



# EVS Rroma Guide for volunteers

## SEED I



# ROMA

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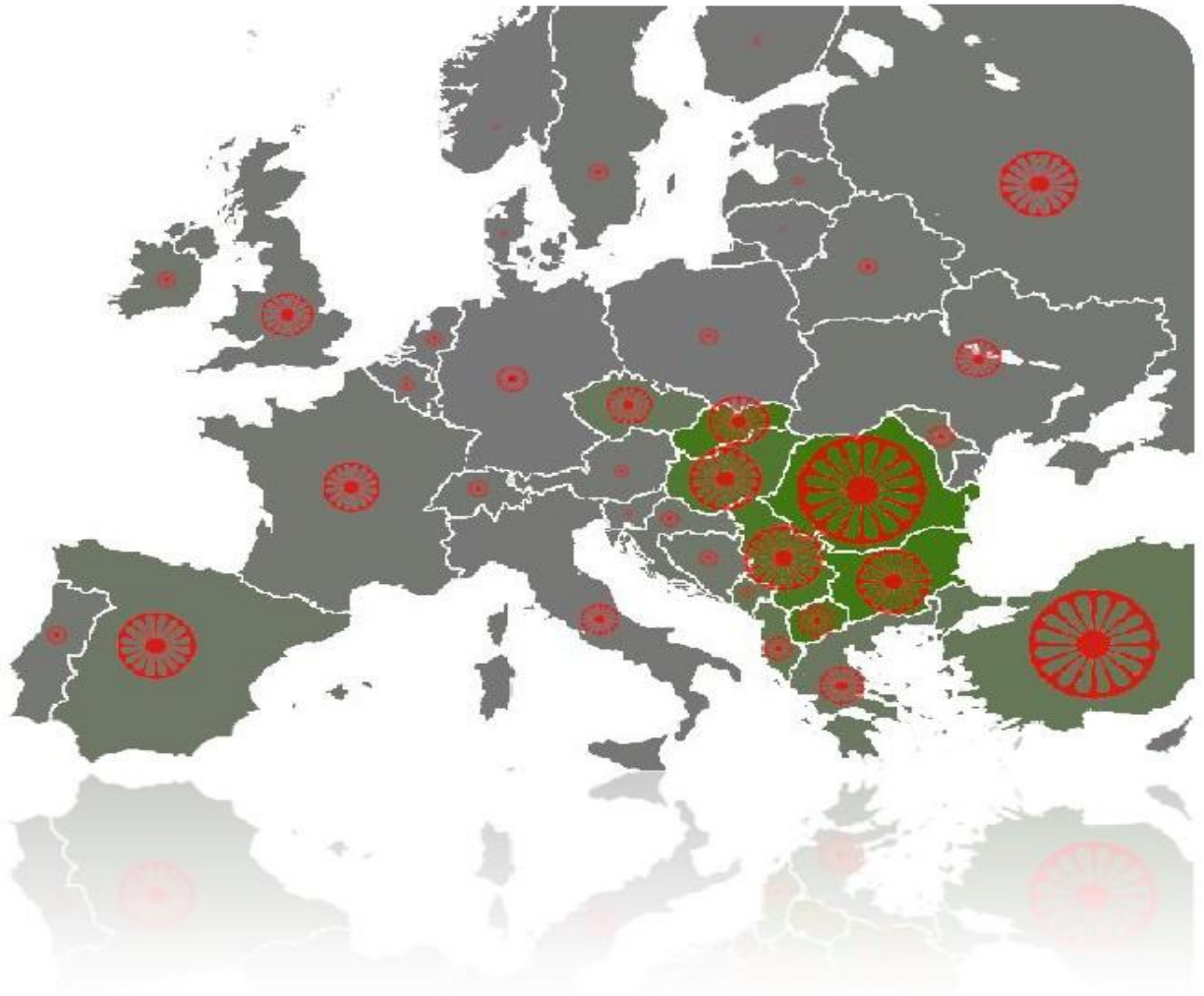
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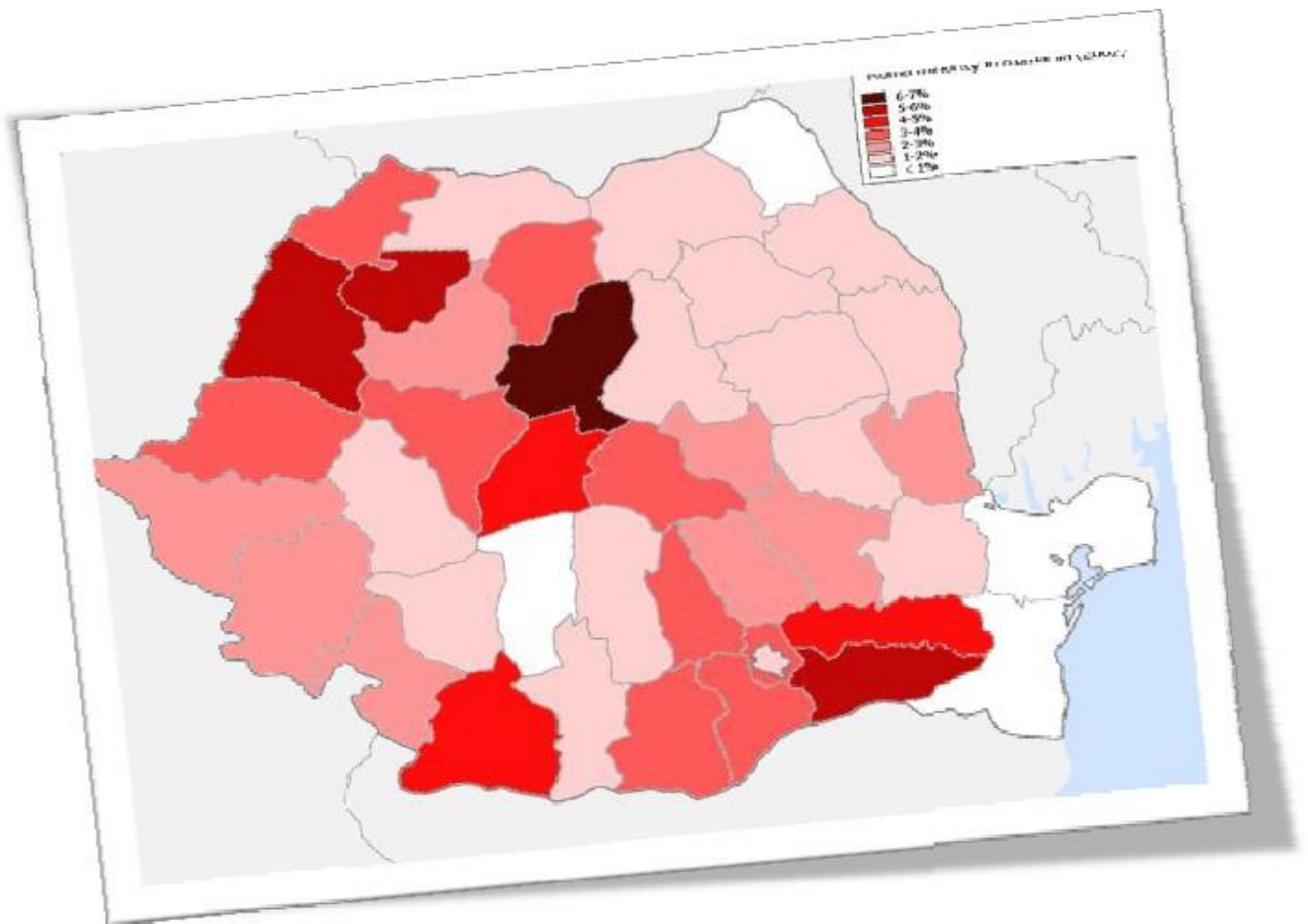
## ROMA HISTORY



There are some 15 million Roms dispersed across the world. Their history is one of suffering and misery, but it is also one of the victories of human spirit over the blows of fate. Today the Roms revive their culture and are looking for their identity. On the other hand, they integrate into the societies in which they live. If they are understood by their fellow citizens in their new homelands, their culture will enrich the society's atmosphere with the color and charm of spontaneity."

Milena Hubschmannova & Jaroslav Jurasek

With a population in Europe estimated at eight to 12 million, Roma people can be found everywhere from Finland to Greece and from Ireland to Russia, but they have no "homeland." The greatest number live in Central Eastern Europe: Romania, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and the former Yugoslavia.a,



The last census, in 2002, showed that Romania had a stable 'Gypsy' population of 535,140, though most scholars widely believe that this figure is inaccurate and most likely underestimates the actual numbers; unofficial estimates place the Roma population somewhere between 1.8 and 2.5 million, representing between 8 and 10 percent of the general population. If these numbers are accurate, Roma constitute the largest minority in Romania and Romania has the most Roma of any country in Europe.

## Introduction

The Roma (Roma in Romani; Romi, Rromi or Țigani in Romanian) constitute one of the major minorities in Romania. According to the 2002 census, they number 535,250 people or 2.5% of the total population, being the second-largest ethnic minority in Romania after Hungarians.

The Roma are, however, also Romania's most socially and economically disadvantaged minority, with high illiteracy levels, and unofficial sources claim that there are between 0.7 and 2.5 million Roma in the country, or approximately 3 to 11% of the total population. This may be caused either by the fact that many Roma do not declare their ethnicity in the census, or do not have an identity card or birth certificate. Since 2007 members of this ethnic group have migrated in Spain, France and Italy.

