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Strasbourg, 27 August 2021

**12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue**

**with Roma And Traveller<sup>1</sup> civil society**

**“Teaching the history of Roma and Travellers”**

**Strasbourg, 2-3 November 2021**

**Concept Note**

## **BACKGROUND**

The Council of Europe has developed key European recommendations and instruments in the area of history teaching, setting clear methodological principles on the objectives of history teaching in a democratic and pluralist Europe.

The Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on history teaching in 21st century Europe (Recommendation (2001) 15) is broad in scope and can be considered a landmark document. This Recommendation covers the general aims of history teaching, the European dimension, syllabus content, learning methods, initial and in-service teacher training, the use of new information and communication technologies and the misuse of history. The recommendation is unconditional in its condemnation of the latter, two examples of which are abuse of the historical record and interpretations of history based upon the "us" and "them" dichotomy, regarded as incompatible with the values of the Council of Europe. The Recommendation clearly positions history teaching in the development of a responsible, active citizen, respectful of differences in the framework of the rule of law and the fundamental values of human rights and democracy. It considers also that history is a main factor for reconciliation, acknowledgement, understanding and mutual trust between people.

The Committee of Ministers later reaffirmed the principles and guidelines laid down in this document in its 2011 Recommendation to member states on intercultural dialogue and the image of the other in history teaching (CM/Rec(2011)6).

In the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma<sup>2</sup>, the member States of the Council of Europe agreed to take measures to foster knowledge of the culture, history and languages of the Roma and understanding thereof. Also Article 12 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS. No. 157)<sup>3</sup> states that “Parties shall, where appropriate, take measures in the fields of education and research to foster knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities [...] and shall inter alia, provide adequate opportunities for teacher training and access to textbooks”. However, the Committee of Ministers has on several occasions recognized the fact that the longstanding historical presence of Roma and

<sup>1</sup> The term “Roma and Travellers” is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term “Gens du voyage”, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

<sup>2</sup> [Committee of Ministers \(CM\(2010\)133\) The Strasbourg Declaration on Roma](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Committee of Ministers \(1994\) The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](#)

Travellers' in Europe is still not adequately acknowledged in European societies and educational systems and that their contribution to the common European cultural heritage is underestimated in both formal and non-formal education, and by the public in general. Therefore, the Council of Europe in 2020 complemented the earlier 2001 and 2011 recommendations with a more specific Recommendation on the Inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials (CM/Rec(2020)2). This is a historical step towards acknowledging publicly and thoroughly the longstanding historical presence of Roma and Travellers as an integral part of all societies throughout Europe, shaping their past, present and future.

An essential part of the educational process is mutual knowledge about the common history that Roma and Travellers share with all non-Roma in Europe, taking into account also different periods of time and the longstanding historical persecution, especially the horrific crimes committed against Roma and Travellers during the Second World War. Until recently, many member states have by and large ignored this fact in their existing teaching materials. Because of the continuation of assimilative policies and on-going discrimination it took decades after the Second World War for Roma and Travellers to go public with their yet unheard testimonials of the racist persecution by the Nazis and their allies, and to start demanding justice, recognition and reconciliation as victims of the Holocaust and other forms of persecution.

Roma and Traveller pupils have the right and real need to know their own history and all non-Roma pupils have the right and real need to know the history of Roma and Travellers. Educational reforms such as the reform of national curricula and production of new quality teaching materials for different educational levels are the most important tools for questioning traditionally biased views of minorities. These reforms are essential for developing fairer, more dynamic and balanced multicultural societies that strive for real societal change for vulnerable groups. Quality history teaching is fundamental for developing the common knowledge base which is a pre-requisite for children's intercultural competencies, development of natural and positive interethnic relations, and understanding between different Roma and Traveller groups and other citizens. It is therefore absolutely necessary to change the earlier biased, objectifying, unbalanced and distorted images of Roma and Travellers and their history, culture and way of life as part of the development of new national official canons of history.

