

Romani-Plurilingual Policy Experimentation

Report on the online launch conference

23 March 2022

David Little

Academic coordinator of the RPPE

Opening session

Welcome and introduction

Villano QIRIAZI, Head of the Education Department, Council of Europe

I would like to welcome you to today's conference on plurilingual and intercultural education. This event is organised by the Language Policy Programme of the Steering Committee for Education of the Council of Europe. As you may know, the objectives of our programme form part of the broader objectives of the Council of Europe concerning the rights of individuals, social inclusion and social cohesion, intercultural understanding, and access to quality education. Language learners and users lie at the heart of the work of the Language Policy Programme. Whatever their status, all languages are included: foreign languages, languages of schooling, languages spoken in the family, and regional and minority languages. One of our programmes focuses on the linguistic integration of migrants (adults and young people) and refugees, and we cooperate closely with the European Centre for Modern Languages based in Graz, a partial agreement of the Council of Europe that promotes innovation in language teaching.

For more than ten years a specific place in our programme has been given to the development of conditions for the implementation of plurilingual and intercultural education. Today, through this conference, we are opening a new chapter in this field with the launch of a three-year policy experimentation in partnership with Slovenia, the Slovak Republic and Greece. I'd like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all our partner institutions for their commitment to providing access to quality education for Roma children and young people through language.

The Language Policy Programme is related to the work of the Education Department, which is part of the Directorate of Democratic Participation within the Directorate General of Democracy. This programme should also be connected to the work of other sectors of the Council of Europe and the work they are doing in response to the recommendations of our monitoring bodies, the Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of Minorities. Both Slovenia and the Slovak Republic are party to the Charter and the Framework Convention. Another specific area of work is related to the integration of Roma and Travellers, and we also have with us a colleague from the Anti-discrimination Directorate who will address the conference.

Opening remarks

Matjaz GRUDEN, Director of Democratic Participation, Council of Europe

I would like to thank Slovenia, the Slovak Republic and Greece for their participation in and support for this initiative. I would also like to follow up on what Villano Qiriazzi has said about the Council of Europe's long-standing work on Romani issues and challenges, which we have undertaken not just for but with representatives of Romani communities. When it comes to the educational inclusion of Romani children significant difficulties still remain.

Why are we conducting a policy experimentation? Despite the Council of Europe's decades-long engagement with Romani issues, the educational inclusion of Romani children and adolescents continues to present major challenges to member states. Successive recommendations from the Committee of Ministers are clear about the political principles and social values that should shape policy, and they are equally clear about the outcomes that policy implementation should achieve. They do not, however, concern themselves with those aspects of policy that shape classroom practice. In 2018–2019 a Council of Europe expert group set out to fill this gap, proposing new ways of managing the educational inclusion of Romani children and adolescents in schools and classrooms.

The group's proposals, which have implications for the educational inclusion of other linguistic and cultural minorities, are based on two principles that are fundamental to the Council of Europe's work

in language education: language learners are also language users, social agents with a personal agenda to fulfil; and language education should take account of all the languages and cultures present in a particular educational context and help learners to develop integrated plurilingual repertoires and intercultural awareness. The policy document argues that the educational inclusion of Romani children and adolescents should be guided by five principles which will be tested by applying them to school policy and classroom practice in the participating schools.

The efficient functioning of democracies depends on social inclusion and societal integration, which in turn depend on an understanding of, respect for and engagement with linguistic and cultural diversity. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has recently adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1 on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture. This recommendation aims to give fresh impetus to the promotion, development, and implementation of plurilingual and intercultural education, recognising its importance for personal and professional development, equity, societal integration, the exercise of human rights, and participation in democratic culture. The policy experimentation will contribute to our understanding of ways in which the Council of Europe's concept of plurilingual and intercultural education can be translated into classroom practice that secures the educational inclusion of pupils from linguistic minorities.

QualiRom ([Quality Education in Romani](#)) has been offered as part of the ECML's [Training and Consultancy programme](#) since 2015; eight capacity-building workshops have been held in six countries. Over the years there has been an evolution in the focus of these events: until 2018 the emphasis was on the teaching and learning of Romani, drawing on key Council of Europe resources, such as the [Curriculum Framework for Romani \(CFR\)](#) and [two European Language Portfolio models](#), as well as on an extensive databank of teaching and learning materials for teachers of Romani, covering six Romani varieties, developed as part of a European Commission-funded project entitled [QualiRom](#). In recent years, the focus has shifted more towards plurilingual and intercultural education and the integration of Romani children in mainstream classrooms, where Romani is not part of the official curriculum.

The policy experimentation will run for three school years (2022–23, 2023–24 and 2024–25). It will be a demanding but very valuable exercise designed to show that our policies can be applied to educational practice, benefiting everyone concerned and contributing to the improvement of education. The data collected in the course of the policy experimentation will inform further policy development in this field.

I would like to thank the Ministries of Education of Greece, Slovakia and Slovenia and the schools involved for undertaking such an important work and wish them every success.

Thorsten AFFLERBACH, Head of the Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Programmes Division

The Romani language is an integral part of our common European linguistic and cultural heritage, diversity and wealth. One of the key elements of Roma identity is the Romani language, and its promotion is crucial for identity preservation. Linguistic and cultural identity can be preserved, communication and mutual understanding improved, and racism, intolerance and anti-gypsyism fought through language learning.

The importance the Council of Europe attaches to this is reflected in the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, the only legally binding instrument for the protection of minority languages, including Romani. Some of the ratifying member states, including the Slovak Republic and Slovenia, have officially recognised Romani as a minority language. Education in the Romani language should not be used as grounds for practising school segregation of Romani children and adolescents. The committee of experts of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages has clearly opposed this practice, taking a consistent stance on the social exclusion that results from educational segregation. It has also drawn attention to practices which have led to assimilation, highlighting that the teaching of Romani is a prerequisite for real integration.

On the same topic, the European Court of Human Rights has ruled that the temporary placement of children in a separate class on the ground that they lack an adequate command of the language of schooling is not automatically contrary to Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Importantly, however, the Court held that when such a measure disproportionately or exclusively affects members of a specific ethnic group, appropriate safeguards must be put in place. The Court further highlighted that language difficulties were not adequately addressed simply by placing the applicants concerned in a Roma-only class. The teaching of the Romani language should be a tool to advance integration and not to determine separation, and the Council of Europe policy framework fully supports this – see for example the provisions of Recommendation 2009(4) by the Committee of Ministers on the education of Roma and Travellers in Europe, or those of Recommendation 2012(9) on mediation as an effective tool for promoting respect for human rights and social inclusion of Roma (in this case mediators working in the field of education).

Coming back to the language charter, the committee of experts has included in its recommendations to member states, including Slovenia and the Slovak Republic, that Romani should be taught as a subject at all appropriate levels, a training scheme for teachers of Romani should be developed, and the teaching of Romani should be extended to pre-school, primary, secondary, technical and vocational education as an integral part of the curriculum.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) regularly assesses the situation regarding the social inclusion of Roma communities. With the start of the sixth monitoring cycle, ECRI is paying particular attention to inclusive education by looking into education policies and efforts to address exclusion and marginalisation through inclusive education. The specific country recommendations should further serve as guidance for public authorities.

Finally, let me also draw your attention to an example of a concrete impact on inclusive education by referring to a joint European Union and Council of Europe programme, *Inclusive Schools: Making a Difference for Roma Children*, known by the acronym *InSchool*. The Romanian country report for 2021 notes that the things most appreciated by participating pupils and parents are friendship with a group of pupils, an approach to the topic of human rights in schools, reliability of the support they receive from teachers, the skills of teaching staff, and a curriculum which is tailored to inclusion. The purpose of the current third cycle of the *InSchool* project is to support public authorities in adapting national education policies and practices to become more inclusive.

In conclusion, I wish you a very successful policy experimentation, which should contribute to inspiring practice and deliver evidence that plurilingual education makes a significant contribution to intercultural awareness, inclusion and social cohesion.

Alexandros KOPTISIS, Secretary-General of Primary, Secondary and Special Education, Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Greece

It is a great joy and honour for me to participate in the opening of this conference. The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs of Greece attaches great importance to providing free quality education for all students regardless of race, gender, language, religion and cultural affiliation, so that they can develop as autonomous social agents. Our national policy is based on specific measures and initiatives aimed at eliminating all forms of discrimination in education. Let me mention, by way of example, various actions that we have undertaken to ensure that Roma have equal access to education, regardless of their civil status. They enter Zone of Educational Priority schools and attend reception classes, just like any other pupil who does not have sufficient knowledge of the Greek language, and they receive a student card which accompanies them if they have to change schools.

The Council of Europe's Romani-Plurilingual Policy Experimentation aims to make the Romani language part and parcel of school life. It promises to develop good practice and should allow us to draw conclusions about the plurilingual and intercultural approach. The participating schools in Slovenia,

the Slovak Republic and Greece constitute an important international network: by working together we should be able to make a difference. I am really happy that we are participating in this project, and I'd like to thank Slovenia and the Slovak Republic for their participation. I believe that the project will lead to the more effective inclusion of Roma and other minority students, which is a priority for all of us. I wish the policy experimentation every success.

Svetlana SÍTHOVÁ, State Secretary for the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic

For the last three weeks, Europe has been living in the shadow of the war that is taking place in Ukraine. Here in Slovakia, the war and the accompanying humanitarian catastrophe affect us deeply – we are an immediate neighbouring country, and a significant number of Ukrainians are taking refuge in our country. I am glad that our society immediately showed great solidarity with those suffering, the majority of whom are women and children. The government of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Education have also taken the necessary measures to ensure that the right to education of incoming Ukrainian children and young people can continue to be realised.

Of course, the moral imperative to help Ukrainian refugees and to strive for their temporary or permanent integration into society does not take away from the obligations we have towards our own citizens. This applies particularly to those who are also dependent on state support measures. In this context, I would like to assure you that the inclusion of Roma and in general the principles of inclusive education are among our top priorities. Last autumn, the government of the Slovak Republic adopted a new Equality Strategy for Roma Inclusion and Participation 2030. These days, the process of approving the first action plans for the strategy is being finalised. The government has also adopted a strategy for inclusive education. The finalisation of the first action plan is also on the agenda for the coming days and weeks.

Inclusion of the Roma population implies the adoption and implementation of comprehensive, inter-related measures. Social, economic and desegregation measures, linked to raising the level and quality of education of Roma children, have a key role to play. However, the Roma strategy also takes into account the preservation and development of the cultural and linguistic identity of Roma, insofar as there is an interest and a need for this. The Roma community in Slovakia is itself multilingual and many of its members are also plurilingual. At the same time, members of the Roma community come to us from Ukraine. In this context, I would like to inform you that the Council of Europe's Romani-Plurilingual Policy Experimentation, which we are now launching, has been included in the first action plans of the Equality Strategy for Roma Inclusion and Participation 2030.

I am confident that the policy experimentation will achieve its goals over the next three school years. I believe that it will benefit the participating schools, their management, teachers and pupils, and will help us to develop further support tools to achieve the full social inclusion and participation of Roma. I wish you a successful conference.

Damir OREHOVEC, State Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia

It is a great honour for me to take this opportunity to say a few words about the efforts of the Republic of Slovenia to ensure the quality integration of Roma children and pupils into the educational system in Slovenia.

The Republic of Slovenia is aware of its obligations to protect weaker and socially excluded individuals and communities, including the Roma community, in its overarching strategic development objectives. Our aim is to reduce the risk of social exclusion, prejudice and so-called anti-Romatism, and to ensure equal access to education and quality of life for all.

