



MANUAL

ON ROMA HISTORY AND CULTURE

Project 'Contribution to the Role of Education – Educating Educators' (CORE)

Ref No 357373-1-LLP-1-2011-BG-KA1-KA1NWR

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Sofia 2013, BULGARIA





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Abbreviations

ACIME:	Alto comissariado para a imigração e minorias étnicas.
ADRA:	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AMALIPE:	Centre for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance
ANR:	Agência Națională pentru Romi. National Agency for Roma
ASA:	Agency for Social Assistance (ASA)
BRbp:	Bulgarian Response to good/best Practices
BRqu:	Bulgarian Response to Questionnaire
CEICSEM:	Center for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities
DESINCOOP:	Desenvolvimento Económico, Social e Cultural
DRPNERM:	Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities
EEA:	European Economic Area
EFCPNM:	European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
ERRC:	European Roma Rights Centre
KIM:	Norway's Contact Committee for Immigrants and the Authorities
ICCPR:	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IHRA:	International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance
IMDi:	The (Norwegian) Directorate of Integration and Diversity
ITF :	International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance
LpE:	Liga pro Europa
LRbp:	Lithuanian Response to good/best Practices
LRqu:	Lithuanian Response to Questionnaire
NSI:	National statistic Institute of Bulgaria
NRbp:	Norwegian Response to good/best Practices
NRqu:	Norwegian Response to Questionnaire
OSCE:	Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSI:	Open Society Institute
PRbp:	Portuguese Response to good/best Practices
PRqu:	Portuguese Response to questionnaire
PIRCC:	Public Institution Roma Community Centre, NGO Lithuania
ROMED:	Roma Mediators
RRbp:	Romanian Response to good/best Practices
RRqu:	Romanian Response to Questionnaire
RCC:	Roma Community Center (Vilnius, Lithuania)
SDA:	Seventh Day Adventist (church)
SEIF:	Selvhjelp for Innvandrere og Flyktninger
TEIP:	Educational Territories of Priority Intervention
U.G.R.R.:	The General Union of Roma in Romania
WB:	the World Bank



Introduction to Roma History and Culture

The dispersed jewels of Roma history and Roma culture need to be sought, found, analyzed and summarized from all over the world – and that is a future work to be done by scholars. Our project does not dare to have such an unrealistic great ambition - to present even in a short summary the Roma history and Roma culture in its worldwide diversity. Our ambition is much more modest – to contribute to increasing the understanding of the non-Roma, the ‘Gadje’ as they are called by Roma people, of the specifics of this interesting, proud, sometimes different, sometimes – close to the surrounding majorities Roma population.

What is to be a Roma? What the self-identification of being a Roma contains? It’s difficult for the non-Roma even to answer this seemingly ‘simple’ question. In our project partnership of Roma and non-Roma experts we asked the Roma representatives to try to formulate it. And the best – according to us – definition was that of the Bulgarian Roma expert Deyan Kolev, who himself recognizing the difficulty to present the specifics of so many sub-groups in a common formulation, called the Roma identity a ‘Roma spirit’. A very special spirit that empowers Roma people to transfer between generations the feeling of belonging to an ethnos with difficult and not fortunate historical faith and to be at the same time vital, able to be happy, proud to be Roma, preserving its culture and traditions. People philosophically accepting their difficult life of surviving in a social environment of discrimination, often hatred, stigmatization, ostracism and expulsion, insisting to stay what they are - Roma.

Yes, Roma people are ‘travelling’ people. Often on a move – through time and place. Often forced to move. But forced or moving on their own will, Roma do not surrender before the difficulties of their daily life. And what is characteristic for them in all their long history of survival is that they succeed to carry on this Roma spirit that prevents Roma from assimilation. And at the same time to look towards a future where they will still be Roma but more fortunate in societal life.

The project partnership hopes that this short Manual provides an insight on Roma background, presenting some parts of Roma history and culture based on the work of prominent researchers of Roma and on personal observations and reflections of Roma experts. And by presenting the recent trends in Roma development provides evidence of



increased Roma achievements in a Roma-friendly societal environment where such exists.

Maybe when non-Roma think about Roma integration the first question that should be answered – especially in countries as Bulgaria and Romania with numerous Roma population – is how we presume to feel if we were minority among Roma people? Aren't we then to rely on tolerance towards our 'otherness'? And would we not be insisting to preserve that 'otherness' if it presents what we are? What would we prefer – to be equal or equalized?

To understand is the way to accept. And Roma history and culture provides a key to understanding Roma way of living and Roma values which Roma people expect to be respected. The recent trends in Roma development shows that harmful traditions as early marriages, lack of family planning etc. little by little get abandoned. Though slowly, and sometimes painfully, Roma integration happens. And it comes faster where the level of education is raised.

So what Roma integration needs at most is skilled teachers in mixed classes who not only speak about equality and respect but understand the specific of their Roma students in the mixed classes. And here we believe our Manual to contribute.

Alya-Nedyalka Veder

Project manager of CORE project



INTRODUCTION OR FINDING OUR WAY AMONG THE IDENTITY LAYERS

The aim of this manual is to serve practitioners and stakeholders in the field of education and intercultural learning. It is designed also for all the people interested in the biggest European minority: the Roma minority – its history, culture and worldview. It would not give you answers to all questions about Roma but it will give you a basis for further research; it will give you a starting point for reconsidering stereotypes and myths about Roma; and last but not least, it will give an orientation tour in the Roma world view.

The manual has been produced within the project "Contribution to the Role of Education - Educating Educators" (CORE) financed within the Lifelong Learning Program of DG Education and Culture of the European Commission.

From the beginning of this manual we have to make several terminological clarifications, such as definitions of *ethnos*, *ethnicity* and *culture*. The questions concerning Roma identity are much less examined and even more complicated than the questions of ethnic identity in general. Although Roma have lived in Europe at least since the eleventh century and they appeared in scholarship yet in the eighteenth century, until the 1980s Roma identity was not an object of scholarly interest. The shift in this direction began with Liegeois but even today the important questions concerning Roma identity are still the subject of debate. Summarizing and critically revising the main conceptions about ethnicity we can outline a working definition about the terms *ethnos* and *ethnicity*:

Ethnos is a self-organized group of people with similar cultural characteristics and shared sense of kinship, myths and symbols who recognize themselves as similar (and as different from the others) and who are recognized from the others as a different entity. (Kolev 2004)

The statement that an *ethnos* is a self-organized group of people intends to emphasize the inner character of the principle that organizes a group. As a result of this shared inner principle, people relate to each other as a community and react towards the others as a community. For example, people who were born on January, 1st do not form an *ethnos*. The principle that organizes them is formal and alien. That is why they do not



relate to each other as a community and there is no unity on fundamental, cultural, or on symbolic level among them. They form a formal category but not a community.

The similar cultural characteristics are the basis of each ethnos. A common language, customs, festive system, traditions and many others can be included in this category. They express a common worldview and common patterns of attitudes and behavior towards nature, other people and themselves. It is not necessary for the cultural characteristics to be completely identical. The similarity that can provide a basis for common understanding and common life is enough.

The most important outcomes of similar cultural traditions are the shared sense of kinship, myths and symbols. If similar cultural traditions are the basis of each ethnos, the outcomes are the driving force for an ethnic formation. It is not necessary for similar cultural characteristics to lead to an ethnic formation. For example, Serbs and Croats have similar cultural characteristics, but they form different ethnoi. The ethnic formation is dependent rather on a shared sense of kinship and common myths and symbols than on the real existence of kinship relations. In the contemporary world, blood kinship is rather an abstraction or even a myth. Important is not kinship itself, but a sense of it shared by a group.

As a result of shared cultural features and a common sense of kinship, an ethnic group perceives itself as similar (because group members have the same characteristics, myths, and symbols) and other ethnic groups as different (because they do not have them). For the process of ethnic construction this perception is as important as its opposite: the perception of the outsiders that the people in a group are similar and form a different ethnic group. Sometimes an outsider perception towards a group is a more important driving force for their ethnic construction than the own perception of the people concerned. (Kolev 2004) The case of Hungarian Beasha who recognize themselves as Roma and their Romanian language as a Roma language as a result of the outsider perceptions is an excellent example in this direction. As a whole Beasha (the other name is Rudara) in Romania (from where they came), Bulgaria, and many other countries do not consider themselves as Roma and do not speak Romani language. But because they were considered as Roma from the other ethnoi in Hungary, Beasha in this country began to recognize themselves as Roma. (Marushiakova, Popov 1993: 46)



At present, the Roma community faces a crucial period of its development: transition from pre-modern (patriarchal) to modern society. This transition is always painful and difficult but at the same time it provides unique opportunities for either moving the groups to a higher stage and position, or dissolving / assimilating it. In Europe this transition was called Enlightenment, Renaissance, Modernization; for Roma it is called Integration. An important factor that makes it even more painful and difficult is the fact that it happens in countries and societies that are on the borders of post-modernism.

The pre-modern, traditional Roma identity does exist although it is mainly at the level of Roma groups and clans, i.e. it is more “identities” than “identity”. Certain Roma cultural practices are common for certain Roma / Gipsy groups, some of them – to many Roma / Gipsy groups. For example, the celebration of St. Basil’s Day as the beginning of New Year or the celebration of St. George’s Day is common for almost all Balkan groups. The legend for the Egypt origin is another example.

The biggest challenge before Roma today is the construction of a modern identity. Certain questions should be answered. For example, whether a Roma identity or different (Roma, Millet, Rudari...) identities will be built? Will this identity abandon the previous (traditional) cultural practices or will it unify, simplify and transform them? On the basis of which territorial or historical myths will the modern Roma identity be constructed?

Integration could not happen without answering all these questions, i.e. without building a modern Roma identity. The lines below correspond to these questions:

1. It will be a grave mistake if the modern Roma identity abandons the pre-modern Roma cultural practices and traditions: this will make the new “Roma” just a “social group” and finally will lead to acculturation and assimilation as well as to marginalization. Many national and European agencies as well as some Roma activists implicitly apply this approach hiding it under the concept of “social inclusion” and other similar concepts.

The binary opposing scenario – making a cultural practice of one Roma group universal for the modern identity – will also be a big mistake: it will provoke an exclusive identity that will lead to forming several identities. Many Roma activists use this approach: for example, arguing that the Romani language should be the cornerstone

of the modern Roma identity although large groups have not spoken it for generations (Millet, Rudari/Beashi, Egyptians, etc.)

Contrary to the approaches discussed above we might say that that the modern Roma identity should build on transforming certain traditional values that are common for most (or even all) Roma groups: for example, respect for family and elders, respect for nature and the super-natural, etc. The modern societies (not only Roma but also Gadje) need these values and actively search for them. Roma should not abandon but transform them. In this way the example of building a contemporary Native American identity (in the USA, Canada and Latin America) could be used as an inspiring model.

2. The modern Roma identity should construct certain historical (in stead of territorial or social) myths. The Indian origin, Roma Holocaust Porrajmos, 8th of April, Djelem, djelem, and others are good starting points. On one hand they could unite the diverse Roma groups. On the other hand they could build respect towards Roma among the surrounding population.
3. Building identity usually depends not only on the groups concerned but also on the surrounding populations and/or mainstream societies. In this way Roma integration is a mutual responsibility of the states the Roma live in, the EU and the Roma community itself, including Roma activists. The role of the Roma community and Roma activists should be crucial in the process. The Roma activism (no matter whether it has been fostered from inside or outside) has during the last 20 years contributed to the constructing of a new Roma elite. And exactly this accumulation of a critical number of Roma intellectuals could foster the shaping of the modern Roma identity. Roma activists should play an active role – together with pro-Roma ones – in building the modern Roma identity and later in transforming it into a post-modern identity (by the way, this could happen not “later” but simultaneously). Nevertheless in the chaotic situation of the contemporary Roma movement, the latter has an important role to play! Its ability or inability to foster the construction of an inclusive modern identity built on modern Roma values and modern myths will be crucial for the future of Roma integration. (Kolev, 2012)

“Gypsy” or “Roma”: the fundamental right of self-identification

The term Roma is a self-given name used by the group in contrast to the name “Gypsy” given to the group by the outsiders. The name used for Roma in many of the current languages (*Цигани, Цыганы, Zigeuner, Zingari, Sigøyrner, Čigonai*) is derived from the Greek word “Atzinganoi” used in the Byzantine Empire for the first Roma approaching the Balkans. (Liegeois 1994:18, 36; Fraser 1992: 46-47) The self-identification name “Roma” becomes popular in Europe after the first congress of the International Romani Union (London, 1971) (Fraser 1992: 316 – 317), when it was literally “chosen”, because in Europe, apart from Roma three other large gypsy communities live – the so-called “meta-groups” – Manush, Sinti and Kale. In official international texts “Roma” appears for the first time in 1977 in a resolution of the United Nations, which appeal “the countries, where Roma /Gypsies live, shall provide them with all human rights which the other part of the population benefits from”.

The Roma community, who speak the Roma language (Roma means “man”, “people”), call themselves *Roma*, while “*Gypsies*” is the name given by others. Similarly the name *Hungarians* is an exonym (the name given to a certain community or group by another group), while the endonym, used by the community itself is “Magyars”. In the same way the Slavic word for the German people is “Nemtzi”(which also has a pejorative meaning originating from the Slavic word “dumb”, i.e. people whose language we do not understand). At the same time some of the groups, who do not speak the Roma language or who have lost their language prefer to name themselves “Gypsies”.

The term “Gypsies” and all derivative words (*Gitans, Gitanos, Gitani, Yifti, Giftos, Sigøyrner* and so on) refer to the mythological Egyptian origin of the Roma – a mythology created by the Roma themselves during the Middle Ages to avoid the persecution in Europe. In many languages the term “*Gypsies*” still has a negative or stereotypical connotation. For example, the definition given in *The Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd edn, 1989) is:

Gipsy, gypsy ... A member of a wondering race (by themselves called Romany), of Hindu origin, which first appeared in England about the beginning of the 16th c. and was then believed to have come from Egypt.

They have a dark tawny skin and black hair. They make a living by basket-making, horse-dealing, fortune-telling, etc.; and have been usually objects of suspicion from their nomadic life and habits. Their language called Romany) is

a greatly corrupted dialect of Hindi, with large admixture of words from various European languages.

Or

Gypsy (gypsies) also **gipsy**. A **gypsy** is a member of a race of people who travel from place to place, usually in caravans, rather than living in one place.

(*Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner's English Dictionary*, 4th edition, 2003)

At the same time the Council of Europe recognized several terms and came to a consensus on their usage on the basis of a seminar held at the Council of Europe in September 2003 on «The cultural identities of Roma, Gypsies, Travellers and related groups in Europe». The seminar was attended by representatives of the various groups in Europe (Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichals, Boyash, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Travellers, etc.) and of various international organisations (OSCE-ODIHR, the European Commission, UNHCR and others). For further information of the other terms *Travellers*, *Sinti*, *Kalo*, *Manush*, please refer to (Council of Europe, 2013)

<http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/Source/documents/GlossaryRoma.doc> (last accessed on February 10, 2013)

The European Union and its structures have chosen to use the word “Roma” as a collective term which “refers to a variety of groups of people who describe themselves as Roma, Gypsies, Travellers, Manouches, Ashkali, Sinti and other titles.”

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm (last accessed on February 10, 2013)

In **BULGARIA** the term “Roma” was formally introduced immediately after the end of the WW II with the creation of the theatre “Roma” and the newspaper “Romano esi” (Roma voice) in 1946. The change of the state policy after 1956 and the prohibition for the minorities to use their mother tongue in public places lead to “forgetting” the notion until 1989. (Marushiakova, Popov 1993: 88 – 93) After the end of the totalitarian regime, the word “Roma” started to be used by the media, political circles and non-governmental organizations, due to the fact that the majority of the people with Roma identity have defined themselves in this way. That is also the politically correct way to call these people, without, of course, imposing on them another identity since there are two big groups who prefer to be identified either as Millet or as Rudary (see below).

In **NORWAY** Roma people have been characterized with different terms since their first arrival in Norway in the beginning of the 16th century.

Rom – This is currently the official term for people that were previously called “*Sigøyner*” (Gypsies). The Roma themselves prefer this term that has less negative connotations than the word gypsies. *Rom* is the name used for the around 700 Norwegian Roma that arrived in Norway in the beginning of 1800. They are declared a national minority. However, the term is also used for other recent Roma migrants from Europe. The expression has both positive and negative connotations. On one hand the Gypsies are seen as exotic people with colourful clothes, lively music and dances. On the other hand the word Gypsy is also associated with poverty and criminality in some people’s minds.

Romani is the official term for people that were previously called *tater* (*Taters*) or “*de reisende*” (*Travellers*), used to describe a second national Roma minority that came to Norway around 1500. However the expressions *Taters* or *Travellers* are more commonly used among Norwegians. *Tater* has had a partly negative connotation in the past, but efforts are undertaken by *Romani* to give it a positive connotation. There are no official statistics according to ethnicity in Norway, but organizations working with *Romani* people estimate that there are 10 - 30 000 *Romani*¹ living throughout the country. The expression “*de reisende*” (*Travellers*) includes *Romani* People as well as other travellers. The term *Fant* (*Tramp*) has a negative connotation and is not limited to Roma/*Romani* people, but includes other wanderers/travellers. The term *Splint* also had a negative connotation and was used for *Romani* traders travelling by boat along the coast of Norway. (Glomdalsmuseet, Latjo Drom 2013)

There is an ongoing debate in Norway among some national minorities on the terms used to identify the minority groups. The government operates according to the principle of self-identification, meaning that official documents use the preferred terms of the self-identified minority. In some cases where there is no clear consensus, the government uses both options. In official documents from 2010 and onwards the identification *Romani/Tater* is used for the largest Roma minority in Norway while the expression “*de reisende*” (*the travellers*) is omitted according to the wishes of the group. The expression *Rom* is the preferred identification for the smaller Roma minority in

¹ Det store norske leksikon: <http://snl.no/romanifolk>

Norway as opposed to *sigøyner* (Gypsy), and the latter will gradually be omitted from official documents.²

The debate about the identity name of the Roma community in **Romania** goes even further. Romania's government has caused outrage among Roma community and organizations after it asked the Parliament in Bucharest to accept a proposal to change the official name of the community from Roma to Tsigan (Gypsy). According to the Government the name change is necessary because of the possible confusion among the international community between the words Roma and Romania. Meanwhile, the Romanian Academy has supported the move on the grounds that many countries in the European Union use a variation of the word Tigan to refer to their Gypsy populations. However, such decision of the government would violate a number of international human-rights regulations signed also by the Romanian Government. "Self-determination is the right of a people to determine its own destiny," reads the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. (Time: 2010)

In Lithuania the name of Roma nationality in official state documents is "čigonas". They recommend using word Roma but it is not obligatory. The different names in use to identify the Roma minority in the country are Roma and Čigonai – depending on the context. Different Roma communities call themselves when speaking Romanes: Rom, Romni.

When speaking Lithuanian or Russian with non-Roma, mostly "čigonas, -ė", „цыган“, „цыганка“ are used. The latter one is more or less equivalent to "Roma", but has a less negative connotation in both Russian and Lithuanian, and could be used neutrally. The term was several times defended by the Roma community. One of the arguments in favour of using it was that the term Roma is supposed to stay inside the community and be used among the members also to identify each other. Another argument was that the respect and positive discourse about the community did not depend on the term and would not come automatically with the switch from "Roma" to "Roma". However, for the members of the community it is even more painful to hear the word "Roma" being used as a derogatory term.

² Arbeidsdepartementet, Resultatområde 5 Nasjonale minoriteter;
www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/ad/doc/regpubl/prop/2009-2010/prop-1-s-20092010.html?id=579887

ORIGIN: INDIA OR EGYPT?

Most of the facts related to the history of Roma are disputable and unclear. Unlike scientists, historians try to restore the picture of the past on the basis of remaining documents, archaeological data, etc. For obvious reasons the written sources, related to Roma, are few in number and quite inaccurate; they are left by “the others” – Byzantine, Balkan, Ottoman and West-European chroniclers – and as a result the information provided is scarce and often doubtful.

One of the few certain facts related to the origin and settlement of Roma in Europe is their Indian origin. For a long time it was thought that Roma come from Egypt – territory nearer and more familiar to Europeans than the distant and mysterious India. Moreover, the Roma themselves claimed to be descendants of Christians expelled from Egypt. As a result they got statute of martyrs for the faith, protected by means of honorary diplomas by the pope Martin V, the emperor Sigismund and many other West-European rulers and were benevolently accepted in Europe. (Fraser: 1992, 63 – 665) Remnant of this notion is how Roma were called in many languages– for example the popular word *Gypsy* in English language is derived from Egypt. Even nowadays some groups of Roma relate themselves with Egypt – for example the so-called *Egyptions* in Macedonia and Kosovo (a small number of them live also in the most south-western parts of Bulgaria), etc. The modern Greek name of Roma – *Guphtoi* – also refers to that notion. (Fraser: 1992, 48)

The Indian origin of Roma was defined on the basis of linguistics, by means of parallels between the Roma language *Romani* and the ancient Indian holy language *Sanskrit*.

In 1776 the Vienna newspaper “Wiener Anzeigen” published the notes of the Hungarian student Istvan Valyi from Komarno (today's Komarom, Hungary). While still studying in Leiden, he made acquaintance with three Hindy-Brahmana people, who spoke Sanskrit. It seemed to him that the words of this language resembled the words of Roma in his native town, so he wrote down about 1000 Sanskrit words. When he returned to Komarno, he read these words to the Roma living there and they guessed the meaning of almost half of them. This article made the linguist Heinrich Moritz Gotlieb Grellmann collect materials for Sanskrit and Roma languages and after working for two decades, he

published his famous work “*Die Zigeuner*” in 1783. As a result the hypothesis of the Indian origin of Roma is imposed as a major one. (Marushiakova, Popov: 1993, 21 after Grellmann: 1787) Various theories in the scholarly literature give credit for the “discovery” of the Indian origin of Roma to different scholars (Hancock: 2007–2008) nevertheless this was a corner stone in the studies of Roma origin and history.

At the same time, another hypothesis shared in the scholarly literature is the one that considers the Iranian highlands as Roma homeland. According to Alexey Pamporov it is the place where Roma are constituted as an ethnic entity with a common language network, similar social structure, and similar social and religious practices. Gradually, as a result of the historical processes going on at that time, Roma are pushed westward. (Pamporov: 2006, 16).

MIGRATION

It is not clear when and why the Roma left India: most historians assume that this happened in 5th – 6th century AD and was related to the fall of the Gupta dynasty and the collisions in the Indian society. (Marushiakova, Popov: 1993, 23-24). The linguists tend to place the Roma exodus from India between the 5th and the 9th centuries on the bases of linguistic data for the formation of the Romani language (those who support the traditional *Shah Nameh* explanation)³ (Hancock: 2007-2008b) . However, more recent historical evidence places it earlier. The whole discussion and information on the various hypothesis is presented by Ian Hancock in his article “Romani Origins and Identity”(Hancock: 2007-2008b) In the article he explores the different theories about the reasons for the Roma migration from India.

A less debated fact is that between the 9th and 11th centuries Roma already appear on the territory of the Byzantine empire (Marushiakova, Popov: 1993, 25 – 28). One of the hypothesis (defended mostly by Kenrick (Kenrick: 1977) and Fraser (Fraser: 1992) (and earlier by Hancock (Hancock: 1995, 25 - 51) accepted that when reaching the eastern borders of the Byzantine empire, the Roma groups divide into three streams and they set out respectively to the north, to Trans Caucasus (today's Georgia and Armenia), to the south, to Syria, Palestine and North Africa, and the third stream – to Asia Minor, the Balkans and Europe. They were called respectively *Lom*, *Dom* and *Rom* or *Lomavren*,

³ According to it Firdawsi in his *Shah-nameh* (Book of Kings) from the Persian national epic from the 11th century (1010) refers to a request made by Bahram Gur to the Indian King Shangul for musicians and entertainers: he asked for 10 000 Luri to play upon lute (Fraser: 1992, 33 – 36)



Domari and *Romani* (Hancock: 2007-2008b). Furthermore, exploring the Domari group, Yaron Matras refers to earlier works by Hancock: "It has since been widely accepted (cf. Hancock 1988) that all three ethnonyms – *Dom*, *Rom*, *Lom* – are derived from the Indic *ḍom*, a caste name, although their origin in a low-caste of marginalised and stigmatised service-providers of various kinds has more recently been contested (Hancock 1998)."(Matras: 1999, 2)

However, it is very probably that the Roma migration did not happen at once but consisted of several waves of people traveling westward (Hancock: 2007-2008b).

SETTLING ON THE BALKANS

Due to the various names given to the Roma (by Byzantine and other historians) the exact date of the first information about the arrival of Roma on the Balkans is not clear. Taking into consideration that it is very probable that the earlier sources mentioning *Atinganoi* [ατιγγανοί] might refer not to the Roma but to the Paulicians⁴ we have to consider as more reliable the sources pointing to the presence of αζσινγανοί/*Adsincani* in the 11th century in Constantinople (Pamporov: 2006, 17 – 18). The same name– "*Atsinganoi*" can also be seen in earlier sources – for example the Chronography of Theophan the Confessor dating back to the beginning of the 9th century, but it is not clear whether the *Atsinganoi* mentioned in it are Roma. Roma (under the name "*Atsinganoi*") were described for sure in "The life of St George from Athon" (XI century); Roma remained on the Balkans for several centuries before moving to Western Europe. They brought crafts, worked in monasteries, and dealt with fortune-telling and incantations. They were called „*Atsinganoi*" – „untouchable" due to their practice of incantations, which was not accepted by the church.

THE ROMA DURING THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

As mentioned above, the Roma remained on the Balkans for several centuries before leaving in large groups for Western Europe. This is the reason why many researchers call the Balkans "the second motherland of the Roma". Gradually they moved from a

⁴ A dualistic Christian sect that originated in Armenia in the mid-7th century



nomadic to a settled way of life (the laws of the Ottoman Empire incited them to it). By means of tax relief, the Ottoman rule managed to convince large parts of the Roma population to convert to Islam and become Muslims. Muslim Roma did not pay the *Haraç* tax while Christian Roma had to pay (Marushiakova, Popov: 2000).

*A Gypsy Muslim shall not live among Gypsy infidels. He shall live with Muslims. But if he continues to live among infidels, then he shall be taxed **Haraç** amounting to the same amount as from the infidels*

Mehmed II Fatih's book of laws for the populationin of the Rumeli vilayet (1475)

As a rule Roma have earned their living by activities servicing the other population groups: they were blacksmiths, manufacturers of baskets, tools, etc. and thus they got their names- *Basket-makers, Burgudžii (blacksmiths), Drandari (musicians)*, etc.

The centuries of living together with the other Balkan peoples, the transition from Christianity to Islam and vice versa, as well as the necessary contacts with other population groups (due to the above mentioned way of living) had significant influence on Roma folklore. It intertwines Bulgarian-Slavonic and Turkish-Arab elements, which together with the "native Roma ones" form one colourful and inseparable entity.

MIGRATION OF ROMA IN EUROPE AND ANTI-GYPSY POLICIES IN CENTRAL AND WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The big waves of Roma migration towards Central and Western Europe date back to the Ottoman invasion on the Balkans. Roma presence is documented in Western Europe as early as the 14th century but most commonly in the 15th century. In order to easily cross borders, Roma coming from the Balkans often presented themselves as martyrs chased out of Egypt by the Muslim troops for being Christians. As a result they received charity (food, clothes, etc.) and documents allowing them free transition cross borders (Kenrick, Puxon: 2006, 13 – 15).

The system of myths and stereotypes however is quickly built around Roma in Europe. The first pillar of stereotypes is the mystery around the Roma origin. They are strange people coming from nowhere. The strongest marker of their alienation however is the skin color. Being darker than the rest of the surrounding population creates a whole

system of legends, myths and folklore tales. In the church philosophy, it was linked to the eternal fight between light and darkness, between God and the Devil, between good and bad. Language is the other marker of alienation. Speaking a language which was different from most of the other languages which are based on Latin deepened the gap between Roma and the majority population. An additional factor is that in the 15th and 16th century Christian Europe was frightened and frustrated about the menace from the Ottoman Empire. As a result of this Roma were often perceived as spies sent by the Turks. Moreover, they did not fit into any of the well-established systems of religious and non-religious powers. Due to the fact that Roma have had their own religious systems based on (but not solely) the two traditional religious systems (Christianity and Islam), and sometimes being even a mixture of the two, a whole branch of folklore tales were developed in the different countries. These prejudices found their further projection in religious and secular practices. For example, the priests in Magdeburg were forbidden to baptise Gypsy children; in Albania Roma were always placed in the back of the mosque. In addition, the Church was not happy with some of the traditional Roma occupations like fortune telling which sometimes was more interesting and tempting for the humble laity than the church sermons. (Kenrick, Puxon: 2006, 16 – 23)

The sophisticated system of stereotypes and prejudices against Roma is soon materialized in anti-Roma legislation changes. English and Swedish laws from the 16th century envisage death for a person for being of Gypsy origin. The first anti-Gypsy laws adopted in most of the European countries show quick expansion of this tendency”

- 1482 – Brandenburg
- 1484 – Spain
- 1498 – Germany (Freiburg)
- 1524 – the Netherlands
- 1526 – Portugal
- 1530 – England
- 1536 – Denmark/Norway
- 1539 – France
- 1541 – Scotland
- 1549 – Bohemia
- 1557 – Poland and Lithuania
- 1637 – Sweden

One of the aims of the wide range of anti-Gypsy laws was to deprive Roma of citizenship. This trend was shared even by the Nordic countries. In the 17th century Danish and Norwegian legislation envisaged confiscation of all vessels which shipped Gypsies to and from the two countries. The Danish deportation laws were active until 1849. Furthermore, as a result of the deportation laws in Portugal thousands of Gypsies were sent from Portugal to Brazil in the 16th century.

A new trend in the anti-Gypsy legislation was the laws adopted by Maria-Theresa aiming at full assimilation. In 1758 she issued a series of Decrees aiming at transforming Gypsies into the new Hungarians. Roma children were taken out of their families and “adopted” by Christian families in order to be “raised properly.” (Kenrick, Puxon: 2006, 43 – 54).

ROMA IN ROMANIA

The first document stating the presence of Roma in Romania dates from October the 3rd 1385, when the ruler Dan Vodă confirms the gift of 40 Gypsy slaves for the Vodiță Monastery from the ruler Vladislav. (Alex. Ștefulescu: 1909, p. 167-171)⁵

The first documents proving the presence of Roma in the region of Moldova, date from August 2nd 1414, when the ruler Alexandru cel Bun gives three villages with Roma communities to a nobleman called Toader Pitic. (M. Costăchescu: 1931, p. 103-105)⁶

In the year of 1424, it was drafted in the constitution of King Sigismund of Hungary drafted in the constitution that Roma could have their own jurisdiction under the authority of a voivode. During this century the first information about the Gabor Roma appears. It seems that the name of this subgroup originates from the name of Bethlen Gábor (Gabriel), a Hungarian king, who was the first in this region to give rights to Roma. The first information about this subgroup dates from the year 1424 when the first dignitary as a “voievode of Gypsies” was established. In the year of 1588 The Dieta of Transylvania abolished the first Gypsy Principality, which meant that Roma were not obliged to pay taxes to their voivode any more. In 1595, in Moldova, Ștefan Răzvan

⁵ Quoted from Mariana Sandu: Romii din România – Repere din istorie, București, 2005, - The book was published as a result of the project: “Roma children want to learn” – project implemented by Roma Center for Social Interventions and Studies, Romani Criss in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Research and with the financing partner the representative of UNICEF in Romania, p.5

⁶ Quoted from Mariana Sandu: Romii din România - Repere din istorie, București, 2005, p.5

reigned. He was a Roma rurel who faught along with Mihai Viteazul in the war against the Ottoman Empire. (N. Bălcescu: 1988)⁷

Since the 14th century all Roma in Wallachia and Moldavia had the statute of slaves devided into three major categories: slaves of the Crown or the prince, slaves belonging to the monasteries, and slaves of the boyars. The slaves of the Crown brought a substencial income to the fisc thorough the taxes they were obliged to pay. Generally speaking, their situation was better than that of slaves belonging either to monasteries or boyars' estates although people often moved from one category to another. A separate category of slaves that existed in Moldavia were the "princes's slaves". These were Roma who were solely the possession of the wife of the prince.

