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**AD HOC COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON ROMA AND TRAVELLER ISSUES<sup>1</sup> (CAHROM)**

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**THEMATIC VISIT ON THE PROTECTION, PRESERVATION AND TEACHING OF LANGUAGES  
SPOKEN BY ROMA, BOYASH, SINTI, KAALE AND YENISH  
(INCLUDING WAYS TO HANDLE THE OPPOSITION OF TRADITIONAL COMMUNITIES TO HAVE THEIR  
LANGUAGE WRITTEN AND TAUGHT)**

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**REPORT OF THE THEMATIC GROUP OF EXPERTS  
FOLLOWING THE THEMATIC VISIT TO GRAZ, AUSTRIA, ON 29-31 MARCH 2017**

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<sup>1</sup> The term "Roma and Travellers" is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term "Gens du voyage", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.

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## TABLE CONTENTS

<b>I. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>page 4</b>
1.1 Context of the thematic report and visit	page 4
1.2 Composition of the thematic group	page 4
1.3 Programme of the thematic visit and main issues addressed	page 4
1.4 Language(s)' situation in countries participating in the visit	page 5
<b>II. EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND REFERENCE TEXTS</b>	<b>page 6</b>
2.1 At the level of the Council of Europe	page 6
2.2 Other European/international standards and reference texts	page 6
<b>III. SITUATION OF LANGUAGES</b>	<b>page 7</b>
3.1 Groups and languages	page 7
3.2 Language documentation	page 8
3.3 Public language use	page 9
3.4 Language in education	page 10
3.5 Teaching in/of Romani	page 10
3.6. Teaching of Romani and the Council of Europe	page 14
3.7 The Curriculum Framework for Romani (CFR)	page 14
3.8 Quality Education in Romani for Europe (QualiRom)	page 15
<b>IV. CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNED, GOOD PRACTICES, AND ENVISAGED FOLLOW-UP</b>	<b>page 16</b>
4.1 Preparation of the thematic visit by the requesting country	page 16
4.2 Conclusions of the thematic group of experts	page 16
4.3 Lessons learnt by the experts	page 18
4.4 Good practices identified	page 21
4.5 Envisaged follow-up	page 22
4.6. Recommendations to the Council of Europe (CAHROM and COMEX)	page 23
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	<b>page 24</b>
<i>Appendix 1: Official invitation letter</i>	<i>page 24</i>
<i>Appendix 2: Programme of the CAHROM thematic visit in Austria</i>	<i>page 24</i>
<i>Appendix 3: List of experts and participants in the thematic visit</i>	<i>page 24</i>
<i>Appendix 4: Questionnaire on languages' situation in participating countries</i>	<i>page 24</i>

## I. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Context of the thematic report and visit

Due to high interest expressed by several countries after the first CAHROM thematic visit *on the protection and promotion of the languages spoken by Roma*, organized in Zagreb, Međimurje County, Croatia, on 24 - 26 September 2014 and its findings<sup>2</sup> CAHROM decided to continue overview of languages' situation. Current discourse on Roma situation in Europe is mainly focusing on their socio-economic situation thus the cultural dimension, cultural heritage and cultural contribution of Roma and related groups into the European cultural heritage is often underestimated and/or at least unappreciated.

Although relevant languages are spoken among millions of users in Europe and outside, due to the differences among the users' ethnic origins, cultural backgrounds, lack of language(s) standardisation, low level of education among the users, lack of properly prepared teachers and teaching materials, the different levels of official recognition as language(s) of minorities, etc. – the situation of those languages is precarious and unsafe. Moreover, usually the national strategies for Roma inclusion in many European countries do not cover linguistic dimension of the Roma identity.

### 1.2. Composition of the thematic group

Thanks to Austrian invitation to host the visit in Graz - the cooperation with CoE European Centre for Modern Languages and with Graz University enriched the visit not only with experts' experience but also with materials on teaching of Roma languages prepared on the occasion of *QualiRom* project<sup>3</sup>.

Experts participating in the visit represented wide range of entities: mainly sociolinguists, linguists, Roma language teachers and persons responsible for education of national/ethnic minorities at the national/federal/local levels, CAHROM members, members of CoE Committee of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and university lecturers conducting Roma studies, including Roma languages.

### 1.3. Programme of the thematic visit and main issues addressed

Due to the high number of participating experts (see: *Appendix 3*) agenda (see: *Appendix 2*) focused on exchange among the experts on the language(s) situation in respective countries in terms of legal possibilities offered by national and international legislations for national/ethnic minorities/groups and perspectives of language teaching development, including the willingness to be taught among Roma themselves.

One of the most important features defined during discussions was the transgenerational differences in language(s) use, analysed by experts and the level of communities' involvement into the process of maintaining the cultural identity through the mother tongue teaching.

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<sup>2</sup> Report from the visit available on: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/cahrom>

<sup>3</sup> Details on *QualiRom*: referred in part III.

Another issue was the problem of standardisation of the language (s) – to what extent its existence (or not) is important (or not) for using the language, especially in the light of many language(s) varieties among different groups.

Prerequisite in this context for the preservation, promotion and teaching of the language (s) is existence of qualified teachers, possibly native speakers, and their trainings. Another crucial point is preparing school curricula, textbooks and teaching materials for formal (or not formal) education. Plurilingual and plurilinguistic approach towards languages used by related groups was mentioned often as the way to include related languages into the repertoire of languages contributing to cultural heritage of Europe.

Finally, the problem of strong opposition among Roma, Sinti and Yenish elderly to have their languages taught in formal education on the one side was reported, and on the other side – the will of many parents towards the education in other languages (like English, etc.). In some excluded communities mother tongue is perceived as an obstacle in process of integration which results in rapidly diminishing level of its knowledge among youth and the youngest generation.

To make the discussion more efficient the questionnaire was distributed among the experts prior to the visit and on that basis the comparative analysis was prepared on: the language(s) spoken by relevant communities, on the public use of related language(s) in administration, media, education, judiciary, etc., on the language(s) situation: vitality, indigenous groups/migrant use, etc., on codification situation, teaching and problems defined.