One of the most important systemic measures taken by the Ministry of Education is the systematisation of the post of Roma assistant, which was adopted last year. This school year we have started to recruit Roma assistants in kindergartens and primary schools. They are a key link between Roma communities and institutions, providing language, learning and other support to Roma pupils. Above all, they are more trusted by Roma, making it easier for them to decide to change.

We have also undertaken other normative changes to facilitate the entry of Roma children into pre-school education. Through the so-called short kindergarten programmes, which are free of charge for parents, we are promoting the early integration of children into pre-school education, although short programmes are not our primary objective, which is the enrolment of Roma children in regular kindergarten sections.

Important supportive environments for Roma families are the so-called multi-purpose centres as hubs for various educational and other activities, where Roma children and parents engage, socialise and learn on a daily basis. Slovenia has had an extremely positive experience with the establishment of seven centres created within the framework of Roma projects, and we will continue our work in these centres.

We also give educated Roma responsibility for the development of the Roma community and expect them to play an active role in creating progress in their own community.

Despite the progress described above in the integration of Roma children in education, in the coming years we will continue to seek solutions in areas such as: the still insufficient inclusion of Roma children in kindergartens, the excessive rate of absenteeism in primary schools, the low percentage of Roma children completing primary school, the poor communicative ability in Slovene and Romani, the stereotyping of the majority community, the lack of self-activation and participation of representatives of the Roma community – I could go on and on.

All these challenges must be addressed comprehensively, which is why the measures taken by the Ministry of Education are part of a national programme, the National Programme of Action for Roma. It is an umbrella document at national level, with actions by all government departments for the period 2021–2030. It includes measurable indicators and targets for the implementation of the measures. On the basis of this programme, detailed action plans will be adopted in all ministries.

The Roma community in Slovenia is diverse and heterogeneous, so it is important that schools from different backgrounds are involved in the policy experimentation which is the focus of today's conference. I am convinced that this project's plurilingual approach will have a positive impact on the quality of work in schools and on improving the learning achievements of Roma pupils. It is important to involve as many teachers and other professionals as possible in the participating schools and to transfer positive experiences to work with other vulnerable groups, including immigrant and refugee children. The policy experimentation will contribute to wider processes and policies to ensure equity and democratic culture, human rights and the rights of every child in life and education.

Let me conclude my brief contribution by thanking the Council of Europe, which has made the policy experimentation possible and which will actively support and guide the project throughout. I wish the expert group and all participants in the project success, perseverance and many inspiring experiences.

Timea JUNGHAUS, Executive Director, European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture

ERIAC welcomes the Romani-Plurilingual Policy Experimentation and shares the principles that are fundamental to the Council of Europe's work in language education: that language learners of all ages are also language users who are social agents with an agenda to fulfil; also that language education should take account of all the languages present in a particular educational context and help learners to develop integrated plurilingual repertoires. I'm quoting these points from the conference agenda.

ERIAC is a membership organisation with currently 223 members, bringing together Roma and non-Roma individuals and organisations with relevant and demonstrated competence and experience in the field of art and culture and a commitment to ERIAC's values. The transversal dimension, which is the Romani language section, aims to protect and promote the Romani language as one of the historic minority languages of Europe. Under the leadership of Mihaela Zatreanu we have brought together experts, practitioners and legislators to participate in the protection and promotion of the language. The aim of the ERIAC initiative is to oversee the status of Romani, to discuss issues of language preservation, transnational harmonisation and Romani language education. Our goal is to establish cooperation for language harmonisation at an international level, to design future strategies for preserving the language, and to fulfil the general need for Romani language education in Europe.

I would like to say a few words about the history of the initiative and explain how it connects to other initiatives. At the beginning of 2019, ERIAC membership and management began to discuss and design ways forward to preserve the Romani language heritage and to fulfil the general need in Europe for Romani language education tools. In 2020, within the framework of the international outreach programme, ERIAC's Roma cultural history initiative, supported by the German foreign ministry, we began a Romani language initiative to create activities that feed into the policies of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. The most significant outputs were a database of Romani language teachers, translators and interpreters and a Romani language textbook for adults at level A1.

For this latter project, which based itself on the Council of Europe's *Curriculum Framework for Romani*, ERIAC established a collaboration with language education experts of the Goethe Institut Budapest and the University of Graz. The book is written in the international variety of Romani, and prior to publication it is being reviewed by Romani language specialists and speakers of multiple Romani dialects listed in ERIAC's database. In 2021 printed copies of the book arrived at the ERIAC office, and we continue to review it and to generate the audio materials that will accompany it.

In 2022 the ERIAC initiative includes efforts towards the long-term objectives of developing teaching materials based on the *Curriculum Framework for Romani*, supporting the language learning needs of Roma individuals, and organising training for Roma language teachers. Taking as its starting point the notion that the Romani language heritage is at risk, the ERIAC language initiative aims to stimulate discussion to support the development of the Romani language at international level, to promote recognition, preservation, development and cultural and political harmony for the future of the Romani language.

In respect of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, beyond the language initiative, we at ERIAC also foster research and programming to promote Romani as part of Europe's cultural heritage. ERIAC maintains contact with local members and partners to observe inalienable and commonly recognised rights to use Romani as a minority language in private and public life. Respect for diversity is one of ERIAC's founding principles, so we stand for the preservation of the dialects of Romani. ERIAC takes measures to use the Romani language in public life with its campaigns, open forums, competitions and events.

I would like to congratulate Professor David Little and the policy experimentation team for the initiative. We trust that the experimentation will contribute to the building of a common, transnational Romani language. I bring with me some inspiration from the ERIAC language section, and I quote here: "Harmonising and uniting our efforts in the initiatives that exist around Europe for the preservation, observation and education of Romani language is our common and most important object for the future and prosperity of Romani's identity."

Introduction to the Romani-Plurilingual Policy Experimentation

Michael REMMERT, Head of the Education Policy Division, Council of Europe

The educational inclusion of Romani children and adolescents remains a major challenge for Council of Europe member states. In 2018–2019 an expert group¹ was established to develop policy guidelines that would address the gap left by previous Council of Europe initiatives between high-level principles and classroom practice, focusing on the role of the Romani language and adopting the Council of Europe’s plurilingual and intercultural approach to education. The guidelines identified five principles that should shape policy and practice:

1. The educational inclusion of Romani children and adolescents is a fundamental human right that should be given priority by Council of Europe member states.
2. The educational inclusion of Romani children and adolescents should also benefit non-Romani students.
3. The highly variable linguistic profiles of Romani communities mean that education systems need to develop flexible approaches to the inclusion of Romani children and adolescents and the teaching of Romani language, culture and history.
4. Flexibility is more likely to be achieved when the primary focus is on learners and learning rather than on teachers and teaching.
5. Flexibility is also more likely to be achieved when language education adopts the Council of Europe’s plurilingual and intercultural approach.

The purpose of the Romani-Plurilingual Policy Experimentation (RPPE) is to test these guiding principles by applying them to policy and classroom practice in four primary schools in each of three Council of Europe member states: Greece, Slovakia and Slovenia. The RPPE, which will run for three school years, will be shaped by two considerations that are fundamental to the Council of Europe’s work in language education:

- i. language learners of all ages are also language users, social agents with an agenda to fulfil;
- ii. language education should take account of all the languages present in a particular educational context and help learners to develop integrated plurilingual repertoires.

The Council of Europe will support the RPPE by providing a wide range of resources, some of which are available in six Romani varieties. Information meetings will explain the policy guidelines and their practical implications and introduce the goals and intended methods of the RPPE to participating schools and teachers. In due course, members of the expert group will visit the participating schools, which will receive small grants from the Council of Europe.

As is usual with Council of Europe projects, expected results are expressed as outputs, outcomes and impact. The outputs of the RPPE will be learning activities and teaching materials based on the *Curriculum Framework for Romani* and the European Language Portfolio; proposals to revise and/or extend the *Curriculum Framework for Romani*, to revise/adapt the Romani European Language Portfolios, and to revise/extend the QualiRom teaching materials; regular reports that describe, analyse and interpret classroom activities and learning achievement; an evaluation of the successes and failures of the policy experimentation in terms of the above-mentioned five principles; a final report that is presented in the form of a manual of good practice for wider dissemination.

The outcomes of the RPPE will be as follows: for participating Romani pupils, an experience of inclusive education in which the Romani language plays a central part; for participating non-Romani pupils, an

¹ The members of the expert group were: David Little, coordinator of the ECML’s QualiRom Training & Consultancy; Dieter Halwachs, member of COMEX of ECRML; Ján Hero, vice chair of CAHROM; Helena Sadílková, head of Romani Studies Seminar, Charles University Prague; Diana Sima, educational advisor and teacher of Romani; Zuzana Bodnárová, Romani Project, University of Graz.

experience of Romani language, history and culture; for participating teachers, continuing professional development; on the part of all participants in the policy experimentation, an understanding of the practice of plurilingual education and the contribution it makes to inclusion and social cohesion; and new ways of including the Romani language in the daily discourse of school, inside and outside the classroom

The impact of the RPPE will be more effective inclusion of primary-age Romani pupils in participating schools; significant innovation in the teaching of Romani language, history and culture to Romani and non-Romani pupils; building of school networks in and between participating countries in order to provide a basis for further development. More generally, the experimentation will contribute to our understanding of ways in which the Council of Europe’s concept of plurilingual and intercultural education can be translated into classroom practice that secures the educational inclusion of pupils from linguistic minorities.

Romani: A European minority Language

Zuzana BODNÁROVÁ, Helena SADÍLKOVÁ and Diana SIMA, Council of Europe Experts

Roma are not always speakers of Romani, but when they are, they are (often unrecognised) bi-/plurilinguals. Figure 1 shows the geographical distribution of Roma in Europe, while Table 1 shows the estimated number of Roma by country and the percentage of them who speak a variety of Romani.

The diversity of Romani dialects (and group belonging) is due to the European history of the Roma. The dialects vary in their vitality and in the extent to which their speakers are ready and able to use them in different contexts. Roma range in their knowledge of the language from full through limited to no competence. Romani is used most widely in the private and least widely in the public sphere. Its status varies in relation to approaches to identity formation, the extent to which it the language is recognised and respected by majority communities (or continues to be stigmatised), the impact of historical pressures on Roma to assimilate, and the plurality of contexts in which it is embedded. Self-identification as a Rom and/or a speaker of Romani varies and is likely to impact on the inclusion of Roma and Romani in the process of schooling.