Slaves belonging to monasteries mostly originated from gifts made by the princes and the boyars. Gifts of slaves made by the boyars were more numerous than those made by the princes. The monasteries managed to possess a very large number of slaves, acquired via a number of paths. The number of slaves belonging to the monasteries also increased as a result of marriages between free people and Roma men or women belonging to the monastery. The rule was that these people, as well as their descendants, had to become slaves. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, enslavement as a result of marriage was a relatively common phenomenon.

Regardless of these three categories the Roma slaves were divided into several other depending on their occupation, way of living, etc. The first category (and the most numerous one) was that of the *vătrași* or household slaves (mainly possession of the monasteries and the boyars). They were occupied mainly with household work, agriculture, different crafts, musicians, etc. Many of them weer assimilated: they had forgotten their mother tongue and could not be distinguished from Romanian peasants. The other category was the so-called *lăieși*. The *lăiesi* belonging to private owners, like those belonging to the prince, wandered the country under the obligation to pay a sum of money to their masters. However, when the master needed them they were supposed to be available. Similar was the statute of the *rudari/ aurari* who were occupied with

⁷ Quoted from Mariana Sandu: *Romii din România - Repere din istorie*, București, 2005, p. 6

gold mining in the mountains. (Viorel Achim: 2004, 31 – 34, Marushiakova, Popov: 2000, 99 - 103)

In the region of Bucovina and Transylvania at the end of the 18th century, slavery had been abolished by Joseph II, but this decree was extremely difficult to apply, due to the fact that many of the noblemen owning slaves argued that slavery was the best thing for Gypsies. (Viorel Achim: 1998)⁸

The abolishment of Roma slavery in Romania was a social reform that lasted more than 20 years. In 1839, the ban on marriage was broken, especially, for Romanian women, and in 1844 it was prohibited to dissolve a marriage between a slave and a free man. In such cases, the slave became a free man through his marriage, and so he was forced to redeem himself by paying for his person to the master. If the slave did not own the amount asked for, he could ask for a loan from the ecclesiastical revenues. Children resulting from the marriage between free people and slaves were free.

The first law that abolished slavery of Roma was adopted in Wallachia, on 22nd of March, 1843. A few years later, on February 11th 1847, at the recommendation of the ruler Gheorghe Bibescu, a law was voted by which Roma slaves belonging to cathedrals, bishops, monasteries, churches or any other public settlements, were freed. The law did not provide for any compensation. In Moldova on January 31st 1844, a law was proposed by the ruler Mihai Sturza and adopted, which freed Roma slaves belonging to churches and monasteries. The income from the taxes paid from the freed slaves was used to redeem other slaves who were sold by private individuals. On 14th of February 1844, a law was adopted through which the slaves owned by the state became free and gained the same rights as the other inhabitants of the country. (Viorel Achim: 1988, p. 85)

Barbu Știrbei, the new ruler of Wallachia, after the revoltuion in 1848, showed interest in the problem of Roma slavery. On the 22nd of October 1850, a decree was issued by the king forbidding Roma families to be separated throughout sale or donation. This decree also prohibited the sale of Roma between private individuals. When the sale concerned from one up to three families the owner had to turn to the state, which bought them and immediately set them free. The following year, another decree was adopted, saying that the state could buy those slaves who were beaten by their masters. On February 20th

⁸ quoted from Mariana Sandu: Romii din România - Repere din istorie, București, 2005

1865, the slavery of Roma by private individuals was abolished, and the owners received 10 golden coins as a compensation for each slave they set free.

In Moldova, upon the request of ruler Girgore Alexandru Ghica, Petre Mavrogheni and Mihai Kogălniceanu drafted a Bill that abolished the slavery of the last Roma category, the privately owned slaves. This bill was passed on December 22nd 1855 by the Public Divan of the Country. The owners would receive a compensation of 8 golden coins for every spoon maker and *vătrași* and 4 golden coins for *lăieși*. The slaves were set free but the state did not give any land to Roma nor the necessary tools to work the land, although legally they were assimilated peasants and paid taxes. In these conditions Roma were obliged to work on their former master's land and so their lives did not change significantly. Due to the Alexandru Ioan Cuza's agriculture reform in 1864 some Roma received land and became land owners. After the process of abolishing the slavery until the beginning of the 20th century, a demographic migration of small Roma groups can be seen, groups that left to Central and Western Europe and Russia. Significant Roma groups arrived in the Americas, Australia and South Africa. (Petcuț: p.22-23)

After the Great Union and the formation of the State of Romania, the size of the Roma population increased due to the large number of Roma living in Transylvania (where they were not slaves) and Basarabia. Nevertheless, in the 1930 Census only 1.5% of the population declared themselves Roma. In the year 1944 Ion Chelcea pointed out that the number of Roma living in Romania was 525 000. (Petcuț: p. 23)

Many of the traditional occupations were abandoned by the Roma as a result of the modernization process, so the practicing peddlers shifted to textile production.

The interwar period was the beginning of the emancipation movement for Roma and the appearance of Roma individuals who were not ashamed of recognizing their Roma ethnicity. Socio-occupational organizations were set up, the most important one being the Association of Gypsies in Romania, founded in March 1933 in Bucharest by Poppeșerboianu. Their goal was to: improve literacy among the Roma; publish books on the history of Roma; establish a Roma University and National Roma Museum; establish workshops where Roma could work; settle all nomad Roma; and establish "county councils" and "councils of elders" to resolve the disputes between Roma individuals. (V. Achim: 1998, p. 128-129) G. A. Al-Lăzurică, Roma writer and poet, in collaborator with Șerboianu, left the Association and founded the General Union of the Roma in Romania.

The Congress (on 8 October 1933) chose Lăzurică to the Management Committee and as President. The Honorary Chairman was the known musician, Grigoraș Dinicu.

ROMA IN LITHUANIA

According to Vytautas Žilevičius (V. Toleikis, 2001, 9 p.) Roma came to Lithuania in the middle of the 15th century through Poland and Belarus. The large number of Polish and Belarusian words in Lithuanian Roma languages proves it. In 1501, Lithuania's Grand Duke and the Polish King Alexander signed a privilege in Vilnius castle, which allowed Roma to move from one place to another freely and the right to be partly autonomous with a selected leader. Afterwards, efforts were made to make Roma settle down. They had to pay taxes, which were collected and managed by their leader up to the end of the 19th century.

In 16th - 18th century in Europe, a unique phenomenon existed - the institution of Roma leaders. In the Lithuanian-Polish Union, they were selected by the king and the Grand Duke of Lithuania. The Roma leaders were the connection between the authorities and the community. A Polish historian L. Mroz has determined the names of 17 Romani leaders, who ruled between the 17th and 18th centuries. In Poland, the Roma people elected kings. In the Roma museum in Tarnov (Poland), one can see advertisements to participate in the election of the Roma king.

Roma leaders were also community leaders, and were called the barons. The word "baron" originated from the Romani "baro" - big. The authority of a baron was never questioned, he always got the last word. As a consequence, Roma camps became more united and easier to manage.

The word "Roma camp" is translated as "a group of Roma people, traveling together". Usually, it was a big family, a couple of generations traveling together. After settling down, the structure remained. In Eastern European countries, the status of a baron still exists. There are no barons in Lithuania, but sometimes wealthy and influential men, able to take on responsibilities, are called barons.

In the 19th century, the nobles hired the Roma people to take care of the horses. When Lithuania was occupied by tzar-ruled Russia, most Roma people left the country. Those, who remained, worked in the fields, crafted items, especially metal ones, or sold horses.

The women begged for money, or engaged in fortune-telling. In the 1970's Roma people from Romania and Hungary came to Lithuania. The life of Roma people did not change much up until World War Two. The Roma started settling in the 1940's, in cities such as Kaunas, Panevėžys or Alytus. They bought or built houses, and their children went to elementary schools. All the Roma people have a Lithuanian nationality, a Lithuanian passport.

ROMA IN PORTUGAL

The arrival of the first Roma in Portugal, according to some authors, happened in the second half of the fifteenth century (Pinto, 2000, Cortesão, 2005) or at the beginning of the sixteenth century (Project Nomad / ICE, 2004). They arrived from Spain, across the countryside, into the region of Alentejo which from a geographical point of view is the continuity of Spanish Extremadura. The reason given for this move to Portuguese lands may be linked to the persecution of the Catholic Kings, with whom the Portuguese were involved in the conflict called War of Succession.

Pedro d'Azevedo was the first who found a document concerning Roma in the Chancery D. Afonso V (1432 - 1481), where the name "Afonso of Egypt" appears.

According to the trend of what happened in other European kingdoms (France 1504 and 1511, Sweden 1521 and Holland in 1526) D. John III published Permit March 13, 1526, which prohibited the entry and determined the expulsion of Roma who were in Portuguese territory.

In 1592, in the time of Philip I of Portugal, the Act of August 28 was issued which gave Gypsies a period of four months to leave the country under the threat of being sentenced to death if opposing.

According to some authors, the legislation about Roma people can be considered the first major attempt of acculturation and assimilation of Gypsy culture to the majority society. Costa, quoted by Cortesão (2005: 17) states that these laws "(...) tried to discourage the practice of their habits of dress and language, change its social organization, (...) aimed at modifying social behaviour differentiators, so they become equal to the other inhabitants of the Kingdom. "

The persecution of Gypsies continued, especially in the colonies, to where they had been sent.

In the nineteenth century, Portugal was part of the first group of countries to enact compulsory and free education in 1835, but there is no record that this measure included the Roma community.

In 1864 the Census of the Portuguese population was carried out. This was the first to be governed by international guidelines of the International Statistical Congress in Brussels in 1853, marking the beginning of the modern era censuses. According to the Census of 1864 Portugal had 4,188,410 "inhabitants of fact" and the average number of people per family was 4.1. This census however did not mention Roma/ Gypsies at all.

At this end of Europe, Portuguese Roma limited their "travel" between the more populous territories, always with the expectation of "business" licit or illicit, which intensified contacts with non-Roma or gadgé. It can be said that the economic activity functioned as the first integrator element.

ROMA IN NORWAY

There are two groups of Roma in Norway today that are acknowledged as national minorities, the Romani (Taters/Travellers) and the Roma (Gypsies), are both believed to originate from India. But the time of their arrival in Norway differs. (St.meld. nr.15 (2000-2001))

The History of the Romani National Minority

The first official written document about Roma people in Scandinavia is a letter from King Jacob IV of Scotland to King Hans of Denmark-Norway, dated year 1505. This letter was brought by a Roma group and urged the king to welcome the group of Gypsies led by Earl Antonius Gagino from little Egypt (hence the English term Gypsies). The Romani people in Norway originate from this group, but other Roma immigrants have joined the group over the years. There have been inter-marriages with Norwegians, and it is believed that other groups of travellers such as pilgrims, poor people, musicians and soldiers have also merged with the Romani group. (Nes, Benedikte (2009))

The Romani people used horses and carriages/sledges to travel with their families, and some sailed by boat along the coast. (Store norske leksikon (2012)) They were traders, well known for their skills, and families in the rural areas in Norway often depended on them. It was a joyful time when the Romani people arrived with their goods and music. They brought news from other places in Norway. The Romani people frequently worked as tinsmiths and horse-traders, (Utdanningsdirektoratet (2004)) and carried out a number of different crafts.

Persecution of Travellers/Fants/Romani 1536 - 1750

During the first few years after their arrival the taters were tolerated in Denmark-Norway and given food and shelter according to the catholic pilgrimage traditions. With the Reformation came a change in attitude towards Travellers (Glomdalsmuseet, Latjo Drom), and in 1536, King Kristian III of Denmark-Norway demanded that all Romani people should leave the country within three months. King Fredrik II repeated this action in 1561. After Denmark and Norway separated, the first Norwegian law against the Romani people came in 1584, stating that the Romani people had to leave the country. In 1589, a law was put in action sentencing the Romani leaders to death if they were caught, (Store norske leksikon (2012)) offsetting one of the most brutal persecutions in the Danish-Norwegian history.

In 1643 it was decided by law to start a hunt against the Fants/Taters in Norway. Village men would gather once or twice per year to hunt Taters and other travellers, and the prey was either imprisoned or killed. In 1907 in Flå in Gudbrandsdalen up to 1000 men participated in a hunt on Fants that lasted for several months. It was based on rumours about a 6-year old missing girl named Gudrun, allegedly having been kidnapped by "Fants" in Kristiania (Oslo). The following year her body was discovered in a manhole that she had probably fallen into while playing. (Glomdalsmuseet, Latjo Drom) These Tater-hunts continued over a period of 100 years.

From around 1700 and onwards, houses of correction were founded. It is not certain if it was specifically the Romani people that were hunted and put in these institutions or just generally poor people travelling, however, it is believed that many of those who were caught and sentenced were Romani people. (Store norske leksikon (2012))

In 1754 a regulation allowed Romani people to live like travellers. The regulation was for tinsmiths, handicraft traders and horse cutters/veterinaries. These vocations were common among the Romani people and many got travel passes and were allowed to travel again. (Store norske leksikon (2012))

In the late 1854, the government passed a law about supporting Taters (Romani People) and "Fants" (other travellers) A fund was established to support housing, confirmation education for adults and foster home care for children. The government contributed a considerable amount for the fund. (Store norske leksikon (2012)) However Eilert Sundt, who was the first researcher to recognize the Romani as a people with their own identity and culture, still saw them as a social problem needing to be helped towards living a worthy life. He engaged in this project to settle the Romani People and provide them with a Christian upbringing, but due to lack of positive results, the funding was stopped by the government in 1868. (Glomdalsmuseet, Latjo Drom)

From the beginning of 1900, there was a strong push by the government towards settlement and assimilation of the Romani through a number of laws and regulations and through collaboration with the Church and different organizations: 1) The Guardianship Act of 1896 opened up for removal of children from the care of their parents; 2) The Vagrancy Act of 1900 criminalized a travelling lifestyle; 3) An addendum in 1935 to the Commercial Law of 1929 forbade the traditional trade activity of travellers without a business letter/permit from the police; 4) The Animal Welfare Act of 1951 with an addendum denied travellers the right to use horses for their trading activity. (Glomdalsmuseet, Latjo Drom)

The law forbidding travelling trade without a business letter/permit from the police caused a lot of harassment for the Travellers. Police frequently denied them this permit, thus forcing them into illegal trade and imprisonment when caught. (Glomdalsmuseet, Latjo Drom) The situation was further aggravated with the ban on using horses to carry goods for trade. This law was aimed at the Romani/Roma people who often used horses to pull carriages or sledges when travelling, (Glomdalsmuseet, Latjo Drom) thus undermining their livelihood and cultural identity. They were now forced to use hand-pulled carriages and later bikes and automobiles for their trade.

In 1892 an organization working to settle the travellers in order to put an end to the travelling (this also included other groups including Romani/Roma people) was founded

by the initiative of a priest called Jacob Walnum with support from the government. The organization changed name several times, and in 1935 it was renamed “Norsk Misjon blant hjemløse” – Norwegian Mission for the homeless. The goal of the government and the Mission was to counteract vagabondage and assimilate the Romani people into the Norwegian society. To fulfil this goal the Mission established schools, children’s homes and labour camps. True to the motto “if you save the children, you save the family” Walnum worked tirelessly to remove as many children as possible from their parents (Glomdalsmuseet, Latjo Drom) so as to bring them up to live as residents with a fixed address. Some of them did not learn of their affiliation with the Romani people until they reached adulthood. (Advisory Committee: 2002, p.9)

Svanviken Labour Camp was established in 1907 with the purpose of settling the Romani people and helping them forget their travelling lifestyle and culture in order to assimilate them into Norwegian culture. This was done through housing and farming activities, and severing all contact with family members outside the camp. Families were forcefully split up, and from 1900 to 1970, at least 1500 Romani children were placed in foster homes and children’s homes by the Mission. It was strictly forbidden to speak Romani both at Svanviken and in the children’s homes. (Engebriksen, Ada (2012)

In 1934, a law was passed about voluntary and forced sterilization of Romani women. The idea behind the law was to sterilise people with poor genetic characteristics and avoid mix of races. It was argued that society needed protection through race hygiene (eugenics). In Norway the Travellers were singled out as people with poor genetic characteristics and an inferior race. (Glomdalsmuseet, Latjo Drom) The women were threatened to have their children taken away if they did not agree to sterilization. It is estimated that more than 300 Romani women were sterilized from 1930 – 1970. (Store norske leksikon (2012).

The Norwegian Mission among the homeless was run by the Lutheran State Church and supported by the government until the 1980s. The government social measures towards the Romani people/Travellers were phased out in the course of the 1980s. The Mission was closed down in 1987, and restructured and re-established a year later as “Kirkens Sosialtjeneste” (The Social Services of the Church). (Store Norske leksikon (2012)

In spite of all the attempts over the years to assimilate the Romani into the mainstream Norwegian culture, the Romani group managed to keep some of its cultural values and identity. Some children in search of their true identity were, after reaching adulthood, able to reunite with their parents or family members after years of estrangement. However the suffering and damage afflicted was immense, and there are many testimonies of depression, drug abuse and crime among youth that had their family ties severed during their childhood.

In the early 1990s, the Norwegian Helsingfors Committee initiated research projects to document the history and situation of the Romani people in Norway. (Den Norske Helsingforskomite (2009)

In 1995, the Romani people established the organization «Romanifolkets Landsforening». The name was changed to “Taternes Landsforening” in 2005. In 2000 “Landsorganisasjonen for Romanifolket” (LOR) was founded. A number of smaller Romani organizations also exist. (Store norske leksikon (2012)

Trough the work of the researchers and the claims of Romani organizations, public opinion was influenced, and in 1996, a politician named Erling Folkvord from the political party Rød Valgallianse (Red Electoral Alliance) demanded compensation schemes for those Romani that were negatively affected by the government politics. Finally in 1998, the minister for local government, Ragnhild Q. Haarstad extended an apology to the Romani people on behalf of the Norwegian government. This apology was strengthened in the white paper: St.Meld.nr 15 (2000-2001) *Nasjonale minoriteter i Noreg – Om statleg politikk overfor jødar, kvener, rom, romanifolket og skogfinnar* (National minorities in Norway – about government politics towards Jews, Kvenes, Roma, Romani and Forest Finns).

The State Church of Norway also made a statement in 1998 apologizing for the abuse carried out against the Romani people. The organizations of the Romani people did not accept this apology as they thought it was too weak, so in 2000, the Church Council expressed an apology that was much clearer, stating the role of the Church in the abuse.

In 1999 Norway ratified the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Two Roma groups were officially recognized as National Minorities: the Romani and the Rom. A white paper St. Meld. nr. 15 (2000 – 2001) to the Storting (parliament) about government politics toward Jews, Kvens, Rom,

Romani and Forest Finns (St.meld. nr. 15 (2000-2001) repeated the apology to the Romani Minority and spelled out the commitment of the government to ensure the rights of the National Minorities including the rights to practice and develop their own culture, religion and language. It opened up for compensation to individuals on the background of concrete abuse in the areas of child/health care or education. It underlines that cultural diversity is a richness for the Norwegian community and makes a commitment to “ensure that minorities have access to participation in the cultural, social and economic life and public issues that concern them” (p.49). The white paper sets forth a number of initiatives to strengthen the cultural identity and integration of the Romani people including: establishment of a center for documentation of the Romani culture at the Glomdal Museum; support for special initiatives education initiatives; financial support for research on the Romani history and culture and support for Romani organizations and their initiatives.

In order to further substantiate the apology to the Romani people, the government established a compensation fund with NOK 75 million kroner for the Romani people in 2004. (Den Norske Helsingforskomite: 2009, p.53) The fund surplus is used to promote and sustain the Romani people’s culture. A steering committee consisting of the different Romani organizations in Norway decide how the funds are spent. *The Rom National Minority*

The Rom people in Norway are mainly from the Vlach Roma group and speak the Romanés language. They are believed to be of Indian origin like the Romani and held as slaves in Valacia (now Romania). When freed, they started travelling to other countries in the late 1800s. This group of Roma people arrived in Norway around 1860 (St.meld. nr.15: 2000-2001).

In 1860 a law was passed to end the forced passport system (“Avskaffelse af det tvungne Pasvæsen med videre”) and there was no hindrance from travelling to Norway. The Rom people travelled like the Romani people and had the same kind of occupations.

The Rom people kept in touch with relatives that had travelled elsewhere in Europe and these international networks became very important in order to escape when the Norwegian assimilation politics took effect in 1900.

Many Rom people got Norwegian passports after the First World War. The Norwegian government passed a law in 1922 that stated that in cases where it could be proven that gypsies and travellers had domiciliary, birth right or citizenship in another country, they were to be deported from Norway. In 1924, the government tightened the law to state that gypsies with old Norwegian passports should have their passports withdrawn. In 1927 the Norwegian authorities banned all gypsies and travellers that did not have Norwegian citizenship from entering Norway. The Rom people heard about the hard labour camps and children being taken from their families, and many moved to Belgium or France. (Liden og Engebrigtsen: 2011) Many lost their lives in concentration camps during World War II.

After the war, the first Roma family sought permission to enter Norway in 1953 because the head of the family had a birth certificate proving that he was born in Norway. Still the family was denied access. The family applied several times and was finally granted Norwegian citizenship in 1956 when the "Gypsy Paragraph" in the law was abolished. Survivors from another large family that also had proof of their Norwegian history were also granted permission to stay. (Liden og Engebrigtsen: 2011) These families had lost all their belongings during the war, and the economic situation was difficult. They sold their few belongings and stayed in tents in various places in and around Oslo.

In December 1960, a radio program discussed the situation for the Roma people. The social department held a meeting in January 1961 in which Norwegian Mission for the Homeless attended. Norwegian Mission for the Homeless recommended sending the families to Svanviken hard labour camp; however the recommendation was not put into action. Later that year, the first settlement project started. The Roma people were not included in the planning of the project. From 1962-64 several housing efforts were made, but the houses offered was of poor quality and not suited to the needs and likes of the Roma families, so they decided to stay in their caravans next to the houses instead of moving into them. (Myking, Veronica: 2009, p. 60 - 62) The government established a contact committee for "Gypsy matters" in 1962. Unfortunately no Roma people were involved in the committee. It was also difficult to reach the Norwegian Roma from 1962-1968 as many were travelling in Denmark. Many Roma families were afraid that the Norwegian government would take their children if they stayed in Norway. (Myking, Veronica: 2009, p. 60 - 62)

In the 1970s and 1980s, the central government authorities and Oslo Municipality engaged in a number of special measures to deal with the problems of the Roma group. A document about the work among Norwegian Gypsies (Innstilling om arbeidet blant norske sigøynere) led to the white paper "Tiltak for de norske sigøynere (1972-73) (Measures for the Norwegian Gypsies). This report stated that the Roma group in Norway was a special cultural group that one could not assimilate. (Liden og Engebrigtsen: 2011)

The Gypsy Council (Sigøynerrådet) was established in 1971 and a position as "Gypsy consultant" was funded by the social department. In March 1973, the Gypsy Office ("Avdeling for sigøynersaker") was established under the Social Department and to assist the gypsies as a special case. The white paper from 1972-73 gave the municipality the responsibility to organize housing for Roma people that wanted to settle in Oslo and assist Roma people with applications for social assistance.

Tøyen School in Oslo started an education program for Roma children. The Roma families were travelling a lot, and this resulted in scarce attendance from the Roma children. The project was not seen as successful and new methods were tried. In 1973-74 a mobile school was introduced, where two teachers travelled with the families to teach their children. Teaching of the Romanés language started towards the end of 1970s, but was abandoned a few years later, and today there is no existing education in Romanés. (Myking, Veronica: 2009)

Adult literacy training courses started in 1973 at Manglerud School in Oslo. A temporary kindergarten was held in a barrack close to the literacy training site. From 1976-77 discussions about the importance of kindergartens were held, and it resulted in establishment of Gaustadbekkdalen kindergarten for Roma children in 1978. 46 children enrolled in the kindergarten in 1982, but there was a lot of absenteeism. The number of children attending and the presence rate increased as the parents got to know the staff and gained trust. (Myking, Veronica: 2009)

In the 1980s, a number of small projects for Roma people were started. One project was trying to help the Roma people to start a carpet shop in Oslo. This project proved hard to start as nobody wanted to rent out premises to Roma people. Another project, in connection with the adult literacy training, was a sewing course for the women. They

produced products that were to be sold in the city centre. This project had to close because of vandalism on the stalls. (Myking, Veronica: 2009, p.74)

There were a lot of on-going discussions about the special employment project for the Roma people, and in 1986 a committee was formed to evaluate it. (Myking, Veronica: 2009, p.72) The committee concluded that sheltered employment was a good project that should to be continued.

In 1988, the government decided that Roma people should be treated as any Norwegian citizen on social benefits. From now on, the municipality (as opposed to the central government) would cover expenses related to integration. The gypsy office was shut down in 1990 and with the office, all the special initiatives, such as the kindergarten, were also closed. There was no formal evaluation carried out, and as it was difficult to see visible results, the project was seen as a failure. (Myking, Veronica: 2009, p.76)

Norway ratified the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 1999 and the Rom gained official status as a National Minority in Norway. "On the basis of the Governmenr's social and welfare policy, all people, including the Roma, shall have the opportunity for inclusion in the Norwegian community and be able to take part in education and working life" (Dag Terje Andersen, Minister of Labour and Social Inclusion: 2009).

In 2007 the Oslo municipality established adult literacy and training programmes in order to enable parents to support their children for completion of primary school and to help integrate them. Since 2008 several Rom have been involved in the project as meidators. (Romtiltaket Rapport: 2011, p.3) Schools with Roma students receive extra funds for special measures for Rom children. There is however a high level of absenteeism and early drop-out of school, especially among girls. Only two Roma students have completed high school, both of them having non-Rom fathers.⁹ An Action Plan for improvement of the living conditions for the Roma in Oslo was developed by the Norwegian Ministry of Governement Administration, Reform and Church Affairs in 2009 to address the challenges of the Rom in Oslo on education, housing, employment, health care and communication with the authorities.

Roma asylum seekers in Norway

⁹ Conversation with Ada Engebriksen (2012), Researcher at NOVA



During the war in the Balkans in the 1990s, many people fled and several sought asylum in Norway. Among them were several Roma people; however there are no existing numbers or statistics about this group. They do not identify themselves with the national minority Roma group in Norway and live as separate families which are integrated in the Norwegian society, according to the Centre for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities in Norway. (Lidén and Engebrigtsen: 2011)

Roma Tourist Migrants in Norway

After the Norwegian law against vagrancy and begging was abolished in 2006, a new group of Roma has started to come to Norway. Romania joined the EU in 2007, so Rumanians no longer need a visa to enter Norway. They can enter and are allowed to stay for three months. The financial crisis in Europe has pushed some poor Romanians to come to Norway do street work (like playing music, begging, collecting bottles) and to look for more permanent work. Most of them are from the Roma minority. It is most common for couples around 40-50 years to travel to Norway for income and leave their children at home with their grandparents. (Engebrigtsen: 2012)

A few NGO's and church congregations have engaged in charity towards these Roma visitors. The Salvation Army provides food and access to sanitary installations and a place to sleep during very cold nights. *Folk er Folk (People are People)* seeks to provide work opportunities for some small income for a few Roma visitors through sale of a magazine.

PERSECUTION OF ROMA IN EUROPE

The pursuit of Roma in Europe started in the beginning of the 16th century, but it reached its peak during the WW II (1939 - 1945) at the rule of Adolf Hitler. The history of suppression started much earlier and the idea of the pure Aryan race had a leading role in it. Gradually a whole ideology developed for protection of the German race to avoid mixing with the other impure people. The German government undertook the first steps on this in 1933. In 1936 - 1937 a special Research Institute for Racial Hygiene was created. Its director Robert Ritter proclaimed Roma to be "primitive creatures" with no individuality, history and culture. He recommended that they were prohibited (through different methods, including surgical) from creating progeny and in this way "the pure

nation" would have been gradually cleaned from them. Moreover, the mixed marriages were forbidden.

However, we should not be misled to think that the pursuit of Roma only took significantly place in Hitler's policy. In the beginning of developing this policy, three groups of Roma were differentiated. The first one was of the "ethnically pure nomad Roma ". The attitude towards them was more positive and they were allowed a certain level of freedom. Nevertheless, the members of the Research Institute for Racial Hygiene accepted the historical fact that Roma come from India and thus could be considered as Aryans, but they claimed that along their way from India through Europe they had married representatives of other races and as a result they were "dirty, of mixed race". The second group was Roma of mixed origin. The measures against them were particularly cruel. They were in no way allowed to have children, because the "contamination" of the German nation was not supposed to continue. The third group consisted of people of non-gypsy origin, but who led nomad life just like Roma. These people were proclaimed "anti-social" (persons who could not live normally in the society like the rest of the people). They were persons without permanent job or self-employed people. In this way even artists and musicians, who earned their living by moving from one place to another, were threatened.

"Death camps"

All who fell into these categories, together with the Jews, were isolated and sent to specially created concentration camps. In 1942 over 10 000 Roma were transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. Roma from the territories occupied by the Germans were also sent to the concentration camps accused of being spies of the countries they came from. During the period February 1943 – summer 1944 Roma from Germany, Austria, Bohemia and Moravia, the Netherlands, Belgium, north France, Poland, the Soviet Union, etc. were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. The conditions in the camps were beyond human. The people kept there looked like they were more dead than alive. They were subjected to hunger, epidemics and disease. Worse than that were only the gas chambers, where the Jewish and Roma prisoners were killed. Almost 19 300 Roma were killed in Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, and only from 2nd till 3rd August 1944 at the threat of the coming Soviet soldiers, the Germans killed 2900 Roma in the gas chambers.

According to data of different surveys between 250 000 and 500 000 Roma became victims of the Nazi genocide. This genocide is called ***Holocaust*** (in the Roma language - ***Porrajmos***) and the memory of the victims is honoured on the international day of Roma – 8th April.

BULGARIAN ROMA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

During the WW II Bulgaria was the only European country, in which the Roma did not share this cruel fate,. After activating its policy against Roma the German Nazi government required from Bulgaria to surrender her Jews and Roma and to deport them to the "death camps". Despite the threat of occupation of the country by the Nazi Germany, tsar Boris III refused, saving in this way the lives of about 300 000 Roma and 50 000 Jews.

ROMANIAN ROMA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

As an ally of Germany Romania follows the Nazi policy towards Roma although not in the same straightforward manner. Nevertheless, thousands of Roma became victims of this policy. In 1941 – 42 around 25 000 Roma were transported from Buchrest to the region of Stalingrad where they had to dig trenches. Other Roma groups were transported to labor camps. Although there was no big large-scope campaign against Romanian Roma (unlike the Roma in Hungary, Poland, etc) around 36 000 Roma became victims of the fascist regime of Antonescu (Kenrick, Puxton: 2006, 142 – 145)

ROMA IN NORWAY DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Around 1930, the whole Norwegian Rom group had left Norway for fear of the assimilation process forced upon the Romani people. (St.meld. nr.15 (2000-2001)) Only a few years later some of them attempted to escape German persecution and re-enter Norway through Denmark. One incident is recorded in the Danish National Archives: On 23rd January 1934, 68 Roma people were stopped in Padborg, a border city between Germany and Denmark. These were members of the two largest Norwegian Roma families, the Karoli family and the Josef family, trying to escape from Germany to Norway. A number of them were born in Norway, they spoke Norwegian, and several carried Norwegian passports. Still, they were denied access through Denmark upon orders from the Norwegian authorities with reference to a Norwegian law passed in 1927 including a paragraph forbidding entry into Norway for Gypsies and other



travellers unable to prove Norwegian citizenship. The group was sent to a hard labour camp outside of Hamburg. They were later released, but were soon arrested again and sent to concentration camps. (NRK Brennpunkt) 56 persons died and only 12 survived of the group of 68 people that tried to enter Norway through Denmark in 1934. (Liden og Engebrigtsen: 2011) Up to 100 Norwegian Roma were killed in German concentration camps during the war.

