DOSTA!
Enough! Go beyond prejudice, meet the Roma!

Toolkit against anti-Gypsyism

CAMPAIGN dosta

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Dosta! Assez! Dépassons les préjugés, allons à la rencontre des Roms !

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Cover photos:
First row from the left
Mr Skender Avdulahi, Rom
and a business manager
Ms Diana Kirilova, Romni
and a legal interpreter
Mr Julian Demoraga, Gitan
and a film director
Ms Francine Jacob Schutt, Yenish
and a human rights activist
Second row from the left
Mr Gérard Gartner, Manush and an artist
Ms Jenica Teglas, Gypsy and a hairdresser
Mr Bill Bila, Rom and a businessman
Ms Liliana Neda, Romni
and a social worker

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WHO ARE THE ROMA?

The Roma[1] are a European people of Indian origin whose ancestors left the Ganges Valley in northern India somewhere around 1000 years ago. There are now approximately 12 million Roma in Europe, and they are often denied their rights to education, employment, health care and housing. They are also subjected to forced evictions, racist attacks and police violence.

WHAT IS THEIR HISTORY IN EUROPE?

It is generally agreed that the Roma were living in the European parts of the Byzantine Empire, in today's Greece, before the 13th century. Since their arrival in Europe, the Roma have been forced out of countries, deported under threat of sanctions if they remained, including the death penalty – all for the sole reason of being born Roma. The Roma people have had to flee violence and discrimination wherever they were.

The Roma were slaves on the territory of present-day Romania from before the founding of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia in the 13th and 14th centuries. Under the influence of the international movement for abolishing slavery in the mid-19th century, and helped by young liberals, slavery was abolished in the two Romanian principalities. For many Roma, this just meant a different dimension to their exploitation as those who consequently became tied to the land were expected to give away a part of their crop to the landowner.

The 20th century was marked by another memorable event in the lives of the Roma. In the beginning of 1940 the first mass murder of the Holocaust took place in the concentration camp at Buchenwald, when 250 Roma children from Brno were used as guinea pigs to test Zyklon-B, later used in the gas chambers at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Later, on 2 and 3 August 1944, several thousand Roma and Sinti were massacred at the *Zigeunerlager* in Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp.

Approximately 500 000 to 1.5 million Roma were exterminated during the Holocaust. As a percentage, that makes Roma the ethnic group that was the most affected by the Nazi killings. Over 90% of the Roma population of Austria, Germany and Estonia was exterminated by the fascist regimes.

During the years following the war, the Roma were reluctant to identify their ethnicity in public or draw too much attention to it. No reparations were provided for the Nazi atrocities committed against them; instead, pre-war anti-Roma legislation remained in place. In Germany, until 1947, the Roma who survived the camps had to remain hidden to avoid being incarcerated once again, this time in labour camps, if they could not prove their German citizenship.

WHAT PROBLEMS DO THE ROMA FACE IN EUROPE TODAY?

Roma rights continue to be violated every day in Europe. The Roma face prejudice, intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion. Roma workers are refused jobs and their children are placed in segregated schools or refused places in mainstream schools. Their community is often considered marginal and traditional, meaning they are more likely to suffer social exclusion.

In reality, Roma can be considered as the first truly European people, since they "broke through" European borders much earlier than any international treaty or convention. They travelled throughout Europe, enriching their own culture with that of the visited countries, while at the same time enriching European cultural heritage.

WHAT IS THE AIM OF THIS PUBLICATION?

The Dosta! campaign toolkit was conceived to help you understand what the campaign is about and how you can use it to combat anti-Gypsyism by taking concrete actions at the local level. The toolkit includes a video kit that you, or media professionals, can use free of charge while reporting on the Roma. The material produced within the Dosta! campaign should not be considered as an exhaustive picture of the very complex Roma culture and identity, but as input to contributing, through your help, to the fight against prejudices and stereotypes towards Roma. For more information, please visit: www.dosta.org.

THE DOSTA! CAMPAIGN

The Dosta! campaign "Enough! Go beyond prejudice, meet the Roma!" aims to raise awareness of the prejudices and stereotypes concerning the Roma. It was devised by the Council of Europe under the joint Council of Europe and European Commission programme on Roma in South-Eastern Europe "Equal rights and treatment for Roma in South-Eastern Europe" (2006-2007). Since 2007 the campaign has been extended to all Council of Europe member states.

"Dosta!" aims to stop prejudices and stereotypes not by denouncing them but by breaking them down and showing who the Roma really are. It aims to bring non-Roma closer to Roma citizens by promoting understanding and active participation in breaking down the barriers caused by prejudices and stereotypes.

WHY DO WE NEED THIS CAMPAIGN?

Dosta means "enough" in the variant of the Romani language spoken in the Balkans, where the campaign was initiated.

The Roma are European citizens. They form a group of approximately 12 million people and can be found in almost all Council of Europe member states. In several central and eastern European countries, they represent between 5% and 10% of the total population. Although the Roma have been in Europe since the 13th century, they are not always recognised by the majority as a fully fledged European people. Many Roma communities today live in very difficult conditions, and their participation in public life is extremely limited.

Although some progress has been made in improving the economic and social development of Roma in Europe in recent years, these efforts often face severe obstacles caused by deeply rooted beliefs and prejudices. Negative beliefs can be preconceptions and clichés, or irrational feelings of fear and dislike, all leading to discriminatory attitudes that may impede the Roma from having access to citizens', human and social rights. Prejudices and stereotypes are also the basis for racism, which, in the case of the Roma, is too often justified and manifested at the political level.

The paradox of this campaign is that there should be no need to campaign for the rights of minority groups. We are campaigning to turn around prejudices and setting a challenge to Europeans: "Go beyond prejudice: meet the Roma!"

CAMPAIGN MESSAGES

The campaign addresses very deep-rooted beliefs and prejudices. It conveys two basic positive messages.

1. A socio-political message: Roma have the same rights and aspirations as everybody else. They are citizens of the countries they live in and they have to be recognised as such, in the full respect of their citizenship and human rights. Taking a positive approach towards diversity in European societies means enabling all citizens to obtain new competences and skills for facing future challenges and building stable and cohesive societies.

2. A cultural message: Roma culture is part of Europe's cultural heritage and it has contributed to the enrichment of European societies. It is now time to recognise this contribution.

The campaign messages are the same for all European countries.

The campaign was conceived as a tool for Roma representatives, the majority population, governments and public institutions for changing the status quo. The participation of the Roma in every step of the process related to them is key to the success of any event aimed at obtaining their access to social and human rights.

WHO IS GOING TO BENEFIT FROM THE CAMPAIGN?

The Roma: The Dosta! campaign wants to have the Roma acknowledged as European citizens with full rights and responsibilities. It aims to build bridges between the Roma and majority populations by facilitating a better understanding of the Roma and their culture and by encouraging broad participation in making human rights a reality for the Roma.

Societies: The campaign targets "society at large", by identifying target groups – such as governments, local and regional authorities, public institutions and civil servants, churches, media and journalists, public figures, civil society organisations, women's groups, youth – that are most likely to reach out and spread the messages of the Dosta! campaign.

WHO RUNS THE CAMPAIGN?

As Europe's guardian of human rights, the Council of Europe has a duty to make sure that everyone's rights are respected. The Council of Europe has the task of disseminating the objectives of the Dosta! campaign and identifying and inviting national actors to implement initiatives within its framework.

These national partners are then responsible for the management and implementation of national campaign initiatives.

The Council of Europe's role is to provide relevant technical support to the development of national campaigns. This support includes, but it is not limited to: guidance on how to build a campaign team, practical tools to help implement the campaign, assistance in the production of awareness-raising material in the national language(s) and advice on how to use campaign tools.

The Council of Europe offers specific campaign tools for journalists, school teachers, students and youth.

Campaign partners

The campaign addresses national, regional and local partners, who are able to "translate" and multiply the campaign message. Specific co-operation at local level is encouraged.

In its role of international co-ordinator, the Council of Europe hopes to reach out to a wide audience and therefore welcomes support and partnership from governments, local and regional authorities, public institutions and civil servants, churches, media and journalists, public figures, civil society associations, women's groups, youth associations, etc.

How can one become an official Dosta! campaign partner?

Anybody can become a partner in the Dosta! campaign. Partners can support it by spreading its message and fighting stereotypes. Support is welcomed both in kind and financially.

Official requests to join the campaign should be addressed to the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues, through the Dosta! campaign secretariat.

Partners will sign an agreement with the Council of Europe in order to launch a national campaign in their country. The Supporting Team of the Special Representative for Roma Issues will provide guidance to the partners throughout the campaign.

CAMPAIGN TOOLS

Website: the Dosta! multi-language Internet site is the platform for the promotion of all the campaign's activities, as well as for the collection of audiovisual material to be used in all Council of Europe member states. The website is conceived as an interactive tool allowing users to register and login to post comments and forum topics or find material to download. Internet address: www.dosta.org.

Creative visuals and slogans: The visuals and slogans are elaborated in co-operation with the Council of Europe Roma network as well as with the Council of Europe Directorate of Communications. They can be used on material such as leaflets, posters, promotional material (t-shirts, mouse pads, etc.) and audiovisual products. You can obtain them by simply sending an e-mail request to: info@dosta.org (depending on availability).

The CD *Music beyond prejudice: Romani variations on the European Anthem*: the CD *Music beyond prejudice: Romani variations on the European Anthem* has been produced in co-operation with the Council of Europe Directorate of Communications as a means of marking the first two years of the Dosta! campaign. The CD contains five different arrangements of the European Anthem in Romani language and style performed by artists from Albania, France, Serbia and "the former Yugoslav Republic of

Macedonia". Esma Redzepova, known as the "Queen of Gypsy Music" and nominated twice for the Nobel Peace Prize, has contributed to the project.

The television spot is one of the main tools of the Dosta! campaign. It is the result of a brainstorming meeting organised in co-operation with the Council of Europe Directorate of Communications and Roma media experts who contributed to its script. It is based on photos taken during a field visit to Serbia, which was organised in co-operation with the Association of Roma Students in Novi Sad. The television spot exists in two versions, 50 and 25 seconds, and in Albanian, Bosnia and Herzegovina's local languages, Serbian and Macedonian, as well as in English and French. It is posted on the campaign website and is distributed free of charge to national television channels for broadcast, or to NGOs for publishing on their websites.

Croatia and Italy have produced their own videos which are also available on the Dosta! website.

A radio spot exists in Albanian, Bosnia and Herzegovina's local languages and Serbian. Both the television and the radio spot are available on the campaign website (www.dosta.org) and on the Council of Europe website http://hub.coe.int/web/coe-portal/roma.

Media pack for journalists: this includes a video kit in DVD and BETA SP format with interviews of senior international officials, video interviews and testimonials, a Euronews report on the Roma, the Dosta! campaign's television spots and the "Tool for fighting stereotypes towards Roma". The media pack is distributed to the press during major Council of Europe Roma-related events.

