Teaching Romani:
the Curriculum Framework for Romani and
the European Language Portfolio

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Report by

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Opening of the seminar

Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni (Director General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport, DG IV) welcomed participants to the seminar organised by the Language Policy Division and introduced by Philia Thalgott. She noted that the project to develop a Curriculum Framework for Romani and related versions of the European Language Portfolio had now reached its final stage. She expressed the Council of Europe's gratitude to Finland for its generous funding of the project and to the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) for its central involvement. She also expressed her appreciation that the Vice-Chair of the Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers, Mr Ian Naysmith, was present and that the seminar would be addressed by representatives of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and of UNESCO, as well as by the Executive Director of the European Center for Modern Languages.. The seminar was a further Council of Europe contribution to UNESCO's International Year of Languages.

Ms Battaini-Dragoni recalled that the Council of Europe has been involved in Roma issues for almost four decades. The education of Roma children is a constant priority and the Council of Europe has organized workshops and seminars and produced teaching materials on Roma history and culture. Recent work has been guided by Recommendation 2000 (4) on the Education of Roma/Gypsy Children in Europe, which highlights the need to ensure that curricula and teaching materials take account of the cultural identity and history of Roma children and the importance of involving representatives of the Roma community in the development of teaching materials. The present project provides exactly the kind of follow-up that the Recommendation envisaged and supports the ERTF's policy of promoting Romani as a crucial marker of identity. The Recommendation specifically states: "In countries where the Romani language is spoken, opportunities to learn the mother tongue should be offered at school to Roma/Gypsy children." The important role played by their first language in children's affective and intellectual development cannot be overestimated. The challenge now is to ensure that the Curriculum Framework for Romani is implemented widely and effectively – a process that will be supported by the versions of the European Language Portfolio that have been developed specifically for children and adolescents learning Romani[1]. Ms Battaini-Dragoni expressed her sincere thanks to those who prepared the Framework document and the ELPs and all those who took part in the piloting phase. She concluded by emphasizing that the human rights dimension of the education of Roma children remains at the centre of the Council of Europe's concerns.

Ambassador Irma Ertman (Permanent Representative of Finland to the Council of Europe) said that she was pleased to be at the seminar not only because Finland has provided financial support for the project but because it has made minorities and disadvantaged groups a priority in the human rights field. Education has been identified as a crucial factor in social inclusion by all the major actors in Europe, including the Council of Europe, the European Union and the OSCE.

Ambassador Ertman noted that when Finland joined the Council of Europe almost 20 years ago there was little understanding of the protection and promotion of minority languages, especially Romani, and the Roma themselves preferred to keep their language as a secret medium of communication among themselves. Since then knowledge and attitudes have developed on both sides. Romani textbooks are now publicly available, and this year the Finnish National Board of Education published a practical guide for schools and municipalities on the integration of Roma pupils.

Ambassador Ertman said that the Finnish authorities attach particular importance to the fact that the Curriculum Framework for Romani has been developed in collaboration with members of the Roma community and experts on Roma culture. This is very much in the spirit of the Council of Europe's core values, and it should also help to ensure effective implementation. It is a sad fact that the educational achievement of Roma children falls below the national average all over Europe. From the time they start school all children should have confidence in their own abilities and potential. Teaching the mother tongue, in this case Romani, can contribute greatly to children's sense of empowerment, which should lead to better results.

Ambassador Ertman emphasized the importance of addressing the issue of Roma inclusion on all fronts – education, health, housing and employment. The Council of Europe has done and continues to do much valuable work in all these sectors. Welcoming the recent interest of the European Union in this domain and looking forward to the development of concrete Europe-wide policies for Roma inclusion, she saw this

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[1] The Curriculum Framework for Romani, the two versions of the European Language Portfolio and the Handbook for teachers are available in Romani.

seminar as a contribution to educational inclusion: new tools are now ready and it is time to disseminate them to member states so that we get maximum return on our initial investment.

Ambassador Ertman concluded by suggesting that as the present project is nearing completion, new proposals for projects in this field should be planned and considered: small but significant steps will eventually bring about the full implementation of human rights for all.

Miranda Vuolasranta (Vice Chair, European Roma and Travellers Forum; ERTF Ambassador to the European Union) thanked the Language Policy Division for its interest, commitment and expertise. The Curriculum Framework for Romani demonstrates what can be achieved with the full and active participation of Roma. The Romani language reflects Roma unity in linguistic diversity and is central to Roma identity and culture. The Curriculum Framework for Romani will support the development of Romani as a European mother tongue. The Roma people and the Romani language have still not been recognized in all parts of the continent as part of Europe's cultural heritage. The Framework should help to remedy this and bring Romani the same recognition as other European mother tongues. Ms Vuolasranta expressed her gratitude to David Little and Barbara Lazenby Simpson for developing the Curriculum Framework for Romani and the European Language Portfolios for Roma children and adolescents (including the Handbook for teachers). She appealed to the official representatives present at the seminar for their support in implementing the Framework and ELPs, and she proposed that the Framework should be recommended to Council of Europe member states. Ms Vuolasranta concluded by thanking Finland for its financial support and those countries that had piloted the Framework for their commitment.

Ian Naysmith (Vice-Chair, Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers/MG-S-ROM) began by thanking the Language Policy Division for inviting him to the seminar. He explained that although the Council of Europe has long been in the forefront of campaigning for the rights of Roma in Europe, the decision of the Committee of Ministers to set up MG-S-ROM in 1995 was an important milestone as it was the first Council of Europe body responsible for reviewing the situation of Roma on a regular basis. Members of the committee – permanent and non-permanent, Roma and non-Roma – are appointed by the member states, and the ERTF has a permanent seat at MG-S-ROM meetings. Romani is one of the working languages of MG-S-ROM, and recommendations and main documents are translated into Romani. This helps to ensure Roma participation in the fullest sense.