ROMA IN LITHUANIA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

In Lithuania, the Roma was the group who suffered the holocaust most painfully. Over 500 Roma people were killed, making it in fact every third person of Roma origin in the country. Roma were treated as the second class citizens. Over 1 000 Roma were taken after a temporary detention in Lithuania to the labour camps in Germany and occupied France. However, the majority of them after the end of the war returned to Lithuania, claiming it to be their homeland.

The repressions against the Roma started strongest after the 1942 with the occupation of Lithuania by the III Reich with mass arrests and deportations, however, the first cases of killings were occurring during the first years of the war. Most Roma were killed in Pravieniskes labour camp (during one case around 50 mostly elderly people and children were shot for being not efficient in physical work tasks), other places of murders are Kirtimai, Kaunas and Paneriai. During Nazi occupation not less than 500 Roma were killed in Lithuania, in fact every third Lithuanian Roma.

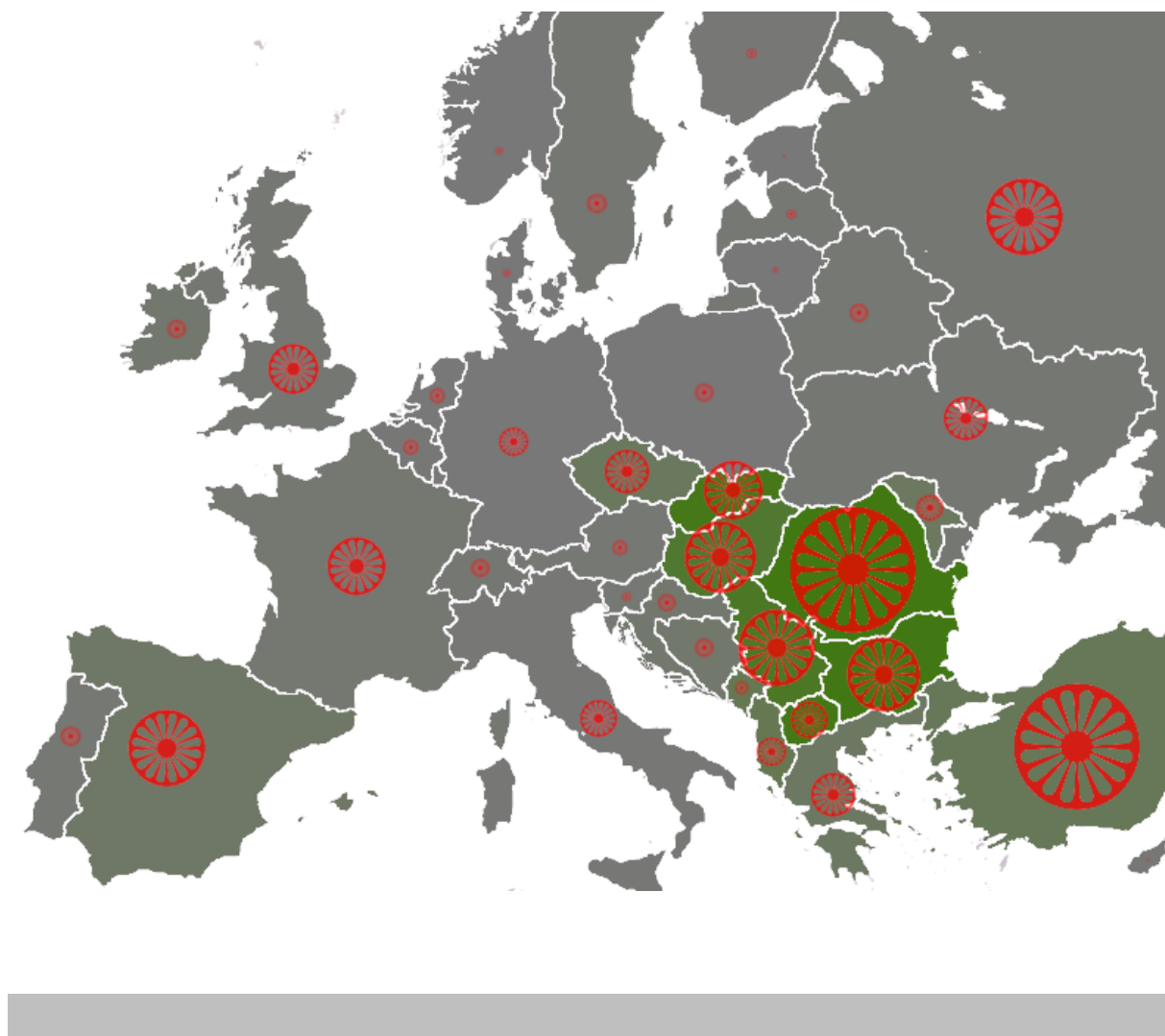


DISTRIBUTION OF ROMA IN EUROPE

In almost all Member States the number of Roma varies between official and expert data. The reasons for this phenomenon are complex and we are not going to deal with them here. For the purposes of this manual we will use the statistic of the Council of Europe (http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/default_en.asp):

(updated: 14/09/2010)	Total country population	Official number	Minimum estimate	Maximum estimate	Average estimate	% of total population
European countries	(July 2009)	(last census)	(source in footnotes)	(source in footnotes)		(from average figure)
<i>Turkey</i>	71 892 807	4 656 (1945)	500 000	5 000 000	2 750 000	3,83%
<i>Romania</i>	22 246 862	535 140 (2002)	1 200 000	2 500 000	1 850 000	8,32%
<i>Russian Federation</i>	140 702 094	182 617 (2002)	450 000	1 200 000	825 000	0,59%
<i>Bulgaria</i>	7 262 675	370 908 (2001)	700 000	800 000	750 000	10,33%
<i>Spain</i>	46 157 822	No data	650 000	800 000	725 000	1,57%
<i>Hungary</i>	9 930 915	190 046 (2001)	400 000	1 000 000	700 000	7,05%
<i>Serbia (excl. Kosovo)</i>	7 334 935	108 193 (2002)	400 000	800 000	600 000	8,18%
<i>Slovak Republic</i>	5 455 407	89 920 (2001)	400 000	600 000	500 000	9,17%
<i>France</i>	64 057 790	no data	300 000	500 000	400 000	0,62%
<i>Greece</i>	10 722 816	no data	180 000	350 000	265 000	2,47%
<i>Ukraine</i>	45 994 287	47 917 (2001)	120 000	400 000	260 000	0,57%
<i>United Kingdom</i>	60 943 912	no data	150 000	300 000	225 000	0,37%
<i>Czech Republic</i>	10 220 911	11 718 (2001)	150 000	250 000	200 000	1,96%
<i>"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"</i>	2 061 315	53 879 (2002)	135 500	260 000	197 750	9,59%
<i>Italy</i>	59 619 290	no data	110 000	170 000	140 000	0,23%
<i>Albania</i>	3 619 778	1261 (2001)	80 000	150 000	115 000	3,18%
<i>Moldova</i>	4 324 450	12 280 (2004)	15 000	200 000	107 500	2,49%
<i>Germany</i>	82 400 996	no data	70 000	140 000	105 000	0,13%
<i>Portugal</i>	10 676 910	no data	40 000	70 000	55 000	0,52%
<i>Bosnia and Herzegovina</i>	4 590 310	8 864 (1991)	40 000	60 000	50 000	1,09%
<i>Sweden</i>	9 276 509	no data	35 000	50 000	42 500	0,46%
<i>Belarus</i>	9 685 768	no data	10 000	70 000	40 000	0,41%
<i>the Netherlands</i>	16 645 313	no data	32 000	48 000	40 000	0,24%
<i>"Kosovo"</i>	2 542 711	45 745 (1991)	25 000	50 000	37 500	1,47%
<i>Poland</i>	38 500 696	12	15 000	60 000	37 500	0,10%

		731(2002)				
<i>Ireland</i>	4 156 119	22 435 (2006)	32 000	43 000	37 500	0,90%
<i>Croatia</i>	4 491 543	9 463 (2001)	30 000	40 000	35 000	0,78%
<i>Switzerland</i>	7 581 520	no data	25 000	35 000	30 000	0,40%
<i>Belgium</i>	10 414 336	no data	20 000	40 000	30 000	0,29%
<i>Austria</i>	8 205 533	no data	20 000	30 000	25 000	0,30%
<i>Montenegro</i>	678 177	2 826 (2003)	15 000	25 000	20 000	2,95%
European countries (updated: 03/08/2009)	Total country population (July 2009)	Official number (last census)	Minimum estimate (source in footnotes)	Maximum estimate (source in footnotes)	Average estimate	% of total population (from average figure)
<i>Latvia</i>	2 245 423	8 205 (2000)	13 000	16 000	14 500	0,65%
<i>Finland</i>	5 244 749	no data	10 000	12 000	11 000	0,21%
<i>Norway</i>	4 644 457	no data	4 500	15 700	10 100	0,22%
<i>Slovenia</i>	2 007 711	3 246 (2002)	7 000	10 000	8 500	0,42%
<i>Denmark</i>	5 484 723	no data	1 000	10 000	5 500	0,10%
<i>Lithuania</i>	3 565 205	2 571 (2001)	2 000	4 000	3 000	0,08%
<i>Georgia</i>	4 630 841	1 744 (1989)	2 000	2 500	2 250	0,05%
<i>Azerbaijan</i>	8 177 717	no data	2 000	2 000	2 000	0,02%
<i>Armenia</i>	2 968 586	no data	2 000	2 000	2 000	0,07%
<i>Cyprus</i>	792 604	560 (1960)	1 000	1 500	1 250	0,16%
<i>Estonia</i>	1 307 605	584 (2009)	1 000	1 500	1 250	0,10%
<i>Luxembourg</i>	486 006	no data	100	500	300	0,06%
<i>Andorra</i>	72 413	no data	0	0	0	0,00%
<i>Iceland</i>	304 367	no data	0	0	0	0,00%
<i>Liechtenstein</i>	34 498	no data	0	0	0	0,00%
<i>Malta</i>	403 532	no data	0	0	0	0,00%
<i>Monaco</i>	32 796	no data	0	0	0	0,00%
<i>San Marino</i>	29 973	no data	0	0	0	0,00%
Total in Europe	824 827 713		6 395 100	16 118 700	11 256 900	1,36%
European Union area			4 359 100	7 456 500	5 907 800	1,18%
Council of Europe area			6 360 100	15 998 700	11 179 400	1,37%

Roma groups in the countries

ROMA LANGUAGE AND MOTHER TONGUE OF ROMA IN THE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

Romani language is called Romanes. It has been a subject of research since the sixteenth century. The leading trend in linguistic studies is that the different Roma dialects in Europe although the diversity among them can be traced back to a common linguistic form originating from Northern India and related to Sanskrit. We have already described above the link between linguistic and history of Roma. However, over the course of centuries of migration Romani languages were penetrated by the influence of other languages of the surrounding population Roma had been living with or passed by: Armenian, Persian, Greek, the Slavic languages, etc. (Pamporov: 2006; Liegeois: 1994, 41 – 44). One of the top priorities in the agenda of Romani language is the issue of standardization. A number of prominent Roma linguists work on this issue: Bernard Gilliat Smith, Ian Hancock, Yaron Matras, Victor Friedman, Marcel Courtiade and so on. According to some of the scholars the main reason for resistance against standardization of Romani language is the concept that this process would deprive Romani language of its vivid expression, of the Romanipe and would be a threat for Roma identity (Pamporov: 2006, 67 – 69).

The attempts for standardization of Romani language in Bulgaria are related with the name of Yashar Malikov who tried to use as a basis the dialect of the Yerlii group from Sofia and the region which was widely spread all over Bulgaria. This contradicts the attempts of Savcho Savchov et al. to impose as a basis the Yerlii dialect from Sliven and Eastern Bulgaria in general. Both trends confront with a third one connected with the name of Hristo Kyucukov who binds the standardization with the Kaldarshi dialect (Pamporov: 2006, 67 – 69) who although small in number in Bulgaria are rather numerous in Western and Central Europe and therefore, define the standardization trend in Western Europe.

At the same time in many countries not all Roma speak Romani language. In Bulgaria, for example, there is a significant share of Roma who have Bulgarian, Turkish or Romanian as mother tongue. The table below shows the share of people speaking one or another language as a mother tongue. (Roma in Bulgaria: 2008, 13)

	NSI, 2011	OSI, 2007*	OSI, 2007**	WB, 2007
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Romani	86.2%	60.7 %	38.7 %	65.7 %
Bulgarian	7 %	25.3 %	28.8 %	20.9 %
Turkish	6.5 %	5.4 %	24 %	13.4 %
Romanian	0.1 %	0 %	0.4 %	
Other	0 %	0 %	0 %	
Not-defined	0.1%	8.5 %	8.1 %	

*According to self-identification as Roma; ** According to place of living neighbourhood

According to Bulgarian legislation (Council of Minister's Decree 183/1994) mother tongue could be studied as a "free elective subject" and as an "obligatory elective subject" (since 1999) within the general curriculum of basic schools. It guarantees the right of everyone to study his/her mother tongue at school but not to receive education (and have all subjects) in the mother tongue. (OSI: 2007, 56 – 58)

The Romani National Minority in Norway speak *Norwegian Romani*, a language with mainly Scandinavian based grammar and Indian-based vocabulary.¹⁰ Due to the past assimilation politics in Norway, most Romani people in Norway speak Norwegian as their first language and Romani as the second language. It is mostly the aged people that speak Romani well. Many young people do not speak it fluently. (Utdanningsdirektoratet (the Directorate for Education): 2009) The Romani language in Norway came to Norway in 1860 with the freed slaves that travelled all over Europe. Romanés is mainly a spoken language. It has a rich tradition of stories and tales, but very few of these are put in writing. Language researchers have started developing a standardized written language. (Ruud, Cecile Cathrin: 2012)

Portuguese Roma/Gypsy community uses Caló is an unwritten dialect within the. The Caló has been taught as a dialect spoken in the Iberian Peninsula, but has not had the recognition of the two countries, nor in the European Union, as a minority language. It is deemed that about 10% of Portuguese Gypsies still speak Caló. As for Romani (Romanes) has been the presence of new waves of migration, particularly from the end of the 90s of the twentieth century, which gave greater visibility among different communities.

¹⁰ http://nn.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romani_rakripa (downloaded 19.03.13)

Nevertheless, one of the widely spread myths about the Roma is that they are not religious, or, in the best case, that their religiousness has only an external and commercial expression aimed at troubleless communicating with neighbouring ethnai. This concept is shared also by some scholars as well: "Gypsies does not belong to any religion... They are Christians in a Christian milieu, Muslim in Turkey, and if there were a kingdom of Judea they would have been Jews." (Kogalnitchan 1840:27). "They change their religion changing their country. They are Christians on Christian territory, they are Muslim on Muslim territory, and they are Protestants among Protestants." (Popp-Serboianu 1930: 62). This conception, as Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov point out, belongs not only to scholars, but it is widely accepted by the common representatives of the ethnai on the territory of which Roma have settled. (Marushiakova, Popov 1993: 159-160). There are three reasons for this phenomenon.

First, the incorrect conclusion that Roma are non-religious is drawn on the basis of the correct premise that Roma do not have their own (Romani) religion. It is a fact that along the long road from India towards Europe, Roma quickly lost the traditional Indian religion and accepted the religion of emperors and peoples they were in contact with. There is really no Romani religion in this stream of thought. But identity of an ethnos and religion has lost its actuality centuries ago, since the entering of the big monotheistic religions (Christianity and Islam) at least.

Second, the incorrect conclusion that Romani religiousness is ostentatious or a matter of no principle is drawn on the basis of the correct premise that Roma easily change the religion confessed by them and often combine Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim elements in their festive and cult system. Two very important factors are left aside: on one hand, there not such big theological differences among Christianity and Islam (and especially between the branches of Christianity - Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Protestantism), and on another, Roma have often belonged to the poorest layers of society. The strict theological layer in religion for the so-called populace had been incomprehensible and therefore, it had been limited only to basic dogmas (rather a point of a world-view than a matter of religion): whether to belief in one or many gods, how the world and man have been created and other like these. There are no significant differences there. Everything else has been a matter of tradition: it is hardly to believe

that the common man was interested in the question whether the Son descends only from the Father or from the both, the Father and the Holy Ghost. This explains why some people painlessly change their religion under the pressure of different political conditions (especially those without their own state to institutionalize the tradition). It is enough just to mention the converting of Albanians and Bosnians to Islam, for instance. Another example is the wandering of Bulgaria between Orthodoxy and Catholicism at the beginning of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. (Kolev: 2002)

Due to the nomadic way of living and the often change of cultural and religious environment, Roma had also been inclined painlessly to covert from monotheistic religion to another and to combine elements of different religions in the rites and customs. But as pointed above, this by no means mean atheism. For a Romani man belonging to the populace it is more important to believe, than how he would do this or how he would call God. At the same time we have to underline that the easy conversion from one religion to another and combining elements form different religions is not a typical characteristic of all Romani groups. It is rather popular among some Bulgarian Roma groups like the so-called *Yerlii*, but it is quite an exception among the other two big groups of Roma in Bulgaria: *Rudari* and especially *Kaldarashi*, who are devoted Orthodox Christians. (Kolev: 2002)

Third, a common mistake is to identify religiousness with religion. The two terms are not identical at all. Religiousness includes several cultural practices for treating the supernatural and religion is just one of them. A number of other practices (like fortune-telling) exist in parallel with religion. They are related to religiousness but they are not part of religion (they often come into contradiction with some of its dogmas; they are often denied by religion). These "parallel practices" have often played an important role among Roma. Their role is even more important than in any other ethnoi. It can be said that to some extent they deprive the most important practice, religion, of part of its "territory", especially when we are talking about its abstract dogmas. In this way they enhance the easier change of a monotheistic religion with another one. (Kolev: 2002)

Not taking into consideration the role "parallel practices" (especially fortune-telling and *vrachuvane*) play among Roma, as well as the incorrect identifying of religiousness and religion, leads to he wrong conclusion about the weak (or even missing) religiousness among Roma. (Kolev: 2002)

The three reasons given above can be united into one: the not-knowing of Roma culture by non-Romani leads to the wrong conclusion about its absence.

On the basis of all said above we can outline the major characteristics of Romani religiousness, as far as it is directly concerned and reflected by the festive system of Roma.

1. Roma believe in God. The presence of a term for God, *O'Devel* or *Devla* in *Romanes*, the Romani language, is in favour of this statement. The private, almost intimate addressing towards God, without the mediating role of the priests, is very familiar to Romani spirituality. This is symbolized by the address "*Shukar Devla*" (literally "Sweet God, Beautiful God") that can be very often found in the songs of *Drandari*, for example. The veneration of God is also expressed by the address "*Bareyra Devla*" ("Great God").

Another proof of the deeply rooted belief in God is the fact that he is present in one big part of Romani tales. He is the major personage in some of them.

2. The earthly character of Romani religiousness is another typical feature. There is limited (or almost no) interest towards God's heavenly being. None of the Romani tales, legends and songs deals entirely with God's heavenly being. As pointed above, these questions are left aside by the poor and non-educated mortal to whom Roma belong. Another thing is more important for them: God is the instance that is the final judge and guaranty for truth and justice; he interferes human deeds only to help people in trouble.

It is not by accident that the vow made by those who are accused by the *meshere* (Roma court – Kris Romani) is a vow in front of God: a man could lie to another man, but he could never lie to God. The vow not to steal made by a whole village sometimes is also a vow made in front of God. God is present in man's life and namely this presence (not the transcendental life of God) is important for Romani people.

This is one of the reasons why God behaves in a "Christian way" in the folklor of Muslim Roma (*Horohane-Roma*). They themselves celebrate not only the Islamic feasts (Bairams), but the Christian feasts, as well.

The fact that most of the Roma do not believe in the after life or do not pay much attention to it (See: Marushiakova, Popov 1993) is another expression of the earthly character of Romani religiousness.

3. Another peculiarity closely connected with the earthly characteristic of Romani religiousness is successfully called “Romani religious syncretism” by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov (Marushiakova, Popov 1993: 162). The term covers the tendency mentioned several times above to combine elements of Christian and Islamic religion, of Orthodoxy and Catholicism, as well as to convert from one religion to another (for some Roma in Bulgarian these conversions are so often that it is already difficult to define whether they are *Horohane-Roma* or *Dassikane-Roma*).

This result is not only due to the historical conditions, because they are just one of the reasons, the direct one. The ability of the basic characteristics of Romani religiousness to function both, under Christian and under Muslim “roof” is another important reason. Both, the Christian Romani man and the Muslim Romani man call God more frequently **Devla** than Jesus, Jehovah, or Allah. For both of them God is the one who helps, who administers justice and punishes. The trinity, the dualistic nature of Jesus Christ and a number of other abstract theological disputes are too far away from the mind of the common Romani man.

In fact religious syncretism is not typical only for Roma. One significant part of Latin-American Indians still adore their pre-Columbian gods, and nevertheless define themselves as devoted Catholics. Moreover, there are hundreds of books written about syncretism between Shantoism, Buddhism, and Christianity in the life of the Japanese.

In Bulgaria according to survey carried out by Center Amalipe Ortodox Roma are around 45 %, Muslim Roma – around 35 % and Protestant Roma – around 20%.

In Romania, in concordance with the predominant religion, most of the Roma are of Orthodox religion. In some places where the population is predominantly Hungarian (in Eastern and Northern Transylvania), the Roma are either Romano-Catholic, or Reformed (according to the Hungarian confession). Also, in some villages that hold (or have held) a German population there are small communities of Roma Lutherans (e.g. at the Uila). A large part of the Roma in some of the Southern cities are Muslims (approx. 1% of the total number of Roma in Romania, one of the most notable being the community of Babadag).

After the fall of communism, the new-Protestant churches have shown openness towards the Roma community and its urgent needs. The Protestant churches organized social aid

networks, kindergartens, Sunday schools, religious education courses and included Roma among the pastors and priests. Some of the services are held in the Romani language. The largest percentage of Roma affiliated to the new Protestant churches are specifically those belonging to the traditional conservative Roma communities. They feel equal, accepted, respected in the religious denominations like Adventist, Pentecostal, Baptist. Therefore, religion plays an increasing role in the life of the traditional Roma communities of Romania.¹¹

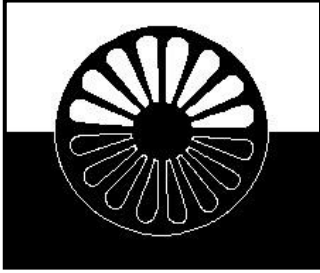
In Lithuania, Roma community after mainstreaming society profess two main religions – Lithuanian (Litovska and lotfktka) Roma are Catholics, but Kotliary that have arrived to Lithuania mostly from Moldova just after the World War II (WWII), are Orthodox. There are some Muslim families as well.

There are no statistics on **Norwegian Roma/Romani** and their religious affiliations. However faith in God has been important for them over the years. From the 1950s, many Romani people became Pentecostals. There was a new wave of revival in the 1980s in connection with Romani pastor Ludvig Karlsen and his evangelistic and social work. (Glomdalsmuseet, Latjo Drom) The Lutheran State Church has some negative connotations due its past involvement in family abuses.¹² Many Roma in Europe are Pentecostals. According to Lidén and Engebrigtsen (2011), the Norwegian Roma people often travel to religious meetings all over Europe to meet family members and other Roma.

¹¹ Survey on forced marriages in Romania – Survey carried out by Liga Pro Europa in Romania, in the project: **Preventing forced marriages** – with the financial support from the European Commission under the Daphne III Program, Contract no. JLS/2008/DAP3/AG/1298-30-CE-03124780080, 2009-2011

¹² Theme Pamphlet from the Directorate of Education: *Om tatere som minoritet i et flerkulturelt samfunn. Kulturformidling i barnehage og skole (About Taters as minority in a multicultural society. Cultural communication in kindergartens and schools)* produced by the project „Taterfolket fra barn til voksen“ (*The Taters from child to adult*) p.46.

ROMA SYMBOLS



The first world Roma congress of the organization Romani Union started on 8th April 1971 in London. It is then when a flag, anthem and world's day of Roma have been accepted. That is the day of the beginning of the Congress. It was accepted that on this day the memory of all Roma, who died during the Holocaust, would be honoured. The Roma anthem is the popular song "Gelem, gelem" (*I have wandered, I have wandered*), written by the Serbian Žarko Jovanović. The Roma flag is a red wheel with 16 spokes on blue and green background. The 16-spoke wheel in ancient India was called **chakra**. It is present on the Roma flag to remind of the Indian origin of the Roma and the long way, which they have travelled from India to Europe. The blue and green stripes symbolize the sky and grass, as well as the free nomad life of the Roma in the past.

ROMA IN THE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

ROMA IN BULGARIA

Bulgaria is one of the countries with the most numerable Roma population. The exact number of the Roma could hardly be determined, because a large majority of them prefer to be declared as Turkish, Bulgarian or Wallachians at the population census. According to the census in 2001 370 908 people declared themselves as Roma , and according to the census in 2011 – 325 343 people, out of which 44.13% live in the villages. At the same time authoritative international and Bulgarian researchers determine the number of gypsies in Bulgaria of about 800 000 people.

As we specified, the Roma come to present-day Bulgarian lands at different times and from different places. That is the reason why today so many Roma groups exist, differing (more or less) from one another.

YERLII

The first in historical aspect is the meta-group of the so-called *Yerlii* – i.e. local, settled Roma. They are decendents of the Roma who came during the period from the 13th to the 18th century, and who gradually settled and for centuries on lived together with both Bulgarian and Turkish population. To a large extent the term *Yerlii* was introduced for popular usage mainly as a scientific point of view to summarize a large group of Roma, who settled at different times in the Balkans from the Middle Ages to the beginning of 19th century. A large part of the Roma themselves (except several subgroups near Sofia and Kyustendil) do not recognize the term *Yerlii*, and prefer the subgroup names or just *Roma /Gypsies*.

Yerlii divide themselves into two large groups: *Horahane Roma* (Turkish/Muslim Roma) and *Dasikane Roma* (Bulgarian Roma, Christians).

- **“Dasikane Roma”**

Literally translated **“Dasikane Roma”** today means Bulgarian/Christian Roma. As a whole the word “das” in its original meaning meant “servant”, “slave”. The generalizing term *Dasikane Roma* identifies about 26 subgroups, speaking different dialects of the Balkan type of Roma dialects, with significant lexical influence from the local Bulgarian

dialect. Dasikane Roma is the predominant Roma population in Northwest and some parts of Central North Bulgaria and approximately half of the Roma population in Southwest Bulgaria. These are for example *Burgudžiii*, *Dzhambazi*, *Tudzhari*, etc. Among them a slight tendency for Pro-Bulgarian behaviour can be observed, but some groups proudly preserve their Roma identity and traditions (for example part of the Burgudžiii in Shumen area call themselves "*parpul Roma*"- "*real Roma*").

Specific subgroups with preferred other identity:

- **Grey pigeons**

In Southeast and Central South Bulgaria there is a group of people, who the Bulgarians call "Bulgarian Roma", the Roma call "Dasikane Roma", and the Turkish call "giaour chengenesi". They call themselves Asparuh Bulgarians or Ancient Bulgarians, and the neighbouring population often designates them as "Grey pigeons" or "Demirzhii". The group inhabits a relatively concentrated area along the Valley of Maritsa River with approximate boundary to the east – the town of Chirpan, to the west – the town of Pazardzik, to the north – Central Stara Planina Mountain and to the south– the Rhodopes Mountain. The Grey pigeons prefer intermarriages and avoid marriages with other ethnical groups within the country, except Bulgarians, as is their preferred identity. As a tradition the representatives of the group are members of the Orthodox Church, although under the influence of the Gospel Pentecostal Church in some villages a process of evangelization takes place. The peculiar for this group is that in some residential areas the mother tongue is Roma, while in others – traces of Roma language are completely absent. Nevertheless they recognize themselves as representatives of one and the same group and marry each other and the place of living determines also the language to be spoken at home.

- **Tsutsumani**

In the three areas of Northwest Bulgaria lives a group of people, which the Bulgarians call "Bulgarian Roma" or "converted Roma" and the Roma designate as "Tsutsumani". The Tsutsumani are Orthodox Christians, who Bulgarians do not accept as "real" Bulgarians, and the Roma do not accept as "real" Roma. Their mother tongue is Bulgarian, but they have several words with Roma origin in their language. In the general case the Tsutsumani do not live in ethnical separated neighbourhoods, but are dispersed among the Bulgarian population. They are considerably better integrated than

the rest of the Roma in the region – the size of the households, the educational level and the unemployment level are similar to the ones of the Bulgarians in the respective area.

- **“Horahane Roma”**

Literally translated **“Horahane Roma”** means today Turkish/Muslim Roma . Horahane Roma are the predominant Roma population in Northeast, Southeast and Central South Bulgaria and approximately half of the Roma population in Southwest Bulgaria. Horahane Roma are the most numerous Roma group in Bulgaria. They profess Islam mixed with numerous Christian elements, and their holiday system includes not only Bayrams, but all significant Christian holidays – St. George’s Day (Erdelez), St. Basil’s Day (*Bango Vassilii*), St. Todor’s Day, St. Ivan’s Day, even Christmas and Easter. They speak *Romani* mixed with a number of Turkish words, and some of them use Turkish language together with *Romani* language. Horahane Roma are divided into number of subgroups. For example *Basket-makers*, *Tinsmiths*, *Drandari (Musicians)*, etc. In the course of time these internal group differences have faded up and today the larger majority of Horahane Roma are a uniform group, which keeps only a distant memory about the former craft and subgroup division.

Specific subgroups with preferred other identity:

- **Millet**

In the regions where Horahane Roma live, there are groups of people who call themselves “Millet”. The Bulgarians usually designate them as “Turkish Roma” or “Roma with preferred Turkish consciousness”, the Turkish call them “Millet chengenesi”. The *Romani*-speaking Roma have dubious attitude and some accept them as Roma, others consider them Turkish. Although the census of the population they declare themselves as Turkish, the name they use for themselves is *Millet*. “Millet” is a Turkish word, which can be best translated as “ethnos” or “religious community”. During the time of the Ottoman empire the minority Christian population was divided into *Millets* in terms of religion – for example Orthodox, Judeans, Armenians (not in the ethnical meaning of the word, but in the religious one, as long as the Armenian Church differs from the Eastern Orthodox). The only *millet*, which was divided in an ethnical principle, was the gypsy

one – *Chengene Millet*. The Turkish themselves did not use the word "millet" when referring to themselves¹³. Part of the gypsies, who called themselves "Millet" used also the name "Turkish gypsies", but categorically deny being called "Roma ". For them Roma are only the Christians who speak Roma language. The mother tongue of the Millet is Turkish, but in some residential areas the older generations use Roma language as “a secret language”, and in other groups the usage of a small number of Roma words is preserved as a slang. (Kolev, Krumova: 2005)

- **Agupti**

In the region of the Rhodopes Mountain lives a group of people, which call themselves and is called by the others Agupti. In the middle of XXth century they were classified as Gypsies based on a fragment of a folk song: “Turkish captured Rada,/ and then made her Agupti/ Agupti – a black gypsy...”. But Agupti are a wonderful example of change of the initial group identity with the preferred Turkish identity within several generations. If in the middle of XX century researches register Egyptian identity combined with “clear ancient Rhodopi speech”, at the end of XXth century the Agupti differ showing tendency towards inclusion in the surrounding Turkish population and usage of the Turkish language. A decisive factor in this case is probably Islam. Similar to the Millet, the usage of the Roma language is as a “secret” language, used by the older generation.