Photographic resources: a selection of photos is published on the campaign website. All the photos are available upon request.

VIP testimonials: personalities with popular mass appeal and recognition have provided statements in favour of the Roma in order to break down the barriers caused by prejudice. These statements are published on the Dosta! website and the testimonials are provided free of charge to national media.

Media outreach: a press officer has the task of following the campaign and preparing press releases, fact files and other written material for the media. Press service support is sought for individual events.

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

Music beyond prejudice
More information on the CD and the artists on the Dosta! website.

The campaign continues on the Internet:
www.dosta.org.
Now it is your turn to campaign!

Chapter 2

Stereotypes and prejudices

One of the most striking elements of stereotypes and prejudice is that they are usually created by the powerful and applied to the weak, who cannot control the way they are perceived by others and are unable to change these perceptions.

Stereotypes and prejudice are methods of categorising the world around us.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, stereotypes are "a fixed idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong". According to the same dictionary, prejudices are "an unfair and unreasonable opinion or feeling, especially when formed without enough thought or knowledge". In other words, stereotypes are preconceptions and clichés, while prejudices are unfounded feelings of fear and dislike. They can be understood as filters which somehow protect us from information overflow and allow us to judge people without knowing them personally or only superficially: they limit our view of reality.

In this sense one could argue that stereotypes and prejudices have a positive function as they enable us to make decisions quickly. Very often, however, stereotypes are used to justify and support the beliefs and values of the majority population. The "common" is perceived as the "normal" and things done by distinct social groups or minorities are devalued when they do not conform to these "norms". A common saying has it that stereotypes have a grain of truth. Whenever a true aspect of a stereotype is found, it justifies and reinforces the stereotype.

Politicians and the media very often make use of stereotypes. Playing with negative feelings or fears is a good way to win an election or to sell a paper. People normally use stereotypes to define and justify the status quo. The ones who suffer from stereotypes are not those whose fears are exploited but those being presented in a negative light: the stereotyped.

ANTI-TSIGANISM, ANTI-GYPSYISM AND ROMAPHOBIA

Anti-Tsiganism, anti-Gypsyism[2] and Romaphobia[3] are essentially the same thing: a distinct type of racist ideology, which is at once similar, different and intertwined with many other types of racism. Anti-Gypsyism itself is a complex social phenomenon that manifests itself through violence, hate speech, exploitation and discrimination in its most visible forms.

The three terms do not vary in content but in usage. While anti-Gypsyism is the term most often used on the international level some Roma, especially those from eastern Europe, prefer the term anti-Tsiganism as *Tsigan* is the term used in their region. Both terms, Gypsy and *Tsigan*, are pejorative in nature in most countries in Europe,[4] which is why some scholars prefer the term Romaphobia.

The term "anti-Gypsyism" is used in several Council of Europe official texts (see below the definition provided by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), a Council of Europe body in charge of monitoring racism and discrimination in Europe). Roma-related resolutions of the European Parliament also refer to anti-Gypsyism and Romaphobia.

> "Anti-Gypsyism is a specific form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanisation and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among others, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatisation and the most blatant kind of discrimination." (ECRI – General Policy Recommendation No. 13 on combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma, June 2011)

ANTI-SEMITISM AND ANTI-GYPSYISM

All across Europe, the Jews and the Roma have historically been the two minorities that have suffered most from discrimination on grounds of their supposed "inferiority" and the subsequent negative stereotyping attached to this alleged inferior status.

Both minorities originated from outside Europe, the Jews from the area of what is now Israel and Palestine and from the southern shores of the Black Sea, and the Roma from India. Both migrated due to persecution; both have suffered throughout the ages at the hands of the majorities in Europe; both were considered inferior and many members of both groups were exterminated by the Nazis during the Second World War. Both groups suffered under the communist regimes in Europe. However, the Roma still experience discrimination, hatred and prejudice while anti-Semitism is today, fortunately, condemned at all levels (social and political). Anti-Gypsyism has yet to be recognised as an existing phenomenon and consequently condemned.

Aspects of anti-Gypsyism

Dehumanisation and reducing the Roma to their "Gypsyness" are core elements of anti-Gypsyism. The Roma are seen as less than human and thus not morally entitled to human rights. This dehumanisation is not based on misconceptions or ignorance but appears to be a legitimising myth that justifies the majority's abusive behaviour of Roma people who are not perceived as individuals but simply as "Gypsies". Very often, instead of talking about the problems that the Roma face, there is talk about "the Gypsy problem" due to their "Gypsyness". "Gypsyness" itself is defined by exclusively negative terms. Roma are never defined as they are, but rather as they should be in order to justify policies and behaviours towards them. The way the Roma are identified corresponds to the collective expectations, mainly negative, about them, whereas any deviation, usually positive, is seen as an exception to the rule. Statements such as: "I am not a racist, but these Gypsies…" or "I had a Roma friend, an extraordinary person, if all Roma were the same!" – evoking one positive aspect while generalising negative attributes at group level are the markings of classic racism. In the absence of Roma social representation and influence as part of a desired identity policy, everybody seems comfortable in defining the Roma, who they are and what they do, and to blame them for problems, failures and fears in a society. More so, "final solutions" are sometimes proposed by groups and organised movements.

The Roma are defined either by negative stereotypes, derived from biased thinking over centuries of social exclusion and institutionalised racism, or by positive stereotypes, derived from the romanticised view in literature and popular culture.

Stereotypes and prejudices about the Roma are very often at odds with rational thought. Many times they reveal more about the cultural background of the person talking about the Roma than about "Gypsies". When making a list of the presumptions that people have about the Roma, many things seem absurd but nonetheless people stick to them as though they were unquestionable truths. There are many examples in history of absurd assumptions being at the foundations of a society's world view (for example, the earth is flat), but many people, especially forward-thinking people, are often unwilling to accept that this might still be the case today.

Stereotypes and prejudices against the Roma, and thus anti-Gypsyism, are so deeply rooted in European culture that they are most often taken as facts. Those who suffer from them have to engage in the tiring task of convincing others that they are being discriminated against for no reason. One obvious sign of anti-Gypsyism is the fact that many people who have never had close, personal contact with the Roma are nonetheless able to provide a detailed picture of them. How they look, live and behave. Very often the behaviour of one individual is automatically applied to all "Gypsies". The (negative) behaviour is attributed to all of Roma culture, not to the individual in question.

OVERCOMING ANTI-GYPSYISM

Anti-Gypsyism can be overcome only if people acknowledge its existence. Nothing can change as long as people are not aware that it is a reality; the problem is not the Roma but anti-Gypsyism. The key is to reverse negative stereotypes by contradicting them, through direct interactions between people, in the media and through education.

The role of the media

The media, sometimes unconsciously but too often consciously, spread anti-Roma feelings. In the case of reporting a crime, mentioning the ethnicity of the perpetrator does not have any positive impact. By the same token, a patronising attitude from the media is also harmful. In addition, the media generally do not pay attention to stories in which the Roma are victims, as is the case for racist attacks or hate speech pronounced by politicians towards the Roma. The media could help by condemning all of these acts.

The media can be a valuable tool for awareness raising and promotion of diversity and multiculturalism, if committed to change. Instead of focusing on negative headlines about the Roma, emphasis should be put on finding positive stories and on giving the Roma a voice. There are lawyers, teachers, politicians and doctors of Roma ethnicity, so why not report about them? Talk about those whose stories usually remain unheard!

Your role as a European citizen

Stereotypes are not always negative. We construct them in order to be able to interact effectively, to know which behaviours are considered acceptable for certain groups and cultures, and which are not. We have a moral responsibility however to differentiate between right and wrong and positive and negative categorisation of an individual or a group of people. Stereotypes about the Roma can be easily misused by "enemies" who can feed and perpetuate stereotypes to their advantage.

Each of us should examine the assumptions we make about the Roma and ask ourselves where those assumptions come from. Upon what information are they based? Are they based on personal experiences with others? Are they based on things we have heard from others? Are they from the media? From school? Is it possible that some of our negative images about the Roma are wrong? In most cases, the answer to the last question is likely to be "yes".

Through such questioning, the image of the Roma as a whole may become more positive as well. The challenge then is to expand such transformative experiences beyond the individuals we interact with to larger groups, communities and eventually whole societies. Mediation workshops, children's programmes, recreational programmes and public health programmes that bring individuals together can help break down negative images people hold of the Roma, which eventually helps curb anti-Gypsyism.

Before making assumptions about the Roma, as about any group, we should try to get to know them as individuals. This can help us realise that they are not as we originally assumed. This exercise alone will help reduce the stereotypes we hold of the Roma, and it will probably reduce the stereotypes the Roma may hold of us too. We may actually discover that we have many things in common, from enjoying the same music or sports, to having the same worries about raising children, the public health services or the economic crisis.

The role of governments and local authorities

Governments are morally obliged to serve people on their territories by protecting life, liberty and property. They promote democracy and protect fundamental rights and the rule of law.

European governments have many times failed to protect the Roma's fundamental rights and freedoms. States have been slow to respond to cases of violence, crime and hate speech against them. Perpetrators of violence, either state or non-state actors, have not always been identified or punished. Public officials who have engaged in hate speech against the Roma have not been scrutinised or dismissed.

But governments can use the Dosta! campaign to change attitudes and stereotypes about the Roma and end discrimination. Countries can further develop initiatives to stop the segregation of Roma into ghettoes or of Roma children in schools, and end forced evictions and violence against them. They can promote a neutral and objective view of the Roma. Countries with a significant Roma population should adopt and implement positive measures. They can design, fund and implement effective programmes to ensure that school completion rates, employment levels and health indicators of Roma people rise to the same level as that of the majority population. They can support law enforcement to investigate and prosecute hate crimes against the Roma in an adequate and timely manner. They can promote and support community-level development and women's empowerment for the Roma.

The role of civil society organisations

The role of civil society organisations is to continue lobbying for the needs and concerns of Roma communities, promote human rights, help reverse negative stereotypes and change perceptions and attitudes towards the Roma.

The challenge remains to closely monitor the trends and developments in new waves of extremism and anti-Gypsyism and to help mobilise other groups and the international community to react promptly in order to prevent further escalation of the problem.

The role of education and education systems

Stereotypes can be perpetuated from generation to generation. This is why they need to be acknowledged and corrected through education. Educational institutions have a major role in remedying historical injustice. For example, consider the Holocaust: education and school systems help maintain the memory of the grave crime against humanity committed by the Nazis. Educational institutions and teaching materials also have the ability to affect or perpetuate stereotypes. In the books about the Holocaust, Roma have been overlooked among the victims of genocide. Imagine if history books taught about the Roma being persecuted and killed in the Second World War next to the Jews and Poles. Would people still think that the Roma are worth nothing, that it is their fault when they are discriminated against and marginalised?