Mr Naysmith noted that MG-S-ROM has recently revised the Recommendation on the Education of Roma Children in Europe, which now explicitly mentions the Curriculum Framework for Romani. The Recommendation will be discussed by the Steering Committee for Education early in 2009, and he hoped that it would then be adopted by the Committee of Ministers. He also noted that the Romani language plays a central role in the development of strategies for Roma inclusion. Roma communities need to access to information and access to education in their mother tongue; there is thus a need to develop educational materials in Romani, which should be shared across national borders.

Mr Naysmith concluded by paying tribute to the work done so far in developing the Curriculum Framework for Romani and pledged MG-S-ROM's continuing support. Language is an important part of our identity and culture. In the worst of times language difference can be a source of conflict and division; in the best of times it can be a bridge between cultures and a medium of dialogue and mutual understanding. As a pan-European language, Romani has a huge potential to become that kind of bridge. But if the language is not taught in schools and children do not have the chance to develop their language skills, then that will not happen. That is why this work is so important.

Introduction to the seminar: *David Little*

The Council of Europe was established to defend human rights, parliamentary democracy and the rule of law. In pursuit of that goal it promotes awareness of a European identity that is based on shared values. It also attaches great importance to language learning as a means of preserving linguistic and cultural identity, improving communication and mutual understanding, and combating intolerance and xenophobia. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was developed to support Council of Europe policy by providing "a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe" (CEFR, p.1). The Curriculum Framework for Romani was developed in accordance with the same policy and is designed to perform the same function for Romani.

The CEFR is based on an action-oriented approach that may be summarized as follows. We use language to perform communicative acts which may be external and social (communicating with other people) or internal and private (communicating with ourselves). When we perform communicative acts we use strategies to make the most appropriate and effective use of our linguistic resources. Language learning is, or should be, a kind of language use. The action-oriented approach thus implies a task-based approach to language teaching and learning.

The CEFR defines language proficiency at six levels arranged in three bands: A1 and A2 (basic user), B1 and B2 (independent user), C1 and C2 (proficient user). We can use these common reference levels as a starting point for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of learning materials and activities, and the assessment of learning outcomes.

It is fundamental to the CEFR's action-oriented approach that we use language to do things. Thus the successive proficiency levels are defined in terms of what learners can do in the second/foreign language(s) they know or are learning. By defining proficiency levels for five different language activities (listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production, writing) the CEFR allows us to take account of partial competences and the fact that we are usually stronger in reception (listening and reading) than production (speaking and writing).

The common reference levels comprise more than scales of "can do" descriptors; the behavioural description of second/foreign language proficiency is complemented by scales of linguistic competence/language quality and strategy scales. But as a first step the Curriculum Framework for Romani limits itself to scaled descriptions of communicative behaviour, using the CEFR's action-oriented approach and common reference levels to develop a resource for educational planners, curriculum/ syllabus designers, textbook writers and materials developers, teachers and teacher trainers, and examiners.

The following design considerations underlay the development of the Framework:

- It should be user-friendly – not too long and largely self-explanatory.

- It should be of immediate practical use to educational planners, syllabus designers, textbook writers, teachers and examiners.

- It should be graded so that it reflects progression in learning.

- It should be based on the first four levels of the CEFR (A1, A2, B1, B2).

- It should include the skills of listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing.

- It should address the needs of three categories of learners: those for whom Romani is the medium of education; those who may hear Romani at home but have not developed a productive proficiency in the language; and those for whom Romani is not a language of the home.

- It should cater for learners in three age groups: 3-6 years, 6-10 years, 10-14/15 years.

The first four levels of the CEFR may be characterized as follows:

- Level A1 – This is the first identifiable level of proficiency. In listening and reading learners can recognize names, familiar words and basic phrases; in spoken interaction and spoken production they can use single words or simple phrases to respond to questions or to give basic information on very familiar topics; and in writing they can produce very short text, add labels to pictures and (in the case of younger children) copy from a model provided by the teacher.

- Level A2 – Learners can interact and react in a basic way to familiar everyday situations. In listening and reading they can understand phrases and sentences used in familiar and everyday contexts such as frequently heard stories and familiar types of text (e.g. a timetable); in spoken interaction and spoken production they can exchange simple information and provide simple explanations; and in writing they can produced short simple notes, messages and letters.

- Level B1 – Learners can interact in a range of different situations and can cope with more challenging though still routine tasks. In listening and reading they can understand the main points in clear speech and written text that use high-frequency language; in spoken interaction and spoken production they can engage in unprepared conversations and give an account or tell a story; and in writing they can produce simple connected text on a familiar topic.

- Level B2 – Learners are much more aware of language and have the confidence and ability to control communicative situations. In listening and reading they can understand extended speech and complex argument; in spoken interaction and spoken production they can engage actively in discussions and give clear detailed descriptions and arguments; and in writing they can produce clear text on a wide range of topics providing description and argument, indicating personal attitude, etc.

