a small number of municipalities actually provide such instruction. The reasons include the wide dispersal of the Romani population, as well as the lack of resources, teachers, and specialist training provision. The Romani Education Unit is currently developing measures to address these obstacles.

Many valuable initiatives, however, have been introduced at the local level and in individual schools. For example, many Romani children get transferred to 'special schools', not necessarily in the earliest years, but around the time of moving to secondary education. In the town of Pori, transfer to special schools has been replaced by provision of personal support to Romani pupils accompanied by personal teaching plans. In Mikkola Comprehensive School in Vantaa, Romani children are integrated into regular school classes from the start, but also receive special instruction in the Romani language. This gives them the opportunity to work in their own group, and to build a positive sense of Romani culture and identity, alongside that of the majority population. The school has three teachers of Romani language, who also act as mediators between school and home, and between Romani and majority cultures generally.

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**ADDITIONAL EXAMPLE:**

In **Latvia**, which has a relatively small Romani population, the government provides financial support to the Cultural Association of Latvian Gypsies in Riga (founded in 1991) and also to similar provincial associations. Romani language materials are produced (poetry, dictionary, ABC book), and cultural events organised, and the government finances classes for the teaching of Romani history and culture in some schools.

►► **Contact:** A.Deglava d.104 kv.33,  
LV-1001 Riga



## **5. ROMA SCHOOLS: THE GANDHI SCHOOL, HUNGARY**

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The Gandhi Secondary Grammar School in Pécs, Hungary, was established in 1994 by a group of Roma intellectuals, in order to provide a secondary education for Roma students with the potential to proceed to study at university level. It was the first such secondary school to be established in Central/Eastern Europe, and is operated by the Gandhi Public Foundation. It constitutes one of a number of examples of separate educational establishments designed wholly or primarily for Roma students - an approach which has attracted strong interest but also proven controversial.

The School accepts approximately 50 students a year, selected from among the brightest Roma pupils in primary schools in the Transdanubia region. They follow a standard secondary school curriculum, but in addition learn about Romani history, language and culture. The aim is to equip students to function effectively in the wider Hungarian society, while also providing them with a positive sense of Roma identity. The School provides the certificate of the final secondary-level examination, and helps its graduates to continue into further and higher education.

The School aims to counter the negative stereotypes and low expectations of Roma that are widespread in the broader education system. It seeks to enable Roma youngsters to achieve their educational potential free from the negative pressures of the outside world. Most students reside at the attached Hostel during the term, so that the school functions as a supportive community for its individual members. The School also attempts to maintain links with parents and families, and to win their support for their children's continuing education.

The students attending the school are not exclusively Roma. There are also a small number of non-Roma pupils, as well as students of mixed parentage. Although the majority of teachers are non-Roma, some are Roma - including the original Principal of the School. This provision of role-models and of connection to the wider Roma community is important. Whether or not they proceed to university, the educational and social benefits for Roma children have already been shown to be very substantial.

In addition to receiving funding from the national education budget, the School has been supported by the Soros Foundation, as well as by the local municipality and Roma Self-Government.

The Gandhi School, like other Roma-focused educational establishments, has clearly shown that it is possible to design schooling that is more closely geared to the needs and background of Roma students. There are important lessons here that can be incorporated into the mainstream educational system. Whether segregated school structures are desirable in the longer term is a more controversial issue. Monitoring of student performance indicates improved outcomes for Roma children by comparison with mainstream schools, but does not suggest that Roma schools alone can overcome the effects of background social disadvantage. However, due to the recent foundation of such schools and the limitations of existing monitoring data, it is not yet possible to draw reliable conclusions on this matter.

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**SIMILAR EXAMPLES:**

**Czech Republic:**

The Romska Stredni Skola Socialni (Romany Social High School) in Kolin, which opened in 1998, is a similar initiative aimed at providing secondary-level education for Roma. It is aimed at slightly older students seeking a 'second chance', and with a subsequent interest in direct employment rather than university study. Although officially it is open to anyone interested in Romany studies, in practice all its students are Roma.

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**Hungary:**

The Martineum Collegium at Mánfa, near Pécs, is not itself a school, but a hostel for talented Roma students from disadvantaged backgrounds who attend public secondary schools in the locality, and have the potential to continue their education in colleges or universities. It was founded in 1996, and provides students with living accommodation and social support, and also Roma culture and language programmes.

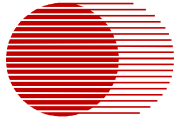
► Contact: Fábíán Béla u. 87, 7304 Mánfa, Hungary;  
Tel: +36-6-72.483.904.

**Czech Republic:**

The Premysl Pitter School in Ostrava is an elementary-level school which was established to provide an alternative to the 'special schools' in which Roma children predominate. It is run by the Catholic organisation Caritas, and aims to provide young Roma children with the proper pedagogical support that will enable them to succeed within the Czech educational system. It offers pre-school preparation, language support, close links with families, and the services of a social worker and of Roma assistants working alongside teaching staff.

► Contact: Jungmannova 3, 702 51 Moravska Ostrava;  
Tel/fax; +420-69-613.34.26.





## 6. ALTERNATIVE VOCATIONAL SCHOOL, SZOLNOK, HUNGARY

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The 'Roma Chance' Alternative Vocational Foundation School in Szolnok, Hungary, is a Roma initiative which provides the opportunity for those who have dropped out of school but are still of school age to return and continue their education. Szolnok is a municipality in the east of Hungary of around 80,000 inhabitants, of whom approximately 5% are Roma.

The School was founded at the end of 1996, when a group of specialists came together in association with the National Roma Federation 'Lungo Drom' (the national Roma governmental body) to formulate a concept to meet the needs of young people who had ceased to attend school. The town of Szolnok already had strong Roma community associations and leadership, which were carried through into the new Roma Self-Government structures. This leadership has enabled the pioneering concept to be transformed into reality.

The School provides vocational training and remedial education for disadvantaged Roma and non-Roma students aged between 14 and 22 years. It has around 240 daytime students, and 160 evening students. The aim of the School is to provide basic instruction to compensate for their missing schooling, and also to provide practical training in craft and technical skills for members of this age group which will improve their opportunities for finding work.

In 1999 the School acquired a new building for classes, and is converting the old school into a hostel. The new building has been renovated with the help of students and teachers, and has been equipped with modern facilities, including IT equipment. In addition to funds from the national education budget, the School also receives funding from the municipality, the Roma Self-Government, the Foundation for Hungarian Roma, and other national and international programmes.

The Lungo Drom Training Centre operates a variety of other educational and training programmes in addition to the Vocational School for young people. It also initiated the magazine 'Lungo Drom' which has a substantial national circulation, and publishes other books and materials for use by the Roma community in Hungary.

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## **SIMILAR EXAMPLES:**

### **Hungary:**

The 'Kalyi Jag' Roma School for Vocational Training in Budapest (Sixth District), is another example of a school in Hungary which provides educational support for Roma who are not enrolled in public secondary schools or who are above the age limit for secondary education. It has approximately 60 students, all Roma, who attend a two-year vocational training course, including computer skills.