### Religion

According to the 2002-census, 81.9% of the Roma are Orthodox Christians, 6.4% census, Pentecostals, 3.8% Roman Catholics, 3% Calvinists, 1.1% Greek Catholics, 0.9%

Baptists, 0.8% Adventists, while the rest belong to other religions (Islam, Lutheranism etc).

#### Terminology

In Romani, the native language of the Roma, the word for people is (phonemically) /roma/ or /rom/ depending on dialect (/rom/ or /rom/ in the singular). Starting from the 1990s, the word has also been officially used in the Romanian language, although it has been used by Romani activists in Romania as far back as 1933.

There are two spellings of the word in Romanian: rom (plural romi), and rrom (plural rromi). The first spelling is preferred by the majority of Roma NGOs. The two forms reflect the fact that for some speakers of Romani there are two different "r-like" phonemes: /r/ and /ʀ/. In the government-sponsored (Courthiade) writing system /ʀ/ is spelt rr. The final i in rromi is the Romanian (not Romani) plural.

The traditional and colloquial Romanian name for Roma, also widely used by the press, is "țigani" (cognate with Hungarian cigány, Greek ασιγγανοί (atsinganoi), French tsiganes, Portuguese ciganos, Dutch zigeuner, German Zigeuner). The term is considered to be highly pejorative in Romania.

## Demographic history

The presence of the Roms within the territory of present-day Romania dates back to the 14th century. The population of Roms fluctuated depending on diverse historical and political events.

#### □ Before 1856

Until their liberation on February 20, 1856, most Roms lived in slavery. They could not leave the property of their owner (the boyars and the orthodox monasteries). In the first half of the XVIII-th century, 102,000 Roma lived in the Danubian Principalities, comprising 2.7% of the population (90,000 or 4.1% in Wallachia and 12,000 or 0.8% in Moldavia). Other sources claim that around 200,000 to 250,000 Roms (approx. 7% of the country's population) lived in slavery.

#### □ Between 1856 and 1918

After their liberation in 1856, a significant number of Roms left Walachia and Moldavia. In 1886 the number of Roms was estimated at around 200,000, or 3.2% of Romania's population. The 1899 census counted around 210,806 "others", of whom roughly half (or 2% of the country's population) were Roma.

In Bessarabia, annexed by the Russian Empire in 1812, the Roms had been liberated in 1861, and many of them migrated to other regions of the Empire, while important communities remained in Soroca, Otaci and the surroundings of Cetatea Albă, Chișinău, Bălți.

#### □ Between 1918 and 1945

The 1918 union with Transylvania, Banat, Bukovina and Bessarabia increased the number of ethnic Roma.

The first census in interwar Romania took place in 1930. 242,656 persons (1.6%) were registered as Gypsies (țigani).

The territory lost in 1940 caused a drop in the number Roma, leaving a high number especially in Southern Dobrouja and Northern Transylvania.

The Romanian government of Ion Antonescu deported 25,000 Roma to Transnistria; of these, 11,000 died. In all, from the territory of present-day Romania (including Northern Transylvania), 36,000 Roma perished during the Second World War.

#### □ Between 1945 and 2007

Though the persecution of Roma ended after 1945, their social situation didn't improve substantially. According to various census data, their number was:

Roma	
1956	104,216 (0.6%)
1966	64,197 (0.3%)
1977	227,398 (1%)
1992	409,723 (1.8%)
2002	535,250 (2.4%)

The reason for the small number of registered Roms in 1966 is unknown. The 1966-census data is suspected to be manipulated.

Estimations put a higher number of Roma in Romania. According to a study of the Research Institute for Quality of Life from 1998 and published in 2000, there are 1,452,700 to 1,588,552 heteroidentified Roms (of whom 922,465 to 1,002,381 autoidentified). Some other estimations put a number of 700,000-760,000 to 1,800,000-2,500,000 though the authors don't justify those numbers.

□ After 2007

The accession of Romania to the European Union in 2007 determined many members of the Romani minority, the most socially disadvantaged ethnic group in Romania, to migrate in masses to various Western countries (mostly to Spain, Italy, Austria, Germany, France) hoping to find a better life. The exact number of emigrants is unknown. Florin Cioabă, an important leader of the Romani community (also known as the "King of all Gipsies") declared in an interview that he worries that Romania may lose its Romani minority. The next population census will take place in 2011.

## Origins

Linguistic and genetic evidence indicates the Romanies originated from the Indian subcontinent, emigrating from India towards the northwest no earlier than the 11th century. The Romani are generally believed to have originated in central India, possibly in the modern Indian state of Rajasthan, migrating to northwest India (the Punjab region) around 250 B.C. In the centuries spent here, there may have been close interaction with such established groups as the Rajputs and the Jats. Their subsequent westward migration, possibly in waves, is believed to have occurred between 500 A.D. and 1000 A.D. Contemporary populations sometimes suggested as sharing a close relationship to the Romani are the Dom people of Central Asia and the Banjara of India.

The emigration from India likely took place in the context of the raids by Mahmud of Ghazni. As these soldiers were defeated, they were moved west with their families into the Byzantine Empire. The 11th century terminus post quem is due to the Romani language showing unambiguous features of the Modern Indo-Aryan languages, precluding an emigration during the Middle Indic period.

Genetic evidence supports the medieval migration from India. The Romanies have been described as "a conglomerate of genetically isolated founder populations", while a number of common Mendelian disorders among Romanies from all over Europe indicates "a common origin and founder effect". See also this table: A study from 2001 by Gresham et al. suggests "a limited number of related founders, compatible with a small group of migrants splitting from a distinct caste or tribal group". The same study found that "a single lineage ... found across Romani populations, accounts for almost one-third of Romani males." See also the Cohen Modal Haplotype. A 2004 study by Morar et al. concluded that the Romani population "was founded approximately 32–40 generations ago, with secondary and tertiary founder events occurring approximately 16–25 generations ago".

## Possible connection with the Jat people

While the South Asian origin of the Romani people has been long considered a certitude, the exact South Asian group from whom the Romanies have descended has been a matter of debate. The recent discovery of the "Jat mutation" that causes a type of glaucoma in Romani populations suggests that the Romani people are the descendants of the Jat people found in Northern India and Pakistan.

This contradicted an earlier study that compared the most common haplotypes found in Romani groups with those found in Jatt Sikhs and Jats from Haryana and found no matches. The haplogroup H, which is the most common haplogroup in Romanis is far more prevalent in central India and south India than it is in northern India, where haplogroup R1a lineages makes up at least half of male ancestries, and haplogroup H is rare.



An 1852 Wallachian poster advertising an auction of Romani slaves in Bucharest.

In 1322 CE a Franciscan monk named Symon Semeonis described people resembling these "atsinganoi" living in Crete and in 1350 CE Ludolphus of Sudheim mentioned a similar people with a unique language whom he called Mandapolos, a word which some theorize was possibly derived from the Greek word mantes (meaning prophet or fortune teller).

Around 1360, an independent Romani fiefdom (called the Feudum Acinganorum) was established in Corfu and became "a settled community and an important and established part of the economy."

By the 14th century, the Romanies had reached the Balkans; by 1424 CE, Germany; and by the 16th century, Scotland and Sweden. Some Romanies migrated from Persia through North Africa, reaching the Iberian Peninsula in the 15th century. The two currents met in France. Romanies began immigrating to the United States in colonial times, with small groups in Virginia and French Louisiana. Larger scale immigration began in the 1860s, Larger-scale

with groups of Romnichal from Britain. The largest number immigrated in the early immigrated 1900s, mainly from the Vlax group of Kalderash. Many Romanies also settled in South America.

When the Romani people arrived in Europe, curiosity was soon followed by hostility and xenophobia. Romanies were enslaved for five centuries in Wallachia and Moldavia until Wallachia abolition in 1856. Elsewhere in Europe, they were subject to ethnic cleansing, abduction



of their children, and forced labor. In England, there were hangings and expulsions of the Romani; in France, branding and the shaving of heads; in Moravia and Bohemia severing of ears of women. As a result, large groups of the Romani travelled back East, towards Poland, which was more tolerant, and Russia, where the Romani were also treated less heavy-handedly, as long as they paid the annual taxes.

## Persecutions

### World War II

During World War II, the Nazis embarked on systematic attempt at genocide of the Romanies, known as the Porajmos. They were marked for extermination and sentenced to forced labor and imprisonment in concentration camps. They were often killed on sight, especially by the Einsatzgruppen (essentially mobile killing units) on the Eastern Front. The total number of victims has been variously estimated at between 220,000 to 1,500,000; even the lowest number would count as one of the largest mass murders in history.

#### □ Post-1945

In Communist Eastern Europe, Romanies experienced assimilation schemes and restrictions of cultural freedom. The Romani language and Romani music were banned from public performance in Bulgaria. In Czechoslovakia, they were labeled a "socially degraded stratum," and Romani women were sterilized as part of a state policy to reduce their population. This policy was implemented with large financial incentives, threats of denying future welfare payments, with misinformation, or after administering drugs (Silverman 1995; Helsinki Watch 1991). An official inquiry from the Czech Republic, resulting in a report (December 2005), concluded that the Communist authorities had practiced an assimilation policy towards Romanies, which "included efforts by social services to control the birth rate in the Romani community" and that "the problem of sexual sterilization carried out in the Czech Republic, either with improper motivation or illegally, exists" with new revealed cases up until 2004, in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia.