During the visit above mentioned survey on the situation of the languages spoken by *Roma*, *Sinti* and *Yenich* served to define examples of good strategies/practices in language protection, examples of good strategies/practices in language teaching, on defining strategies how to deal with negative attitudes of speakers towards language visibility and finally on the possible strategies for the improvement of the situation of the languages.

#### **1.4. Language(s)' situation in countries participating in the visit: Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Poland, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Switzerland**

See: Appendix 4

## II. EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND REFERENCE TEXTS

### 2.1 At the level of the Council of Europe

- The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages<sup>4</sup> (hereinafter: Charter)
- Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities<sup>5</sup> (herein after: FCNM)
- The Language rights of the persons belonging to national minorities under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Thematic commentary No. 3, 2012, Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of national minorities (ACFC/44DOC(2012)001 rev)
- The European Language Portfolio (hereinafter: ELP)<sup>6</sup>
- Report of the Thematic visit on the protection and promotion of the languages spoken by Roma, Zagreb, Međimurje County, Croatia, 24 - 26 September 2014<sup>7</sup>

### 2.2 Other European/international standards and reference texts

#### UNESCO

- Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003
- Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, 2005
- Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.coe.int/en/web/european-charter-regional-or-minority-languages/home>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/home>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/cahrom>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/>

### III. SITUATION OF LANGUAGES

#### 3.1 Groups and languages

The languages of the *Roma* are *Romani* and *Boyash*:

- *Romani* is an Europeanised Indo-Aryan language and is a heterogeneous cluster of varieties or rather dialects which are shaped by contact with the dominant languages of the countries or regions of residence. In each of the countries listed in the following table, more than one *Romani* dialect is spoken, and those may differ significantly<sup>9</sup>.
- The *Boyash* language, also *Bayash*, in Hungary *Beás*, subsumes archaic Romanian dialects preserved as ethnic languages by linguistically assimilated *Romani* migrants from Romania. The single varieties of *Boyash* are characterised by elements of the dominant languages of the particular country of immigration/residence.

*Sinti* label their language *Romanes* which linguistically is a dialect cluster of *Romani*. However, as *Sinti* are the earliest immigrants to the German cultural sphere with dialects strongly shaped by German and a self-definition as "German Gypsies", they tend to strictly separate themselves from other *Romani* speakers.

As much the same can be said of the *Sinti*-related Finnish *Kaale*,<sup>10</sup> their language *Kaalo* is subsumed under *Romanes* in the table.

From a linguistic point of view, *Yenish* varieties are dialects of German with special vocabularies and are treated as such in Austria and Germany. In Switzerland *Yenish* has the status of a recognised language.

LANGUAGE \ COUNTRY	AT	BiH	CH	CZ	DE	FI	PL	SK	SL
<i>BOYASH</i>	few/C	few/C	?	∅	?	∅	∅	∅	∅
<i>ROMANI</i>	10k+/O+	10k+/O+	10k+/C	10k+/O+	10k+/O+	1k-/C	10k+/O+	10k+/O+	10k+/O+
<i>ROMANES/KAALO</i>	1k+/O+	?	1k+/C	few/O+	10k+/C	1k+/O+	1k-/O+	few/O+	few/O+
<i>YENISH</i>	1k-/C-	∅	10k+/O+	∅	10k-/C-	∅	∅	∅	∅

k 1000 / thousand

C status = community language = no official status

C- status = community dialect = no language & no official status

O+ status = official (national) (minority) language protected under the Charter

∅ no users' presence

As both: official census data of *Boyash*, *Kaale*, *Roma*, *Sinti* and *Yenish* people and unofficial numbers by NGOs are inaccurate, numerical data of speakers of the respective minority languages are even more unreliable<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, only estimations by a number of ten are used. The label "few" stands for some families who might use the particular language.

<sup>9</sup>For further information on *Romani* see: <http://romafacts.uni-graz.at/index.php/language/general-introduction/general-introduction.html>

<sup>10</sup> *Kaale* < rom. *kalo* 'black'.

<sup>11</sup> To avoid widespread convictions on "state ethnic data manipulation" it must be underlined here that "official data" in this context reflects exclusively the number of self-declarations (on ethnicity or mother tongue/language used at home) in national censuses. However, apart from "official data" - census - states can use also the estimates.

The *UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* defines *Romani* as "definitely endangered" which corresponds level three on the six-level scale from "extinct (0)" to "safe (5)"<sup>12</sup>. The characterisation of *definitely endangered* as "children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home" is not generally valid at all. For example, the Austrian variety of *Burgenland Romani* is at the best "severely endangered (2)" – "language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves" – however "critically endangered (1)" – "the youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently" – is more likely to apply.

The situation for most "indigenous" dialects of first migrants into a country or region is quite similar: the vitality levels of Finnish *Kaalo*, Slovenian *Prekmurje Romani*, *East-Slovak Romani* in the Czech Republic, *Hungarian Romani* or *Romungro* in Slovakia, Austrian *Lovari Romani*<sup>13</sup> and the *Romanes* varieties of *Sinti* communities range from *critically* to *severely* and *definitely endangered* at the best; the original varieties of Bohemia and Moravia (Czech Republic) are even *extinct* (0) today. Higher vitality levels can only be found among recent migrants to Central and Western Europe as well as in their Eastern European regions of origin, e.g. among *Gurbet Romani*<sup>14</sup> speakers in Bosnia and Herzegovina and *East-Slovak Romani* speakers in parts of Slovakia. The vitality status of the *Romani* dialects of communities who raise their children with the ethnic language is defined as "vulnerable (4)" – "most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains". Level four – *vulnerable* – applies to dominated languages in general. As a rule, speakers of dominated minority languages are under assimilation pressure which includes the high probability that the dominant language replaces the dominated language in certain domains of usage. However, *Romani* remains a vital language as long as it is used by a single community of speakers as the main language in everyday life.

### 3.2 Language documentation

The level of documentation of a language is reflected by the existence of corpora or at least some texts (C), as well as the availability of dictionaries (D) and grammatical descriptions (G). As the table shows, each country meets these criteria for at least one "language" or dialect of *Romani*.

