



Svet Evrope Slovenija  
Council of Europe Slovenia  
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2009



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## **Education for Roma: achievements, opportunities and challenges for the future**

**Conference held in the framework of the  
Slovenian Presidency of the Council of Europe  
(May-November 2009)**

**Brdo, Slovenia, 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> May 2009**

# **CONFERENCE REPORT**

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**A. Igor Lukšič** (Minister of Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia)

**B. Gabriele Mazza** (Director of Education and Languages, Council of Europe)

**C. Alan Phillips** (President of the Advisory Committee on the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities)

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## **1. Background and Context of the Conference**

### **1.1. Outcomes of the Project “Education of Roma Children in Europe”**

The future of Roma communities hinges very much on arrangements for the schooling of their children, as education is a key factor in understanding modern reality and in social integration.

That is why in 2002, the Council of Europe started the “Education of Roma children in Europe” project, with the aim of implementing the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation 2000/4 on the education of Roma in Europe. The aim of the project is to support and guide, through co-ordination, synthesis and evaluation, information and training, the integration of Roma communities into the mainstream education system. The originality of the project lies in the fact that the Roma themselves were/are actively involved at every stage, mainly through participation in the design and execution of the policies concerning them.

After six years of work, a range of products was produced which show the concrete manner of the Council of Europe’s contribution to improving access to education for Roma. They are available on the internet site of the project: [www.coe.int/education/roma](http://www.coe.int/education/roma)

Some examples:

- Strategies for developing national education policies for the Roma. Specifically, it describes the particular educational context of the Roma and the role of the school. It proposes, via a grid, strategies for implementing those policies. The result is a comprehensive vision of education policy for the Roma, that covers schooling, social inclusion, cultural identity and the promotion of Roma cultural heritage as well as the empowerment and participation of the Roma community.
- Teaching kit for Roma pre-school children. This kit prepares Roma and Traveller children who have not attended nursery school and are neither ready nor sufficiently mature for the first primary school class to start school so that they do not fall too far behind.
- Training seminars in the framework of the “Pestalozzi” programme for education professionals of the Council of Europe. Every year training seminars are devoted to Roma issues (use of teaching material, Roma culture and history in schools, Roma school mediators, community/family and school, etc.).
- Guide for Roma school mediators. Positions such as that of a Roma mediator or school assistant can be made more effective by promoting high-quality initial training geared to the needs on the ground. This Guide contains an occupational profile, training modules for mediators and other essential practical information.
- Teaching material suitable for use by Roma and non-Roma teachers working with classes made up of both Roma and other children. This material, in the form of publications or sets of educational fact sheets covering a number of topics, such as history, culture, language, will foster mutual understanding of differences, which is the basic principle underlying the intercultural approach.

It can be used in both formal education and non-formal educational settings such as cultural centres or museums of Roma culture and history. Some of this material can be used in the community by children and their parents.

- The Roma Holocaust. A section of the Roma website is dedicated to the Roma Holocaust. This work is done in co-operation with OSCE/ODIHR. It comprises a database on this period of Roma history, with a virtual library of the best-known and most useful publications, and an interactive map on which countries can indicate their special/distinctive features at national level. The website will also provide information on curricula, available teaching materials, school textbooks, places of remembrance, and innovative practices introduced by ministries, civil society, international organisations, museums and schools.
- Standard-setting tools for the teaching and learning of the Romani language were developed in view of the crucial importance of the issue of Roma education throughout Europe and in the context of the Council of Europe's comprehensive approach to Roma and Travellers issues. In response to the need expressed by a number of member states for curriculum guidelines to ensure high-quality provision in the Romani language, the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe has developed and published a *Curriculum Framework for Romani* and two *European Language Portfolio (ELP)* models for Romani, accompanied by a Teacher Handbook. These tools address different target groups. The *Curriculum Framework for Romani* can be used to design curricula, textbooks and other learning materials as well as for planning and organisation of learning and teaching of Romani in schools in Europe. The *ELP models* are a personal document for use by the learners. Both models were conceived in parallel with the Framework as a tool to support language learning, promote plurilingualism, and develop intercultural awareness and intercultural competence. Developed in close co-operation with the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF), these tools are designed to accommodate three different sociolinguistic situations: the teaching of Romani to (i) children who do not speak Romani at home; (ii) children who are not fluent in Romani, though they may hear their family speak the language; and (iii) children who are fluent in Romani but who need to develop their skill in using the language as an instrument of formal learning (Romani as a language of education). Two international seminars were organised by the Council of Europe to introduce these tools to policy deciders and practitioners.

Almost a decade after the Committee of Ministers adopted Recommendation No. R (2000) 4, it was necessary to take stock of the work done on the education of Roma, to draw lessons from this evaluation exercise and to make new proposals.

Therefore an evaluation conference of the project was held in Slovenia in May 2009.

The conclusions of the conference show that there is a huge need to continue co-operation at international level. One of the conclusions is that the Council of Europe project should ensure the dissemination of the results (disseminate teaching and training material, develop training methods etc).

The Council of Europe works closely with UNESCO, OSCE-ODIHR, the Roma Education Fund, and the Roma Civil Society. The Council of Europe has also established contacts with the European Commission, the Task Force for International co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research and the European Roma and Travellers Forum. This co-operation is a coherent approach at an international level and is critical for the funding, visibility and organisation of the project and also for promoting new ideas in support of the education of Roma children.

*A new Recommendation on the Education of Roma and Travellers* was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 17 June 2009. It is the most recent international official text covering all aspects of the education of Roma and Travellers.

## **2. Outcomes of the Conference**

### **2.1. The role of the education of Roma in a wider context**

First of all, the results of the Project showed that problems and solutions related to the education of Roma should be tackled from a wider perspective. This holistic vision must take into account all aspects of everyday living conditions, for instance the economic circumstances, but also cultural and social factors. Solutions are neither simple nor short-term.

In this sense, the social exclusion of the Roma was emphasised as one of the most relevant problems faced by this non-territorial minority. Most Roma are socially, economically and educationally marginalised and are victims of discrimination and racism; many of them are consequently affected by unemployment, poverty and illiteracy. In general, deep-rooted prejudices and institutional neglect make their everyday existence harder. It is possible to mention the consequences related to political changes in the last decades: new waves of migration – especially from Eastern Europe - lack of citizenship documentation, and the attacks of far right ideologies.

Faced with the whole situation, all the participants in the Conference realised that there is nowadays a vicious circle which should be broken as soon as possible. Social and economic difficulties hinder, without any doubt, the suitable educational development of Roma children and teenagers, whose families and communities do not trust the mainstream system.

In fact, in the context of Roma education, it is essential not only to encourage the social inclusion of the Roma, but also to promote, on the one hand, the effective realisation of minority and human rights - including the right to a high-quality education – and, on the other hand, the dignity which accompanies these rights in a social and economic environment. “It takes reason and conscience, rather than donors and budgets, to treat school children with dignity and show that they are cherished” explained Mr Alan Phillips (Advisory Committee on the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities). Furthermore, intercultural understanding has to be kept in mind as a key concept concerning Roma

issues and Roma education. In any case, the true recognition of the Roma as European citizens and as a European minority serves as a basis for all the changes.

Taking everything into consideration, the effective education of the Roma is seen in a knowledge-based society as the means to break this vicious circle, because it really helps them – in the long term - to improve their social position and to be aware of their own rights and duties in society. All this represents a precondition to achieve other rights, such as a job or health care, and especially becoming a subject of their own social development – for instance, being an active citizen in elections or to engaging in Roma strategy.

## **2.2. The need for reforming mainstream education in Europe**

The overall opinion of the participants in the Conference was that the mainstream education should be reformed in order to be high-quality, fairer and more accessible, for all members of society, especially for those more at risk, such as the Roma. However, it was not clear to what extent this reform and the resulting changes should be led, in other words, how far they should be innovative and flexible.

The Project has shown that there are several key factors in an educative reform related to the Roma which play a role in improving their knowledge and competencies: on the one hand, inclusion in the education system and, on the other hand, the quality of education.

With reference to inclusion - which implies first a change in the rules and in their implementation concerning access and equality in the educative system - the school should not represent an environment felt to be foreign by most Roma. In this way, it is essential that Roma pupils and students keep alive their cultural identity and be able to express themselves in their mother tongue (Romani) when necessary. That is to say, schools must promote Roma values and history, and also fight against the general acceptance of negative stereotypes.

