

The Council of Europe:  
Protecting the rights of

**Roma**



COUNCIL OF EUROPE    CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



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## What's in a name?

### 10 to 12 million Roma in Europe

There are an estimated 10-12 million Roma and Travellers in Europe, living in almost all Council of Europe member states, and particularly in Bulgaria [10.33% of the total population], "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" [9.59%], Slovakia [9.17 %], Romania [8.32%], Serbia [excluding Kosovo] [8.18%], Hungary [7.05%], Turkey [3.83%], Albania [3.18%], Greece [2.47%] and Spain [1.52%].

### Roma, Travellers, Gypsies, Manush, Sinti, Kale ... a multitude of names

"Roma" [the term chosen at the 1<sup>st</sup> World Romani Congress in 1971] covers a wide variety of population groups. Mostly, the way these groups refer to themselves is different from the way non-Roma or public authorities refer to them. Long years of discrimination have also given rise to pejorative terms. The term "gypsy" is especially pejorative in eastern Europe, but still used to refer to Roma music.

It is important to differentiate between the Roma/Sinti/Kale, whose ancestors came from northern India, and indigenous communities such as the *Travellers* in Ireland and the United Kingdom, and the Yenish in Switzerland and France, even though they have points in common in terms of lifestyle or difficulties.

Roma, Sinti and Kale are the three main branches. Sinti are found mainly in German-speaking regions, Benelux and certain Scandinavian countries, northern Italy and the south of France [Provence], where they are known as Manush. The Kale [commonly known as "Gypsies"] are to be found in the Iberian peninsula and North Wales. The term "Travellers", used in France, Switzerland and Belgium, also includes non-Roma groups having an itinerant lifestyle. There may be different communities in the same country: so for example, in Germany and Italy, the communities are referred to as "Roma and Sinti".

In the Council of Europe, Roma is presently used as a generic name, although there have been various terms in use since the 1970s. The Council of Europe has produced a glossary that takes into account the Roma point of view.



The glossary can be found at:  
[www.coe.int/roma](http://www.coe.int/roma)

## Persecution and migration: a long history

Ever since they left India between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Roma have suffered from persecution, prompting massive waves of migration.

### **From India to Byzantium: pre-European history**

At the time of the Byzantine Empire, Roma groups migrated from India to Europe via Persia, Armenia and Asia Minor. The eastern branches of the Roma are still to be found in the Caucasus, Turkey and the Middle East, where they are known as “Lom” or “Dom”.

### **Arrival in Europe and first experiences of discrimination**

From the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Roma who had settled in Europe came across their first experiences of discrimination in the Ottoman Empire and central Europe, in particular serfdom and slavery in Wallachia and Moldavia. In western Europe too they were marginalised and persecuted.

### **Discrimination during the “Enlightenment”**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the period of the “Enlightenment” in European history, the Roma faced new methods of discrimination: in Spain they were interned, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, various laws ordered their forced assimilation. In Russia, however, they were considered as equal subjects of the Tsar and were accordingly granted all civil rights.

### **Second migration period and more intense discrimination**

A second wave of migration took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with Roma groups in central and eastern Europe leaving for other parts of Europe. Some even crossed the sea. In 1860, Roma slavery was abolished in the Romanian principalities. Nonetheless, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, discrimination became more intense, especially in those regions which had been part of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.

### **The “Samudaripen” or Roma holocaust**

Discrimination reached its peak during the Second World War, with a genocide orchestrated by the Nazis. It is estimated that between 400,000 and 500,000 Roma and Sinti were massacred by the Third Reich. During the Nuremberg Trials, no mention was made of this genocide and no assistance or compensation was given to the Roma who had survived the concentration camps. The Roma term is “Samudaripen”, although some use the term “Pharrajmos” [or “Porajmos”] instead.



### Third wave of migration and emancipation

Migration of Roma from eastern Europe to western Europe and then to the United States, Canada and Australia, was initially part of the movement of migrant workers. This took on much larger proportions in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellites, and the disintegration of Yugoslavia. The wars in the Balkans in the 1990s affected the Roma in a number of ways: they were war victims, they were expelled (in particular from the province of Kosovo in 1999) and were granted only “economic refugee” status in the countries of destination.