This is why it is critical that the educational system provide a fair and accurate picture of Roma history and culture. By learning about the traits of Romani culture and the experiences that the Roma have been subjected to in order to survive, let alone to maintain their cultural and ethnic cohesiveness as a group, students can understand and appreciate their Roma peers better. Young people can be the motor in changing mentalities about the Roma in our societies. Educational systems should be able to provide young Roma with enough tools to prevent and respond appropriately to challenges occurring in their communities, societies or homes, involving them or their relatives. School debates, writing competitions, interactive e-learning and joint workshops are just a few examples of the school activities that can help educate students in mutual understanding and respect.

IS THIS A STEREOTYPE?

The Roma are freedom loving, easy going and carefree nomads, wearing colourful clothes and lots of golden jewellery. They are passionate dancers, gifted artisans and great musicians. The women are beautiful and seductive like Georges Bizet's Carmen or Esmeralda from the *Hunchback of Notre Dame*. They tell fortunes and can curse you if you do not give them money. They are poor and beg. They do nothing to improve their own situation and steal food. They prefer to live on welfare than to work. They have more children than they can feed and clothe.

One day they will probably "out-baby" the majority population. Roma girls get married at a very early age; the men beat their wives and exploit their children. At night they dance around camp fires and sometimes they steal babies in order to sell them. They do not have a religion. They are dirty and a burden to society. They do not want to integrate and they marginalise themselves. They are happy only when they are away from non-Roma. They do not want to be citizens of the country they live in and whenever they migrate, they tarnish the reputation of the country they come from. They like to live close to rubbish dumps and their houses are very dirty. They are afraid of water, allergic to soap and do not know how to use a toilet. They are a source of disease. They do not know how to read and write, and somehow are not interested in learning or in going to school. They must be mentally deficient.

Maybe they are not even human beings. They live in huge family groups and do not mind sharing one room with 10 people. They are greedy and never satisfied. They are lazy and not trustworthy. They are genetically predestined to become thieves and drug dealers. And anyway, the term "Roma" is just an invention, they are actually called "Gypsies" or "Tsigani".

There are very many stereotypes about Roma. You have probably heard many of them yourself. Read below to learn more about the most common misconceptions about Roma.

The word "Gypsy" in itself is the testimony of a negative identification of the Roma. "Gypsy" is not a scientific term used to designate the ethnic belonging of Roma, but rather it identifies the belonging to a religious group considered heretic by the clerical officials of the time. Thus, the word "Gypsy" derives from the Greek *athinganos* or *athinganoy*, which signified "pagan", "untouchable" or "impure".

STEREOTYPE NO. 1: "GYPSIES" ARE "JUST GYPSIES"

Roma are often perceived as a homogenous group and many times they are reduced to their "Gypsyness". They are not perceived as individuals but as "Gypsies", a social denomination derived from a history of social marginalisation and institutional racism.

From the time of their arrival in the Romanian principalities, the Roma were slaves. The term *atigan* which later became *tigan* defined a social status of slave and not the ethnicity of Roma. Later on, the term *tigan* was kept in the collective memory, at least of the Romanian population, with a deep pejorative meaning. But the term in the Romani language used to designate this ethnicity was "Roma". It derives from the Prakrit word *dom* which meant "human being" and it referred on the one hand to the Indian emigrants who engaged in mixed marriages in Persia and formed a people there and then started moving towards Europe, and on the other hand to an ethnic subgroup in India, which exists still to this day.

The status of slaves put the Roma on the margins of society and the human condition, as their owners considered them as moving property or goods for exchange. As slaves, the Roma were subjected to violence and other cruel forms of exploitation, including rape and torture. They could be sold and bought after being weighed and valued, the owner having the rights of life and death over the slave. Roma children were separated from their parents and sold, given away or traded. Roma women and girls were often sexually abused and used to entertain the gentlemen.

Centuries of ignorance, exploitation and marginalisation did not allow for a fair and objective understanding of who the Roma are in reality. There are many who continue to produce and reproduce the most outrageous stereotypes about the Roma and who forcefully claim that they are like this or that. In reality, there is not a single Roma person who could meet all the stereotypes that exist about them.

What is true for all populations is true for the Roma: generalisations are never true and the differences between individuals are greater than the differences between ethnic groups. The Roma live in many different environments, speak different languages and different dialects of Romani, and they can be found on all five continents. They have also adopted many of the habits of the majority population of the countries where they live. They are engaged in numerous occupations, are members of different religions and their financial and educational situations also vary from person to person, from group to group, and according to the general situation of the country they live in, just as for any other citizen.

STEREOTYPE NO. 2: NOMADISM

Roma are often perceived as carefree nomads with no significant worries: free to do whatever they want, freedom loving and easy going, living in tents or in caravans and dancing around fires every night. When they are hungry they just steal a chicken from a local peasant.

Throughout the Middle Ages, Roma were often mistaken for Muslims and encountered the hatred of the Christian Europeans. They were not allowed to settle down or work in many countries and thus had to find other ways of making a living. Finding a place to stay, a home, is a common theme in Roma folk tales. During the Holocaust, the Roma were one of the primary targets of the Nazi regime and were sent

to concentration camps all over Europe. After the end of communism many Roma fled from ethnic persecution. Again this was conceived as nomadism rather than an attempt to save their lives. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, countless Roma in eastern and South-Eastern Europe have fallen victim to violent attacks, evictions, destruction of property and even murder.

Throughout the centuries, settling down often meant having to abandon Roma traditions and culture. Many Roma did this, thus choosing the path of assimilation. Most of those who would have preferred to maintain a nomadic way of life were subjected to forced assimilation policies as early as the 18th century. Under communist regimes, the majority of the remaining nomads were settled by force.

This almost romantic picture of Roma life is very far from reality. Only 20% of European Roma today are still nomadic, almost exclusively in western Europe. In previous centuries nomadism was almost never a matter of free choice but of persecution. Continuous expulsion is a main feature in Roma history. Thus, nomadism was mistakenly interpreted as a cause of "inadaptability" of the Roma in modern society. Behind the concept of "adaptation", promoted by non-Roma authorities, is not only ignorance and the failure to recognise cultural values and the tendency of ethnic assimilation, but worse, a deeply racist view, where the main issues dealt with are poverty, disease and education, thus issues related to social status, not ethnicity.

STEREOTYPE NO. 3: MUSIC AND DANCING

Non-Roma people often refer to Roma men as being "fiddlers" or think that they are primarily "singers". This is a stereotype formed in the collective mind. Not all Roma are musicians but certain groups have specialised in it. Some Roma have become famous musicians after completing musical studies. In many countries, Roma musicians are often hired for weddings or other special occasions by the majority population. At these events they play whatever the *gadje* (non-Roma) want to hear, rather than traditional Roma music. In addition, specialists draw a clear distinction between the non-Roma folk music played in the Romani manner and true Romani traditional music – *Romane purane gilia*.

But Romani music, whether vocal or instrumental, is an artistic manifestation of the community. Romani music has a ritual character (wedding, howler) or non-ritual (love or sleeping songs), while fiddler music is one of the traditional Romani occupations, which brings financial gain and is performed by professional singers of autochthonous popular music. From an identity perspective, the fiddlers, who could be found in all societal structures and living among non-Roma, were the first to be subjected to a major cultural assimilation. They lost their mother tongue and other elements of cultural identity except for the bear trainers who maintained cultural values.

STEREOTYPE NO. 4: FORTUNE TELLING

A common folk belief is that the Roma can curse you, for example, when you do not give them money, or that they are all witches.

The Roma do have in their traditions a belief system that includes omens, but its nature is completely different. Throughout history, Roma have used various methods, from crystal balls and tarot cards to palm reading to foresee the unknown and the uncommon for outsiders. Today, fortune telling is largely lost and is practised by only a few. Where it continues to be used, it is carefully taught and transferred to those who have talent and respect the rigours of an ancient craft.

Fortune telling is not widely practised because of the risks it carries. Instead, among family members and the community, Roma use herbs and magic to cure diseases and prevent the signs of old age. Roma may also wear amulets and lucky charms to protect them from troubles and banish bad spirits and disease.

STEREOTYPE NO. 5: TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

One of the most well-known crafts practised by the Roma is that of a blacksmithing. They probably acquired this skill in Armenia as many of the Romani terms that refer to this craft are derived from the Armenian language. One of the main reasons why the Roma were enslaved in the Romanian principalities was because they were skilled workers.

During the 500 years of slavery, other crafts were developed and passed down through family and kinship. Even today, Romanian Roma categorise themselves according to the profession they practise. Many Roma family names such as Gabor (smith) and Ciurar (sieve maker) refer to professions. Other professions that are typically linked to the Roma are bear training (*ursurari*), searching for gold in the rivers (*aurari*) or spoon making (*lingurari*).

Many of these traditions continue to be practised by Roma in various countries in Europe, but to a much lower extent and sometimes in a more modern manner, in response to competitive market demand. For instance, blacksmiths have adapted to making contemporary objects and furniture.

However, most Roma have moved away from traditional crafts and penetrated the mainstream job market. When they are able to overcome societal or institutional discrimination, they are employed in any sector of the job market. If those who are employed are often considered as "exceptions", it is simply because discrimination is the rule.

STEREOTYPE NO. 6: CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

Roma customs are often misunderstood and generalisations are often made about the Roma way of life.

Most Roma today live according to the norms of modern life. Some of them may maintain routines, rules, customs, conventions and laws of their own, while some may keep to norms derived from their community ideology. Others may embrace habits and customs of their host societies or adopt a lifestyle irrespective of origin. They all value individualism and free choice.

Many Roma, modern or otherwise, have preserved certain customs, which they have inherited through many generations. Many of these customs have become traditions, as people started to believe in their intrinsic spiritual value, despite the fact that a particular custom sometimes had only a practical (or reparatory) purpose in the beginning.

Such customs revolve around important rituals surrounding events such as birth, marriage and burial.

A birth is an important event in the life of any Roma family or community. It validates the life of the couple, is an act of purification, and the child symbolises continuity. Baptism, in its many forms, is another important event in the life of the Roma family. Sometimes it has a reparatory purpose in the life of a sick child.

Another celebration in the lives of the Roma is marriage. Marriage is usually described as an affinity between two families, sometimes two different communities. In traditional communities, early marriage is still practised. There is a very well-prepared process of choosing the family with which the parents would like to be affiliated and of ensuring that the girl is a virgin as a sign of respect for the boy's family and prosperity of the marriage itself. This practice was common in traditional communities as a rule of honour, when individual development outside the family and the community was not an option. This practice was strengthened during the time the Roma were slaves in Romania, when landowners used virgin slaves to entertain the guests. There are also numerous stories about a legendary right of feudal lords known as *ius primae noctis* or the "right of the first night", according to which the lord of the manor took the virginity of his serf on the night of her marriage. There is no actual evidence of this, but symbolic gestures used as signs of superiority and coercive social dominance over slaves and peasants, sometimes even to display male desire for sexual variety, were developed by lords in the 15th century. As a consequence, Roma parents used to marry their daughters early to avoid denigration and sometimes separation from their offspring. Today many families have given up this practice and have adapted to modern life and its values.