KALDARASHI

The second large Roma meta-group in Bulgaria are the so-called *Kaldarashi*. They come with "the big Kaldarashi invasion", initially passing through Austro-Hungary and Serbia, as a result of which they are often called "Hungarian Gypsies", "Austrian Gypsies", "Serbian Gypsies" or "Nyamtsuri" (i.e. German Gypsies"). They are divided into two large groups - *Bakardzhii* and *Lovari* (from the Hungarian "lo" - "horse", due to which they are known as "horse stealers") and into many subgroups.

¹³ It is only since 20 century, after the Kemalist cultural revolution that the word "Millet" began to be used regarding Turks yet, not in its ethnic or religious meaning, but in its social meaning – as a synonym of "people's".

The Kaldarashi is one of the best preserved Roma groups in Bulgaria. They still have potestarian forms preserved – such as the Roma court - *meshere*, they speak mainly Romani, they strictly keep their customs and traditions. The lavish way in which they celebrate Easter (Patragi) and St. George's Day, as well as Kaldarashi wedding ceremonies often points them out as one of the most interesting Roma customs in Europe. The Eastern Orthodox Christianity plays very important role in the life of the Kaldarashi and they are devoted Christians.

Until the middle of 20th century they were nomads, who travelled from village to village to sell their goods. They settled down after the promulgation of Decree 258 of the Council of Ministers dated 1958, prohibiting "nomadism and begging in the People's Republic of Bulgaria". In absolute numbers they are not many. But in territorial aspect Kaldarashi live in all country regions, they rarely form large neighbourhoods, more often several families settle in a village together with the other population but without mixing with the other Roma .

The number of the Kaldarashi in Bulgaria is about 30 000. (Krumova, Kolev, Daskalova-Tsvetkova: 2011)

RUDARI / LUDARI

Groups of people which the neighbouring population calls "Romanian gypsies" live predominantly in the village regions of Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Nova Zagora, Burgas, Varna, Dobrich, Veliko Tarnovo and Pleven areas. The representatives of this community call themselves "Rudari" or "Ludari" – depending on the local dialect. Due to their specific crafts, the surrounding population knows them as Kopanari (whittlers) and Mechkadari (bear-tamers), for which their words are respectively *Lingurari* and *Ursari*. During the census and the sociological researches the Rudari/Ludari identify themselves usually as Romanian, Wallachians or Bulgarian, but they always insist on being differentiated from the Roma . Usually older generations accept the name "Romanian gypsies" for them, because the words *tsigán* and *tsigánka* mean respectively "husband" and "wife" in their speech (as by the way is the meaning of the words *rom* and *romni* in Roma language). The Rudari / Ludari speak a dialect of the Romanian language. In Bulgaria there are two dialects – north (more influenced by the standard Romanian) and south (with more distinct influence from the Greek language). Although they live in



relatively differentiated ethnical neighbourhoods, they are probably the best integrated Roma group in the Bulgarian society in relation to the level of education, employment rate, as well as the size of the households, in which they do not differ from the Bulgarian population in the certain residential areas.

The number of the Rudari in Bulgaria is about 70 000. (Krumova, Kolev, Daskalova-Tsvetkova: 2011)

ROMA IN ROMANIA

The Roma in Romania are also a rather diverse community. It includes a number of groups and subgroups:

Aurari (Goldsmiths) and *Argintari (Silversmiths)* – As occupation they are engaged with producing jewels or objects of worship. They live in the area of Teleorman, Alexandria, Bucharest, Ialomița and a few in Tulcea (aprox. 1000 de families). The specificity of the group is the processing of precious metals (gold and silver) from which they produce ornaments or objects of cult. Inside the community they still practice the stabor (community judgement) and the traditional marriage (based on agreement between the families).

Ciurarii – this group of nomads living in tent has disappeared, as well as the geambașii, with the industrial expansion. Their major occupation has been the producing of sieves from animal skin prepared in a specific way.

Arāmari (Tinkers) – specialized in copper processing, they have produced and repaired copper cookwares, but also made roofs for churches.

Cocalari – Were producing objects from animal bones (combs, handles, ornaments etc.). After the industrialization of the country their products could not be sold, the majority of the cocalari became scavengers or merchants of flakes and kitchenware. They are most probably the descendants of the processors of ivory from India.

Cărămidari (Brick makers) – were producing unburnt clay bricks.

Covatari – group producing whites, troughs.

Cositorari (Tin makers) were treating with tin (white-silver coloured metal, very malleable and ductile, scientifically called "tin") by covering the inner surface the concavity of the household dishes in order to prevent oxidation.

Cărbunari (Coal miners) – people who worked in producing of wood coal.

Fierari (Blacksmiths) – Occupation: manufacturing of iron tools and objects. They had the monopoly of processing iron during the Middle Ages. In the 20th century a significant number of them became farmers or industrial workers. After 1989 the few blacksmiths from the village are manufacturing carriages and tools. They have been wealthy, among the first who settled, and also among the first ones who lost their mother tongue.

Florari (Florists) Occupation: flower trade. They are a relatively new group, that appeared and developed in the interwar period. Nowadays, the florists is the most homogenous group of Roma, relatively rich.

Gunoieri (Scavengers/Garbage carriers) – Roma working at state sanitation companies

Cehara/Lăieți (or "Romanianized Roma", to be found in the Mărginimea Sibiului area, having traditional Roma costumes: Romanian folk costume-type shirts, made of hemp and big and wide (money) belt, with long hair - "lăieți"; having similar occupation with the "telali".

Corturari (Roma living in tents) – nomadic Roma living in tents; it is the only group whose wealth is stored in an old silver cup;

Corfari (Wicker weavers/Basket makers) – group of Roma who weave corfu or baskets from twigs of hazel or willow wicker.

Coșari (Chimney sweepers) – were specialized in cleaning the chimneys.

Lemnari (Carpenters) – specialized in producing furniture (chairs, tables, closets etc.), especially in manufacturing chests, hives and barns (for storing cornmeal).

Lingurari – were care manufacturing spoons, jars, cups, ladles;

Geambașii/Lovari (Horse traders) – specialists in "rejuvenation" and healing horses.

Măturari (Sweepers) – used to produce wicker brooms.

Olănari (Tiles makers) – were manufacturing tiles and wood shingles for covering roofs;

Spoitori (Tinsmiths) – Occupation: tinning vessels; begging. After the forced collectivization in the '50, most of them became farmers. They are the descendants of the Roma coming from Turkey. Were among the most poor Roma; were travelling in carts with canopies, pulled by buffalos.

Pieptănari (Comb makers) – subgroup of Cocalari – were manufacturing combs (they are not existing anymore).

Penari (Add chicken feathers) – gathered down of bird and were exchanging it for pots and pans; using it for manufacturing pillows and duvets.

Rudari – Occupation: Searching and processing of gold, softwood, and picking berries from the woods. Starting with the end of the 18th century, when the gold became more and more difficult they turned to woodworking. Specificity: the Rudari are the descendants of the ancient gold-seekers from India.

Răcari – they draw their name from a village. Probably it is an emerging subgroup, without a clear specificity up to now.

Telali (Patavara) – they were selling old clothes.

Ursari (Bear leaders) - Ocupație: bear taming. Their ancestors have been magicians, tamers, clowns etc. In the Middle Ages were wandering throughout the villages and towns with the bear for making a living. At the beginning of the last century when their occupation has disappeared, the bear leaders learned the occupations of the other subgroups. They settled in relatively compact groups, maintaining their language and traditions.

Horahai (Turkish Muslim Roma) – settled in Dobrogea, South part of Romania, being mainly traders and speaking the Turkish language.

Alăptătoare de sugari (Breastfeeders) – women hired by noblemen to breastfeed the newly-borns (disappeared);

Ghicatori (Fortune-tellers) – the fortune telling from tarot cards, crystal bowls, numerology and in hands etc. was practicing only for the gadje, but not for other Roma. At arriving in a new community it was a good method to gather information about the community itself, and to earn money. The fortune tellers claimed that their powers come from the supranaturale world.



Lecuitoarele băbești (Healers) – women who used empirical cures for healing the people as well as magics, witchery, spells etc.

Lăutari (Fiddlers) – subgroup separated from the vătrași at the middle of the 20th century. The fiddlers from rural areas were every day farmers and were singing at celebrations. In the towns were having other occupations and having an easier everyday life. the more talented from them became well-known artists.

Zlătari (Goldsmiths) – gold-seekers, were extracting gold from riverbeds;

Țigani de mătase (Silk Gypsies) – Roma from Transylvania, in the past having as major occupation the trading with carpets and silk materials. They started from the Brașov area and were reaching the coast of France and Italy.

Meseriașii (Crafts man)

Romungre – Hungarian mother tongue Roma living in Transylvania.

Vătrași – were the first ones to loose their traditional way of life and mother tongue. They were undertaken various works at the boyars' courtyards or at monasteries, as well as working in agriculture. Before liberation and the 1864 agricultural reform they have been tied to the land. After emancipation, several Roma without an occupation and land became members of the vătrași community.

Ciobotarii or cizmarii (shoemakers) – are part of the vătrași subgroup, working either in their own workrooms (most often being one room of their houses), or in shops not belonging to them. Nowadays there number has very much decreased, their descendents being involved in agriculture or modern professions.

The geographical dispersion of the traditional communities covers the whole territory of Romania, with some local differences. For instance, the community of Gabors is concentrated mostly in Transylvania, in the regions where the Hungarian minority is also living. The Gabors speak Hungarian as second preferred language and have generally Hungarian first names. From the point of view of religious belief, the majority of Roma are Greek-Orthodox. However, mainly after the fall of communism and the open society conditions, Roma have adopted several of the new-Protestant faiths, becoming members of the Advent Church and Pentecostal Church. The preference for the new protestant churches is understandable, as these churches show respect and solidarity

towards Roma, far from the reserves of the classical historical Christian denominations (Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic).

Căldărari (Kalderash) – were traditionally smiths and metal workers, manufacturing buckets, pans, pots, stills etc. from copper and aluminium sheets. From the beginning they were living in tents, travelling with colourful carts. The majority of them maintained the traditional way of living until very recent times. This group was the last one which have settled down. In the community it is still existing the position of bulibaşa (head of the community) and they are still practicing the judgement (kris) by the elders of the community.

Gaborii cu pălărie ("Gabors", Gypsies with hat) – they speak Hungarian as second preferred language and have generally Hungarian first names. As occupations they have trading, tinsmithing and modern professions.

ROMA IN LITHUANIA

According to field research data, Roma population in Lithuania consists of three ethnic groups: litóvska (litoucka, litovķcka) Roma (Lithuanian Roma), lotfķtka Roma (Latvian Roma) and kotliary. Specifically, the Roma group calling itself pólska roma (Polish Roma) lives in the Vilnius region, but the dialect they speak, the same set of customary laws and the way of living allows us to bracket them in the category of Roma living in other regions of Lithuania and calling themselves litóvska roma. Litóvska roma and lotfķtka roma are Catholics, but kotliary that have arrived to Lithuania mostly from Moldova just after the World War II (WWII), are Orthodox. There are also some families that call themselves fliški („German Roma“), however, during the interviews they were given to say that fliški is a family name or the nīcija (Roma group with distinct ethnic identity). The author suggests that fliški could be the last survivors of the Roma ethnic group that had been living in borderland with Germany and Koenisberg (nowadays Kaliningrad) region. Fliški were almost exterminated during the WWII. However, there are still too few investigations done on Roma genocide to check this assumption.

There are following Roma subgroups in Lithuania according to their territorial and linguistic background: North Russian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Poland, Belorussian Roma,

called Polska Roma, Russian Roma, etc. The Caldarari (Kalderash, Kotliar) are a more traditional Roma group of about 200 living separately from the Roma settlement keeping strict cultural traditions and not generally accepting marriages outside the community”

ROMA IN PORTUGAL

The Roma names in Portugal are: Ciganos, Galegos, Beirões, Chabotos, Cesteiros. The self-names are: Calon, Ciganos or Romanos.

Roma are (self-) identified according to a range of sub-groups based on historical, linguistic or professional distinctions. Prominent subgroups include the Kalderash of South-Eastern Europe, the Sinti of Italy, France and Germany and the Kale of Spain and Portugal (Amnistia Internacional: 2010). Roma have been in Portugal for 500 years.

The Kalé group reached the Iberian Peninsula in the first quarter of the 15th century. It is easy to imagine how strange such a different people, speaking a strange language, dressed exotically and with completely different customs, seemed to the society of the time. The aura of mystery attracted as much as it repelled. For a long time that distance was real, as the unknown creates separation. Relations developed which were based neither on trust nor esteem. The discrimination and marginalization to which the Roma were subjected to from early on forced them into extreme isolation, creating a barrier around them which, whilst on the one hand it enabled them to keep their identity and culture, on the other it meant they were overlooked and distrusted by mainstream society and even excluded from it. Close-knit but not submissive, they still kept their fundamental values, based on the cult of the family, respect for older people and the protection of children. For centuries they were persecuted and subjected to repressive laws which legitimized very severe punishments, not always proportionate to the crimes committed. It was only nearly four centuries after their arrival in Portugal that the 1822 Constitution gave them Portuguese citizenship and recognized them as full Portuguese nationals. Looking back historically over the way of life of Roma communities, we find that their current situation is still very vulnerable. Despite social changes which have taken place and a number of improvements in the Roma's situation, there is still a series of factors which combine to militate against their integration: social exclusion,

discrimination, difficulties in organizing concerted action, reluctance to take up schooling, loss of economic resources, the decline of traditional occupations, a high level of arrests and the fact that they obey very strong internal rules.

However, the passage of time and better knowledge of their history and culture has led to a new dynamic between Roma and non-Roma, creating links based on mutual respect and esteem. Knowing 'why' means also understanding, accepting and respecting. Relations, which have tended to ebb and flow, have 'softened'. In the meantime there have been turning points which have removed barriers and built bridges which have, slowly, helped to change the course of history" (National Strategy: 2012: 4)

Historical sources indicate that Roma, like the Portuguese Jews, changed their names during the Inquisition period and move to Spain. Portugal was spared from the atrocities of the Second World War.

ROMA IN NORWAY

There are four main categories of Roma people in Norway. Two of these, the Rom (Roma) and the Romani, are acknowledged as national minorities. They have a different historical background and speak different languages.

Romani (also called Taters or Travellers): Romani people with Norwegian citizenship were acknowledged as a national minority in 1999. The Romani are fairly integrated in the Norwegian society and culture as they underwent strong assimilation politics earlier. There are no official statistics according to ethnicity in Norway, but organizations working with Romani people estimate that there are 10 - 30 000 Romani¹⁴ living throughout the country. There is still some stigma connected to being Romani, so many do not openly declare themselves Romani. There are now several Romani groups and organizations in Norway, and they have over the past few years been able to introduce the general public to their history and culture through the school curriculum, cultural events and museum exhibitions.

¹⁴ Det store norske leksikon: <http://snl.no/romanifolk>

Rom (also called Gypsies): Rom people with Norwegian citizenship were likewise acknowledged as a national minority in 1999. It is estimated that there are around 700 Rom people with Norwegian citizenship¹⁵, most of them living in Oslo. Many from this group travelled to other countries and lived in exile during the strong assimilation years in Norway. Several efforts were made by the Norwegian government to assist this group in the 1970s, however many are still illiterate and depend on the social welfare system.

Roma asylum seekers from the Balkans: This group of Roma came in the 1990'ies as asylum seekers, fleeing the war in the Balkans. They live in different places throughout the country according to which asylum they were sent to and have followed the mandatory introduction course for all asylum seekers. There are no separate statistics about this small group of Roma, but they are included in the estimated Roma national minority numbers. They do however not have close relations with the Norwegian Rom group in Oslo.

Roma - "Tourist migrants" from Romania: This group started arriving in Norway in 2006 after a law forbidding begging in the streets was abolished. They are becoming a common sight in many cities, especially in Oslo during the summer months. They do not have the rights to social services that come with Norwegian citizenship. They generally camp in parks or on private land and are in Norway to earn money for their families by begging or engaging in short term jobs.



¹⁵ Nes, Benedikte (2009): Biblioteket og de nasjonale minoritetene rom og romanifolket. Høgskolen i Oslo, Avdeling for journalistikk, bibliotek og informasjonsfag (JBI).

ROMANIPE

This is a term that has appeared and stands for the unified Roma identity, a term combining the notion of perceiving the world around us, the way the world around us perceives us, and the way our everyday life, our system of cultures, beliefs and practices is organized in order to achieve the former two things. Translating it into English we can use the term "*Romahood*". Romanipe is not a scholarly concept but rather a notion to distinguish "us" from "the others".

The notion of *Romanipe* is further stressed by the term *amare Roma* (our Roma – a term of rather social grouping) in contrast to *aver/cudza Roma* (foreign Roma). (Rombase: 2004)

THE ROMA FAMILY

Family is the most important factor in the life of anyone. That is why old Roma people would say that a man can live with no money but not without a family. In our lives, we change the place we live; the school, we go to; the job, we work. But we cannot choose our own parents or change the family, we were born in. So, everyone looks for a stronger support in his/her family and kinship.

For Roma people the family is also a sacred environment where, over the centuries, Roma material and spiritual culture was created, developed, saved and transmitted. Thus, even with no writing, it has preserved the mother tongue, the rich folklore, interesting celebrations, customs, rituals and traditions, unique crafts and their technology, their values, etc. During the centuries Romany was no one's people and precisely their families and kins were their indisputable keepers and protectors. They were the chosen ones to limit the thriving for centuries Roma liberty and bridle its devastating element, when it turns into an abuse of freedom.

The mutual support, the respect, love and concordance are the highest virtues in the Roma family. The members of a family – parents, children, brothers and sisters – help each other in the work and during the celebrations, in moments of happiness and grief. Roma people would first look for help and support in their families. The respect between the members of the family is one of the fundamental rules. Thus, for example, the respect to the parents is considered duty of everyone. It is unacceptable for children to

speaking rude to their parents or even raise their voice. The children must always listen to the words of their parents, because they have rich life experience and always think what's best for their children. When the children grow up they must take care of their parents, in the same way as they have been cared of when they were little: it is inadmissible to leave the old and powerless parents to take care of themselves. So, it will be an exception, if you meet a Roma person left in old people home. Traditional for the Roma family is the spirit of mutual respect, complete loyalty to one another, selflessness in extreme circumstances, notable morality and ethical attitude towards the older, the sick and the weaker. And the respect to elderly people and especially to the most aged ones, the most experienced and wisest in the family, was made a cult of.

Children are the greatest treasure of each Roma family and they give meaning of its creation and existence. Children are the most valuable capital of each family, because they are the most real continuators of the family and lineal traditions and values. In the Roma family, any child has its place depending on its gender, age and health condition. In the traditional family, from the earliest age the child is brought up mainly in extreme respect to the adults, in readiness to protect the honour of the family and kin, in devotion and affection to all members of the kin (especially to the elderly), in preserving the traditions of the family and kin, the customs, rules and norms of life, in an early inclusion and mastering of the family business, which often coincides with the family and kin's traditions in the practiced professions: tin-smiths, blacksmiths, sieve-makers, cattle-dealers, basket-makers, rope-makers, etc. Influence upon the Roma child will have not only the mother and the father, but also the grandmother, grandfather, uncle, aunt, older brothers and sisters, and cousins. Within this entire constellation of relatives and kins everybody has its own place, defined by his/her age, gender, personal charisma and influence over the others, prestige from earning means for living, skills to negotiate, act as an intermediary and resolve conflicts, etc.

From their very early age the children are brought up differently, depending on their gender. The traditions regarding the upbringing of the female offspring aim at establishing the skills necessary for the future woman, wife and mother. Everything else, including the good school education for Roma girls, remains in the background. Boys are object of a more specific upbringing influence by the family, which is mainly directed towards mastering the family craft as fundamental family value, through which the



future husband will be able to earn living for his family easier. Unlike the girls, boys are related to greater hopes. Present day Roma families would not find strange the idea for their male offspring to receive better and more prestigious education, to acquire a better valued profession on the labour market, there is even an open aspirations towards graduation from higher education and ambitions for mastering prestigious professions such as teachers, doctors, lawyers, etc.

One of the peculiarities of the Roma family is that the child, after reaching certain age, is regarded as member of the family of equal worth and his/her opinion on certain issues is accepted as an opinion of a mature person. For this reason, if a child declares in front of his/her parents, that he/she does not want to go to school, it is highly probable that they will not react but just agree with that opinion. Today, as in the past, many Roma children grow up in families with one parent or with a „step“ parent: stepmother (the new wife of the father of the child, who did not give birth to the child, but takes care of him/her) or stepfather. This is because the parents can split or an accident can happen to one of the parents. Although not a „blood“ parent, the step parent must also take care of the child and for this reason he/she is respected as a blood parent.

One of the factors, which must also be taken into account, is the degree of modernisation of the respective Roma group. That, to a great extent defines the relations within the community, which is directly connected with our work. The provisional hierarchical structuring of the community develops according to the ladder of *“individual”* – *“family”* – *“community”*, where the individual has the smallest weight, and the community – the greatest. The choice to be done between the individual and the community is in the favour of the community. Then follows the family and the last place is for the success of the individual. This state of the matters explains to a great extent the specifics of the Roma family, described above. That dependence in the traditional Roma groups caused and originated the stereotype about Roma comradeship. This is largely interfering with the development of the separate individual, which eventually reflects in the development of the entire community. However, that feature is not distinguishing only for the Roma community – that feature is characteristic for any traditional society. Where the community has already started to modernise, the aspiration for personal development would gradually begin to outweigh the striving for development of the family and community.

FORMAL LEADERS

The first type of formal leader is the Roma *tsar* or *monarch*. In Bulgaria and Romania, the talks about „**Roma monarch**”, date back even before the change of the Socialist regime – Tsar Gogo in Bulgaria, Ion Cioaba in Romania. However, usually the figure of this king is recognized mainly within his own group. Parts of the academic researchers in Bulgaria, for example, blame the media environment for the emergence of the next „**Roma monarch**”, namely, Tsar Kiro – Kiril Georgiev Rashkov. Researchers believe that he is a made-up one and imposed on the public mind mostly due to the journalist’s passion for page-one sensations. Although Tsar Kiro tried to impose his authority and create a mythology around his personality, similarly to the Romanian Kaldarashi Ion Cioaba, the power of Kiril Rashkov encompasses mostly his family and kin and a very tiny part of the rest of Roma people, especially ones, who do not belong to the group of Kaldarashi, accept his title as a tsar.

Apart from the so-called „Roma monarchs” in the context of the leadership research, in the foreground emerge also the so-called „**Roma mayors**”. This practice gained greater popularity over the last two decades. In most of the cases, this is the deputy-mayor of a neighbourhood with predominantly Roma population or an expert in ethnic and demographic issues, who is completely dependent on the respective municipal administration. At the same time, this position quite often causes the complete abdication of the respective local administration from the problems of the given Roma community, because of this wide-spread understanding among the administration (and to be more precise, among the heads of administrative departments) that the Roma expert must be in charge for all matter, related to Roma, regardless of their nature, i.e. he/she must be the middle-man between the Roma and the administration.

Concerning Roma “mayors” we can also point out that they not always enjoy the trust of the group, because of the apprehension that they may turn into pawns of the non-Roma.

INFORMAL LEADERS

However, **the informal leaders** enjoy much greater influence within the community.

The first type of informal leaders is the so-called ***barvale - bigwigs***. These are rich Roma people, who have own profitable, legal, semi-legal or completely illegal business. On the one hand, this may be the patron – tenant-farmer of tobacco, peanuts, etc., who employs manpower and providing thus the living of considerable number of Roma households within a populated area. On the other hand, these are the leaders of the organized crime in the particular settlement or region. Some of the Roma ghettos and especially the regions outside the zoning boundaries of the populated area, represent a special type of micro „inaccessible zones ”.

The next type of informal leader is the ***grocer*** – tradesman, who owns a small shop for food stuff and other groceries or a drinking establishment. The tradesman of this type is not as rich as the ***barvale***, but buying food and basic need goods is done through his intermediation (he often sells on credit). It is exactly the credit mechanism, which provides power and authority to the grocers, as it is directly connected to the survival of the household.

Another type of informal leaders is the one possessing ***spiritual charisma***. At Roma people, who are members of some of protestant denominations, informal leader can become not only the priest, but the musician playing during the service, as well. The hodja (imam), healer and the fortune-teller also focus the public concept that the truth lies in their words and many social activities are often coordinated with their opinion.

The next types of informal leaders represent Roma people with ***higher*** or ***secondary vocational education***. Good professionalism and personal prosperity each by honest labour, and higher erudition helps the integration of these individuals in the macro-society. This, in its turn, turns them into natural intermediaries between him/her and rest of the Roma people from the neighbourhoods. This peculiar Roma intelligence plays an important role in the relations with *a date and* especially in the moments, related to finding work, tax system and healthcare. The campaigns, Amalipe Centre carried out in 2010 for prevention of early marriages in ten populated places clearly showed that personal example of successful youths is one of the most efficient approaches. The young, educated and successfully coping with everyday life challenges Roma people, which originate from a particular community, grown up in front of the eyes of the others and managed to achieve more than them without stopping being Roma people, and without depriving themselves from any personal life and family, can extremely influence



the rest. The personal example of these Roma people can render its effect in two ways. One of them is by inviting successful Roma people to participate in public meetings, gatherings, etc. The other, more efficient way is if such Roma people are given power and are engaged at certain positions. Turning these Roma people into a role model, i.e. affirming their authority is a sure guarantee for success.

And last, but not least, among the informal leaders we will mention the traditional authority of the *pater familias*. Within any given neighbourhood there is at least one elder individual above 55-60 years, who acts as leader of a strong network of families within that neighbourhood or the populated place. Usually, it is a man, who has three or more sons, who, in their turn have three and more children. Through the kinship by marriage, entire blocks within the Roma neighbourhoods can be included in the descending kinship network of the given individual and he has the potential to expand his influence and impose his will, meeting the obedience of the rest of the Roma people.

The other group of informal leaders, who often remain concealed for outsiders are **the women leaders**, although they are often the “invisible” leaders. The woman in the Roma community (regardless of the group – even in the most conservative groups) plays a very important role for consolidation, structuring and preservation of the community. In the Romani language groups she would often be called “bibi” (aunt) or “phuri daj” (old mother). She has her own space, where her authority is not smaller than the one of the men – especially on issues, concerning the family. She is the real, established authority, whom one may turn to when it is about early marriage, dropping out of school, as these processes falls exactly within the woman’s space – organization of the tradition, wedding, continuation of the family, children ... One will hardly find the woman leader in the village square, in the local pub or at any other public place (often she does not see herself as a leader), but one can easily find her by just asking who is the woman, the girls would go to, when they have female problems or for other female issues.

THE MESHERE (ROMA COURT) AS POTESTARIAN BODY AMONG THE GROUP OF KALDARASHI

An important mechanism for leadership exercising is the specific Roma potestary body known also as „**meshare**” or „**meshere**”. Most probably, the term originates from the Roma words “me” (my) and “shoro” (head), i.e. the heads of the community, the chieftains. These would be the elders, the most respected people in the family, for which


reason, it is sometimes called the “elderly council”. The word for naming the same social structure in the western studies is „Kris”, but it can also be „Romano Kris” or „Kris Romani” and usually is translated as „**Roma court.**” The meshere is known and functions as a potestary body only among the Kaldarashi. It is called for specification and resolution of only intra-group disagreements and problems. The meshere has no power over Roma people outside the Kaldarashi group. The occasions it would usually declare its decision are related to slander, fraud, fights and murder - cases, which in the regular state are within the jurisdiction of the existing judicial system. In other words, the meshere functions as an arbitration tribunal, sanctioning the observation of the common law in the Kaldarashi community. The meshere is extremely objective. Participation in it is a question of honour and if there is any amount of doubt in the objectivity of any of its members, he shall be replaced, which automatically leads to reduction of the authority of that man for the remaining part of the community. It is not by chance that one of the greatest researchers of the Roma culture Jean-Pierre Liégeois says about the meshere: “If men make the meshere, the meshere makes then then men – the dignity and integrity of the participants define the dignity and integrity of the gathering. The more integrity a man demonstrated during the sitting the greater his own integrity is. Sometimes, concerning more serious matter meshere members from all over the country gather, because Kaldarashi are extremely small group, spread out around the whole country. The decision of the meshere is law for the community. Failure to observe this decision causes exclusion of the respective individual from the community, which is equal to social death for him. Using its role of a tribunal, this potestary body is among the mechanisms for exercising leadership in the Roma community. It may be useful to both teachers and social workers for resolution of a particular case. Structures of the Ministry of Interior, which have good knowledge of meshere’s functions, have already built a mechanism for its use when resolving certain cases, related to Kaldarashi group.

The different types of Roma leaders have their role in a context different by its specifics. Thus, for example, identification of certain type of Roma leaders is necessary in the communication with international donors and institutions. "We need Roma leaders, who are capable of negotiating in confidence with the local authorities in order to what their communities need. In order to achieve anything, it is of paramount importance that the authorities will have a valid interlocutor on part of the Roma population, who will identify the priorities." These were the recent words of Mod de Boer Bukikio, deputy-

general secretary of the Council of Europe. Moreover, when speaking of Roma leadership, institutions not only ascertain its importance, but also **identify it as an issue**. For instance, in the above-cited statement Mod de Boer Bukikio speaks about the "fragmentized nature of the Roma leadership": "the international organizations and the national governments want Roma representatives to be included in the resolution of the Roma problems, but they are disappointed by the incapacity of the internally divided Roma communities to select widely acknowledged leaders". Dimitrina Petrova, Director of the European centre for rights of the Roma people in Budapest, expressed similar opinion: "There are well known and widely discussed problems with the leadership in the Roma people regarding their fragmented nature, generation differences, tradition, etc. Roma community in Europe is divided by boundaries, languages, etc." As seen in the above-cited opinion, representatives of institutions are often inclined to cast the blame about the problems with the Roma leadership onto the Roma people. This, however, speaks rather about not knowing the community and is an attempt for its unification. As became clear in the preceding chapters, Roma community is divided into a number of groups and sub-groups. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to take that into account when identifying the leaders the community and when looking for a dialogue, to look for the leaders of the different groups and sub-groups.

In fact, if there is a problem with the Roma leadership, it is actually created by the institutions, to a considerable extent. It is them, which in most of the cases are the active party, which identifies, qualifies and authorized the leaders in the Roma community, in the majority of the occasions – lead mainly by the underlying logic of its policies, and not by the reality in these communities.

Much can be written about the leadership, its role and mechanisms and the types of leaders and these can be considered under different angles depending on the context of the situation and the particular community. Within these pages we attempted in brief to bring to the foreground the most crucial elements, the knowledge of which we consider as extremely important for any successful work within the community.



SEVERAL TERMINOLOGICAL CLARIFICATIONS:

Stereotype: the notion was introduced in 1922 by the American journalist and sociologist Walter Lippmann. In his book „Public Opinion” he defined the stereotype as a simplified, pre-established notion, not stemming from one's personal experience. Lippmann differentiated between the four aspects of the stereotype:

1. The stereotype is always a simplified idea about the reality;
2. People "get" stereotypes from other people, from the mass media, etc., rather than formulate them on grounds of their personal experience;
3. all stereotypes are false in one or another aspect. This stems from the fact that the stereotype attributes to a person this or that characteristic features solely on basis of him/her belonging to a certain group;
4. stereotypes are very sustainable. Even if people alone may convince themselves that the stereotype does not correspond to reality, they find themselves unwilling to give it up, preferring to claim that exceptions will only confirm the rule.