▶▶ Contact: Almassy u. 3, 1077 Budapest;  
Tel: +36-1-351.6522

### **Netherlands:**

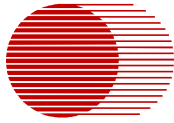
Stichting Sinti Werk is a project based in Best, near Eindhoven, which provides support for Sinti children and older young people who have dropped out of school. It provides teaching of basic educational skills for children of secondary school age, and also a 'second chance' programme for those who are over 16, to help prepare them for entry into employment. There is also a flourishing music programme. The project is linked to the Landelijke Sinti Organisatie (National Sinti Organisation), and receives its funding from local government bodies.

▶▶ Contact: Sportlaan 10, 5683 CS Best;  
Tel: +31-499-371.212 - Fax: -372.915

### **Slovakia:**

Within the framework of its national strategy for integration of Roma, the government is supporting several projects providing education and vocational training for young Roma to equip them with skills to enter the labour market. A project in the Liptovský Mikuláš district focusses on craft skills for jobs such as cook, waiter and carpenter, while a larger-scale project in the Rimavská Sobota district is providing more general skills in cooperation with the National Labour Office.

▶▶ Contact: Slovak Republic Government Office, Námestie Slobody 1, 813 70 Bratislava;  
Tel: +421-7-5729.5311 - Fax: -5729.5424



## **7. TRAVELLER EDUCATION SERVICES, UNITED KINGDOM**

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In the UK, as in several other Western European countries, many Gypsies and Travellers continue to move frequently from place to place. This presents a challenge for local education authorities, who have a responsibility to ensure that children of all backgrounds receive equal opportunities for education. Many Gypsy/Traveller families may not value formal education to the same extent as the Gaje community, and the lack of adequate site provision together with the discrimination faced by Gypsies and Travellers, all result in children from travelling families being especially vulnerable to educational disadvantage.

There are now several decades of experience on the part of teachers, educationalists and Gypsy activists in addressing these issues. Although the problem persists, and the response of schools and local government is uneven nationally, there are also many valuable initiatives and examples of good practice. Many of these have been highlighted by the reports of the national HM Inspectorate of Schools.

For example, in SE England, Essex County Council's Traveller Education Service has developed a comprehensive approach to providing support to schools, families and other agencies to ensure full access to education for Traveller children. It has a team of teachers, support assistants and Traveller Education Welfare Officers who work in Essex and Southend, providing support services and undertaking development projects. Priority is given to the needs of children from families that are highly mobile or travel seasonally, and also to individual children when transferring between or settling into new schools.

The main activities undertaken include: advice and training for teachers and other professionals; curriculum development and support materials for schools; support with planning and provision of distance learning to allow continuing education whilst travelling; support for families in accessing education; and direct support for pupils with fragmented education and with social and welfare needs. Education packs have been produced for schools and families to provide information relating to both primary and secondary education.

So far as children of travelling families are concerned, a major aim is to ensure they can move from school to school with a minimum of disruption to their education. To assist with this process, record cards are used to help transfer information about children's progress between

schools. These are completed by the schools, but held by the family, and passed on to the next school following each move.

The Traveller Education Service in Gloucestershire (SW England) offers a similar example of good practice. It particularly prioritises the needs of 'roadside Travellers', i.e. highly mobile families who camp on unauthorised sites because of the shortage of official stopping places. It has produced a comprehensive policy document, which includes detailed information and guidance for schools. It seeks to implement this policy across schools by a 'top-down' approach, e.g. working with heads of schools, setting standards and monitoring outcomes, and evaluating overall effectiveness. The aim is to ensure that schools take responsibility for the education of Traveller children, rather than relying on specialist support services.

► **Contact:**

Essex Traveller Education Service  
Alec Hunter High School  
Stubbs Lane, Braintree,  
Essex CM7 3NT, England  
Tel/fax: +44-1376-340360

Gloucestershire Traveller Education Service  
The Hucclecote Centre  
Churchdown Lane, Hucclecote,  
Gloucester GL3 3QN, England  
Tel: +44-1452-427262 - Fax: +44-1452-427327

**SIMILAR EXAMPLES:**

**France:**

Based in Strasbourg, ARPOMT ('Association pour une Recherche Pédagogique Ouverte en Milieu Tzigane') is an example of a local civic association that provides educational support for children of Travelling families ('Gens du voyage' of various ethnic groupings) in the Alsace region. Teaching is provided from a special caravan which travels between local sites, and children follow correspondence courses produced by the Centre National pour l'Etude à Distance (CNED). ARPOMT, which has a staff of 6, also organises sports activities and basic literacy classes for both children and adults, and provides a 'poste restante' service for local, national and international Travellers.

► **Contact:** 1 rue de l'Ancienne Ecole, F-67100 Strasbourg; Tel: +33-388-44.44.37 - Fax: -84.46.76)

**Scotland:**

The Scottish Gypsy/Traveller Association works closely with the Save the Children Fund to promote the interests of travelling families in their relationships with the public authorities. In the field of education, they deal with a wide range of issues including educational support for mobile children, transport to school from sites, and attention to the needs of children when families are forced to move on.

► **Contact:** SGTA, 13 Guthrie Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JG, Tel: +44-131-650.6314; SCF, 8 Clifton Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 5DR, Tel: +44-131-527.8200

**Ireland:**

The 'Visiting Teacher Service' is available to schools in all areas of Ireland. Each visiting teacher operates on a county basis and has responsibility for the pupils, primary and post-primary of Traveller families in each

area. This scheme was strongly endorsed by the Task Force on the Travelling Community, and is the responsibility of the Department of Education and Science.

▶▶ Contact: Equal Status Division, Department of Justice, 43-49 Mespil Road, Dublin 4;  
Tel: +353-1-663.2615

**Belgium:**

Participation in a transnational European Union project on inclusion programmes for Roma has provided a coalition of government and NGO partners with the opportunity to assess current educational provision and practice for Gypsies and Travellers in Belgium. Interviews have been undertaken with individuals working in this field, and a review of policies on education and on social inclusion generally has been undertaken. The nature and extent of the challenge faced in Belgium is being analysed by the project, and although some examples of good practice have been identified, it is evident (and especially the view of NGOs) that a more integrated and strategic approach is required, involving a wide range of agencies and the NGOs and community associations.

▶▶ Contact: Vlaams Minderheden-centrum, Gaucherstraat 164, 1030 Brussel;  
Tel +32-2-203.08.73 - Fax: -201.68.63





## **8. YOUTH EMPOWERMENT: ATHINGANOI PROJECT, CZECH REPUBLIC**

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The idea of young Roma people as 'youth' is a new concept within the Roma community, and its implications are still being explored and debated. However, it is clear that fostering the potential of young Roma leaders is one of the most important tasks for long-term community development. This has been recognised by the Council of Europe Youth Centre, which has been running a programme of training courses for young Roma leaders since 1995.