LANGUAGE \ COUNTRY	AT	BiH	CH	CZ	DE	FI	PL	SK	SL
<i>BOYASH</i>	∅	∅	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>ROMANI</i>	C/D/G	C/D/G	∅	C/D/G	C/D/G	∅	C/D/G	C/D/G	C/D/G
<i>ROMANES/KAALO</i>	c/d/g	X	∅	∅	c/d/g	C/D/G	∅	∅	∅
<i>YENISH</i>	C/D	X	C/D	X	C/D	X	X	X	X

∅ no documentation

X irrelevant in the country / language (most probably) not spoken

12 See: <http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/> (16/09/2017).

13 *Lovara* 'horse traders' < hun. *lo* 'horse'; are a rather widespread group.

14 *Gurbet* 'strangers' < tur. *gurbet* 'foreign land', are spread all over Europe today.



Most publicly available or accessible materials on *Romanes* date from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which is indicated by lower case letters (c/d/g) in the table above. This arises from the language attitude of (mainly older) Sinti. They perceive their language as a tabooed in-group marker which has to be kept secret from outsiders. This attitude which mainly results from negative experiences during the Nazi era that led to the Holocaust is especially relevant in Germany and Austria and in territories occupied by Nazis, chosen as a place for “*Endlösung der Judenfrage*” in death camps in Eastern Europe. The lack of documentation of *Romanes* in the other countries is caused by the small numbers of *Sinti* communities and their resulting low public visibility. The lack of *Yenish* grammars results from the limited linguistic status as a bundle of varieties of German with special vocabularies.

The quality of documentation, which is quite important for any future public language use primarily, is closely connected to a productive cooperation between academic research institutions and speech communities with simultaneous sufficient financial support from the authorities. Such constellations are first of all met for *Romani* in Czech Republic, Germany, Austria, and in Switzerland concerning *Yenish*.

### 3.3 Public language use

The most relevant domains of public language use are administration (A), education (E), jurisdiction (J),<sup>15</sup> literature (L), media (M) and religion (R). Furthermore, public visibility is guaranteed by the use of a language on topographical signs (T).

COUNTRY LANGUAGE	AT	BiH	CH	CZ	DE	FI	PL	SK	SL
BOYASH	∅	∅	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
ROMANI	E/M/L/R	L/M	∅	E/L/M	L/E	∅	L/M/R	E/M/L/R	E/L/M
ROMANES/KAALO	∅	X	∅	∅	∅	E/L/M/R	∅	∅	∅
YENISH	L	X	L/M	X	L	X	X	X	X

∅ no use at all

X irrelevant in the country / language (most probably) not spoken

No use of *Boyash* in Austria as well as in Bosnia and Herzegovina reflects the low visibility of the speakers in public which is mainly connected to their small numbers. The public invisibility of *Romanes* results from the previously mentioned language attitude of the *Sinti*.

The complete absence of the languages in the domains of administration and jurisdiction as well as their invisibility on topographical signs reflects the low status of their speakers. Only in domains where representatives of the speakers have some (co)decision competence – literature, media, religious services – the languages are (partly) present. The almost exclusive literary use of *Yenish*, again, reflects the linguistic status as a bundle of varieties of German with special vocabularies. Regarding education, the use of *Romani* and *Kaalo* is rather symbolic than pragmatic.

<sup>15</sup> Translation in cases where plaintiff and/or defendant do not speak the official language are not taken into consideration.

### 3.4 Language in education

As the status of a language is always connected with the implementation of a codified variety as standard via the educational system by law, language teaching is always perceived as crucial for the prestige as well the protection of a dominated minority language. It goes without saying that this is also the case with *Romani*. Although the only real prerequisite of language vitality is its use in everyday life, its presence on all levels of education is seen as the most important aspect of language preservation. It would be important to use minority languages in preschool or kindergarten (K) and primary school (1) especially with those children who have been socialised with the language, however, demands – especially for the teaching of *Romani* – often concentrate on secondary (2) and tertiary levels (3). The use in adult or further education (A) sometimes is even not on the agenda of teaching initiatives at all. Most frequently *Romani* is taught in extracurricular classes (E) offered by NGOs.

COUNTRY LANGUAGE	AT	BiH	CH	CZ	DE	FI	PL	SK	SL
<i>BOYASH</i>	∅	∅	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<i>ROMANI</i>	1/2/3/A//E	E	∅	2/3//E	E	∅	∅	K/1/2/3/A//E	E
<i>ROMANES/KAALO</i>	∅	X	∅	∅	∅	K/1/2/3/A//E	∅	∅	∅
<i>YENISH</i>	3	X	3	X	3	X	X	X	X

∅ no use at all

X irrelevant in the country / language (most probably) not spoken

The absence of *Boyash* in education in Austria and Bosnia-Herzegovina is caused, again, by the low visibility of the speakers because of their small number. The presence of *languages* at tertiary level – it equals extracurricular teaching in number – is connected to the fact that universities are research institutions and thus irregularly teach primarily about *Romani* with language courses being the rare exception. Due to its linguistic status, teaching in/of *Yenish* is not possible at all levels. Additionally, speakers do neither insist on language teaching nor see the need for it. The absence of *Romanes* in education is caused by the repeatedly mentioned language attitude of the Sinti. It has to be noted in this context, that the right to decide about the visibility of a minority language and its use in public domains remains solely with the speakers of the language. State authorities of the majority only have to provide the framework conditions to allow each individual to determine its ethnolinguistic belongings; they have to take the necessary measures to enable speakers to exercise their right of self-determination.

### 3.5 Teaching in/of *Romani*

In contrast to the role of standardised European national languages in the educational system, the functionality of *Romani* is by no means to be taken for granted in this domain. The difference in the socio-political status of the dominant majority language and the dominated and partly also stigmatised minority language obstructs and prevents the use of *Romani* as a language of education. The associated discrepancy between homogeneous, written national standards and variable, heterogeneous, orally transmitted group language also contributes to this.

The heterogeneity of Romani with regard to its use in education is threefold. *Romani* is heterogeneous with regard to:

- ✗ varieties or rather dialects,
- ✗ language competence of the pupils,
- ✗ language attitude of the parents.