Therefore stereotype is single-sided / on purpose / non-objective description of certain group, to which are attributed certain generalized features and much like the prejudice, it can become grounds for different treatment or discrimination.

Stereotypes may be positive and negative; yet, they invariably affect our concepts and expectations from the other people, which, as a result, affect our actions and the way we perceive the acts of others. Even when they express a more favourable assessment, as for example, the wide-spread idea that all Roma people are good dancers, they are based on the stereotype categorization of certain group of people.

The social STEREOTYPES, in their turn, represent summarized vision of a given social group concerning another social group, which may well have positive as well as negative aspect. These are based on the assumption that there are common characteristic features, which all members of a given social group have. Usually, individuals borrow the social STEREOTYPES „as ready-made article” in the course of their socialization within a given community. In fact, one of the main reasons for occurrence and existence of

stereotypes is the lack of direct relations and personal knowledge, which representatives of a given social group would have concerning another one. Social sciences often speak about the erroneous nature of stereotypes. The reason for this is that they may become reason for discriminatory attitude or be used as grounds for discriminatory behaviour.

Prejudices represent most of all an antipathy, based on erroneous, but sustainable notion about a given group, to which undesired features were attributed. In the general case, a negative attitude occurs towards a particular individual or group of people just because they belong to this group. The prejudice is a hastily created and often unsubstantiated opinion. Prejudices may be due to different biological or cultural characteristic features: gender, race, language, religion, sexual orientation, etc. They are directly connected to the existing social STEREOTYPES about these groups.

The notion of **social distance** was introduced in the sociology for the sake of finding a term, which best describes and compares racial STEREOTYPES and prejudices. It deals with the degrees of understanding and closeness both between separate individuals, and between given social groups. The very notion of „social distance“ turned out to be extremely beneficial in the sphere of the social science: it is widely used in the studies of gender, of ethnical, religious and sexual affiliation, and of class and social status.

Integration and assimilation

Assimilation is the process of melting away of one ethnos (in most of the cases, smaller in number and weaker) by another — bigger and stronger ethnos. This can find its expression in the language, religion or culture. The assimilation may have both voluntary and coercive (forced) nature – as a result from conquest, extermination, external migration, legislative acts and policy, etc. (<http://bg.wikipedia.org>)

An example of assimilation attitudes is the statement of the German Chancellor Angela Merkel (*Statement of Angela Merkel at a meeting of youths from the Christian Democratic Union on 16 October 2010*). In it, the German Chancellor stated that „they“ [the immigrants/ the minorities] must not only observe the rules of „our“ society, not only speak „our“ language, but also accept „our“ lifestyle. It is beyond any doubt that learning the official language of the respective country is an obligatory prerequisite for a successful integration, as obligatory is also the observation of the rules of the respective society, insofar as it corresponds to the absolute principle – the supremacy of law, but

acceptance of „our” lifestyle suggests denial of „their” lifestyle, which is already an example of assimilation and acculturation, i.e. loss of cultural distinguishing features (acceptance of culture and values of the recipient society).

In the beginning of XX century and for many decades thereafter the assimilation was regarded as a fully positive, as a full inclusion, merging of immigrants with the recipient society, which they have chosen and wanted. The most emblematic and optimistic expression of this concept is the melting pot – the pot where races, languages, religions, cultures, traditions are mixed together in order to forge the American identity. The year of 1968, with its social movements in the USA, France, Italy and other European countries, with the demands for recognition of all differences – sexual, gender, ethnic – clearly marked the beginning of another period. Its paradigm became the multiculturalism – the zenith of differences. Assimilation was rejected as model. Multiculturalist policies are connected with stimulation the development of the communities, including through governmental funding of the education of the minority languages, issuance of newspapers and other media of the immigrant groups, creation of theatres and other cultural institutions of the ethnic communities, introduction of quota representation of the minorities.

The last decade outlined a new sharp turn in the politics. One of the most characteristic examples is the Netherlands. While for decades it was orientated towards the successful model of the multiculturalist integration of immigrants, in the mid-90s it started to enforce one of the strictest policies for acculturation, by introducing the citizenship trajectories – high requirements for mastering Dutch language, for knowing the main features of the local society and culture and for recognition of its values. Integration is now to be seen not as much as a result from settling the immigrants in the recipient society.

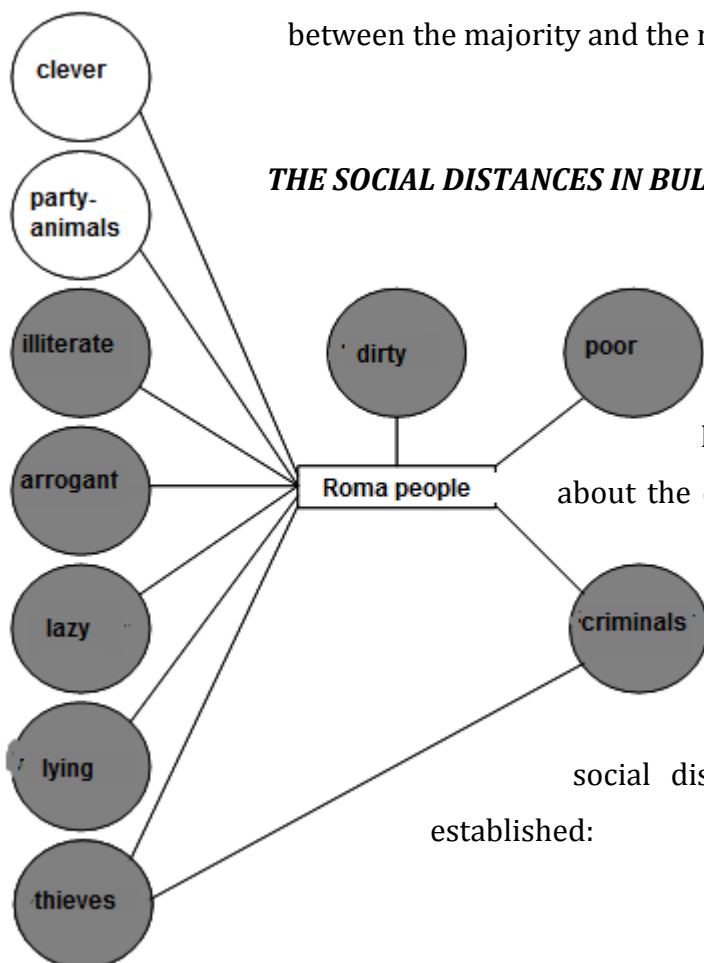
Forms of integration

The most cited in the literature is the typology of H. Entzingen and R. Biezeveld (2003), who consider four types or degrees of integration:

- social-economic (related to the access to the labour market). Two approaches compete with each other concerning the policies of stimulation of the social-economic integration. The positive discrimination represents governmental measures, which should facilitate and stimulate employment of immigrants and

representatives of other non-privileged minorities. In some countries they are so well developed that anecdotes spring into being, relating that it would be most difficult for you to find work if you're man, white, educated and heterosexual. These express the frustrations of the „classic majority.” The other approach is inclusion into the “common agenda” (mainstreaming). It is directed towards inclusion of the specific problems of the minorities in the common policy/policies.

- Cultural. It is relatively easy to define and hard to realize.
- Legal and political: the right to elect and be elected
- Acceptance by the society: the integration is considered mainly in terms of discrimination and racism and the policies for their minimization. Milton Gordon differentiates three stages of the increasing integration: the first one is the level of attitudes and is expressed in the attitude of acceptance and lack of prejudices; the second one is on the level of individual communication with minorities, immigrants, etc. and is expressed in a behaviour of acceptance and lack of discrimination; the third one, the most comprehensive form is the interaction between the majority and the minorities.



The first academic attempts to define the social distances in Bulgaria, encountered the problem about the cultural specifics of our country and the need for the Bogardus scale /main instrument for measuring these distances/ to be further adapted. The following order of social distance categories was permanently established:

Do you agree?

- ***To marry to...?***
- ***To maintain friendship with...?***
- ***To live in the same neighbourhood with....?***
- ***To work in the same place with....?***
- ***To live in the same populated area with....?***
- ***To live in the same country with.....?***

Apart from Bulgarians, the study included three other types of ethnic minority groups, living in Bulgaria: 1/ traditional minorities with considerable international diasporas – Armenians, Jews, Pomaks and Roma people; 2/ new minorities, forming as a result from the intensive immigration processes after 1989 - Arabs, Vietnamese, Chinese as well as Russians and Ukrainians, united within one position, 3/ ethnic minorities from neighbouring Balkan countries – Albanians, Greeks, Macedonians, Romanians, Serbians and Turks, which also traditionally live in the country. During the study, all ethnic groups including the Bulgarians, were put into one common list, arranged by alphabetic order, in order to avoid any suggestion about the significance of any given group.

The results obtained show that it is not the Roma people, but the new minorities – Arabs, Vietnamese and Chinese, prove to be the most rejected by both Bulgarians and the population of the country, as a whole, i.e. they are the most vulnerable group from the point of view of the ethnic prejudices towards them.

More detailed information about the study and data obtained from it, you can find at www.osi.bg or write to us about them at e-mail amalipe.social@gmail.com .

MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES REGARDING ROMA PEOPLE

Large portion of the notions assumed as characteristic for the Roma people are STEREOTYPES and prejudices – whether negative or positive. Below follow analysis of the main associations, which different groups of field workers link to the name of „Roma”:

Music, dances: this is one of the few positive STEREOTYPES concerning Roma people. What's true is that many of the Roma people in the Balkan Peninsula are extremely musically inclined, and a great number of the masterly music performers (including – of Bulgarian folk music) have Roma origin. The reasons for this originate as early as the times of the Ottoman Empire. Even then part of the Roma people turned music into their craft, which they developed to perfection: the military musicians in the Ottoman army were Roma people, Roma musicians used to play at weddings, etc. and even at the present day in many of the villages, populated by the sub-groups of Roma people of *Yerlii and Millet* there are musicians, bands and orchestra that have no rivals in their skills.

However, not all Roma people have musical skills. An example in this aspect is the group of *Kaldarashi*, who have never dealt professionally with music and among which there are no musical groups and pronounced musicians. Many teachers say that the pupils from the group of *Kaldarashi* have no musical ear, at all.

Nomads, gypsy camp, cart: the romantic idea about the free Gypsies – Katunari is especially inadequate about Bulgaria and Romania. On the Balkan Peninsula (unlike the Western Europe) the vast majority of the Roma people settle as early as the times of the Ottoman Empire. The latter one had a strict policy for tax-collection, which forced all nomad people to settle. This happened also to the Roma people – it is not arbitrary that the ethnologists define Roma groups, living in Bulgaria for centuries as *Yerlii* – i.e. local, settled.

The last Roma people – Katunari in Bulgaria were from the groups, which arrived in the 19th and 20th century from Romania: *Kaldarashi*, *Kalajdzii*. On 17.12.1958 the Council of Ministers issued a Decree 256 for settling of the nomad gypsies and in the following 3-4 years these relatively small in number groups were forced to settle.

Pick-pockets, thieves: the traditional Roma culture of none of the groups considers larceny as a value – on the contrary, theft is defined as an act that is inadmissible within the community. As a matter of fact – in terms of values the traditional Roma culture is

not essentially different from the culture of the rest of the ethnoses on the Balkan Peninsula – Bulgarians, Turks, etc. Pick-pocketing is practiced as a craft by a relatively small in number sub-group of *Kaldarashi* (the so-called *Nitsulesh*), and even they consider pick-pocketing within the community as a punishable deed. This is not to mean that there are no crimes, committed by Roma people... in the same way as there are crimes, committed by Bulgarians, Turks, Armenians, etc. Criminals exist within any ethnos. Yet, it is wrongful to speak about „Roma crime” and believe that it is essential characteristic of the Roma community!

Many children: Currently, the average number of children in the Roma family is 2,77 – contrary to the wide spread by the media concept about Romani women who give birth to a child every year. Numerous children are usually born in the marginalised families, which have cut themselves away from their community and over which the community has no control.

Giving birth to many children is a characteristic feature of every patriarchal community – plenty of children have been born by the ethnic Bulgarians and Romanians, for example, up to the mid-20th century. Along with the progress of the process of modernisation, the number of the children in the family is reduced.

Illiterate: It is true that the educational status of the Roma people is many times lower than the one of the majority population of a given country. In the same time it is true that over the last decades it has been improving at quick pace. The census of the population in Bulgaria, for example, from 1946 pointed out that then 89 % of the Roma people were completely illiterate, Roma people with secondary education were 20, and Roma people – university graduates – was just one. Today these figures are quite different: the number of university graduates, who declared themselves as Roma people increased by 2,5 times. It is indicative that for a period of ten years, from 2001 to 2011 the number of Roma people with higher education has increased ten times! The problems, we face today though, are that a large portion of the Roma people with higher education prefer hiding their ethnic identity, so as not to become subject of STEREOTYPES and prejudices. Education is increasingly becoming a sustainable value

for many Roma families, even among the most conservative groups. This process will take time and it is on all of us that it will happen quicker!

United: The comradeship and solidarity among the Roma people is strong on the extended family, kin, clan and even group. In the same time among the separate Roma groups there is often distrust, resentment and numerous stereotypes. (For example, the group of *Kaldarashi* defines the rest of the Roma people as *Tsutsumani*, *Mangali* and considers them as „second-hand people“. Roma people *Yerlii* also have STEREOTYPES about the *Kaldarashi* – that they are thieves and pick-pockets, etc.) These contradictions are gradually disappearing among the younger and educated Roma people.

Lazy: ever since their settlement in Europe up to the present day, Roma people have occupied this economic niche, which the rest of the population (the majority in a given state) did not want to occupy. That is, Roma people have always earned their living by the most unattractive and hard labour or by crafts, requiring continuous labour. So, in no way can the stereotype „lazy“ describe adequately the Roma people.

The only ground for this stereotype can be found in the traditional, pre-industrial mode of work among many of the Roma people. For the majority of Roma people the concept of a regulated, 8-hour work day and 5-day work week with clear distribution of responsibilities looked incomprehensible. The traditional production process provided the opportunity for an unregulated work hours, breaks around the calendar holidays and so forth. As a result from this, initially many of the Roma people, who started work in the industrial enterprises during the socialist regime would often be absent from work, fail to strictly observe the working hours forming thus the stereotype about „lazy gypsies“. Practice shows that the transition from pre-industrial to industrial mode of work requires time, but can be completed even within 1 generation. Examples about this are the Roma people from the Nikola Kochev neighbourhood in Sliven, Bulgaria. They became the first textile workers and within a single generation turn into a highly valued manpower.

Dirty: The reasons for this stereotype would probably originate in the large Roma ghettos, where hygiene in the inter-block spaces and in the street has been heavily reduced. Another reason, in historical aspect is the Indian genotype of Roma people – their swarthy skin tone made peoples from all over Europe believe that Roma people are „dirty“. In the Roma culture the requirement for cleanliness is one of the most important requirements! In some Roma dialects (the so-called Wallachian sub-dialect) there are even two words differentiating the forms of dirt – *melalo* – dirty, smeared and *mahrime* – the defiled, spiritually polluted. The requirements about hygiene and keeping the cleanliness have constituted one of the fundamental elements of the traditional Roma culture. It is not by chance that even in the neighbourhoods with polluted inter-block spaces, immaculate cleanliness is maintained in the apartments and houses. Exceptions are only the dwellings of the most marginalised families – the so-called „ghetto in the ghetto.“

Poor: Poverty among Roma people is considerably higher than among the other population – by data of World Bank, the Roma people in Bulgaria, for example, are 4 times poorer than the majority of the population. In the same time we should not perceive poverty as the inevitable fate of the Roma people. In the historical aspect there are many evidences about Roma people, who used to be quite well-off thanks to their crafts and had quite high position. Even today there are Roma groups, in which the social-economic problems are significantly less (e.g. *Kaldarashi*, *Burgudjii* – who became famous for their large houses and luxurious lifestyle, which of course is not valid for all representatives of these groups). So, it is quite possible and it depends on all of us to turn this stereotype in a memory.

Early marriages: Early marriages exist even today among many Roma families, but the tendency for their overcoming is clear and categorical. The national representative research carried out in 2010 by Amalipe Centre specified that currently, the average age of the first marriage in the Roma community is between 18 years and 4 months and 18 years and 8 months, and at some groups (*Rudari*) it is even above 21 years.

Furthermore, we must note that the early marriage is not a specifically Roma tradition, but a practice among many people, when they were in the pre-modern stage of their



development – incl. the wide-spread practice in the patriarchal society before the World War I. Along with the modernisation this practice is being abandoned – process, which is currently under way among the Roma people.

Social benefits: The opinion that Roma people live off social benefits is widely-spread. This is simply not true: by data of the Social Assistance Agency, people, who rely on monthly social aids in Bulgaria are around 40 000 people. (there are not only Roma people among them, of course!). The Roma people in Bulgaria count between 700 000 and 800 000 people (according to the Note of the European Commission dated from 5 April 2011), i.e. it is clearly evident that the percentage of Roma people, counting on social benefits is considerably lower than what is widely believed.

Fortune-tellers: As soon as they arrive in Europe, part of the Roma women indulged in fortune-telling, lead-casting and similar other practices, denied by the Church. For this reason Roma people were called „atsiganoi” – „untouchable”, i.e. people, which Christians should not communicate with. Currently, fortune-telling is a „craft” for the women of one of the Kaldarashi sub-groups, that is, by far not all Roma people indulge in fortune-telling. This type of „fortune-telling” is rather a psychological skill to create the impression that you can „tell”, which employs some well-tested psychological facilities and has nothing to do with the supernatural abilities.

Fortune-tellers, about which it can be stated that have extrasensory capacities are just a few; they are well-known and they never „tell” in the streets.

Gold: a specific „cult” to gold we can observe among the groups of the former nomads – *Kaldarashi, Burgudjii*, etc. Their wealthy women would demonstrate their material well-being by wearing strings of golden coins; a frequent practice is also to install a golden tooth, etc. The reason for this is that over the years of nomadic life everything earned would be turned into gold – the metal which never loses its value, can easily be carried and can be used in any country. At the same time, we should note that this is far from an usual characteristic of all Roma groups.

BULGARIA

As a whole the Roma calendar holidays coincide with the calendar holidays of the surrounding population in the country transformed through the specific elements of Roma worldview. So although many of the holidays might be found among the majority population (especially in the countries where Roma have been living for centuries and have participated in the formation of the modern nations, like Bulgaria and Romania) each of the holidays receives specific Roma meaning: it is related to a Roma legend, elements of the ritual are changed as a result of their reflection through Roma spirit, etc.

The biggest calendar holidays of Balkan Roma and especially Bulgarian Roma are St. George's Day (Erdelez), Easter (Patragi) and St. Basil's Day (Bango Vassilii). They are celebrated by all Roma communities, including Horahane Roma. They celebrate also many other Christian holidays – Christmas, St. Ivan's Day, Shrovetide, St. Todor's Day, Virgin Mary's Day, Petlyovden, etc., and Horahane Roma celebrate also the two Muslim Bayrams - Ramazan Bayram and Kurban Bayram.

St. Basil's Day (Bango Vassilii): St. Basil's Day or Bango Vassilii (literally "The limp Basil") are celebrated by all Roma groups in Bulgaria. It is known in the country as "The Roma New Year". The Kaldarashi and Rudari celebrate it simpler, while for the Yerlii and especially the Burgudžii and the Roma musicians it appears to be the main holiday comparable only to St. George's Day.

Exactly the Burgudžii and the Roma musicians celebrate Bango Vassilii for three days, even a slight difference is made between St. Basil's Day and Bango Vassilii – on 13th January and on 14th January is St. Basil's Day, and on 15th January is Bango Vassilii. This differentiation is not made by the Kaldarashi, Rudari and the rest of the Yerlii (for example Horahane Roma) in Central Bulgaria, who call all three days "Bango Vassilii". We also have to note that the night on 13th January to 14th January very often play the role Christmas Eve.

The celebration of Bango Vassilii (St. Basil's Day) is related to several Roma legends, which we can divide into two types. In the first type Bango Vassili is St. Basil – defender and protector of Roma . He restored the bridge which the Roma passed on,

after it was destroyed by the Devil or God and he saved the drowning Roma . In the second type of legends Bango Vassili is a "historical" personality – a limping shepherd, who saved a drowning Roma child or gave shelter to a Roma running away from his enemies. In an indirect way the celebration of St. Basil's Day is related to the legend of the flock of geese which save the Roma from Egyptian army by taking them over the Red sea. (Yosif Nunev: 2000, 107)

The following moments can be marked in the celebration of St. Basil's Day (for convenience we will use St. Basil's Day and Bango Vassilii as the synonyms they are in fact):

Preparation for the holiday: It can start even a week before 13th January. St. Basil's Day is celebrated with poultry meat – geese (duck) for the Horohane Roma and some Kaldarashi or rooster (hen) for the Burgudžii, the Roma musicians and some Kaldarashi. Very rarely (the Burgudžii) slaughter a lamb or even a pig for Bango Vassilii, but this is done only by these families which during the year have a daughter-in-law or their first grandchild.

The preparation starts with buying a goose or rooster, in case the family does not breed such. The animal has to be bought 12th Jan. latest and it has to stay the night at home "so that the luck doesn't run away". In the morning of 13th Jan. the goose or the rooster are butchered and about 2 p.m. the real preparation starts. The main task is the preparation of the table and the implementation of the survaknitsa (decorated cornel-twigs). The cornel-twigs look different in the different Romani groups. The common element is that the twig is from cornel-tree, but their decoration is different - popcorn, pepper, candies (Horohane-Roma) or just the "simple" decoration of old golden coins and red thread for the Burgudžii. Roma-musician families do not decorate the cornel-twigs.

Dinner: Bango Vassilii is predominantly a family feast. In all Romani groups the dinner in the evening of January 13th plays a very important role and it bears rich symbolism. An obligatory element for all Romani groups is that the door is tightly closed when the dinner starts until midnight, none of the family is allowed to go out (even in the yard!), and no other people are allowed to go into the house. This is one of the rare occasions when Roma implicitly refuse their traditional hospitality.

For different groups and villages dinner starts at different time - usually between 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. In the past (for some groups even nowadays) it was obligatory that the



dinner of 13th January is arranged on a special round table– *siniya*. The cooked dishes are put on the *siniya*: a boiled rooster or goose, *sarmi* (usually with fortune slips - cornel buds), *banitsa* with fortune slips, richly decorated round bread (also quite often with fortune slips) or ritual bread-*kulak*, wine, Rakia, etc.

The Burgudžii put as well a handful of raw wheat (from the wheat boiled for St. Nicholas' Day and Christmas) and a handful of raw rice (from the rice which the rooster was boiled with). The Roma musicians' families obligatory prepare the so-called "Gypsy meal" (with dry gumbo and dry tomato). It is a tradition (or rather was a tradition) for the Burgudžii and the Roma musicians' families to place all family treasures on the table: gold, old golden coins, jewellery... Other Burgudžii groups had the tradition to take the treasures out and bless them by leaving them for everybody to see them. Anecdote stories for thefts of gold, left out by Burgudžii on Vasilitsa are still told among different Romani groups.

The dinner usually starts with incensing and blessing the table. The person who is doing the incensing (usually the woman) says a prayer for luck, fertility and happiness. After this the family members forgive each other by kissing each other's hands. After the forgiveness the eldest people (the grandmother and grandfather) take the richly decorate round bread (or the *kulak*) and break it into two to "see who will have more luck during the year and who will provide the household living".

Then the mother breaks the bread into pieces for all the children or each child breaks as bigger piece as possible. The first mouthpiece of the bread shall not be eaten - is wrapped and placed under the pillow. It is believed that the dream at this night will show what will happen during the coming year.

For the different Romani groups there are differences in some of the customs related to the dinner. For example the funny "stealing of the duck" for some Roma is a custom, where everybody tries to steal the boiled duck unnoticed by the others to be "the luckiest and healthiest". Other Romani groups arrange *kulaks* one upon another and somebody from the family hides behind them, and they wish Bango Vassili to bring more *kulaks* during the next year, and so on. Almost all groups do not to clean the table for the whole night. It is believed to bring fertility.

Welcoming Bango Vassili and the New Year: the welcoming of Bango Vassili and therefore the New Year occupies an important place in the celebration. It is done in two

ways: by *survakane* and when the family head pretends to be Bango Vassili or his messenger. While the first tradition is popular among all Roma (which is a reflection of the Bulgarian tradition "*survakarstvo*"), the second one is practiced only by Burgudžii and some Horohane Roma groups (i.e. these groups who celebrate Bango Vassili more solemnly) and it is always in combination with the first one.

St. Basil's Day and the New Year come at midnight. The *survakane* starts from this moment on. At the very night the Kaldarashi tap with the decorated cornel-twigs mainly the backs of the family members, while in other Romani groups the children may go around the neighbouring houses (after midnight the doors of the houses are open for visitors). The *survakari* people wish health, fertility and luck. Their words are usually short and simple, for instance: "Surva, surva this year, be sound and healthy for the next year". Often the ritual of *survaki* is in Bulgarian language, but there are also different *survakari* sayings in Romani, the Roma who speak Turkish say them in Turkish language, and the Romanian speaking ones – in Romanian¹⁶. Just like the Bulgarian tradition, the people who do the *survaki* are given dry fruit, candies, money.

The Yerlii, as mentioned above, celebrate Bango Vassilii for three days without cleaning the table. On the third day they make the so-called "crooked banitsa" for the horses and the donkeys not to become lame.

PETLYOVDEN (ROOSTER'S DAY) (BASHNUVDEN, IHTIMYA): Ihtimya or Bashnuvden (Petlyovden) is celebrated by the Roma musicians (called also Drundars), who are a particular, well preserved group Horohane Roma. Their descent is from the region of Kotel, but large groups of musicians in the past moved to the north of Stara Planina – to Zlataritsa and Lyaskovets, the villages around Omurtag, as well as some villages near Shumen (Ivansky, Salmanovo, etc.).

There are at least two things worth mentioning about these Roma musicians. First, the dialect they speak is quite different from the dialect of the other *Yerlii*. Therefore many scholars of Romani studies speak about "Drandari dialect". Second, the historical

¹⁶ You can read these sayings in the two student books: Krasteva, Kolev, Krumova, *Tales from the fireplace*, 162-163; Kolev, Krasteva, Krumova, *Roads retold*, 168. Available also at <http://amalipe.com/files/file/romski%20folklor/Pomagalo-2-4.pdf> and <http://amalipe.com/files/file/romski%20folklor/Pomagalo-5-8.pdf>



character Mustafa Shibiloglu, who was immortalized by Yordan Yovkov in his short story "Shibil", was a musician from Gradetz. Nowadays musicians have mythologized Shibil and present him as their king. (Kolev, Krumova, Yordanov: 2001, 179-181)

Although they are "Turkish gypsies", large number of the Roma musicians are not Muslims any more and they have completely lost the memory of celebrating Islamic holidays – for example the ones living in Zlataritsa and Lyaskovets. Other groups of musicians have also given up Muslim religion and have converted to Christianity, but still celebrate the Bayrams, together with Christian holidays. During the last years a great number of the Roma musicians have been attracted by the Church of the Pentecost and as a whole they abandon the celebration of the traditional holidays, but still keep the memory about them.

Ihtimya is celebrated on 2nd February. It is connected with several similar legends, according to which during the Ottoman rule, the Ottoman troops started to kill all boys (Romani or non-Turkish) and to leave a bloody mark on the doors of the houses they had already been. A Romani woman (Ephtimiya or Ihtimya) butchered a rooster and marked her door with its blood. When the Ottoman solders passed by, they thought they had already taken the boy from this house and in this way the boy was saved. As one can see, the legend is an exact analogue of the Bulgarian parable about Petlyovden, the only difference is that the major personage here is a Romani woman. (By the way this is also not obligatory. Some of the nowadays musicians believe that the woman who butchered the rooster was a Bulgarian and they do not deny that the celebration of Ihtimya by Roma is an echo and reflection of the Bulgarian celebration of Petlyovden).

Ihtimya is celebrated as the Boy's Day. The feast is completely deprived of any religious decoration, and if there is any, it is hidden and implicit. The core of the feast is the butchering of a rooster for the health of the boy in the house.

A separate rooster is butchered for each boy in the house. It is important that the rooster is butchered by a person who is not part of the household - a relative or a friend. A dot is made on the boy's forehead with the rooster's blood - it is believed that this brings health. Some of the musician households hang the head of the rooster on the door, "to remind that the rooster has saved the Romani people" and the internal organs are thrown into the river or are dug into the ground "for dogs and cats not to take them away".



The meat of the rooster is to be eaten only on 2nd February. Therefore households with many boys (i.e. where more than one rooster is butchered) have big celebrations or the meat is gifted to neighbours and relatives. The Ihtimya celebration of the birth of the first grandson during the year is especially solemn. Then the whole rooster, still raw is gifted to the people from the neighbourhood. Although Bashnuvden is the day of the boys, the girls are also included, but in a more modest way.

The feast **Ihtimya** is also interesting as it clearly demonstrates one aspect in the relation between Romani and Bulgarian traditions – that sometimes Roma preserve customs, which the surrounding ethnoses have already lost. The connection between the celebration of the Bulgarian Petlyovden and the Romani Ihtimya is more than obvious – they are celebrated on one and the same day (2nd February), the legends are almost the same (there is difference only in the ethnical identity of the woman who butchered the rooster – respectively Bulgarian or Romani), the ritual is also almost one and the same. But the Bulgarian ethnos does not celebrate Petlyovden since long time ago, while Roma musician households celebrate it even nowadays.

EASTER (PATRAGI): Easter (Patragi) is celebrated by almost all Roma in Bulgaria, including Horahane Roma. The only exception are the Muslim Roma, who have strong preferred Turkish self-consciousness and due to their desire completely to identify themselves with the surrounding Turkish population, they have abandoned celebration of almost all Romani holidays. The Kaldarashi have the most exuberant celebration of Easter, although it is not the biggest holiday for them – it gives way to St. George's Day.

The celebration of Easter by Kaldarashi, Rudari and Dasikane Roma is related to their Christian religion and for them Patragi is really the Resurrection of Christ. The religious recognition of the feast does not exist for Muslim Roma - it is mainly celebrated just as "the day of the red eggs". During our field research we did not come across any specific Romani legends about Easter (like the legend about the restoration of the bridge by St. Basil, the legend about the salvation of Roma by St. George, etc.).

Several elements can be distinguished in the celebration of Easter. Unlike St. Basil's Day, where the elements of the feast are more or less common for all Romani groups, they significantly differ here.

Preparation for the holiday: colouring of the eggs. Just like the Bulgarian tradition the eggs are coloured on Thursday or Saturday. The preferred colour is red. For the Burgudžii group the number of the eggs has to end on 1 – they can be 21, 31, 41, etc. They have also preserved the custom that the family members colour their faces with the first coloured egg (which is obligatory red) - it is believed to bring health. This egg is left aside and it shall not be eaten- it stays till St. George's Day. Some Kaldarashi have preserved a similar custom.

Fetching water: Long before sunrise, while still dusky outside, the youngest daughter-in-law or daughter goes to fetch water from the village water fountain. She carries a small cauldron with cranesbill and a red egg. Before filling in water, she greets with the holiday, and then prays for health and fertility. When she goes home, she wakes up her parents or parents-in-law and sprinkles them with the water for health.

This custom is preserved mainly by Kaldarashi Roma.