The Curriculum Framework for Romani is based on eleven themes grouped in five categories: personal identity (*Myself and my family*; *The house/caravan and its activities*); daily life (*My community*; *At school*; *Food and clothes*); reflecting experiences (*Festivals and celebrations*; *Travel and transport*); general/educational relevance (*Time, seasons, weather*; *Nature and animals*); and heritage and culture (*Roma crafts and professions*; *Hobbies and the arts*). Romanipe is clearly more than a "theme"; it is relevant to all other themes and essential to learning and understanding the code for living that is expressed in part through the Romani language. Thus the descriptors for Romanipe provide a reference point for curriculum designers, materials developers and teachers. They should ensure that learning Romani includes learning the "code for living" and will help to remind/inform professionals who are distanced from the "code'" or who are not Roma themselves.

The grid for each theme is followed by a checklist of "I can" descriptors that refer to classroom activities and can be used to record progress in learning. The checklists played a central role in the design of the two European Language Portfolios (ELPs) that were introduced at this seminar. The ELP was conceived by the Council of Europe in parallel with the CEFR. To date almost 100 ELPs have been developed in Council of Europe member states and accredited by the Council of Europe's ELP Validation Committee. The ELP is a tool to support language learning, promote plurilingualism, and develop intercultural awareness and intercultural competence. It has three obligatory components. The language passport provides an overview of the owner's communicative proficiency in second/foreign languages, including his/her summative self-assessment, at a given point in time. The language biography facilitates the learner's involvement in planning, reflecting upon and assessing his/her learning process and progress; "I can" checklists play a central role. And the dossier offers the learner the opportunity to select materials to document and illustrate achievements or experiences recorded in the language biography.

Piloting the Curriculum Framework for Romani: reports

Bulgaria : *Lilyana Kovacheva, Hristo Kyuchukov*

Lilyana Kovacheva explained that there are 800,000 Roma in Bulgaria and 90% of them speak Romani. Because children must learn two alphabets (Cyrillic for Bulgarian and Roman for Romani), Romani is introduced only in grade 2. The Bulgarian Ministry of Education is preparing a curriculum for grades 5–8; Bulgarian foreign language experts with experience of the Bulgarian ELP have been invited to participate. One problem is convincing colleagues of the importance of Romanipe. In due course the programme will be available on the Ministry of Education's website. Lilyana Kovacheva asked participants whether the Romani language is obligatory in any national education system. In Bulgaria Romani is optional, which allows the government to avoid implementation, whereas if it were obligatory the necessary funding would be found.

Hristo Kyuchukov reported on a study that he carried out at kindergarten and primary levels using instruments based on English language tests developed in the United States. He found that children aged 4–7 learn the structures of Romani but their production is very poor; also that there is no significant improvement between the ages of 7 and 11. However, he said that the methodology he used is open to question, so further research is necessary. Hristo Kyuchukov noted that he used the Curriculum Framework for Romani only in the second year of his study; he was unable to comment on the Framework's effectiveness as he did not have time to use it fully. He noted that there are evident problems in learning Romani as a mother tongue since it is extra-curricular and not obligatory. Also, Bulgarian teachers have a negative attitude to the learning of Romani, which they believe has a detrimental effect on the learning of Bulgarian. Teaching in Bulgarian schools is generally very teacher-centred, so the introduction of more interactive methods will require significant investment in teacher training and the development of support materials.

Czech Republic: *Helena Sadílková*

Helena Sadílková explained that in the Czech Republic Romani is not taught at primary level but is taught in secondary schools and at university. There are three Romani dialects in the country and levels of use are

variable. The piloting of the Curriculum Framework for Romani focused on secondary and university levels. A meeting was held of all teachers of Romani in the country and the project plan was presented to them. Themes were selected and activities were designed. Romani teachers do not have any pedagogical formation and the CEFR is unknown to them, so one recommendation that emerges from the piloting is that methodological support is needed. In general the piloting was successful: adult students were more motivated and their learning was more successful; the presence of a few native speakers in classes was found to be very helpful.

Helena Sadílková reported that in parallel with the piloting she conducted a research project that tested learners' receptive and productive competence in Romani in June and October 2008. In June 350 learners were tested in 50 schools and their performance was graded on a four-level scale. 38% had a good receptive and productive competence and 25% had almost no competence. The results for October have not yet been fully analysed.

Helena Sadílková noted that there are Romani speakers in the Czech Republic whose proficiency exceeds B2. What is more, classes bring together learners of different dialects and different competence levels, which poses a major challenge to materials developers and teachers. She concluded by emphasizing the importance of bilingualism for the development of Roma children. Because this is not clear to either the ministry or teachers, a public debate is needed on the importance of teaching Romani as mother tongue. She noted that Roma themselves sometimes have an ambiguous attitude to the language, so information on the importance of linguistic development needs to be spread in the Roma community.

Sweden: *Mai Baier, Angelina Dimiter-Taikon, Iren Horvatne*

Mai Baier said that she sees the Curriculum Framework for Romani as a means of guaranteeing the quality of Romani teaching in Sweden, where the municipalities are responsible for providing mother tongue classes. Since the Framework was first made available, in June 2007, two conferences have been held for Romani teachers and resource people. The CFR was translated into Swedish. A team of five teachers examined the Framework in detail, after which classroom activities and materials were developed. These will be published in Swedish, English and three Romani dialects. The next step is the development of teaching materials (textbooks) in three dialects across the 11 themes of the Framework.

Iren Horvatne, a teacher with 14 years' experience, said that in the pilot project she focused on two Framework themes, *Myself and my family* and *The house/caravan*. She found that the Framework opened a new perspective on children's learning needs; for example, she began working on the theme *Myself and my family* by using the first person pronoun, and this raised children's pride in speaking Romani. They talked about this and slowly became convinced of the importance of using their language. After years they are speaking Romani, whereas before they didn't know a single word. Now the aim is to achieve higher proficiency levels.