Out of this programme has emerged the Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP), the first of several Europe-wide Roma/Gypsy youth networks. The Youth Centre and FERYP have worked together to provide support for young Roma leaders to establish projects and NGOs at national and local level in a wide range of countries. Membership of FERYP consists of both individuals and associations. Special attention has been paid to supporting young Roma women as leaders. FERYP now organises regular meetings and training activities, aimed at enabling and empowering young Roma to work more effectively in their organisations.

A separate example of the new Roma youth projects is O.S. ATHINGANOI, a recently formed civic association in the Czech Republic. It brings together high-school and university-educated young Romany people from across the country who, on the basis of their future work in the Romany community, will become elements of a Romany elite in the Czech Republic.

In early 1999 it established a "Romany Students' Meeting" Project, with funding support from the OSI. This project provides for quarterly meetings in which some 30 participants take part in professional seminars under the guidance of experienced Romany leaders and other experts. Three of the meetings are of four days duration, while the fourth consists of a two-week 'summer school'. The summer school allows in-depth attention to a particular theme (e.g. mass media), and focuses also on communication skills, mutual support structures, and Romany language. The Meetings have received a very positive evaluation from the participants. Many members of O.S. ATHINGANOI were active in the 'Tolerance Ride', which visited schools around the country as part of the Czech Government's 'Tolerance Project', designed to promote public awareness of Roma and minority issues.

O.S. ATHINGANOI has now established a Romany Students Information Centre in Prague. This will collect information on further education and Roma-related employment opportunities for Romany students, organise meetings and events, and act as a resource centre generally on Roma-related matters for use not only by Roma but also members of the majority society.

► **Contact:**

Project Coordinator, O.S. ATHINGANOI  
YMCA, Roma Student Information Centre  
Na Porici 12, 115130 Prague 1, Czech Republic  
Tel: +420-2-2487.2090 - Fax: -2487.2091

Emilian Niculae  
President, FERYP  
PO Box 51-23, Bucharest, Romania  
Tel/fax: +40-94-855.612

**SIMILAR EXAMPLES:**

Minority Rights Group International implemented two programmes, INTRINSIC and PASSPORT, designed to support the development of young Roma leaders in Central/ Eastern Europe. Both programmes used 'mentoring' as an approach, and a working group of Roma was formed to produce a Mentoring Advice Pack. MRG worked with partner Roma NGOs in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, each of which identified specific local needs and methodologies.

► **Contact:** 379 Brixton Road, London SW9 7DE; Tel: +44-20-7978.9498 - Fax: -7738.6265. Or Budapest Office: Szilagyi Erzebet Fasar 22/c, 1125 Budapest; Tel: +36-1-391.5730 - Fax: -391.5745

The PAKIV European Roma Fund is a newly established transnational NGO which aims to facilitate the creation of new civil society programmes in Central & Eastern Europe that support income-generating activities of local Romani civic associations. Its initial actions will focus on providing intensive, global training for young Roma in order to create a cadre of leaders who can manage the types of programmes envisaged.

The training will be carried out in three 'blocks' based in Britain, Denmark and Hungary, after which participants return to their countries to undertake needs analyses and develop proposals. The training is funded by the World Bank and the Ford Foundation.

► **Contact:** Pozsonyi út.14, 1137 Budapest; Tel: +36-1-237.60.27 - Fax: -237.60.29; E-mail : [pakiv@pakiv.hu](mailto:pakiv@pakiv.hu)

**Romania:**

The Alliance for Roma Unity has developed a project entitled "Stimulating the employment of Roma public servants by local public administrations and public services". The project is aimed at young Roma students or high school graduates and provides them with training in the skills required to pursue careers as professional public servants. The project has been designed in partnership with local public administrations, and receives funding from the Open Society Foundation in Romania.

► **Contact:** Silvestru Str. 27, Bucharest 2; Tel/fax: +40-1-211.42.35



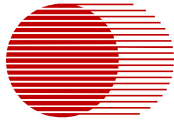


## **SECTION C – POLICING & JUSTICE**

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## **INTRODUCTION: POLICING & JUSTICE**

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ECRI Country Reports and other human rights-based documents have expressed serious concerns about the treatment of Roma by officials and agencies of the police and justice systems across Europe. On the one hand these relate to the failure of police and justice agencies to provide adequate protection and redress for Roma in the face of racially-motivated violence and discrimination. On the other hand, there are concerns over incidents where police themselves have overtly abused Roma and violated their human rights, as well as concerns that police and other justice agencies more routinely fail to treat Roma fairly, with respect and with the quality of service to which all citizens should be entitled. Partly as a result of these failures, Roma frequently lack trust and confidence in the police and justice agencies. Given also that many Roma lack information about their legal and other rights, and lack the resources to exercise these, their access to justice is often extremely limited.

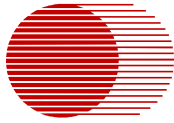
In order to address these concerns, ECRI Policy Recommendation No.3 sets out a variety of actions that should be taken in Council of Europe member states. These include ensuring that crimes against Roma are dealt with effectively, that justice is not only done but seen to be done when the rights of Roma are violated, that support is available for Roma who are victims of discrimination, that relevant training is provided for officials in the justice system, that arrangements are established to promote dialogue between Roma and the police and other public authorities, and that the importance of the role of NGOs is recognised.

The entries that follow are intended to serve as examples of the kinds of actions that may be taken at local and national levels to help implement Policy Recommendation No. 3 in the field of Policing and Justice. Most of the examples that were identified during the preparation of the booklet were in the field of policing. This was not because policing practices are good, but because bad policing has come under strong criticism from Roma and Human Rights NGOs so that there has been increasing pressure on police to improve their relation with Roma and other minorities. By contrast, the disadvantages faced by Roma in other parts of the justice system are much less visible, and there appear to be very few initiatives relating to agencies such as prisons, prosecutors and the courts. Once again it must be stressed that there is a serious lack of formal evaluation of the effectiveness of projects in this field.

The section opens with the example of the Hungarian National Police who have elaborated a broad strategy for improving relations with minorities, and Roma in particular. A second national-level initiative is that of the Czech Ministry of the Interior which has established

mechanisms specifically to combat the right-wing extremism which particularly affects Roma. The third and fourth entries present examples designed to improve relations between Roma and the police at the local level: a local police training project in Stolipinovo, Bulgaria; and the variety of neighbourhood-level activities of the Roma-DROM Centre in Brno, Czech Republic.

The fifth entry widens the scope beyond policing alone, and describes the initiative of the Romanian NGO, Romani CRISS, in establishing a series of multi-agency 'round-tables', aimed at combating outbreaks of inter-ethnic violence that occurred in different parts of the country earlier in the 1990s. The sixth describes the Bulgarian NGO, 'Human Rights Project', which has been highly effective in combating human rights abuses by police against Roma, whilst also engaging in dialogue with the Government to develop a general strategy for integration of Roma. The seventh entry outlines the types of training course run by the European Roma Rights Centre to equip lawyers with advocacy skills to represent Roma in legal cases. Finally, the research conducted by the Barañí Project on Romani women in prisons in Spain highlights the important role of NGOs in highlighting injustice in other parts of the judicial system that are currently being overlooked.