Taking of "furrow". This extremely interesting custom is connected with meeting Easter's sunrise. It is preserved in one way or another by all Kaldarashi Roma. The essence of the custom is fetching a wheat turf from a nearby field into the house. The wheat turf is called "furrow". This is a square with length of the sides around 50 cm (the length is not obligatory) and it consists of wheat stalks, their roots and soil. It is taken from the nearest wheat field or from just a field or a meadow (if there is no wheat field nearby). The turf has to be taken early in the morning on Easter's day, at sunrise. In the group of the *Grebenari* the turf is taken by the youngest daughter-in-law, in the group of the *Bakardzhii* this is done by the man who is the head of the family.

A red egg, money, a bottle of wine and an iron spoon are placed on the furrow (the spoon - with one end on the doorstep of the house, the other - on the furrow). Exactly at sunrise the eldest man in the family gives Eucharist: each member of the family steps on the spoon ("to be healthy like the iron during this year"), drinks a gulp of wine, takes the Eucharist from the eldest man, crosses himself/herself and says: "Christ has risen!"

The ritual with the furrow is performed for health and fertility. It symbolizes spring regeneration of nature by combining fresh green stalks of wheat and the red egg and the red wine - the blood of the resurrecting Christ.



The feast itself. Easter is probably the only feast when going to church is obligatory (at least for Kaldarashi Roma) and this is the essence of the feast. Other Romani groups in Bulgaria celebrate the feast within their families. Visiting relatives and friends and exchanging eggs is another important element of Easter. On Easter the table shall be rich, with poultry meat (usually turkey) and ritual bread "*kulak*".

As we mentioned above for Kaldarashi Roma Easter is markedly religious holiday. This is less applicable for other Christian Roma groups in Bulgaria (Rudari and Dasikane Roma) and is not valid for Muslim Roma , where the religious layer of Easter celebration is missing for obvious reasons. But the holiday is connected with the joy of the coming spring and the hope for fruitfulness and fertility; it is yet another way to ask for them.

ST. GEORGE'S DAY (ERDELEZ):

St. George's Day is the biggest feast for Roma in Bulgaria. It is celebrated by all Romani groups (with the only exception of **Horahane Roma** with strong Turkish self-consciousness, who have celebrated it until recently) and for all of them St. George's Day is the major holiday, including Muslim Roma.

Usually the Kaldarashi and Rudari Roma call the feast "St. George" or "St. George's Day", the Yerlii call it "Herdelez", "Hadarlez" or "Erdelez." It is celebrated for three days. For some Roma these days are 4th, 5th and 6th May; for other the dates are 5th, 6th and 7th May; for others - 6th, 7th and 8th May.

The celebration of St. George's Day is related to the belief that St. George is Roma ' savior (just like St. Basil) and to the legend that the dragon of an evil king started to eat Romani people, but St. George killed him. Moreover Erdelez was celebrated also as the beginning of spring, of real warm weather, therefore, the whole ritual is full of spring symbolic. The celebration of St. George's Day is different not only among various Romani groups, but it also varies among representatives of one and the same group living on different places. Despite the differences, several common elements are not difficult to be pointed out:

Preparation for the holiday: the most important element in the preparation is buying the lamb. The common belief is that the lamb for the offering has to spend the night in the house; therefore, it is bought on 4th or 5th May the latest. Some groups start



the celebrations with the lamb entering the house. Then the gates are decorated with blossoming branches - usually pear-tree or willow and a wreath and a candle are put on the lamb's head, then the incense "for health" is done. Other Romani groups also practice the decorating of their houses with blossoming branches on 5th May, but they do the placing of the wreath with the candle and the incensing in the morning of 6th May.

The Burgudjii start the preparation since Easter with the colouring of the first egg and the preparation of the special St. George's Day's candle. As already mentioned above, the first red Easter egg is preserved and on St. George's Day it is placed in the mouth of the roasted lamb. At the same time a special candle with a red thread is made on the Passionate Sunday (before the Resurrection). It is lighted for a while on the Easter's eve and then put aside. Its next lighting is in the evening of 5th May and it is let to burn out completely on 6th May before the lamb is slaughtered.

Many Roma have adopted the custom to pick nettle in the evening of 5th May for each family member and hang it under the roof-tiles. By the fading away of the nettle they predict the year for each person: a jolly or a sad one.

There was a custom (which is to a great extent lost now) to have a bath in the evening of 5th May in water with herbs and plants: St. George's flower, nettle, burr, etc. It is not difficult to see in this custom the ritual purifying before the feast, spring symbolism and the hope of chasing away the diseases and being healthy through the year.

Walking "on green": the groups of Romani musicians, the **Basket-makers** from Shumen and most of the Muslim Roma (irrespectively whether they are called Horohane Roma or Millet) practice the custom to walk "on green" on the eve of St. George's Day. All Roma go to the forest, light fires and have fun during the whole night. In the morning they go home bringing blossoming branches ("green") to decorate the doors of the houses.

Ritual slaughtering of the lamb: Most of the Roma do the slaughtering of the lamb-offering is extremely solemn. It is usually done in the morning of 6th May. The Kaldarashi had the tradition to slaughter a lamb for each boy in the house. Today due to economic difficulties this custom is almost abandoned, although some families still observe it. The tradition for the other Roma groups is to slaughter one lamb in each house.

The lamb is decorated before being slaughtered. A wreath of St. George's flower, wheat, cranesbill and spring flowers (for example the **Kaldarashi**) or blossoming twigs and willow are put on the lamb's head. Somewhere the lamb is additionally decorated with red paint and necklaces. The purpose of this decoration is to show the wealth of the coming spring and to serve as a pray for fertility and fruitfulness.

One or two candles are put on the wreath and they are lighted before the lamb is slaughtered. The Burgudžii from Gorna Oryahovitza this candle is specially prepared on the Passionate Saturday and it is decorated with red thread, nettle and grass, which we mentioned above. While the candle(-s) is burning, the lamb is incensed and blessed. This custom is still well preserved among **Kaldarashi and the** other Romani groups have rather abandoned it, although they still keep the memory about it.

A custom typical for the Burgudžii is giving salt to the lamb. This way they predict the year - if the lamb eats much salt the year will be good and vice versa.

After this they do to the slaughtering. For the **Kaldarashi** it is done by the oldest man in the family – the head of the family. Even if he is too old and weak, he just slaughters the lamb and gives it to his sons to take out his skin and roast it.

They never let the blood of the lamb to flow into the ground. It is collected and together with the internal organs and the bones they are thrown into the river on 7th May. This is done "for people's luck throughout the year" and "the blood not to go into a dirty place". **A red dot** with the blood of the lamb **is** made on the children's foreheads. This is done "for health".

The lamb is not cut to pieces. It is roasted whole on **cheverme** (barbecue) or in a large baking dish, the inside is sewed and thus also roasted. For the Kaldarashi the tradition is that the head of the family washes the barbecue spit with water from a special tin-plated copper with cranesbill and wheat stalks in it.

The table for the St. George's Day: Some Roma (certain families from the **Grebenari** from Dryanovo) prepare a special table for St. George's Day – it is obligatory round, made in a way that "there is no nail in it". The reason for discarding nails is because iron gets rusty: "We put the lamb, the offering on this table. It is not good to have iron or anything else that gets rusty".

The richly decorated lamb is placed in the middle of the table. A red egg is placed in its mouth (the first egg from Easter), a slice of bread, a banknote (the highest value available), and a golden coin. Some fresh garlic is put near the lamb (to prevent against evil eye and to bring health). It is obligatory to put red wine on the table.

Before the lunch the table is incensed. Then the eldest people in the family – the head of the family and his wife (or his brother) take the ritual bread (the so-called **kulak**), slightly cut it crosswise and pour red wine in the four arm ends of the cross saying: "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit! Amin!" and they break the **kulak** into two, everybody kisses the two pieces, then they break it into two more pieces and everybody kisses them again. After this the head of the family takes a candle, says a prayer and extinguishes the candle in the bottle of wine, putting it three times in the mouth of the bottle and on the fourth he extinguishes it. Thus the table is considered inaugurated and the lunch can start.

This custom is well preserved by the **Kaldarashi**. The other Romani groups preserve just single elements from it.

Another ritual preserved by the **Kaldarashi** and the Burgudžii is to sell the head of the lamb. As mentioned above it is richly decorated. The person on the left of the host considered clockwise takes the head and sells it to the neighbour on his left. The two men hold fresh garlic in their hands. The purchaser tries to steal the head before the deal is over, but the seller hits his hands with the fresh garlic "to chase away the evil thoughts and the evil ghosts". So the head is sold from person to person clockwise, until it reaches back the host. All this is a special game form – no real money given.

Washing and hanging a swing: Usually St. George's Day is connected with a lot of joy and good mood, expressed in various ways. Almost all Romani groups have the custom that the lads go into the river to show that the warm weather has already come and the water is not cold any more. It is also accepted that the lads hang swings for the girls and while swinging them, they ask them about their future marriage, etc.

"Singing to the rings": this custom is shared by all Romani groups on St. George's Day. Its essence is predicting (half-seriously, half-jokingly) the future marriage of the young girls. It is usually performed in the evening of 5th May and in the morning of 6th May.

In the evening before St. George's Day all unmarried girls gather and each girl drops a ring or another sign (bracelet or a necklace) in a bucket of water. Then they put cranesbill in the water and leave to bucket to "spend the night" under a rose bush. For the Roma musicians the gathering of the rings is performed very solemnly - with music.

In the early morning of St. George's Day, before sunrise, the girls gather again at the bucket. The one, who sings best, covers her face with a veil not to see anything and starts singing different songs, succeeding jolly and sad songs. While singing she takes out a ring from the bucket. It is believed, that if she takes out a ring during a jolly song, the girl's marriage will be happy and vice versa.

RAMAZAN BAYRAM AND KURBAN BAYRAM: These two mainly Muslim holidays are celebrated by Romani Muslims. They are especially richly celebrated by Turkish-speaking gypsies - Millets.

Before the first Bayram - Ramazan Bayram (or Sheker Bayram) the Islamic tradition requires a 30-day fast. The Roma rarely do this long fast. The Islamic fast is manifested in ritual food denial during the day – from sunrise to sunset administration of any food or drinks, sexual contacts etc. are prohibited. The day of a Muslim Roma during the Ramazan goes the following way: early getting up at 6 o'clock, breakfast and at sunrise the fast begins. During the day they pray 5 times- in the morning after the breakfast, about 10 o'clock a.m., about 3 o'clock p.m., about 5 o'clock p.m. and before going to bed. The fast ends after sunset, when these, keeping the fast, drink water three times.

The Islamic fasts aim at purifying the soul of the believer, preparing him/her to meet Ramazan Bayram revived. Due to the duration of the fast – a whole month, often the believer skips a day or two. They catch up on the fast before the second Bayram.

On the eve of Ramazan Bayram (the so-called Arife) the women of some Romani groups henna their hands. They believe that at that very night the souls of the dead return to their native homes.

Men celebrate Bayram by going to the mosque, then the holiday table is arranged – it is rich in sweets – Turkish delight, khalva, etc. On this day people ask their relatives, friends and neighbours for forgiveness. Some Roma have a custom similar to Survaki on

St. Basil's Day. In the morning of Ramazan Bayram children gather in small groups and go from house to house. They greet the host with the holiday and wish him health and luck. He treats them with candies and sweets.

The celebration of Kurban Bayram is similar, but for this holiday a ram shall be slaughtered (the other name of the holiday is Koch-Bayram, i.e. ram-Bayram) or a lamb. This is done because according to the Islamic legend (which partially repeats the Jewish and the Christian ones) Ibrahim (Avraam) had to sacrifice his only son Ismail. In this way Allah wanted to check his faith. Although Ibrahim grieved for his only son, he agreed because his faith was strong and the moment he was about to do the sacrifice, an angel flew down from the sky and gave him a ram. Allah forbid human sacrifice and ordered on this day people to slaughter an animal for the offering.

Romani Muslims prepare for Kurban Bayram a week earlier. If they do not have a ram, they buy one. The selected animal shall not have any defects – it shall not be lame, blind or crippled. The Roma do not bargain about the price of the sacrificial animal but accept the price offered by its owner. Then they take the ram home. This shall be done at least a day before the holiday, because the sacrificial animal shall spend the night at home, so that the luck doesn't run away.

Before being slaughtered, the ram has to be hennaed and decorated. His three legs are tied and some Roma put a towel on his eyes – not to become afraid by death. Then a pray is read. Most Roma do not understand what it says as it is in Arabic language, but they think that it is for health and fertility.

Some time ago the meat of the slaughtered animal was divided into three equal parts – one was used for the table dishes, so that all relatives, friends and guests are well feasted. The second was left for the family and the last was given to the poor people. This custom is observed by some Roma, Turkish and Bulgarians professing Islam even nowadays.

On this day the most prestigious for the Muslims is to give alms to the poor. Besides meat from the sacrificial animal, richer Roma give clothes and shoes to the poorer to be happy during the holiday.

And while the celebration of Bango Vassilii, Ihtimya, Patrangi and Erdelez demonstrates the proximity between Romani and Bulgarian holiday traditions, the

celebration of the two Bayrams come to show us that such proximity exists even to the holiday traditions of the Muslim ethnoses living in Bulgaria - Turkish, Bulgarians professing Islam, etc. Most of the elements in the festive ritual are Islamic, perceived through the prism of Romani spirituality.

WEDDING CUSTOMS

The wedding customs of the Roma in Bulgaria reveal the richness and the vast diversity in the world of Bulgaria Roma . Very often these customs are different for the different groups. Sometimes even Roma from one and the same group but living in different villages have differences for some elements of the wedding ritual. There are also differences between the wedding customs of the Roma in the past and nowadays. But they are all alike, because they expose the vivid and full of energy Romani spirit.

THE DECISION FOR THE WEDDING

In the past – until the 60s of the XX century all Roma groups had the custom that the parents decided whom their child would marry. It happened sometimes that even the young couple did not know each other, but the parents' word was enough for the new family to be created. Today the custom that the parents create the family of their children and the custom that the children marry at the age of 14-15 is to be observed only by a few of the Roma – Kaldarashi, Burgudjii, Thracian Kalaidjii and some Romani Muslims (Horahane Roma and Millet). For the other Roma these customs are already past. And for the Bulgarians and the Bulgarian Turks the above mentioned customs have extinguished long time ago.

The initiative to create a new family came from the boy's parents. When they liked a girl as suitable for their son, they went to her parents to ask for her hand. The Roma valued several things in the young girl. First, she was supposed to have good household skills: to work hard, to cook well and to keep the house clean and tidy, to know how to look after small children. That is why even from the early age her parents cultivated these qualities in their daughters. Romani girls at the age of 11-12 knew how to knead and bake bread, how to look after their younger brothers and sisters, how to cook and clean when their parents are not at home. Some Romani groups added to these qualities also professional skills in the traditional craft. For example Kopanari insisted on the young



girl's skill to be able to make wooden spoons and spindles as well as to know how to sell them at a profit.

Other quality, which was highly praised in the Romani girl, was her respectful attitude towards her parents and older people in general. This was a guarantee that the girl would treat her parents-in-law with not less respect. The Roma insisted also on the beauty of their future daughter-in-law. Quite often they were ready to pay extremely high dowry (babaak) for a beautiful daughter-in-law.

The Roma insisted especially on the virginity of the girl. It was supposed to be preserved for the husband during the first wedding night. If not, the parents might not ask the girl's hand or might return her back to her parents. And her name was disgraced forever.

The girl's qualities considered valuable were her hard working and skills in the traditional craft. Even from the earliest age the boys helped their fathers and that is why at the age of 13-14 a young Roma was able to work absolutely independently.

The girl's parents insisted on something else – the name of the boy and his family had to be respected. No father would want to send his daughter to a family of spendthrift and drunkards.

MATCHMAKING

In the past one of the obligatory and most respected wedding customs of the Roma was the matchmaking. In some groups it is still preserved even nowadays. After the boy's parents like a girl for a daughter-in-law, they went to her parents' home to ask for their permission. Of course, they send a secret messenger first. He/she was supposed to understand one single thing – whether the girl's parents consider her ready for marriage and whether they are ready to accept guests for matchmaking.

If the girl's father refuses, he does it with polite words and tells no neighbour or relative. This is done to preserve the honour of the boy's father. If he agrees, he prepares for the guests – in-laws to visit them on the chosen day.

The boy's parents arrive with a lot of gifts for the whole family of the future bride. They often bring richly decorated bottle of Rakia. Tied to it is a beautiful red or colourful kerchief – a symbol for the asking of a bride. Next to the kerchief a golden coin is also tied – this is a sign that the father –in-law is ready to pay dowry for the bride. A colourful bunch or a flower are put at the neck of the bottle– this symbolizes that the father-in-law

and the mother-in-law want to show that their future daughter-in-law is as beautiful as the most beautiful flower. The words, with which (the Kaldarashi for example) the guests address the host show respect towards him, his family and his daughter: **“Avilyam katka ande tumaro vilaetu! Ashundyam ka kate namerilpe o chiriklo, kairo dasles de kadaki bursh! Kate li suli ili nai? – We came here into your region! We’ve heard that the turtle-dove we’ve been looking for many years is here. Is she here or not?”**

The girl prepares coffee, Turkish delight and other sweets for the guests. In the past she was supposed to knead and bake bread so that the father-in-law and the mother-in-law could see what their future daughter-in-law could do. According to the Rudari tradition the girl had to make wooden objects– spindles, spoons, bowls and to show how she was going to sell them.

After the parents are convinced in the girl’s skills, they discuss with her parents when, where and under what conditions the engagement and the wedding will take place. The first thing the parents negotiate is the dowry which has to be given for the bride. In the past Roma had the custom (and at many places it still exists) that the boy’s parents pay the dowry to the girl. This dowry is called **"babaak"**, "baba-aka" or "baba-haka". The babaak is paid to the girl’s father, because he has raised and brought up his daughter, and now she is going to another house.

For the different Romani groups the babaak differed in quantity and form. For Rudari and the Romani Muslims it was mainly clothes and goods, and an amount of money was added to them. Today most of the Rudari and Romani Muslims do not pay babaak or it is only in goods (wine, Rakia, blankets, etc.). For Kaldarashi, the Thracian Kalaidjii and the Burgudžii the dowry was (and still is) mainly golden coins and money, and it was considered prestigious paying as high a price as possible. These Romani groups continue their tradition to pay the dowry for the bride even nowadays.

For most of the Roma the babaak was related to the virginity – i.e. the amount was paid only if the bride was a virgin and the bridegroom is her first man in life. If this condition wasn’t fulfilled, the girl’s father had to return half or even the whole amount of money. This was also clarified during the in-laws’ visit. Other things that were clarified were the dates for engagement and wedding. The in-laws negotiated even the slightest details, like the type of music which will be played, who the cooks will be, etc.

THE ENGAGEMENT (THE NISHAN)

Soon after the matchmaking an engagement (nishan) was arranged so that everybody understands that a new family is created. For many Roma (for example most of the Yerlii, irrespectively whether Muslims or Christians, as well as some Rudari) the engagement is more important even than the wedding, because after it the new couple starts living together.

The “Nishan” continues from 1 to 3 days. The bridegroom and his parents go with music to take the bride from her parents’ home. There, her female friends prepare her – they dress her, put make-up on her face, and for the Romani Muslims they modify her eyebrows making them thinner (for the first time in her life) and they also make “sakuz”. The aim is that the bride transforms from a girl into a grown-up maid. The clothes which the bride puts on for the nishan are usually made of expensive material. For the Roma Muslims they are traditional – shalwars and a blouse.

For most of the Yerlii and Rudari the first wedding night is a must. It is a proof for the girl’s honour. And the proof has to be taken out – this was the sheet from the first wedding night. After showing it the general spree starts – the music plays, the guests sing and dance and red, sweetened Rakia is drunk. The Rudari also tear off the head of a rooster and spray the walls of the house with its blood, and all present people – irrespectively whether men or women – put on lipstick.

For Kaldarashi as well as other Roma , these customs are observed during the last day of the wedding. The engagement for these Roma is not obligatory. On this day the boy’s parents gift to their daughter-in-law a golden coin and earrings, so that everybody knows that she is going to marry.

THE EVENING BEFORE THE WEDDING

Years ago the Romani weddings continued for a whole week – from Monday to Friday, even to Sunday. Today Roma have shorter weddings – they usually last three days: Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

In Roma tradition, just as it is in the Bulgarian and the Turkish ones, the evening before the wedding is very important and a number of rituals have to be implemented. It is devoted to the girl. In that evening the girl separates with her maid life and her family



home. On the next day she is going to create her own family, go to a new house and her life will change forever.

For Romani Muslims (Horahane Roma and Millet) the evening before the wedding is called **kana-gedzhesi** – the evening of the henna. As the name shows, the central ritual in this evening (this is usually the Friday evening) is the henna dying of the future bride.

The custom of henna dying is common for many Muslim peoples. It is related with the belief that the saint Mariam (Mother Mary) was born with a red nishan (symbol) on her hands and hair. That is why each girl has to henna herself before wedding as a symbol of honour and purity.

Usually the hennaing is done by the godmother, but only in case that she has never divorced. Otherwise – according to the Romani belief – the bride might divorce after some time.

The henna dying starts with the palms of the future bride. The godmother puts coins on the hennaed palms of the bride and ties them, so that the marks of the coins are visible. Then she put an odd number of burning candles between the tied palms – one, three, five or seven. This is done to show that the maid has lit up so far her father's home. The Roma believe that the burning candles will light the bride's way from now on till her oldest age, and in this way there will always be light and happiness in her life.

The burning candles are not put out. As soon as the flame gets closer to her palms, the bride puts them in a bowl of flour. Then the godmother dyes the girl's hair with henna. During the whole time the future bride has to keep silence. Her friends try jokingly to make her speak, tease her with jolly words, but she has to keep silence.

After the end of the hennaing, the godmother veils the girl with a red veil and together with the bridegroom she takes them to the yard. There the music plays a traditional song, which for many Romani Muslims is in Turkish language. In the yard the wedding guests greet the couple. This happens in the following way: their friends spread a red (or blue) veil over them which is a symbol of honour and purity. The new couple stands under the veil. All wedding guests pass by them, wish them something and decorate them with money. If the guests are older, the bride and the bridegroom kiss their hands as a sign of respect.

Christian Roma do **braiding** of the maid instead of hennaing. In the Friday evening the girl's female friends come to her father's house. The godmother also comes and braids the long girl's hair. Before then the girl was wearing her hair free, but since that day on she has to braid her hair. At that time the girl's friends knead the bread for the feast, singing songs to them. Then a party with a lot of music and joy starts.

The Rudari have a custom in the evening before the wedding, called **fidiles**. The boy's parents come to the bride's home to show their respect towards her and her parents. The guests have to be obligatory received with coffee. The party starts and during the whole evening the boy's parents have to fulfil all wishes of the girl's parents. They are often asked to dance on the table, to dance in a large baking dish, etc. This is done to check whether they really want their future daughter-in-law.

THE WEDDING

On Saturday morning the real wedding starts. Until noon the guests of the wedding are divided into two– the boy's relatives prepare at his home, and all the girl's kin is in her father's home to support the bride's worth sending off. A number of rituals are implemented in both houses.

At the boy's home comes a barber, who shaves solemnly the bridegroom. This is to show everybody that he is a grown-up person - not a child, but a man to get married. During the shaving the clarinet player plays old sad melody. The bridegroom shall not cry, because in this way all the grief will remain away in his life.

Then the bridegroom, the godfather and the relatives leave to the bride's home. Walking first is a younger brother or a cousin of the bridegroom (he has to be obligatory unmarried), who carries the wedding flag. It is material with two stripes – white and red and on the top of the flag there is a stuck apple and a bunch of flowers. The red material symbolizes the purity of the girl and the white – the purity of the boy. The two tied together stripes shows to everybody that a new family is to be created. The apple on the flag symbolizes the fertility and is a wish for many children and for wealth.

At that time the girl is being veiled at her home. Early in the morning a cousin of hers goes to a nearby well to fetch water, with which the girl washes her face. While filling in the water, the lad wishes: "As long the rope in the well is, as long and happy the life of the bride and bridegroom may be! May they have many children, money, happiness ..."

After fetching the water the godmother washes the bride's face and veils her. This is done in the following way: an apron is tied around the bride's waist (the apron has to be loose and free, so that the veil can go through it). The godmother passes the veil three times through the apron and over the head of the bride, saying blessing and wishing the young family happiness and prosperity.

When the procession with the bridegroom comes, the relatives of the bride close the doors. They want money to open them. Then the bridegroom has to buy the bride's shoe, her handbag and some other things. All this happens with a lot of jokes, music, round dances and belly dances.

On the wedding day the bride is dressed in a white wedding dress– as is the clothing of the bride in a Bulgarian wedding. Some Muslim Roma still keep even nowadays the traditional wedding clothing "**don anteri**" – shalwars and a white shirt (or more likely a blouse). But it is worn during the engagement or in the evening before the wedding. The Kaldarashi pay special attention to the clothes which the bride wears – they have to be new, beautiful, expensive and on each day she has to wear different clothes. But even for them the obligatory bride clothing on the wedding day is a white wedding dress.

Then the procession takes the bride from the home to the bridegroom's home. The moment, in which the young family gets out of the bride's home, the traditional Bulgarian song "A fir-tree is bending, bending down!" is being played.

Before leaving the bride takes in her hands a young child and round bread, then she kicks a copper of water and cranesbill. This is done so that the life of the young family is full of children, they always have bread on their table and their life goes smoothly.

In the past symbolic obstacles were placed along the way from the bride's home to the bridegroom's home, the bride's relatives arranged "ambushes" and required ransom to leave the procession go on its way. This was done because the road symbolized the growing up of the children, their transformation into adults, and each growth is accompanied by obstacles and difficulties.

The father-in-law and the mother-in-law go out to the entrance of the boy's home. They put bread and honey in the mouths of the couple. Many Muslim Roma preserve the tradition according to which the bride shall spread some honey or sweetened water on the door of her new home– so that the life of the couple in the new home is sweet.

WEDDING PARTY

After meeting the bride to her new home the wedding party starts. In the past (sometimes even nowadays) it was done outdoors - on the meadow near the Romani neighbourhood or in the street. For this purpose large tents for 200-300 people were set up. Today is more common to celebrate weddings in a restaurant.

Important part of the wedding party for the Romani people is the band. For larger weddings even two bands may be hired, but the music obligatory shall not stop. Because tens, even hundreds of relatives, friends or just residents of the neighbourhood come to the wedding, and each person has his own taste, it is important that the band plays various music to satisfy everybody's wish. It is a well-known rule that the Roma wedding depends a lot on the music- if the music is good, the wedding is to be remembered for years on. The Roma - irrespectively whether poor or rich- like to have fun from the bottom of their hearts, to pour their souls in songs and music that is why the wedding bands are so respected.

During the wedding party special attention is paid to the table where the bride's parents sit at. It shall have everything they want - this is a sign for high respect towards them. For some Roma (for example the **Kaldarashi**) during the first day of the wedding the newly-married couple also stays behind the table of the girl's parents. During the party the bride and the bridegroom are tied to each other by means of a red ribbon.

For many Roma an important moment in the wedding is the gifting. All guests have to gift something to the new couple. On one hand it is a sign of respect towards them. On the other - the new family needs a lot of things to start a normal life. Usually the Roma gift money. It is considered that even if a Roma is poor, he or she has to give as much money as possible on the wedding of his/her relative or friend.

Quite solemn is the gifting of Kaldarashi Roma . They do it as a way of mutual aid and guarantee for keeping the family ties. The band stands next to the gifting person, plays the song he/she wants and gives him the floor. The person says his wishes to the new couple and announces what he/she gifts. The Kaldarashi endow as much money as possible and in this way the new family gathers a large amount. According to the tradition of this Romani group, when the time comes, the new couple has to attend the

wedding of the person who gifted them (or his son) and as a sign of gratitude and respect to gift him more than what they were gifted.

On a Roma wedding – like the Bulgarian ones – the most often wish to the newly married couple is for many children. For the Romani people the most important thing are the children. They are more important than money, society position and everything else. Roma consider the lack of children the biggest misfortune in life.

The wedding party continues during the whole day. For Kaldarashi and some other Roma the first wedding night of the bride and the bridegroom is on Saturday night. They do then the ritual “*rakiinita*”, which the other Roma do on the engagement (“*nishan*”).

ROMANIA

The Baptism

The child can be baptized when he/she is six weeks old. The baptism ritual of the Roma people respects mostly the rules of the Orthodox religion. In some communities only two godmothers are chosen to baptise the baby; recently men are also allowed to become godfathers, but this custom is not practiced very often.¹⁷ After the church ceremony, relatives and friends of the parents are invited for a celebration, where they donate money and other gifts for the newborn.

The wedding

The wedding takes place at a young age. At 15 years old the family is already established having a “pillar for the old age”. In traditional communities the boy is taught from an early age by his father a craft. The girl is taught from an early age to sew, to wash, to cook. The virgins, the young girls called “*seiabarea*” differ from married women because they never have the head covered with a cloth called “*batic*” (meaning head-kerchief) no matter what the weather is and they always have their hair combed in three plaits: two of them by the cheeks, named “*Tici*” and one on the back named “*Pori*”. The two plaits by the cheeks have also silver coins. The back plait has all sorts of shining stones.

Unlike “*Seiabarea*” married women have only two plaits tightly drawn by the cheeks with twists towards the face and the plaits called “*Ciunr*” have many silver or sometimes

¹⁷ Tradition in the community of Petelea, Mures county

even gold coins. Married women always wear on their head the head-kerchief and are not allowed to show themselves otherwise. The symbol of the married woman is the head-kerchief.

The Agreement

First, the boy's parents send a messenger with all sorts of gifts to the girl's parents. Usually they go with wine and money. The wedding day is settled, then the boy's parents must come to fulfill the engagement of the girl. In the established day the boy's parents come accompanied by a large group of all their relatives. All the people get together around the leader, the "*Bulibasha*". The boy who is to be engaged is not allowed to come so he stays at home. Within the Roma people community there are some strict rules as far as marriage is concerned:

- if the father of the bride is a poor man, he has the right to ask money for his daughter. The amount of money depends on the girl's beauty. If he doesn't get the price he asked, then he has the right to cancel the wedding.
- if the father of the bride is rich, he is not allowed to ask for money from his future "*hanamik*";
- rich people always wed their children in rich families;
- a poor man will never ask for "*bori*" (daughter in law) from a rich man;
- the rich man has the right to ask a "*bori*" from a poor man, but only if the girl is very beautiful;

The future "*hanamiks*" (in-laws) discuss a lot before the settlement of the engagement in order to agree on the girl's dowry.

The Engagement

The engagement is scheduled for a certain day when the entire community is invited. Men go with the two in-laws ("*hanamiks*") to buy the pigs and the wine. Usually, at an engagement the meat is fried on grills and "*sarmale*" (meat rolled in cabbage leaves) are cooked. When the food is ready, the tables are laid beautifully. The leader "*Bulibasha*" has his place at the head of the table. The best food is always placed in front of him. Women are forbidden to sit at the table with men. They usually eat where they cannot be seen by men.

The music starts and the boy's mother, the future "*hanamika*" (the mother in law) must dress her daughter in law with a new suit, shoes; she puts a gold coin at the girl's neck, a ring on her finger. When fully dressed she brings the girl in the middle of the people dancing and kisses her. The girl must dance with everyone.

The Wedding day

On the day of the wedding, two women, one from the groom's side and one from the bride's side, dress the bride in the white gown. A long time ago the bride was dressed in red clothes and she had a white veil with a crown on her head. The woman dressing the bride must follow some strict rules: she must be married only once, having been a virgin at her wedding, she must have children and harmony in her family, she must be rich and hard working. A bride will never be dressed by a woman that has been married twice or whose husband has been married before.