Angelina Dimiter-Taikon said that when she and her colleagues started to think about how to continue beyond the pilot phase, they decided to introduce different dialect groups to each other. They expect that Roma in other countries will say, "If they can do that in Sweden, then we can do the same in our country."

Iren Horvatne said that the materials created during the pilot project made learners much more active and helped them to acquire a richer vocabulary. They had opportunities to listen to, speak and write Romani, and they went home keen to tell their parents what they could do. The pilot project connected the topic *Myself and my family* with traditional Roma stories in the different dialects. The materials prepared are for all learners at all proficiency levels.

Mai Baier said that she found the work of the teachers involved in the pilot project very impressive. It has been decided not to create textbooks at A1 level because the teachers have produced such excellent ideas. At higher levels it is important for learners to have interesting texts so that they continue to learn Romani but also develop the skills needed for education in general.

Discussion

In the discussion that followed these reports the following points were made:

☐ Hristo Kyuchukov said that in Bulgaria children from Romani-speaking communities understand and speak Romani but their vocabulary appears to be poorly developed. The Curriculum Framework for

Romani provides a basis for addressing this problem. Pupils' interest grows enormously after they have started to learn Romani. Even Bulgarian children want to learn Romani with their Roma friends.

☐ Jan Heros noted that in the Slovak Republic there are two secondary schools at which Romani is obligatory.

☐ Iren Horvatne said that in the Swedish pilot project the theme *Myself and my family* was a way of opening the door for learners. Their attitude to school changed because they could speak in their own language. Having a teacher who speaks Romani is very important to Roma children because it raises their self-esteem and can lead to more regular school attendance.

☐ Helena Sadílková said that children participating in the Czech research project were very interested in the tests (presented to them as competitions) and were proud to show that they were able to get good scores. Regular teachers expressed puzzlement at the increased engagement of children who were involved in the research project.

☐ Stefania Kulaeva explained that Roma children in Russia do not speak a majority language, which puts them at a serious educational disadvantage. If they meet a teacher who can speak Romani it is usually an untrained person, which is a further instance of inequality. Efforts are being made to inform teachers about Romani and teach Russian to Roma children. Many of the Roma children in Russia are already completely fluent in Romani but can't read or write it.

European Language Portfolio for learners aged 6–11: *Barbara Lazenby Simpson*

As David Little explained in his introduction to the seminar, the European Language Portfolio was conceived in parallel with the CEFR as a tool to support language learning, promote plurilingualism, and develop intercultural awareness and intercultural competence. From the beginning we intended to develop versions of the ELP as a way of mediating the content and ethos of the Curriculum Framework for Romani to teachers and learners.

The three parts of the ELP are closely interconnected. The language passport is where the owner records his or her developing linguistic and cultural identity and overall language learning progress. The language biography is the "engine" that drives learning: it helps learners to identify learning targets and assess learning outcomes, to reflect on their individual learning styles and preferences, and to capture their own emerging attitudes to language and culture. And the dossier is a place to keep work in progress and examples of learning outcomes; it begins as an empty space that is gradually filled as learning proceeds.

In the ELP for learners of Romani aged 6–11 the language passport prompts learners to think about their identity. On page 4 they attach a picture of themselves and record their name and where they live. This immediately makes the ELP a personal document. Other information required on this page can be supplied at a later stage, as learners engage with different themes in the curriculum – *Myself and my family*, *Food and clothes*, *The house/caravan*, *Hobbies and the arts*. The same is true of page 5, which invites learners to summarize their experience of language in the world around them. The language passport also focuses on intercultural awareness (page 8) and encourages learners to take pride in being Roma (page 9, "Things I would like to tell other people about my culture and my way of life"). This latter page should be added to for as long as the ELP is used. Finally, on pages 6 and 7 the language passport allows learners to maintain a record of their progress against the proficiency levels of the CEFR. It is a good idea to date entries on these pages in order to create a retrospective timeline for learning.

The language biography is designed to motivate learners. Page 11 encourages them to think about learning and about themselves as learners. It is a good idea to enter information on this page after each cycle of learning (the page will need to be renewed when there is no more room in the boxes). Page 12 is used, with the teacher's help, to set targets for the next phase of learning. At the end of each learning cycle learners and their teacher look at the relevant "I can" checklists, which reflect the 11 themes of the Curriculum Framework for Romani, to see whether they have reached their targets. Simplified to make them easier for young learners to understand, the "I can" statements are categorized by CEFR level and skill – listening, speaking (spoken interaction and spoken production), reading and writing. Teachers can use the checklists to plan a learning cycle, find ideas for classroom activities, check what has been covered by the end of a phase of learning, and identify "gaps" in teaching/learning. Pupils can use them to identify what may be learned about a particular topic or theme, set their own learning goals or targets, review what has been learned, and record personal progress in learning. It is unlikely that a single learning activity or cycle of learning will focus on just one checklist, because there are many interconnections between the different

themes as the Curriculum Framework for Romani itself makes clear. For example, if pupils have worked on a project entitled "An important festival or celebration in my family or community", they may be able to record learning achievement on five checklists: *Myself and my family*, *Festivals and celebrations*, *My community*, *Food and clothes*, *The house/caravan and its activities*.

It is a good idea to have a "portfolio day" at regular intervals, perhaps every two or three weeks, that follows these steps:

1. The teacher directs pupils to the page(s) in the ELP relevant to what has been covered in recent classroom activities.