This assumption implies, all things considered, a two-way process and not just a simple introduction of Roma into the mainstream, as there is a need for mutual respect, understanding and cooperation. Although educative recommendations, provisions and laws certainly represent an important step into new changes concerning the education of the Roma, all actors in the system must indeed empower the reform and improve the quality of the relationships between the teacher, the child and the parents, as Prof. Čačinovič Vogrinčič from the University of Ljubljana emphasised, thanks to a more profound conversation and dialogue.

In the matter of inclusion, there is a second perspective to consider within a new system: educational expenses and other related costs (such as books, transport...) must not be an obstacle for Roma families, to whom more scholarships ought to be offered.

In this sense, and talking again about inclusion, some participants highlighted the results of research conducted by the Roma Education Fund, according to which the inclusion of Roma in the education system is certainly feasible.

As for the quality of the education system, this depends on different factors and methodologies. Regarding future legislation, it should display a greater interest in pre-school education and also in early child care - with special attention to the languages in use and to pedagogical techniques - as well as in the role of non-formal or informal learning which is a key knowledge. Evidently, new laws must explicitly recognise and integrate the Roma culture, history and language in different ways: for example, through items of the curricula and through instruments of the educative community; in fact, the participants in the Conference suggested that the educational materials of the CoE, for instance the factsheets about Roma history or Romani-learning tools, should be more disseminated and used in the schools as textbooks or reference books. See Appendix 3 for a complete list of the books published by the Council of Europe.

More specifically, a high-quality education system has to pay more attention in its organisation to subtle differences among Roma children and teenagers, differences which affect their school improvement, such as gender, age, mother tongue, level of education of the parents, and so on. Additionally, the system must properly assist the children to learn to use the national language effectively. This is because the many youngsters who do not know the language cannot really integrate into society and improve their everyday life; in this case, some participants apply for a bilingual educative system, in which Romani and the national language are both instruments of communication and school subjects.

Information about good practices and experiences – as well as failed projects - should be communicated and disseminated, so as to improve the education systems in Europe. For that reason, some participants asked for a pan-European Roma policy so that it would be easier to pay attention to the whole geographical area and to the difficulties faced by the Roma who migrate across national borders. This kind of policy will also help to take into account the nature and necessities of the diverse Roma groups across Europe. Moreover, legislation of this kind may help Roma international mobility due to the EU enlargement, and it may offer too a balance between East and West Roma communities regarding education, the latter having been neglected often.

### **2.3. The State as the responsible body of the reform**

The participants in the Conference enumerated several key actors and responsible people or bodies who have to take care, in an active way, of the new changes in the education field and to implement them accurately: all members of the society (that is, both Roma and non-Roma), the civil society (particularly NGOs), international institutions – for instance the CoE, who were asked to support a pan-European dimension of the reform – and last but not least the State, represented by the national government and the education authorities.

In any case, the action plans have to be aimed at diverse geographical and political levels in order to ensure the effective exposure, development and implementation of the reform, in other words, local, regional, national and also European spaces. This brings to mind the necessity of transforming legislation and objectives into an outstanding performance and governance in every city, town, village and hamlet, including monitoring and evaluation by the authorities and the civil society. This co-ordination is thus a means to solve the educational difficulties which Roma and

Travellers tackle in their everyday life, no matter if they are migrants or not. In this sense, an international co-operation may help to integrate children and teenagers coming from international migration into the mainstream education thanks to the fact that action plans are wider than national borders.

On that account the Project portrayed an image of the State as the accountable body for the education targets, in other words, the State remains responsible as a last resort for the proper and complete implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the aims in the educational domain.

On the one hand, the State must guarantee not only the right to education, but it must also guarantee the obligation to education, in two complementary ways: first, the State has to assure the effective equality of all future school pupils and students before joining the system and during their studies. This field of action refers to the access to education, to the offer of equal opportunities and, due to recent events in the courts, to the abolition of segregated schools or classes for Roma children, which are illegal in Europe. Secondly, the State is supposed to put forward co-ordinated activities and measures in various areas, including, among others, the social environment and the health care, in order to guarantee the proper participation and integration of the Roma children and teenagers in the education system.

On the other hand, Mr Igor Lukšič (Minister of Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia) brought up the concept of justice applied to the State and education at the same time: the State must encourage the Roma to develop their collective conscience, and to encourage them to express themselves and to participate actively in all kind of social processes. That implies that the State is meant to promote the education and training of the Roma community with the goal of assisting it in order to develop a group awareness and a better insight of its role in the society; the Roma will therefore learn to be more active by themselves and to express themselves.

“The other important position that needs to be considered during the planning of measures is to understand the concept of justice. (...) It is more important that a group is able to make its stand and speaks on its own behalf than it is to develop abstract concepts that eventually end up having nothing in common with a concrete situation. It is important to develop mechanisms that stimulate a group’s own activity – namely, that no one acts on behalf of a social group to which they do not belong.” (Mr Igor Lukšič).

### **3. Follow-up**

In this context, the planned reform and future proposals involve multiple key actors and affects different areas related to education.

#### **3.1. Key actors**

##### **3.1.1. The State and the education authorities**

The State, represented by the Government and the education authorities, is the responsible body for the appropriate and suitable education of the Roma people within its borders.

###### **a. Concerning the legislation**



General and specific provisions and laws concerning the education of the Roma are the basis of all new changes and processes, because they represent the steps which all key actors have to follow and respect. In this sense, national legislations should evolve and establish the Roma as a priority in their policies, especially being in harmony with European standards and other European and national laws.

b. About the implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Many of the participants were deeply concerned about the implementation, the monitoring and the evaluation of laws and measures, because they felt that the education system lacks practical activities and needs to bring into motion all the abstract and theoretical plans.

In that way, the Project showed that the implementation of laws is one of the key problems in the education of the Roma, so the States should work harder on that issue in order to make the changes really effective. It is also essential to set up instruments for internal communication in states with de-centralised and federal structures, such as Germany or Switzerland, in order to reach all the authorities involved in the decision-making. Moreover, one participant suggested the development of more strict education control measures so as to prevent misuses of structural funds:

“funds are raised and allocated with a lack of transparency. Furthermore, there are attempts to use Roma education needs to attract external funds, without addressing the domestic priorities of the educational system and without taking a real ownership of these issues;” (Mr Alan Phillips, President of the Advisory Committee on the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities)

On the subject of the monitoring and the evaluation, some priorities were raised. First of all, the necessity of impartial actors should be reflected on, and consequently the involvement of both Roma and the civil society are requested. At the same time the enrichment of the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms – but not a complete change - was asked for, as a means to counteract some kind of unproductive routine. In this sense, the topic of future data collecting connected to minorities – whether ethnic minorities or not - still generates hot debate about personal confidentiality and privacy, although it is generally accepted that the acquired information may display concrete figures on the educational position of minorities and their progress, and may therefore reveal any form of discrimination or inequality.

c. Concerning the Roma representatives

More Roma representatives should be present in every decision process within the education system - policies, programmes, monitoring, and so on – to assure effectiveness, quality and impartiality, and moreover to allow the Roma to get involved in their own issues. In this way the representatives may also help to prevent institutional ignorance - frequently detected in different instances - towards many Roma education issues.

d. In reference to a pan-European co-ordination

International co-operation between governments, authorities, international institutions and NGOs is seen as a must in the topic of Roma education, to save effort and funds, as well as to back professional networks which detect good practices and projects, disseminate their outcomes and promote them.

e. A propos a sustainable system and reform

On account of medium and long term objectives, the education system, its structures and its processes need to have sustainability. In this case, it is much more useful and fruitful to develop, for instance, efficient communication networks, monitoring instruments or implementation structures than to invest more funds to solve evident or potential complications in the short-term.

f. In regard to structural funds

Although the EU Commission was absent from the Conference, some of the participants raised the topic of structural funds. In this sense, they talked about the necessity of more structural funds for the Roma education and a more suitable allocation. In their opinion, it is possible thus to offer more and better scholarships to young Roma. However, in future meetings, and together with the EU Commission, the question of whether this demand matches a genuine necessity in all states or whether to distribute the resources with a different approach should be considered carefully.

### **3.1.2. Communities and especially Roma communities (including families)**

Communities play a key role as well, because they can promote, in partnership with parents, an effective participation of the Roma people in the education system, as an aim and also as a means to achieve other rights and to make decisions.

Instruments and ways of allowing this participation should be thought up. In any case, some participants believe that all Roma voices should be listened to and appreciated, such as those of the non-educated and unemployed, so that their opinions can enrich and improve the system. In fact, that is also a means to rethink, on the one hand, about the role of non-formal education in relation to formal education and how to integrate it into the mainstream, and, on the other hand, in relation to pre-school education, in order to educate children who are not attending the school and who are liable to miss a proper education if they are not able to join later formal lessons or to understand the national language.