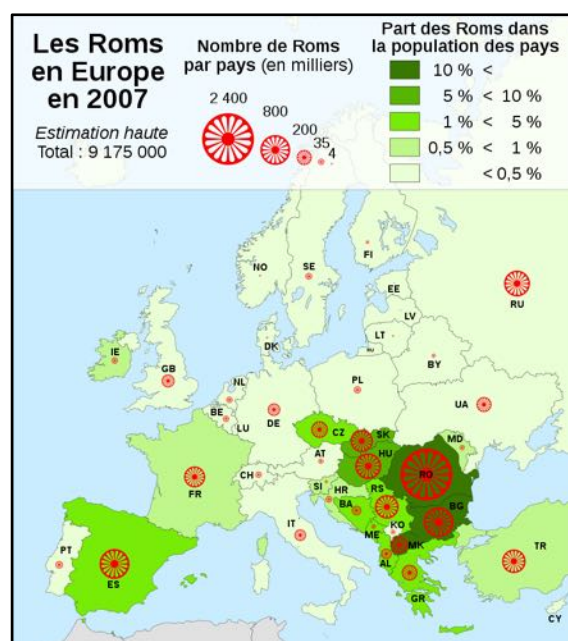


Figure 1 Geographical distribution of Roma in Europe (source: Wikimedia Commons)

Table 1 Estimated number of Romani speakers in Europe by country and percentage of total Roma population (source: Halwachs & Zatreanu 2003)

Country	Speakers	%	Country	Speakers	%
Albania	90,000	95%	Latvia	18,500	90%
Austria	20,000	80%	Lithuania	4,000	90%
Belarus	27,000	95%	Macedonia	215,000	90%
Belgium	10,000	80%	Moldova	56,000	90%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	40,000	90%	Netherlands	7,000	90%

Bulgaria	600,000	80%	Poland	4,000	90%
Croatia	28,000	80%	Romania	1,030,000	80%
Czech Republic	140,000	50%	Russia	405,000	80%
Denmark	1,500	90%	Serbia and Montenegro	380,000	90%
Estonia	1,100	90%	Slovakia	300,000	60%
Finland	3,000	90%	Slovenia	8,000	90%
France	215,000	70%	Spain	1,000	1%
Germany	85,000	70%	Sweden	9,500	90%
Greece	160,000	90%	Turkey	280,000	70%
Hungary	260,000	50%	Ukraine	113,000	90%
Italy	42,000	90%	United Kingdom	1,000	0.5%

Historically Roma have been a marginalised minority. This explains the dominance of oral over written use of Romani; today's speakers of Romani may not read and write the language, so its appearance in schools, textbooks and other learning materials will be a new experience for many Roma communities. What is more, as a result of historical multilingualism, migration histories and their marginalised minority position, Roma vary greatly in their proficiency in Romani and in official languages. As the RPPE handbook points out, they may have no knowledge of Romani, some knowledge perhaps acquired from older generations, or Romani may be their home language. Whichever of these three categories they belong to, they may have no serious difficulties with the language or schooling, or they may need help, or they may have zero proficiency when they first attend school.

The heterogeneity of Romani dialects and the minority position of Roma communities may make it difficult to decide which dialect to use in the public domain, which includes school. Various efforts have been made to establish international and local standards, with varying degrees of success. The process of standardisation means codification, which is a prerequisite for compiling dictionaries, and the establishment of rules of orthography. The first thing to decide is what to base the standardisation on. Is it really necessary, and if it is, who is it aimed at and for what purpose?

Essentially, there have been two approaches to standardisation: (i) one dialect is chosen to the exclusion of others, which is the usual practice at national level; (ii) a standard is constructed from a mixture of models, which is the approach adopted at international level (and also in North Macedonia). Attempts to bring Romani into the mainstream are usually accompanied by the creation and adoption of a national standard; this has happened in Slovakia and Romania. But it is also possible to work with local dialects as an authentic part of local Romani experience and knowledge.

Linguistic repertoires of Romani speakers	Private – Interaction with family members, friends, etc.	Everyday life- Interaction at work, school, with strangers, when shopping, etc)	Public life – Interaction with public authorities, media, public domain, religious context, higher education, etc.
Repertoire 1 - Most Romani speakers	MAJORITY LANGUAGE(S) Romani	MAJORITY LANGUAGE(S)	MAJORITY LANGUAGE(S)
Repertoire 2 -speakers of vital (VLAX) Varieties	MAJORITY LANGUAGE(S) Romani	MAJORITY LANGUAGE(S) Romani	MAJORITY LANGUAGE(S)
Repertoire 3 - International Romani activists	MAJORITY LANGUAGE(S) Romani	MAJORITY LANGUAGE(S) Romani	MAJORITY LANGUAGE(S) Romani

Figure 2 Use of Romani: three linguistic repertoires (source: RPPE handbook)

The sociolinguistic situation of Romani reflects the socio-political and sociocultural status of its speakers. Romani has been described as a primarily oral, functionally restricted, dominated, stateless

diaspora language with multilingual speakers. Figure 2 summarises the linguistic repertoires of three kinds of Romani speaker.

The Romani language is present in almost all types of media; in some countries state institutions make sporadic use of Romani interpreters; some international organisations use Romani as a working language; Romani is under the protection of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and has been officially recognised as a minority language in 18 countries; and since the early 1990s, Romani has been used by some religious denominations. Nevertheless, the language is marginalised, neglected and irrelevant to majority communities; its use in the public sphere depends on political motivation and mostly remains on the symbolic level. Table 2 lists projects that have focused on Romani as language of schooling.

Table 2 Romani as language of schooling

Initiatives at university level	
1978	Georges Calvet at INALCO, Paris, degree programme
1991	Milena Hübschmannova at Charles University (Prague), Romani programme
1992	Gheorghe Sarau at Bucharest University, Romani section
1991–1992	Lev Cerenkov, Moscow
1991	Pedagogical Higher School, Nitra, Slovakia
1997	Marcel Courthiade at INALCO, Paris
2002	Santino Spinelli in Trieste, Italy
2009–2011	Hristo Kjuchukov, University of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria
2014	Ljatif Demir in Zagreb, Croatia
	Sweden, Södertörns Högskola, Romani language teaching

Romani is an Indo-Aryan language that belongs to the Indo-European language family. The core Romani vocabulary is of Indic origin. The Roma migration started from central India, moving through north-western India and the Indian sub-continent to Europe. In the process the language acquired loan words from Iranian (Persian, Kurdish), Armenian and Greek. Figure 3 shows that there are two lexical layers in Romani: The pre-European lexicon which comes from Iranian, Armenian and partly from Greek, and the so-called European lexicon which are words borrowed from the various languages of Europe. The absence of loan words from Arabic suggests that the time of departure from India was before 1000 AD, and the absence of loan words from Turkish suggests that

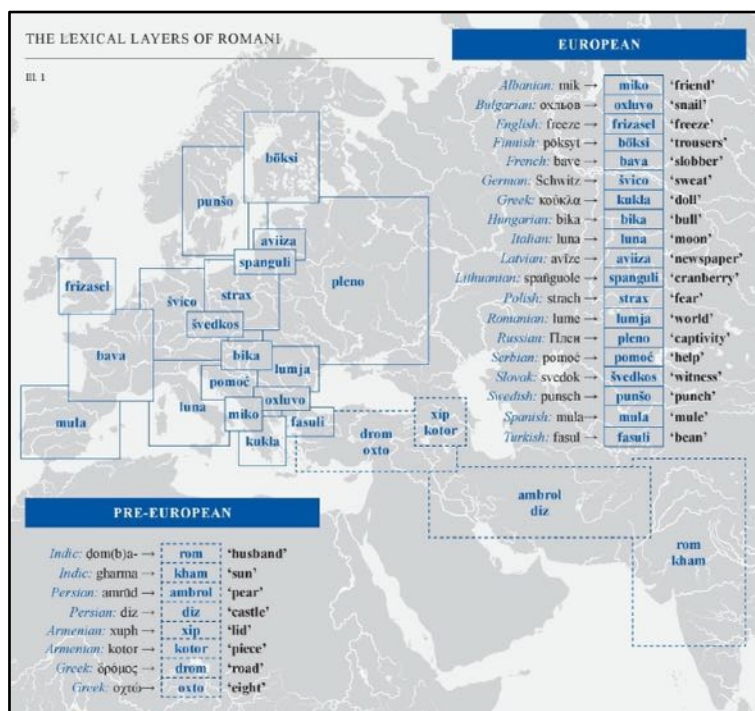


Figure 3 The lexical layers of Romani (source: romaffects.uni.graz.at, Language: 2.0 Words)

the time of departure from the Byzantine Empire was the 14th century at the latest.

Present-day Romani dialects (Figure 4) share a large part of the pre-European and Greek lexicon, though they differ in their internal development and the influence of different contact languages. There are four main dialect groups: Balkan, Vlach, Central and Northern. There are also dialects that have developed independently, e.g. Dolenjska Romani. The migration of the various Romani dialect speakers within Europe (Figure 5) contributed to that today in most European countries we find Romani speakers from at least two or more dialect groups. Of the three countries participating in the RPPE, Greece has speakers of Balkan and Vlach, Slovakia has speakers of Central, Vlach and Northwestern, and Slovenia has speakers of Central, Balkan, Vlach, Northwestern and Dolenjska Romani. The extent of mutual comprehension between varieties is indicated by the following sentences:

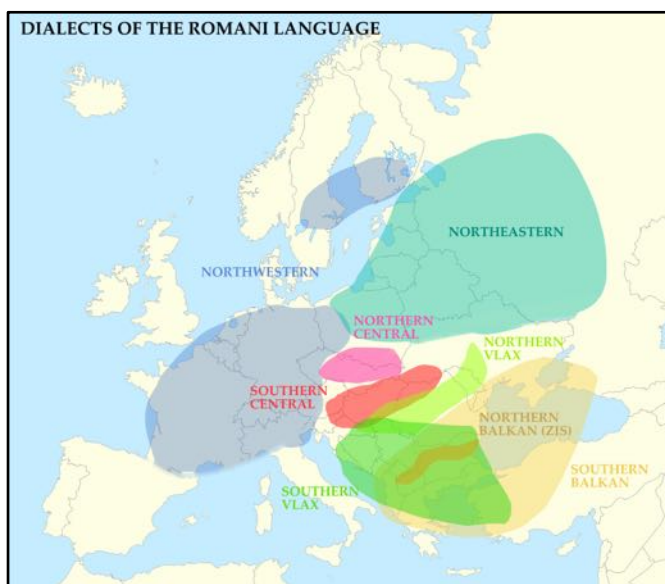


Figure 4 Present-day dialects of Romani (based on Wikimedia Commons, ArnoldPlaton, CC-BY-SA-3.0)

- North Central (Slovakia): **miri učiteljka hinji mek nasvalji**
- South Cental (Slovenia): **mri mešterkinja hi mēk nasvāuli**
- North Vlach (Romania): *profesora munri ynka si nasvali*
- South Vlach (Serbia): **mungri sikavni si vazda nasvali**
- North Balkan (Macedonia): **meri učitelka panda si nasvaj**
- South Balkan (Greece): **mi δaskala isi akoma amboromi**
- Northeastern (Latvia): **mi skuolates isčo nasvaly**
- Northwestern (Italy): **mar maestra ila papli nasali**
my teacher is still ill

(Source: Romani Morpho-Syntax Database, romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/rms/)

Although a large part of the pre-European vocabulary is shared by all Romani dialects (for example the adjective *nasvali* “sick” in the sentences above), there are also many words which are borrowed from the local contact languages (for example the word for “teacher”). Based on this, we can conclude that speakers of different Romani dialects could find it challenging, but not impossible, to understand each other to a certain extent.