Sinti and Roma about to be deported in Germany, May 22, 1940

### Historical persecution

The first and one of the most enduring persecutions against the Romani people was the enslaving of the Romanies who arrived on the territory of the historical Romanian states of Wallachia and Moldavia, which lasted from the 14th century until the second half of the 19th century. Legislation decreed that all the Romanies living in these states, as well as any others who would immigrate there, were slaves. The arrival of some branches of the Romani people in Western Europe in the 15<sup>th</sup> century was precipitated by the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans. Although the Romanies themselves were refugees from the conflicts in southeastern Europe, they were mistaken by the local population in the West, because of their foreign appearance, as part of the Ottoman invasion (the German Reichstags at Landau and Freiburg in 1496-1498 declared the Romanies as spies of the Turks). In Western Europe, this resulted in a violent history of persecution and attempts of ethnic cleansing until the modern era. As time passed, other accusations were added against local Romanies (accusations specific to this area, against non-assimilated minorities), like that of bringing the plague, usually haring their burden together with the local Jews



One example of official persecution of the Romani is exemplified by the The Great Roundup of Spanish Romanies (Gitanos) in 1749. The Spanish monarchy a country-wide raid that led to separation of families and placement of all able-bodied men into forced labor camps. Later in the 19th century, Romani immigration was forbidden on a racial basis in areas outside Europe, mostly in the English speaking world (in 1885 the United States outlawed the entry of the Roma) and also in some South American countries (in 1880 Argentina adopted a similar policy).

## Holocaust



The persecution of the Romanies reached a peak during World War II in the Porajmos, the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis during the Holocaust. In 1935, the Nuremberg laws stripped the Romani people living in Nazi Germany of their citizenship, after which they were subjected to violence, imprisonment in concentration camps and later genocide in extermination camps. The policy was extended in areas occupied by the Nazis during the war, and it was also applied by their allies, notably the Independent State of Croatia, Romania and Hungary. Because no accurate pre-war census figures exist for the Romanis, it is impossible to accurately assess the actual number of victims. Ian Hancock, director of the Program of Romani Studies at The University of Texas at Austin, proposes a figure of up to a million and a half, while an estimate of between 220,000 and 500,000 was made by the late Sybil Milton, formerly senior historian of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. In Central Europe, the extermination in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was so thorough that the Bohemian Romani language became extinct.

## Cultural influence

Romani music has had a significant influence in Romanian culture, as most lăutari (wedding and party musicians) are of Romani ethnicity. Renowned Romanian Romani musicians and bands include Grigoraș Dinicu, Johnny Răducanu, Ion Voicu and Taraf de Haïdouks. In recent years, some Romani artists have started to publish traditional Romani music in albums as a measure of ethnic preservation. The musical genre manele, a part of Romanian pop culture, is often sung by Romani singers in Romania and has been influenced in part by Romani music, but mostly by Oriental music brought in Romania from Turkey during the 19th century. A subject of controversy, this kind of music is both considered to be low-class kitsch by some people in Romania and enjoyed by others as fun party music.

## Integration in Romanian society

According to a 2009 report of the European Fundamental Rights Agency, the discrimination perception of the Romani community of Romania is lower than that of the other EU countries covered by the report. The perceived discrimination levels given by the report are:

Czech Republic 64%: Hungary 62%: Poland 59%: Greece 55%: Slovakia 41%: Bulgaria 26%: Romania 25%:

Based on this report, Romanian newspapers have stated that the Romani minority in Romania is the 'least discriminated Romani minority in Eastern Europe'. However, the same report suggested that the favorable responses from Bulgaria and, to a lesser extent, Romania be regarded with caution, as the low levels of reported discrimination might be a result of the high levels of segregation between Roma and non-Roma:

- spatial segregation is high amongst the Roma; (that is, they are living in areas predominantly populated by other Roma): highest in Bulgaria (72%), Romania (66%), Slovakia (65%) and Greece (63%). The implications of this should be borne in mind when looking at the results, as higher levels of spatial segregation imply that Roma respondents are cut-off from mainstream society, which, on the one hand implies that they experience high levels of discrimination, but, on the other hand, may serve to shelter them from discriminatory treatment as contact with the majority population is limited.

A 2000 EU report about Roma said that in Romania... the continued high levels of discrimination are a serious concern.. and progress has been limited to programmes aimed at improving access to education. The EU has launched a program entitled Decade of Roma Inclusion to combat this and other problems.

## Self-proclaimed Romani monarchs

The Romani community has: An Emperor of Roma from Everywhere, as Iulian Rădulescu proclaimed himself. In 1997, Iulian Rădulescu announced the creation of Cem Romengo - the first Rom state in Târgu Jiu, in southwest Romania. According to Rădulescu, "this state has a symbolic value and does not affect the sovereignty and unity of Romania. It does not have armed forces and does not have borders". According to the 2002 population census, in Târgu Jiu there are 96,79% Romanians (93.546 people), 3,01% (Roma) (2.916 people) and 0,20% others.

A King of Roma. In 1992, Ioan Cioabă proclaimed himself King of Roma at Horezu, "in front of more than 10,000 Roms" (according to his son's declaration). His son, Florin Cioabă, succeeded him as king. An International King of Roma. On August 31, 2003, according to a decree issued by Emperor Iulian, Ilie Stănescu was proclaimed king. The ceremony took place in Curtea de Arges Cathedral, the Orthodox Church where Romania's Hohenzollern monarchs were crowned and are buried. Ilie Stănescu died in December, 2007.

### Early age marriage scandal

On September 27, 2003, Ana Maria Cioabă, the 12-year-old daughter of Florin Cioabă (the King of Roma) was forced to marry Mihai Birită, a 15-year-old boy. Since both were below Romania's legal age of marriage (set at 16), no official marriage ceremony was performed. Ana Maria Cioabă fled from the wedding, but her father brought her back and she was forcibly married. Particularly controversial was the fact that the groom showed the wedding guests a bloodied bed sheet to prove that the marriage had been consummated; in Romania, the age of consent is 15 years old, so sexual contact with the 12-year-old girl was illegal under Romanian law. A friend of her, Ms Dana Chendea, said "She told me it was the worst thing that ever happened to her. She felt like a huge rock fell on her."

Baroness Emma Nicholson, the European Parliament rapporteur for Romania, said that it was a rape and the child must be given over to foster care.

Subsequently, the Romanian authorities decided that Ana-Maria Cioabă and Mihai Birta must live separately and must not have any sexual relationships until the legal age of marriage. Ana-Maria was not, however, sent to foster care. Doru-Viorel Ursu, a former Romanian Minister of the Interior (1990–1991), was the

godfather of the young bride. Florin Cioabă said that he believes, also, that there shouldn't be marriages between Romani children anymore, but he argued that hundred years old traditions cannot be changed over night.

The median age at which the first marriage for Romani girls happen is 19.

## **Rroma traditions**

Within the Rroma community the most wonderful thing in life is giving birth to a child, perhaps this is the reason why boy's or girls' fathers would pay a lot of attention whenchoosingapartner(husbandorwife)fortheirchildren.

The Roma women become mothers at a very young age, the family being usually founded at 15 years old. The mother, mother-in law and other women of the gypsy camp are teaching the young girl, the way she has to behave during her pregnancy in order to give birth to a healthy and strong child.

When a pregnant woman passes by someone who is eating it is absolutely necessary that this person share a little bit of his food with her, because if it happens to have a lot of appetite and not feed it, she may have a miscarriage. It is said that if someone doesn't share the food with a pregnant woman, he could awake with a boil in his eyes the next day. In this case she or he must go to the woman and apologize for not sharing the food.

### **Preparations before Birth**

When the woman feels the time has arrived to give birth to her child, she starts by announcing the other women. First she announces the girls of her age, then these will inform the older women. The preparations for the birth start at this moment. First of all there is a piece of wood brought in the woman's tent. The pregnant woman must jump over it, forward and backward in order to ease her birth. Near the wagon's wheel they arrange with straws the place where she will give birth.

When the baby is born, all women leave and let the young mother alone to cover him with swaddling-clothes, and to dig a hole in the ground where she puts all the birth leakage. Six weeks after the child's birth, the woman must stay isolated, hidden, alone all this time in order not to be seen by men from the camp; no one is allowed to talk to her or to eat from her hands.

### **The Fortune Tellers**

During the first night, after the baby is born, the fortune tellers come to the tent. The oldest woman in the camp must cook on fire or on embers 3 little pieces of bread, then the bread is arranged near baby's head together with 3 little glasses of red wine, salt and gold. If the child is a boy, then they attach to these things a hammer and if it is a girl they put a threaded needle.

The Fortune Tellers arrive when the night comes, having as purpose to bless the baby. The child's mother must be very careful, as it's not a good sign if she is found asleep when the fortune tellers arrive. In the morning, the old woman who prepared the bread comes, takes the towel and invites some children to eat the bread. Only children are allowed to eat it, this way the fortune tellers can be satisfied. After 9 days since his birth, the baby receives a little bag, called "Baier".