Regarding the families, mechanisms and structures dealing with parents' commitment in education issues are required: firstly, in order to get them involved in co-operation and participation – including an active dialogue with teachers and children - and, secondly, to achieve an effective participation – alongside communities – in all kinds of decision-making.

In fact, the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* recognises different education rights, among them the liberty of parents to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children, and the right of the individuals and legal entities to establish and direct their own educational institutions.

Furthermore, parents should take an interest in about pre-school education, mainly in those cases when children do not attend formal lessons.

### **3.1.3. Roma representatives**

More Roma representatives should integrate into the education system as members of think tanks and decision-making groups. It is assumed that they know Roma issues best and are the appropriate responsible people for making decisions concerning Roma and themselves. Moreover the instruments and structures achieved should afford the effective participation of all them. On the other hand, some of the participants asked for mechanisms which allow a democratic election of representatives from the Roma communities. This election should be guided by several criteria: first of all, the elected people have to be trustworthy for all Roma; this means that these representatives have to be close to the communities and know them well in order to act in favour of the community's interests.

### **3.1.4. Roma mediators / assistants**

The authorities and the principals have to realise the importance of the role of Roma mediators / teaching assistants in the proper process of teaching and learning, as well as in the communication procedure with parents. Unlike other mediators / assistants, Roma personnel may be in charge of different activities within the framework of the schools: they can also attend to other kinds of necessities, especially those of school pupils with problems, and try to give them – and their families - their support. Indeed, Roma families supposedly trust to a higher degree members of their own communities who can liaise with the administration.

The authorities and principals should in consequence recognise the positive role of these employees and increase the number of contracts, depending on the necessity. Furthermore the authorities and the school staff must back the work of the Roma mediators / assistants, encourage them, treat them as school personnel and reward their performance, including a fair pay. Some of the participants asked for training sessions, which mediators / assistants and principals would attend together, as a means to clarify the activities charged to former and be aware of them.

In fact, it remains to clarify thoroughly what the activities charged to Roma mediators / assistants are, and also to whom they are accountable. In this sense, it is really important to regularise the employment status of Roma mediators / assistants to enable a proper working position, because this status has not been uniform in the last few years: sometimes they are accountable to schools, sometimes to communities; furthermore, the kind of contract they have should also be regularised: sometimes the NGOs have the responsibility of offering them a contract, regardless of Government's funds, sometimes the Government is in charge of these contracts...

### **3.1.5. School personnel (principals, teachers and others)**

All the staff and employees in the centres must fight against to remove all Roma stereotypes, not only among children or teenagers, but also within the school personnel or the authorities. Tools and retraining courses should be offered to them.

On the other hand, the professional duties of teachers related to Roma children and teenagers should achieve a new and broader scope, as some of the participants recognise, in order to allow educators to become a means, among others, towards the dialogue, the collaboration and the empowerment of the Roma pupils and students and their goals. As a matter of fact, it is advised that teachers be involved in a continual conversation with children and parents.

In this sense, special training sessions should be offered so as to stimulate this conversation, for instance, about topics such as diversity and Roma history. It is even advisable to provide educators with Romani language lessons in order to improve the nature of this dialogue. Some participants also asked for more innovative and technical training concerning the recognition, appreciation and use of the informal knowledge which many Roma children have acquired before joining the education system, notably when referring to latecomers. In any case, all teachers are to be allowed access to schoolbooks and other educational materials regarding Roma, and to be included in a education network promoting contacts between teachers issued from different communities.

### **3.1.6. Students**

Roma children and teenagers should be offered the possibility of meeting other Roma youngsters belonging to different communities, so as to share experiences. It could also be fruitful and enriching to include non-Roma pupils and students in these meetings, in order to create ties between young people.

### **3.1.7. Civil society and other actors**

Regarding civil society – and notably NGOs - they play a worthy role as a trigger for the proper development of a successful relationship between the government, schools and parents, for instance in the promotion of Roma mediators / assistants. Civil society deploys as well a useful position when it helps Roma communities to understand the educational needs of the children, but also when it advises them to monitor the rights-based approach of local education authorities.

In general, it might be advantageous for the education system to reflect carefully on civil society's future tasks, and to distinguish them from the ones under the authorities' responsibility.

On the other hand, the impact on the general public provoked by politicians and the media should not be neglected. They act as models for society, whose opinions are later integrated in the education system; therefore they have a big part to play in obliterating any kind of intolerance.

Finally, universities may also help to spread knowledge and tolerance among members of society, for instance through investigation projects and special courses on Roma issues targeted for university students and the general public in general. Some participants asked too for a university cathedra for Romani studies.

## **3.2. Areas of action**

### **3.2.1. Pre-school education**

The participants were unanimous about the crucial role which early care and pre-school education play within Roma communities, principally in order to avoid absenteeism and drop-outs, but also in order to facilitate latercomers' adjust to the school. In this sense, communities (including families) ought to use the didactical kits already developed. However, there is still a debate over whether these learning activities should be home-based, community-based or centre-based.

### **3.2.2 Primary and secondary education, and their curricula**

First of all, it is essential that Roma communities acknowledge the cultural and social values of both primary and secondary school, and how the certificates they have gained facilitate entry into the labour market.

Regarding the education authorities, they should support an adaptation of curricula and resources in order to promote the integration of Roma children and their culture in the education system. For that reason, many of the participants appraised very positively the pedagogical materials produced within the framework of the Project and therefore asked for more translations of these materials, as well as a wider dissemination.

Furthermore, educational curricula have to recognise the Romani and the Roma history and culture as a European heritage. Hence education authorities must encourage the use of Romani in schools, foster an intercultural education for all children and also include the topic of the Roma history – with emphasis on the Genocide of the Roma during Second World War - as a component of European history in secondary education.

These measures involve promoting at the same time courses on Roma history for mediators / assistants and teachers, organising summer schools as a means to raise awareness and, finally, backing cultural activities related to Roma, such as art, theatre, radio or television programmes...

### **3.2.3. Adult education**

The rate of illiterate adults – and especially illiterate women - among Roma is higher than among other communities, due to the fact that many of them never attended school or had to drop out. In consequence, courses should be offered to them, because adult education has a positive effect on the community and its social inclusion and, additionally, literate parents are able and eager to help their children to study.

### **3.2.4. Recognition of non-formal or informal skills and knowledge**

In the end, some of the participants put the accent on the necessity of reevaluating the non-formal or informal learning in relation to the formal mainstream education and also in relation to labour market inclusion. Unfortunately, it is still unknown how this evaluation should be done and to what extent. However, it is important to clarify the

specific value of non-formal or informal skills and knowledge, which may allow the children to better integrate into mainstream education or to get vocational qualifications.

#### **4. Relevance of the European co-operation**

Last but not least, all the participants in the Conference gave compliments to the activities and outcomes generated by the Project and encouraged its managers to go further. Nevertheless, representatives of different institutions and associations - such as UNESCO, OSCE, OSI, Roma Education Fund or ERTF – pointed out that, due to the fact that Roma are a non-territorial minority, all the states are responsible bodies for their education and they suggested therefore the creation of an International Task Force for the Education of Roma in Europe.

Thanks to this International Task Force it would be possible to achieve the education goals in a more efficient way, but also to save time and funds. In this sense, both the establishment of professional networks and the tight coordination between authorities, institutions and NGOs may allow a more in-depth involvement of the key actors – especially governments - and thus a better implementation of the policies at all levels – local, regional, national and international – as well as a faster detection in cases of distortion and corruption of these policies. Furthermore the network would urge for a better communication and dialogue channel, including international teacher training.

#### **5. Conclusions**

All the participants agreed that the outcomes of the Project are very positive and that they may therefore facilitate a high-quality education. For that reason, the participants asked for further steps in the education involvement, so as to ensure a more effective implementation.

First of all, it is necessary to disseminate thoroughly all pedagogical materials and guidelines developed by the CoE experts, in order to generate a wider awareness of their existence and their education benefits. In this sense, governments, as the most relevant key actors, are requested to accept full responsibility for an extensive dissemination and moreover for the promotion of the use of these materials.

Secondly, the establishment of an International Task Force for the Education of Roma is seen, on the one hand, as a must in order to speed up the efficient implementation at all levels of the measures concerning Roma education, and, on the other hand, as a means to avoid duplication of projects and investments. Even though this International Task Force will be completely independent of governments, they should be in charge of supporting its development and effectiveness. Regarding the operation of the International Task Force, there will be a meeting of all representatives once a year.