Roma communities also have various customs and rituals related to death and funerals that are mainly meant to lead the dead to the afterlife and protect them from bad spirits.

STEREOTYPE NO. 7: DRESS

Many people perceive the traditional clothing of Roma in a stereotypical way.

While many Roma have moved away from wearing traditional clothes, some communities preserve traditional clothing as an expression of their Roma culture. Women wear long, colourful skirts, often consisting of several layers. In some traditional communities married women wear a *diklo*, a headscarf. The colours of their clothes have different meanings. Red, for example, is the colour prevalent at marriage ceremonies. It symbolises individual sacrifice for the collective well-being. Instead of individual selfish love, traditional marriage blesses the long-term alliance between families, which become *hanamik* (in-laws).

Traditional Roma women usually allow their hair to grow long and wear it in braids. Jewellery was used not for its beauty but for its intrinsic value, as in other Eastern traditions. In times when bank accounts were unknown, carrying your valuables on your person was seen as safer than carrying it in a purse. Traditionally, acquired wealth was converted into jewellery or coins called *galbi*. Among some groups, coins were worn on clothing as adornments or even braided into the women's hair. This practice helped many Roma families preserve some of their wealth during the Holocaust, war, evictions, thefts and violent attacks against their properties.

For Roma men, there is usually no traditional attire. Since the head is regarded as the body's focal point, Roma men might draw attention to it by wearing large hats and wide moustaches. On special occasions, a good suit and a brightly coloured neck scarf might be worn.

In European countries that usually celebrate cultural diversity and freedom of expression, the traditional clothing of Roma creates uneasiness, fear and even disgust that there is a "Gypsy" nearby. Wearing traditional Roma dress means choosing to be a target of sideway glances, negative attitudes and even being refused access to public spaces. For modern Roma who are neither confined to nor defined by traditional norms, such dress has become prohibitive due to societal standards of "appropriate" dress codes.

STEREOTYPE NO. 8: PURITY

Roma are often regarded as dirty. They are accused of being allergic to soap, afraid of water and a source of disease.

These are definitely stereotypes. Many Roma live below the poverty line, often in isolated and segregated environments, with limited access to basic utilities such as water, sanitation, electricity or heating. Poor living conditions and lack of access to medical services often impact on the health status of Roma and their life expectancy,

which is sometimes considerably lower than that of the majority population.

The responsibility of reversing this situation and improving Roma living conditions lies with states and governments, which have the obligation to guarantee to every citizen access to basic social rights.

Cleanliness and purity are among the highest values of Roma traditions, both in the material as well as in the ritual sense. There are very specific rules about personal hygiene, washing dishes and clothes, and about what kind of water to use.[5] Taking a bath in a bathtub for example is forbidden, as this would mean lying in one's own dirt. The water used for personal hygiene is considered polluted and therefore disposed of at the back of the house as a way to protect the living area.[6]

A series of rules and norms concern the human body and encompass a ritual of hygiene. The body is viewed as both pure and impure: the upper part from the waist up is pure and the lower part from the waist down is impure.

The lower part of the body must be covered at all times, both for men and women. Roma women wear long skirts, never trousers or short skirts while men wear long trousers, never short, as the knees are considered the most indecent part of the human body.

The shirts and blouses are washed separately from the skirts and trousers, in different pots, especially chosen for each clothing component, upper or lower. The water used to clean the kitchen dishes is never mixed with that from pots used for washing clothes, because of purity reasons.

The virginity of the Roma girl at marriage is based on the same concept of pure and impure, symbolising the unaltered premise to procreate in a ritual cleanliness, and an ultimate respect for her family and the husband's family.[7]

The entire life philosophy of traditional Roma culture is anchored on the opposition between pure and impure, born from the pre-assumption that there is an immaterial and pre-established order and quality of things, which should not be contaminated.

STEREOTYPE NO. 9: RELIGION

Many people think that Roma do not have a religion. This is not true. Roma usually adopt the religion of the majority population that they live among, maintaining at the same time aspects aligned to their faith systems. There are Roma of Muslim faith as well as of all kinds of Christian denominations: Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Evangelistic, etc. In the Balkans and Crimea for instance, many Roma are Muslims. Nomadic Roma in France, Spain and Germany are Evangelicals.

Since the Second World War, an increasing number of Roma have joined "neo-protestant" churches. By the mid-20th century, Roma had become priests and created their own churches and missionary organisations. This contributed to improving the image of the Roma.

In recent years, Kalderash, Lovari and Sinti Roma, especially in western Europe have converted to Pentecostalism. Others have joined congregations such as Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Roma belief in the supernatural is founded on an ancient dual eastern doctrine based on the one hand on the source of goodness and light, protector of men (*Del*, "God") and on the other hand the source of evil, darkness and temptation of men (*Beng*, "Devil").

STEREOTYPE NO. 10: WOMEN

There are two main stereotypes of Roma women. The first one portrays Roma women as passionate dancers, ready to seduce any man, fiery and exotic, immoral and lusty.

This stereotypical view of Roma women dates back to the time of slavery when young Roma women were used as sexual objects to entertain their masters, gentlemen, monarchs and guests. This abuse led to the stereotype of "beautiful and hot Gypsy women" which was internalised as an apparently positive stereotype, reducing Roma women to their physical appearance. In addition, some scholars argue that those elements of Roma dancing, which are often seen as seductive, are in fact remnants of Indian temple dances, which were not intended to be seductive at all.

It has to be pointed out that traditional Roma have very strong moral values.

Premarital intercourse or betrayal of the husband are traditionally unacceptable. As a wife and mother, the Roma woman will respect her husband and parents-in-law. She takes care of the house and children. As a mother-in-law she becomes the mistress of the house, with an important role to play in the life of the family, especially of the daughter-in-law.

The second view depicts Roma women as dirty with too many, usually naked, children; being beaten by their husbands and exploited by their wider family. They marry at age 11 and have the first child at age 13.

The representation of the Roma woman as the breeding Gypsy is another consequence of Roma slavery: Roma women slaves increased the number of slaves. The number of children should not be a reason for despising a minority group. Roma women as any other have the right to decide upon the number of children they want to have. The lack of access to basic utilities impacts on their ability to provide for their children. Regarding domestic violence, it should be prevented and combated wherever it occurs. Domestic violence is not an indicator of "Gypsyness". It occurs among all types of families, regardless of income, profession, region, ethnicity, educational level or race.

Today, Roma women continue to have a lower status in society. They are subjected to discrimination in all domains of life because of their class, ethnicity, gender, status in the community, disability or age. Often, the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination make Roma women one of the most vulnerable socio-economic groups in Europe.[8]

STEREOTYPE NO. 11: CHILDREN

Since birth rates among Roma are generally higher than among non-Roma, in several countries non-Roma fear that Roma will outnumber the majority population. This fear has led to forced and coerced practices of sterilisation of Roma women, reported in countries such as Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary.[9] The Czech ombudsman estimated in 2005 that, since the 1980s, as many as 90 000 women may have been forcibly or coercibly sterilised in the former Czechoslovakia.[10] Monitoring reports on Slovakia point to more than 1 000 Roma women and girls having been sterilised during a single year in the 1980s. According to human rights activists, Roma women were still being sterilised without their informed consent in 2002. Various international human rights bodies are still calling on the government to investigate the allegations, compensate the victims, and punish the perpetrators.

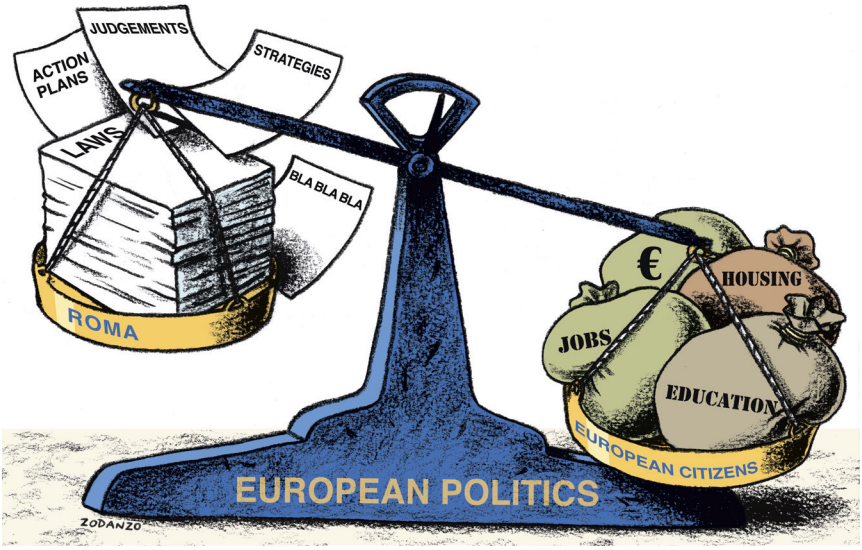
Roma children in traditional families are taught to be responsible from an early age, and their skills and abilities are highly valued by their parents. Boys accompany their fathers to work and are able to continue the family's traditional crafts, while girls help their mothers and older sisters in household responsibilities. Thus, the Roma teach their children to be independent from childhood, while the community looks after them.

While the situation of Roma children begging may result from this early emphasis on responsibility by their parents, it is a deviation from the traditional community values. Begging is clearly one area where children are being exposed to serious risks: they can be further abused or socially marginalised. Many times, begging children end up being trafficked by adults or organised criminal groups. Despite serious concerns

raised by various international organisations about the systematic violation of the rights of Roma children and their increased vulnerability to poverty, marginalisation[11] and various forms of violence[12] states have not lived up to their obligation to protect Roma children from forced labour, trafficking or any other form of exploitation that is prejudicial to their welfare.