This bag is made by the oldest nine women in the gypsy camp. This “baier” is filled with lots of roots and plants, gathered from the wood and then arranged at the baby’s neck, having the purpose of defending the child from danger.

### **The Baptism**

The child can be baptized when he/she is six weeks old; this ritual can be repeated after a year when the baby’s parents have found a godfather. The baptism ritual of the Roma people respects the rules of the Orthodox religion. All the expenses are supported by the parents and grandparents; the godfather offers money/golden coins to his godson and buys clothes, 50 meters of textile, adorned with flowers; from this textile they make clothes, which will represent a present for the child’s future wedding.

### **Cut of the Impediment**

When the baby starts to walk, he stumbles and falls down when making his first steps. To put an end to this and to prevent this in the future, the gypsy have to cut this impediment or “lopanzi”( in their language). This action is accomplished by an old rich woman in the gypsy’s camp, having a firm walk.

So the baby’s parents must bring to the old woman a silver coin and 2 chickens. The woman draws a line on the ground, with the silver coin; then she takes the baby’s hand and walks behind him, showing him the road drawn with the silver coin. When they arrive at the end of the road, the baby’s parents must offer two chickens to the old woman and give a kiss to their child, being very confident that from this moment on, their baby will never stumble and he will walk very firmly into the life exactly as the old woman does.

## **Breaking "Gypsy" stereotypes**

When most people think of the Roma, more commonly referred to as ‘Gypsies’, exotic images often flood the mind - Fortune Tellers, Palm Readers, Circus stars and a nomadic lifestyle characterized by the Horse drawn Carriage. For the most part, the true spirit of the Rom, still remains mysterious and unknown to the populations with whom they reside. Amidst the fascination with the mysterious and passionate lives of the Rom, also lie deep overarching prejudices. Much of Europe regards this largest minority as uneducated, primitive and to be engaged in thievery and other criminal activity.

The first basic step in separating myths and stereotypes from facts and authenticity is in the use of our terminology. Rom means a human being, person or man in the Romani language. The Roma do not call themselves Gypsies. Historically, the term "Gypsy" came from the mistaken assumption on the part of Anglo-Europeans that Roma originated in Egypt. In fact, the Roma are a distinct ethnic minority, distinguished at least by Rom blood and the Romani, or Romanes, language, whose origins began in the Punjab region of India. Their migration began in the 12th Century, when they traveled through the Persian Gulf, Egypt, Turkey, eventually spreading all over Europe. While Roma are Europe's largest ethnic minority, they remain the least integrated and the most persecuted people of Europe today.

Using the word "Gypsy" is not only inaccurate but perpetuates the continuation of stereotypes that portray Roma as beggars, swindlers, and thieves; thus the phrase: "I've been gyped". The romanticized image of the "Gypsy" is alive and well in song lyrics, novels, costume parties, musical groups, and other forms of cultural imagery: "They are exotic women in colorful skirts, dancing in sensual swirls. They are dark en with



smoldering eyes. They are carefree spirits playing the tambourine." 1 They dance by campfires, travel in caravans, tell fortunes with crystal balls or Tarot cards.

## Popular stereotypes

### 'Gypsies' are 'just Gypsies'

Roma are often perceived as a homogenous group and many times they are reduced to their 'Gypsiness'. They are not perceived as individuals but simply as 'Gypsies'. Some people can produce the most outrageous stereotypes about Roma but then claim that they know one 'who is not like that!'. Talking badly about Roma damages all Roma including the one who is supposed to be 'different'. Roma who do not fit the image that others have about 'Gypsies' are often not perceived as Roma. In reality there is not a single Roma who could meet all the stereotypes that exist about them.

### Nomadism

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

This almost romantic picture of Roma life is very far from reality. Only 20% of European Roma today is still nomadic, almost exclusively in Western Europe. In previous centuries nomadism was almost never a matter of free choice but of persecution. Continuous expulsion is a main feature in Roma history. Throughout the middle ages, Roma were often mistaken for Muslims and encountered the hatred of the Christian Europeans. They were not allowed to settle down or to work in many countries and thus had to find other ways of making a living. Finding a place to stay, a home is a common theme in Roma tales. During the Holocaust Roma were one of the primary targets of the Nazi regime and were sent to concentration camps all over Europe. After the end of communism many Roma fled from ethnic persecution. Again this was conceived as nomadism rather than an attempt to save their lives. Since the fall of the iron curtain countless Roma in eastern and south Eastern Europe have fallen victim to violent attacks, evictions, destruction of property, and even murder.

### Music and dancing

Especially in literature dancing is considered a genuine feature of Roma traditional culture and used to represent them as being 'exotic'. Roma, however, do not habitually dance, unless dancing is a common tradition of the country they live in (for example in Spain and in South Eastern European countries).

Music is much more a skill or trade which served as a survival strategy than a main feature of Romani culture. Not all Roma are musicians but certain groups have specialized in it



## Fortune telling

A common folk believe has it that Roma can curse you, for example, when you do not give them money. Others believe that they can put you into a trance and will then steal your valuables.

Roma do have in their traditions a belief system that includes omen and curses but its nature is completely different. Those few Roma who practice fortune telling do so only for the benefit of “gadje” but never among themselves.

## Dressing

In the minds of many, all Roma wear colourful dresses and a lot of golden jewellery. Today only very few Roma still dress in this way. Among traditional groups men quite often adapt the way of dressing to their environment. Since the head is regarded as the body's focal point, they might draw attention to it by wearing large hats and wide moustaches. On special occasions, a good suit and a brightly coloured neck scarf might be worn.

Flowers, colourful skirts, blouses, and head scarves are not specific to Roma women but can be found everywhere in the East from India and Iran up to the Balkans.

Traditional Roma women had the habit of wearing long, colourful skirts, often consisting of several layers. In some traditional communities married women still demonstrate this fact by wearing a diklo, a headscarf. Traditional Roma women usually allow their hair to grow long and braid it. Jewellery was used not for its beauty but for its intrinsic value, as in other countries of the East. In times where bank accounts were unknown, carrying your valuables on your own person was seen as safer than carrying it in a bag.

## Purity

Roma are often regarded as dirty. They are accused to be allergic to soap, afraid of water, and a source of disease. These are definitely stereotypes. Some Roma have limited access to fresh water because they live in isolated places without water pipes, plumbing, or indoor toilets. Finding a better place to live or improving living conditions is often difficult or impossible. The responsibility of reversing this situation stands on States and Governments which have the obligation to grant to every citizen the access to the basic social rights.

Cleanliness and purity were among the highest values of Roma traditions, both in the physical as well as in the ritual purity sense. There were very specific rules about personal hygiene, washing dishes and clothes, and about what kind of water to use. Taking a bath in a bath tub for example was forbidden, as this would mean to lie in one's own dirt.

## Women

There are two main ways of stereotyping Roma women. The first one portrays Roma women as passionate dancers, ready to seduce any man, fiery and exotic, immoral and lusty; the other as old fortune tellers ready to curse you or to put you into a trance if you do not give them any money. The second view depicts Roma women as dirty, having too many usually naked children, being beaten by their husbands and exploited by their wider family. They marry at age 11 and have the first child at age 13. Concerning the first view it has to be pointed out that traditional Roma have very strong moral values. Premarital intercourse as well as the betrayal of the husband are traditionally unacceptable. In addition, some scholars argue that those elements of Roma dancing, which are often seen as seductive, are in fact relic of Indian temple dances, which were not intended to be seductive at all. Music, dancing, and fortune telling, which are seen as integral elements

of Roma culture by many, were in fact a means of making a living. Concerning the second view, the difficult living conditions which many Roma face have to be taken into account. Lack of utilities such as running water, having no clothes for children, or eventual cases of domestic violence are indicators of poverty but not of 'Gypsiness'.

## Crime

Many people seem to believe that Roma are genetically inclined to commit crimes. This is nonsense. In many cases Roma are the first to be suspected of having committed a crime but the last to be rehabilitated when proven innocent. Whenever Roma do commit crimes the whole community is stigmatised and therefore judged and condemned for the act of an individual.

## Theft

Common stereotypes depict all Roma as thieves. This is again the consequence of judging a whole community for the acts of individuals who just belong to the community. Every society has its thieves and criminals, but not for that the whole group is systematically stigmatised, as it happens to Roma.

Recognition of the crimes of which Roma were victims is, on the contrary, hard to obtain. Does anyone ever think about the things that have been stolen from the Roma? Roma were victims of the Holocaust: their valuables, especially gold, were taken from them before they were sent to death. In today's post communist transition period, Roma often fall victim to pogroms or unjust forced evictions, during which their property is often being destroyed.

## Roma steal babies

The myth that Roma steal babies is centuries old. Even today it is often repeatedly told. In 2006, Romanian press reported about a Roma women who had kidnapped a non Roma child. It later turned out that the woman was not Roma but Romanian. Of course this fact did not hit the news. When Roma children are kidnapped by non-Roma, fall victim to violence, or are murdered this is hardly ever becomes a public scandal.

Some important words/terminology in the Romani language:

Rom - Noun: human being, person, man, husband (sing.).

Roma - Noun: people (pl.)

Rroma - Noun: people, alternative spelling (some Romani scholars/activists prefer to write it in this form so that readers will not confuse it with the city of Rome in Italy.)

Romani - Adjective : as in, Romani language, history, culture etc...