2. If necessary with the teacher's help, the pupils read the relevant "I can" statement(s).

3. Teacher and pupils discuss the statement(s) and confirm that the pupils can perform the tasks described.

4. The pupils colour in the relevant stars in the checklists and are praised for their achievement.

By using the language biography in this way learners develop an awareness of what they need to learn, come to understand how they learn effectively, begin to appreciate that learning involves many different activities, see visual evidence of their progress (the coloured stars in the checklists), and are motivated for further learning.

The dossier has a contents page to help pupils organize their work, a "word wall" for collecting vocabulary on a particular topic (this page can be copied and used many times over), and a frame for planning a story, designed to help maintain the Roma storytelling tradition. As noted above, the purpose of the dossier is to provide a space where pupils can keep samples of their work – for example, plans for stories, written text, labelled drawings, poems or rhymes, word games, certificates, e-mails, postcards and letters. It can also be used to store learning resources for future use – for example, word lists for particular topics, sample sentences that illustrate grammatical structures, definitions of words or phrases, and frames or scaffolds that can be used to plan oral or written text. From time to time learners should be encouraged to review their dossier and decide what should be retained and what can now be discarded.

It is important to remember that the ELP is not a book of forms to be filled in; a single ELP page may take two or more years to complete, and each statement on every page of the ELP can be turned into a learning activity. Owning an ELP has proved to be an important source of motivation for many learners; but at the same time the teacher is free to work with the ELP so that it fits his or her programme of learning (in Ireland some teachers have found the ELP the most liberating thing they have encountered in their careers).

Discussion

In discussion the following points were made

☐ Hristo Kyuchukov expressed concern that the ELP might be seen as an unserious, "gypsy" way of teaching/learning, especially when mainstream teachers and school managers are not open to interactive approaches to teaching and learning.

☐ Adrian March pointed out that Roma children are mobile, so the transferability of the ELP from one school context to another is potentially very important.

☐ Miranda Vuolasranta said that the Curriculum Framework for Romani and the accompanying ELPs should be seen not as the end of a process but as the end of the beginning.

Workshop task

Working in small groups, the participants used the checklists and the Teacher's Handbook (*Using the European Language Portfolio for Romani*) to identify a number of different themes that could be used for a particular learning task, specify the level of teaching (A1, A2, B1, B2), and suggest how a learning task, or longer cycle of learning, could be built around specific statements in the checklist descriptors selected.

European Language Portfolio for learners aged 11–16 - *Barbara Lazenby Simpson*

In this presentation Barbara Simpson highlighted the differences between the primary and lower secondary ELPs for learners of Romani and showed how the ELP can help develop good learning practices, contribute to the development of cultural pride, and support the maintenance of important cultural and historical aspects of Roma life and heritage.

In the lower secondary ELP the language passport fulfils the same functions as in the primary model, but in ways appropriate to adolescent learners. For example, page 4, on which the learner enters personal information, is designed to develop awareness of names as part of Roma heritage and help learners to understand that it is possible to learn new language and information by performing simple tasks. Pages 5 and 6 provide two ways of summarizing communicative proficiency and experience of language in use, the former very simply and the latter in relation to the self-assessment grid in the CEFR. Learners record their progress in Romani (pages 8 and 9) in the same way as in the primary ELP. Pages 10 and 11 are concerned with thinking about cultures, and learners should return to them at the end of each phase of theme-based learning (*Myself and my family*, *The house/caravan*, *Roma crafts and occupations*, *Festivals and celebrations*, etc.). By thinking and writing about different aspects of Roma life, they should come to a fuller understanding of the importance of tradition and heritage. Page 12 provides them with an opportunity to talk in terms of similarity and difference about experiences they have had in other places, or with people from other places.

As the engine that drives learning, the language biography begins with a page that focuses on "Things I have done and what I would like to do in the future". This page may be visited at any time but is particularly relevant to four themes: *The house/caravan and its activities*, *My community*, *Roma crafts and occupations*, *Hobbies and the arts*. It is designed to encourage learners to think about the possibilities that exist for their future lives and how these might be achieved. Page 15 is concerned with developing good learning skills: if we understand how we learn best, then we can use our strengths to deal with our weaknesses. Learners should return to this page at the end of a cycle of learning or an extended learning activity, thinking about and recording how they learn. On page 17 learners identify learning targets at the beginning of a cycle of learning, returning to the page at the end of the cycle to record the outcome. As this page is gradually filled with targets and achievements it becomes an important source of motivation for further learning (it will, of course, be necessary to renew the page at regular intervals). Finally, the checklists in this ELP are specified in greater detail than in the primary model: learners can record their progress in mastering each "I can" task at three levels.

The dossier of the lower secondary ELP has a contents page and four other pages designed to support the learning of Romani. Page 43 supports the planning of stories and reinforces the importance of the Roma oral tradition by encouraging learners to collect stories so that they can be retold in the future; page 44 provides a "word wall" that learners can use to organize the new words they learn; page 45 helps learners to organize a brief record of the stories and riddles that they and others bring to class; and page 46 comprises a frame for thinking about, planning and organizing written text. The dossier can be used to store word lists for particular topics, samples of written text, information about relevant websites, plans for stories, examples of letters and e-mails, useful expressions and phrases, word definitions, and so on.

The ELP for lower secondary learners of Romani is designed to help learners think about themselves as members of a community, as learners in general and language learners in particular, as young people with future potential, as participants in a history and culture that reach far back into the past, and as carriers of that history and culture into the future. We believe that the Curriculum Framework for Romani and the ELP support the learning of Romani in ways that will automatically support the preservation of Roma culture and community.