## **1. PROGRAMME OF NATIONAL POLICE, HUNGARY**

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The Hungarian National Police have developed a relatively comprehensive programme of activities on Roma/minority issues, and these in turn form part of a broader strategy for reform of the Hungarian Police. It provides a good example of how an initial project can lead to the introduction of concrete institutional measures on the part of government.

The work focussing on police and ethnic minority relations was initiated in 1996. It began with an assessment sponsored by the US-based NGO 'Project on Ethnic Relations'. This was carried out by representatives of the Southern Police Institute, University of Louisville, USA, with the assistance of the Ministry of the Interior and of Roma and other NGOs. The assessment identified a serious lack of trust and absence of cooperation between police and Roma, and widespread ignorance and stereotyping among the police with regard to Roma. It recommended the introduction of community policing, supported by effective consultation and complaints procedures, and by training programmes on ethnic minority issues.

The Police in Nograd County pioneered the introduction of this new approach. They established partnerships with local community - and especially Roma - leaders, and set up a Police and Roma Advisory Board. They also organised a summer camp for Roma children, both to assist the children's development and to encourage a more positive image of the police among youth.

Strong support for the new approach has been given at national and political levels, with the Hungarian Parliament requiring that community partnerships should be a priority for the Hungarian police. Civilian Advisory Boards have now been introduced in all counties. And the Ministry of the Interior established a dedicated unit within the National Police to promote work on minority issues.

A special programme of training for police commanders on building police-community partnerships was also introduced, with support as before from PER and the Southern Police Institute. Four one-week seminars were held, which were attended by 200 commanders from all districts across Hungary. Nograd County Police and community representatives presented their work as a model approach. Roma leaders played a key role as instructors during the seminars. Alongside this special programme, training on minority and community issues has been incorporated into basic police training for recruits and managers. A textbook containing articles on police and minorities has been produced to support the training.

(For a fuller account, see *Toward Community Policing: The Police and Ethnic Minorities in Hungary*, Project on Ethnic Relations, 2000)

►► **Contact:**

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Ministry of Interior,  
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Tel/fax: +36-1-338.2832

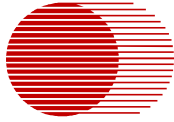
Project on Ethnic Relations  
Budapest Office  
Tel: +36-1-175-9011  
Fax: +36-1-156.6373

**RELATED EXAMPLE:**

**Ireland:**

The Garda Siochana (National Police), with funding support from the European Union, have developed a project entitled "Intercultural Ireland: Identifying the Challenges for the Police Service". Although the project is concerned with racism and ethnic relations generally, the relations between police and the Traveller community are a major focus. A series of sub-projects will lead to the production of an ethnic and cultural diversity policing strategy. The sub-projects include international exchange visits, a consultative conference, training initiatives, and the establishment of an Ethnic Relations Forum and of a Racial and Intercultural Office at Garda Headquarters. Traveller organisations are directly involved in the programme.

►► **Contact:** Garda Racial and Intercultural Office, Community Relations Section, Harcourt Square, Dublin 2;  
Tel: +353-1-666.3150 - Fax: -666.3801



## **2. POLICE STRATEGY AGAINST RACIST VIOLENCE, CZECH REPUBLIC**

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The Czech Republic has experienced acts of violent racism by skinheads and others against Roma since the early 1990s. Czech law provides enhanced penalties for crimes where racist motives are involved, but relatively few cases were being successfully prosecuted.

In 1995, following a particularly brutal racist murder, the government strengthened the measures available for tackling racist crime. Special instructions were issued by the President of the Czech National Police regarding the recording and investigation of racist crimes, and tackling skinhead activities and other forms of extremism. A Specialist Unit has been established at police headquarters in Prague, and in each district of the Czech Republic an officer is assigned specialist responsibility for dealing with racist and extremist crimes. A personal adviser on minority issues to the Minister of the Interior has been appointed, who is himself Roma. In 1997 a detailed manual on 'Extremism' was prepared and distributed: this describes the general characteristics of racism and extremism, and the various movements to be found in the Czech Republic, together with examples of symbols and other manifestations used by skinheads and others.

In 1998 a substantial report was produced by the Ministry of the Interior, setting out a comprehensive approach to tackling the problem of racism and extremism in the Czech Republic, together with a complete record (and brief description) of incidents recorded in the Czech Republic during 1996-1997. It has been updated by a further report produced in 1999, charting subsequent developments and setting out a further analysis of the problem and further detailed proposals for policy and practice. Both documents highlight the importance of training, preventive work, and cooperation with other agencies and Roma associations.

In 1999 the Ministry of the Interior organised an international symposium to share experience of police forces in tackling racism and extremism. This was attended by representatives from many countries across Europe with experience in this field, including Germany and the UK, as well as from the USA and Canada. The Ministry of the Interior has now launched a follow-up programme of seminars for senior police officials, with input from experienced UK police officers and from representatives of Roma and other ethnic minority communities in the Czech Republic.

Other police-related activities undertaken by the Ministry of the Interior include a programme to recruit Roma into the Czech National Police. Two special 'access' courses to assist Roma

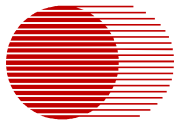
candidates to reach the necessary standards for entry have been run during 2000, as a result of which eight Roma have been recruited. Although the numbers are small, this is a positive outcome given that previous attempts to recruit Roma had been unsuccessful.

Despite these various initiatives, there continues to be criticism by Roma and human rights NGOs about police treatment of Roma at the local level (and especially by the separate 'municipal police' in some areas). There remains, therefore, a challenge to ensure that good practice at national level is implemented effectively and systematically at local level.

► **Contact:**

Major Stanislav Daniel, Adviser to Minister  
Ministry of Interior, Czech Republic  
Nad Stolou 3  
170 34 Prague 7  
Tel: +420-2-6143.2283 - Fax: -6143.3500





### 3. LOCAL POLICE TRAINING IN STOLIPINOVO, BULGARIA

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Since 1996, a variety of community policing initiatives have been developed in the Stolipinovo district of Plovdiv in Bulgaria. Stolipinovo is one of the largest Roma quarters in Bulgaria with more than 30,000 inhabitants, the majority of whom are unemployed and experience multiple social disadvantage. The initiatives have been developed by the local police, with the support of a British ex-police officer from the London Metropolitan Police, and funded by the UK Know-How Fund. Nine local NGOs, including the Foundation for Regional Development 'Roma', have been involved as partners in the programme.