Romani/Romanes - Noun: the spoken language of Romani people, derives from the Sanskrit, Punjabi region in East India.

Herdeljezi - Noun: advent of summer, also known as "Saint George Day" celebration

Mahala - Noun: community, neighborhood, or the district where Roma live

Gadje - Noun: non-Roma, outsiders

Gadjikane - Adjective: non-Romani, foreign

Porrajmos - "the Devouring", the Holocaust

Opre Roma - Expression: "Rise up, Roma!"

# Reality in Craiovean Roma Communities

## Mofleni

### Introduction

School n°26

The oldest documents of the school are talking about the school in Mofleni, dating from around 1894 - from the first day, the school keeps the transcript with those students who were enrolled in the classes I-II, the school year 1894-1895.

Currently the school functions with classes I - VIII, a single number, and school population is heterogeneous, predominantly Roma students.

School with classes I-VIII n°26 is located in a peripheral area. The neighborhood has a heterogeneous population (Romanians and Roma, the latter represented by the year 1990, the majority population) and socio-cultural as a medium. The role of the school is very important and at the same time difficult, as the family environment is not educational, being influenced by material situation.

### I. Status quo of the community

Mofleni is a peripheral neighborhood located in the south-west of Craiova City, situated close to the „Parcul Tineretului” ( The Park of Youth” ), at a distance of maximum 5 km away from the zone 0 of the city.

There are means of transportation from down town: bus n°14 and bus n°29.

Mofleni has 1.745 inhabitants of which 800 persons are Roma.

Mofleni neighbourhood has the appearance of a village, with contrasting „landscapes” like poor, small houses near large, luxurious houses, and partially paved streets.

The main street has asphalt, but the side streets are not paved. Also, on the side streets, (like Street Abatorului), people are very poor, living in misery. There are also cases when 12 people live all together, in one small room.

There is no network of running water, and people are using water from wells dug in the ground.

Roma population in Mofleni includes only traditional Roma. They are mostly, brick makers, but they have abandoned the traditional job. Only few still practice traditional trades.

There are few Roma with stable jobs.

In Mofleni neighborhood Roma population earn their living from occasional work, work in the market (selling second-hand clothes), collecting useless objects from iron or plastic and selling them. Many of them are beneficiaries of welfare and to this is added children's allowance.

Lately, the financial situation of community has improved due to migration of young people working abroad.

Most of the Roma families in Mofleni neighbourhood are still traditional ones.

The biggest problems facing Roma youngsters are discrimination, lack of education and early marriage.

The traditions of Roma people, their way of living and their difficulties to adapt it to a modern society led to many prejudices and labeling from the Romanian people, like:

- all Roma people are criminals and thieves
- Roma people are responsible for the bad image of Romania



Marriages are usually between the ages of 13 - 17 years. Even if there are some Roma people who use to “sell” their daughters, Roma people from Mofleni practice marriage without asking for money. Civil marriage is made in years if absolutely necessary for some family interests, the youngsters can live together from the day of the traditional wedding. Roma people have their own traditions for marriage and their own Roma trial, where they solve everything, except for murder. Generally, the collaboration and the cohabitation of Roma and Romanian people in this neighborhood are good but it is evident to some extent, the mistrust regarding gypsies and the tendency to judge them. The neighborhood is actually split into two pieces: in the first half (close to The Park of Youth) Roma people live, and in the other half (close to the bridge), the Romanians live. Roma people do not really collaborate with the school, seen as an institution that can destroy their tradition. Educational process faces the following issues: early marriage, migration abroad, labor exploitation of children, some parents do not allow children to go to school, high absenteeism, low level of living. As a result of the lack of referential patterns in the educational system, most young people in the neighborhood migrate, thus reaching the level of early school drop-out. In Mofleni is located a general school, namely School with Classes I-VIII n°26, and Orthodox Theological Seminary, with classes IX-XII, but only in School n°26 Roma children are present in large numbers. School with Classes I-VIII n°26 has a long tradition in this neighborhood, dating from around 1894. The school has two buildings (one for classes I-IV and one for classes V-VIII), has a lab and internet access. In the school there are mostly Roma children; there are only two non-roma children. The teachers are mostly non-roma. There are two Roma teachers, and one of them is teaching Romani language (Roma language). The collaboration between Roma and Romanian people is very good in this school.

## **II. The main problems with an impact on Roma youngsters**

Roma youngsters constitute the most marginalized group in Romania. Raised under very difficult socioeconomic conditions and the striking pressure of the society, it is very hard for them to integrate into the social and cultural life of the country. Their involvement in professional courses, cultural activities and various training seminars would influence the improvement of their situation.

The low educational level is the most serious problem, impeding the integration of this community towards the majority society. Many Roma children are illiterate. Some of the factors influencing this situation are the poverty in their families and sometimes the wrong mentality of their parents. If Roma children have no possibility to complete a certain educational level, it means that their future is in danger. When adults, the children with no education are offered to do ordinary jobs, such as cleaning streets at night or during the day, collecting garbage or cans and finally, using their oldest profession: begging.

In Mofleni neighborhood, the role of the school is very important and at the same time difficult, as the family environment is not educational, being influenced by material situation.

In School n°26 there are few children going to school every day. They are not used to timetables, not to say extracurricular activities. The children often go to school two or three hours a day, and then they go home and start working in their houses.

Also, they don't have community life or group space. Usually children live in their own families without deep contact between them. They don't spend time together like a group or a community apart for the traditional events like weddings or funerals.

Even if Roma people are said to have no education, the percentage of children that promote school in Mofleni is high, 98%-99%.

In School n°26, there are only two non-roma children, but they get along very well with Roma ones.

In kindergarten, the situation is different. Roma and Romanians are present in equal percentage.

These different situations occur, because the non-roma parents agree with sending their children in kindergarten along with roma children, only because they are afraid of letting them to go alone in another kindergarten from another neighborhood (a kindergarten without Roma children), because of the long distance and the age of their kids (5-6 years old). But when the children grow, the situation changes, and they go to schools in other neighbourhoods.

The school in Mofleni neighborhood is not sufficiently supported by the Local Council or the City Hall in terms of educational initiatives. The school doesn't have a sports field, only a small room for physical education, and during the summer when the temperatures are very high, the atmosphere is hardly bearable.

General school from Mofleni has an active group of teachers ready to involve in a project, ready to support any activity, but the problem is that they are not speaking English. There is only one English teacher in the school.

Another big problem of the school and indirectly of the Roma children is that there is no budget for extracurricular activities and there are no sponsors. Without money, non formal education has no chance in changing the future of these youngsters.

Not only that in Mofleni and in Roma communities the level of education is very low, but they also don't receive any kind of support in implementing projects for promoting non-formal education or for raising the awareness about the importance of the education in general. Also the school doesn't have a sports field, or a celebration hall. All these aspects affect Roma children, their future, and the process of reducing discrimination against Roma population.

### **III. The opportunities to implement an EVS project**

Non-discrimination does not apply always in real life, especially when it comes to Roma population. An explicit example is Mofleni a segregated neighborhood of Craiova where children are not motivated to go to school, they don't have a group of friends, or an idea about the concept of after school classes.

In School n°26, there were some extracurricular activities, like a dancing team, and all kind of social, and ecological games. Now the kids here are experiencing an EVS project, with two Spanish girls, two times a week. So, the school has some experience in relation with European projects, like Learning by Doing implemented by EPYD and other projects with NGOs like Vasiliada and Terdezom.

Also this school from Mofleni has partnerships with ISJ, TRUST, EPYD, Vasiliada Asociation, Terdezom Association, Amaro Sumo, Speranta Baniei Association, ROMANI C.R.I.S.S. and others.

Mofleni neighborhood is a mixed one – young, medium and older.

Regarding the number of children aged 0-7 years the situation is the following:

- between 3 and 5 years - 32 children
- aged 5 - 7 - 25 children
- between 0 - 3 years - 35 children

These youngsters from Mofleni are disadvantaged, with low opportunities. For them, the unemployment, social and economic exclusion, depression, substance abuse and crime are just some characteristics of their future.

Disadvantage is not inevitable. While a disadvantaged young person has grown up with a lack of opportunities and resource, this doesn't have to be the story of their adult lives.

Through comprehensive programs and scholarships, organisations like EPYD can help provide disadvantaged young people with educational support, employment skills and confidence to negotiate this vital stage of life.

The key of changing this situation is non-formal education.

Non-formal education can enhance their overall knowledge, can help them integrate what they have learn in school to what they know about the environment.

The European Union supports non-formal education opportunities for young people through transnational voluntary service which directly and actively involves young people in activities designed to meet the needs of society in a wide range of fields.

In Mofleni, there are a lot of problems to work on, and the school provides us with the support and the place to do it.

There are teachers in Mofleni who really want to involve in every project that can help children. Romanescu Alexandra is a young English teacher who offered, along with Vladut Mirela, a sports teacher, to support the volunteers and the projects.

Roma population is well known for migrating in countries like Italy, Spain or Germany. So, even if they don't speak English, they can speak Spanish, Italian or German. There are two girls in the community who speak Spanish fluently, and there are a lot of youngsters who speak very good Italian.

In this S.E.E.D II. project, TRUST organization will be supporting all the activities.

TRUST "Tineri Romi pentru Unitate și Transparență" is an association, dealing with monitoring human rights violation and belongs to ROMANI C.R.I.S.S.'s network.