For more details, see the fact sheets on the history of the Roma, beginning with the first wave of migration, then covering the major periods of discrimination and extermination, and finally outlining the current emancipation process:

[www.coe.int/roma](http://www.coe.int/roma)

## Identity

### The Romani language

Romani, the language spoken by the Roma, derives from a language spoken in northern India, close to Sanskrit. There are numerous variants with vocabulary borrowed from the languages with which Romani came into contact : Persian, Armenian and Greek prior to the 14<sup>th</sup> century and then German, Romanian, the languages of the south-eastern Balkans and Turkish. Romani is mostly spoken in the Balkans. It is included in the list of languages protected by the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

### The family

The family is traditionally the basis on which Roma society, economic activity and education are organised. It is a closely-knit, cohesive unit. Housing problems and the changing role of women are leading to smaller families, and young people often have their own aspirations or obligations causing them to move away from the family unit.

### Religion

There are various religions practised by the Roma, tending to follow the dominant religion in the areas in which they have settled. For example, in Italy and Ireland, most Roma would say they are Catholic, while in Bulgaria they would be Orthodox or Muslim. In some countries, the religion they subscribe to and the religious festivities observed may involve different faiths, as for example in Bulgaria where certain groups are baptised by an Orthodox priest and buried by a Muslim imam. Rituals revolve mainly around birth and death, and pilgrimages are an opportunity for family groups to meet up. The Gypsy Evangelical Movement has grown considerably since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and also plays a political role in bringing claims to the attention of states.

### Lifestyle

The Roma comprise diverse communities and in the course of their migration have been influenced by a variety of cultures. Theirs is an identity shaped by diversity and they are among the most European of all population groups. Since the Middle Ages, they have maintained transnational family ties, criss-crossing Europe's borders.

With such great diversity, a single Roma culture is hard to pin down. A common feature is the importance of family as the basis for economic and social organisation, a pride in being different, independence in carrying out an occupation, the absence of roots or an affiliation to any particular area, and education within the family.



The very strengths of the Roma way of life – communal living, a marginal economy, living for the present, mobility, dispersal, linguistic variety, community solidarity – can become barriers in societies characterised by individualism, accumulation of capital, sedentary living, standardisation, and competitiveness. Globalisation has had an impact on Roma identity, diluting it as groups have borrowed from local culture. The tightening of regulations in various countries, crack-downs on camps and tighter accommodation conditions impact the Roma’s cultural development, and consequently their identity. Isolation, crime, alcoholism, drugs and family fragmentation can be the consequence.

## **Culture and Art**

Art among the Roma is above all a way of life. It is linked to mobility, to travelling, trading, making transportable objects, and playing music. Most of the time, the art of the Roma merges with the immediate environment, and traditional gatherings form an opportunity for sharing. Traditional expression was mainly oral: modern life – and new technology – is proving a challenge. Roma are now experimenting with new forms of art such as painting, sculpture or publishing traditional folk tales.

The Roma are best known for their music, and many Roma artistes enjoy major international careers. The two most well-known combinations are Manouche jazz and flamenco andaluz. There is a tendency amongst non-Roma to stereotype the whole community through their colourful cultural life – this is leading to increased politicisation of culture by the Roma as they struggle to assert their identity.

## **Roma Culture and Heritage Routes**

The itinerant culture of the Roma has not left tangible traces such as churches or monuments. Instead, the Roma have marked the landscape as they have in turn been marked by the places they passed through.

The Council of Europe’s Roma Cultural Routes retraces the migration movements of the Roma, providing opportunities to discover Roma artists, musicians, and writers. The route seeks to promote Roma culture, familiarise the public with their living conditions and project a positive image of a people who have always been viewed negatively.



Map of the route:  
[www.coe.int/roma](http://www.coe.int/roma)

## Powerful symbols

### Travelling and a sedentary lifestyle

Travelling has never been an inherent Roma characteristic: the constant moving came through persecution and expulsion – including the recent deportations of the Second World War and more recent removals from national territory.