In 1999, initiatives such as the establishment of a local police station and a schools programme were supplemented by a police training project. This began with a session for senior officers, which was also attended by local Roma NGOs, the local Mayor, and representatives from the Ministry of Interior and the Police Academy. Subsequently a course was developed for Sergeants (front-line officers) working in the Roma areas. This course consists of two main elements. The first is two days of classroom-based information provided by representatives of the local Roma community. The second is a period of supervised patrol with experienced instructors, observing and practising a range of community policing skills. Several such courses have now been run, and have received a positive evaluation from both police and NGOs.

The Ministry of the Interior now plans to extend this type of training to other areas of Bulgaria where there is a substantial Roma population. A senior police officer has now been appointed as coordinator for the programme. Sliven is already participating, and Lom will follow, with the local police working in partnership with the Roma-Lom Foundation. For each new municipality or region, basic training for trainers (police and NGO partners) will be provided by experienced trainers in Stolipinovo. It is intended in this way to extend the benefits of this initiative widely across Bulgaria.

►► **Contact:**

Foundation for Regional Development 'Roma',  
12 Malina Street, Stolipinovo,  
4006 Plovdiv, Bulgaria.  
Tel: +359-32-622.322  
Fax: +359-32-836.048  
E-mail: [romafon@plovdiv.techno-link.com](mailto:romafon@plovdiv.techno-link.com)

Coordinator, Roma Training Programme  
Directorate of National Police  
Ministry of Interior  
235 Slivnitsa Boulevard  
Sofia 1202, Bulgaria  
Tel: +359-2-982.39.81

## **SIMILAR EXAMPLES:**

### **Bulgaria:**

In Veliko Turnovo, in north-eastern Bulgaria, the police and local Council of Europe Information Centre organised a programme of locally-based police training which addressed Roma/minority issues within a framework of human rights. Roma NGOs acted as partners for the project, which has now been extended through the region.

▶ Contact: PO Box 345, 5000 Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria;  
Tel/fax. +359-62-300.48

### **Spain:**

In Barcelona, the UNESCO Human Rights Centre of Catalonia formed a partnership with the Catalan Police Training School and a group of NGOs, to design and deliver training for the local police on migrant and minority issues. Local Gypsy Associations were among the partners. The initiative formed part of the EU-funded NAPAP Project, "NGOs and Police Against Prejudice".

▶ Contact: Mallorca 285, Barcelona 08037;  
Tel: +34-93-458.95.95 - Fax: -457.58.51

### **Ireland:**

Representatives of the Pavee Point Travellers Centre provide training on Traveller Issues for police officers attending courses at Templemore, the training college of the Garda Siochana (Irish national police).

▶ Contact: 46 North Great Charles Street, Dublin 1, Ireland.  
Tel: +353-1-878.0255 - Fax: -874.2626.

### **Czech Republic:**

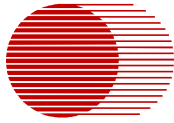
At the regional Police Training School at Brno, a senior member of the Roma community with long professional experience has been appointed to provide teaching on Romany language, culture and background for students at the school.

▶ Contact: Horní 21, 659 65 Brno;  
Tel: +420-5-4354.4288 - Fax: -4152.3061

### **Slovakia:**

The Minority Rights Group Slovakia (now the Foundation for Citizenship and Democracy) undertook in 1994-1995 a series of locally-based seminars aimed at improving the relations between the police and Roma communities in ethnically-mixed areas. The project was funded by the UK Know-How Fund, and had participation from British police officers. A guidance manual for police training schools was also produced.

▶ Contact: Dobrovičova 13, 811 09 Bratislava;  
Tel/fax: +421-7-5292.0426



#### **4. NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION: DROM ROMANI CENTRE, BRNO, CZECH REPUBLIC**

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The DROM Romani Centre is an independent body that was originally established on the initiative of the Municipality of Brno (North District) in 1989, and it continues to receive funding from the Municipality. Its initial aim was to focus specifically on the needs of Roma children and youth in the Bratislavská Street neighbourhood of Brno, where many Roma are living. Experience has led it to widen its field of activities, so that it now also works with the parents of young people. Currently, it operates a supplementary educational establishment, provides free-time activities for children and youth, and runs a Counselling and Information Centre for parents. It also cooperates with the SPOLU Foundation on a pioneering community housing project, in which Roma tenants work on the reconstruction of their apartment block, thereby paying off their debts for unpaid rent.

The Centre has established close links with the various public services in Brno, including both the City and National Police. An initial attempt to recruit Roma into the police was unsuccessful. It was decided that a longer-term strategy to improve Roma-police relations, and to combat criminality amongst young people, was therefore needed.

With the City Police, the Centre has established the 'Mission Project', which is particularly targeted at children between 7 and 10 years. Representatives of the police participate in the activities of the children, aiming to interest them in the work of the police, and motivating them towards education and avoidance of criminality. The basic Project Team consists of one Police Constable, one worker from the Romani Centre, and one teacher. A core group of about 15 children are engaged in this Project, having been selected from local schools as youngsters who are both challenging but also have leadership potential. They participate in activities which develop knowledge and skills relating to law, policing, self-defence, and countering pressures towards criminality. The role of the police officer also involves getting to know, and be known by, the Romani community generally, and so establishing better communication and relations between Roma and police in the area.

The DROM Centre is also involved in other activities designed to improve Roma-police relations. Liaison has been established between the Centre and the officer of the National Police responsible for monitoring activities of racists and extremist groups. This enables mutual exchange of information about planned or expected events organised by skinheads and others. The Director of the Centre also provides advice to the Police Training School in Brno on issues relating to Roma in the training of police recruits. Following his observation of role-play sessions

in which actors simulate practical policing situations, the possibility of involving Roma in such sessions is now being explored. To complement the training for recruits, a programme of in-service training for experienced police personnel working in the new local area is being introduced. This will be a Roma-police partnership project based at the Roma community centre, supported by the UK-based RrAJE Programme (Roma Rights and Access to Justice in Europe).

The various local initiatives mentioned above all form part of the programme of implementation of the City's 'Strategic Plan for Inter-Ethnic Relations between the Majority and the Roma Minority in the City of Brno'.

►► **Contact:**

DROM - Romani Centre

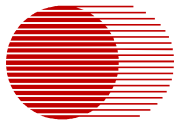
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E-mail: [drom.r.s@razdra.cz](mailto:drom.r.s@razdra.cz)



## 5. COMBATING INTER-ETHNIC VIOLENCE: ROMANI CRISS, ROMANIA

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In the early 1990s, numerous incidents of collective violence against Roma took place in localities in various parts of Romania. Individuals were attacked, and in some cases killed, and houses were burnt down. In most instances the police failed to protect Roma or investigate the attacks properly, and sometimes clearly sided with the perpetrators. Roma activists and NGOs campaigned for firmer action by police and the courts against inter-ethnic violence, and directly assisted Roma families to rebuild their homes.