Evidence has shown that in most European countries the old canon of history teaching and historical research, as well as the functioning of many museums and cultural institutions, have been inertly racist towards Roma and Traveller communities. This may partly have been caused by the lack of interest and representation of Roma in the relevant institutions, as well as existing power imbalances regarding both the making and documenting of history and researching it. However, many Council of Europe member States are now ready for active corrective measures required for producing more multifaceted, modern and above all a more equal view of the history of Roma and Travellers, based on the very latest research findings. A wider understanding of lifelong learning and what modern quality teaching materials and rich learning environments consist of challenges also different non-formal educators to develop new Roma and Traveller learning affordances for both children, youth and adults. In practice this means creating more inclusive basic exhibitions, new participative components for Roma and Traveller-related work such as the co-creation of mobile and online exhibitions, more immersive museum visits and cultural events which can all function as laboratories and catalysts of social change.

On 22 January 2020, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted the *Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion 2020-2025*<sup>4</sup> to combat antigypsyism and discrimination and to support equality. The plan reinforces the progress made under the Council of Europe's Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019), which had also tackled anti-Roma and anti-Traveller prejudice, discrimination and crimes with innovative models for local-level solutions and inclusive policies.

In keeping with the Council of Europe's mission and expertise, the Strategic Action Plan focuses on the following three key priority areas, all of which are relevant from the point of Roma and Traveller history teaching, Holocaust remembrance and Dialogue meetings. These priority areas are:

- combating antigypsyism and discrimination in its diverse forms by raising awareness of the Organisation's standards and instruments, fostering their application and implementation and supporting access to justice;
- ensuring the effective participation of Roma and Travellers in decision-making processes; and
- improving implementation of national and local level Roma inclusion strategies in the areas of inclusive education and local policies (including effective public services).

In order to take stock of the current situation concerning the inclusion of Roma history and Roma holocaust in the school textbooks, and to contribute to a better understanding of the topic and to stimulate different institutions working in this field, the Council of Europe Secretariat commissioned in 2020, on behalf of the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues<sup>5</sup> (ADI-ROM), an analytical report on the Representation of Roma in European Curricula and Textbooks<sup>6</sup> and two analytical reports on the representation of Roma in major European museum collections<sup>7</sup> (Louvre and Prado) which analyse the way Roma are depicted in their art collections.

The first part of the 12th Dialogue meeting will concentrate on relevant Council of Europe recommendations and on-going intergovernmental co-operation in the field of history education. The second part of the meeting will present inspiring examples of how some member States have already included Roma and/or Traveller history teaching and Holocaust remembrance into their national school curricula and civil society proposals on how this inclusion could be implemented in practice. The meeting will also discuss how different stakeholders can support the development and revision of history teaching materials and methods. Civil society and institutional participants will also present and discuss concrete examples of how Holocaust education and remembrance can be organised among children, youth and adult citizens and how the educational and wider societal inclusion of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, arts and language of Roma and Travellers should take place.

The 12th Dialogue meeting will offer an opportunity to discuss the current Roma and Traveller history teaching and teaching material situation and to make proposals for their review, revision and modernisation in compliance with Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2 on the introduction of the history of Roma and/or Travellers into school curricula and teaching materials. The Ad hoc Rapporteur of the 12th Dialogue meeting will

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<sup>4</sup> [Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion \(2020-2025\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues \(ADI-ROM\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> Council of Europe (2020) Analytical Report on the Representation of Roma in European Curricula and Textbooks. Available at <https://repository.qei.de/handle/11428/306>

<sup>7</sup> Council of Europe (2020) The representation of Roma in major European museum collections – Volumes 1- 2 (the Prado and the Louvre). Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/publications>

develop conclusions and a set of recommendations and/or examples of good practice that should be implemented by Council of Europe member States, different institutional actors and by Roma and Traveller civil society organisations themselves.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE 12TH DIALOGUE MEETING

The 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society will be devoted to teaching the history of Roma and Travellers, with special focus on the inclusion of the history of Roma and Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials.