Governments must also assure the educational inclusion of Roma children and guarantee all their human rights. In fact, these measures imply a reform of the mainstream education system. In this sense, one of the most urgent issues is the

elimination of segregated schools which are based on racial grounds. In this context, teacher training is understood as a means to encourage and really promote inclusion. Mediators / assistants are seen as key players between schools and communities as well, and consequently governments have to establish common criteria regarding their professional status.

More effective and new monitoring and evaluation structures are required in order to ensure reliability and independence from national, regional or local authorities. There is still an ongoing debate about the legality of ethnic data collection and about the way in which this information should be collected. However, it was in general felt that these data would indeed be useful for monitoring progress and evaluating it.

Finally, it is compulsory to involve Roma representatives in all kinds of decision-making concerning Roma issues. In consequence, the education system needs to generate mechanisms to allow their effective participation, as well as the democratic election of representatives for the overall interests of all Roma communities.

## APPENDIX 1: Agenda of the Conference



Svet Evrope Slovenija  
Council of Europe Slovenia  
Conseil de l'Europe Slovénie  
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# ***Education for Roma: achievements, opportunities and challenges for the future***

**Conference**  
*held in the framework of the Slovenian Chairmanship  
of the Council of Europe (May-November 2009)*

**Brdo, Slovenia, 25-26 May 2009**



Education des enfants roms en Europe  
Education of Roma children in Europe

## **PROGRAMME**



## PROGRAMME

<b>Monday 25 May 2009</b>	
9:00  Plenary session	<p>Opening session</p> <p><u>Chair:</u> <b>Gregor Mohorčič</b>, Director of the National Education Institute, Republic of Slovenia</p> <p><u>Welcome addresses</u> <b>Igor Lukšič</b>, Minister for Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia <b>Gabriele Mazza</b>, Director of Education and Languages, Council of Europe</p> <p><u>Keynote speeches</u> <b>Gabi Čačinovič Vogrinčič</b>, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Work: <i>Co-creation of Learning and Support in the Classroom</i> <b>Alan Phillips</b>, President of the Advisory Committee on the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities: <i>Rights perspective on Roma education</i></p>
10:30	Coffee break
11:00 Plenary session	<p><u>Chair:</u> <b>Gabriele Mazza</b>, Director of Education and Languages, Council of Europe</p> <p>1. <i>The project “Education of Roma children in Europe” and the revised draft Recommendation on the education of Roma children</i>, <b>Jean-Pierre Liégeois</b> (Council of Europe expert), <b>Aurora Ailincai</b> (Council of Europe) and <b>Calin Rus</b> (Council of Europe expert)</p> <p>2. <i>Reference tools for teaching Romani</i>, <b>Philia Thalgott</b> (Council of Europe)</p> <p>3. <i>Goals and expected outcomes of the Conference</i> : <b>Arthur Ivatts</b> (Council of Europe expert)</p>
12:10	Introduction to the working groups and to the “Info Market” by <b>Mirko Zorman</b> , National Education Institute, Slovenia
12:30	Lunch
14:00	Visit of the “Info Market”
15:00 Working groups	<p>Work on the following themes:</p> <p>1. Preschool education and early childcare Moderator: <b>Hristo Kyuchukov</b>                      Rapporteur : <b>Yoshie Kaga</b></p> <p>2. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning Moderator: <b>José Ramón Flecha García</b>      Rapporteur : <b>Tjaša Plohl</b></p> <p>3. School – community cooperation: Roma assistants and mediators Moderator: <b>Calin Rus</b>                                      Rapporteur : <b>Diana Kirilova</b></p> <p>4. Cultural recognition: history, culture and language Moderator: <b>Mihaela Zatreanu</b>                      Rapporteur : <b>J-Pierre Liégeois</b></p> <p>5. Policies to facilitate access and ensure equal access to quality education, including teacher training Moderator: <b>Arthur Ivatts</b>                                      Rapporteur : <b>Nicolae Gheorghe</b></p>

	<p>Issues to be tackled in all working groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take stock of the project and reflect on how to build on experiences</li> <li>Perspectives for the future? Implementation of the Recommendation on Education for Roma children, questions and recommendations to international organisations</li> <li>Transversal issues such as gender, empowerment of Roma, equality of opportunities and outcomes, combating discrimination, positive action, training of professionals</li> </ol> <p>There will be a flexible break for each working group Each group will start with instructions by a moderator and a presentation of the relevant Council of Europe product/materials. The last 30 minutes will be devoted to reaching an agreement on the key elements to be reported on in the plenary session the following day. A predefined structure in PowerPoint format will be prepared for the reporting</p>
18:00	<p>End of the working day and departure of the bus for Bled Evening: “Sa o Roma”, Romani music with Imer Traja Brizani and the group Amala</p>
<b>Tuesday 26 May 2009</b>	
9:00 Plenary session	<p><u>Chair:</u> <b>Viljana Lukas</b>, Head of Service, Ministry of Education and Sport, International Cooperation and European Affairs Service</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reports of working groups</li> <li>Feedback on achievements in the field of Roma education from <b>Miranda Vuolasranta</b>, representative of the ERTF</li> <li>Comments from participants and general discussion</li> <li>Film “Čika” by Martina Hudorovič, in the presence of Dženi Rostohar</li> </ol>
11:00	Coffee break
11:30 Plenary session	<p><u>Chair:</u> <b>Tünde Kovač-Cerovič</b>, State Secretary, Ministry of Education, Republic of Serbia</p> <p>Panel with international institutions on follow-up UNESCO (Florence Migeon), OSCE/ODIHR (Andrzej Mirga), Roma Education Fund (Costel Bercus), European Roma and Travellers Forum – ERTF (Miranda Vuolasranta), European Training Foundation- ETF (Lida Kita), Open Society Foundation (Tina Hyder) and a resource person (Nicolae Gheorghe)</p>
13:00 Closing session	<p><u>Chair:</u> <b>Andreja Barle Lakota</b>, Director of the Office for the Development of Education, Ministry for Education, Republic of Slovenia</p> <p>Short summary by the General Rapporteur, <b>Arthur Ivatts</b> Final remarks by participants</p>
	<p><u>Closing remarks</u> <b>Alenka Kovšca</b>, state secretary, Ministry for Education and Sport, Republic of Slovenia <b>Aurora Ailincăi</b>, Project manager, Council of Europe</p>
13:30	Lunch and departure

## **APPENDIX 2: Opening speeches and keynote presentations**

### **A. Igor Lukšič (Minister of Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia)**

Ladies and gentlemen, dear participants and guests of the Council of Europe Conference!

Dealing with the issue of social groups pushed to the edge of society is an endlessly difficult topic. This is true because, usually, the reasons for such a situation are complex and the solutions leading out of this situation are neither simple nor short-term. If an area that is already sensitive is concerned, where trends can only be changed slowly, for example, in the field of education and schooling, it makes it that much harder. That is why some authors, such as Bourdieu, warn that perhaps “non-intervention” or not taking responsibility for potential measures/solutions is the most innocent strategy, since it is difficult to change or remove most factors affecting the position of certain social groups. However, Bourdieu also warns us that this means we are denying assistance to those who need it – and those who deny it are guilty of maintaining the situation.

The Roma community has been excluded in many respects. First, from the concept of the national state, this is still the basis of modern policy. The community does not have the support of a state, which would exert pressure to achieve protection of a minority with political power, as in the cases of other minorities tied to their national states. The Roma have property at their disposal to a much smaller extent than average European citizens. It is estimated that between ten and twelve million Roma live in Europe, of which 60% live in extreme poverty. Statistically, exclusion may be expressed with a high share of unemployment in the Roma community. (Slovenia is no exception. Only 15% of adult Roma are employed in Slovenia.). Finally, the indicator of achieved education should not be dismissed and this indicator shows Roma’s early abandonment of formal education. (According to the last census survey, 65% of adult Roma in Slovenia did not even finish elementary school.)

In modern society, the level of education significantly influences an individual’s social position and affects the possibility of whether or not an individual becomes an active subject of social developments.

Schooling is becoming a necessary but also insufficient condition for employment or for achieving appropriate social positions. Without education, the hopelessness of an individual’s situation is that much greater. In a knowledge-based society, education (schooling) is the condition by which an individual is actively included in society and can assume rights and duties with responsibility.