Roma are mobile rather than nomadic, adapting to employment conditions, such as seasonal work that help them survive economically, or travelling to bring scattered families together for important events. For them, travelling is not just an economic necessity but a state of mind and even when they are obliged to stay in one place, Roma remain travellers in their hearts and minds. Nonetheless, a minority of European Roma have opted for an itinerant lifestyle; the majority are settled, although mostly under conditions of extreme hardship.

The Roma define themselves as a nation, but as a nation “with no compact territory and with no claim to such a territory” [5<sup>th</sup> Congress of the International Romani Union, Prague, 2000]. They are generally citizens of the countries in which they live. They do not claim territory, but the same rights as any other citizen.

### The flag and what it symbolises

The first World Romani Congress held in London in 1971 asserted the Roma claim to be recognised as a fully-fledged people. It adopted a flag, an anthem and an International Roma Day.

The Roma flag represents a people and not a state with defined borders. The colour blue symbolises the sky, freedom, spirituality, what is eternal; green symbolises nature, the earth, fertility and the tangible aspects of life. The red 16-spoke wheel symbolises not only the horse-drawn caravan, travelling, growth and progress, but also refers to the Indian origin of the Roma, their “motherland” from whence they migrated, since the wheel is inspired by the chakra, found on the Indian flag, which has 24 spokes just like the number of hours in a day.

***“Blue, like the sky and the sea,  
Green, like the forests and the prairies  
Red, like the blood shed  
in the persecution we have suffered over the  
centuries.”***

*Vania de Gila-Kochanowski, Huguette Tanguy,  
Parlons tsigane: histoire, culture et langue du peuple tsigane  
[Let's speak Gypsy: history, culture and language of the Gypsy people]*





## Anthem

“Gelem, Gelem” is the Roma anthem. The words were written by Jarko Jovanović, a Roma poet from the former Yugoslavia, most of whose family were deported and perished in Auschwitz during the Second World War. The music is based on a traditional Roma melody.

## 8 April, International Roma Day

As the Congress was held on 8 April, it was logical that this date should be declared International Roma Day. This date also refers to a traditional festival of the Roma of Transylvania, the “day of the horses”, when horses were led out of their winter shelters, decorated with garlands. Cultural events take place throughout the world.

## 2 August, International Day to commemorate the Roma and Sinti Victims of the Holocaust (*Samudaripen*)

The Roma commemorate the Samudaripen on 2 August, the date that 3,000 Roma were killed in Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1945.

This tragedy remains overlooked. The Council of Europe is working to ensure that it is included in school curricular as part of its project “Education of Roma Children in Europe” [see Sheet 5]: teaching material has been drawn up, and events and working meetings are also held. A website developed in co-operation with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe contains a database on this period in Roma history, a virtual library and an informative interactive map.



[www.romagenocide.org](http://www.romagenocide.org)

## Housing, jobs, education and health

### Traditional economic activities

Traditionally the Roma made their living through metal-working, collecting and re-selling various materials, performance and circus-related work, fairground work and second-hand trading, market trading, seasonal work on farms or in the building sector. Throughout history, the need to adapt to the job market, the Roma's versatility acquired from a very young age and their desire for freedom have prompted them to move about constantly and perform seasonal jobs.

High unemployment rates among modern communities can be explained by the disappearance of traditional occupations, segregation of living areas, low-level of skills, unequal access to education, and economic transition in the countries of central and eastern Europe where the Roma were the first to be dismissed from the state-run companies.

### Housing, depending on their surrounding extreme hardship

Roma housing situations are very diverse. Some families have been settled for several centuries in one area and live in bungalows, small houses or apartments. Others live in a caravan or mixed accommodation (house and caravan or mobile-home), although horse-drawn caravans are now rare. Some families live in very cramped social housing.

Housing conditions therefore depend very much on the immediate surroundings, the attitude towards them of the neighbouring populations, and the sometimes stringent regulations which mean that the Roma have to limit the time they can remain in one place.