Linguistic heterogeneity or rather plurality is twofold: on the one hand, members of the *Romani* community of a specific country use different *Romani* varieties, on the other hand their linguistic repertoires also cover different languages in addition to the dominant national language. The latter is particularly true for recent migrants. The *Romani* population of almost every European country consists of various groups who in turn show internal diversity. The following table lists the resulting ethnolinguistic variety in three countries<sup>16</sup>:

COUNTRY	HUNGARY	ROMANIA	SERBIA
DIAL. GROUP			
NORTH-WESTERN	<i>Romanes</i>	<i>Romanes</i>	<i>Romanes</i> <sup>17</sup>
CENTRAL	<i>Romungro Romani</i>	???	??? <sup>18</sup>
VLAX	<i>Lovara Romani</i>	<i>Kalderaš</i> <sup>19</sup> <i>Romani</i>	<i>Gurbet, Kalderaš Romani ...</i>
BALKAN		<i>Ursari</i> <sup>20</sup> , <i>Crimean</i> <sup>21</sup> <i>Romani, ...</i>	<i>Arlije</i> <sup>22</sup> <i>Romani, ...</i>

*Lovara*, *Gurbet* and *Kalderaš* are part of the second, so-called *Vlax* migration which contributes to the heterogeneity of *Romani* populations in Western Europe.

1<sup>st</sup> migration: "original" or indigenous Romani population living in a country since the 15<sup>th</sup>/early 16<sup>th</sup> century;

2<sup>nd</sup> migration: as a consequence of the abolition of slavery and bondage in Wallachia, Moldavia, and adjacent areas in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Vlax Roma* spread all over Europe and beyond;

3<sup>rd</sup> migration: (south)east-west migrants and refugees from the 1950s onward.

The following table shows the resulting triple-layered ethnolinguistic variety in Western Europe:

COUNTRY	AUSTRIA	FRANCE	SWEDEN
1 <sup>ST</sup> MIGRATION	<i>Romanes &amp; Burgenland R.</i>	<i>Romanes</i> <sup>23</sup>	<i>Scandoromani &amp; Kaalo</i> <sup>24</sup>
2 <sup>ND</sup> MIGRATION	<i>Lovara Romani</i>	<i>Kalderaš Romani</i>	<i>Kalderaš Romani</i>
3 <sup>RD</sup> MIGRATION	<i>Vlax, Balkan, Central &amp; Northeastern varieties of Romani</i>		

16 For the five dialect groups of *Romani* see: <http://romafacts.uni-graz.at/index.php/language/dialects/dialects-i>

17 These relatively small communities of *Romanes* speakers are so-called *Estrexarja* < deu. *Österreicher* or *Jesterajxa*/ 'Austrians', i.e. *Sinti* who arrived from the Austrian part of the Habsburg monarchy.

18 As both Romanian Transylvania and Serbian Vojvodina used to be parts of the Kingdom of Hungary, Romungro speakers might live in all three countries; yet the majority of the so-called *Ungrika Roma* has by now been linguistically assimilated.

19 *Kalderaš* 'kettle smiths' < rum. *căldăre* 'kettle', are spread world-wide today.

20 *Ursari* 'bear charmers' < rum. *urs* 'bear', are very likely the most numerous groups in Romania.

21 Speakers of *Crimean Romani* came to what was then Ottoman Dobruja after the Russian conquest of the Crimean Peninsula.

22 *Arlije* 'locals' < tur. *yerli* 'native', another rather widespread group.

23 The French *Sinti* call themselves *Manouche* < rom. *manuš* 'human being'.

24 *Resande*, how the initial Swedish immigrants refer to themselves, are speakers of *Scandoromani*, a para-Romani which is defined as a variety of Swedish with primarily but not exclusively lexical elements from Romani. Finnish *Kaale* came to Sweden from the 19<sup>th</sup> century on.

The speakers of *Vlax* varieties of the second migration are often still socialised bilingually, as are some speakers of the so-called indigenous groups. Among the latter, there is usually a dominance of the majority language or national language in all domains. Many primarily younger speakers have adopted the dominant language and are *de facto* monolingual with only marginal competence in *Romani*. In contrast, speakers of the third migration are usually still plurilingual. Their repertoires comprise, in addition to *Romani* and the dominant language of their country of immigration, also the language or languages of their countries of origin.

The following table summarises both plurilingualism and languages of socialisation of *Romani* children<sup>25</sup>:

CASE-N°	ROMANI [- dominant]	OTHER [± dominant]	NATIONAL [+ dominant]
01	●	-	-
02	●	+	-
03	●	●	-
04	-	●	-
05	+	●	-
06	●	●	+
07	●	-	+
08	●	+	+
09	-	●	+
10	+	●	+
11	-	●	●
12	+	●	●
13	●	-	●
14	●	+	●
15	+	+	●
16	-	+	●
17	+	-	●
18	-	-	●

*other ....languages of the country of emigration and / or international languages*

● .....language(s) of socialisation / full competence

+.....additional language / L2 / high competence

-.....marginal language / limited or almost no competence

25 The table formalises possible cases. In reality the 18 cases have to be multiplied with both the number of Romani varieties and the number of other languages involved which results in quite a high number of possible scenarios.

European monolingual education systems treat cases 01 to 05 with no competence in the national language as severe problems. This is intensified by the fact that these cases above all apply to children of migrants with a divergent cultural background and a problematic socio-political status as foreigners, asylum seekers or even illegal aliens. Furthermore, the situation is complicated by the fact that among recent migrants the plurality of *Romani* varieties as well as of other languages is most pronounced. But cases of *Romani* children with little or no competence in the national language and low socio-political status are not limited to Western European countries. Over the last decades, many *Romani* refugees have been repatriated to their country; however, in many cases, not to the place or region from which they originally came. Therefore, dislocated *Romani* families with children who have little or no competence in the respective national language are also living in the Balkans and Eastern Europe.

Cases 06 to 18 with high competence in the national language are seen as normal and convenient. Cultural richness and possible advantages of the cultural and linguistic plurality, which are represented by all these cases, are mostly neglected. If at all taken into consideration, competence in other languages, mostly in the national language of the country of emigration, is used as an auxiliary tool to establish the particular national language as the only language of instruction.