For this reason, it is important to define fundamental positions for solving the issue of successful inclusion of particular social groups, for example, the Roma in the education system. Reay determined that school may be a mandatory home of permanent outlaws – mandatory because it is prescribed by law. Namely, for social groups like the Roma, school may be a foreign space and a foreign culture, a culture with which they do not have anything in common and with which they do not identify themselves. They may even be afraid of losing their own identity. Pupils who feel like outlaws in school usually turn to several strategies, such as: denying the importance of school, complete passivity or internalisation of failure. In implementing these strategies, pupils play a certain role that authors (like Reay) defines as: the hopeless one, the jester, the scapegoat, the bully etc. This truth helps us understand the poor school attendance by the Roma that has been recorded (even though we

cannot ignore the fact that poverty is also a large reason, as parents are often unable or reluctant to pay educational expenses). Nevertheless, we have to ask ourselves whether Roma children are able to express themselves in their mother tongue at school; how often do they have the opportunity to read a Roma fairytale or youth novel or to borrow one from the school library; will they find anything on the history of their community in history textbooks and do the values of the school they are attending provide them with the possibility of affirmed cultural identity?

On the other hand, we strive for a time when a Roma in the education system are not identified solely by that label, completely reduced to being the representative of the nationality. We need to remember that national identity is just one of an individual's many identities and that it may not even be the dominating one. For many people, playing soccer, listening to a certain music genre or recording with a video camera is more important than the fact that they are Roma, Slovenian, Hungarian, Romanian, or British.

The strategy-planning framework for more successful inclusion of pupils must include understanding of the right and obligation to education and the understanding of justice.

If the right to education is an indisputable right – therefore, a non-negotiable right, then the question remains of how to guarantee this right knowing that particular social groups are in a completely unequal social position. Setting equal demands for implementing the right to education of social groups who are in this unequal position, is actually an execution of symbolic violence. According to Bourdieu, making equal demands without taking into consideration the distribution of assets helps to legitimise inequality, which is how real inequality is reproduced with symbolic violence within formal equality.

The other important position that needs to be considered during the planning of measures is to understand the concept of justice. Foucault emphasises that universal concepts of justice are dangerous and suppressive. It is more important that a group is able to make its stand and speak on its own behalf than it is to develop abstract concepts that eventually end up having nothing in common with a concrete situation. It is important that such a group develops understanding of itself and its position in society. Thus, it is important to develop mechanisms that stimulate a group's own activity – namely, that no one acts on behalf of a social group to which they do not belong.

Let's return to the right to education. It concerns the process of establishing the relationship between the individual and the state. The state is responsible for creating conditions for efficient inclusion of individuals into society and due to the significance of education, inclusion in the education and schooling system and provision of quality education for all are particularly important.

In creating conditions for efficient education, we are faced with the fact that the Roma's position in education is a reflection of their position in society. The issue of a more successful inclusion in the education system cannot be solved independently from other issues.

Inefficiency of systemic measures is often a reflection of uncoordinated activities between individual areas of social action and, in particular, an ill-defined role of the Roma in the planning of activities. Too often, the Roma community is still a group for which measures are planned and not an active discussion partner contributing to the planning of measures and thereby assuming responsibility for their own fate.

In Slovenia, we have wanted to surpass these difficulties, in particular, by preparing an integrated government programme. In the area of education and schooling, the strategic document was created in 2004. The Roma community has been actively participating in the preparation and, particularly, the monitoring of the document.

Thus, in 2008, Slovenia entrusted the implementation of the project worth several (3) million euros (ESS) to the Roma Association of Slovenia. With this approach, we hope to strengthen the role of this ethnic community as the subject of social action.

What are our future challenges and tasks?

- to include as many children as possible in the education and schooling system starting at pre-school age;
- to strengthen the position of a Roma assistant in Slovenian schools and further expand it;
- to provide conditions for the development of identity and elimination of biases (implementation of a special subject, material in the Roma language, strengthening of societal competencies);
- to train and educate teachers to work with Roma children;
- And to strengthen the inclusion of the Roma in various forms of adult education.

Fifty-five years ago this month, the US Supreme Court adopted a landmark decision on abolishing segregation in the American education system. Today, it is clear that segregation cannot be defended at the level of principles and that it is necessary to strive for the elimination of practices that, in any way, generate inequality, particularly regarding access to education. As stated before, education is not an area separated from other areas of life; thus, it is possible that due to the separated living spaces of the majority community and the Roma minority, along with the majority of school drop-outs being Roma children, there are *de facto* segregated schools across Europe. Here we are faced with the gap between the universal concept and reality.

Tolerance is a concept that primarily understands the world as divided between “us” and “them” or “foreigners”. Furthermore, it promotes that what is “foreign” should be tolerated – accepted – but only as long as it does not interfere with our space or create a disturbance. However, if “foreign” is something that is significantly different from us and incomprehensible, it usually becomes disturbing, which is when we start demanding that the “foreigner”, in order to become less disturbing, give up the essence that essentially makes him what he is. This way, we can use tolerance of principles to force others to give up their identity and become more like us. This is the paradox of tolerance. If it were implemented to the bitter end, there would be no one left to tolerate.

All that we have discussed so far points to the conclusion that we have to create conditions under which the Roma may speak for, and about, themselves by providing quality education, early inclusion and opportunities for lifelong education and training of adult Roma. They need to be given the ability to co-create the future of the society of which they are a part. Our task is to empower them with that ability. The first step should be not to implement programmes for the Roma, but to enable them to manage and implement key integration projects by themselves.

## **B. Gabriele Mazza (Director of Education and Languages, Council of Europe)**

"Minister, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I am delighted to welcome you on behalf of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe at the opening of this major European conference on Roma education, and I am grateful to you, Minister, and to the Slovenian authorities, for the willingness to host this event in the framework of the Slovenian Chairpersonship of the Council of Europe.

My grateful thoughts go also to our loyal experts who have been supporting and followed our activities – some of whom were already involved in our work as far back as twenty-five years ago. Thank you for being with us today.

May I extend a special welcome to our partners from the international organisations involved in Roma issues for their presence and interest in our activities. I am pleased, in particular to recall our excellent co-operation with UNESCO and OSCE/ODIHR.

Our grateful recognition also goes to the Roma organisations for their co-operation and unfailing commitment to improving the situation of Roma in Europe. I very much appreciate that the Vice-President of the European Roma and Travellers Forum, Miranda Vuolasranta is with us today.

Co-operation within and outside the Council of Europe is crucial in education, as in other fields. I am pleased to note the presence of Mr Phillips representing the Advisory Committee on the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and several colleagues from various sectors of the Council of Europe.

The list is undoubtedly longer, but allow me to stop here, expressing my thanks to all of you for your interest in attending this very important final conference.

2. "Final" doesn't mean that after this conference the Council of Europe will discontinue its activities in the field of Roma education.

2.1 On the contrary, as the title of the conference suggests, we shall use this occasion to review progress and development in the field of education of Roma and Travellers (including those linked to our own efforts) in order to better understand the opportunities and the challenges that lie ahead. Our Organisation has been active in various ways in this vital area of education for over three decades, with a view not both to improve the situation of Roma and Travellers and to promote human rights, social cohesion and intercultural understanding. I am happy to say that in all likelihood in 2010 the Council of Europe will start a new programme "*Education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic culture*", which will include the Roma education issue as a transversal theme.

2.2 But why has the Council of Europe given – and will it continue to give - so much attention to Roma education?

- Firstly the education programmes of the Council of Europe are directly instrumental to the support of the fundamental mission of the Organisation, which is to protect and promote pluralist democracy, the rule of law and human rights;
- Secondly we are particularly concerned with ensuring the right of all to education, as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights (Protocol No 1. article 2). Education is a fundamental right and a precondition for the full enjoyment of many other rights. The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Charter for Regional or Minorities Languages but also the Recommendations of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance have undoubtedly reinforced this aspect with regard to the rights of the Roma and Travellers communities;
- And thirdly, education policy is a key dimension of social policy, and we are particularly active in developing policies and practice aiming at an inclusive approach to the education of minorities and vulnerable groups. We know there are still formidable obstacles to overcome to ensure that all Roma and Travellers children can satisfactorily complete basic education and continue to develop their full potential through further participation in educational socialisation and training processes.

3. Ladies and Gentlemen,

3.1. This conference offers all of us a unique opportunity to share our experiences and expertise in responding to the challenge of guaranteeing the right to inclusive quality education for Roma children: to all of us and to those who want this to happen, and want to meet this challenge, because they believe it can be done.