Efforts to include Romani in the communicative life of schools is likely to face the following challenges:

- Romani pupils speak different dialects with varying degrees of proficiency;
- non-Roma as well as Roma parents might have negative attitudes to the use of Romani in school

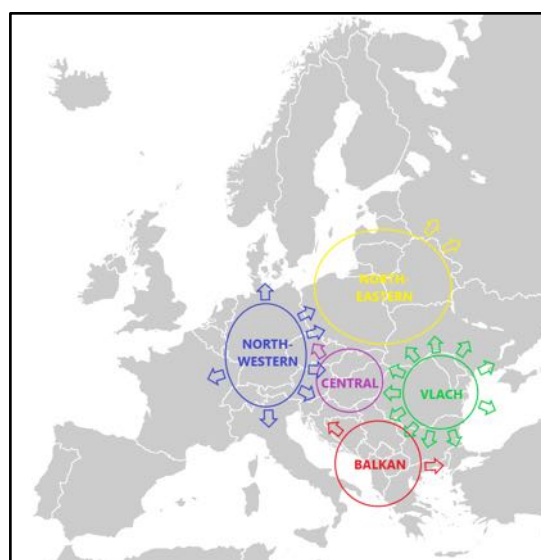


Figure 5 Areas of emergence of dialect (sub) groups and later migration routes

(We don't need the language in school. Which dialect do you want to use? Our kids need to learn official languages, not Romani);

- the use of Romani at school may give rise to fear of (further) stigmatisation and discrimination;
- the presence of the language in school is completely unfamiliar: parents and pupils do not know what to expect;
- textual use of the language is rather unfamiliar: seemingly straightforward tasks like reading, writing and translating can prove very demanding; parents are likely not familiar with written Romani;
- pupils (and parents) are unlikely to know much about the general history of the Roma, the structure of the language, etc.;
- creating separate (after-school) groups for Romani language classes may result in the stigmatisation of the participating pupils.

The Council of Europe's plurilingual and intercultural approach to education

David LITTLE, Academic Coordinator, Romani-Plurilingual Policy Experimentation

The Council of Europe, language education and Roma

The Council of Europe was established in 1949 to defend human rights, parliamentary democracy and the rule of law. A key part of its mission is to promote awareness of a European identity based on shared values, and it attaches great importance to language learning as a means of preserving linguistic and cultural identity, facilitating communication and fostering understanding, and combating intolerance and xenophobia.

The Council of Europe's principal instruments in the field of language education are the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR; 2001) and its *Companion Volume* (2020), which are the product of some 50 years of work on language learning and teaching for communication and exchange. Both documents were developed to support Council of Europe principles and policy. This explains their focus on the language user/learner as an autonomous social agent and their use of "can do" descriptors to define language proficiency in terms of language use

The Council of Europe has been committed to the educational inclusion of Romani children and adolescents for more than 50 years. Recommendation R (2000) 4 noted "an urgent need to build new foundations for future educational strategies towards the Roma/Gypsy people in Europe", while Recommendation R (2012) 13 asserts that quality education "gives access to learning to all pupils, particularly those in vulnerable or disadvantaged groups". The *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* (2008) defines integration as a reciprocal, two-way process that brings gains on both sides. This has important implications for the inclusion of Roma in national education systems.

In 2008 the Council of Europe published the *Curriculum Framework for Romani* (2008), versions of the European Language Portfolio for learners aged 6–11 and 11–16, and a handbook for teachers, all of which are available on the Council of Europe's website (www.coe.int/lang → Plurilingual education). From 2010 to 2013, the QualiRom project, funded by the European Union and hosted by the European Centre for Modern Languages, developed teaching/learning materials in six Romani varieties (qualirom.uni-graz.at). And since 2016 the ECML's QualiRom Training and Consultancy has offered support to the member states on (i) the use of the *Curriculum Framework for Romani*, the ELPs and the QualiRom materials and (ii) the educational inclusion of Romani children and adolescents following the principles of plurilingual and intercultural education.

Recommendation R (2022) 1 on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture

Recommendation R (2022) 1 was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 2 February 2022. It addresses two developments of concern to the Council of Europe: a tendency on the part of public authorities and civil society to think that proficiency in one additional language is enough; and the notion that proficiency in minority or migrant languages is harmful to social cohesion. The Recommendation asserts that plurilingual and intercultural education is essential to education for democratic culture; respects and values linguistic and cultural diversity; promotes language awareness and language sensitivity across the curriculum; encourages critical reflection on cultural diversity; helps to foster critical digital literacy and digital citizenship; encourages learner autonomy and values the learner's voice; and supports the inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalised learners on an equal footing with other learners. This Recommendation constitutes the policy framework within which the Romani/Plurilingual Policy Experimentation (RPPE) will be carried out and evaluated.

Defining plurilingualism

The CEFR defines plurilingualism as follows:

Plurilingualism differs from multilingualism, which is the knowledge of a number of languages, or the co-existence of different languages in a given society. ... [T]he plurilingual approach emphasises the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep those languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of languages contributes, and in which languages interrelate and interact. (CEFR 1.3; Council of Europe 2001: 4)

This definition rests on a distinction between plurilingualism and (individual) multilingualism. When they adopt a multilingual approach, education systems seek to "achieve 'mastery' of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the 'ideal native speaker' as the ultimate model" (CEFR 1.3; Council of Europe 2001: 5). By contrast, a plurilingual approach to language education seeks to develop integrated linguistic repertoires that accommodate partial competences (CEFR 1.1; Council of Europe 2001: 2) and uneven proficiency profiles (CEFR 6.1.3; Council of Europe 2001: 133). The gradual expansion of the individual's plurilingual proficiency that the definition envisages is likely to be hampered when the multilingual approach and traditional teaching methods are followed.

Ofelia García's description of two learners, Christine and Carlos, may help to clarify this distinction between multilingualism and plurilingualism:

Born in France to educated middle-class parents, Christine has spoken French since birth. In school she learned English, and then Spanish. Now 36, she considers French her L1, English her L2, and Spanish her L3. She is secure in her identity as a francophone and uses French personally and professionally in her daily life. She seldom uses English, although she often reads reports in English for work; she says that she likes Spanish better than English but uses it only to sing songs she loves. Christine considers only French as her own language. The others are simply 'gifts' which she borrows.

Carlos was born and grew up in Peru and is now 43. In the home where he was raised, he spoke Spanish and Quechua. However, at school only Spanish was taught, although Quechua was frequently used. Carlos is a talented musician, and in Peru he was part of a bilingual musical group that sang songs in Quechua and Spanish. He considered himself a bilingual Peruvian, with neither language identified as L1 or L2. At the age of 38, because of economic hardship, Carlos migrated to Germany. When he first arrived, he took a German language 'integration' course.

Two years ago, he married a German-speaking woman. He is required to use German as his everyday lived language, both at home and at the Peruvian restaurant where he works and sings in Spanish and Quechua. German is not his L2 or L3; it has become his own (although not his sole) everyday lived language. (García 2018: 18)

According to the CEFR’s definition, Christine is multilingual, whereas Carlos is plurilingual. As García puts it, Christine is “a ‘second’ language learner ... learning the language of ‘the other’”, while Carlos “must become a bilingual/multilingual German speaker, not just a speaker of German as a second language” (García 2018: 18). This difference is captured in Figure 1. Christine’s linguistic identity is strongly francophone, and her proficiency in English and Spanish is only partly integrated with it. The English disc is larger than the Spanish disc because Christine knows more English than Spanish. On the other hand, a greater proportion of the Spanish disc invades her francophone identity because she has an emotional attachment to the language. Carlos’s indivisible Spanish/Quechua identity is represented by a green and blue weave, and his proficiency in German is a fully integrated part of his plurilingual identity, his “everyday lived language”.

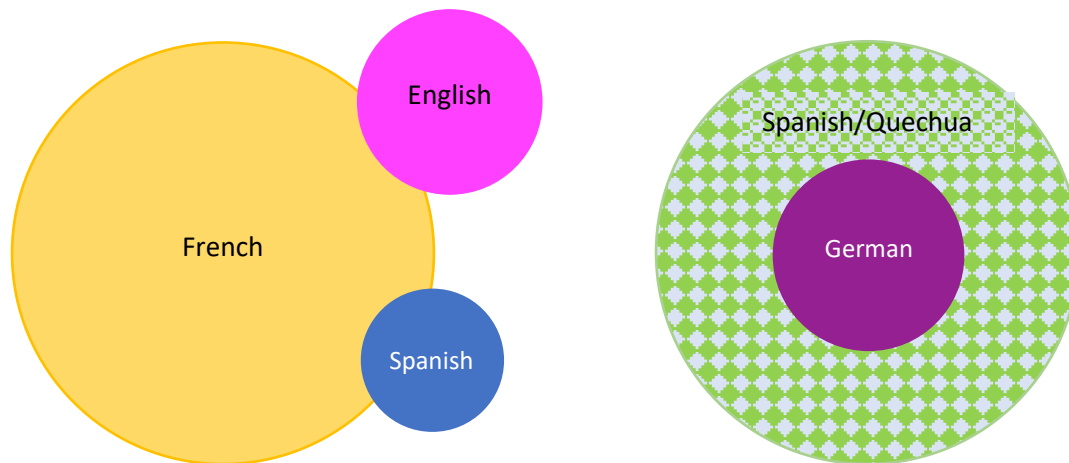


Figure 1 Diagrammatic representation of two linguistic repertoires: Christine (left) and Carlos (right)

The pedagogical challenge of the plurilingual approach

In the CEFR’s definition there is a clear *qualitative* difference between (individual) multilingualism and plurilingualism. The question for education systems is: How do we get from Christine to Carlos? How, in other words, do we ensure that languages taught and learnt in formal educational contexts become part of learners’ everyday lived language? Bearing in mind that language user/learners are “individuals and ... social agents” (CEFR 2.1; Council of Europe 2001: 9), how do we ensure that each new language they learn is integral to what they are and a channel of their agency?

It seems clear that the development of plurilingualism in formal educational contexts requires pedagogies that are grounded in language use, engage learners’ identities and agency, and use their existing linguistic repertoire to support the learning of new languages. Such pedagogies fulfil one of the Council of Europe’s central educational aims, summarised thus by John Trim:

To promote the personal development of the individual, with growing self-awareness, self-confidence and independence of thought and action combined with social responsibility as an active agent in a participatory, pluralist, democratic society. (Trim 2012: 23)

Plurilingualism and pluriculturalism

According to the CEFR, “Plurilingualism has itself to be seen in the context of pluriculturalism” (CEFR 1.4; Council of Europe 2001: 6); plurilingual competence, in other words, is one component of pluricultural competence. This is problematic, however, because it seems to imply that learning a new language necessarily means acquiring a new culture. Elsewhere, the CEFR tells us that “*Plurilingual and pluricultural competence* refers to the ability to use languages for purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social agent has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures” (CEFR 8.1; Council of Europe 2001: 168). This prompts two questions: How do language learners in classrooms acquire experiences of new cultures? And is it necessary to be “pluricultural” in order to engage in “intercultural” communication?

Michael Byram provided a helpful clarification of these issues in a paper he wrote for the Council of Europe project *Languages in Education, Languages for Education* (Byram 2009: 6–7). Pluriculturalism, he explained, “involves identifying with at least some of the values, beliefs and/or practices of two or more cultures, as well as acquiring the competences which are necessary for actively participating in those cultures”. Pluriculturality can be expressed in various ways: via “multiple cultural allegiances irrespective of context”; via “alternation”, e.g. switching between the culture of the home and the prevailing peer culture; or via “hybridity”, “the eclectic fusion of resources and elements drawn from multiple cultures”. Interculturality, by contrast is the “capacity to experience and analyse cultural otherness, and to use this experience to reflect on matters that are usually taken for granted within one’s own culture and environment”. It involves “being open to, interested in, curious about and empathetic towards people from other cultures”; “using this heightened awareness of otherness to engage and interact with others and, potentially, to act together for common purposes”; and “evaluating one’s own everyday patterns of perception, thought, feeling and behaviour in order to develop greater self-knowledge and self-understanding”.

To sum up

The Council of Europe’s concept of plurilingualism implies a reconceptualisation of the goals but also the methods of language education. The development of plurilingualism requires pedagogies that make use of all linguistic resources available to the learners.