Particularly, through a strategic plan against discrimination, in the last four years they have been working in the field of school segregation in Craiova in order to ensure same quality and same opportunities of education to Roma children.

They will provide cultural trainings and information of volunteers in what regards the Roma culture, their traditions and habits, making them better prepared in approaching with success the target group.

The school will be the place for developing each activity.

In School n°26 from Mofleni, there are small classes, a lab with internet access, and a small room for physical education. They are now building a celebration hall, and looking forward to seeing the moment when they will start building the sports field.

There are teachers ready to help, and most important, roma children who need help in these activities.

Also, teachers agreed with having the volunteers assisting the classes, and observing how the process of formal education works in Romania.

The school in Mofleni and the community itself is used to foreigners. The school had developed some projects with Romanians like social education, ecological games, human rights, and only one EVS project, with two Spanish girls.

Sara and Nuria came in Romania for a six months project named "Learning by doing" implemented by EPYD Organization. They are working in Mofleni with children from 7 to 14 years old, twice a week from 3 to 5. They have games, dancing, and workshops. Also, Sara now is teaching 3 boys how to read and write, because these kids, even if they are 12 years old, they have never went to school. They are making progress but she is concerned about this situation – there are children that never go to school in Roma communities. She hopes that she will encourage children to go to school, and also that her project would be continued.

Because they were the first volunteers working in Mofleni, they had some difficulties at the beginning, and they also have some now too.

They would never expect the children to be waiting for them in the school at 3 o'clock. Before 3 PM, they go door by door in the community, announcing and also presenting their project to the Roma children and parents too.

For them this was also good because now they can understand better the community, see where and how every child lives and how is the project seen by the parents.

These girls have managed to attract children with some "free time activities", like painting, dancing, and also learning about European Countries and culture.

When working in the Roma community in Craiova, Mofleni you will know the problems affecting Roma daily life, like access to housing, employment and health care and this experience will make them face, on the local level, the violation of human rights.

The Roma children know almost nothing about how a normal child should act, learn or play. That is why they are happy with small actions, routine actions for us, new and exciting for them.

Having Roma children, and also the Roma community of Mofleni involved, maybe in the future we wouldn't be talking about school drop-out.

These non-formal activities will help children realise the importance of the school and also the importance of sport, fair-play and a healthy life.

In order to find out the needs and wishes of the Roma children from Mofleni neighborhood we applied a survey, from which it results that children with ages between 11 and 14 years old, like to practice sports and hang out with friends into their spare time. There are also kids who like to listen to music and also reading.

The children like to spend their free time into the park, or at the stadium. The park is really near Mofleni and it is a new park, being an attraction for all children and youngsters from Craiova.

The favourite activities of the Roma children from Mofleni are sports and listening to music. These children are active, and music is a strong part of their culture and tradition. Being asked if they would like to participate together with other youngsters after classes to some extracurricular activities, all the children responded affirmatively. They are very interested in knowing new people and learning new things.

Roma children from Mofleni neighborhood are interested in computers and internet, but due to financial situation, less than half of the families have a computer connected to the internet.

All the children preferred as extracurricular activities sports, artistic activities like dancing, painting, theatre, and also ecology. They had already developed an ecology project, and this theme sound interesting to them.



## Lascar Catargiu

### I. Status quo of the community

Catargiu is a neighborhood located in the outskirts of Craiova, in the South part, near the biggest space for leisure in town, called „Parcul Tineretului” ( The Park of Youth” ).

There are means of transportation from down town: bus n° 14.

The population of Roma people is significant in the neighbourhood – a quarter of the total population. The neighborhood has the appearance of a village, with contrasting „landscapes” like poor, small houses near large, luxurious houses, and partially paved streets. Only a few streets in the neighbourhood have sewage so the living conditions are difficult.

The Roma people earns their living by practicing crafts which are not so profitable, like: collecting useless objects from iron and selling them; collecting old clothes and selling them; repairing metal objects and others. A real tendency regarding the economical aspect is the migration of Roma families and youngsters abroad, to work, mostly in domains like constructions and agriculture. Therefore there are notable economical differences between them: some of them living in poverty, misery, beneficiaries of social help and another part of them –those who work abroad- with a good financial situation, being able to build big houses and to buy expensive cars. Most of the Roma families in this neighborhood are still traditional ones. One of their most known and controverted custom is early marriages – the youngsters get married from early ages like 14, 15 years old or even earlier in some cases, and the marriages are arranged by parents. The Roma families are characterized by solidarity and hierarchical organization: the man has the power of decision and particularly the old men.

The traditions of Roma people, their way of living and their difficulties to adapt it to a modern society led to many prejudices and labeling from the Romanian people, like:

- the name of „gypsy” is often used as a pejorative one, associated to some negative features that the Roma people are believed to have ( they are believed to be lazy, thieves, dishonest ); some of them feel offended when they are called „gypsies”, and on the contrary some others feel offended when they are called „Roma” sustaining that „gypsy” is their traditional name )

- it is believed that most of Roma people are criminals and especially thieves

Generally, the collaboration and the cohabitation of Roma and Romanian people in this neighborhood is good but it is evident to some extent, the mistrust regarding gypsies and the tendency to judge them on the one hand, and on the other hand it is also evident the resistance of Roma people to changes coming from outside their culture.

In Lascar Catargiu is located only one school, namely School with classes I-VIII nr. 19, “Lascar Catargiu” for children aged between 7 and 14 years old. The school is located on street BARAGANULUI number 45, it has between 300 and 500 students and places for Roma children.

### II. The main problems with an impact on Roma youngsters

The Roma community in Lascar Catargiu –and not only- is confronted with a series of problems with an impact on youngsters:

- Poverty – for many of them the main source of living are the social aids and allowances
  - there are a lot of cases when the Roma children are stimulated to go to school only because they receive a student allowance

- most of Roma adults don't have any professional qualification working in low- paid jobs such as salubrity or practicing ambulatory commerce
- Migration – a significant number of Roma people migrate abroad for jobs better paid
  - the adults either take their children with them abroad, interrupting their studies, either leave them at home to take care of younger brothers or old members of the family, which also leads to the situation of interrupting the studies
- Tradition - there is a significant number of cases when the rules of tradition supersede the need for education : by the age of 11 years old or 14 years old, the girls are already engaged and they have to interrupt school for getting married; the boys are allowed to continue their studies but there are a lot of cases when they interrupt their studies by the age of 16 years old
  - the adults don't perceive the education as a benefit and opportunity to develop but as a threat to their traditions

## Education

Level of schooling; school drop

The school with classes I-VIII nr. 19, "Lascar Catargiu" has 25% Roma children. Although the attendance rate in general is high – 90%- the school attendance rate among Roma children is fluctuating. The main cause seems to be the migration. The parents enroll their children at the beginning of the school year and after a while they take their children, interrupting their studies, to leave abroad. Therefore the Roma children have serious gaps in their knowledge: many of them don't learn to read and write until 10, 11 years old. The graduation rate is also smaller among Roma children.

The teachers have tried to do an afterschool in 2008 to help the Roma children to recover gaps but they didn't succeed because of lack of finances to sustain this programme.

The school is facing also situations of school drops more frequently among Roma children than Romanian ones. School drops usually happen for several reasons: parent's lack of interest for education; early marriages; poor material situation.

The school is collaborating with representants of Roma people, councillor from the County Council and other representants from the local public administration to prevent school drops. They organise symposiums and round tables where they discuss these issues and where preventive measures are proposed.

## Segregation

The school is facing the situation in which the parents of Roma children don't respect the official enrollment period. They enroll their children later; therefore classes with a majority of Roma children appear. It can not be said that the segregation is imposed. The teachers are making efforts to mix the classes during the school year by gathering Romanian children and Roma children with a similar level of knowledge.

### III. The opportunities to implement an EVS project

It is evident the need to improve the level of education of Rroma children and to increase the level of cooperation between Roma and Romanian children.

An EVS project can be considered an instrument that can respond to these needs. The SEED EVS project offers an option to the classic education and curricula using non-formal education, youngsters working with youngsters, a rich cultural environment and flexibility to adapt activities to needs and possibilities.