There are many Roma families in Europe who are obliged to live in shanty towns, on the pavements in cities, alongside motorways, and industrial estates in makeshift housing made from recycled material, with no drinking water, electricity or means of disposing of waste. Roma families wishing to engage in an itinerant life have extreme difficulty finding suitable unpolluted sites, not too far away from schools, obliging them to camp illegally or be continually on the move.

### Continuing inadequate access to education and segregation

Half of the Roma in Europe are of school age, but at least half of them have never been to school. Amongst adult Roma, the illiteracy rate is often over 50%.



In most regions of Europe, Roma children have no access to high-quality education of an equivalent standard to that available to other children. Absenteeism and drop-outs are at unacceptable levels and are rising. Poverty and the traditions of certain communities create additional obstacles to education.

Discrimination and prejudice are at the heart of this deep-rooted inequality in access to education. Certain Roma children cannot get to school because they live too far away. Others are placed in schools cut off from the rest of society, or in classes for children with special needs, without any psychological or educational assessment. Segregated education excludes Roma from the rest of society from an early age and prevents contacts between Roma and non-Roma.

The Council of Europe launched a project on Roma education in 2001, aimed at fostering best practice and providing teachers with training on how to integrate pupils from Roma communities. The project produces teaching material, especially for pre-school age children for attending primary school.



[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/Source/leaflet\\_EN.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/Source/leaflet_EN.pdf)

## Unfavourable health indicators

In many countries of Europe there are significant differences between the health indicators of the Roma and those of the majority. Life expectancy is in general 8-15 years lower, and the mortality, infectious and chronic disease rates are much higher. In certain cases, an improvement in the Roma health situation is a matter of urgency.

Many Roma live in areas far removed from healthcare centres and find it very difficult to get to them. If there is an emergency, the situation can be serious. Furthermore, the Roma do not always have identity papers, which can make it even more difficult to obtain ordinary health care. There are also cases of discrimination by healthcare professionals, particularly general practitioners who refuse to go to Roma neighbourhoods or encampments.

## Stereotypes and discrimination

### Anti-Gypsyism – a specific form of racism

The Roma are the most persecuted minority in Europe. Majority populations have for centuries harboured stereotypes about them, misreading their itinerant lifestyles and traditions and seeing them as dirty, asocial thieves. In contrast, they are romanticised in popular cultures, obscuring the harsh reality of their lives.

Frequently scapegoated, their present situation looks grim, against a backdrop of the world economic crisis, the rise of extremism, discriminatory laws on migration and inflammatory media reports of European Union enlargement leading to an influx of Roma. Many communities refuse to allow Roma families to settle, and pushed away to live in shanty towns and make-shift encampments, the stereotype of the Roma as people who live in dirty and poorly maintained conditions is further entrenched.

The Council of Europe is combating these prejudices with an awareness-raising campaign called Dosta! ["Enough!" in Romani]. The campaign shows Roma as people who provide value to society in their own right. Run in 12 European countries since 2006, it has an interactive website, TV spots, school projects, training for the media and teachers, and awards a prize for local authorities which have taken steps to uphold and protect the rights of the Roma.



| [www.dosta.org](http://www.dosta.org)

### Diminished rights

The vast majority of Roma are citizens of the country in which they live but they do not always enjoy the same rights as other citizens. Isolation, illiteracy, poverty, lack of trust in the police and the judicial system, and a lack of awareness of how to defend their rights mean they are isolated and can potentially become victims of abuse by the authorities. Where they are not citizens of the country in which they are living, the Roma have real difficulties in gaining recognition as a minority.

Roma women are particularly marginalised. Along with the general negative stereotype, and practices such as forced sterilisation by the authorities and the majority population, they face lower status and practices such as early marriages in their own community. The Council of Europe is taking action to promote entrepreneurship and economic empowerment of women, and regularly co-organises international conferences on the topic.