Pluriculturalism means membership of two or more cultures, which entails identification with values, beliefs and practices and the acquisition of whatever competences are required for autonomous participation in those cultures. Pluriculturalism may or may not be associated with plurilingualism and is not easily achieved in contexts of formal learning, especially at a distance from relevant speech communities.

Interculturality means being open to cultural otherness and empathetic towards others and capable of reflecting critically on cultural similarities and differences. It is a defining goal of language education programmes shaped by Council of Europe values

Implications for schools with minority language students

When they adopt a plurilingual and pluricultural/intercultural approach, schools will seek to develop the proficiency and competences captured in Figure 2. For majority language students the language of schooling is a variety of their home language; it is the basis on which they develop proficiency in the first and second foreign languages of the curriculum. They should acquire language awareness and interculturality as a result of their foreign language learning but also because the home languages and cultures of the minority language students are included in the life of the classroom. Minority language students develop proficiency in the language of schooling and the first and second foreign languages of the curriculum; in doing so they should acquire language awareness and interculturality in the same way as their majority language peers. At the same time, they should develop pluriculturality because

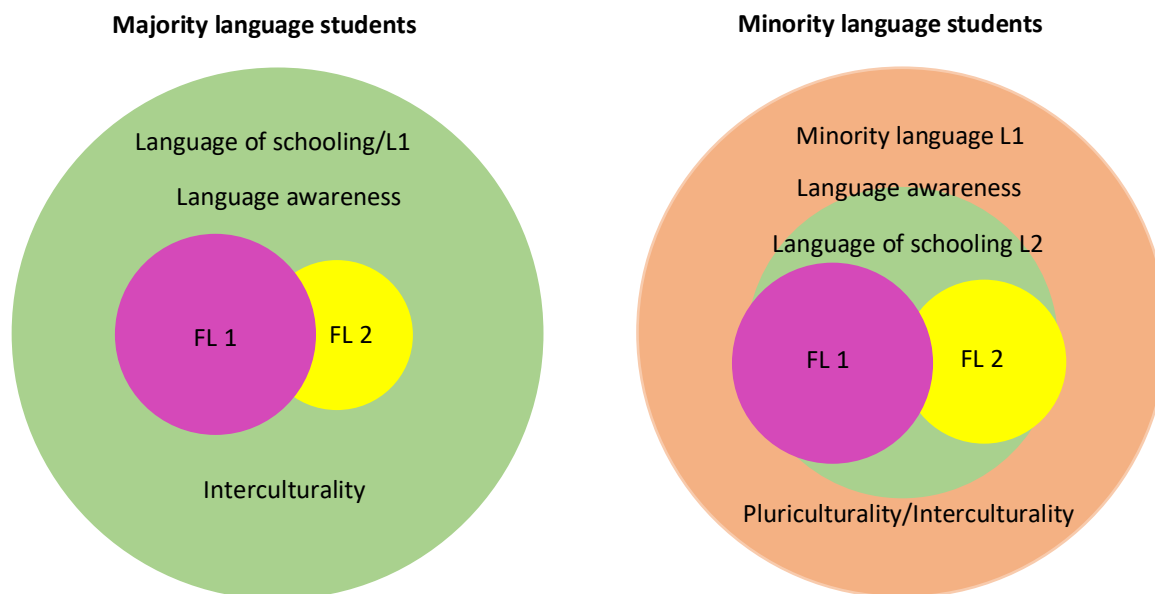


Figure 2 Target repertoires and competences for schools following a plurilingual and pluricultural/intercultural approach

an inclusive education gives them membership of the majority culture, at least in its educational dimension. This, essentially, is what the Council of Europe's Romani/Plurilingual Policy Experimentation is aiming to achieve.

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Listening to the learner's voice: an example of plurilingual and intercultural education in an Irish primary school

Déirdre KIRWAN, formerly principal, Scoil Bhríde (Cailíní), Blanchardstown

Introduction

Recommendation R (2022) 1 asserts that plurilingual and intercultural education

- respects and values linguistic and cultural diversity
 - *Explanatory Memorandum: The languages present in a given institution should be included in all aspects of the educational process*
- promotes language awareness and language sensitivity across the curriculum
 - *Explanatory Memorandum: [Teachers] should encourage learners to draw on the full range of their linguistic and cultural resources ... plurilingual and intercultural education develops pupils' and students' critical culture and language awareness and their literacy*
- encourages learner autonomy and values the learner's voice
 - *Explanatory Memorandum: Giving pupils and students a voice in the educational process is a way of developing their capacity for autonomous learning and critical thinking and thus preparing them for active participation in the democratic process*

In this presentation I shall describe the plurilingual and intercultural approach to primary schooling developed by Scoil Bhríde (Cailíní) (St Brigid's School for Girls), Blanchardstown, Dublin. In 2014–2015 the school had 320 pupils ranging in age from 4½ to 12½ years. Eighty per cent of them came from immigrant families; most of the 80% had little or no English when they started school; and between them they had 51 home languages, mostly unknown to the teachers: Afrikaans, Amharic, Arabic, Bangla, Benin, Bosnian, Cantonese, Cebuano, Dari, Estonian, Farsi, Foula, French, German, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Igbo, Ilonggo, Indonesian, Isoko, Itsekiri, Italian, Kannada, Kinyarwanda, Konkani, Kurdish, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Malay, Malayalam, Mandarin, Marathi, Moldovan, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Shona, Slovakian, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Tamil, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Visayan, Xhosa, Yoruba.

Managing linguistic diversity: an inclusive language policy

This is how a minority-language teenager remembered her first day in Scoil Bhríde:

"I felt all eyes on me as I walked through the school. My dad talked to the principal and she called a teacher over who then took my sweaty hand and led me to my new class. She asked me something in a language I didn't understand – English. I looked at her helplessly. She introduced me to my new classmates, some were smiling and some were observing me from top to bottom. I was asked something again and again. I had no idea what the class teacher said. I never felt so stupid in my life. I couldn't help but think about how I was one of the smartest in my class in my country and now it seemed I would be the thickest. The recognition of this whole situation made me want to run back home, crawl under my bed and never come out again."

Scoil Bhríde's guiding principle in managing linguistic diversity is captured in these words of John Dewey: "The child is the starting point, the centre, and the end. His development, his growth, is the ideal. ... To the growth of the child all studies are subservient ... Personality, character, is more than subject-matter. Not knowledge or information, but self-realisation, is the goal" (Dewey 1902).

The Irish primary school curriculum

In Ireland there are eight years of primary schooling, two preparatory years (Junior and Senior Infants) and six grades (Classes); children start Junior Infants at the age of 4½+ and move to post-primary

school at 12½+. The primary curriculum has the following content: language – English and Irish, French in Fifth and Sixth Class; mathematics; social, environmental and scientific education; arts education; physical education; social, personal and health education; religious and ethical education (the responsibility of the school patron body, in the case of Scoil Bhríde the Roman Catholic Church).

The principles underpinning the Primary School Curriculum coincide broadly with the ethos expressed in Recommendation R (2022) 1 and its Explanatory Memorandum: pupils should realise their full potential as unique individuals (Government of Ireland 1999: 7); “the child’s existing knowledge and experience form the basis for learning” (ibid.: 8); language “helps the child to clarify and interpret experience, to acquire new concepts, and to add depth to the concepts already grasped” (ibid.: 15); “the child is an active agent in his or her learning” (ibid.: 8); the curriculum aims “to enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society” (ibid.:7); and “the life of the home is the most potent factor in [the child’s] development during the primary school years” (ibid.: 24).

Including immigrant pupils’ home languages in the educational process

As the last of these quotations indicates, the Primary School Curriculum assumes a strong link between school and home. EAL pupils (i.e. those for whom English is an additional language) have lived their pre-school years mostly in a language other than English or Irish. Their home language is central to their sense of self, the default medium of their discursive thinking, and ever present in the unspoken stream of their consciousness. To suppress home languages at school is thus cruel, foolish and doomed to failure (Little, cit. European Commission 2020: 14, 15). If EAL pupils are to “realise their full potential as unique individuals”, their home languages must be included in the educational process in ways that benefit *all* pupils.

Scoil Bhríde had an open language policy. EAL pupils were encouraged to use their home languages for whatever purposes seemed to them appropriate, inside as well as outside the classroom. The approach to teaching was dialogic: pupils shared the initiative in classroom discourse. A strong emphasis was placed on the development of literacy skills in English, Irish, French and home languages (this last required the involvement and support of immigrant parents).

Scoil Bhríde’s approach was based on three assumptions:

1. Plurilingual pupils will learn most effectively if they are encouraged to use all the languages at their disposal whenever and however they want to.
2. Even very young children can be trusted to know how to use their home language as a tool of learning.
3. Language awareness is a tool to support learning but also one of education’s most valuable outcomes.

Inclusive plurilingual and intercultural education in action

Home languages can perform three functions in classroom discourse. First, they can serve as the medium of reciprocal communication between pupils with the same or closely related home languages. This begins to happen during the period of play that starts the day in Junior Infants and continues at all levels of the school outside the classroom. In due course home languages can be used in pair or group work (pupils report their results to the teacher and the rest of the class in English). Second, home languages can be used for purposes of display: “This is what we say in my language”. For example, Junior Infants learn to count first in English, then in Irish, and then EAL pupils show the class how they count in their home language. Home languages are used in this way in action games and many other classroom activities. In due course this practice supports the transfer of emerging literacy skills from English and Irish to home languages. Third, home languages are a source of linguistic intuition and insight. For example, a six-year-old Chinese pupil explained: “In English, you find a *door* inside and

a *gate* outside. In my language we use the same word inside and outside”. In Third Class the teacher wrote *octopus* on the whiteboard and asked the class how many legs an octopus has. A nine-year-old Romanian pupil said that *oct-* reminded her of the Irish word *ocht*, so perhaps an octopus has eight legs.

How does language learning happen? In every class one lesson each day is devoted to Irish, and in Fifth and Sixth Class one lesson each week is devoted to French. These lessons give teachers the opportunity to introduce new vocabulary, idioms, etc. *that they will then make use of in their other lessons*. Pupils develop integrated plurilingual repertoires through processes of language socialisation – “learning through praxis – that is, through observation, participation, and performance” (Duff & Talmy 2011: 96). As classroom routines, procedures and activities are mastered in English, they are transferred to Irish, EAL pupils’ home languages, and in due course French. This applies equally to the development of oral proficiency and the acquisition of literacy. Note that the inclusion of home languages helps to ensure that “learners socialise caregivers, teachers, and other ‘experts’ in *their* identities and practices” (Duff & Talmy 2011: 97) and in the process, each class creates its own hybrid culture. Note also that processes of socialisation foster the pupils’ inborn autonomy.

As noted above, the approach to teaching is dialogic. Traditional classroom discourse follows the IRF structure: the teacher *initiates*, the pupils *respond*, the teacher *follows up*. The Primary School Curriculum, however, expects teachers to start from what pupils already know, their “action knowledge” (Barnes 1976). This is elicited by exploratory talk, which creates a learning conversation (Tharp & Galimore 1988) that is dialogic: although the teacher controls the discourse, pupils always have the right to offer initiatives. In the case of EAL pupils, this right is confirmed by encouraging them to use their home languages, which allows them to make a unique contribution. When pedagogy is truly dialogic (Alexander 2020), schooling is a continuous conversation in which every “long turn” can be transformed at any moment into reciprocal talk. All of which means that teachers must be prepared to implement their lesson plans flexibly.

Some examples of emerging language awareness

Because teachers implemented lessons flexibly, pupils felt confident to contribute their insights and ideas. The following examples were provided by pupils in the knowledge that their contributions would be valued.