The opportunity to implement an EVS project in a community like Lascar Catargiu and particularly in the school number 19 can be described in terms of:

☐ Human resources:

- the director of the school , Mr. Predus Daniel, together with a teacher for primary school, Ms Ecaterina Ilie and one of the English teachers, engaged themselves in supporting the project during it's implementation
- the support offered by the teachers consists in: helping the volunteers to integrate in the school; talking to parents and children and explaining them the purpose of the project in order to intermediate the contact between them and the volunteers and win more easy their confidence; helping the volunteers to organise the groups of children and activities

☐ Infrastructure/ Material resources:

- the school has a sports room; a festivity room and one laboratory of informatics with internet connection
- there is a sports field in the school yard
- the courses schedule is from 8 a.m.to 12 p.m.- the primary school and from 12 p.m. to 19 p.m.- the gymnasium but there are available daily, three unoccupied classrooms that can be used for extracurricular activities
- only a small part from the budget allocated for school needs is used for extracurricular activities because the budget is small
- the school managed on several occasions to obtain sponsorships from companies for activities with children ( festivities, contests ) and for some necessary equipment

☐ Extracurricular activities/ Partnerships:

- there is a group of dances formed by a teacher from the school in 2008; the group is mixed- Rroma and Romanian children- and has participated in contests of ethnic dances
- the teachers and the children celebrated in 2009 The Day of Rroma people
- there is a football team, formed 4 years ago and trained by the sports teacher; the team has a mixed group of children and participates in contests, championships between schools
- the school has a sports association called JIEN, that supports the football team and the dances group
- the school has several partnerships with other schools from the town and from outside the town; it is noteworthy the partnerships with school number 3 Rasnov-Brasov and school number 4 from Sibiu, ( Brasov and Sibiu are two big cities of Romania ), based on exchanges between teachers and children
- partnership and good collaboration on educational projects with the organisation Romani C.R.I.S.S.- an organisation that fights for Rroma people's rights and integration
- partnership with the organisation „Terre des hommes”, an organisation working mainly in the human rights field; through this partnership the teachers participate at courses of improving their teaching skills using animation

#### □ Openness/Expectations:

- the teachers don't have experience with European programmes because they couldn't access any of them; so implementing an EVS project would be a good occasion to learn more about these programmes
- the teachers from the school, in general, are interested in new educational programmes
- the teachers are open to a possible collaboration with other schools where the number of Roma children is significant
- as an expectation of the teachers: they would like from volunteers to offer to the children examples of new teaching and learning methods, more modern, active and practical ones that will attract more the children in schools
- the teachers believe that they, together with the volunteers through the children openness and interest in extracurricular activities, will obtain the parent's openness too

The level of openness, the desires and the needs of children have been tested through questionnaires. The research team spread the questionnaires to children with ages of 10 to 12 years old and 13 to 15 years old. The respondents were Roma and Romanian children.

The results were the following:

- for children with ages from 10 to 12 years old
  - for the question: „What do you like to do in your free time?’ most of answers indicated activities like playing games and preference for outdoor activities ( walk in the park with family and friends )
  - for the question: „Where do you meet your friends?” most of them said that they have as a meeting place the park ( the park is near the neighbourhood )
  - for the question: „What do you usually do when you meet your friends?” the majority answered that they play games ( especially sports ) and discuss
  - for the question: „ Would you like to take part in recreational activities after classes?”, the answers were 100% affirmative for this category of ages
  - for the question: „Do you have a computer with internet connection at home?”, half of the respondents of this age answered „no”
  - the children had to choose from a list of themes and activities that they would like to develop after classes. The most answers indicated preferences for: sports ( football ); art ( dances, theatre, music ); health issues (hygiene, prevention of certain diseases ) and ecology
- for children with ages from 13 to 15 years old
  - for the question: „ „What do you like to do in your free time?” the majority of answers indicated activities like practicing sports ( volleyball, football, tennis ) and spending time on computer
  - for the question: „Where do you meet your friends?” most of answers indicated as the most common meeting places the streets where the children live and the school when they come to classes
  - for the question: „What do you usually do when you meet your friends?” the majority answered that they like to play games ( mainly sports ) and to discuss with their friends
  - for the question: „ Would you like to take part in recreational activities after classes?” the majority of answers were affirmative although a significant number of children from this age answered negative
  - for the question: „Do you have a computer with internet connection at home?” the answers indicated that a high number of children from this category of ages have a computer with internet connection
  - the children had to choose from a list of themes and activities that they would like to develop after classes. The most answers indicated preferences for: sports ( football, volleyball ); artistic activities ( dances; theatre, music ); health issues (hygiene, prevention of certain diseases ) and culture ( learning foreign languages; learning about cultures and tradition of other countries )



## Popoveni

### I. Status quo of the community

This district, located in the South of Craiova, is populated with a total of 1,000 people of which about 70% are Roma ethnics.

There are means of transportation from down town: bus No 24, 1.

Roma community in this area is located in the area known as "Canal", following the canal that passes right through the middle of its community over a distance of about 2 km. The neighbourhood has the appearance of a village, with poor, small houses near partially paved streets.

The main street has asphalt, but the side streets are not paved. There are also cases when 12 people live all together, in one small room. There is no network of running water, and people are using water from wells dug in the ground.

Roma population in Popoveni includes only traditional Roma. They are mostly, brick makers, but they have abandoned the traditional job. Only few still practice traditional trades. There are few Roma with stable jobs.

In Popoveni, Roma population earn their living from occasional work, work in the market (selling second-hand clothes), collecting useless objects from iron or plastic and selling them. Many of them are social aid beneficiaries adding to this children's allowance. Lately, the financial situation of community has improved due to migration of young people working abroad.

Most of the Roma families in Popoveni are still traditional. The biggest problems facing Roma youngsters are discrimination, lack of education and early marriage. The traditions of Roma, their way of living and their difficulties to adapt to a modern society led to many prejudices and labeling from the Romanian people, like:

- all Roma people are criminals and thieves
- Roma people are responsible for the bad image of Romania

Marriages usually take place between 12 - 17 years, engagements are made 7-8 years earlier. Even if there are some Roma people who use to "sell" their daughters, Roma people from Popoveni practice marriage without asking for money. Civil marriage is made in the years after if absolutely necessary for some family interests, but the youngsters can live together from the day of the traditional wedding.

Roma people have their own traditions for marriage and their own Roma trial, where they solve everything, except for murder.

Generally, the collaboration and the cohabitation of Roma and Romanian people in this neighborhood is good but it is evident to some extent, the mistrust regarding gypsies and the tendency to judge them.

Roma people do not really collaborate with the school, seen as an institution that can destroy their tradition. Educational process faces the following issues: early marriage, migration abroad, labor exploitation of children, some parents do not allow children to go to school, high absenteeism, low level of living. As a result of the lack of referential patterns in the educational system, most young people in the neighborhood migrate, thus reaching the level of early school drop-out.

School Nr. 36 was opened in 1992 and in terms of infrastructure is new. In terms of teachers, all staff are qualified. Since 2000 to this school was subordinated structure Popoveni-School Nr. 27. School classes I-IV Popoveni is located out of the city of Craiova and looks like a house with 3 bedrooms. The building is made out of 4 rooms: lounge, the office and 2 classrooms. The toilet is located outside and still running. This building shelters 75 students, all Roma. Distance between the two structures is about 1, 5 km.

## II. The main problems with an impact on Roma youngsters

The Roma community in Popoveni is confronted with a series of problems with an impact on youngsters:

- Poverty – for many of them the main source of living are the social aids and allowances
  - there are a lot of cases when the Roma children are stimulated to go school only because they receive a student allowance
  - most of Roma adults don't have any professional qualification working in low paid jobs such as salubrity or practicing ambulatory commerce
- Migration – a significant number of Roma people migrate abroad for better paid jobs
  - the adults either take their children with them abroad, interrupting their studies, either leave them at home to take care of younger brothers or old members of the family, which also leads to the situation of interrupting the studies
- Tradition - there is a significant number of cases when the rules of tradition supersede the need for education : by the age of 11 years old or 14 years old, the girls are already engaged and they have to interrupt school for getting married; the boys are allowed to continue their studies but there are a lot of cases when they interrupt their studies by the age of 16 years old
  - the adults don't perceive the education as a benefit and opportunity to develop but as a threat to their traditions

### Education

Level of schooling; school drop

The school with classes I-IV nr. 27, "Popoveni" has 100% Roma children. Although the official attendance rate in general is high – 90%- the real school attendance rate among Roma children is lower and fluctuating. The main cause seems to be the migration. The parents enrol their children at the beginning of the school year and after a while they take their children, interrupting their studies, to leave abroad. Therefore the Roma children have serious gaps in their knowledge: many of them don't learn to read and write until 9, 10 years old.

Even though the graduation average is above 90%, Roma children come out of the educational system with real blanks in where knowledge and competences are concerned. School board has alerted already the city council and the city hall, but no concrete answer was received, nor any help.

### Segregation

School 27 is a subordinated structure of School 36, so segregation is given by location. Roma children in Popoveni go to primary school here and then make up mix classes with Romanian pupils.

Teachers have created interaction between the children organising sports events, dancing groups and scenes play with the children.

### III. The opportunities to implement an EVS project

It is evident the need to improve the level of education of Roma children and to increase the level of cooperation between Roma and Romanian children.

The opportunity to implement an EVS project in a community like Lascar Popoveni and particularly in School 27 can be described in terms of:

□ Human resources:

- the director of the school , Mr. Marica Ion, together with the deputy director Mrs. Carmen Dragomir, the coordinating teacher for primary school Popoveni, Mr Georgică Constantin and one of the English teachers, Mrs. Dumitru Adelina engaged themselves in supporting the project during it's implementation
- the support offered by the teachers consists in: helping the volunteers to integrate in the school; talking to parents and children and explaining them the purpose of the project in order to intermediate the contact between them and the volunteers and win more easy their confidence; helping the volunteers to organise the groups of children and activities.

□ Infrastructure/ Material resources:

- there is a sports field in the school yard
- the courses schedule is from 8 to 11:30 - 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and from 11:30 to 15 – 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade, but there are available daily, 2 unoccupied classrooms in the kindergarten that can be used for extracurricular activities after 12 o'clock when small children go home.
- only a small part from the budget allocated for school needs is used for extracurricular activities because the budget is small
- the school managed on several occasions to obtain sponsorships from companies for activities with children ( festivities, contests ) and for some necessary equipment, but the principle said is becoming more and more difficult to get funds.