Discussion

☐ Adrian Marsh drew attention to the material produced in the UK by the Traveller Education Services.

☐ Philia Thalgott proposed that the Council of Europe website could host a specific section to be used to exchange information.

☐ Miranda Vuolasranta argued that the ELP provides an excellent basis for developing new participatory approaches to learning. At present the ELPs and teacher guides are available in English and one Romani dialect. It is now necessary to arrange for the translation of the Curriculum Framework for Romani and the two ELPs into different Romani dialects and relevant national languages (translation into national

languages is necessary in order to gain official acceptance). David Little suggested that ideally there should be bilingual versions of the ELPs, in the different national languages and the locally dominant Romani dialect.

☐ Lilyana Kovacheva said that Bulgaria has a state-funded centre for the integration of minority children through education, which may support translation of the Curriculum Framework and ELPs.

☐ Bashkim Ibishi (Kosovo[2]) offered to organise the translation of the Curriculum Framework for Romani into Albanian and Serbian as soon as possible and bring it to the attention of those charged with revising school curricula.

☐ Philia Thalgott pointed out that the Council of Europe relies on the ERTF to promote, transmit and distribute the Curriculum Framework and the ELPs. She noted that those who commission translations must take responsibility for their accuracy; also that formal permission to make a translation should be sought from the Council of Europe[3] (one of the reasons being that this avoids the problem of having competing translations for a similar language variety).

☐ Florin Fleican said that the biggest challenge in implementing the Curriculum Framework and the ELPs will be teacher training. In particular, the ELP will not work unless it is explained in detail to teachers.

☐ Angelina Dimiter-Taikon indicated that the draft CurriculumFramework for Romani had already been translated into Swedish and that it would be updated to accord with the revised final version.

Policy initiatives

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and Romani: *Dieter Halwachs*

There are two instruments in the framework of European treaties for minorities: the Framework Convention for National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which allows European states to specify which languages they wish to protect in their territory as regards the use of these languages, including education and the media. Ukraine and Romania are the latest countries to ratify the Charter, which is now in force in 23 countries. Charter countries report every three years on the situation of regional or minority languages in their territory and a committee of experts monitors the country reports. The committee visits a country, meets NGOs as well as government officials, and makes recommendations to the Committee of Ministers. If approved the recommendations are transmitted to the country in question and published on the Charter web site (which provides information about the status of Romani in the Charter states). Linguistic minorities can submit their own report to the Council of Europe, but the Charter cannot interfere with national law or force countries to follow a particular course of action; it can only evaluate whether obligations incurred under the Charter are being fulfilled. Romani has a special status under the Charter as a non-territorial language. In principle the use of the Curriculum Framework for Romani can be encouraged by the Charter Committees of Experts to promote the teaching of Romani; obligations under the Charter may facilitate implementation of the Framework and the ELPs for learners of Romani.

UNESCO – "Mother tongue matters: local language as a key to learning": *Noro Andriamiseza*

UNESCO's global mandate includes a particular concern for marginalized populations, and it develops policy guidelines, strategy documents and position papers to emphasize the importance of mother tongue-based bilingual/multilingual education as a means of promoting educational inclusion and improving the quality of learning.

Ms Andriamiseza's presentation highlighted key findings from the publication *Mother tongue matters: local language as a key to learning*, which includes four case studies of bilingual/multilingual programmes using mother tongue as languages of instruction: 11 out of 13 local languages plus French in Mali; more than 430 out of 820 vernacular languages in Papua New Guinea; Quechua and Spanish in Peru; and Spanish and

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[1] *"All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full*
[2] *compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo."*

[3] www.coe.int/lang - Section Minorities and Migrants / Romani / Translation

English in the United States. Students in these bilingual/multilingual programmes are characterized by the following principal educational outcomes:

- Their overall academic achievement and their achievement in mathematics are superior to those of students in the monolingual second-language system.

- Their achievement in the second language is at least as high as that of students in the monolingual second-language system.

- They acquire additional linguistic competences in their first language.

- They participate more actively in the learning process and feel more confident about learning.

Participants were reminded that 21 February is International Mother Language Day (UNESCO) and 26 September is the European Day of Languages (Council of Europe).

Planning for the future

European Centre for Modern Languages – Project Proposals: *Waldemar Martyniuk, Executive Director*

The ECML was founded in 1994 as an Enlarged Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe and currently has 34 member states. It is supported by the Austrian authorities and its work is managed by a secretariat and overseen by a Governing Board comprising one representative from each member state. Its mission is to support the implementation of the Council of Europe's language education policies, promote innovation and facilitate reform in language teaching and learning, develop networks of experts, and disseminate good practice.

The ECML works via four-year medium-term programmes in which projects of four and two years' duration are coordinated by teams of international experts. Participants in projects are nominated by national nominating authorities and are expected to participate in the development of international networks and function as national multipliers. Project results are published and distributed free of charge as books and/or CD-ROMs; they can also be downloaded from the ECML website. The current medium-term programme (2008–2011) comprises 20 projects in four thematic areas: evaluation, continuity in language learning, content and language education, and plurilingual education. The ECML is open to proposals for cooperation involving Romani; the first step would be an exploratory meeting in Graz.

How can the Council of Europe tools be implemented in specific national contexts? (plenary discussion)

- Reminding participants that we are currently in the decade of Roma inclusion, Joe Sheils wondered how this is impacting on the Romani language. He also wondered whether the Roma Education Fund can support the implementation of the Curriculum Framework for Romani and the ELPs for learners of Romani.