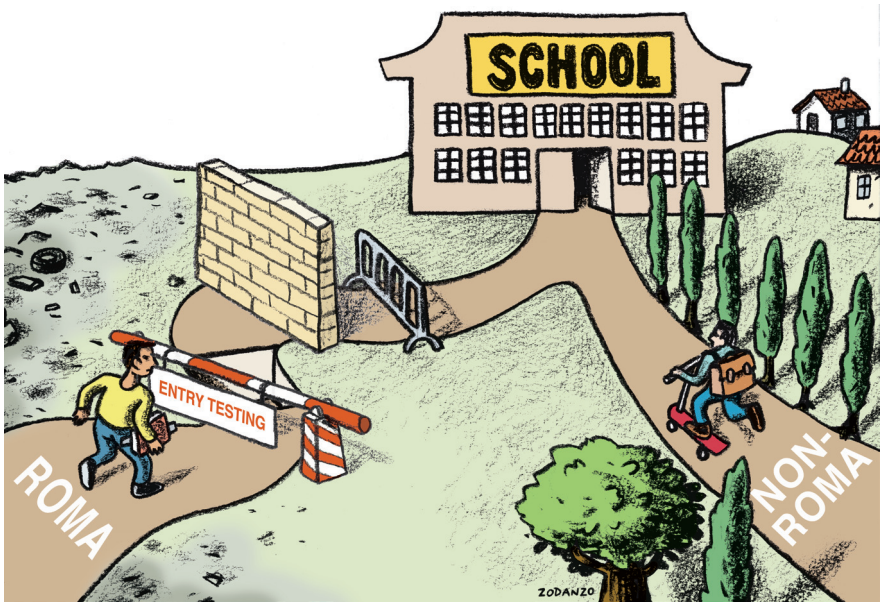
Roma children are often seen as filthy beggars or pick-pockets. Their parents do not seem to look after them well and are assumed to be ready to exploit them. Roma parents love their children just as much as any other parents. Children are adored and cherished by the whole family. The child symbolises "God" in the Roma family, and represents the continuity of the Roma. But the harsh reality in which Roma have always lived means that each member of the Roma family takes a role to contribute to the well-being of the family or community.

STEREOTYPE NO. 12: FINANCIAL SITUATION



The socio-economic status of Roma is perceived by some people to be the result of various forms of illegal businesses, based primarily on biased media reports[13] and ignorance about the Roma. In reality, many Roma live below the poverty line, due to discrimination, social exclusion and marginalisation. Still today, Roma are discriminated against and often excluded from the school system (see stereotype No. 13); they face discrimination when seeking a job, and in many countries they are segregated in geographically isolated settlements. In some cases, their situation excludes them from social protection benefits (institutional discrimination). As a consequence, many Roma today are trapped in a cycle of poverty and social exclusion that is hard to break.[14]

STEREOTYPE NO. 13: EDUCATION



Many non-Roma tend to believe that Roma do not value education. Unfortunately, many Roma children face multiple obstacles in their access to education. For Roma living in isolated settlements, the commute to school alone is a hurdle. Furthermore, many parents lack the financial means to buy proper clothes, shoes, school supplies and food for their children. Exclusion by the teachers and schools is also an issue. Many Roma children are forced to attend separate classes or "Roma only schools" because of the majority population's fear of their children mixing with Roma children. As a result, Roma children are often separated from the majority in classrooms by being placed in specific areas of the class, or in entirely separate classes. Separate classes and segregation in the classroom have been reported in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Montenegro, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Turkey, among others.[15] Roma children are also disproportionately represented in special schools, in particular schools for children with intellectual disabilities. In the Czech Republic, segregation persists despite the 2007 ruling of the Strasbourg Court in the matter of *D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic*, and the adoption of the new Educational Act, which restructured the provision of special needs education. An estimated 30% of Roma children are still learning in schools designed for pupils with mild mental disabilities, compared to 2% of non-Roma pupils.[16]

One important aspect concerning educational systems and Roma across Europe is the lack of cultural diversity in the educational system. In addition, textbooks often spread a negative image of Roma or completely ignore their role in history. And of course, Roma history is not included in the schools' curricula.

Roma ethnic identity should be adequately acknowledged, promoted and guaranteed in formal education. Elements such as Romani language, history and culture should

be present at all educational levels in order to promote and support individual self-esteem, a positive attitude and respect for cultural differences, and an inclusive and intercultural society.

The perception about Roma students and the system of education can be positively changed if the educational system takes steps to understand Roma students and their culture. Roma students will feel motivated to learn and socialise in a multi-ethnic environment where they feel emotionally and physically safe, respected and valued for both their similarities and differences.

STEREOTYPE NO. 14: EMPLOYMENT

Roma are often seen as reluctant to work and as voluntarily living on welfare rather than looking for a job. This picture is far from the reality of most Roma. There would be no point in denying that there are some Roma who prefer to live on welfare but no more so than members of other ethnic groups, including in the majority population. The crucial question, however, is not if Roma want to work but what kind of employment they can find, if any. Roma are virtually invisible in the service sector. There are almost no Roma taxi drivers, shop assistants, kitchen workers, waiters or doormen. For many it would not be conceivable to employ a Roma house cleaner, let alone a Roma baby sitter.

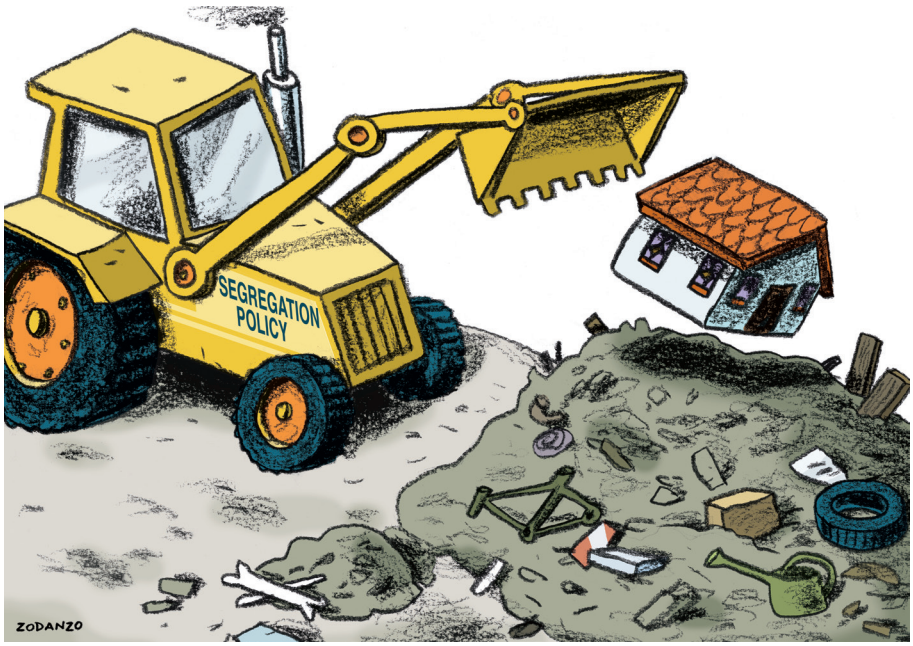
Thus the Roma remain largely excluded from the job market because of their lack of qualifications and discrimination, particularly when it comes to recruitment. According to existing data, in most European Union member states, the number of Roma declaring that they are unemployed is at least double that of non-Roma; in Italy, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, up to four to five times more Roma than non-Roma said they were unemployed.[17]

In a number of countries, Roma are denied employment on discriminatory grounds, due to their ethnicity. Patterns in Europe also show that employed Roma are more likely to face discrimination in the workplace. Discrimination also affects educated Roma whose chances to find well-paid jobs are sometimes hindered.[18] If Roma find employment then it is usually in physically demanding, often dangerous, and badly paid jobs. In many cases, transport to and from work already consumes the biggest part of their salary. Roma are hired as rubbish collectors, field hands or forestry labourers, thus in the least prestigious work places.

Improving educational levels alone will not be enough to ensure better employment of Roma. A change in attitude also has to take place on the part of the employers and of the national employment agencies. Nothing will change as long as common stereotypes about Roma are not questioned. What keeps people from hiring a Roma to do qualitative and responsible work? Many non-Roma cannot conceive of the idea of hiring (a qualified) Roma for superior positions. Employers are often unwilling to even hire Roma as contract workers, which forces them to work on the black market.

STEREOTYPE NO. 15: HOUSING

Many people seem to believe that Roma prefer to live in unhygienic housing conditions. While there are many Roma who live without running water, indoor toilets, electricity or heating, it would be hard to find a single Roma who would not like to exchange these conditions for a nice house or apartment. Many Roma live close to rubbish dumps or in isolated settlements without utilities because these are the only places where they are allowed to stay.



Unlawful forced and collective evictions of Roma are a weekly phenomenon in Europe (often not reported by the media), blatantly ignoring the obligations undertaken by European countries through the signature of international treaties.

Improving the infrastructure of Roma settlements is currently one of the top goals of Council of Europe policies. Unfortunately many governments are reluctant or slow to invest in better housing for the Roma.

STEREOTYPE NO. 16: ROMA AND SOCIETY

The Roma are often depicted as untrustworthy and unwilling to integrate into society. But when too many non-Roma people do not trust the Roma, it is very difficult to continue to desire to be part of society. "Integration" usually means the loss of Roma culture without being fully accepted by the majority population. Even educated Roma who have lived inside the majority population all their lives often face exclusion. The fear of being rejected is sometimes so present that some Roma have to hide their ethnic origin in order to continue living in society instead of on its fringes. As long as marrying a Roma or allowing one's children to do so is still a taboo for many, there can be no talk about the Roma's unwillingness to integrate. Self-marginalisation is and has been a survival strategy rather than a free choice.

STEREOTYPE NO. 17: PASSIVITY

Many people accuse the Roma of not doing anything in order to improve their own situation. This accusation concerns their financial situation as well as employment, education or housing.

It is hard to want to aspire to something if you have never seen it achieved by those around you. Many Roma, caught in the circle of poverty and social exclusion for generations, have limited their dreams and aspirations. Their primary concern and struggle is to provide bread for their family "today". Long-term expectations and plans that look beyond "tomorrow" are incompatible with their life quality. Collective memory reconfirmed by personal experience has taught many Roma that there is a "maximum" level they can reach in life and that they should not try to be equal to the *gadje*. Their interactions with non-Roma have hardly been positive and almost never on equal footing. This is why most Roma have developed a strong protection system which separates them even more from the non-Roma. The way Roma are seen and treated even in contemporary times has not changed

dramatically from the time Roma were enslaved and perceived only as work and entertainment subjects. While killings of Roma under slavery were common and not even registered, today mass violence and hate crimes against Roma are hardly recognised as racially motivated. Far-right groups often accompanied by ordinary citizens mobilise against the Roma in what they call "an act of justice" to end "Gypsy criminality".

Centuries of forced passivity and oppression make it hard to encourage individual empowerment and community leadership. Roma activists themselves face harassment and physical violence from the authorities, including by the police in some countries. Social change has to be encouraged, supported and nurtured from both sides, through the promotion of a safe environment where human rights, active citizenship and social cohesion are effectively implemented.