There is increasing evidence, for example, from projects supported by the Roma Education Fund, that Roma inclusion in education can be achieved, and we must learn from these successful initiatives in order to break the vicious circle of social exclusion, drawing the relevant lessons and launching ever more pertinent and effective initiatives.

3.2. The “Dosta” Campaign against prejudice and discrimination vis-à-vis Roma populations is an example of the kind of action the Council of Europe can promote to initiate a debate on how to bring the Roma into the core of society, away from its margins. Lasting two years and covering five countries of this region as a joint venture with the European Commission, the Campaign relied on radio and television spots, posters and other means to enhance the level of awareness in our member states population about the unacceptable predicament of Roma communities.

3.3. At the present time, the Council of Europe is focusing intensely on intercultural dialogue and education for intercultural understanding, which is particularly relevant in the context of our goals, and of the aims of this conference. Education can play a key role in developing attitudes of openness to difference, readiness to listen and to understand the point of view of others, and respect for their languages and cultures. Education must play its part in promoting understanding of, and positive attitudes to, Roma culture and to the Romani language as an integral part and an enrichment of the multicultural and multilingual fabric of our societies.

My Directorate of “Education and Languages” is responsible for the management of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. And I am pleased to note that the teaching of Romani, at least in primary schools, is increasingly promoted in many of the 23 States that have ratified the Charter.

In this connection, in order to provide concrete support for the teaching of Romani but also for policy makers and curriculum developers, we have carried out a project, in close cooperation with the European Roma and Travellers Forum, in pursuit of the establishment of a *Curriculum framework for the teaching of Romani*, supported by tools for learners and a Handbook for teachers.

This innovative activity on the teaching of the Romani language has been carried out in concert, and in full intelligence, with the project on “Education of Roma Children in Europe” which, launched in 2001, is a concrete and paradigmatic example of the Council of Europe’s specific nature of its contribution to the education of Roma children.

All of this work has been guided by *Recommendation 2000 (4) on the Education of Roma / Gypsy Children in Europe*. In this comprehensive Recommendation, the Committee of Ministers states that the education of Roma should be a priority in national policies. And that their disadvantaged position in European societies cannot be overcome unless equality in access and outcomes in the field of education is guaranteed.

The Recommendation further highlights the need to ensure that curriculum and teaching materials are designed to take into account the cultural identity of Roma children, including their history and culture. The participation of representatives of the Roma community should

be encouraged in the development of teaching material on the history, culture or language of the Roma.

As part of our project, and in response to the Recommendation, a set of teaching materials for the training of teachers and other educational professionals has been developed, and we are pleased that our proposal to appoint a Roma school mediator, which was first put forward over fifteen years ago and carried further by the project, has been taken up by several countries.

4. Given the importance of the issue of Roma and Traveller education for member states, it is vital that the lessons to be drawn from the project are identified and applied to further activities initiated by public authorities, as well as NGOs and international organisations.

For our part, our experience and ambition in the area of the education of Roma children places us in a favourable position to develop and support such further initiatives with a European dimension in the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The fact that the Roma have no single State to defend their interests, nor any diplomatic representation to encourage the teaching of their original language and culture, for example, and the fact that they live all over Europe, gives us a special responsibility and makes the role of international institutions - our role - all the more important.

Again, we must act now to break the vicious circle of marginalisation and social exclusion of the Roma and Traveller population. We must act together – international organisations, national governments, non-governmental organisations and institutions, including financial institutions – and use our collective wisdom and experience to identify and tackle the areas in which renewed efforts in the wide field of Roma education must be deployed, and energy invested.

I wish the conference every success in helping us progress further towards this goal.

Thank you.

**C. Alan Phillips (President of the Advisory Committee on the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities)**

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights; they are endowed with reason and conscience, and should act towards each other in a spirit of brotherhood.”

This is the beautiful language of article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was proclaimed and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1948.

Sixty years on let us look at the situation of Roma and, in the context of this conference, explore if Roma are treated with dignity and rights in education.

Do we, individually and collectively, use reason and conscience to determine Roma education today, more than 60 years later?



Is our programming in a spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood... working together or more designed to meet EU Directives and pre-accession criteria?

#### Educational rights of minorities:

Let me relate this to The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities which has been ratified by 39 States including our hosts Slovenia. It was carefully considered by many ministries in each State, which led to new legislation and policies as necessary. It is a legally binding instrument that is part of international human rights law. It is not optional but mandatory in every State Party to the Framework Convention, where the rule of law exists. As Minister Luksic stated these are non negotiable rights. It is compatible with a number of other international norms including UN Human Rights. Conventions and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

These general education rights include:

- The principle of a free and compulsory primary education.
- Equal access to education and equal opportunities within the education system.
- The liberty of parents to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.
- The right of individuals and legal entities to establish and direct their own educational institutions

There is a complex system of monitoring the Framework Convention. (The Advisory Committee that I chair reports to the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers Deputies regularly with Opinions on the implementation of educational rights in countries by country.)

My presentation is based on the evidence in these Opinions, particularly on the implementation of Articles 12, 13 and 14, which can be found on the minorities page of the Council of Europe (CoE) website and to which I will return later.

#### Developments over time:

We know that many Roma and Travellers in Europe live in abject poverty, they are marginalised socially, economically and educationally, many- especially elderly women- are illiterate. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) vulnerability study of 2005 of Roma in 9 countries provides a wealth of evidence on the situation of Roma. This important study shows that in the nine countries of Central and South Eastern Europe (14% of all the population and 48% of Roma live in relative poverty spending under US \$4.3 expenditure per person per day) while 3% of all the population and 17% of the Roma population live in absolute poverty measured by UN global standards; they can spend less than US \$2.15 per person per day.

Furthermore, some families lack citizenship documentation to claim basic rights, including educational rights, despite a decade of campaigns. The Advisory Committee has found this unacceptable making some strong comments in recent Opinions on certain states in this region. Additionally some Roma children, whose parents escaped to Western Europe in the 1990s, are still the focus of major deportation initiatives to Serbia and Kosovo. Is this in the best interest of the child? Political parties in some countries are still allowed to advocate the 'final solution' of the 'Roma problem'.

There remain gross abuses of the human rights of Roma like these, and it is important for the Council of Europe to respond vigorously to these. Nevertheless, over the last ten years, the Advisory Committee has seen some major positive developments, particularly on anti discrimination measures that have benefited the education of Roma, and it is important to take

encouragement and celebrate the many project successes there have been, including the achievements of the Council of Europe programmes, with their opportunities and challenges for the future, which we will be discussing later.

I recall working with Roma communities from the early 1990s and it would have been difficult to envisage then the institutional commitment that there is today in many major organisations. It is not only the Council of Europe, but also major organisations ranging from the World Bank to the European Union, in governmental strategies for Roma in which so many of you are involved, civil society initiatives and most importantly, the commitment of many young Roma themselves. It would have been inconceivable for the Presidency of the Council of Europe to have an evaluative conference such as this even a decade ago. The Council of Europe is playing a key role in bringing different players together and supporting long term processes that need embedding in Government and Society.

In 2002, the Advisory Committee was monitoring the implementation of the Framework Convention in Albania and we arrived 2 hours late for a meeting with Roma leaders in a settlement as the sun was setting at 7 pm. I apologised profusely for our lateness- not least of all because I thought that we had not treated the Roma leaders with dignity. The senior Roma leader replied wistfully: “We have been waiting for the Council of Europe for 20 years, what is 2 hours? You are very welcome but”, he added, “do not wait 20 years until you return.” He showed us how to behave with dignity and that we must think long term.

Promoting minority and human rights is a continuing journey promoting the progressive and more effective realisation of rights. It demands a long term set of strategic responses to highly complex social economic, cultural, civil and political issues which, even with the most committed and experienced people involved and with an abundance of resources, would be profoundly challenging.

#### Access and education rights:

The education rights of minorities are important human rights in themselves and these will be referred to later in my remarks, but educational rights – not least of all to read and write- are also instrumental in accessing other rights e.g. job training, employment, health care, social benefits and even housing as well as the right to be an active citizen including participation in elections and to engage in planning and delivering aspects of any Roma Strategy.

Similarly the effective participation of parents and communities in the education system is instrumental in the effective realisation of education rights.

The Advisory Committee has recently produced a Commentary on how states should understand and develop the right to effective participation, copies of which are available outside.

*“Effective participation should ensure a genuine and substantial influence on decision making... in a regular, permanent and systematic way.. with a shared sense of ownership of the important decisions and a shared responsibility in rectifying any shortfalls.”*

It should not be confused with consultation which is valuable but not empowering. Minister Lukšič reminded us that paternalism is the wrong strategy.