## The trap of trafficking networks

Due to their extreme poverty and marginalisation, Roma are particularly at risk of being trafficked by criminal gangs –especially those who fled their homes because of the wars in the Balkans in the 1990s. Women and children are particularly exposed to the dangers of trafficking for sexual exploitation, begging, forced labour, illegal adoption and organ removals. Two Council of Europe treaties help to protect against this: the **Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings** [2008] focusing mainly on the protection of victims of trafficking, safeguarding their rights and the prosecution of traffickers; and the **Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse**, [2010] the first international treaty to criminalise sexual abuse.

## Roma representation

### Emancipation

The Roma political movement began to take real shape from the 1960s onwards thanks to the setting up of Roma organisations, international awareness-raising campaigns, co-operation with international organisations and recent initiatives such as the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, launched by the World Bank and the Open Society Institute [See Sheet 12].

### The European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF)

The European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) was set up in 2004 following an appeal made by Finnish President Tarja Halonen during a speech at the Council of Europe in 2001. Its main objectives are to give the Roma a voice, enable them to express their hopes and concerns at European level and take part in decisions directly concerning them. The ERTF, which has its headquarters in Strasbourg and is totally independent of governments, signed a partnership agreement with the Council of Europe in December 2004. It brings together representatives of national Roma federations and international Roma organisations to promote Roma rights and monitor respect for them.



| [www.ertf.org](http://www.ertf.org)

### The Forum of European Roma Young People (Feryp)

Young European Roma suffer not only from human rights violations, but also from a lack of recognition of their civil rights and responsibilities. This forum, an international NGO based in Strasbourg, supports the representation of young Roma people, defending their interests in the European institutions and promotes co-operation and training for young Roma NGO leaders.



| <http://feryp.piczo.com>

### The International Roma Women's Network (IRWN)

The Council of Europe supports the International Roma Women's Network, set up in 2003 in partnership with the OSCE European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC). The network, which initially focused its action on access by Roma women to healthcare, now covers other areas, such as access to employment and the fight against discrimination. The IRWN is a driving force for change in the Roma community on matters which for a long time were taboo, such as early marriages, girls' education and homosexuality.



## Key dates in the political history of the Roma

**1967:** Creation of the International Gypsy Committee

**1971:** Adoption of the term “Roma” at the 1<sup>st</sup> World Romani Congress in London. Adoption of the flag, anthem and International Roma Day.

**1978:** The World Romani Congress meeting in Geneva in 1978 establishes the International Romani Union [Romani Ekhipé].

**1979:** The International Romani Union obtains consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

**1980s:** Period of stabilisation and consolidation of Roma organisations.

**1990s:** Significant increase in the number of Roma political and cultural organisations.

**1994:** Juan de Dios Ramírez-Heredia becomes the first Roma member of the European Parliament, after being the first, and to date the only, Roma member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe between 1983 and 1985.

**2000:** Launch, at the Prague Congress, of the idea of a Roma nation. Creation of an international Roma parliament, based in Vienna.

**2004:** Establishment of the European Roma and Travellers Forum and signature of a partnership agreement between the Forum and the Council of Europe.

**2005:** Nine states in central and south-eastern Europe join the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and undertake to improve the socio-economic conditions and status of the Roma minority. Three other states join subsequently in 2008-2009.

**2008:** Two Hungarian members of the European Parliament of Roma origin, Ms Livia Járóka and Ms Viktória Mohácsi, encourage all EU member states to join the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

# The Roma and the Council of Europe

## The Parliamentary Assembly, pioneering Roma rights

In 1969, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly was the first institution to adopt a text on Roma. In 1963, it highlighted the Roma contribution to Europe's cultural diversity and the need to guarantee their rights and in 2002 it focused on the new wave of Roma migration in Europe and the importance of their legal status.

Two new texts in 2003 and 2005 dealt with the forced returns from Council of Europe member states of the former Yugoslavia and on the situation in Kosovo.