□ Extracurricular activities/ Partnerships:

- there is a group of dances formed by a teacher from the school in 2008; the group has participated in contests of ethnic dances
- the school has several partnerships with other schools from the town and from outside the town; it is noteworthy the partnership with Organizatia Tinerilor cu Initiativa din Arad who is implementing the project ECO GROUPS financed by the Youth in Action Program

□ Openness/Expectations:

- the teachers have experience with only one European programme(the above mentioned partnership ); so implementing an EVS project would be a good occasion to learn more about these programmes
- the teachers from the school, in general, are interested in new educational programmes
- the teachers are open to a possible collaboration with other schools where the number of Roma children is significant
- as an expectation of the teachers: they would like from volunteers to offer to the children examples of new teaching and learning methods, more modern, active and practical ones that will attract more the children in schools
- the children are open to extracurricular activities
- the teachers believe that they, together with the volunteers through the children openness and interest in extracurricular activitites, will obtain the parent's openness too.

## Question and Answers

When hearing about Rroma, when reading about them, a wealth of clichés, generally accepted “truths” and statements are always present. This summary presents the most common amongst them.

### **Why Rroma with two Rs?**

Rroma can actually be written with one or two Rs. In some dialects, this is pronounced differently. And originally, this “Rr” was the Sanskrit retroflex D, which phonetically changed into an R. So, with one or two Rs, both are valid options.

Sinti and Rroma. Especially in German speaking countries, the name of “Sinti and Rroma” has taken hold. This is akin to saying “Parisian and French” or “Londoner and English”, for Sinti are Rroma. Ask a Sinto which language he speaks, he will say “Romanes” in most case, ask him how he calls his wife and he will say “Romni”. In addition, Sinti from Poland call themselves German Rroma (Sasytke Rroma). The name Sinti itself is a recent one as in the 19th century, Sinti called themselves Kale (black). This appellation came to be after World War two with the influx of Rroma from Eastern Europe in Germany. The Sinti, the local ones started differentiating them from the others, the “Rroma” in general.

### **How many Rroma are there?**

There are between 8 and 12 million Rroma overall. As there are no reliable statistics in many countries, and as many Rroma do not want to declare themselves as such, it is difficult to say with more precision how many there are.

### **Are Rroma travelers?**

No. Only a negligible part of the overall Rroma population was ever traveling. In fact, in the Balkan, they settled as soon as they arrived. Only in Western and Northern Europe were Rroma de facto forced to travel, as they were not allowed to settle.

### **Are Rroma “nomadic”?**

No, even the few Rroma who travel always have a home base. They traveled because of their jobs (as horse-dealers, as coppersmiths) from villages to villages, but always had a house.

### **Do all Rroma steal and beg?**

The classic view in Western Europe! If all Rroma in Europe were only doing that, this would be pretty much visible. Eight to twelve million thieves and beggars... One cannot deny that some steal, some beg. These are the ones one sees most and the ones the press always displays. All Rroma are simply thrown into the same pot, regardless of the truth. This is akin to say “all Germans are Nazis”, “all English are rowdies and drunkards”, “all Italians are Mafiosi” etc... Who would dare to do these analogies?

### **Are the Rroma dirty?**

The usual pictures of ghettos, of “favellas”, of children running in the dirt etc. have contributed to the general assumption that Rroma are inherently dirty. In fact, the opposite is rather the norm. Cleanliness is one of the foremost rule among Rroma, and even in some of the worst favellas, one can almost eat on the floor in most Rroma houses.

### **Do Roma have many children?**

Their population is growing rapidly. The typical Roma family doesn't have much more children than the general surrounding population. True, there are still large families, with 5 or 6 children, but they are far from being the norm. In fact, in places such as Bulgaria, Kosovo, Macedonia, where one has statistics since the 16th century, the overall proportion of Roma has not changed at all. They always represented between 10 and 15% of the overall population in these regions. In some places, such as Slovakia, Hungary or Romania, they are a bit behind the curve, i.e. they still have a tendency of having more children than the general population. This has more to do with the social situation than with an actual Roma trait.

Roma never integrated or wanted to integrate.

False in both cases. All over the Balkan, Roma were well integrated. So well, in fact, that in some place they were the bourgeoisie and craftsmen. They have had jobs ranging from farmers, lawyers, doctors, teachers, bakers, policeman, judge, and so on ever since records exist in those regions. So wherever they were given the chance, they integrated well, all the while keeping their own culture. Only in places where they were forcefully segregated, like in Western Europe, in Romania (with the slavery), in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, did this integration fail. Not because of Roma themselves but rather because of the policies that were inflicted on Roma.

### **If one is integrated, how can one be a Roma?**

Integrated doesn't necessarily mean one has to lose one's identity. In Europe, since the 19th century, there has been a tendency to think that a country is equal to a unique culture, language, and even ethnic appurtenance. Europe was never like this before, and there are minorities. One can integrate, live a regular life, all the while keeping a different language at home. Would anybody ask the same question about Jews?

Are Roma are uneducated?

They cannot read and write. Roma are so often confronted with the question "can you read and write?" that it is almost embarrassing. Fact is, 10% or so of the Roma population went to university. This is not sufficient, but already is better than many European countries as such. True, education is one of the most pressing problem that Roma are faced with. In many countries (mostly in former communist countries), Roma were and still are sent to special schools, schools for mentally retarded, and as such are being willfully denied a proper education.

### **Roma are not European, they are foreign.**

False! Roma are of Indian origins, i.e. of non-European roots. But the Slavs came from the Altai in the 5th century, the Magyar from central Asia in the 9th, the Germans from the Nordic countries in the 3rd, and so on. Most Europeans have non-European roots. Fact is, Roma are a trans-national European minority. Roma are European, and always were. Their identity and culture was created in Europe, and for many centuries, there were no Roma outside of Europe. After 1200 years in Europe, who can say they are not?

### **The Roma problem is a social issue.**

This is by now the common approach of many countries. Rather than acknowledging a minority and discrimination issue, many governments and alas, also NGOs qualify the Roma issue as a social one. The justifications are simple: low education, low employment rate, poverty, criminality, etc. Why this is the case, namely rampant discrimination, prejudices etc. is actually being denied by making the issue of Roma integration a purely social one. With the opening of the EU borders, there will be a massive influx of Roma in Western Europe. This is a common theme among populist politicians in Europe. This argument is being heard in Italy, in France, in Switzerland, etc. It is not based on any facts! Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republics joined the EU a while back, and had a free visa policy much earlier. Between them, these countries have roughly 1.5 to 2 Million Roma. They never came en masse to Western Europe. Bulgarians and Romanians can travel to Western Europe without visas since 2002.



This means that all Roma who would have wanted to could have already arrived. Did they? Apart for a few (very few), none actually did. They have houses in those countries. So most stay. At worst, one or two family members will try to go abroad to work and feed their family back home. Their families are better off in their home countries

These countries are booming. Romania, in particular is in an absolute boom phase. There are more opportunities now there than there will ever be in Western Europe. This can be seen in the numbers of Eastern Europeans moving back to their home countries after several years in countries such as the UK or Ireland.

Roma are not more “mobile” than the rest of the population. They tend to move in the same patterns than the rest of the local population. So if there are 10% of Roma in a country, among emigrants from that country, one will find no less and no more than 10% of Roma. This is a pattern that can readily be verified and still proves to be true.

For 3 Million Roma to come to Western Europe, this would mean that all the Bulgarian and Romanian population have migrated westwards...

### Small Conversation Guide

Romani language	English Language
Droboi tu!	Good Morning!
Lašo des!	Good Evening!
Mai lași ti reat!	Good night!
Mišto arakhlem tu!	I'm glad to see you
Mišto avilean!	Welcome!
Sar bušos?	What's your name?
Me bușoau Verdeana	My name is Verdeana.
Fal ma mišto te prinjeau tu!	I'm glad to meet you!
Tu sar bušos?	And you, what's your name?
Me bușoau Toma	My name is Toma.
Katar san ?	Where are you from?
Kai beșes akana ?	Where are you living in this moment?
Anda savo cem san?	What country are you from?
Me akana beșeau ando Sibio	Sibio! I'm living in Sibiu now!
Da kana avilean ande Romania ?	When did you arrive in Romania?
Jeanes romanes ?	Do you speak romanian?
Sar fal tu amaro cem ?	How do you like our country?
So mai karas?	How are you?
Mišto	Fine
Si tuka bokh?	Are you hungry?
Kames te peas akh kafa?	Would you like a coffee?

Romani language	English Language
Sostar avilean mande ?	Why have you come to me?
Kamau te sitiau te dau дума	I want to learn romanes language
Kames te jeas man? a ando foro	Do you want to go with me in the city?
Sode ašes ande Romania ?	How long would you stay in Romania?
Akana me jeautar khara ka si reat	Well I'm leaving now.
Jea le Devllesa!	Go with God!
Aš le devllesa!	Remain with God!

## The Rroma Flag

The Rroma flag is dark blue on top (representing the heavens) and green below (representing the earth) with the red wheel image represents a sixteen-spoked chakra in the centre (in recognition spoked of the Indian origin of the Rroma), representing movement and the burst of fire from which all the creation emerged at the beginning of time. This flag was approved at the First World Romani Congress in 1971 at London, England.



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