When she is ready her mother and the boy's mother are sent for. The bride's mother usually cries and the boy's mother starts singing a specific song by which the bride says a sort of good bye to all her dear things. In Roma weddings the music must sing without interruption from morning until late in the night. During the dance sometimes there is a little scandal, usually due to jealousy.

The rules for a married woman in traditional Roma communities

She is not allowed to step in front of a man, unless he turns his face. There could be big trouble if she by carelessness were to step in front of a man. She must not step over an object in front of her. If an object is placed in front of her, she must pick it up and put it in another place and only afterwards she may step. She must always wake up before her parents-in-law, she must bring them water and she must light the fire if it is cold.

She must never sit in front of her father-in-law or her husband, she must always be humble. When she is sitting, and a man enters, she must rise in front of that man and stand straight. He must speak only when asked by a man. She must never talk to a man, if no one else is present.¹⁸

The funeral

¹⁸ <http://www.icfoundation.ro/traditions.html>

In case of need Roma people are very united, even if other times they are enemies. If death occurs, during the funeral the members of the community show solidarity. In the region of Mureş county for respect, men usually do not shave and wear beards for six weeks.

The corps is set in the most beautiful room of the house. If in the room there are mirrors these are covered, because it is believed that if the dead person sees itself in the mirror, than he/she will reflect another death in the family. After the last service has been made, all the members of the family leave the house backwards/by back, so that they take all the evil from the house together with the dead person.¹⁹

The Onion calendar

The yearly weather is forseen by the elder women in the community through the onion calendar. The calendar is made in on January the 1st the following way: an onion is cut in two pieces, 12 leaves are chosen, these are put in a safe place and then salt is put in the leaves. After a few days, the calendar will show which months will be rainy and which will be more dry.

Saint John's Day

This custom is taken from the culture of Germans. Young families, couples dress up in different costumes, some beautiful, some ugly and on the 7th of January they go out on the streets of the settelment in order to banish the evil spirtis.

Watering grils

The custom of watering girls is related to the holyday of Easter. On the second day of Easter, the boys visit girls in their homes, and wet them with water (in older times), these days instead of water the boys use parfumes, and on the third day of the holyday, the roles will be inversed and so the girls will wet the boys. In other villages, communities, the boys will adorn the fances of the girls with pine branches, filled with painted egg shells and different colored creped paper. The second day, these boys will go to the girls and water them with parfumes. The gesture of the boys is rewarded by the girls with beautifully painted eggs. The first person who will water the women in the

¹⁹ These customs are practiced in Mures county, in the village of Brateiu.

household has to be the grandfather and he does not use perfume, only water from the fountain.²⁰

Midsummer's Day

This day is celebrated on the 24th of June every year. The children and young people of the community pick yellow flowers with long stems, called midsummer's day flowers from the fields and they braid a circlet from them. Each member of the family tucks their circlet on the roof of the house. Those circlets that stayed on the roof meant that the members of that family will have a long and happy life, while those persons's circlets that fell off the roofs were sad, because this meant that their lives will be shorter.²¹

The above mentioned customs are celebrated along with the ethnic majority of the settlements. Many traditions which disappeared from the repertoire of the other ethnic groups, like Romanians or Hungarians, are still practiced by the community of Roma in the village.

Roma calendar of other events in Romania further includes:

- January 14 – Bango Vasili, the Roma New year
- April 8 - International Roma Day
- September 8 - National Roma Day
- Events shared with the majority and other minorities:
- January 7 – Saint John's Day - young families, couples dress up in different costumes, some beautiful, some ugly and they go out on the streets of the settlement in order to banish the evil spirits.
- Easter Day

"Some of the traditional Roma communities (such as the Gabors and Kaldarashi Roma) are still wearing their traditional clothes.

LITHUANIA

²⁰ These customs are mainly practiced by Roma communities in the region of Transylvania.

²¹ Romeo Soare, Ioan Aldea „Studiu monografic Bagaciu”, Editura Ambasador, 2007.

Roma Community in Lithuania because of its small size absorbed traditional celebrations of mainstreaming society. There are no special dates of Roma calendar – Catholics celebrate Christmas and Easter with Lithuanians and Poles, Orthodox – with Russians. There is All Saints Day (All Souls' Day) on the 1st of November which is worshiped by all dwellers of Lithuania. Kotliary particularly honor the second day of Orthodox Christmas or Easter as a Day of Godparents – they use to pay a visit to them.

NORWAY

Family is important and family ties are strong for Romani and Roma people. They take care of one another and will assist one another financially when needed. Taters tell how families travelled and camped together and left secret signs in the dust or the snow along the road in order for other Taters to know where they had gone and join them.

The Rom mostly marry within their group or with Roma people from Europe, however intermarriages do exist. Lidén and Engebrigtsen (2011) writes that the most common intermarriage is with other Roma groups like the Norwegian Romani (Taters/Travellers) and groups in Germany, Belgium and Netherlands. According to Lidén and Engebrigtsen (2011), there have also been many situations where young people wanting to marry run away together without their parent's consent. This has caused trouble in the involved families, but normally the negotiations afterwards leads to an agreement of marriage. (Lidén and Engebrigtsen: 2011).

PORTUGAL

The calendar of events and feasts of Portugese Roma include the National Day of Gypsies on June 24, celebrated by the Obra Nacional da Pastoral dos Ciganos as well as other NGOs, St. John the Baptist Day, more recently well documented and encouraged by the media, churches and various state institutions including schools.

Roma Wedding

The importance of virginity

According to tradition Rima women should all go virgins to their marriage (Lopes: 2008). The Roma tradition, also known as Roma-Law, is required from a Roma woman

get married at the wedding ceremony, being married only once and being faithful to her husband (Nunes: 1996).

The wedding ceremony never happened in the tent (or house) of the bride, because the wedding party usually is done at the place of residence of the fiancé's family (Nunes, 1996). It is a common practice among Roma, as part of their tradition, the existence of arranged marriages by parents of spouses, that this ritual is called the "pediment". According to Lopes (2008, p. 71), the request is usually taken by the "father or an uncle of the boy suitor, to whom he has confided an interest in certain girl." Usually the request is made by the father and may, in some cases, even be formalized (more often the case when children are newly born or even when unborn) by an uncle or even for some women (eg. in the case of the father having died), but always belongs to the family of the male suitor. This practice is "commitment," in order to ensure the marriage of their sons and daughters with someone they know. This gives to the parents an assurance about the future of his descendants who, through this practice, do not take the "risk" to remain unmarried

According to Mendes (2005:139) the practice of promised marriages is part of a strategy of defending identity that keeps allowing inbreeding and also strengthens the bonds of kinship ethnic and cultural homogeneity of the group.



EARLY MARRIAGES IN ROMA COMMUNITY IN BULGARIA: DATA AND STATISTICS

Early marriages in the Roma community (the essence is actually cohabitation, family creation and not literally about “marriage”, because the legal act of marriage is not present or in most cases even not possible) is a topic, which is currently attracting the attention of the so called “general public” and “public opinion”. On the one hand, early marriages are often combined with “arranged marriages” and even “forced marriages”: in some case it is exactly the parents who initiate („arrange”) this form of cohabitation. Quite frequently this leads to “dropping out”, i.e. to early school leaving, which, on the other side, is related to limitation of the further appropriate social realization of the person. The early marriages are usually followed by “early births”, because – at least with the traditional Roma families, as well as the marginalized ones) the married woman is expected to prove that she can give birth: she is highly appreciated as the continuer of the family and if she cannot fulfil this role, she has to bear one of the heaviest stigmas. Not rarely early marriages are accompanied by different forms of domestic violence, divorces, young mothers’ diseases, etc. Therefore as a whole, we can see a whole series of negative phenomena, to which any European society is (or at least should be) painfully sensitive. On the other hand, early Roma marriages seem curious, exotic and inexplicable: a remnant of the “non-European marriage model” (typical for the people to the east of the Trieste – St. Petersburg line, according to John Hajnal). This “exotic phenomenon” is often related to the definite stigmatization of the whole Roma community as a backward and unable for development child generator, accompanied by the even more definite forgetting that, not so long ago, early marriages were typical for the majority of the nations to the east of Trieste – St. Petersburg line (and a little earlier – for the rest of the European nations), and by neglecting the fact that not all Roma groups and families have early marriages. As a result of the above, the public interest towards early Roma marriages in Eastern European countries (as well as the rest of the countries where Roma people live) is sustainably high. This is usually related with the generation of many myths and stereotypes (buying and selling of young Roma girls, common practice of giving birth at 12-year age etc.): they often result from the lack of

information and the lack of research in this area; as well as by the acute lack of an adequate discussion (including representatives of Roma communities). But in all cases these myths and stereotypes do not help for the solution of the problem with early marriages.

The field workers themselves often share most of these stereotypes and prejudice, sometimes they even generate them. This is a serious obstacle, hindering their efficient work in Roma communities and prevents any adequate activities for prevention, as well as the adequate reaction in cases of early marriages. That is why it is important that the question of early marriages in Roma communities is discussed with the field workers so that a way for overcoming stereotypes and prejudice in this aspect is searched for.

STATE OF THE PROBLEM

Types of marriage in Roma communities: At present Romani families are created via four different types of marriage. Three of them are not legally recognized, but have their historical parallels in number of societies, including Roman law as well as the Bulgarian traditional culture until the middle of the 20th century.

- Today the custom of *“bride-buying”* is characteristic mainly for the most conservative Roma groups - the Kaldarashi, Burgudžii and Thracian Kalaidjii, among which it is the main form of marriage. Bride-buying is still seen in some of the subgroups of Horahane, Dasikane and Millet Romas, where it is already in a process of transformation and disappearance.

Although we talk about “bride-buying” and “brides’ market”, the essence of this problem is not actually buying the girl, but rather buying her “honour” – the right of the boy to take her virginity and the right of the boy’s family to associate the future children with their own kin (Pamporov, 2006). That is why the custom of “bride-buying” is closely related to the girl’s virginity – requirement which is still very strong in Roma communities, especially the groups mentioned above. The “ransom for the bride” is not a “price” but dowry given as compensation to the girl’s family for its loss, when she leaves her home to be married. And because amongst ethnic groups with patriarchal social organization the woman belongs to the kin of her father, the compensation has to be paid to that kin; after the wedding the girl becomes part of her husband’s kin, just like

the children who are considered part of the „man’s kin”. This can clearly be observed in Roma groups which have strongly preserved this custom (the above mentioned ones): for example, in case of divorce between the Kaldarashi couple, the child remains with the father’s kin, not the mother’s. The “ransom” is also a sign of gratitude towards the girl’s father who has brought up her in good moral (i.e. she has kept her virginity). This type of dowry is also a kind of guarantee that the girl will be treated with respect in her new home – otherwise she has the right to leave with no dowry given back.

However, the results from a number of ethnographic and sociological studies among Romas in Bulgaria show that the buying of brides has a negative effect in terms of marriage age and early/forced marriages as a whole. In some local communities after the first menstruation the girl is suspended from school in order not to “be deceived”, i.e. to lose her virginity. The fear that the girl could meet a boy and have sexual intercourse before her marriage make the parents marry their daughters at a relatively early age. Since girls at this age are still children and do not know “what is good for them”, the parents choose the marital partner – usually amongst boys, whose parents have also decided that it is time to get them married (Pamporov 2003, Pamporov 2006, Pamporov 2009).

- The custom of “elopement” or “bride-stealing” is another form of marriage, quite often observed in Roma communities. In the common case it is characteristic for these Roma groups, amongst which the custom of buying brides is in process of dying down or has already been overcome. These are the predominant part of the Roma groups and subgroups which live on the territory of whole Bulgaria. With the custom of elopement, the social legitimacy of marriage is achieved only through the consummation of the sexual relationship and a proof for this is the blood from the defloration.

The elopement or bride-stealing is initiated by the lads– in most of the cases it is a result of mutual consent between the two young people, but it is also possible that it is just the lad’s initiative. In the predominant part of the cases the parents are not informed, but when „the proof” is presented, they agree to accept the marriage – due to the preserved requirement for the virginity and the concept that the first sexual contact is equal to marriage. De facto, elopement is also spread in other groups in which bride-buying is a lead model, but there it is more or less an exception.

In these groups the elopement is most commonly related to an attempt to avoid the partner chosen by the parents, which also affects early marriages.

- The third type of traditional marriage for Romas is related with a preliminary engagement – *nishan*.

In this case the payment is rather symbolic (as is the filling of the bride's shoe with money, before her leaving home in the contemporary wedding rituals of all ethnoses in Bulgaria). An important sign, however, is the "nishan" which the boy's family gives (a ring, a bracelet, earrings). With this type of marriages again the parents negotiate the conditions – when the young couple is going to get married, where they are going to live, what the size of the dowry is going to be, etc., but this is usually done after they have discussed it with the young. In many cases it is the young who initiate it – they like each other and then ask their parents to arrange the marriage relation and the nishan.

This type of marriage can be quite often observed with many of the subgroups of Dasikane Roma, Harohane Roma, Millet, as well as some Rudari, for which „bride-buying" has faded away as a tradition. Usually these are the groups which practice „elopement" as well. Just like the previous two types of traditional marriages, this one also has the risk of forced marriage – especially for the girl and, of course, this has a negative effect on the early age for the first marriage, too.

- More and more Roma families are created by the judicially legal *civil marriage*. For groups and families, which are modernized at a higher level, the civil marriage is observed in a degree not less than the one of ethnical Bulgarians. By the way, for almost all Roma groups, after 3-4 years of family life most of the families contract civil marriage.

After 1980 many of the Roma people in Bulgaria contract civil marriage not because of external pressure, but because of the significantly high "wedding loan" granted, which gives them an opportunity for an independent start by buying a house, furniture and a car. The data from the conducted in 1992 and 2001 censuses of the population confirm this.

In each age group of 25–39 years old about 86% of Roma women have contracted civil marriage, while in the age group of 30–39 years old approximately 90% of men have contracted civil marriage, i.e. despite the early factual start of family life in unregistered

cohabitation, a significantly high level of legitimate matrimony, typical for the other ethnic groups in the country is observed in the middle age groups (Pamporov, 2006).

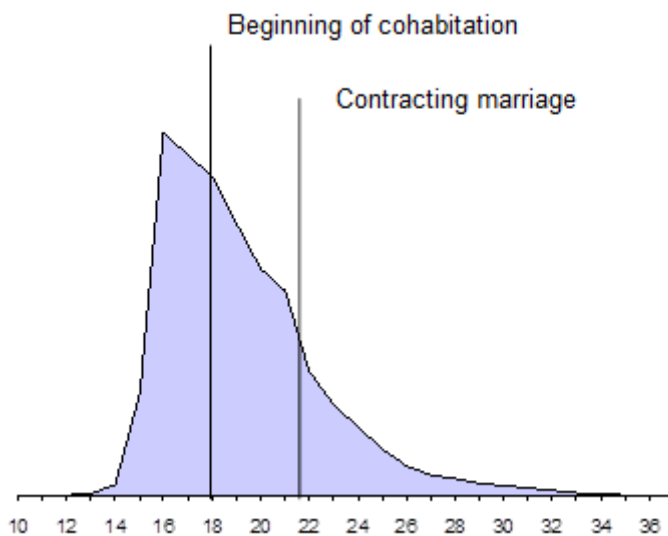
Age for marrying and factors which influence it: A widely spread is the concept that Roma people marry young – at the age of 12-13 and that this is a tradition, which cannot be changed. A national representative research of the readiness for marriage, which Amalipe Centre implemented in 2010 undoubtedly confute this concept. According to the research data, at present, the average age for starting a family life in a Roma community is 18 years and 4 months – 18 years and 8 months. This does not mean that there are no too early marriages– such exist, but more or less they become an exception. In the representative abstract about people over 10, where one person of the household provides information about the rest, the average age to start cohabitation is 18 years and 8 months. The most common age for the beginning of the cohabitation is 17 years, the earliest is 10 years.²² At the age of 16 20% of the Roma people already live in cohabitation as a family. At the age of 18 the share of people who live in cohabitation is 50%, and at the age of 21 80% of the people living in the Roma neighbourhoods have a partner.

In the representative abstract about people over 15, where the people were interviewed in a direct interview and people give information about themselves, the average age as a beginning of cohabitation without marriage is 18 years and 4 months, however, the most often mentioned age as a beginning of cohabitation is 16, while the earliest is 12, and the latest 37.

Three factors have serious influence over the age of family creation – the education, income and the residential area. The research has undoubtedly shown that the marriage age is not a constant quantity and it can be influenced. Mainly the increase in the educational level, as well as the income increase and the increase of the dwelling area which the family occupies lead to increase of the marriage age.

²² One example of cohabitation at the age of 10 was registered within the research. It is possible that it is respondent's error and the real age is a little bit higher.

- As the most significant and distinctive factor for the early start of informal cohabitation and marital life is **the education of the questioned people**. *The increase of*



the age of first cohabitation and first marriage is in direct correlation with the level of education. The higher the educational level is, the later marital and non-marital partnerships start (graphics1).

The average age of first cohabitation among people with incomplete elementary

education is 17 years old; however, the most common start age is 16 years and at that age 50% of the Roma with the lowest educational level already have a partner. The average age of first cohabitation for people with higher education is 23 years; however the most common start age is 28 years. At the age of 25 about 50% of Roma with higher education already have partners. It is interesting to note that the type of secondary education also has significant influence. The average age of first cohabitation (22) and marriage (23) of those who have graduated professional (vocational) schools is 2 years higher compared to the graduates of secondary comprehensive schools.

- An important factor, though less significant, is **the economic status of the household**. After comparing the age of the first cohabitation and first marriage and the net average monthly income per capita in the household, the direct correlation can be observed – the higher the net average monthly income per capita in the household, the higher the age for contracting a first marriage. In other words the risk of early family life in cohabitation or after contracting civil marriage is higher for households with lower income.
- The third factor is **the dwelling are which the family occupies**. When comparing the age of first cohabitation and first marriage with the average dwelling area per capita in the household, a directly proportional correlation is observed again – the larger the dwelling area per person is, the higher the age of concluding civil marriage and first cohabitation is. Therefore, the risk of early

start of non-marital cohabitation or conclusion of civil marriage is higher in the households with less average dwelling area per person. An exception here – nevertheless significant – are the groups of the former nomads (Kaldarashi, Burgudžii, Thracian Kalaidjii), who live in large and luxury homes, and have a relatively low age for starting cohabitations.

There are significant differences among the ages for marriage in the different Roma groups. The lowest is the age of the people who self-identified themselves as *Millet*, the highest – of *Rudari*. There are also significant differences among the different regions: the lowest is the age for beginning of family life in the South-eastern Region (16,8 years), and the highest – in the North-western (19,7 years).

Roma birth: The widely spread concept of the higher Roma birth-rate contradict the existing statistical data, according to which **a significant decrease in the average number of children born by one Romani woman can be observed**. If for the Roma women born before 1930 it is 3,5 children, and for the born within the period 1955-60 it is 3 children, for the ones born between 1965-1970 it is 2,6 children. It is important to note the fact that *due to the extremely high death rate in Roma communities (high children death rate and significantly shorter life expectancy), the increased birth-rate is a natural mechanism of reproduction*. In practice, to provide the simple reproduction (i.e. the number of the Roma people to remain the same as it is at the moment), the average number of the children per woman shall be 2,4. The data of the NSI show values very close to these – the average number of children per Roma woman as of 2001 is 2.77%. I.e. the natural growth rate of the Roma people at present is positive, but low. This can be clearly observed from the decreased number of Roma people between the two population censuses in 2001 and 2011: from 370 908 people to 325 000 people.

The early childbirth (under the age of 18) in the Roma community decreases, but it is still high as per data of the NSI as of 2001. 51% of Roma women have given birth to their first child before the age of 18. For comparison – as of 1992 this share was 69%. Quite sharp is the decrease of exceptionally early childbirth (under the age of 14) – from 7% in 1992 to 3.6% in 2001.

STEREOTYPES: Regarding the early marriages in Roma community there are several main stereotypes:

„Roma marry at 12 and give birth at 13“: This is true only for a very low percentage of Romas– between 5 and 10 % of the most marginalized families in big city ghettos or in the isolated villages. The average age for family creation in the Roma community nowadays is 18 years and 4 months – 18 years and 8 months, and for some Roma groups it is much more higher. The problem with the early marriages and births continues to exist, but still doesn't refer to all Romas and even doesn't refer to the „average statistical” Roma person.

„They sell their brides as horses at a market“: It is wrong to assume that the bride is bought, what is bought is her “honour”, i.e. the right of the bridegroom to take the virginity of the girl and to associate the children with their own kin. That is why the bridegroom's family pays dowry (many Romas call it with the Turkish word *„baba-hak”*, i.e. father's right). The dowry does not „buy” the girl – she remains a free person, who has the right to divorce if the attitude towards her in the new family is not good.

By the way, in the past marriage with dowry payment was to be observed with the Turkish, the Bulgarians and all Romas. Nowadays it is not the main type of marriage for most of the Roma groups and there is tendency towards overcoming this custom. There is „bride market” only in one of the relatively small Roma groups – the Thracian Kalaidjii. „Buying the bride” at present is the main type of marriage only for the group of the former nomads (Kaldarashi, Burgudžii, Thracian Kalaidjii).

„All is for the money“: even for the most conservative groups the amount is not the decisive factor for the creation of the family. The girl's parents assessed mainly the family where their daughter goes and only after the family is assessed as a good one, they start to negotiate the dowry.

The dowry itself is not spent automatically. Part of it is the so-called „maid's money” – it is kept by the girl's father and in case she gets a divorce, it is handed to her (in case she is not guilty for the divorce – to start her new life) or to the boy's father (in case the girl is guilty for the divorce). At present many of the parents hand the whole dowry to the young family on the wedding day.

However, the rumours about huge dowry are quite exaggerated! For Burgudžii and the Thracian Kalaidjii they are more or less symbolic, and for Kaldarashi the highest dowries are given only by the richest families. What is mentioned as a dowry outside the community is usually several times higher.

„Early marriage is a Roma tradition, inseparable part of the Romani culture“: The early marriage is not Romani but patriarchal tradition. Not long time ago it was a tradition of the Bulgarian Turks, and until the 20-s of the 20th century it was the main marriage among the Bulgarians, and all Balkan peoples. It is enough to read the books written by Ivan Hadzhiyski to convince that almost all elements of „the Roma“ tradition related to early marriages were common in the Bulgarian villages at the end of 19th and the beginning of 20th century.

The girl's dowry is not a specific Roma tradition, too – the word *baba-hak* is a Turkish one, and the dowry was given by other Balkan peoples, too.

The early marriage is a practice, which was common during the patriarchal stage of development of each people. It is related to the fact that at the age of 12-14 the body matures for reproduction, and the personality has learnt his or her basic social roles in the traditional community and family (housewife and mother – for a woman, agricultural labour or craft – for a man). With the modernization this custom is abandoned, because the modern man has to acquire more complicated social roles (good education, professional skills, etc.). At present the Roma community goes through its process of modernization. That is why early marriages are gradually overcome as a tradition, although there are still many Roma groups and families where it can be observed. The overcoming of the early marriage is not a threat for the Roma culture and identity but part of its modernization.

„Nothing can be done“: this stereotype is completely wrong! As we specified above, three factors influence directly the increasing of the age for marrying – education (most directly), income and the dwelling area (indirectly). Increasing education, as well as improving the ways of life in the Roma community, we are definitely going to increase the marriage age. It is because in this way we give chance to the community modernization, as well as a chance of the separate person for a better realization.

Quite often field workers (teachers, health and social workers) refuse to interfere in cases of early marriage because they see it as insoluble and irreparable. The experience shows that this is not so. We have described below successful practices for influence in cases of early marriages.

SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES

The institutions and the Roma activists/ leaders can implement a number of successful activities for overcoming early marriages. Planning and implementing such activities, we have to take into account 3 important peculiarities:

1. *Prevention is always more efficient than reaction:* The activities for overcoming early marriages are more successful when they are constantly implemented and when they precede the event. Reaction in case of an early marriage is also necessary, but it will achieve more limited results;
2. *Successful practices are not universal:* as we mentioned above, there are considerable differences among Roma groups and among the separate regions. For example, the activities for prevention of early marriages with the more conservative Roma groups where the main type of marriage is „bride-buying” will be one, and for groups where the predominant practice is „eloping” – they will be different. We have to know well the communities where we plan to implement activities related to early marriages;
3. *Without the participation of the Roma community success will be impossible:* the creation of family is one of the most personal spheres for each community. Without cooperation with Roma activists and leaders the influence may not only fail, but may even do harm.

In 2010 within the project „Prevention of forced marriages” implemented by Center Amalipe local campaigns against early marriages were implemented in 10 municipalities. They clearly outlined several principles and models of influence, which could affect the attitude towards early marriages in the community.

Firstly, the **personal example of successful Roma people** should be emphasised: the young, educated and coping with the challenges of life Romas who have left a particular community, have grown up and managed to achieve more than the rest without forgetting their Roma origin and without neglecting their private life and family, can influence significantly the others. The personal example of these Romas may be influential in two ways. The first is by inviting successful Roma to participate in public meetings, hearings, etc. The other, more efficient approach is with empowerment of those Roma and engaging them on certain positions to work for the prevention of early

marriages in the community: among their group or among other Romas. Transformation of those Romas into role

models, i.e. the validation of their authority is a particular guarantee for success.

There is a close link between the quality of education in the relevant settlements, **building of motivation for continuation of the education** and the distribution of early/forced marriages.

In this aspect, transformation of the schools – where a problem with dropouts of Roma children exist – in attractive and adequate to the modern requirements educational centres, inevitably would influence positively the prevention of early marriages and births.

The increasing of the motivation for studying can happen in many ways – through the measures specified above (personal example from successful Roma, community discussions, etc.), and also through activities for improving the quality of the educational process in the existing schools, activities for introducing different forms of intercultural education (e.g. elective subjects on Roma folklore, celebration of the Roma calendar holidays at school, etc.) and for involving the Roma parents in the educational process (through trainings for parents, involving the parents in the classes – for example on Roma folklore, involving the Roma parents into the school board, etc.²³). Increasing the motivation for continuing education influences significantly the communities, where the process of overcoming the traditions is on the way and early, but not forced marriages occur. In these communities early marriages are more often initiated by the young people themselves and increasing the motivation for education directly leads to overcoming early marriages.

Support for community development is another important principle that should be applied in the efforts for prevention of the early marriages. The community and the different communal mechanisms for influence are very important for the life of the individual Roma. Thus, it is necessary that the community participates actively in the efforts for overcoming different negative practices. Even more – the entire community development has to be supported. That may occur through different community discussions, activities for support of individual members of the community, etc.. The

²³ Similar activities were tested within the Amalipe Centre's project "Decreasing the Dropout Rate of Roma Children", which have shown the possibility to actively involve the parents.

sustainable frame, where the community development may be supported, is the establishment of community centres (**Centre for community development**), that should systematically organize the indicated activities.

The principle of interaction between all institutions, which are directly relevant to the existence of the problem with early/forced marriages, is of primary importance for its limitation. The structures of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Science, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Justice that are situated in the affected problematic settlements shall be motivated and encouraged to become familiar with the problem and to take their responsibilities for its prevention. They should overcome their passiveness on the issue, which is usually excused with the argument that “this is a Roma tradition and we do not want to get involved”. It appears that the image of the representatives of those institutions has a positive impact within the community regarding the knowledge and observance of the existing rules.

Meanwhile, it should be taken into consideration that this is not enough. The **institutionalization of a position within the community is needed**. The influence of the institutions on the Roma community from the “outside” (especially with the more traditional Roma groups) has its limits. It must be complemented by the activity of people within the community, who will perform social work by working for resolution of certain problems (like the one with the early marriages, dropping out of school, etc.) and at the same time, they will contribute to the development of the community itself. This position (**community moderator or mediator**) should be institutionalized.

Another successful model of influence can be **the community discussions**, part of which will be the significant for every community people – the external important authority figures (e.g. the spiritual leader, the village mayor, the doctor, the teacher etc.²⁴), as well as authority figures with internal significance for the community (e.g. informal leaders, who by rule are people, whose advise and approval is sought for by the others). In some Roma groups the internal authority figures have certain degree of community institutionalization: e.g. the so-called „meshere” among the group of Kaldarashi. In most of the cases among the rest of the groups there is no such

²⁴ NB! It should be judged who from the external environment is actually known and trusted. Often the social worker is not among the recognized authorities.

institutionalization, but the informal leaders are well known („cheribashii”, „patrons” etc.) and these must by all means be involved in the community discussions.

The completed campaigns clearly showed the necessity of similar type of discussions. The topics discussed cannot be limited only to the early marriages: issues related to pressing for the local community problems, employment, education, services received, as well as the more general questions about the Roma integration would usually be part of the topics for discussion.

Another efficient method proved to be **the group discussion**, where not the whole local community would participate, but only representatives of certain group within it: for instance, youths, women, etc. The group discussion allows the participants to debate the topics to a greater depth, insofar as their hesitance to speak their mind in front of the elderlies will then be absent. The topics for these discussions also cannot be limited to the early marriages, and can comprise many other, which were specified above.

With a view of the fact that within a large portion of the pilot communities there was a lack of information among the young people with respect to *the reproductive health and the family planning*, there is obviously a necessity of organizing lectures and discussions on the topic, which will be presented in the most appropriate for the public manner. It should be taken in consideration that there are serious differences in the way, this information can be presented to a Roma community: depending on the different Roma groups, on the degree of modernisation of the local community and on the age (generation) of the audience. Thus, for example, the usual means for distribution of information related to reproductive health and family planning can render counter indicative effect within the groups of Kaldarashi, Burgudjii (especially those in the North-eastern Bulgaria), Thracian Kalajdži, etc.: completely different information materials would be required for these groups – ones which are compliant with the cultural standards of the group.

Many of the implemented campaigns showed the necessity of **door-to-door campaigns** in the Roma neighbourhoods. Individual conversations or family discussions within the frames of such campaigns appear to be an effective measure for increasing the awareness of the issue of early marriages, which is a necessary step for its solution. The methods described are not a “magic wand” guaranteeing immediate success. Their application depends very much on the skills of those who realize the activities for

preventing early marriages: one and the same approach could be very effective or bring about counter indicative results depending on way it has been applied. The different methods should comply with the specifics of the local community: some of them may be applied among all Roma, while others will influence effectively certain groups. In any case, it should be taken into consideration that resolving the issue of early marriages cannot be achieved within a short time: continuous and systematic efforts are needed so that the described methods and principles would bring about sustainable results.

Early Marriages in Traditional Roma communities in Transylvania

In Romania, only 5% of the total Roma population, is considered to belong to a traditional Roma community. In these communities the custom of early marriages still prevails (communities like Gabor, Kaldarashi and Turkish Muslim). The practice is deeply rooted in the identity reproduction mechanisms of internal solidarity of the traditional Roma communities.

The members of these groups have a very strong sense of identity. The roles and power relations are very well established, these groups are strongly patriarchal ones.

The person who decides in the family is the father with the approval of the elders. Early marriage unions are a practice for keeping the group closed and compact. Promising the children to each other at an early age (between 2 and 8) than marrying them at the ages of 12 -15 is important not only for the cohesion of the group, but also for wealthy families keeping the wealth in the community.

Early marriages in the Kaldarashi community

In the Kaldarashi community from the region of Transylvania (County Sibiu) shows a high degree of unanimity of the respondents, on the basic criteria of choosing the partners. The rituals, values, power relations are clearly defined and known by all the members of the community, no matter their age, gender or position in the family.

The marriage is seen as a crucial event, a strong mechanism of reproduction of the group identity, a tool to prevent assimilation or dilution. Therefore preparations for the marriage start from the moment of birth. In the Kaldarashi community the custom of “promising” the children to each other involves families with children aged between 2 and 8.