- Philia Thalgott presented a summary of the 11 responses she had received to the questionnaire that was sent to participants in advance of the seminar:

  - In two countries Romani is not taught in the educational system; in one country it is included in the mainstream; in five countries it is taught in fewer than eight schools; in two countries it is taught in between eight and 15 schools; and in one country it is taught in over 200 schools.

  - In one country there are between 90 and 200 pupils/students learning Romani at school, in five countries there are between 400 and 900, in two there are over 1,000, and in one there are over 25,000.

  - In seven countries there is no training, or almost no training, for teachers of Romani; in one country there are alternative forms of training; and in three countries training is available.

  - Four urgent needs were identified: teacher training (7 respondents); learning materials/textbooks (6); new curricula (2); support at policy level (2).

  - Respondents thought the Council of Europe could support the teaching and learning of Romani by making recommendations on mother tongue education; offering teacher training; providing

consultation with specialists; supplying persons and material to support public debates on the teaching and learning of Romani; facilitating the exchange of information, teaching materials and personnel; supporting the establishment of networks; supporting the implementation of the Curriculum Framework for Romani and the ELPs.

☐ In the autumn of 2008 a meeting was held in Belgrade that brought together the countries that formerly made up Yugoslavia. One day was devoted to discussion of the standardization of Romani for those five countries, and experts have identified themselves who are prepared to work on this project. There are plans to open a centre for Romani language and literature in Skopje, and to establish a working group in 2010 to train 20 teachers of Romani in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The underlying intention is to promote Romani as a mother tongue within the educational system. Mai Beijer noted that Sweden intends to produce materials in the dialect of Romani in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

☐ Bashkim Ibishi reported that two years ago Kosovo adopted a policy for the integration of Roma, following which the Ministry of Education has constituted a group to develop a school curriculum for Romani. The Roma community is very engaged, and Kosovo looks forward to working with other countries to acquire expertise, especially in the area of teacher training. Joe Sheils noted that the Language Policy Division is organizing a seminar on language education in Kosovo in March 2009.

☐ Several participants pointed out that implementation of the Curriculum Framework for Romani and the ELPs will require financial support. Joe Sheils reminded them that the project was in principle ended and that any financial support would be subject to further external funding.

☐ Ulrike Pawlata said that the newly established Competence Centre for Plurilingualism of the University of Graz is prepared to organize seminars in collaboration with the ECML and to launch a project to implement the Curriculum Framework for Romani in Austria.

☐ Adrian Marsh said that in Turkey local communities act as multipliers. It is not possible to take the Curriculum Framework for Romani and the ELPs into the national educational system, but there might be regional cooperation with countries where there are Turkish Roma.

Planning for the future

☐ Susanna Lehtonen said that in 2010–2011 Finland will prepare a new core national curriculum, which can take account of the Curriculum Framework for Romani and the ELPs for learners of Romani. From a Finnish perspective it would be good to have materials at three levels to cover the whole of basic education.

☐ Barbara Simpson suggested that it will be much easier for teachers to understand how to use the ELPs if they are accompanied by appropriate teaching/learning materials. A first step towards this goal might be to review currently available materials and identify those that are harmonious with the ELP. After that it might be possible to establish a network of people in different countries who would be ready to exchange materials. It will be important to avoid the pitfall of a one-size-fits-all approach to materials development.

☐ Several participants made reference to a list of published Romani materials compiled by Peter Bakker, which is available on the website of the Linguistics Department of Aarhus University. Barbara Simpson noted that the Council of Europe has compiled a certain amount of cultural material.

☐ Mai Beijer argued that it is important to look at existing materials from the perspective of the Curriculum Framework for Romani. When this was done in Sweden one course book was dropped but two others were found to be in harmony with the Framework.

☐ David Little drew attention to the extreme difficulty of achieving educational change when it is attempted top-down and on a large scale. He emphasized the benefits of working on a small scale and responding to different needs (e.g. curriculum reform, materials development, teacher training, classroom implementation) in a single project framework.

☐ Agnes Daroczi said that the Curriculum Framework for Romani and ELPs open the door to true emancipation, but if there are no materials to put into children's hands nothing will have been achieved. In Hungary there are just two schools and one kindergarten where Romani is the medium of education, though the total Roma population is 800,000.

- Barbara Simpson stressed the importance of putting a book into the learner's hand. She also recalled that the Milestone ELP project[4] developed learning materials and made them available on the project website.

- Hristo Kyuchukov said that a lack of books is often used as an excuse for not starting to teach Romani. He proposed the establishment of national Romani teacher associations as a way of facilitating exchange, perhaps under the aegis of an international association. He noted that since the mid 1990s Romani linguistics has developed on the basis of research and a conference every two years.

- Miranda Vuolasranta recalled that in 2003 a conference was held that brought together language teaching experts and teachers of Romani. But after two meetings it was decided that there was a need for a Curriculum Framework for Romani. Projects to implement the Framework might be funded by the Roma Education Fund or by national educational authorities.

- Joe Sheils said that he would add Romani to the agenda of a meeting that has been scheduled between the Language Policy Division and the European Commission.

- Lilijana Kovacheva said that there are professionally designed textbooks in many countries. She will attempt to have the Curriculum Framework for Romani and the ELPs translated into Bulgarian and the Bulgarian Romani dialect. Bulgaria cannot afford to provide teacher training but would send teachers to receive training in Graz. She noted that an international organization called Next Page[5] coordinates the publication and dissemination of Romani books.