In 1994, the NGO Romani CRISS (Roma Centre for Social Intervention and Studies) launched a project with the title *"Round Table Series for the Promotion of Trust and Communication in Communities and the Prevention of Criminality"*. Although by this time the incidence of inter-ethnic violence had reduced, relations between Roma and the police remained poor. High profile raids were conducted by police in Roma areas, ostensibly to prevent communal violence and to tackle criminality. The series of Round Tables was intended as a constructive intervention in what appeared to be a spiral of deterioration in relations between the Roma community, the police and the wider community generally.

The Round Tables brought together the full range of key local and administrative actors. These included local Roma, police, mayors and local councillors, local government officials, lawyers, NGOs, religious organisations, and many others. They were held in a variety of localities in Romania where there had been inter-ethnic tensions or conflict between Roma and the police. The structure of the events was flexible, and provided for open discussion among the participants. The goal was to promote a more coordinated response both to crisis situations and to proactive/preventive activities. In many areas, more permanent structures and a variety of innovative projects resulted from the Round Table Programme.

One of the outcomes for Romani CRISS was that, in addition to its campaigning role and provision of legal and other support for Roma, it increased its capability to engage effectively with the public institutions. Also, at this time, the Romanian National Police established a national 'Crime Prevention Service' (now the 'Institute for Crime Prevention'), with officers in all counties, which specifically addresses issues concerning Roma and ethnic relations and which cooperates with Roma NGOs. The Round Table Programme and other subsequent developments were supported in a variety of ways by the US-based Project on Ethnic Relations and by the Council of Europe.

Romani CRISS now cooperates with other NGOs and public authorities across Romania to promote, coordinate and implement a wide range of Roma-focussed programmes. The scope of these activities covers fields such as community development, education, youth training, small business development, women's projects, analytical studies, and transnational cooperation (e.g. on the PAKIV Project, and the INTRINSIC and PASSPORT Programmes). Romani CRISS also promotes the participation of Roma associations in public policy-making, for example through the formation of the Working Group on Roma Association (GLAR) which is a partner of Romanian Government in elaborating a national strategy for Roma. In 1998, Romani CRISS received the Award for Civil Society and Democracy of the European Union and the USA.

► **Contact:**

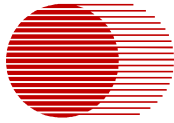
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## **6. NATIONAL-LEVEL ADVOCACY: HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT, BULGARIA**

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In many European countries, serious incidents of abuse of human rights of Roma by police officers have been recorded, including physical violence against Roma. Raising awareness of this problem, punishing those responsible, assisting victims to secure justice, and ultimately preventing such incidents from occurring are all important challenges which NGOs and governments must address.

The Human Rights Project was founded as an NGO in 1992. Its goal is to monitor and publicise incidents of police and other abuse of Roma rights in Bulgaria, and to support victims in their dealings with the authorities, including taking legal action where appropriate through the courts. Incidents and actions taken are publicised in local media, and examples are documented in HRP's Annual Reports. HRP also monitors and, where necessary, challenges the responses of the judicial system in such cases. In 1998, in cooperation with the Bulgarian Lawyers for Human Rights and the European Roma Rights Centre, HRP successfully took the case of Anton Assenov to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, and secured a condemnation of police brutality against Roma. A second case, on behalf of Mrs Ania Velikova whose husband died in police custody, was also successful in 2000.

HRP's approach brings it directly into conflict with the police, and in its early years any form of cooperation was impossible. However, in 1996-7, with the support of the Council of Europe, HRP organised a series of round tables in which police officials and representatives of NGOs and Roma communities were able to exchange views. In 1998-9, the HRP, in association with national Roma organisations, successfully promoted the adoption of the 'Framework Programme for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society' by the Bulgarian Government. The elaboration of the Framework Programme, and the campaign for its adoption carried out by Romani organisations in Bulgaria, exemplify a model for the participation of Roma in national policy-making on Roma affairs.

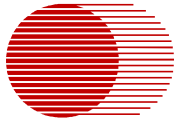
HRP continues to campaign for effective complaints and discipline procedures to deal with cases of police abuse of citizens' rights. (The lack of such procedures is not unique to Bulgaria, but a widespread problem in transition states.) HRP is now able to address these issues through dialogue, while continuing to act on behalf of victims in individual cases. HRP also maintains

close connections with the Roma communities in Bulgaria, through its regional offices, its human rights education programmes, and its casework. Both the Board and staff of HRP are composed of a mix of Roma and non-Roma individuals working together.

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## **7. EUROPEAN ROMA RIGHTS CENTRE, TRAINING FOR LAWYERS**

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The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) is an international NGO which monitors the situation of Roma in Europe, and provides legal defence for Roma who have experienced violation of their human rights. Based in Budapest, Hungary, it has an international Board of Directors, and a body of legal and other staff drawn from a variety of countries.

In 1998-99, the ERRC, with the cooperation of the Council of Europe, organised a series of national-level workshops on international and domestic human rights litigation. These workshops were held in six countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania, Spain, Ukraine and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In each country they were conducted in association with local bar associations and human rights organisations. The workshops brought together domestic lawyers, Roma and representatives of human rights NGOs, judges, government officials, and international lawyers dealing with cases in international courts. The aim of the programme has been to help empower Roma and their advocates to secure their human rights by use of the law. The main emphasis in the approach was on practical issues of conducting litigation on behalf of Roma clients to achieve strategic legal goals.

Since 1996, the ERRC has also cooperated with the Council of Europe to help provide human rights training for lawyers involved in legal assistance to Roma/Gypsies. A three-day training session is currently held annually in Strasbourg. It is hosted and funded by the Human Rights Awareness Unit of the Directorate of Human Rights, and the Division of Migration and Roma/Gypsies. Legal experts, including ERRC staff and lawyers of the Registry of the European Court of Human Rights, act as tutors.

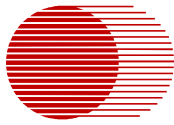
The objective of the course is to familiarise the participants with relevant mechanisms of the European Convention on Human Rights, and the functioning of the European Court of Human Rights. The session in 2000 was specially designed to provide guidance on discrimination cases. It was attended by 15 persons drawn from 11 countries (in Central/Eastern Europe, and Italy), all of whom were practising lawyers who provide legal representation and advice to Roma. The course included attendance at a Hearing at the European Court, and a 'moot trial exercise' which was very well received by the participants according to the course evaluation.

A full account of the workshop programme is provided in the report, *Legal Defence of the Roma*, published by the ERRC. Further information about the training at Strasbourg can be obtained from the Council of Europe Secretariat.

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## **8. THE BARAÑÍ PROJECT: ROMANI WOMEN IN PRISON, SPAIN**

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Although accurate statistical evidence is usually lacking, Roma are seriously over-represented in prisons in many countries in Europe. The Barañí Project carried out a study of Romani women in prisons in Spain, in order to investigate the reasons for this over-representation and the consequences for Romani women and their communities. This project has been financed under the EU Daphne Initiative, under the auspices of the Association 'La Kalle', based in Madrid. The study provides a good example of how a small NGO project can make a major contribution to diagnosing systematic discrimination in a particular institution, and to identifying the actions required for tackling the problem.