STEREOTYPE NO. 18: REPUTATION

In many eastern European countries, the majority population claims that the Roma tarnish their country's reputation when they migrate to other countries. Apart from the fact that reputation is not a concept used in western politics, it is the treatment of the Roma and not the way that they behave, which can be held against the states of origin. In a recent poll 70% of non-Roma said that Roma should be denied the right to foreign travel, even when all legal conditions are met.[19]

Romanians also view the Roma as tarnishing their country's international image and, hold them responsible for any major political setbacks of the country. Roma were blamed for harming the country's prospects for integration into Europe, and

for the delays in joining the Schengen Area.[20] Controversies over Romania's image escalated with the mass deportations of thousands of Roma from France back to Romania by the French Government during the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy.[21]

In September 2006 a member of the European Parliament of Roma ethnicity was victim to the racist attacks of a Bulgarian parliamentary observer. On the day when it was decided that Bulgaria and Romania would join the European Union the question arose as to whether human and minority rights are really valued in Bulgaria.

The ethnocentric models promoted by many European countries impose behavioural standards on the majority, which are not always shared by minority groups. Thus the Roma can be easily perceived as deviant, unsocial and "uncivilised". The problem is that even in situations where Roma reject their own system of values and their ethnic identity, rallying to what the majority demands, they continue to be rejected and considered as the same unworthy "Gypsies".

STEREOTYPE NO. 19: GYPSY CRIMINALITY

"Of all the stereotypes about the Roma, the social construct of 'Gypsy criminality' has had the most devastating impact upon the social status of the community."[22] Many people seem to believe that Roma are genetically inclined to commit crimes,[23] which is nonsense. Perceiving crime through the lens of group ethnicity makes it hard to avoid the trap of racism. Whenever a crime is committed the issue on which to focus is that crime, not the ethnicity of the person who committed it.

There are various arguments as to why the stereotype about "Gypsy criminality" has been perpetuated. Some link it to the Middle Ages when the Roma nomadic way of life was criminalised by the state. Later on many migratory groups were perceived as "Gypsies", being grouped together in the context of vagrancy, poverty, criminality and marginality.

Stereotyping Roma as a "criminal" or "asocial" group, as the Nazis did, was at the heart of the Roma Holocaust during the Second World War.[24] With the collapse of communism in Europe, "Gypsy criminality" took a more devastating dimension. In the wake of growing tensions and numerous violent attacks between majority populations

and the Roma, states used "Gypsy criminality" to justify the vacuum in the justice system and their own prejudices. In many of these incidents, the law-enforcement services failed to provide adequate protection and displayed their own bias against the Roma. Over-policing and police brutality toward Roma have often been justified as standard operating procedure in crime prevention.[25] This has made the Roma distrust the police and other government institutions even more and has consequently increased the gap between Roma and non-Roma citizens.

On 11 February 2005, on Bulgarian National Radio, Bulgarians openly expressed their outrage that "a Gypsy woman" could represent Bulgaria in the Eurovision Song Contest. Under pressure, Sofi Marinova had to withdraw from the competition. An Italian journalist, Matteo Legnani, was sanctioned after publishing in the newspaper *Libero* (Milan section) between December 2009 and June 2010 serious allegations and dangerously stereotyped assertions about the Roma, which resulted in violations of professional ethics and of anti-discrimination legislation.[26] In October 2013, the UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Rita Izsak, cautioned against stigmatising Roma communities as criminal, calling on the media and politicians to refrain from making dangerous generalisations on the supposed criminality of Roma.[27]

An important player in constructing the "Gypsy criminality" stereotype is the media. The media have on numerous occasions reported on "Gypsy crimes" and "Gypsy criminals". In so doing, the media have helped to justify the violence and convert victims into perpetrators. They have generalised the guilt of perpetrators to the entire Roma community and have contributed to xenophobia through biased reporting and the negative portrayal of Roma.

Politicians also play an important role in building a negative image of the Roma.[28] In the 2009 European parliamentary elections, numerous far-right political groups used anti-Roma rhetoric, including arguments about "Gypsy criminality" to win popular votes. In Hungary the far-right party, Jobbik, won four seats in the European Parliament in 2009 and 47 seats (17% of the vote) in the national parliament in 2010

using anti-Roma rhetoric.[29] In the March 2012 election campaign in Slovakia, the Slovak National Party, which is now in parliament, used anti-Roma slogans such as: "Let's not feed those who don't want to work" and "How much time are we going to lose on the Gypsies?"[30] In April 2007, the Czech Senate declined to strip Senator Liana Janáčková of her parliamentary immunity in the context of an investigation under hate speech laws for racist statements concerning the Roma. Janáčková was recorded as suggesting that problems in a Roma settlement could be resolved with "dynamite", that the Roma had too many children and that she believed they should be held behind an electric fence. She said: "Unfortunately, I'm a racist. I disagree with the integration of Gypsies and their living across the district. Unfortunately, we've chosen Bedriska, therefore they will be there, behind a tall fence with electricity."[31]

The Roma are overrepresented among persons searched and arrested by the police as a result of targeted racial profiling. The existing statistics on crime by minority groups, including the Roma, should be viewed from the perspective of risk factors that are indicative of social determinants such as low income, difficult living conditions, social exclusion, etc. They should provide information about the modus operandi of police and the judicial system and not about the criminal tendencies of vulnerable groups.

In addition, official monitoring of hate crimes in most countries in Europe is limited, and disaggregated public data on anti-Roma violence is almost non-existent.

STEREOTYPE NO. 20: THE ROMA STEAL BABIES

The myth that the Roma steal babies is centuries old and is still perpetuated today. In 2006, the Romanian press reported about a Roma woman who had kidnapped a non-Roma child. It later turned out that the woman was not Roma but Romanian. Of course this fact was not reported in the news. When Roma children are kidnapped by non-Roma, fall victim to violence or are murdered it hardly ever becomes a public issue. Confidential studies have shown that in the last few centuries, the state, the church and charity authorities have stolen Roma children from their families and placed them in institutional care. This practice can still be found in Europe today.[32]

STEREOTYPE NO. 21: DRUGS

There are Roma who deal in drugs just as there are drug dealers in every

country in the world. Drug dealing is not a part of Roma culture. When it does occur it should be regarded as yet another indicator of the hardships the Roma face when trying to enter the "normal" work market and of the resulting poverty, just as with all vulnerable groups, including those belonging to the majority population.

What is unfortunate is that the Roma are becoming increasingly drug dependent yet they do not have access to treatment or harm-reduction programmes. It is difficult to obtain accurate data on the prevalence of drug dependency among the Roma because of fear of negative stereotyping and generalisations about the Roma and because the users and their families hide the situation. There are many vulnerability factors that contribute to the use and abuse of drugs, among which are poverty; homelessness, especially in young people; child abandonment; difficult relations with both or one of the parents; legislative gaps, etc.

What do you think ? If we have convinced you, now help us to break down prejudices towards Roma!

Dosta! Enough is enough!

Chapter 3

How to plan a campaign

WHY CAMPAIGN?

The Irish author Oscar Wilde once said: "There is only one thing worse in life than being talked about, and that is not being talked about."

Yet all too often, we try to impose new measures, laws or practices on society without informing the citizens about them first.

No wonder it takes time to change their attitudes!

Campaigning is about taking people from where they are to where you want them to be. It is about getting people to see why change is necessary, how it can make things different and how it can actually be a positive thing. It is getting them to react positively. Campaigning is persuasion.

It can be persuading a lazy child to clean up his or her bedroom; or it can be persuading a whole society to adopt new habits – not smoking in public places perhaps, or driving with their safety belts fastened. Or changing the prejudices of a lifetime so that Roma people are valued as citizens and the majority population will be able to construct better societies.

WHERE TO START A CAMPAIGN?

All campaigning starts by assessing the current situation.

To be able to make progress, you need to draw up a "snapshot" of the present situation.

Commercial companies can do this through tracking sales records. Public authorities and NGOs can do it through other records such as census figures, police statistics or figures that show the number of people going through education or training, or getting into employment.

Your government may have carried out research on how the Roma are perceived in your country: this would be a very good starting point for you. Otherwise you can do your own research by simply analysing the news in the media about the Roma; you will realise that most of the time the information provided is about negative events. Maybe there is something special about the Roma that is specific to your region? Analyse that too. Have there been changes in recent years? Are there new trends? All this information is important for you to create a picture of what the situation is at present. What are the new laws, if any? Do you have any feedback on how the general public has reacted to them? Do you have any quotes from individuals that capture a mood?

All these facts are important. Both actions, campaigning and the marketing of products, begin with facts. Specialists use techniques such as Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental (PESTLE) analyses to map where they are at the beginning of campaigns. This means you have a beginning – so you have a base against which to measure the impact of your campaign. And it makes it a lot easier to decide what you should say, to whom and how.

FIVE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK AT THE BEGINNING OF A CAMPAIGN

- Where are we now? (the snapshot)
- Where do we want to be? (our aim)
- How do we get there? (our objective)
- Which way is best? (our strategy)
- How can we make sure we arrive? (our tactical plan)

All these steps will mean that our campaign is more likely to be successful, and our resources well used.

Using the snapshot

The information you gather will help you to get clear answers to some important questions:

- Who is your target audience?
- What sort of messages do they respond to? Children will react differently than adults, women differently than men, and so on.
- How do you reach them? Do they watch television? Do they read newspapers? Are they impressed by politicians? Do they admire pop stars?

Important: When it comes to Romaphobia or anti-Gypsyism, the target group is likely to be very wide, since you are trying to influence the majority. If your campaign is really going to be successful you will have to cut this large group down into the smaller components which are the most appropriate for your own country – it could be by age or social group for example.

You can then start to look at what means you have to develop the campaign.

- Do you have a budget? If you do, that is great. But be careful to spend it wisely! And if you do not, do not despair. You can do a lot, even with no budget.
- Do you have a staff of people to work with you? Properly run campaigns need a lot of enthusiastic and motivated people.
- Do you have any friendly allies – such as other NGOs or prominent people who are working with the Roma? Always remember that you can count on the Council of Europe and the European Commission!
- Do you have any already existing material – such as well-written fact sheets for journalists, or pre-edited radio reports? The Council of Europe has developed some material which can be useful.

Developing your objective

The best objectives to follow in life are SMART.

That means they are:

- Specific
- Measured
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Timed

In personal life a poor objective would be:

"I think I'll give up smoking."

A good one would be:

"I will cut my cigarettes down to one a day by 28 July and stop smoking completely by 1 October."

For the Roma campaign a poor objective would be:

"We want to stop people from insulting the Roma and give them better opportunities."

A better one would be:

For governments: "By December we want to pass new laws in parliament to stop anti-Roma discrimination in the workplace. By mid-July next year we want employers to have these standards in place, and use them in a positive way."

For NGOs: "By December we want to reduce hate speech against Roma by systematically denouncing it. By mid-July next year we want people in our environment and local community to be conscious of the fact that stereotypes are wrong and create opportunities for them to know who the Roma really are."

DEVELOPING YOUR STRATEGY AND TACTICS

You now have a good idea of the present situation and a goal. How are you going to do it?

The strategic plan is very important. It involves a great deal of thinking and needs to be constantly revised.