- Making cross-linguistic semantic connections (Third Class: 8½+): Having listened to a Filipino pupil reading versions of the same story in English, Irish and Tagalog, a pupil of Russian/Nigerian heritage explained that she now knew the word for hedgehog in Tagalog: *parkupino*. She said she worked this out “because it was almost at the end of the story and the spikes [of the hedgehog] reminds me of porcupine’s”.
- The impact of cross-linguistic comparison on pupils’ English vocabulary (Fourth Class: 9½+): In a maths lesson the teacher asked: “What is an oblique line?” A Romanian pupil suggested it was like *oblig* in her language, which meant “something you must do”. The teacher explained the difference between *oblique* and *oblige*. An Irish pupil noted that *obligatory* is like Romanian *oblig*. A Filipino pupil offered *obligate*. A Lithuanian pupil then answered the teacher’s original question: “There’s an oblique line on the end of the letter q.”
- New languages are always interesting (Fifth Class: 10½+): An Irish pupil whose parents had been on holiday in Italy brought an Italian newspaper to school that contained a report on a rugby match between Italy and Ireland. The Special Needs Assistant, who was Italian, read part of the article aloud to the class. The pupils were able to understand many words in the article even though they had not learnt Italian: *verde y bianchi, azzurra, stadio olympico a Roma, ovale, prendo corragio*.

The development of literacy in home languages

In Senior Infants (5½+) teachers provided worksheets that could be completed in English and Irish/home languages. In First Class (6½+) pupils produced simple identity texts in English and their home language. In Second Class (7½+) and Third Class (8½+) dual language texts became more elaborate, and in Third Class some pupils began to write texts in English, Irish and their home language. In Fourth Class (9½+) a Romanian pupil filled six pages of her copybook with a story in English in which several of the characters spoke Romanian. In Fifth Class (10½+) French was added to English, Irish and home languages. And in Sixth Class (11½+) pupils engaged in sophisticated language play and wrote confidently in English, Irish, French and their home language (for examples of pupils' written work, see Little & Kirwan 2019).

Three unexpected bonuses of Scoil Bhríde's plurilingual and intercultural approach

First, the approach had a positive impact on the learning of Irish, which is a new language for all pupils when they start school, so it provides a level playing field. Teachers reported that minority-language pupils began to produce their home languages when the focus switched from English to Irish. Native-born Irish pupils were motivated to think of Irish as their "home language". Scoil Bhríde has a long tradition of using Irish outside as well as inside the classroom, and teachers sometimes use Irish as well as English when dealing with curriculum content. In classroom discourse and in the development of plurilingual literacy, Irish was a "hinge" between English and minority-language pupils' home languages – it acted as the "second language glue" in Scoil Bhríde's version of plurilingual education. We recently learnt that some kindergartens and primary schools in Greece use English as a "bridge" language between Greek as language of schooling and Romani as the pupils' home language.

Second, pupils frequently undertook ambitious language-related projects on their own initiative. We attribute this to the fact that EAL pupils' use of their home languages allowed them to contribute uniquely and autonomously to classroom discourse. In Third Class a Filipino pupil wrote a diary in Irish in the person of her dog Oliver; in Sixth Class a Nigerian pupil spent much of her free time promoting the learning of home languages, while another Nigerian pupil taught herself Spanish.

Third, the inclusion of home languages promotes well-being, self-esteem and social cohesion. When EAL pupils were asked: "What would it be like if you couldn't use your home languages in school?", their answers contained the following keywords: *closed, not fair, terrible, not able to speak, empty, wouldn't understand, pretending, rejecting, devastated, without an arm or a leg, sad, very shocking*. But when they were asked "What are the benefits of using your home languages in school?", they focused overwhelmingly on positives: *possibilities, advantage, exploring, yes!, personal, friendship, knowledge, expanding, closer, warm, spark, point of view, perspective, together, help, learn, supports, great, speak out, be courageous*.

Conclusion

Scoil Bhríde's learning outcomes may be summarised as follows. Pupils achieve high levels of age-appropriate literacy in English, Irish, French and (in the case of EAL pupils) home languages, this last without benefit of instruction. They also develop unusual levels of language awareness and undertake ambitious language-related projects on their own initiative. The inclusion of home languages in the educational process promotes pupil self-esteem, well-being and social cohesion. Scoil Bhríde, moreover, is ranked in the top 12 per cent of schools in the country as regards the teaching and learning of Irish; and in the standardised tests of maths and reading that pupils take each year from First to Sixth Class, Scoil Bhríde consistently performs above the national average

Scoil Bhríde's approach to plurilingual and intercultural education has taught us that pupils develop integrated plurilingual repertoires – written as well as spoken – through processes of language socialisation. As classroom routines, procedures and activities are mastered in English, they are transferred to Irish, EAL pupils' home languages, and in due course French. Pupils from immigrant families become

literate in their home languages without benefit of explicit instruction (though some may attend weekend schools organised by their community). Finally, Scoil Bhríde's plurilingual and intercultural approach is no less motivating for Irish pupils: like their EAL peers, they develop high levels of age-appropriate literacy in English, Irish and French

Viewed from the perspective of the Romani/Plurilingual Policy Experimentation, there may seem to be little in common between an Irish primary school with a highly diverse pupil cohort and primary schools in other countries some of whose pupils come from long-established Romani communities. In particular, Scoil Bhríde doesn't have to cope with high levels of absenteeism and early drop-out. What is more, because Romani is not a written language in the traditional sense, its inclusion in the life of the school presents special challenges. Nevertheless, Scoil Bhríde's experience began and ended with concern for the learner's voice, which released positive motivation and endless energy to learn. Moreover, the principles that shaped our policy and our approach in the classroom are not context-specific: they are general principles that are fundamental to the Council of Europe's (language) education policy.

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Introduction to the participating countries and schools

Greece

The Greek context

Theodora ASTERI, Coordinator of the Scientific Unit for Special and Inclusive Education, Department of Innovative and Inclusive Education, Institute of Educational Policies, Athens; RPPE National Coordinator

Greece has a long-standing commitment to the education of Roma, from the introduction of a universal educational framework for all in PL 1566/1985, through the establishment of intercultural education and reception classrooms in 1999, to the introduction of 21st-century Skills Labs in 2021. Since 2000–2002 the Greek government has co-funded projects on democratic and inclusive education, issued the PL 3879/2010 to combat segregation and socioeconomic disadvantage, implementing Zone of Educational Priority (ZEP) schools, and supported extra-curricular activities in collaboration with local authorities, civil society and European partners. These measures have benefited 1211 elementary and 279 secondary schools up to this year.

National policies that support the educational inclusion of Roma are articulated in three strands: accessibility, recruitment and mitigating poverty; ZEP schools and reception classrooms; and inclusive and intercultural education for all. The Institute of Educational Policies monitors early drop-out and provides feedback; produces and pilots educational materials and tools; develops innovative practices; and supports the professional development of teachers in inclusive intercultural education. The Institute is involved in the Erasmus projects *In'school* (21st-century Inclusive Schools) and *Inclusion 4 Roma*; produces materials in partnership with universities, including an open-access platform for intercultural education; and provides professional development for teachers in all grades and disciplines on differentiation and inclusive intercultural education. It also has educational partnerships with UNICEF, the Council of Europe (European Wergeland Centre), and universities.

The Greek part of the Romani/Plurilingual Policy Experimentation will be implemented within the framework of the 21st-century Skills Lab, which focuses on learning by doing and project-based learning, encourages new ways of thinking and critical thinking, explores new ways of working, and promotes well-being in the everyday life of the classroom. The Skills Lab digital platform is structured like this:

- Well-being: action plans on self-care and health education
 - Food and nutrition education
 - Mental health
 - Sexuality education
 - Self-care and prevention, road safety awareness
 - Prevention of drug abuse
- Environment: turn the green light on to a greener planet
 - Environmental awareness
 - Climate change
 - Natural disaster preparedness and education
 - World and local cultural heritage
 - Sustainable development
- Social empathy and accountability: get involved, cooperate, act
 - Human rights and inclusion
 - Volunteering
 - Mutual respect and diversity
- Create and innovate: develop new ideas, generate new solutions

- Create, innovate, grow
- STEM/STEAM

The Greek schools participating in the RPPE will explore the relation between language education and inclusivity and the co-construction of meaning in interaction. They will adopt an action-oriented approach, which views the learner as a social agent, fostering the development of plurilingual and intercultural competence in learning environments shaped by the principle of differentiation. All participating schools have ZEP experience and are accustomed to working with the wider community. Their expertise will enable them to contribute to the evolving methodology of the RPPE.

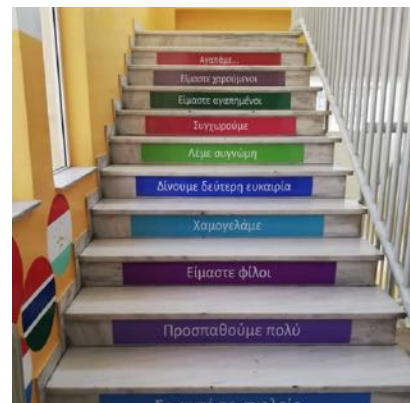
Participating schools

7th Elementary School of Chania



Chania is the second largest city of Crete and is located in the north west of the island; it retains traditional customs, history and monuments and is a popular tourist destination. Founded in 1939, the 7th Elementary School has six classrooms, one for each grade. Altogether there are 79 students from diverse linguistic backgrounds: Greek, Albanian, Syrian, Russian, Ukrainian, and Romani (7 pupils). The school offers additional

support both individually and in groups; support in language learning is provided in collaboration with the University of Crete and the National Kapodistrian University of Athens. The school also participates in the programme “Supportive interventions in Roma communities for the enhancement of accessibility and reducing drop-out by Romani children and teenagers”. There is a focus on experiential learning, and projects include planting the school garden, organising an exhibition of folk music instruments, “Plant seeds – observe – taste Cretan cuisine”, and projects in recycling and road safety education. The school library has more than 278 books. The school has undertaken actions directed specifically at the Roma community: tree planting, providing support for families, producing plays. The school promotes and embraces plurilingualism, integration, social inclusion, and respect for diversity of origin and nationality.



4th Primary School of Amaliada

Amaliada is the second largest city in Iliia and the seat of the municipality of Ilida; it has a population of 16,000. Built in 1935, the 4th Primary School is the oldest of the city’s six primary schools. It is near ancient Olympia, the birthplace of civilisation and the spirit of the Olympic Games, and Ilida, where the Olympic athletes started their training. Previously the school had about 230 pupils, but in recent years numbers have decreased and the teaching departments have been reduced by half. Currently there are 16 teachers: eight class teachers, two foreign language teachers, one teacher each for physical education, music, drama, computer studies and special needs, and one social worker. In addition, there are four ancillary staff. Of the school’s 120 pupils, 95% are Roma. The school’s motto is “Our rich diversity is our collective strength”.



Our Roma students speak a variety of Romani at home. Although some of them have difficulties with the language of schooling, mainly in writing, this doesn't impede their educational progress. The main challenge for the school and its teachers is to use methods that make Roma students feel they are accepted as equals and encourage them to progress to secondary school. Roma students who have difficulties with the language of schooling can attend reception classes (ZEP) that focus on the learning of Greek

and provide support in other subjects. The school collaborates, moreover, with the University of Patras on the programme "Inclusive Schools for Roma". This program includes teachers' professional development and support, with psychologists and social workers helping to meet the diverse needs of Roma pupils. The school's website (<https://blogs.sch.gr/4dimamal/>) is a key communication tool.