During 1999, the Barañí team interviewed 290 Romani women in 12 prisons, as well as police, prosecutors, judges and prison officials. According to their report, 1.5% of the population of Spain are Romani, but 25% of women prison inmates. 60% are serving sentences for drug-dealing, usually on a small scale, and most of the rest for drug-related theft or robbery. The average sentence is 6.7 years, and 60% are repeat offenders. 87% of the women are mothers, and 44% are located outside their region or province.

The study focuses on three levels of discrimination that impact these Romani women. The first is at the level of Spanish society as a whole, affecting the Romani community in areas such as employment, housing, education, and welfare services. Romani women experience triple discrimination: class, ethnic and gender. The second level is that of the criminal justice system. Despite the lack of statistics, there are strong indications that Romani women are systematically discriminated against at all stages: more targeted by police and detained pre-trial; more likely to be tried, convicted and imprisoned; and less likely to receive alternatives to prison or be paroled. The third level is the destructive effects on the women and their families of the long sentences, which are anyway ineffective in combating small-scale drug-dealing.

The study has helped to promote public awareness and debate, not only about the situation of Romani women in prisons, but about the problem of discrimination against Roma in Spain generally. The Barañí Project has put forward a comprehensive series of recommendations for combating discrimination against Romani women in all areas of Spanish life. Those relating to the field of criminal justice include: recognition of systematic discrimination, creation of an 'oversight body on discrimination', training for officials, provision of mediators, raising Roma awareness of legal rights, addressing specific needs of Romani inmates, location of women near their homes, and support programmes for ex-prisoners.

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**RELATED EXAMPLE:**

In 1997, UNICRI (the UN Interregional Crime & Justice Unit) carried out a comparative research study on Roma youth and juvenile justice, based on three sites - Paris, Florence, and Pest County in Hungary. The study revealed common failures of the juvenile justice systems in all three countries to comprehend the social and cultural context of minor criminality among Roma youth, and to deal with the problem effectively and constructively. Almost no programmes had been introduced to address these failures, apart from an initiative of the tribunal in Paris designed to improve interventions with a group of Roma girls originating from Yugoslavia. Research of this kind plays a valuable role in identifying needs, but there is also an urgent need for action by relevant authorities.

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## INTEGRATED STRATEGIES

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The good practices identified in this booklet are initiatives focussing on a specific subject: policing and justice, education and youth, and Roma empowerment. In order to have maximum benefit, such initiatives need to form part of a wider strategy to combat systemic, institutional discrimination and to promote Roma inclusion. For example, Roma-oriented education initiatives that are not supported by wider strategies to combat underlying poverty and to increase employment opportunities will have only a limited impact. Experience of tackling discrimination and exclusion of other minorities and migrant groups across Europe and elsewhere in the world supports this view strongly.

In a number of countries, integrated strategies are now beginning to be developed, at national and/or local and regional levels. Experience of implementation of integrated strategies, however, is still limited. NGOs frequently express concern at the failure of governments to proceed with implementation quickly and effectively, and the unwillingness to establish structures and to provide adequate resources to support such implementation. A further limitation is the lack of adequate monitoring systems - both for recording incidents of racism and discrimination, and for evaluating the impact of policies on the situation of Roma. The collection of statistical data which can be analysed by ethnic group is an essential requirement for the formulation and evaluation of strategies on Roma and minority issues, and ways must be found to overcome legal and constitutional obstacles to the collection of such data.

### National level

Examples of integrated strategies at national level include the following:

- In Spain, the government was one of the first to elaborate a national development plan for Roma, the implementation of which is primarily the responsibility of the regional autonomous governments, together with their Roma NGO partners.
- In Greece, the government introduced a comprehensive national action plan in 1996, which focusses primarily on living conditions and the promotion of social integration.
- in Finland, the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs has recently developed proposals for a strategy to the national government.
- In Lithuania, the government has approved a 'Roma Integration Programme into Lithuanian Society for 2000-2004', which is being implemented first in Vilnius and afterwards in other cities and regions of Lithuania.
- In Croatia, the government has introduced a programme which focuses primarily on measures for the integration of children in the school system, but which also addresses issues such as employment, welfare and living conditions of families.

- In Ireland, the government established a 'Task Force on the Travelling Community' which in 1995 produced a comprehensive report with recommendations: this was commended by ECRI and continues to provide a framework for action.

Also, in the five transition countries of Central/Eastern Europe that have the largest Roma populations, comprehensive national-level strategic plans for the integration of Roma are currently being developed and implemented, with substantial EU and international donor support:

- The Slovak Government has elaborated a 'Government Strategy for Addressing Problems of the Romani Minority', which is now in process of implementation.
- The Bulgarian Government has adopted a 'Framework Programme for the Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society'.
- The Hungarian Government in 1999 adopted a programme of 'medium-term' measures relating to the Roma population, and a consultant from the Council of Europe is assisting it to elaborate a long-term strategy.
- The Czech Government is currently considering a proposal for a 'Concept of Government Policy towards Members of the Romany Community'.
- The Romanian Government is in process of formulating a national strategy for integration of Roma with EU support under the PHARE Programme.

### **Local/regional level**

Examples of integrated strategic approaches at the municipal and regional levels include the following:

- The city of Brno in the Czech Republic has been one of the first municipalities to produce a strategic plan on Roma issues, which was prepared with the support of consultants from the Council of Europe.
- The town of Pardubice in the Czech Republic is also in the process of developing and implementing a comprehensive strategic plan for integration of Roma.
- The city of Frankfurt-am-Main in Germany has an extensive programme of activities focussing on the needs of Roma and Sinti (especially those from Eastern Europe), which forms part of the broader strategy of its Department for Multicultural Affairs (AMKA).
- In Poland, the Government is supporting the development of an integrated strategy for Roma in the Malopolska Region, following a pilot project supported by the UK Know-How Fund.
- In Hungary, a set of integrated projects in selected regions is being developed with assistance under the PHARE Programme, following a successful pilot in Tatabánya.
- In Belgium, in the Wallonia region, the mayors of six cities have agreed to cooperate on a common policy for the integration of Travellers, and to share experience and cooperate with Traveller NGOs in implementing this.

All of the above examples incorporate initiatives focussing on the three areas covered by this booklet. Further information can be obtained from the relevant national, regional and municipal authorities.



## SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

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### INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

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### NATIONAL LEVEL

Examples of specialist Roma Offices in Government, Roma Advisory bodies, and Roma NGOs that may be contacted in individual countries are given in the main text of this booklet.

Documents bringing together examples of good practice within individual countries also exist: for example on Romania, see *Best Practices in Roma Communities*, by Maria Ionescu and Sorin Cace, published by the Agency for Community Development 'Impreuna', Bucharest, 2000. See also the examples in *Breaking the Vicious Circle*, published by SPOLU International and the CEGA Foundation, Sofia 2000.