- Stanislav Stankiewicz (ERTF) argued that the Curriculum Framework for Romani and the ELPs deserve a second phase of discussion. Besides new materials we need an experiment involving 10–12 teachers. This would help to reveal what is missing and what should be done in the future.

- Małgorzata Różycka welcomed the idea of setting up Romani teachers' associations. It was her intention to introduce the ELP to Roma school assistants.

- Christina Rodell Olgac noted that the Roma are one of five recognized national minorities in Sweden. Curricula have been revised to accommodate this, but little has been done in teacher education except at her institution.

- Florin Fleican said that Romania has organized three-week summer courses where future teachers of Romani learn how to teach the language together with Roma history and culture.

- Jan Heros expressed his thanks to the Council of Europe, David Little and Barbara Simpson for their work: it is now time for the Roma communities to pick up the torch. The Slovak Republic has recently completed a standardization process for Romani and is now ready to use the Framework and the ELPs. He expressed support for the idea of a establishing national associations of Romani teachers.

## Concluding remarks and close of the seminar: *Joseph Sheils*

Joe Sheils said that individual participants should inform their national authorities of what is happening in order to gain their support. He proposed that the ERTF is the appropriate body to take up the suggestion that there should be an international association for teachers of Romani. The Language Policy Division can arrange a follow-up meeting of the project group to take stock of what has happened and consider options for the future.

Recalling that during the seminar proposals had been made to translate the Curriculum Framework for Romani into Bulgarian, Albanian and Serbian, Philia Thalgott undertook to put on the website an explanation of how to apply for translation permission. She added that subject to further external funding, the Council of Europe may be able to finance one or two small projects, e.g. adapting one of the ELP models into another Romani dialect,

Reminding participants that the Romani language is endangered and that all Roma children have a right to quality education, Miranda Vuolasranta emphasized the importance of implementing the Curriculum Framework for Romani and the ELPs. She thanked the expert team and the Language Policy Division for all they had done to make the project a success.

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[4] http://www.iilt.ie/teaching_materials/default.asp?NCID=71
[5] http://www.npage.org/en   // *Romani Publications Grants Program*: http://www.npage.org/rubrique19.html
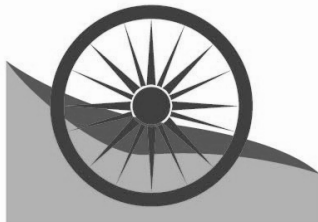
Teaching Romani: Curriculum Framework for Romani and European Language Portfolio

Council of Europe Seminar for decision makers and practitioners

Strasbourg, 27-28 November 2008

Programme

Thursday 27 November	
08.45–09.30	*Registration: Room G 02 – Agora Building, Allée des Droits de l'homme*
09.30–10.00 Chair: Ph. Thalgott	**Opening of seminar** • *Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni*, Director General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport, DG IV • *Ambassador Irma Ertman,* Permanent Representative of Finland to the Council of Europe • European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF): *Miranda Vuolasranta*, Vice-Chair, ERTF Ambassador to EU • Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers (MG-S-ROM): *Ian Naysmith*, Vice-Chair
10.00–11.00 Introduction & Chair: Ph. Thalgott	• **Introduction to the seminar**: *David Little* o Curriculum Framework for Romani: Review of work to date and structure of the related European Language Portfolio (ELP) o Overview of the seminar programme
11.00 - 11.30	*Break*
11.30 – 13.00 Chair: D. Little	**Piloting of the Curriculum Framework for Romani : *Reports*** • *Bulgaria:* Lilyana Kovacheva, Hristo Kyuchukov • *Czech Republic:* Helena Sadílková • *Sweden*: Angelina Dimiter-Taikon, Iren Horvatne Questions and Discussion
13.00 – 14.30	*Lunch*
14.30 – 15.45 Chair: Ph. Thalgott	**European Language Portfolio (ELP) for learners aged 6–11** Introduction to the ELP and relation to the Handbook : *Barbara Lazenby Simpson*
15.45 – 16.15	*Break*
16.15 – 17.45	Introduction: *Barbara Lazenby Simpson* Workshop on ELP for learners aged 6–11: suggestions for use, starting with the checklists and the *Handbook* Feedback

Friday 28 November	
09.00–10.30 Chair: Ph. Thalgott	**European Language Portfolio (ELP) for learners aged 11-16** *Barbara Lazenby Simpson* Introduction with particular focus on differences between this and the primary model Questions and answers on the *Curriculum Framework for Romani*, ELPs, implementation, etc.
10.30–11.00	Break
11.00–11.30 Chair: J. Sheils	**Policy Initiatives:** • The 'European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages' and Romani: *Dieter Halwachs* • UNESCO: "Mother Tongue Matters : Local language as a key to effective learning": *Noro Andriamiseza*
11.30–12.30 Introduction & Chair: Joseph Sheils	**Planning for the future:** • European Center for Modern Languages (ECML) - Project Proposals: *Waldemar Martyniuk,* Executive Director • How can the Council of Europe tools be implemented in specific national contexts: *Tour de Table*
12.30–14.00	*Lunch*
14.00–15.30 Chair: J. Sheils	**Planning for the future** (continued) Collaboration exchanges and networks *With contributions from David Little and Barbara Lazenby Simpson*
15.30–15.45	Concluding remarks and close of seminar: *Joseph Sheils*
15.45–18.00	*Possibility of informal meeting(s) of Roma colleagues to plan future actions*