## Targeted action from the Committee of Ministers

Since 1975, the Committee of Ministers has addressed statelessness, education, employment, mobility, housing and health care.



| <http://www.coe.int/t/cm/>

## The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is a hub for action on Roma issues. In 1993, the Congress set out the role and responsibilities of local and regional authorities in protecting Roma communities. Through its "Dostal" prize, the Congress rewards best practices in promoting Roma rights.



| [www.coe.int/congress](http://www.coe.int/congress)

## The Commissioner for Human Rights

The Commissioner for Human Rights includes Roma settlements in his regular visits. He has stressed the need to stop forced deportations, statelessness, anti-Gypsyism, and segregation and to ensure decent housing. Access to amenities, schooling, access to health care, and representation of Roma communities on policy-making bodies.



| [www.coe.int/commissioner](http://www.coe.int/commissioner)

## The European Convention and the Court of Human Rights

As of June 2010, the Court had delivered 20 judgments on the Roma lifestyle, the right to a home, ill-treatment by the police and the placement of children in special schools. Protocol No.4 to the European Convention on Human Rights forbids collective deportations.





For 15 years, the Council of Europe and the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) have organised training sessions for lawyers on Roma-related case-law.



Court case-law:  
[www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/jurisechr\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/jurisechr_en.asp)

## The European Social Charter

The Charter covers economic and social rights and is increasingly used by the Roma. The first time was in 2003 and concerned family rights to social, legal and economic protection.



The European Social Charter  
and Roma Rights:  
[www.coe.int/socialcharter](http://www.coe.int/socialcharter)

## Action against Racism

The Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has worked consistently to report anti Gypsyism and discrimination. ECRI has also urged the media to report responsibility on Roma issues.



[www.coe.int/ecri](http://www.coe.int/ecri)

## The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

The Charter, which was adopted in 1992 and entered into force in 1998, ensures protection and promotes Romani as one of the protected languages.



Text of the Charter:  
[www.coe.int/minlang](http://www.coe.int/minlang)

## The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

This treaty, adopted in 1994, entered into force in 1998 seeks to preserve and develop minority cultures and identities. Some countries, such as Germany, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Slovenia and Sweden, make specific reference to the Roma in their list of minorities found within their borders.



Text of the Framework  
Convention:  
<http://conventions.coe.int>

## Latest steps in the fight for Roma rights

### The “Strasbourg Declaration”

The events of 2010, which saw the removal of Roma from western Europe, prompted Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland to step up action to help the Roma in a more targeted, better co-ordinated and more cross-dimensional way.

He called representatives of the 47 Council of Europe member states, the European Union and the Roma community to Strasbourg to condemn the widespread discrimination and pledge to improvements. The “Strasbourg Declaration” was adopted, providing for a raft of new initiatives on Roma. A Special Representative for Roma Issues, Jeroen Schokkenbroek, was appointed and a dedicated team set up to spearhead work.



Strasbourg Declaration:  
[www.coe.int/roma](http://www.coe.int/roma)

### Mediator Training

From the beginning of 2011, the Council of Europe launched a project to train mediators – most of whom are from Roma communities – to ease communication between communities and public institutions on practical issues such as schooling, access to health care, housing and employment. Council of Europe experts and specialised trainers equip the mediators with the skills they need to work effectively and impartially between local authorities and the Roma community. The countries taking part in the programme include Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Turkey and Ukraine. Other countries are due to join the programme, thanks in part to financial assistance from the European Union, with the programme becoming a joint project between the two organisations with effect from the middle of 2011. The Council of Europe is also carrying out training sessions for lawyers, reinforcing their skills in this specialised area [Court, see Sheet 11].

### Sharing tactics and successes

Work has begun on a database where national and local authorities, along with NGOs or anyone working with the Roma, can find the best practices so far in use. The idea is to build a pool of projects and policies that work and that can be adapted for use in different countries and contexts, creating a momentum for continual positive change throughout Europe.



At the same time, a group of experts appointed at the highest level by the 47 Council of Europe member states meet twice a year. The Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues [CAHROM] acts as a forum for exchanging experiences and best practices between member states. Reporting directly to the Committee of Ministers, the CAHROM can submit opinions and recommendations for adoption, and alert it to new issues requiring urgent attention.

## The Roma and other international institutions and initiatives

### The new European Union strategic framework

Several resolutions have been adopted by the European Parliament since the 1970s on Roma. Programmes (particularly the Phare programme) and conferences have also been organised to promote policies to secure Roma rights.