## **OTHER USEFUL PUBLICATIONS**

- *Activities on Roma/Gypsies*, Newsletter of the Office of Coordinator for Roma/Gypsy Affairs, Council of Europe
- *Country Reports*, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
- *Roma Rights*, Newsletter of the European Roma Rights Centre
- *Report on the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area*, High Commissioner on National Minorities, OSCE, 2000
- *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, by Jean-Pierre Liégeois, Council of Europe Press, 1994
- *Roma/Gypsies: A European Minority*, by Jean-Pierre Liégeois & Nicolae Gheorghe, Minority Rights Group International, 1995
- *Roma and the Transition in Central & Eastern Europe: Trends and Challenges*, by Dena Ringold, World Bank, 2000
- *On the Margins: Roma and Public Services in Romania, Bulgaria & Macedonia*, by Ina Zoon, OSI (NY), 2001
- *Roma and Statistics*, Project on Ethnic Relations, 2000





## **ECRI GENERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATION No. 3 Combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies**

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### **The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance:**

Recalling the decision adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the member States of the Council of Europe at their first Summit held in Vienna on 8-9 October 1993;

Recalling that the Plan of Action on combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance set out as part of this Declaration invited the Committee of Ministers to establish the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance with a mandate, *inter alia*, to formulate general policy recommendations to member States;

Recalling also the Final Declaration and Action Plan adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the member States of the Council of Europe at their second Summit held in Strasbourg on 10-11 October 1997;

Stressing that this Final Declaration confirms that the goal of the member States of the Council of Europe is to build a freer, more tolerant and just European society and that it calls for the intensification of the fight against racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance;

Noting the proposal concerning the nomination of a European mediator for Roma/Gypsies contained in Recommendation N° 1203 (1993) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;

Bearing in mind the conclusions of the human dimension seminar on Roma in the CSCE (OSCE) region organised on 20-23 September 1994 by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), in close consultation with the Council of Europe and the continuing co-operation between the two Organisations in this field;

Welcoming the nomination by the Secretary General in 1994 of a Co-ordinator of Council of Europe Activities on Roma/Gypsies;

Bearing in mind the work of the Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies (MG-S-ROM);

Recalling Recommendation N° R (97) 21 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the media and the promotion of a climate of tolerance;

Recalling the provisions contained in ECRI's general policy recommendation N° 1, which sought to assist member States in combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance effectively, by proposing concrete and specific measures in a limited number of particularly pertinent areas;

Profoundly convinced that Europe is a community of shared values, including that of the equal dignity of all human beings, and that respect for this equal dignity is the cornerstone of all democratic societies;

Recalling that the legacy of Europe's history is a duty to remember the past by remaining vigilant and actively opposing any manifestations of racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance;

Paying homage to the memory of all the victims of policies of racist persecution and extermination during the Second World War and remembering that a considerable number of Roma/Gypsies perished as a result of such policies;

Stressing in this respect that the Council of Europe is the embodiment and guardian of the founding values - in particular the protection and promotion of human rights - around which Europe was rebuilt after the horrors of the Second World War;

Recalling that combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance forms an integral part of the protection and promotion of human rights, that these rights are universal and indivisible, and that all human beings, without any distinction whatsoever, are entitled to these rights;

Stressing that combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance is above all a matter of protecting the rights of vulnerable members of society;

Convinced that in any action to combat racism and discrimination, emphasis should be placed on the victim and the improvement of his or her situation;

Noting that Roma/Gypsies suffer throughout Europe from persisting prejudices, are victims of a racism which is deeply-rooted in society, are the target of sometimes violent demonstrations of racism and intolerance and that their fundamental rights are regularly violated or threatened;

Noting also that the persisting prejudices against Roma/Gypsies lead to discrimination against them in many fields of social and economic life, and that such discrimination is a major factor in the process of social exclusion affecting many Roma/Gypsies;

Convinced that the promotion of the principle of tolerance is a guarantee of the preservation of open and pluralistic societies allowing for a peaceful co-existence;

recommends the following to Governments of member States:

- to sign and ratify the relevant international legal instruments in the field of combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance, particularly the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages;
- to ensure that the name used officially for the various Roma/Gypsy communities should be the name by which the community in question wishes to be known;
- bearing in mind the manifestations of racism and intolerance of which Roma/Gypsies are victims, to give a high priority to the effective implementation of the provisions contained in ECRI's general policy recommendation N° 1, which requests that the necessary measures should be taken to ensure that national criminal, civil and administrative law expressly and specifically counter racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and intolerance;
- to ensure that discrimination as such, as well as discriminatory practices, are combated through adequate legislation and to introduce into civil law specific provisions to this end, particularly in the fields of employment, housing and education;
- to render illegal any discrimination on the part of public authorities in the exercise of their duties;
- to ensure that suitable legal aid be provided for Roma/Gypsies who have been victims of discrimination and who wish to take legal action;
- to take the appropriate measures to ensure that justice is fully and promptly done in cases concerning violations of the fundamental rights of Roma/Gypsies;
- to ensure in particular that no degree of impunity is tolerated as regards crimes committed against Roma/Gypsies and to let this be clearly known among the general public;
- to set up and support specific training schemes for persons involved at all levels in the various components of the administration of justice, with a view to promoting cultural understanding and an awareness of prejudice;
- to encourage the development of appropriate arrangements for dialogue between the police, local authorities and Roma/Gypsy communities;
- to encourage awareness-raising among media professionals, both in the audiovisual field and in the written press, of the particular responsibility they bear in not transmitting prejudices when practising their profession, and in particular in avoiding reporting incidents involving individuals who happen to be members of the Roma/Gypsy community in a way which blames the Roma/Gypsy community as a whole;
- to take the necessary steps to ensure that rules concerning the issue of de jure and de facto access to citizenship and the right to asylum are drawn up and applied so as not to lead to particular discrimination against Roma/Gypsies;

- to ensure that the questions relating to "travelling" within a country, in particular regulations concerning residence and town planning, are solved in a way which does not hinder the way of life of the persons concerned;
- to develop institutional arrangements to promote an active role and participation of Roma/Gypsy communities in the decision-making process, through national, regional and local consultative mechanisms, with priority placed on the idea of partnership on an equal footing;
- to take specific measures to encourage the training of Roma/Gypsies, to ensure full knowledge and implementation of their rights and of the functioning of the legal system;
- to pay particular attention to the situation of Roma/Gypsy women, who are often the subject of double discrimination, as women and as Roma/Gypsies;
- to vigorously combat all forms of school segregation towards Roma/Gypsy children and to ensure the effective enjoyment of equal access to education;
- to introduce into the curricula of all schools information on the history and culture of Roma/Gypsies and to provide training programmes in this subject for teachers;
- to support the activities of non-governmental organisations, which play an important role in combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies and which provide them in particular with appropriate legal assistance;
- to encourage Roma/Gypsy organisations to play an active role, with a view to strengthening civil society;
- to develop confidence-building measures to preserve and strengthen an open and pluralistic society with a view to a peaceful co-existence.