The school aspires to strengthen ties with members of the Roma community in order to achieve the essential goal of integrating its pupils into society. Securing the active participation of parents and pupils in the life of the school is central to its policy, as is the establishment of a culture of responsibility. Representatives of the municipality are invited to participate in this effort. The school also invites Roma parents to participate voluntarily in activities aimed at revitalising school and community life; such activities focus, for example, on environmental issues, health and safety, and new technologies.

The school takes many measures to help Roma pupils to benefit from the intercultural character of the pupil cohort: cultural festivals; learning more about the different backgrounds of pupils; events with guests and motivational speakers from different backgrounds. The most important challenge Romani pupils face is their active participation in school and community life. Bridging the knowledge gap with other students and meeting the requirements of the curriculum helps them feel accepted and creates opportunities for their personal development.



10th Primary School of Nea Ionia, Volos

Volos is the capital of Magnesia in south eastern Thessaly and is one of the largest cities and most important ports in Greece. It is located on the Pagasitikos Gulf, near the site of ancient Iolkos, from where the mythical Argonauts set sail on their quest, and at the foot of Mount Pelion, home of the mythical centaurs.

The 10th Primary School traditionally serves a large number of Roma students, who comprise the overwhelming majority of its cohort. For the past decade the school has had 15 classes and has provided for reception, integration and preparatory groups. Additional extracurricular support is provided



by a students' internship program supported by the University of Thessaly. The school's students come from the area of Nea Ionia, from the Roma settlement Aliveri, from immigrant families, and from the shelter for abused women. The teaching staff comprises: 23 class teachers, four foreign language teachers, two psychologists/social workers, one teacher for special education, and four other teachers (ICT, music, art).

The school has participated in three Erasmus+ projects:

- 2021-2022: "The contribution of the school community in preventing ghettoisation – marginalisation/social racism against Roma students"
- 2017-2018: "Primary education as a means of avoiding juvenile delinquency and social exclusion of Roma students"
- 2016-2017: "School dropout of Roma students associated with/concerning their school performance and their family"

The school has also participated in projects organised by the local church (Holy Metropolis of Dimitrias) and in the project "Supporting interventions in Roma communities aiming at the reinforcement of access and reduction of school dropout concerning children and adolescents in the Region of Thessaly", funded by the Ministry of Education and Religion and carried out by the University of Thessaly.



12th Primary School of Komotini

The school presented itself in a short video that began with a traditional song from Thrace entitled "To Margoudi kai o Alexandris". The school is located in Komotini, which is the capital city of the prefecture Rodopi in Thrace, northeast Greece. Komotini is a multicultural town with a substantial heritage where Christians and Muslims live together in harmony.

The 12th Primary School was founded in 2009. It is located behind the local hospital, just a few minutes from the city centre. It is a prefabricated building which serves the educational needs of Roma. All the pupils are Roma and are trilingual in Greek, Turkish and Romani. There are ten classrooms in the school, one computer lab and two rooms that serve as offices for the teaching staff. The school serves 164 pupils. The staff comprises: the head teacher, eight class teachers, one reception class teacher, nine teachers of other specialisations, and one social worker.





The school collaborates with the Primary School Board, Democritus University of Thrace, and the Department of History and Archaeology in the programme “Support interventions in the Roma communities with a view to encouraging accessibility and reducing school dropout”. This takes place in the afternoon on the school premises; it includes a student internship from the Department of Social Work. The school also collaborates with the community centre of the Prefecture of Rodopi for the prevention of addictions and the use of substances, *Orfeas*.

The song heard in the video was part of the school’s participation in a cultural event organised by the municipality of Komotini. At the end of the video the pupils recited a poem in Romani by Ioannis G Alexiou. The English translation is as follows:

*Our language
Language, brothers, is what unites us.
Language, brothers, is what differentiates us on earth.
Romani, full of rhythm.
Roma, look for the words and you will discover the paths that we have walked.*

Slovakia

The Slovak context

Kálmán PETŐCZ, Department of National Minorities and Lifelong Learning, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports

Gabriel KRIŠKO, RPPE National Coordinator

Slovakia has been an independent state since 1 January 1993. Its territory covers an area of 49,036 km², its population is 5,449,270 (2021 census), and it shares borders with the Czech Republic, Poland, Ukraine, Hungary and Austria. Slovakia is a member of the United Nations (1993), the Council of Europe (1993), the OECD (2000), the European Union (2004), NATO (2004), and the European Agency on Inclusive Education (2014).

According to the Atlas of Roma Communities (2019), the Roma ethnic group in Slovakia numbers between 400 and 440 thousand. Figure 1 shows its geographical distribution.

The constitution of the Slovak Republic (1992) bans discrimination, allows citizens to choose the national group to which they affiliate, and

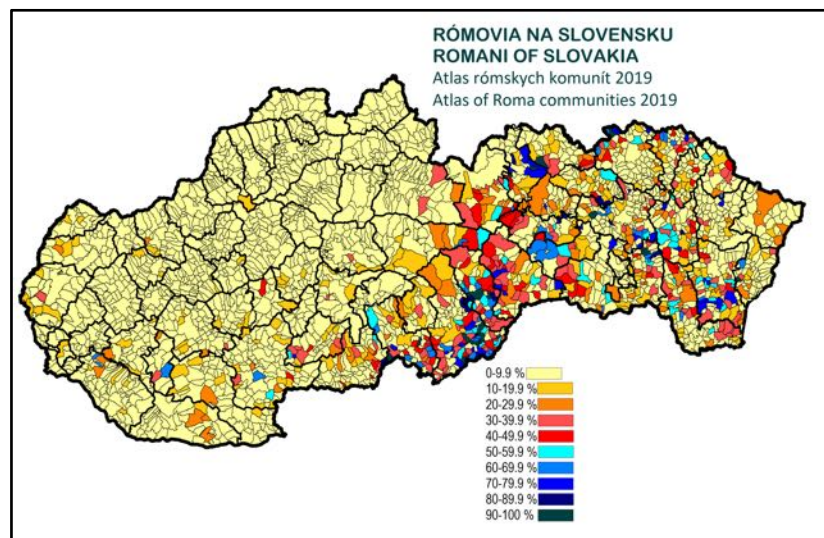


Figure 1 Geographical distribution of Roma communities in Slovakia

recognises the rights of national minorities to use their own language and pursue their own culture. The law on education makes special provision for the children of socially disadvantaged groups, promotes inclusive education, and supports national minority schools. The Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities is responsible for developing and coordinating Roma-related policy, providing practical assistance, and undertaking field work. Roma issues are also addressed by the Governmental Council on Human Rights through its Committee on National Minorities and Ethnic Groups and its Committee against Racism and Xenophobia. Four arms of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports concern themselves with the education of Roma: the Directorate of National Minority Schools, the Directorate of Inclusive Education, the Division of Preschool Education and Primary Schools, and ROCEPO (the Romani Educational Centre, Prešov). Approximately a quarter of the Fund for National Minority Cultures is allocated to Romani culture, and Romani language and culture are promoted by the following institutions: the Institute of Romani Studies (Ústav romologických štúdií), Nitra; the Institute for Romani Studies of the Centre for National Minority Languages and Cultures at the University of Prešov; Romathan (the Roma Theatre, Košice); and the Roma school in Kremnica.

Two policy documents focus specifically on the social and educational inclusion of Roma, the Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma 2030 (adopted in October 2021), which is concerned with education, health, employment, housing, and discrimination, and the Strategy for Inclusive Education 2030 (also adopted in October 2021). Action plans for both strategies are due to be adopted in the near future.

The national project PRIM supports the inclusion of children from marginalised Roma communities in pre-primary education. Phase 2 of the project, PRIM II, is currently underway; it involves 150 municipalities in seven self-governing regions. The main objectives of PRIM II are to increase the number of children from Roma communities attending kindergarten, to ensure that Roma have equal access to quality mainstream education (Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma 2030), to implement the amendment of the Education Act (1 January 2021) that provides for compulsory pre-primary education, and to provide staff and develop professional capacity. In pursuit of these goals, PRIM II employs professional and pedagogical support staff; parent assistants prepare families and their children for entry to pre-primary education; and inclusive teams ensure sustainable conditions for the integration and inclusion of children in kindergartens. Expert advice and evaluation are provided by experts in the field of inclusive education.

PRIM II provides participating kindergartens with a stable inclusive team, funding for staff salaries, and methodological and professional support from the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities. The project organises training events that facilitate the sharing of experience and the exchange of practice. Allocated funds can be used to cover the cost of equipment. PRIM II has seen an increase in the number of children from marginalised Roma communities graduating from kindergartens; an increase in the number of teaching and professional staff in participating kindergartens; improved communication and cooperation with parents; and improved cooperation with the helping professions.

Participating schools

Kružlová Elementary School

Kružlová Elementary School includes all nine primary grades. It has 19 teachers and six support staff and is located in a beautiful setting, in the northern part of the Low Beskydy Mountains, in the Svidničianka river valley. The language of instruction is Slovak, and 139 of the 143 pupils are Roma. They



speak Romani at home, but they also use Ruthenian in the village. The school has taught Romani since the school year 2018–2019, and in addition to Slovak and Romani, it also teaches English and Russian. The school is well equipped to develop pupils’ physical fitness and they have an additional lesson in physical education each year. To support the development of practical skills the school has a wood and metal workshop and a kitchen, and pupils take an additional subject, Home

and Work. Sixty-eight of the pupils come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and 19 have various learning difficulties. Pupils spend their free time in the after-school club, the leisure centre and Primary Art School. In cooperation with parents and the local community the school organises an annual programme of activities to present Romani and Ruthenian culture and cuisine.



Ľudmila Podjavorinská Elementary School



Ľudmila Podjavorinská Elementary School, Košice, provides for all nine primary grades. It first opened its doors on 1 September 1983 with 218 pupils and 15 classes. The number of pupils increased every year, and in 2002–2003 an extension was opened with 18 classrooms, two gymnasiums and a swimming pool. In 2007–2008 the school added workshops that were equipped with the help of US Steel a. s. Košice. In 2009–2010 the school had 1098 pupils, 35 classes at primary level I, 13 classes at primary level II, and 10 special classes for pupils with learning difficulties. In 2021–2022 the school has 807 pupils, of whom 96 are external, following a personalised curriculum and learning remotely. The school operates under the leadership of the director, Mgr. Iveta Rošková.

The school aims to produce graduates who can work efficiently and evaluate the results of their work, have mastered the basic principles of work culture, can prepare the workplace and maintain order, can plan work creatively, and know how to observe safety and hygiene regulations at work.

Pupils at primary level II regularly participate in sporting events under the guidance of Mgr. Stanislav Striženec.

Extracurricular activities are pursued through clubs: art, choir, sport through play, and the club Playful Ring.



Vilko Šulek Elementary school

Vilko Šulek Elementary School is located on the outskirts of Hlohovec. The school is attended by children from the marginalised Romani community (40%) and children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Currently the school has 163 pupils in 11



classes – four classes at primary level I, five classes at primary level II, and two classes for children with learning difficulties.



Pupils learn two foreign languages, English from grade 1 and German from grade 7. In the afternoons, after-school clubs are organised in two departments and there are six activities in sport, informatics and art. The school aims to create a family atmosphere in which all pupils feel comfortable and to provide equal access to education, sports and cultural activities for all pupils.

Elementary School, Záhorská Ves

The elementary school in Záhorská Ves provides for all nine primary grades; it has 204 pupils and 25 staff. Slovak is the language of instruction, and pupils learn two foreign languages, English from grade 1 and German from grade 7. The school aims to create a family atmosphere and to provide students with a well-rounded education using the latest information and communication technologies.