The tactics are the day-to-day means by which you carry out the strategy.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

When it comes to the strategic plan, you are a general in charge of discussing your own campaign. The basics are the target audience, which we have already covered, a decision on the messages you will give to them and then the route you will take to deliver this.

A public relations plan would ideally cover a number of months and would put all the different steps down in a timeline so that it is easy to follow. It gives a date when work should start on different stages of the project, who will do them and the deadline.

Time spent planning will save you time in the long run, because it will be easier to control what is happening, and will give you flexibility if needed.

Tip: a campaign is a huge amount of work, but it becomes more manageable if it is chopped into small pieces. How would you eat an elephant? By cutting it up, of course!

Tip: keep your planning very neat and clear, and make it easily available to everyone in your team. Make sure there are precise deadlines for the different sectors of the work and that there is a name next to each project.

Tip: keep meetings very short and very to the point to leave people time to get on with the actual work, the TACTICS.

THE TACTICS AND TOOLS

The first and most powerful weapon in your armoury is your message. This can also constitute your slogan.

The slogan of the Dosta! campaign is:

Go beyond prejudice – Discover the Roma

This slogan was decided after brainstorming sessions which included communications experts and Roma people. It is targeted at a non-Roma audience.

You may also have sub-slogans and messages that you can use in your own countries for different parts of the campaign. To make sure they are effective they must be:

- Simple
- Clear
- Memorable

The advantage of slogans and messages is manifold. You can use them on posters and material; they will give you a recognition factor with the public, and they will serve as "sound-bites" – that is the small quotes that journalists love and which can be used by experts in interviews.

Tip: think of providing a sheet of messages for your politicians or for allies in NGOs so that they can use the same slogans again and again in press interviews – it really gets the message across to the public!

CAMPAIGN PRODUCTS

Dosta! already has a good number of products that have been put at your disposal. These include:

- brochures
- posters
- a television spot in different languages
- a radio spot in different languages
- interviews with VIPs
- the Dosta! website with the different manuals and guides that can be given out to the public and to the press
- the CD *Music beyond prejudice*

And to complement:

- fact files for journalists, with facts and figures about the Roma in your country/community; success stories about what has already been achieved; some comparisons with other countries;
- a list of experts including Roma who would be willing to be interviewed by journalists. These could include ordinary Roma people, who could talk about the reality of their daily lives. (Make sure you have their consent before giving out names!);
- a website of your own. It does not necessarily need to be extremely professional: it must be easy to use, accessible to any computer and not require specific technology or software to be installed (for example, try to avoid flash effects). Interactive websites will allow you to collect material from visitors who will be able to post comments and photos, suggest forum topics, etc. A good strategy for improving the visibility of an Internet site is to include the function "e-mail this page" to enable people to forward your homepage through e-mail;
- a monthly electronic newsletter with the latest on the campaign. Make it short, chatty, informative and bright, rather than long and dry;
- promotional material such as t-shirts, a bookmark or a mug that can be given as gift or distributed at public events. Bracelets are particularly fashionable at the moment, and ribbons on clothes get people curious about the campaign;
- a photo gallery is a good addition to a website, and you can also use it for postcards and other material. Make sure the pictures are not stereotypical, and that you have legal consent to use them from the people depicted;
- the Dosta! website includes a page of testimonials from people who support the campaign. You should look for non-Roma people who are willing to act as "friends" to your campaign, especially people who are well known and willing to lend their face (and time!) for free.

It is no use having the most beautiful poster in the world if the people in the street never see it.

It is no use having a powerful television spot if it is never seen.

It is no use putting money and resources into a website if you never have any clicks.

Tip: make sure that you put a lot of emphasis on how to market and distribute these products. Work out where the best outlets would be. Which poster sites will be seen by most people? Can you get the national television network to show the Roma television spot at primetime?

FOLLOWING UP ON YOUR WORK

Public relations work is never finished. Monitoring the effects on your target group is a very important part of the whole process. It allows you to see what worked, what could have gone better and what needs to be tweaked so that it can work next time. Try to get as many hard details as you can about the effect the campaign is having. Perhaps you can carry out an opinion poll to see if people have heard of the campaign and what their reaction is. You can see what sort of reaction you are getting from journalists – and how much coverage you have had.

The most important thing about campaign products is to USE THEM.

And finally…

SOME IDEAS YOU MIGHT LIKE TO TRY

- an open air festival with Roma and non-Roma artists in a park;
- sponsoring Roma people to give lessons to small children in school and facilitate meetings with their parents;
- a puppet show for children about the Roma;
- producing postcards to distribute for free in restaurants and bars;
- organising a special debate in parliament;
- getting a local television station to include a Roma character in the most popular television show;
- having posters all over town on 8 April, Roma Day.

CREATING A PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY

SOME DEFINITIONS

Aim – what we are trying to achieve; long-term aspirations.

Objective – the measurable steps by which we can judge that our aim is being achieved.

Strategy – the "how": the rational for all our actions that helps create a master plan to guide and explain our activities.

Tactics – the actions by which we implement our strategy and achieve our aims and objectives: events, press work, film, etc.

TECHNIQUES FOR WORKING OUT STRATEGIES

SWOT–TOWS: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats. (From the work of Professor Heinz Weihrich, San Francisco University)

Brainstorm using the four areas, then analyse to find a strategy. This can be a combination of different aspects.

WT – minimise weaknesses and threats simultaneously. This could include re-trenchment, joint ventures or liquidations. "Cutting the losses"

WO – Minimise weaknesses by maximising opportunities. For example, bringing in new skills or technology.

ST – Use strengths to minimise threats; using technical or financial resources against competitors.

SO – Use strengths to maximise opportunities. The most desirable strategy.

REACHING THE MEDIA: THE PRESS OFFICE "TOOLKIT"

Good media officers work with a "toolkit" of different techniques. The first and most important is personal contact, making networking a primary skill for the press officer. A database is essential to keep up those contacts. Other parts of the kit include media campaigns, press briefings, press kits and releases.

Here is a brief run-down of the techniques.

Personal contact

It is much easier to get a journalist interested in your story if you already have a relationship of confidence with him or her.

Media officers spend the bulk of their time cultivating contacts. This means the very basic social skills of keeping up a good working relationship: calling the journalist from time to time with new information (even if it is not for immediate publication), sharing coffees and lunches, perhaps introducing them to experts in your group or people who would interest them, while at all times respecting their hectic lives and treating them with courtesy, respect and efficiency.

Time invested in journalists pays off a thousand fold when you have an important story for them – they will be much more inclined to listen to you attentively than if you telephone a newspaper "cold". Building these contacts can take many years, but nothing really replaces a relationship of trust between a journalist and their "source". This is one of the reasons why journalists are so concerned about protecting their "sources".

Networking

Networking is the strategy "par excellence" to ensure optimum coverage for events.

Get to know journalists. Find journalists' guides. Track down information on different media via the Internet. Some good sites include www.world-newspapers.com.

Learn about the different approaches that journalists take (news angles). Read papers and magazines to see who is writing about what, and what sort of style they are using (is it a front page story? A feature? Are they interviewing experts, or is it an analytical article?) Listen to the radio and watch television. What are the major topics? How are they being shown – as part of the news programme, in specialised reports, in interviews?

Never underestimate the power of card swapping as a great way of collecting people's names. If you are the sort of person who finds it difficult to fit names to faces after an event, make a note of anything that strikes you about the person's physical appearance – the crazier the better – but do not note their clothing, unless you are certain they will never change their clothes!

Expand your knowledge of the different styles in European countries. Try the International Journalists' Network (www.ijnet.org) or the European Journalism Centre (www.ejc.nl), which provides profiles of different countries. A good reference is *Hitting the headlines in Europe: a country-by-country guide to effective media relations*.

If you work in a specialised field, get to know the journalists who are covering your area. Follow their work and see what they are interested in so that you can decide how to tailor your stories to them.

Use the specialised media. General reporters in the mainstream media will get story ideas from magazines and websites aimed at special interest groups: they will notice your story if it is carried by these specialised outlets.

Build a database

(from *Hitting the Headlines in Europe*[33])

The technical possibilities for computerising your communications are manifold, and you should be able to find a package to suit your needs and your budget. Before parting with your hard-earned cash, though, make sure you are investing in a product that is right for you. If you do not have the necessary technical expertise in the team around you, you should make sure you are getting good advice. You do not necessarily need the latest, most powerful package on the market. Your equipment has to meet your needs and your budget.

Most office packages have a database, with Microsoft Access predominating. These are generally perfectly adequate to keep anything from 10 to 10 000

names, and can be designed to allow a flexible system. Think logically about what you want before you begin work on the database. Do you want to be able to send to regional groups separately? Do you want a flexible system that allows you to "pick and mix" your targeted journalists according to themes, or geography? Will you need to use the database for traditional mail shots, or e-mail and faxing? How much detail will you need? What can you do without? Be sure of your needs before you start and you will save a lot of grief afterwards.

Take the case of a press officer for a campaigning group on human rights issues, based in Manchester in England, but wanting to send information to the whole of western Europe. Some of the stories are aimed only at the British press – indeed some are only for the regions. But sometimes she will want to target continental Europe. Her ideal database will allow her to pick out individual journalists, to make selections according to where journalists are based, and to pick and choose different names.

If your work involves a number of different issues, the system can be designed in an even more sophisticated way, knitting in fields for themes such as green issues, animal rights, human rights, etc.

The database will then allow you, for example, to pinpoint the names of UK journalists interested in green issues, and working in Brussels. This is especially useful if you are likely to be travelling and organising press events in different countries.

The database currently used by the authors was designed in Microsoft Access and has contact details for nearly 8 000 different journalists and 5 000 different media. It covers 62 countries – from Armenia to Uzbekistan, passing by Japan and the Vatican, and can categorise journalists into 41 different areas of interest.

You should think of your database as living and changing. The media world changes almost every day, and you need a system that will cope with this. Your software needs to be flexible, and you need to be diligent about fostering your contacts and changing your database when they change. Do not expect them to get in touch with you!

And a few final points – some of them common sense, but none the less worth remembering:

Spellings – be careful with name spellings. This might be obvious in an English-speaking context, but if you are dealing with Russians or Bulgarians for example, you need to be aware that their names may have different spellings when transliterated from Cyrillic. You also need to decide what to do about accents. To ensure your database is workable, everyone must use the same system of spelling. You can decide on your own system, but basically everyone using the database has to know the spelling rules and stick to them. If you are using one of the Latin languages, such as French, you will need to decide whether to include the accents.

Germanic languages – such as German itself, Danish and Norwegian, use umlauts and accents such as ö and Ä which can be rendered into English spelling with the addition of an e (for instance Rössle becomes Roessle).

E-mail addresses – if you are sending out by e-mail, you need to make sure that the message will reach the newsdesk even if your particular contact is away from the office. You do not want your story to get lost while it waits for someone to come back from their holidays. Always double up with a newsdesk address if the message is not purely personal.