Effective participation may be perceived as threatening; it may take us out of our comfort zones and lead to a questioning of aspects of education, which may be revealed in our forthcoming discussions.

Civil Society can also play an important intermediary role, understanding the educational system while being able to reach out to Roma Communities.

Britain has been criticised by the Advisory Committee for its lack of participatory structures for minorities so it is particularly refreshing to see central government reaching out to Roma immigrant families, to understand their educational needs and to monitor the rights based approach of local education authorities. It was wise to involve an NGO, European Dialogue, to reach out to disparate immigrant communities and to facilitate their effective participation. It will be important to see how effective this participation becomes and whether it is sustainable, but I would commend such pioneering partnerships with civil society if they become empowering.

The Advisory Committee is clear on the fundamental importance of the effective participation of minorities in education, inter-alia, through their involvement in the development of policies, strategies and programmes as well as their participation in their management and delivery. It has frequently recognised that national minorities, including Roma, have an important role to play in monitoring and evaluating policies and programmes, in particular those affecting them. This is a right and additionally an effective way of enhancing the quality and cost effectiveness of programming.

Effective participation crucially implies transparency, with the sharing of essential information, and involvement in decision making on resources and budgets.

It should come as little surprise that there is often considerable anger by Roma leaders at the way that Roma education strategies are often developed in a non participatory way and funds are raised and allocated with a lack of transparency. Furthermore, there are attempts to use Roma education needs to attract external funds, without addressing the domestic priorities of the educational system and without taking a real ownership of these issues.

#### Generalisations:

In presentations like this there is often the risk of generalisations and considering Roma Communities to be homogenous. It is crucial to differentiate within Roma “school” education between boys and girls (where there can be double and even triple marginalisation), between younger and older children, those with educated and uneducated (parents), those with impoverished or affluent home lives, those who use Roma language exclusively at home, those living in the capital or in urban or rural areas, or those who are sedentary or mobile looking for seasonal work.

This differentiation is crucial to ensure that educational enabling policies and programmes are targeted at those who need them and in particular those who are marginalised and excluded. I will return to this later.

One obvious recent example I can give is from a recent monitoring visit to Moldova to Otaci on the boarder of Ukraine and close to Transnistria. We were taken to some very luxurious Roma houses where some parents believe that their children have no need to go to school, while we also saw and know of many Roma who are living in abject poverty who want their children to go to school but cannot afford the additional costs.

#### Education Rights:

Let me turn in a little more detail to education rights

Non Discrimination is a fundamental human right.

Article 4 of the Framework Convention provides minorities with the right of equality before the law and of equal protection of the law and prohibits discrimination. It also allows for adequate measures or positive actions to promote effective equality.

Nevertheless, it is challenging to know whether there is full and effective equality and decide whether positive measures, which can be controversial and costly in the short term, are needed. To measure full and effective equality it is crucial to have good data and the Advisory Committee Opinions have regularly called for disaggregated data on the educational position of minorities. The Framework Convention is clear that it is essential that data on individuals must be safeguarded alongside everyone's personal choice to be identified or not to be identified as a Roma. However, it is unacceptable for an education system not to know whether there is inherent discrimination against Roma under the guise of personal data protection.

I give the example of Kosovo to show the importance of disaggregating data, as the Advisory Committee has just completed a monitoring visit there.

The literacy rate is over 91%. When we look closer at this 98% of those aged 15-24 are literate. However, when we look at the Roma ( Ashkali and Egyptians) Communities in particular, we see that in this age group 65% of all Roma are literate, while a further disaggregation shows that a remarkable 56% of Roma women aged 15-24 are literate i.e. 44% are illiterate.

Similarly, in schools there is almost universal Primary school enrolment yet only 69% or Roma boys and 57% of Roma girls attend primary school.

Although every area is unique, and Kosovo is one of the most impoverished areas of Europe, less dramatic but similar patterns of Roma educational exclusion are seen throughout Europe.

The importance of disaggregated data for understanding whether rights are being realised cannot be overstated. A failure to collect such data is a failure in the duty of care.

The Advisory Committee in its Opinions and the European Court of Human Rights in a landmark judgement in November 2007 on the Czech Republic made it clear that segregated schools and classes for those with different ethnicity are illegal. Separate classes, as a way of educating disadvantaged Roma children without a command of the State language is currently under consideration by the Grand Chamber, however, the Advisory Committee would always want to be assured that such measures were temporary and that other more acceptable and successful methods of overcoming language limitation were developed e.g. through bilingual kindergartens for Roma, bilingual support in the ordinary classroom or through special after school language classes.

To ensure that Roma children can enjoy full and effective equality of outcomes demands much more than providing the same facilities. Every good teacher knows that you need to differentiate between the diversity of needs of children to achieve the most effective education for each and every child. This child centred education is challenging but crucial if there is a real concern about the best interests of the child and not exclusively about the best interests of resources and the budget.

The FCNM (Article 12.1) makes it clear that States in a rights based education system should "foster knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority".

It is important to recognise that integration is a two way process and every community, majorities and minorities, need to know about and value all cultures, histories and religions.

The FCNM (Article 12.2) also requires States to “provide adequate opportunities for teacher training and access to textbooks, and facilitate contacts among students and teachers of different communities.”

Not only may this require Roma teaching assistants, but diversity and bilingual training for teachers, the adaptation of curricula and resources, the inclusion of inter cultural education for all children, recognising that genuine integration is a two way process with communities coming together rather than the partial absorption of one community within the other.

There should be an emphasis on “a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue and take effective measures to promote mutual respect and understanding and co-operation” (Article 6 of FCNM), through formal and informal education and attitudes in society recognising that: “every person belonging to a national minority has the right to learn his or her minority language” and where possible providing resources to support this when requested (Article 14 FCNM). It is explicit in the Framework Convention that national minorities should also be able to learn the state language; something that is not guaranteed in certain countries.

The FCNM also places a legal responsibility on States: “to promote equal opportunities for access to education at all levels for persons belonging to national minorities.” (Article 12.3)

The Council of Europe programme is considering lifelong learning opportunities and here I hope that the programme will learn from the wide body of development literature on the importance of maternal literacy for the social and economic development of communities. One of the crises in Roma education is the need to address the needs of Roma who have left school. Many remain illiterate, particularly Roma women where the levels of illiteracy and poverty match those of impoverished groups in African countries such as Kenya. Their rights are being denied, while they are unable to support and promote the education of their Roma children.

#### Social and economic environment:

Education cannot be taken in isolation. The development of a child, and indeed, of mature adults, will depend on other aspects of their life. How much is there a culture of education in the family and how supportive are parents?

How supportive can parents be if their rights have been denied and they are illiterate, have a home without running water or electricity, and have no money for school clothes and shoes, while they and their children are often ill with out medicines or treatment?

How well motivated can parents be, if they have seen other children going to poor quality schools or special schools, being unvalued as Roma, with their culture and language being ignored, and then Roma young adults being unemployable, even when they complete secondary school? Dignity must accompany rights.

#### Models of Good practice:

In many countries anti-discrimination legislation and social inclusion policies for Roma are in place, but their implementation is particularly problematic. An old English adage comes to mind “The way to hell is paved with good intentions.”

Consequently it is valuable to see which rights are being realised through pilot projects, but also what measures are in place to ensure that these measures will benefit all those who need them in the Roma community. Are the projects an end in themselves or the foundation of an

institutional beginning? It is not sufficient to have a set of ad hoc projects that are welfare based and unsustainable. Here it is crucial for governments to work with the Council of Europe to sustain these initiatives by mainstreaming good practice.

A rights based approach to pilot projects needs to review why education rights were denied before and what lessons can be learnt. It needs to review who remains educationally excluded and what institutional changes are needed to ensure that everyone's educational rights are met in future.

#### Resourcing a rights based approach:

It is argued, with some merit, that it is costly to implement rights based Roma Educational strategies and you will all have used the counter argument that a failure to invest in education is short sighted; history shows that it is likely to lead to high levels of poorly educated unemployed Roma that are socially and economically excluded and are dependent on the State or the un-taxable grey market. Furthermore it rarely costs much money to treat Roma children with dignity.

Many of us here will have seen schools with foreboding entrances, uncared for surroundings, corridors that echo to the sounds of unruly children and aggressive teachers, barren uncared for classrooms, toilets that are "no go" areas, schools where parents are seen as part of the problem and not part of the solution, and schools where children are to be controlled rather than engaged. I am sure that many of you will have seen schools that are like this, often with a majority of Roma children.