The first and most important criterion for choosing the partner, is the group identity, marriage has to take part exclusively with a Kaldarashi person. In the Kaldarashi community from the County Sibiu, girls of the same group are brought from hundreds of kilometres to be married to local boys.

The second criteria is the wealth and the status of the families, the highest priority being given to descendants of respected, wealthy families.

The third criteria, is the purity, the girl has to be virgin. Virginity has a mystic connotation and is fundamental for the marriage to take place.

Unbalanced marriages might occur, when the children do not descend from families with the same wealth or status. But, even in such cases, strict rules are governing the choice: a girl from a wealthy family would not be allowed to marry a boy from a poorer descent. According to the Kaldarashi norms, a boy from a modest family might not be able to manage the wealth of the bride and then the young couple might face poverty.

The wedding ceremony takes place when the girls aged of 13 to 14 and the boys a little bit older, around 16 to 17. The boy's parents will pay for the wedding, but the girl's dowry is also very important. On the wedding night the consumption of the marriage will take place. The bride will move to their parent's in law who will teach and help her to be a good wife. If it is found out, on the wedding night, that the girl was not a virgin, than damages must be paid to the parents of the boy for the shame brought on their son (this usually contains of the sum that the boy's parents has spent for he wedding). The shame suffered by the girl's parents is deep, they will be punished and ridiculed in the community.

In their opinion the time from the engagement until the wedding is the period when the two have the chance to spend more time together and get to know each other better. If after the wedding the young couple cannot live together they have the opportunity to divorce.

Early marriages in the Gabor community

Within the community of **Gabors** there are some differences in customs, depending on the wealth of the family, or how the wife is chosen for the boy.

In wealthy Roma communities the father of the boy makes the agreement with the parents of the girl to marry their children, while in less wealthy communities the

practice is to steal the girl. The most important criteria for choosing a wife is for her to be from the same Roma group.

For the wealthy communities it is important for the girl to be a virgin and to descend from a respected and wealthy family. The children are engaged to each other at the age of 7 and 8 (in some cases 13-14, in the region of Banat). The union of marriage will happen in front of the community, at the age of 14-16.

The consummation of marriage will take place on the wedding night and the virginity of the girl is the most important element, otherwise the father will have to pay the prise for the shame suffered. Many of the individuals questioned said that in the above mentioned cases Roma justice was applied, but it was not specified the nature of these punishments.

In communities where families have a modest income, the beauty of the girl is decisive in choosing the bride. This way the parents of the boy are not obliged to pay for wedding expenses and for the girl to have dowry. The age when the “stealing” of the girl happens is the same as in other communities, 13-14.

Early marriages in the Turkish Muslim Roma community

It is known that in the region of Dobrogea (South Romania) a large group of traditionalist **Turkish Muslim** Roma can be found.

In this community the children are promised to each other between the ages of 12-14 and the father of the boy chooses the bride for his son, asking the permission of the girl's parents. The criteria for choosing a daughter in law are for her to be from the same community, to be virgin and to descend from a respected and wealthy family. The age of marriage is between 14 and 18 year old.

After the union takes place, the couple will move to the boy's parent's house. They are helped until they can be on their own. The family roles are well established in this community also. Women are meant to stay home, run the household, raise and educate the children, while the men are concerned with the financial support of the family.

The girls usually have their first child at the age of 15-17. Family is very important in this community, the children will not be abandoned, but raised in and by the family. The young mother is helped by her mother in law and all the other women members of the family.


Early marriages in the Bear Leaders' community

The elements of the custom are mostly identical as in the Gabor or Kaldarachi community. The father of the boy is the one who makes the choice for his son, on the grounds that the girl has to be from the same community and to be from a wealthy family.

After the marriage the young bride will live at her parents in law's house and have the first child as soon as possible. The children will be raised in the family; none of them will be abandoned.

Early marriages in other Roma communities

A new phenomenon is the emergence of early marriages in the non-traditional wealthy Roma groups. Moreover, early marriages appear in urban slums as a consequence of poverty and exclusion.



The issue of presenting Roma celebrities has always been a tricky one. The biggest problem for this is that many famous Roma never recognized and openly confessed their Roma origin. This concerns mainly the famous people of the past. The problem with the people from the present is defining their celebrities is a subjective issues deprived of the objective assessment of the time distance. Therefore, the author have chosen the approach to present Roma celebrities who are undisputable both, regarding identity and contribution for changing the stereotypes about Roma. We have deliberately chosen not to include here politicians or NGO representatives.

BULGARIA

Some of the first known cultural genius of Roma in Bulgaria lived at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centjury. One of the most well-know repersentatives of the the Bulgarian intellecuals is Atanas Misliakov from the village of Gradets. He graduated Philosophy at the end of the 19th century in Germany and became a professor at Sofia University. The PhD he defended was on Fichte and Schelling. He was one of the first Philosophy professors after the liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire.

Another example is Ivan Kirilov who was born in 1876 in Elena, graduates Low in Germany and became the founder of the Bulgarian union of writers.

At the beginning of the 20th centuries some of the most active cultural figures were Shakir Pashov, Dimitar Golemanov, Manush Romanov, Rusi Zabunov, Ali Chaushev, Yashar Malikov, etc.

Bulgarian literatures critics define Roma literature contribution as a colourful piece especially in the poetry. Recognizing the achievements of the big Roma poet **Ussin Kerim**, the nowadays Roma poetry is characterized by a leading tendency of 'provocation' which could be found in **Sali Ibrahim, Vassil Chaprazov, Hristo Hristov, Assen Merkov, Georgy Parushev** and especially the last generation.

Roma authors in Bulgaria who should be mentioned are also **Yana Merdjanova, Ivan Eandev, Angel Angelov, Atta Becheva, Valentin Miladinov, КрѸм Каменов, Snejana Vassileva, Nadya Kabakova, Stoyan Budakov, Anna Markova, Dinko Kumanov** –

Dunich, Valeri Lekov, Lili Kovacheva and many others some of whom still have only the Internet for a forum.

Usin Kerim is one of the most famous Bulgarian poets. He was born in 1929 and presented in his poems the joy and pain of Roma life in the mid-20th centuries. His poetry is translated into many languages.

Sali Ibrahim (known also by her Bulgarian name Snejana Ivanova) is an outstanding Bulgarian poetess of Roma origin, from the Yerlii sub-group. She is a member of the Association of the Bulagrian Writers and founder of the Chitalishte (specific Bulgarian community unit) 'Elit' – Center for Roma Culture (2002). **Sali Ibrahim** is the author of the text of the Romani hymn 'Vassilitza', sang by the famous Roma singer Sophy Marinova.

And a special place should be given to **Violeta Draganova** – script and fiction writer, author of two novels and well known for her work in national TV. Violeta Dgaranova (born 1978) has quite an impressive professional portfolio as PR specialist, script-writer, journalist and producer. Her educational background is philology with master degree from Sofia University. She is author and TV host of a series of broadcastings on the national Nova TV, a lead figure in the popular TV 'Flight Over Night' of the Bulgarian national TV, author of dozens of documentary movies and radio broadcasts.

NORWAY

During the past decade efforts have been made by the government and Romani and Norwegian organizations to provide knowledge about the culture of the Roma and Romani people through exhibitions, concerts and other events in order to decrease the stigma of the past and give Roma and Romani youth a better understanding of their culture and history.

A number of strong and popular role models - artists and people showing social responsibility in the communities – have contributed to communicating a positive message about Roma/Romania values, culture and art.

Some of the well-known Roma and Romani musicians are:

- Åge Alexandersen, rock musician (Romani). Awarded Knight 1st Class of the Order of St. Olav (2006).
- Elias Akselsen, musician. (Romani)
- Veronica Akselsen, musician (Romani)
- Raya (Raisa Bielenberg), singer (Roma)

Influence of the Travellers on Names of Sites in Norway

In Norway there are many names of sites and houses related to the Romani (Taters) group. When they travelled in earlier days, they stayed at some campsites year after year. It is common to find places called “Taterholmen”, “Fantholmen” etc. along the coast and inland fields names including the word “Tater”. Some Romani also owned houses, which are now known under names such as “Fant-kåken” etc.²⁵ The government is supporting preservation of names and historic monuments connected to minorities as well as museum projects focusing on history and culture of minorities.

ROMANIA

Some of the Roma celebrities function as role models, as singers, writers and intellectuals. One of the best known writers who has contributed not just for the development of Roma culture but also for its popularizing all over the world is Luminița Mihai Cioabă. Here are two of her poems:

Gypsy Love

Long black curçs
one by one
in the spell of the moon’s magic
stars fall in dream-light
on the other side of being
always existing beyond time.

I cling to the horse’s white mane
galloping
in the rush of wind
the whole long way from the soul
to make my return
from oblivion’s dust.

The earth

²⁵ Glomdalsmuseet, Latjo Drom: <http://old.glomdalsmuseet.no/html/romani/latjo-drom/kulturminner/kulturminner.htm>

sticks to
 his bare hooves
 the season's freshness – the branches
 of the forest turn spring green
 the grass blades
 life's sudden outcry
 like a butterfly's wing
 just before
 sunrise.

(translated by Adam J. Sorkin and Cristina Cîrstea)

Na Bîstăr Teo Anau Șaorea Romehko

Na bîstăr teo anau șaorea romehko
 ande te iakha dičiol
 o illo
 le manușengo hasarde sar o thaw la tișaiako
 kata o gor le barăpaiehko.

Na bîstăr teo anau șaorea romehko
 E Duda-Le Khamesti-Anklel atârdeol
 pe tiro mui
 ando garadimos
 la iagako
 ta
 o sungaimos iwando la phuweako
 bešel ande teo kolin.

Na bîstăr teo anau șaorea romehko
 kă numa ande te ball o šonuto
 šudel o străfeaimos le čeraiengo
 sîkaindoi tu
 O Kamblimos Anglal
 Dă
 Înteal o Čerii.

Na bîstăr teo anau șaorea romehko
 te iasfa
 sî
 o brîšind le čerehko
 anda
 O Angluno la Phuweako
 ta
 E Dilli le Slobozimasti
 sî te avel
 O Drom
 Tumară anavehkă oče.

Roma celebrities in Lithuania

Unfortunately there are no Roma in high public standing in Lithuania. Roma are mostly famous and popular in the performing arts, music: Radži (pop singer); Sare Roma (musical band)


Roma celebrities in Portugal

Dr. Carlos M. S. Miguel – Mayor, holds a law degree, Torres Vedras

Ricardo Andrade Quaresma Bernardo- football player

Carlos Jorge dos Santos Sousa, researcher and doctor, with some books and articles published

Piménio Teles Ferreira, Master in Engineering Physics - organizer of Gypsy TV



ROMA CLOTHES

Clothing is the first visible sign for group identity and a marker for a group affiliation. In addition, it is a marker of community status, marital status, gender and a number of other categories constructing the community identity. Furthermore, clothes often reveal deeper concepts and perception. One of the specifics of Roma clothes, for example, is that one could never see a traditional Romani woman in a dress. In contrary, she would be always dressed in two parts clearly showing the difference between the upper and the lower parts of the body. This is related with the different connotations the different parts of the body have: the upper part is clean, while the lower is perceived as contaminated. A thorough and detailed research on Roma dress (with focus on Roma dress in Bulgaria was published by Mirella Decheva (Decheva: 2004)

Traditional Roma clothes in Bulgaria

Although the processes of modernization have influenced the dress still some Roma groups have preserved the traditional clothing. The variety of costumes in the different Roma groups makes it a difficult task to summarize it in a couple of paragraphs. One of the big differences is between the dress of Christian and Muslim Roma. While Horahane Roma and Millet are dressed in the traditional for the Muslim cultures *shalvari* (big wide trousers), the dress of a Christian Romani woman consists of a long skirt (often colourful) and a shirt or a blouse. At the same time some of the women still put a kerchief on their heads. From one side this is a symbol for women marital status (only married women put a scarf on their heads). From another, it is a marker of group affiliation: the women from the different Romani groups tie the scarf in a different way.

Traditional Roma Clothes in Romania


The most traditional Roma groups in Romania are the Kaldarasi (mainly Romanian speaking) and the Gabors (Hungarian speaking, located mainly in Transylvania). These two groups still wear traditional clothes. The main characteristic of the clothing of a Gabor man is the large black hat, wearing of a mustache, wide trousers, a shirt and a coat. Young boys are dressed traditionally at a very young age.

The clothing of women is very colorful. They wear large, pleated skirts, colorful blouses and kerchief on their heads.

The hair of young girls is decorated with red stripes. The dressing of young girls is not coded until they are 9-10, they may wear anything they like, but as soon as they get older they are required to dress traditionally. The colors of the skirts and shirts vary in accordance with the age of the girl or women. For e.g. young girls, until they get married, wear very bright colors (red, white), when they get married, between ages 25-60, they wear more darker colored clothes (green, purple) and the color of an older woman's skirt is dark, mainly brown and blue. Black is the symbol of mourning.

The women who are already married put on their heads a cloth called "*batic*" (meaning head-kerchief) no matter what the weather is and they always have their hair combed in three plaits: two of them by the cheeks, named "*Tici*" and one on the back named "*Pori*". The two plaits by the cheeks have also silver coins. The back plait has all sorts of shining stones. Unlike girls married women have only two plaits tightly drawn by the cheeks with twists towards the face and the plaits called "*Ciunr*" have many silver or sometimes even gold coins. Married women always wear on their head the head-kerchief and are not allowed to show themselves otherwise. The symbol of the married woman is the head-kerchief.

In Lithuania Roma women strictly adhere to tradition to wear skirts below the knee after marriage. Not married young women can put pants, but married Roma women have to wear skirts. Kotliary women wear more traditional, long and coloured skirts and special headwear – kind of neckerchief in the form of a bow. Other Roma women wear casual clothes.



ROMA CULTURE INITIATIVES

ROMA PRIDE

Roma Pride is an international initiative by the European Grassroots Antiracist Movement, EGAM, which encourages Roma people to organise activities to both celebrate their heritage and draw attention to the problems of the largest minority in Europe. It was organized for first time on October 1, 2011 in 7 European countries. In 2012 it was organized on October 7th . The initiatives follows the declaration “Roma, racism, Europe : “Dosta !”, and Roma Pride” from September 30, 2011.

In Bulgaria the Roma Pride is organized by Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance “Amalipe” involving a series of cultural events and traditional crafts displays. The Campaign ‘Roma Pride: Lets’ Live and Study Together’ was organized for first time in the whole country on 1 October – just a week after dangerous anti-Roma demonstrations that started after a criminal conflict in the village of Katunitza. The Community Development Centres in Byala Slatina, Etropole, Peshtera, Novi Pazar and Kameno had community events – exhibitions ‘I’m proud of...’, which showed Roma crafts, and famous successful Roma people talked about the challenges they had met in their lives. The events gathered together hundreds of Roma people, representatives of the municipal administration and people from the majority, thus turning into a true message of tolerance. The idea of the exhibitions was to show what the Roma community can do and that we can be proud of the culture of the different ethnic groups and live together in Bulgaria. As the local moderators shared: ‘This was in fact the way to bring together Roma, Bulgarian and Turkish people to celebrate the Roma Pride’.

In parallel with the community events, Amalipe Center and its partners from the civil sector and schools organized campaigns in Sofia, Veliko Turnovo, Vratsa, Sliven, Strazhitsa, Stara Zagora and a number of other towns. Bulgarian and Roma young people and teachers distributed to the passers-by in the streets children’s essays about tolerance and carnations (by analogy with the Carnation Revolution in Portugal) and invited them to write their messages. Thousands of citizens responded and made the longest message of tolerance, which showed that the majority of Bulgarian citizens do not share the anti-Roma slogans of the nationalists. Two days later, on 3 October, a

students' travelling exhibition under the title 'My Dream of the Roma and Bulgaria' set off from the school in the village of Karadzhovo (2 km away from Katunitsa – a place where ethnic conflict was in place just a week ago). In the school year 2010/2011 it passed 90 schools all over the country.

In 2012 "Roma Pride" was celebrated with flowers, children's drawings and typical arts and crafts from the Roma culture and the participation of successful Roma people. From the 5th to the 8th of October, 2012, Center Amalipe's Community Development Centers in Byala Slatina, Etropole, Peshtera, Novi Pazar, Kameno and the local clubs and centers in Pavlikeni and Veliko Tarnovo held a number of events during the celebration of "Roma Pride" – The Day of The Roma Culture and Pride-. The campaign took place between 2 PM to 5:30 PM and took place under the motto: "I Have a Dream: To Learn and live Together!"

In addition, Center Amalipe organized VT FILM FEST - the first Roma film festival based and produced locally in Veliko Tarnovo. The idea was to show a good selection of independent, high quality films from all around the world. From different fields and on various topics concerned with the fight against intolerance and discrimination. The films were shown from October 5 to October 7, 2012 in "Club Taralej". The aim was to give the audience a diverse perspective about the lives of the Roma people – about their rich culture as well as the problems that the Roma people face in and out of their community-. The first day was dedicated to issues related to the interaction between Roma people, being the minority, and the non-Roma, being the majority. The second day was dedicated to domestic issues in the community, and the last one to the Roma traditions and customs. Films from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, and Germany were shown during the festival, including two Bulgarian premières: "The Forgotten Genocide – Europe's Gypsies in World War II" by Henriette Asséo, Idit Bloch and Juliette Jourdan and "I Am Going to Italy", by Ivaylo Markov.

On the first evening of VT FILM FEST the actors from the film "I am Going to Italy", - which are indeed one of the best Roma bands in Bulgaria- Orchestra Karandila Junior, gave an outdoor concert for this occasion

OPEN HEART FESTIVAL – BULGARIA

Since 2002 Center Amalipe and Veliko Turnovo Municipality have been organizing the Children Roma Festival "Open Heart". Every year more than 1000 children from

different ethnic background (Roma, Bulgarians, Turks) from the whole country participate in the festival. Most of the children take part in the initiative of Center Amalipe “Roma culture in Bulgarian schools” where Roma culture is studied as part of the school curriculum in more than 230 schools all over the country. Gradually the Festival has been established as part of the cultural calendar of Veliko Turnovo Municipality and of Bulgaria. At the same time it provides opportunity for the children who have proved good results in school to be awarded for their success and thus be motivated to be better students.

In 2011 the eighth edition of the Children’s Roma Festival ‘Open Heart’ was held. Between June 4th and 5th in Marno Pole Park, Veliko Turnovo, it attracted more than 1080 children from 50 schools across the country. The festival was held in partnership with the Municipality of Veliko Turnovo and under the patronage of the Mayor Dr. Rumen Rashev. Major sponsors of the festival were America for Bulgaria Foundation.

Official guests of the event were the Minister of EU Funds Management Tomislav Donchev, who together with Dr. Rashev opened the Festival; Lalo Kamenov (Deputy Chairperson of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination), Lilly Kovacheva (Director CEICSEM), Ahmed Ahmed and Nikola Petkov (representatives of NCCEII), Frank Bauer, president of America for Bulgaria Foundation and many others.


Dressed up in colourful Roma and Bulgarian folk costumes, pupils from each school presented their performance including story-telling, reconstruction of feasts, singing and dancing. Each school presented not only Roma, but also Bulgarian and Turkish folklore, flavoured with a lot of smiles and laughter. In addition, the Festival audience had the opportunity to enjoy the numerous studios built-up in the park. Most schools had their own separate exhibition corners where they showed their own handmade masterpieces. The best studios in both festival days were selected by the vote of our guests and volunteers and awarded.

For the participants, the Festival has become a reward and incentive for active learning throughout the year. For the organizers, it is the best indicator for the success of the Roma culture school classes. In the cultural capital of Bulgaria, Center Amalipe and Municipality of Veliko Turnovo have established the tradition of the Roma Children’s Festival based on the belief that different ethnic groups are one of the most valuable assets of Bulgaria.

MUSEUM OF ROMA ART – ROMANIA

The first museum in Romania dedicated to Roma culture opened on February 18, 2013 at the District 6 City Hall in Bucharest, two days before Roma people celebrate the Abolition of Roma Slavery. Two associations, Romano ButiQ and KCMC, in partnership with the District 6 City Hall and the National School for Politic and Administrative Studies (SNSPA) worked together to create the museum. The need for the museum was rooted in the deeply prejudiced public discussions about Roma and their culture, often confronted with stereotyping. The museum's founders have shared it will not have only a series of artifacts related to the Roma culture, but a dynamic conglomerate of ideas and stories, illustrated through objects, installations and people, so as to generate debate on all levels of society.

In Lithuania, Roma folklore festivals organised by Lithuanian Gypsy Association “Gypsy Fire” and Roma Community Centre every 2 years become traditional. Performers from Lithuania, Latvia, Byelorussia took part in concerts on different concert stages in Vilnius.



INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION WORKING FOR ROMA INCLUSION

INTERNATIONAL ROMA UNION

The International Roma Union (IRU) was constituted in 1971 at the first World Roma Congress held in London. Over time the International Roma had the following presidents Ion Țibulac, Saita Balica, Rajko Djuric, Victor Famulson, Emil Ščuka and the current president is Stanislaw Stankiewicz. Headquarters of the Organisation is currently in Warsaw. The declared objective of the Organization is to represent all Roma policy in the world (Roma, Sinti, lovara, kederara, xoraxane, romunge, etc.) and act for the best interests of the Roma nation. Organization also aims to promote cultural traditions, customs and language of the Roma, and at the same time to cooperate with the authorities to solve the social, economic and cultural problems of the Roma in each of the countries they live increases. International Roma organization monitors the respectation of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction of race, sex, language or religion. Member States of the International Romani Union are: Albania, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Spain, Ireland, Kosovo, Latvia , Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, and Ukraine. Any Roma organization in member countries can acquire membership of the IRU. IRU Congress is composed of delegates from member organizations and individual members. The function of IRU is exercised by the following bodies: Congress, Parliament, the Presidium of the Court of Justice. The Congress approves the program and long-term vision of the IRU. IRU is making recommendations to support the participation of Roma in individual countries in political, economic, social affairs, culture, education and human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, regardless of race, sex, language or religion. Parliament deals with reports on the situation of the Roma population in each country during its sessions. In the autumn session of Parliament the members have to discuss and approve the budget for the following year. Parliament defines domestic and international politics of the IRU. The Presidium is the executive body of the IRU and shall function through committees covering the following topics: foreign policy, social affairs and economic, cultural and educational affairs, human rights affairs, financial and budgetary, legal

matters and legislative issues in America, Asia and Australia. Presidium may develop international business studies and reports about them in the economic, social, and educational fields.

Web page: www.internationalromaniunion.org

EUROPEAN ROMA AND TRAVELERS FORUM

The ERTF was registered in July 2004 as an association under French law. In November 2004, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers agreed to establish close and privileged relations with the ERTF through a Partnership Agreement which was signed on 15 December 2004. In virtue of this Agreement, the ERTF receives assistance in terms of financial and human resources, and has a privileged access to the various bodies and organs of the Council of Europe which deal with matters concerning Roma and Travellers.

The Roma and Travellers have several non-governmental organisations in all countries where such population exists. There are also a number of international non-governmental organisations working for the improvement of the situation of the Roma in the various countries. The idea behind the initiative, however, was to create for the Roma an international body having close and privileged links with the Council of Europe. The Forum will give the Roma and Travellers the possibility to participate in and influence decision-making processes in issues concerning them, openly and officially, through a special relationship with the Council of Europe. This will be the first time that national and European Roma organisations from all over Europe will be able to discuss together and formulate jointly their hopes and concerns. These are the unique features of the Forum which distinguish it from any other international organisation.

The Forum is intended to be an autonomous body, independent of governments and inter-governmental organisations. It has the status of a non-governmental organisation. It has, however, have a legal partnership agreement with the Council of Europe, which, amongst other things provides for the establishment of relations with the various bodies of the Council of Europe. According to the case, this relationship could take the form of a hearing, participation at meetings, providing expert advice.

The Forum is open to **Roma, Sinti, Kale, Travellers and other related groups.**

The **members** of the Forum are:

- the **national umbrella organisations**

- the **Roma international organisations.**

The European Roma and Travellers Forum and its members are committed to the achievement of equal rights and equal opportunities for Roma in Europe, including political participation. The ERTF takes an active part in the fight against anti-Tziganism and for the full realisation of human rights.

The ERTF goals are:

- To establish a fair and democratic representation of Roma in Europe;
- To achieve a fair and equal participation of Roma at all levels of policy making at national and international level;
- To achieve an improvement of the living conditions of Roma and related groups;
- To achieve the social integration of Roma on the basis of full equality and mutual respect;
- To make governments and international organisations more aware of their responsibilities toward Roma as their citizens and more responsive toward their needs;
- To become recognised as the key political partner and interlocutor by national governments and international organisations on any issues affecting Roma;
- To achieve official recognition of the Roma as a European people and of Romanes as a European language;
- To achieve official recognition of the Romani Holocaust

Web page: <http://www.ertf.org/>

EUROPEAN ROMA INFORMATION OFFICE

The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) was founded in 2003 as a non-profit organisation under Belgian law, working with an international and European scope. In spite of the role that ERIO plays in the advocacy of Roma rights at the European level, it does not seek to replace any other Roma organisations. As an informational platform, ERIO ensures that the voices of all European Roma are heard by EU and governmental officials. Its work currently focuses on anti-discrimination policies in the fields of education, employment, healthcare and housing.

ERIO is an international advocacy organisation that promotes political and public discussion on Roma issues by providing factual and in-depth information on a range of policy issues to European Union institutions, Roma civil organisations, governmental authorities and intergovernmental bodies. It cooperates with a large network of

organisations and act to combat racial discrimination and social exclusion by raising awareness, lobbying and developing policy.

ERIO aims to combat racist discrimination against Roma and to contribute to an improved public awareness of the problems faced by Roma communities. It advocates for the rights of Roma people by designing and promoting policies which are oriented towards the improvement of the socio-economic situation and social inclusion of Roma in Europe. Moreover, ERIO promotes the participation of Roma communities in decision-making processes at European, national and local levels. The organization works to sensitise EU institutions to the importance of developing and ensuring the accessibility of equal opportunities for Roma in EU member states as well as in candidate countries. ERIO is a member of the Platform of European Social NGOs (Social Platform), Policy Making Committee of the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), Fundamental Rights Platform (FRP) and the European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC).

Web page: <http://www.erionet.eu/>

EUROPEAN ROMA RIGHTS CENTER

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) is an international public interest law organisation working to combat anti-Romani racism and human rights abuse of Roma through strategic litigation, research and policy development, advocacy and human rights education.

Since its establishment in 1996, the ERRC has endeavoured to provide Roma with the tools necessary to combat discrimination and achieve equal access to justice, education, housing, health care and public services.

The ERRC has consultative status with the Council of Europe, as well as with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. The ERRC has been the recipient of numerous awards for its efforts to advance human rights respect of Roma: in 2012, Stockholm Human Rights Award, in 2010, the Silver Rose Award of SOLIDAR; in 2009, the Justice Prize of the Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation; in 2007, the Max van der Stoel award given by the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Dutch Foreign Ministry; and in 2001, the Geuzenpenning award (the Geuzen medal of honour) by Her Royal Highness Princess Margriet of Netherlands.

The ERRC's strategic priorities for 2010 – 2012 include:

- Violence against Roma and hate speech



- Education
- Housing
- Women's and children's rights
- Movement and migration
- Disaggregated data collection

Web page: <http://www.errc.org/>

ROMA EDUCATION FUND

The Roma Education Fund (REF) was created in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2005. Its mission and ultimate goal is to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. In order to achieve this goal, the organization supports policies and programs which ensure quality education for Roma, including the desegregation of education systems. Through its activities, the REF promotes Roma inclusion in all aspects of the national education systems of countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion, as well as other countries that wish to join in this effort.

The objectives of REF include the following:

- Ensuring access to compulsory education, for example, through the involvement of parents in education, initiatives to reduce dropouts, and provision of free textbooks and other educational materials.
- Improving the quality of education, for example, through curriculum reform, introduction of Roma language teaching, anti-bias and tolerance teaching, and training of school mediators.
- Implementing integration and desegregation of Roma students coming from segregated schools and classrooms and from special schools into mainstream schools, as well as eliminating all segregated classes and schools.
- Expanding access to pre-school education, for example, through information campaigns, assistance with the registration process and work with parents to promote pre-school attendance.
- Increasing access to secondary, post secondary and adult education, for example through scholarships, adult literacy courses and career advice for secondary school students.

REF runs five major programs:

1. Project Support Program which finances projects and programs.
2. REF Scholarship Program which is the largest tertiary scholarship program for Roma students.
3. Policy Development and Capacity Building Program which supports activities that help create a framework for dialogue with governments and civil society on education reform and Roma inclusion.
4. Communication and Cross Country Learning Program which includes activities to promote the exchange of knowledge on education reforms and Roma inclusion.
5. Reimbursable Grant Program to help Roma NGOs and local governments access EU funds for the purpose of Roma education.

Web page: <http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/>

OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS, ROMA INITIATIVES OFFICE

The Roma Initiatives Office is OSF structure that responds to political challenges to Roma rights by supporting Roma who can advocate at the European, national, and local levels for policies that promote integration and equal opportunities, combat segregation, and challenge all forms of discrimination faced by Roma. In addition, we facilitate dialogue, exchange and collaboration across the Open Society Foundations to coordinate efforts, increase knowledge and enhance the impact of Roma-related grantmaking and advocacy.

Roma Initiatives builds on the Foundations' many years of support for Roma and pro-Roma civil society organizations to promote active citizenship and grassroots community participation. Substantive Roma participation is essential for meaningful integration, and Roma communities need to participate in the design, implementation, and monitoring of public policies that affect them. Effective and democratic Roma leadership is vital to this process.

The Roma Initiatives Office invests in building the capacity of an emerging generation of young men and women to take a leadership role by involving them in voter education and community mobilization campaigns, and providing training that gives Roma activists the skills and confidence to be a force for social change. We fund internships for Roma graduates in the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council of Europe, and support intensive English language training. In partnership with the

Roma Education Fund, we provide opportunities for postgraduate study in the Roma Access Program run by Central European University in Budapest.

Roma Initiatives works with a broad range of civil society partners to promote positive images of Roma communities and culture, to repudiate racism, and to promote intercultural dialogue. The Roma Initiatives Office recognizes that one of the most formidable obstacles to Roma inclusion is the high level of anti-Roma prejudice harbored by majority populations and fomented by the far-right. Successful inclusion policies require an increased level of public support and effective action to counter racist stereotypes. Attitude change is a complex process that we address by promoting intercultural dialogue, identifying the factors that drive prejudice and negative attitudes, and showing how such attitudes can be effectively challenged and ultimately changed.

Web page: <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about/programs/roma-initiatives-office/>

EUROPEAN ROMA POLICY COALITION

The European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC) is an informal gathering of non-governmental organisations operating at EU level on issues of human rights, anti-discrimination, anti-racism, social inclusion, and Roma and Travellers' rights. The ERPC is committed to the principle of inclusion through participation and aims to promote the participation of Roma in all relevant processes.

The Coalition recommends the adoption of an EU Framework Strategy on Roma Inclusion, to promote and strengthen EU and national action aimed at the social inclusion of Roma in Europe. The EU Framework Strategy should be built on three pillars: equal access to education, health services, housing and employment; accountability of the authorities in their actions to protect the rights of the Roma community (i.e. legislation, policies); and empowerment of Roma community—through ensuring full participation and responsibility for the effective implementation of measures taken by the European Union and the Member States.

The ERPC members are:

Amnesty International

European Network Against Racism

European Roma Grassroots Organizations Network

European Roma Information Office



European Roma Rights Centre

Fundación Secretariado Gitano

Minority Rights Group International

Open Society Foundations

Policy Center for Roma and Minorities

Roma Education Fund

Web page: <http://romapolicy.eu>

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