Záhorská Ves is the westernmost municipality in Slovakia, adjacent to the Austrian municipality of Angern. Its geographical location allows the school to develop Slovak–Austrian relations by cooperating with schools in Angern, Weikendorf and Gänserndorf.

The school's greatest satisfaction is when pupils attend with joy, thanks to the dedicated work of their teachers. In photographs included in the presentation the faces of the children show how much they love and respect their teachers, who aim to prepare them for life. The school achieves excellent results.



Teachers know that not every child is easy to educate, but they look for what their pupils can do best and help them to experience a sense of achievement, which they reinforce through praise and appreciation.

Slovenia

Introduction

Natalija Komljanc, national coordinator, in cooperation with participating schools, a representative of the Ministry of Education, and the Roma community

In Slovenia the educational inclusion of Roma is regulated by the Resolution on National Language Policy (2021–2025), the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy (2019–2030), and the National Programme of Action for Roma (2021–2030), which aims to increase the participation of Roma children in pre-school education programmes.

Between ten and twelve thousand Roma live in Slovenia. In the 2002 census 3246 persons identified themselves as Roma and 3834 identified themselves as speakers of Romani. The different groups of Roma included in the Romani/Plurilingual Policy Experimentation are Prekmurje (Austrian or Hungarian Roma), Dolenjska (Croatian Roma), Balkan or urban Roma, and some European Roma travellers.

In 2020 a survey carried out by Samanta Baranja established that the Prekmurje variety of Romani is slowly dying out in some settlements, the Dolenjska variety is mixed with Slovene and Croatian, and Balkan Romani is represented in the larger Slovenian cities and is slowly taking over as the language of the community. Romani is spoken in Roma settlements; most of the children and parents interviewed understood Romani and spoke it as their home language. Some children and parents, especially in the Prekmurje area, understood Romani but did not use it. Romani is spoken mainly by the older generations, which means that they live in a bilingual or multilingual environment where Romani and the Prekmurje dialect are intertwined. Most people interviewed in the survey said that they were proud of their knowledge of Romani, even if they did not use it on a daily basis. Only a few said that they were ashamed of the language and avoided using it at home and in public. A few parents forbade their children to speak Romani, believing that to do so would detract from their academic results.

At school, pupils speak Romani during breaks and when they want others not to understand them. Few pupils or parents feel that there are schools that do not encourage or allow pupils to speak Romani because the language of instruction is Slovene. The majority of respondents to the 2020 survey supported the teaching of Romani at school because they were interested in the history and culture of Roma and in preserving the Romani language.

Inclusion is a daily occurrence in the Slovenian schools participating in the RPPE (only one of them does not have a Roma teaching assistant). In terms of linguistic profile, DOŠ Dobrovnik includes Roma pupils who do not speak Romani; the other three schools include Roma pupils who speak Romani fluently and understand Slovene; OŠ Škocjan includes Roma who do not speak Slovene on entry.

The four participating schools agree that relations with parents are the key to successful inclusion. Mothers in particular are increasingly interested in their children's education, to which they attach great value. The schools encourage plurilingualism because it enriches the learning environment. They find that pupils socialise with each other, especially the younger ones. The goal of increasing Roma participation in kindergarten remains.

All pupils, including Roma, are included in the extended primary school curriculum and in extracurricular activities (Roma like to perform). Relations with the Roma community and associations are good. In some areas, there are mixed marriages; education is even more strongly advocated there, and knowledge of the Slovene language is not an obstacle, nor is learning other languages. When it comes to pupils with special needs, school counsellors work more intensively with Roma parents to provide additional support and to develop plans or programmes of work tailored to the individual needs of each pupil. However, parents prefer their children not to be reassigned to a lower programme. Roma pupils tend to be especially talented in art, music and dance, and they enjoy mathematics, especially in the lower grades. English teachers report that Roma pupils are more able to speak English and generally get higher grades.

In descending order of importance, participating schools agree that the following factors impact on the learning performance of Romani pupils:

- Parental support and a stimulating home environment
- Peer acceptance
- Individual support for the pupil
- Motivation to learn
- Musical expression
- Positive feedback, praise
- Open learning environment, with play to bridge gaps in understanding
- Attendance, presence in school
- Understanding the language of instruction
- Self-initiative
- Didactic materials

In descending order of importance, the participating schools also agreed that improved learning outcomes for Romani pupils depends on the following factors:

- Parental support
- Acceptance by peers, school and the community
- The individual pupil's motivation, interest and initiative
- Encouragement – praise and positive feedback
- Learning through play, movement, dance, nature, learning magnets
- Language proficiency and the impact of reading and storytelling

Participating schools

Fran Matelka Elementary School

Fran Matelka Elementary School presented itself in a video that began with children waking up to go to school, then walking into the school.

Pupil 1: Welcome to our school.

Pupil 2: Our school is located in the south eastern part of Slovenia, in Škocjan, an attractive city that is interesting in its diversity. Partly covered in forests, the Dolenjska hills rise above narrow valleys. Some of the hills are an earthly paradise for busy winegrowers.

Pupil 3 (who spoke English): Just as our place is interesting and pleasant, so is everyday life at our school. Extensive lessons playfully lead us to acquire new knowledge.

Pupil 4 (who spoke German): We sing, dance, solve hard mathematical problems, do various sports, discover the treasure chest of our literature, observe nature, learn about the lives of our ancestors, cook and explore the universe.

Pupil 5 (who spoke Romani): Each of us represents a piece of the school mosaic, each of us represents a proud Metelkar, a member of Fran Metelko Elementary School.

Teacher 1 to pupil 5: Write that number ... that is a denominator.

Pupil 5: Mitja is our Roma assistant. He helps us with schoolwork.





Teaching assistant: Hello! I'm Teja. I'm a former student of Fran Metelko Elementary School. Now I work here helping students in first grade with their schoolwork.

A video sequence showed pupils working with models, e.g. of planets showing the solar system, and mechanical construction, gymnastics, art and dance. The concluding sequence showed pupils leaving the school.

Pupil: How nice it is at school!

France Prešeren Črenšovci Primary School

Črenšovci is in the north eastern part of Slovenia. France Prešeren Črenšovci Primary School has been awarded a number of titles: Eco School, Symbiosis School, Cultural School, European Talent Point, Healthy School, UNESCO School. It has 13 classes, 205 pupils (27 of them Roma), 37 teachers and support staff, and 2 Romani employees. The associated kindergarten has 112 pupils (19 of them Roma), 17 teachers and support staff, and 2 Romani employees. Roma children like to present their language to their peers. The school organises workshops with teachers in school breaks and holidays. The Roma community has a representative on the municipal council of Črenšovci. World Roma Day is celebrated on 8 April.



Janko Padežnik Primary School, Maribor



Janko Padežnik Primary School is 145 years old and has been attended by many generations from the local community, which considers the school its own. Today there is increasing demand for places at the school. The school is multicultural and at an early age, pupils learn mutual tolerance and understanding. Linguistic and cultural diversity is not an obstacle to school life but rather an advantage, as evidenced by the school's numerous awards. The school experiences multilingualism and multiculturalism on a daily basis, and this works against stereotypes and promotes acceptance of diversity. The school is inclusive and tolerant, respecting the individuality of each pupil. Pupils, including Roma and foreigners, teach one another. A respectful attitude to ethnic identity and culture motivates pupils to continue their education. Romani culture is changing with the changing generations, releasing individuals from traditional constraints.

Bilingual Primary School, Dobrovnik

The video opened with a montage of clips showing pupils arriving at school and engaging in a wide range of school activities.

Teacher 1: What is our school's name?

Pupils chant (in Slovenian and Hungarian): Bilingual Elementary School, Dobrovnik.

Pupil 1 (in Slovenian): I talk, dream and think in Slovene.

Pupil 2 (in Hungarian): I talk, read and count in Hungarian.

Pupil 3 (in German): I play, learn and do homework in German.

Pupil 4 (in English): I read instructions, watch films and play video games in English.

Young pupils chant in Slovenian and Hungarian: In class we talk and learn in Slovenian and Hungarian.

The video continued with a further montage of school activities in classrooms, labs and the mensa, followed by shots of bee keeping, winter sports, climbing, pupils on a school outing.

Unseen interviewer: What do you like about our school?

Teacher 2: The teachers, the pupils, the teachers' lounge, colleagues.

Unseen interviewer: What do you like about our school?

Teacher 3: Working with children.

Teacher 4: A nice community, good pupils, we collaborate very well.

Teacher 5 (in German): The best thing about our school is the pupils and the teachers.

Unseen interviewer: What do you like about our school?

Pupil 5 (spinning a globe): Geography.

Pupil 6 (in English): The English class.

Pupil 7: Theatre club and art class.

Pupil 8: Free periods.

Other pupils: Theatre! ... The breaks ... History ... The library ... Hungarian class ... Friends ... Big classrooms ... Mathematics.

Teacher 6: The thing I like the most is the fact that I can teach in a bilingual school. I feel that the majority of the pupils accept this. This is very important because we know that a child who talks and thinks in two languages will have more opportunities and may reach more or higher achievements in life.

Pupils one after another: One with another ... together we live in coexistence and harmony ... Long live all the nations!

The video concludes with a third montage with traditional song playing in background.



Appendix

Conference programme

09.00	Registration
09.30 – 10.15	<p>Welcome and introduction</p> <p>Villano QIRIAZI, Head of the Education Department, Council of Europe (tbc)</p> <p>Opening remarks</p> <p>Matjaz GRUDEN, Director of Democratic Participation, Council of Europe</p> <p>Thorsten AFFLERBACH, Head of the Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Programmes Division, Council of Europe</p> <p>Alexandros KOPTISIS, Secretary-General of Primary, Secondary and Special Education, Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Greece</p> <p>Svetlana SÍTHOVÁ, State Secretary for the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic</p> <p>Damir OREHOVEC, State Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia</p> <p>Timea JUNGHAUS, Executive Director, European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture</p>
10.15 – 10.30	<p>Introduction to the policy experimentation</p> <p>Michael REMMERT, Head of the Education Policy Division, Council of Europe</p>
10.30 – 11.00	<p>Romani: a European minority language</p> <p>Helena SADÍLKOVÁ, Diana SIMA and Zuzana BODNAROVA, Council of Europe Experts</p>
11.00 – 11.15	Break
11.15 – 11.45	<p>The Council of Europe’s plurilingual and intercultural approach to education</p> <p>David LITTLE, Academic Coordinator of RPPE</p>
11.45 – 12.15	<p>The plurilingual and intercultural approach in action: an example from Ireland</p> <p>Déirdre KIRWAN, formerly principal, Scoil Bhríde (Cailíní), Blanchardstown, Dublin</p>
12.15 – 12.30	Questions and discussion
12.30 – 14.00	Break
14.00 – 14.50	<p>Greece: Introduction to the educational situation of Roma and presentation of participating schools</p> <p>Theodora Asteri, National Coordinator</p>
14.50 – 15.40	<p>Slovak Republic: Introduction to the educational situation of Roma and presentation of participating schools</p> <p>Kálmán PETŐCZ, Department of National Minorities and Lifelong Learning, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports</p> <p>Gabriel KRIŠKO, National Coordinator</p>
15.40 – 15.55	Break
15.55 – 16.40	<p>Slovenia: Integration of Roma in school system and presentation of participating schools</p> <p>Natalija KOMLJANC, National Coordinator</p>
16.40 – 17.00	Close of the conference