I have also had the privilege of seeing (in the same countries, with the same funding regime, and with the same proportion of Roma children) schools where the entrance is bright and welcoming, there are well tended plants, there are fresh children's displays on the classroom walls, corridors that exude celebrations of multilingualism and multiculturalism, where parents are involved in the classroom and participate in extra curricula activities and where children enjoy school and community groups celebrating their success.

It takes reason and conscience, rather than donors and budgets, to treat school children with dignity and show that they are cherished. Personally, I would always want to ensure that an educational body treats children with dignity, as a pre-requisite before investing any additional resources.

#### Conclusion:

Our challenge today is to ensure that within the education system all Roma children become free and become equal in dignity and rights by us acting individually and collectively with reason and conscience. Let me suggest that all of us take some time for quiet reflection (in this beautiful environment). Let us consider-in a spirit of brotherhood (and sisterhood) - what opportunities and challenges there are for us personally to ensure that there is an effective implementation of Roma educational rights in much less than the 60 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of human rights or the 20 years that Roma waited for the Council of Europe in Albania.

### APPENDIX 3: Council of Europe relevant publications



#### PUBLICATIONS

Education des enfants roms en Europe  
Education of Roma children in Europe  
I Edukacia e Romane chavenge and-I Evropa



Updated 17 January 2010

Thème Theme	Version	Titre/Title	Référence/Reference
<b>Accès à l'éducation, éducation préscolaire</b>  <b>Access to education, preschool education</b>	FR	<i>L'éducation des enfants roms : les classes préparatoires</i> , Martina Hornakova	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2003)3
	FR	<i>Accès à l'éducation : concept de mallette pédagogique</i> , François-Xavier Bernard, Dominique Steinberger	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2005)7
	EN	<i>Access to education : teaching kit concept</i> , François-Xavier Bernard, Dominique Steinberger	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2005)7
	RR	<i>Dostapi/aksesko and-i edukacia: siklijavipe vash o koncepto Kit</i> , François-Xavier Bernard, Dominique Steinberger  Documents also available on teaching kit/Documents également disponibles dans la mallette pédagogique/Pedagogko lil CD-ROM )	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2005)7
	FR	Manuel du médiateur – Activités scientifiques pour les enfants, François-Xavier Bernard	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2007)7
	EN	Mediator's handbook – Science activities for children, François-Xavier Bernard	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2007)7
	RR	E mediatorsko liloro – žanimaske aktiviteturi vaš e čhave	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2007)7
	EN	<i>Towards quality education for Roma children: transition from early childhood to primary education</i> , Arthur Ivatts	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2007)5
	FR	<i>Vers une éducation de qualité pour les enfants roms: la transition entre l'éducation préscolaire et primaire</i> , Arthur Ivatts	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2007)5
	EN	<i>Council of Europe and UNESCO Guidelines on preschool education for Roma children</i> , Arthur	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2007)6

		Ivatts, Hristo Kyuchukov (foreseen for the end of 2009)	
	FR	Traduction vers le français prévue début 2010	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2007)6
	RR	Gido e romane çhvenge pal e xurdelinaki edukacija, kerdo katar o Konsilo le Evropako thaj o UNESCO (foreseen early 2010/prévue 2010)	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2007)6
<b>Formation des professionnels de l'éducation : enseignants, éducateurs, médiateurs et assistants scolaires, tuteurs, etc.</b>	FR	La formation des enseignants et la recherche, Virginie Repaire	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2003)2
	FR	Modules de formation pour les enseignants dans le domaine de l'histoire, de la culture et de la langue des Roms, Pascale Faure	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2003)10
<b>Training of education professionals : teachers, educators, school mediators and assistants, tutors, etc.</b>	EN	Training Modules for Teachers in the History, Culture and Language of the Roma, Pascale Faure	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2003)10
	RR	Formaciake module e siklijarnenge vash i istorija, kultura thaj i romani chib, Pascale Faure	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2003)10
	FR	La formation des médiateurs et assistants scolaires roms, Calin Rus	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2004)11
	EN	The training for Roma school mediators and assistants, Calin Rus	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2004)11
	RR	Formacia vash o asistentura thaj e shkolake romane mediatorija, Calin Rus	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2004)11
	FR	La situation des médiateurs et assistants scolaires roms en Europe, Calin Rus	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2006)3
	EN	The situation of Roma School Mediators and Assistants in Europe, Calin Rus	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2006)3
	RR	I situacija e romane školake mediatorurengi thaj asistenturjengi and-i Evropa, Calin Rus	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2006)3
	FR	Guide du médiateur/assistant scolaire rom, Calin Rus, Mihaela Zatreanu	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2006)12
	EN	Guide for Roma school mediators/assistants, Calin Rus, Mihaela Zatreanu	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2006)12
RR	Gido vaš e romane školake mediatorurja/ asistenturja (traduction prévue automne 2009)	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2006)12	
EN	Education and Training of Roma Children and Youth : the way forward	DGIV/EDU/ROM (2008)3	



<b>Matériel pédagogique et de formation dans le domaine de l'histoire, la culture, la langue roms</b>  <b>Teaching and training material in the field of Roma history, culture and language</b>	EN	Collection of pedagogical fact sheets on Roma history, Council of Europe, 2008	
	FR	Collection de fiches pédagogiques dans le domaine de l'histoire des Roms, Conseil de l'Europe, 2008 (available on line)	
	RR	Fakturjengi pedagogikani kolekcija pal i romani historia katar o Konsilo le Evropako (available on line)	
	German	Merkblätter zur Geschichte der Roma (Europarat, 2008)	
	Serbian Albanian		
	EN	Roma on screen, Dominique Chansel, Council of Europe Publishing (available on-line)	
	FR	Les Roms à l'écran, Dominique Chansel, Editions du Conseil de l'Europe (available on-line)	
<b>L'éducation des Roms en Europe : études, textes, stratégies, documents politiques</b>	EN	Collection of pedagogical fact sheets on Roma culture, Council of Europe (available on-line)	
	FR	Le témoignage du survivant en classe 16 fiches pédagogiques (le génocide des Roms)	DGIV/EDU/MEM (2008) 5 prov
	EN	Recommendation No R (2000)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe	
	FR	Recommandation (2000)4 du Comité des Ministres aux Etats membres sur l'éducation des enfants roms en Europe	
	RR	Rekomandacijaki (2000) 4 pal e edukacija e romane çhavengi ande Evropa	
	EN	Recommendation Rec (2003) 8 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the promotion and recognition of non-formal education/learning of young people	
	FR	Recommandation Rec (2003) 8 du Comité des Ministres aux Etats membres sur la reconnaissance et la promotion de l'éducation non formelle des jeunes	
	FR	Les pratiques innovantes dans le domaine de l'éducation pour les enfants roms, Diana Kirilova, Virginie Repaire	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2003)9
	EN	The innovatory practices in the field of education of Roma children, Diana Kirilova, Virginie Repaire	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2003)9

FR	<i>Education des enfants roms en Europe - Textes et activités du Conseil de l'Europe en matière d'éducation</i> , Editions du Conseil de l'Europe	ISBN-10: 92-871-5977-7
EN	<i>Education of Roma children in Europe - Official texts and activities of the Council of Europe concerning education</i> , Council of Europe Publishing	ISBN-10: 92-871-5978-5
FR	Cadre de référence pour les politiques éducatives en faveur des Roms, Sinti et Gens du voyage, Delia Grigore, Dominique Steinberger	DGIV/EDU/ROM (2005)8
EN	Reference framework for educational policies in favour of Roma, Sinti and Travellers, Delia Grigore, Dominique Steinberger	DGIV/EDU/ROM (2005)8
RR	Referencijako kadro vaš edukacionalno politike andar e roma, Delia Grigore, Dominique Steinberger	DGIV/EDU/ROM (2005)8
FR	Cadre politique et législatif pour l'éducation des enfants roms : Textes de référence et systèmes d'appui	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2006)11
EN	Political and Legislative Framework for the Education of Roma Children : Reference Texts and Support Systems	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2006)11
RR	Politikano thaj legislativno kadro vash e Romane chavengi edukacia : Textura save si referencia thaj sisteme kaj te shaj te azutisaren	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2006)11
EN	Audit of Pre-school provision - Briefing paper for the Experts meeting UNESCO/Council of Europe	DGIV/EDU/ROM(2007)4

Link to the website : [www.coe.int/education/roms](http://www.coe.int/education/roms)  
[www.coe.int/education/roma](http://www.coe.int/education/roma)