The meeting aims to:

- **Provide** an opportunity for joint reflection between representatives of Council of Europe bodies and members of the Council of Europe Secretariat as well as representatives of Roma and Traveller civil society;
- **Review** the situation of teaching Roma and Traveller history in different member states by analysing recent developments in the field of history teaching and Holocaust remembrance;
- **Identify and propose** appropriate measures and tools to support the teaching of the history of Roma and Travellers and their contribution to the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, arts and language;
- **Provide** an overview of and **discuss** relevant Council of Europe recommendations and curriculum development instruments as well as practices to support curricula and teaching material reforms leading to the inclusion of the history of Roma and Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials;
- **Highlight and exchange** examples of good practice related to the teaching of Roma and Traveller history and culture , and the development of school curricula, teaching materials and other learning resources.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The involvement of Roma and Traveller communities at every level of policy formulation, implementation and follow-up is a key feature of the Council of Europe's approach to Roma and Traveller inclusion. Whilst recognising that the responsibility of Roma and Traveller integration lies first and foremost with the member states, the Council of Europe considers that other actors, such as local and regional authorities, civil society and international and national organisations, also have an important role to play. As complementary actors, they can facilitate the directions of Council of Europe actions through constructive and mutual dialogue.

Civil society has the necessary expertise and knowledge about the situation of Roma and Travellers on the ground and can contribute to assisting member States and the Council of Europe in meeting their commitments in the field of Roma and Traveller history teaching and the development of appropriate teaching materials. The role of Roma and Traveller civil society is to provide support and be the bridge between Roma and Traveller communities and curricula designers as well as teaching material producers.

The 12<sup>th</sup> Dialogue meeting will serve as a consultation platform for assessing the successes and challenges in teaching the history of Roma and Travellers. It will also serve as a forum for Roma and Traveller civil society organisations and other stakeholders to improve their

knowledge, exchange experiences and share best practices, plan future co-operation activities and identify possibilities for promoting measures most relevant to them in the processes of curricula reforms and making of teaching materials.

## PARTICIPATION

25 civil society participants will be chosen through an open call disseminated via the public website of the Council of Europe's Roma and Travellers Team. Participants will be representatives of Roma and Traveller organisations, including representatives of youth and women organisations, and experts from international, national and local civil society organisations. Priority is given to representatives who hold specific expertise in the area of Roma and Traveller history teaching and Holocaust remembrance and have participated in the processes of history curricula reform, production of relevant Roma and Traveller history and Holocaust Remembrance teaching materials, trainings and events, or have engaged in relevant teacher training work and participated in different kinds of evaluation and research..

Participants must be competent to work in English or French or Romani, the working languages of the meeting.

**Participation is subject to the existing travel, public health and sanitary restrictions applicable in France and/or other countries during the time of the 12<sup>th</sup> Dialogue meeting (2-3 November 2021).**

## DATES AND VENUE

The meeting will take place 2 November 2021 from 09:30-15:30 and on 3 November 2021 from 10:00-15:00 via the KUDO conferencing system.

12<sup>th</sup> Dialogue meeting – working and background documents:

- Agenda of the 12<sup>th</sup> Dialogue meeting
- Concept Paper of the 12<sup>th</sup> Dialogue meeting
- [Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion \(2020-2025\)](#)
- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2020\)2 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to the member states on inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials](#)

## OTHER COUNCIL OF EUROPE INSTRUMENTS AND TOOLS

- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2011\)6 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to the member states on intercultural dialogue and the image of the other in history teaching](#)
- [The Strasbourg Declaration on Roma \(CM\(2010\)133\) by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to the member states](#)
- [Recommendation CM/Rec \(2001\)15 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to the member states on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe](#)
- [Resolution 2153 \(2017\) by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to the member states on promoting the inclusion of Roma and Travellers](#)
- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2009\)4 by the Committee of Ministers to the member states on the education of Roma and Travellers in Europe](#)

- [Recommendation Rec\(2000\)4 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to the member states on the education of Roma/Gypsy children in Europe](#)
- [Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities \(FCNM\)](#)
- [The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\) General Policy Recommendations \(Compilation of ECRI's General Policy Recommendations \(CR \(2018\)16\)](#)
- [Council of Europe Factsheets on Roma History](#)
- [CAHROM Thematic Reports](#)
- [Right to Remember - A Handbook for Education with Young People on the Roma Genocide](#)
- [The representation of Roma in major European museum collections: Volume 1 – The Louvre \(2020\)](#)
- [The representation of Roma in major European museum collections - Volume 2 – The Prado \(2020\)](#)
- [The Representation of Roma in European Curricula and Textbooks](#)