Faxes – E-mail is already predominant worldwide, but you might find that you need to use faxes. Make sure your fax is going to reach the right person – you may even try and find out where the fax is physically located, so that you are sure your material will reach the right place at the right time.

WRITTEN MATERIAL – PRESS RELEASES AND BRIEFING PACKS

Press releases

Press releases are simply a way of catching a journalist's attention. They should never replace the work of maintaining personal contact.

Releases need to give information clearly and succinctly. Think like a journalist! What do you need to know?

- What is happening?
- When is it happening?
- Where?
- Who is involved? What are their titles and the exact spellings of their names? Always use their full names for the first mention and Mr… or Ms… for the second or third.
- What is the aim?

Always give a contact number of someone who knows the event fully and can be reached at all times.

Video/audio news releases

These are the equivalent of a press release for television/radio stations. A video news release will include footage provided free of copyright that the television station can use to illustrate a story. These could include reconstructions: for instance, a story about a conference on bioethics could be told with pictures of babies, Dolly the cloned sheep and the interior of a science lab. There may also be interviews with experts that the journalists can use.

An audio news release will provide similar material for radio – interviews with key experts, background noises appropriate to the story or music.

Press packs

Press packs are very useful for campaigns or other big events. They include background information that can be helpful to journalists gathering information for their story. Packs can be sophisticated, if you have a lot of money, with photos and glossy text. Or they can be simple and basic. The important thing is that they are a quick way of providing journalists with simple information.

Use language that is clear and present your ideas succinctly. Use bullet points for separating information in a useful way.

Use statistics and comparisons. Always say where you got the information, so that it can be shown to be accurate.

Remember to include your contact number on each page of the press pack.

Include practical information – how to get to the event, a map, details on journalists' accreditations.

PRESS BRIEFINGS AND PRESS CONFERENCES

Press briefings and press conferences can take different forms, and you need to think about the best way to convey your information.

Formal press conferences (seated, in a "theatre" atmosphere) are best if:

- you have a very important person with little time to meet individual journalists;
- you have a large number of journalists;
- you are working in different languages and need interpretation;
- you want your story to be covered as widely as possible;
- your story is not difficult to understand or controversial;
- your story is very important (be sure about this).

They are not good if:

- you have a restricted number of journalists;
- you have a number of different people available for press interview (no press conference should have more than three speakers);
- your story is "soft" or is complicated to understand;
- your story is politically sensitive and you might be exposed to hostile questioning;
- you want your story to have "exclusivity".

Organising a formal press conference

You will need:

- a large enough hall (easy to find in Strasbourg and Brussels); use your own or try a local cinema or theatre; or look for a representative governmental building, which will show that your authorities are committed to helping Roma;
- a raised platform, with your own logo as backdrop (for television);

- microphones, for the speakers, and a "wandering" mike for questions from journalists;
- a functioning system if you need interpretation, trained interpreters and technicians.

Beforehand

Look carefully at the timing of the event before you book it. Be helpful to journalists by scheduling it in the morning so they can work on the story before their deadline. Make sure it does not clash with other major events.

Decide which audience you are targeting.

Write a brief press release with all the practical details.

Call journalists to brief them on the story and gauge their interest.

Prepare any press packs or additional material you need to hand out.

Is is difficult to tell how many journalists will turn up to your event. With some experience you will get a feel for their level of interest, and be able to plan accordingly. Be prepared, however, to be flexible.

During and after

Make a note of the journalists who attended the press conference, their contact numbers and the issues that interested them.

Use the information to refresh your database. Monitor what was written or broadcast.

Follow up contacts where necessary (but do not overreact).

Informal briefings

The standing mike

Very useful for VIP visits. Have a mike ready for when VIPs comes out of meetings for a "meet the press" session. The VIP should deliver a key message and then take questions before moving on to the next leg of the visit.

Informal briefings

Informal briefings are very useful if:

- you want to speak to a limited number of journalists;
- you do not need interpretation;
- you want to give a "friendly" impression (for instance, this is useful for giving out controversial or sensitive information);

- you want to ensure that only certain journalists are targeted (exclusivity);
- you are briefing on "softer" stories.

You will need:

- a small room, a coffee bar, drinks, comfortable chairs;
- written material for the journalists;
- an interviewee or interviewees who are prepared to speak in an open and friendly manner.

The media strategy

Every event or important campaign needs to include intricate forward planning. The best is to work very well in advance – magazines and television documentaries often need at least six months to prepare, although you may not always have the luxury of time.

In planning you will need to decide what kind of event you want to have and how to target it to the written press (including newspapers, magazines and specialist publications) and the electronic media (tailoring it to radio and television).

You will need to determine the best moment to contact journalists (not too early, or they will forget and obviously not too late). What material will you give them? Does the material need to be tailored differently to different media and different audiences (for example, you may need to think of a "tabloid" treatment that includes humour and human interest, and a "quality" angle which gives a more serious slant).

Think hard about what sort of product you need for the "toolkit". And remember: be FAST, FLEXIBLE and FOCUSED.

Monitoring

Monitor the results of your work. How much coverage did you get? Was the coverage an accurate reflection of your message? How can you refine it for next time?

GAMES AND ROLE PLAY

Scenarios for practice press conferences

1. The Roma singer Lola has been arrested by the police on suspicion of dealing drugs. You are part of her public relations team, and need to face the press.

2. You are promoting new measures to help Roma people get access to housing, and want positive coverage in the press.

Exercise one – Planning creativity

1. You are a television company launching a new "reality" show – a bit like Fame Academy. It invites non-professionals to sing before experts, to find the next big pop star. You will be travelling around the main towns listening to "talent", and will follow the story as it unfolds. How will you publicise your new show?

2. You are a group of activists against animal cruelty. You want to launch a Europe-wide campaign to stop people from wearing fur. How will you design the campaign for maximum impact?

3. You are the agents for an ageing singing star who wants to re-launch his career after a long break for health reasons. How are you going to remarket him?

Exercise two – Creating events

1. You are the creative team in a public relations agency which has been approached by an international airline to run a campaign for them. The airline wants to get more customers in central and eastern Europe, but they also want to show that they are ethical and concerned about human rights and the environment. What special events would you plan for them?

2. You are public relations consultants working with the local football club. The team wants to be known internationally but is worried about the image of their country abroad. What sort of actions would you suggest?

3. You have just opened a restaurant in your country and want to attract international visitors. What publicity ideas might work?

Exercise three – Communications strategies:

1. The story: a major conference on cybercrime scheduled for September.

Aim: To bring together European countries to fight cybercrime.

Issues: Hacking and computer fraud, child sex sites, racist sites, how to control the Internet. Guests: Bill Gates of Microsoft; Prime Minister Adrian Natase of Romania; a "survivor" who was victimised by the child sex trade.

People involved: the computer industry; the media; police forces, including Interpol; lawyers and academics.

Format: a two-day conference.

2. The story: a campaign for healthier eating in schools.

Aim: to combat a growing trend towards child obesity in Europe by persuading schools to serve healthier food to children.

Issues: children are becoming increasingly overweight and less healthy in western Europe. Experts think this is because they are tempted to eat "junk" food, especially at school. Your campaign wants to stop junk food being sold, prohibit drinks machines in schools and encourage children to eat more healthily. You will need to think up some good ideas of how to do this. It involves schools in the whole of Europe, so you will need to target your audience.

Format: a number of expert studies that show obesity levels and the differences in approach in different countries. Two conferences held in different parts of Europe bringing experts together.

3. The story: You are a member of a bikers' club, and you have recently found out that the European Commission are trying to ban big motorcycles because they think they are dangerous.

Aim: to stop the Commission from passing the law and save the big bikes.

Issues: the law is wrong in your view. Big bikes are not dangerous because you need to be skilled to handle them. All European countries have driving tests to ensure that novice drivers do not get to handle big bikes. You think the Commission should be looking at training for young bikers instead. Banning the bikes would eliminate a lot of pleasure for a lot of people. It would mean the end of important classic European models such as the Triumph – so it would adversely affect manufacturers.

Format: events, rallies and lobbying.

Notes

1. The term "Roma" used at the Council of Europe refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.

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15. Publication of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (2012), *Human Rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, p. 124, available at: www.coe.int/t/commissioner/source/prems/prems79611_GBR_CouvHumanRightsOfRoma_WEB.pdf

16. Ibid, page 18

17. "The Situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States – Survey results at a glance", European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and UNDP, 2012, p. 17. Report available at: http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf

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29. Read more about the concept of "Gypsy criminality", as re-introduced by Jobbik in the political discourse in Hungary, in *The Gypsy "menace": Populism and the New Anti-Gypsy Politics*, edited by Michael Stewart, Organisation of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), 2012.

30. "Slovak nationalists incite anti-Roma hatred" https://romasolidaritynews.wordpress.com/2012/02/18/slovak-nationalists-incite-anti-roma-hatred-2/.

31. Article about the statements made by the Czech Senator, Liana Janáčková, available at: www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/podrany-family-seeks-legal-advice-regarding-czech-senator-liana-janackova.

32. See www.errc.org/article/stealing-children-institutionalising-romani-children-in-italy/1027.

33. Burton C. and Drake A. (2004), *Hitting the headlines in Europe: a country-by-country guide to effective media relations,* The Institute of Public Relations, London and Sterling.

The human rights of the Roma are violated every day in Europe. Hate speech and physical attacks against Roma are increasing; Roma job seekers are refused employment; Roma children are too often segregated, refused places in school or placed in separate classes or schools for mentally disabled students; life expectancy for the Roma is 10 to 15 times lower than the rest of the population; Roma families suffer from precarious housing conditions or are victims of forced expulsions without alternative solutions. Mainly due to ignorance, Roma communities are often considered marginal and backwards, which means they are more likely to suffer from social exclusion.

The Roma should actually be considered as the first truly European people, since they "broke through" European borders long before the existence of international treaties or conventions. They arrived on the European continent as early as the 13th century and travelled all around Europe, enriching their culture with the culture of the countries they visited while enhancing European cultural heritage.

Not only should the Roma have their human rights secured and protected, as any other citizens, but they also need to be recognised as a precious part of European culture. As the guardian of human rights in Europe, it is the Council of Europe's duty to make sure everyone's rights are respected.

Dosta! is an awareness-raising Council of Europe campaign which aims at bringing non-Roma closer to Roma citizens by confronting stereotypes and prejudice, fighting anti-Gypsyism and hate speech, as well as by promoting Romani culture, language and history. The Dosta! campaign toolkit is conceived to help you contribute to the campaign objectives and provides you with necessary advice and materials to challenge anti-Gypsyism through effective action at the local level.

In this field the Council of Europe is supported financially by the Government of Finland. You too, pass on the campaign message: "Go beyond prejudice: meet the Roma!"

For more information: www.dosta.org

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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