Heterogeneity of *Romani* competence and differences in the language(s) of socialisation to some extents have an impact on discrepancies in language attitude.

- ✘ Indigenous speech communities often correspond to case 18 – socialisation in the dominant language and very limited or almost no competence in *Romani* – with some exceptions corresponding to case 17 – socialisation in the dominant language and competence in *Romani*. Language attitude among such groups is quite positive if they are organised in NGOs dedicating their work to emancipation and culture.
- ✘ Although speech communities of north-western varieties correspond to the same cases, language attitude is different. First of all, *Sinti*, especially older speakers, perceive their language as a tabooed in-group marker which has to be kept secret from the majority population. Therefore, *Romanes* is, almost as a rule, invisible in public and education.
- ✘ Long resident speech communities of *Vlax Roma* often encounter a similar shift scenario as indigenous speech communities. There are more competent older speakers, and the number of the younger exceptions with competence in *Romani* might be higher, but language attitude is indifferent. *Romani* is to some extent treated as a feature of the old life, the times of real *Romanipen*, “Romaniness”, and language shift among the younger generations is perceived as an irreversible process. Consequently, there are no initiatives to teach *Romani*, and the language has only one public function, to illustrate the cultural heritage with songs, poems, stories, etc.
- ✘ Among recent migrants with language maintenance, there is almost no language awareness. *Romani* is the language of everyday family life and pronounced language attitude if at all present, concerns the dominant language. For these speech communities, there is no need for *Romani* teaching, they want their children to become fluent and proficient in the national language. In public life *Romani* is used by activists and organisations to flag identity in the political emancipation process, and even more, to satisfy the demands of the ethno-folkloristic mainstream entertainment industry.

- ✘ Among groups where *Romani* has lost its functions in everyday life, language shift is perceived as a loss if they actively participate in NGOs. Because of their involvement in the emancipation process members of such groups develop a positive language attitude which triggers demands for *Romani* teaching.
- ✘ If recent migrants with no contacts to NGOs have undergone language loss and are socio-economically integrated, language loyalty is not an issue. It seems that the price for their socioeconomic integration is sociocultural assimilation. In most cases, they consider *Romani* as a part of the past.

These discrepancies in language attitude which are paralleled by discrepancies in language loyalty at least to some extent reflect the general minority language policy in Europe. The status of *Romani* in education is only a symptom of policy in line with the European ideology of the nation-state which is common sense in European society. This ideology essentially excludes plurality and, if at all, only allows it a marginal status. But if an ideology of plurality were common sense in our society, the situation of *Romani* as described above would not be seen as problematic, but as richness and advantage and despite its diversity it would function as an integral part of society. Consequently, it would be used as the primary language to teach literacy to all children who have been socialised with *Romani* and, furthermore, it would be taught as a second language to all other children with a Romani background as well as to all people interested. However, to this day, such a scenario is still utopian, not only for *Romani* but for most minority languages in Europe.

### 3.6 Teaching of Romani and the Council of Europe (CoE)

The CoE attaches great importance to the maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity and encourages language learning as a means of preserving linguistic and cultural identity, improving communication and mutual understanding, and combating intolerance and xenophobia. Consequently, the CoE has paid special attention to *Romani* teaching over the past decades. The two main outcomes are the *Curriculum Framework for Romani* – developed by the *Language Policy Division* – and the project *Quality Education in Romani for Europe* – initiated by the *European Centre for Modern Languages*.

### 3.7 The Curriculum Framework for Romani (hereinafter: CFR)

The CFR<sup>26</sup> draws on the descriptive categories and common reference levels of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (hereinafter: CEFR)<sup>27</sup> and in doing so aligns itself with the wider policies that shape the CoE's work in language education. The CEFR was developed to provide a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. The CFR takes account of the needs of three age groups: 3-6 years, 7-10 years, 11-14 years; and it is designed to accommodate three different sociolinguistic situations: the teaching of *Romani* to

- ✘ children who do not speak *Romani* at home,
- ✘ children who are not fluent in *Romani*, though they may hear their parents and grandparents speak the language,
- ✘ children who are fluent in *Romani* but who need to develop their skills in using the language as an instrument of formal learning (*Romani* as a language of education).

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26 see: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Romani\\_doc\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Romani_doc_EN.asp)

27 see: <http://www.coe.int/lang-CEFR>

The CFR also takes account of a significant difference between the learning of *Romani* by *Romani* children and the learning of foreign languages in general education. In the latter case, a new language draws the learner into a new culture, whereas the teaching of *Romani* aims to give learners linguistic access to a culture that is already familiar to them and in this way to deepen their sense of their *Romani* identity.

### 3.8 Quality Education in Romani for Europe (*QualiRom*)

*QualiRom*<sup>28</sup> implemented and tested the *Curriculum Framework for Romani* (CFR) and the corresponding *European Language Portfolio Models* (ELPs). The project produced teaching materials in six *Romani* varieties ranging from proficiency levels A1 to B2 for learners at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The material production, as well as the resulting teaching activities, focused on proficiency levels A1 and A2 for primary and secondary learners. Teaching materials were tested in schools in Austria, the Czech Republic, Finland, Serbia and in the Slovak Republic. Beyond that, *Romani* courses were offered for students and adult learners at tertiary level at the universities of Graz and Prague. Furthermore, teacher training modules have been developed by five training courses conducted in the context of the project. All activities were realised in close cooperation with local *Romani* teachers and local as well as national educational authorities. To ensure a professional realisation, teachers at all levels were prepared comprehensively for the handling of the CFR and its ELPs by experts of the *European Centre for Modern Languages* (ECML).

The project implementation lasted from 01/12/2010 to 30/11/2013. However, activities triggered by *QualiRom* extend far beyond this period, thus guaranteeing the sustainability of the results. These activities range from the editing of teaching materials and teacher training to the use of materials in *Romani* classes and seminars offered by the ECML on how to implement the CFR and how to use the strategies and materials developed by *QualiRom*<sup>29</sup>.