The emotion aroused in summer 2010 by Roma communities being removed from western Europe prompted the European Commission to set up a framework for Roma focusing on education, employment, healthcare and housing. States must ensure that all Roma children complete primary school, that the employment gap between Roma and non-Roma is cut, that the infant mortality rate among the Roma community is reduced, that greater emphasis is placed on providing access to housing and that the funds already provided are better used.



The EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011DC0173:EN:NOT>



The European Union and the Roma:

[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm)

### The OSCE “Contact Point”

The OSCE has adopted several resolutions on Roma. In 1994 it decided to set up a “Contact point for Roma and Sinti issues” to promote the civil and political rights of these communities and help prevent or resolve conflicts in the countries of south-eastern Europe. The topics covered by this initiative include racism and discrimination, housing, healthcare and employment, access to education, and Roma participation in public life.



Roma issues at the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights:

<http://www.osce.org/odihr/44247>

### United Nations

The Roma began to be mentioned in the United Nations texts from 1977 onwards. In 1979, the Economic and Social Council (Ecosoc) recognised the International Romani Union as a non-governmental organisation representing the Roma. Unesco and Unicef contribute to the discussions on the education of



Roma children and are involved in projects relating to the Romani language. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has expressed concern at the situation of the Roma in central and eastern Europe. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination [Cerd] is also there to notify countries where there are established cases of discrimination against the Roma.



Roma Issues at the United Nations:

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/inclusive-education/roma-children/>

### **The Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015)**


In 2005, nine eastern European countries signed up to a new initiative to put an end to the racial discrimination suffered by the Roma. This involves improving social and economic conditions. The Decade brings together governments, intergovernmental organisations such as the Council of Europe, and Roma NGOs. The emphasis is placed on education, employment, health, housing, and the elimination of poverty and racial and gender-based discrimination. Twelve states are today part of the Decade of Roma Inclusion: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". Slovenia has observer status. The Roma Education Fund finances projects for Roma inclusion in national education systems. It receives funds from governments, multilateral organisations and private sources.



[www.romadecade.org](http://www.romadecade.org)

## Council of Europe Resources

Bibliography on the education of Roma children in Europe:

 [www.coe.int/roma](http://www.coe.int/roma)

Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights:

 [www.coe.int/commissioner](http://www.coe.int/commissioner)

Council of Europe, Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers [MG-S-ROM]:

 [www.coe.int/roma](http://www.coe.int/roma)

Council of Europe – Roma and Travellers:

 [www.coe.int/roma](http://www.coe.int/roma)

Dostal:

 [www.coe.int/roma](http://www.coe.int/roma)

*Education of Roma children in Europe - Official texts and activities of the Council of Europe concerning education, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2006.*

Education of Roma children in Europe [project]:

 [www.coe.int/roma](http://www.coe.int/roma)

“Ensuring access to rights for Roma and Travellers”:

 [www.coe.int/roma](http://www.coe.int/roma)

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance:

 [www.coe.int/ecri](http://www.coe.int/ecri)

European Court of Human Rights – case-law:

 [www.coe.int/roma](http://www.coe.int/roma)

Factsheets of the European Court of Human Rights on Roma and Travellers:

 <http://www.echr.coe.int/NR/>

Glossary on Roma and Travellers:

 [www.coe.int/roma](http://www.coe.int/roma)

Information factsheets on Roma history:

 [www.coe.int/roma](http://www.coe.int/roma)



Liégeois, J.-P., Council of Europe and Roma: 40 years of Action, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg [to be published].

Liégeois, J.-P., Roma in Europe, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2007 [see the useful references at the end of the book].

Roma Culture and Heritage Route:

 [www.coe.int/roma](http://www.coe.int/roma)

Roma genocide [joint Council of Europe/OSCE-ODIHR site]:


 [www.romagenocide.org](http://www.romagenocide.org)

Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues:

 [www.coe.int/roma](http://www.coe.int/roma)

## General Resources

Bibliography of the “Me sem Rom”

 [www.mesemrom.org/Biblio.pdf](http://www.mesemrom.org/Biblio.pdf)

“Me sem rom” is Romani for “I am a Rom”. The aim of the Swiss association Mesemrom, set up in June 2007 in Geneva, is to raise public and official awareness of the difficulties encountered by the Roma population.