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28 see: <http://qualirom.uni-graz.at>

29 see: <http://www.ecml.at/TrainingConsultancy/QualiRom/tabid/1693/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNED, GOOD PRACTICES IDENTIFIED, AND ENVISAGED FOLLOW-UP

As a result of the thematic visit to Graz, Austria, the following conclusions were drawn up by the experts of the thematic group:

##### 4.1. Preparation of the thematic visit by the requesting country

###### ▪ Positive aspects:

- An official invitation letter and a draft agenda were sent on time,
- To circulate in advance a questionnaire to partner countries' experts to prepare the thematic visit's discussions and comprehensive responses provided by the experts was a helpful and innovative initiative,
- Follow up of the previous thematic visit and some of the recommendations from the previous report,
- The agenda and experts' contributions were well prepared and focused on the topic,
- The initiative of the Austrian CAHROM member to invite two Roma representatives (an activist and a teacher/ex-mediator),
- The hosting of the thematic visit in the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML),
- The mixed composition of the group of experts with different backgrounds - all criteria fulfilled in terms of representativeness,
- The excellent simultaneous English/German interpretation provided by the hosting authorities to allow Austrian Roma representatives to contribute to the discussions,
- The presence of a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ambassador, legal advisor) and the reception offered at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> day,
- There was sufficient time for discussions, very interactive,
- Excellent and comprehensive presentation, prepared by Austrian expert, Mr. Dieter Halwachs, University of Graz, summarizing the legal status and factual position of related languages,
- The distribution of the previous thematic report from previous thematic visit,
- Lots of material distributed, including material available in Romani (pedagogical material, CDs, textbooks in Romani for children, historical reference to Roma presence in Austria).

Despite high number of participating countries as partners, the meeting was very effective, interactive, and constructive and presentation of experts focused on the topic.

###### ▪ Shortcomings:

There has been no field visit with Roma community representatives to hear about their experience though it was made difficult for logistical reasons because of a large delegation. Other experts find this was necessary to avoid "ethno-tourism".

##### 4.2. Conclusions of the thematic group of experts

As indicated, the demand to use *Romani* in public is – in the vast majority of cases – part of the political agenda of the *Roma's* struggle for equal rights and opportunities. Resulting activities range from grass-root level to national and European-wide initiatives. The latter mostly are recommendations and treaties of supranational organisations which in only a few cases are accompanied by concrete measures. Such top-down instruments often initiate national provisions which – at least legally – make *Romani* teaching possible.



In most cases, such measures are embedded into the legal framework for the protection of (national) minorities in a particular country or region and are formulated in the accompanying regulations for minority language teaching. In the case of *Romani*, these top-down measures are, almost as a rule, not actively implemented by the authorities. They just provide the possibility for *Romani* teaching but leave the implementation to NGOs. This has to be seen in connection with several factors, among others: plurality of *Romani* described, lack of qualified *Romani* teachers, low level of education of users, opposition of traditional groups to have their language taught, etc. Educational authorities are used to deal with homogeneous languages with a standard that serves as the norm in teaching.

Without bottom-up initiatives, most of the top-down measures are not brought into force and remain ineffective declarations of good will. Only a productive co-operation between NGOs and authorities offers the possibility that *Romani* teaching becomes part of the educational system. However, being part of the system does not automatically mean that *Romani* is integrated into the regular curriculum. On the contrary, for the most part, *Romani* is taught in extracurricular classes, often only in the framework of lessons on *Romani* history and culture. *Romani* as a language of instruction is even more marginalised than *Romani* as a subject. If a teacher is competent in *Romani* – which is quite exceptional – it might be used with children whose mother tongue is *Romani* and who have a low competence in the majority language. In such exceptional cases, *Romani* functions as an auxiliary language for the purpose of acquiring the dominant majority language.

The outlined situation is most probably related to the fact that *Romani* teaching – and, up to a certain point, minority language teaching in Europe in general – is less a pedagogical than a political matter. *Romani* NGOs see *Romani* teaching as part of the political struggle for emancipation from the majority population and their dominant culture and language. Representatives and authorities of the majority try to value the language and the culture of the *Romani* minority by declarative acts which grant *Romani* a marginal role in mainstream education. There are no cases known that *Romani* is used systematically to teach literacy to children who have acquired it as mother tongue during their socialisation. Such a systematic approach to *Romani* teaching would be the most proper reason to include it into the educational system. Depending on the prevailing conditions, extracurricular *Romani* lessons which first of all discuss culture and history contribute to the empowerment of *Romani* children and counteract, at least to some extent, the pressure to linguistically and culturally assimilate to the majority population. But despite these positive side effects, on the background of the primary political motivation, the main function of *Romani* teaching and its use in other public domains remains at the symbolic level. This also applies to the public use of *Boyash* and *Yenish*.

As state authorities should provide the framework conditions to enable individuals to exercise their right of self-determination about their ethnolinguistic belongings, prerequisites for the protection, preservation and teaching of the languages of *Roma*, *Sinti* and *Yenish* communities have to include simultaneously:

- ✘ the official recognition of the languages,
- ✘ legal provisions for language use in formal public domains,
- ✘ financial support and infrastructural facilities for language documentation,
- ✘ development of the prerequisites for language teaching (teacher training, materials, etc.),
- ✘ authentic involvement of users' intellectuals into the process of preserving, development and teaching the language.

If the political will exists, official status, legal, financial and infrastructural support for minority languages can be provided quite easily. The necessary prerequisites and strategies for language teaching are not so easy to achieve, because of the aforementioned multiple heterogeneities of the languages with regard to:

- ✘ varieties or rather dialects,
- ✘ language competence of the pupils,
- ✘ language attitude of the parents.

Consequently, a reasonable follow-up to this thematic meeting should be an initiative to further develop the necessary prerequisites for language teaching under consideration of the multiple heterogeneities. This could be achieved by using both the existing structures of the Council of Europe and the experiences of experts in the field. The outcomes of such an initiative would be another significant step in the protection, preservation and teaching of the languages of *Roma*, *Sinti* and *Yenish* communities.

It is extremely important to have an international platform that enables the sharing of info on the new developments, events, activities, negotiations and experiences in the individual European countries vis-à-vis Romani as well as the sharing of outcomes of past and current applied/scientific research projects (local as well as international) among actors who work locally in the field of language planning and the support of Romani. It can serve as a way to strengthen and inspire local initiatives and individual actors.

It is necessary not only to put pressure on the official state representatives to include in their consideration the situation of Romani as a minority language but also to support local initiatives organized by members of the local communities as well as to observe local specificities in the situation of the speakers and people active in the promotion of Romani (taking into account differences not only across state but also inside the countries/regions), i.e. unified solutions do not work.

### **4.3. Lessons learnt by the experts**

Language preservation is an important topic for CoE, as Roma related issues should not be perceived only as “social problem”. Existing legal instruments, namely: The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities create the framework for national policies. Nonetheless, the status of related languages is different even in one country, e.g. in Switzerland the languages used by Yenish and Sinti are protected under the Charter, but languages spoken by Roma – not.

Generally speaking, the status of related languages reflects the low social status of related groups and is consequence of reluctance towards those groups and their marginalisation. Moreover, those languages are not perceived as the part of European cultural heritage.

One of the existing problems is the data collection: there is not precise data concerning related languages’ users. In most of the cases the number of related languages users, indicated in national censuses, is bigger than the number of people declared their Roma origin. Thus the need for the research in this field, especially with relation to the generational differences, is obvious. Based on the presented during the visit fragmentary data it can be said that mostly the fluent users are the elderly people, the younger users are - the less fluent they are.

Important factor is phenomenon of social media - to some extent in practice social media encourage using mother tongue among Roma, Sinti and Yenish youth but at the same time – it increase the chaos in notation among different users from this same language group, contributing to its creolisation.

The situation becomes more complicated when it comes to the language used by autochthon Roma groups and language used by Roma migrants in the same country (like Spain, France, Italy, etc.). In some countries where the indigenous groups lost their language(s) the only fluent users seems to be migrants. It created very practical problems with developing any policy towards those languages but also create some tensions among Roma communities as well – which version is the only “true”.

In several countries – like Switzerland, Poland, Germany – where there is no form of language teaching, due to the internal cultural ban and opposition towards it is very strong. Moreover, also in countries where Roma languages are somehow the part of school activity – the opposition from the “traditionalists” side is still present. Apart from its cultural objection it has also more “practical” justification – in some cases Roma parents insists to have other languages taught – more practical, like English or Swedish (the latter – in Finland). It is a sign that also within the Roma communities mother tongue is not perceived as value but rather as a kind of obstacle, a disadvantage in education process. Here is a space for Roma leaders and intellectuals to promote using the mother tongue in both: public and private spheres, as an equal part of European language repertoire.

One of the efficient tools for promoting and maintaining the position of related languages is media use – in countries where minorities languages are present in media, especially public ones, the language situation is slightly better.

Another problem is connected to the standardisation – in countries that use the standardised version – not every pupil (and his/her family members) is identifying the standard version taught at school with their own (“true and pure”) language version. Moreover, lessons learnt from Irish revitalisation of Gaelic shows that standardisation and formal education is not protecting the language from disappearing.

The quality of language(s) teachers and materials was raised as a serious concern. There is a strong need for teachers’ training and producing quality materials for pupils but the question how to measure the quality is still not responded in satisfactory manner, as well what actually means the term “quality” in given situation: a “standarisation” or “effectiveness”? The cooperation between the linguists and Roma intellectuals and language users in this matter is indispensable.

Important issue raised during the visit was a question to what extend the related languages are the tool of efficient communication in everyday life or do they play only a symbolic role of internal, basic communication within the communities. According to the experts those languages play rather a symbolic role for identity and mark of internal, exclusive solidarity, plus - since several decades – also for emancipation. In practice - even everyday life communication is dominated by majority’s language. Moreover, there is no vocabulary connected to modern and complex issues like the administration, judiciary, technologies, etc.

To improve the situation of related languages is to improve the social and educational situation of their users and to take a plurilingual and plurilinguistic approach towards their users, taking into consideration fact that all of the users are at least bilingual. Here, the aspect of interference between the mother tongue and majority language is important factor that should be taken into account.

In several countries the legislation allows to create the national/ethnic minorities mother tongues courses with the education system (depending on country, e.g.: 4 pupils requested in Finland, 7 in Poland, 12 in Germany, etc.) but in practice it is not used by Romani users due to several obstacles, including above mentioned, like: lack of curricula, lack of qualified teachers, lack of teaching materials and reluctance from Roma parents' side.

One of the strongly expressed findings was the common agreement that the language users should take the responsibility for the preservation of their own language. Low level of education among Roma, their bad image among majority and their low self-esteem at the same time – all these factors contribute to the low status of their languages. Nonetheless, apart from above mentioned obstacles, the public authorities' and Roma NGOs' efforts to continue publishing in Romani is an important factor that encourages Roma themselves to improve their own languages.

### ***Bosnia and Herzegovina:***<sup>30</sup>

One of the factors that influence Romani using in BiH is no central ministry of education. Responsibilities are split at different levels (state, federal, cantons, etc.) which cause in practise the lack of support and involvement of educational institutions. Although RAP (Revised Action Plan for educational needs of Roma, 2010) defines 4 goals and 47 measures, until recent times there have not been taken any actions to implement the measures that require the preservation and promotion of the Romani language, culture and history. This fact raises questions related to the existence of hidden forms of discrimination in education systems in BiH (Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, 2017).

The general complex socio-political and cultural situation in BiH, that applies not just to minority languages but also to majority languages, limits and hampers cultural diversity in BiH, including Roma identity and lack of teaching Romani at all levels at schools.

The support and commitment of Ministries of Education should encompass the following needs: to include Romani in the educational system of BiH, to include teachers' trainings for Romani, to enlarge the number of Roma mediators and to ensure institutionalisation of their position, to support financially already existing and adapted initiatives, to open courses of Romani language and literature at Sarajevo and Mostar Universities, to support using Romani in media, to develop teaching material (textbooks) for all levels, to promote Romani and to raise awareness about its speakers and to motivate children and parents for using and learning Romani.