Bibliography of the Centre national de documentation pédagogique [France]:

 [www2.cndp.fr/revueVEI/159/bibliographie\\_159.pdf](http://www2.cndp.fr/revueVEI/159/bibliographie_159.pdf)

Bibliography of the FYI France site [in English]:

 [www.fyifrance.com/gypsybib.htm](http://www.fyifrance.com/gypsybib.htm)

Collectif national droits de l’homme:

 [www.romeurope.org](http://www.romeurope.org)

Colorful but Colorblind:

 <http://roma.glocalstories.org>

A collection of 25 short films as part of an 18-month project to counter the hostile stereotypes about the Roma in central and eastern Europe.

Decade for Roma Inclusion:

 [www.romadecade.org](http://www.romadecade.org)

European Roma and Travellers Forum:

 [www.ertf.org](http://www.ertf.org)

European Roma Information Office [ERIO]:

 [www.erionet.org](http://www.erionet.org)

Established in 2003, this Brussels-based office promotes political discussion on Roma issues by providing factual and in-depth information.

European Roma Rights Centre [ERRC]:

 [www.errc.org](http://www.errc.org)

Established in 1996, the Centre provides Roma with the tools necessary to combat discrimination and obtain equal access to justice, education, housing healthcare and public services. It has consultative status with the Council of Europe.

Ion Cioaba Roma Socio-Cultural Foundation:

 [www.icfoundation.ro](http://www.icfoundation.ro)

This foundation promotes the Roma cultural identity throughout the world to foster peace, harmony and understanding between countries.





Museum of Romani Culture:

 [www.rommuz.cz](http://www.rommuz.cz)

Patrin [Web journal on Romani culture]:

 [www.reocities.com/~patrin/](http://www.reocities.com/~patrin/)

Radio Prague:

 <http://romove.radio.cz/en/>

This site has a number of links to articles on the general history of the Roma, the situation of the Roma since 1989 and traditional family life.

Roma Education Fund [REF]:

 [www.romaeducationfund.org](http://www.romaeducationfund.org)

RomNews Society:

 [www.romnews.com](http://www.romnews.com)

This organisation fosters the exchange of information on the Roma, combats prejudice and gives special prominence to Roma culture and traditions.

The European Union and the Roma:

 [www.ec.europa.eu/roma](http://www.ec.europa.eu/roma)

See in particular the European Union studies on minorities and discrimination [EU-MIDIS] carried out by the Fundamental Rights Agency [FRA], which sought the views of groups of immigrants and ethnic minorities [Roma in particular] on their experiences of discrimination or criminal attacks in their day-to-day lives.

Unión Romani [Spain]:

 [http://www.unionromani.org/union\\_in.htm](http://www.unionromani.org/union_in.htm)

Voix des Roms [in French only]:

 <http://rroms.blogspot.com/>

Willers, Marc [lawyer and human rights expert], *Ensuring access to rights for Roma and Travellers: The role of the European Court of Human Rights*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2009.

World Bank [projects for Roma]:

 [www.worldbank.org/roma](http://www.worldbank.org/roma)

*“ The Roma are what we  
strive to be: real Europeans ”*

Günter Grass, Nobel prize in literature

[www.coe.int/roma](http://www.coe.int/roma)

The Council of Europe, created in 1949, is the continent's largest political organisation, with 47 member states and over 800 million Europeans. Its main role is to uphold democracy, human rights and the rule of law - the basic values of a tolerant and civilised society.

**Council of Europe**

Avenue de l'Europe  
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex  
Tel + 33 (0)3 88 41 20 00

[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

Special Representative of  
the Secretary General of  
the Council of Europe  
for Roma issues

[roma.team@coe.int](mailto:roma.team@coe.int)