### ***Czech Republic:***

- the status of (Central) Romani in CR is closely interlinked with the status of the Roma in the majority society. Negative attitudes towards Roma and Romani, based on prejudices and ignorance/lack of basic information resulting in negative stereotyping of the people and their language, have a direct influence on the usage of Romani especially by (former) speakers of the central dialects who form the majority of the Romani population in the Czech Republic;

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<sup>30</sup> According to the 2013' census there are 12.583 Roma living in Bosnia and Herzegovina. There is no data about Romani nor about other national minorities' mother tongue's speakers. Data on population by mother tongue and sex (level of: BiH, FBiH, RS and BD) for national minorities (17) is presented under the category the «others» with 55.579 people and under the category «no answer» -7.487.

- there is a large disrespect for / ignorance of / absence of knowledge on Romani as an integral part of the language repertoire of certain part of Romani children and its sociolinguistic specificities, including attitudes and (the development of) competence in the language (shared by the general public, including specialists working with Romani children, i.e. teachers, pedagogical experts as well as health specialists such as speech therapists etc., and social workers in state as well as NNO sector);
- the overwhelming dominance of Czech and lack of consideration on the benefits of using mother tongue especially in the early stages of school education in a form appropriate for the speakers and the situation of their language (or on the language barrier burden) might be a problem touching also other non-Czech language speakers (especially in case of “small” or “exotic” languages).

#### 4.4. Good practices identified

##### Bosnia and Herzegovina:

- In November 2016 federal Ministry for Education and Science in Mostar published the book: *“Rodni identiteti u književnosti romskih autorica na prostorima bivše Jugoslavije/ E genderikane identitetura andi literatura savi xramosaren e romane autorke andi nekanutni Jugoslavija”* (“Gender identities in the literature of Romani women authors in the former Yugoslavia”), by Hedina Tahirović-Sijerčić, partly in Romani and Bosnian languages.

##### Czech Republic:

- the use of Romani in public broadcasting should be supported and promoted (i.e. expanding the time limit of the broadcasting session, testing the use of Romani without Czech translation, etc.); support of Romani in public media should be enlarged to Czech TV and count with a budget that includes the use of subtitling of the whole of the program to promote Romani as language of reporting.

##### Poland:

- Precise [data on national/ethnic minorities “mother tongue” education](#) at all levels are collected yearly
- Public campaign on national and ethnic minorities’ languages in 2014.

##### Slovak Republic:

- *QualiRom* training in Slovakia and creating and working within curriculum framework for Romani is an example of good practice, interesting and applicable for the future steps for BiH Romani users.

#### 4.5. Envisaged follow-up

##### Austria:

Austria will ensure the protection, preservation and teaching of languages spoken by Roma, Sinti and Yenish communities through:

- Ensuring effective dialog and co-operation between NGOs and educational authorities;
- Continued support for language documentation;
- Introducing measures to increase public language use, such as Roma media projects producing media content in different versions of Romani.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina:**

The Ministries of Education need to strengthen their support in securing financial and legal opportunities to:

- engage, officially and institutionally, Roma assistants and mediators in mother tongue teaching,
- implement existing and adapted initiatives for teaching Romani language, culture and literature at the Universities of Sarajevo and Mostar,
- raise awareness of children and parents about cultural and national value of Romani.

**Czech Republic:**

In line with part 11 article 2, par. 2 of the ECRML („The Parties undertake to eliminate, if they have not yet done so, any unjustified distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference relating to the use of a regional or minority language and intended to discourage or endanger the maintenance or development of it.“) the Czech government should consider developing measures directed at the larger Czech public, including:

- awareness rising campaign on the advantages of the use of mother tongue in different spheres of life and up-bringing of children including education, the effects of language barrier in education and the limits of the immersion model, introduction of plurilingualism into Czech educational environment (specific target: teachers and pedagogical experts, health/social workers),
- revision/enlargement of obligatory education of teachers to include info on bi/plurilingualism in general and the specificities of the language situation of Romani children in particular.

Other suggestions:

- efforts to promote the usage of Romani should be planned so as to target not only education but the whole public sector,
- measures to support local communities of speakers of Romani in their usage of the language,
- specific support for activities that work with Romani language not in its symbolic function but as a vital language of communication in different spheres.

**Finland:**

- promoting of *QualiRom* materials,
- discussion on national level how to motivate children to use their mother tongue.

**Germany:**

- consultation with Roma and Sinti on the needs and level of interests for mother tongue classes, using existing resources, especially at local level (*QualiRom* materials already used in Hamburg - exploring the possibilities to extend this experience in other places).

**Poland:**

- Presentation of thematic visit findings to the Roma sub-commission of the Joint Commission of Government and National and Ethnic Minorities and other relevant stakeholders,
- disseminating information on achievements in other countries (like Finish solutions, etc.),
- continue financial support for all publications in Roma language(s) and language documentation.

**Slovak Republic:**

- Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport already started the cooperation with ECML, Graz on implementing *QualiRom* materials.

**Switzerland:**

- to explore possibilities for Romani to be recognised under the Charter, as it is in case of Sinti and Yenish and under the FCNM,
- consultation with users (Roma and Yenish separately) to identify their needs.

**4.6 Recommendations to the Council of Europe (CAHROM and COMEX)**

▪ ***Specific recommendations to the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller related Issues (CAHROM)***

- To encourage the BiH Ministries of education to support development of Romani language(s) using.
- To promote ECML *QualiRom* materials with the national stakeholders

▪ ***Specific recommendation to the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (COMEX)***

- To encourage the BiH Ministries of education to support development of Romani language(s) using.

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1: Official invitation letter**



INVITATION FROM  
AUSTRIAN AUTHORITY

**Appendix 2: Programme of the CAHROM thematic visit in Austria**



FINAL AGENDA.docx

**Appendix 3: List of experts and participants in the thematic visit**



2 FINAL list of  
experts.doc

**Appendix 4: Questionnaire on languages' situation in participating countries**



APPENDIX 4



APPENDIX 4



APPENDIX 4



APPENDIX 4



Appendix 4



APPENDIX 4

QUESTIONNAIRE AUS QUESTIONNAIRE BIH QUESTIONNAIRE CZE QUESTIONNAIRE FIN QUESTIONNAIRE GEI QUESTIONNAIRE POI



APPENDIX 4



APPENDIX 4

QUESTIONNAIRE SLC QUESTIONNAIRE SLC