

# COUNCIL OF EUROPE

## Working Paper “Romani Minority Act”

**Sponsors: Republic of Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Republic of North Macedonia, Republic of Poland, Russian Federation, Kingdom of Spain, Kingdom of Sweden**

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

*Acknowledging* the fact that the Romani constitute the largest ethnic minority in Europe,

*Concerned* by the recent surge in racist and violent attacks against Romani people across Europe,

*Deeply conscious* of the fact that Romani continue to face discrimination in education, healthcare, and society, which impacts all areas of life,

*Aware* of the continued failure of many Romani children to complete secondary education, making it difficult for Roma to improve their economic prospects,

*Recognizing* that significant measures must finally be taken so that Romani enjoy equal rights in all European countries,

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1. *Condemns* the enduring inability of various European nations to prevent violence and racist attacks against their Romani population and the lack of legislative protection;
  2. *Proposes* the creation of an EU-funded body that is responsible for the wellbeing of Romani people in European countries and that would involve:
    - a. facilitating integration of Romani people into society of the respective countries,
    - b. facilitating movement of Romani people in the Schengen area,
    - c. conducting a voluntary census including personal details such as name, age, occupation but also region of origin and occupation of relatives with the goal of:
      - i. finding relatives who have been affected by ethnic cleansing,
      - ii. making it easier for retribution funds to reach them;
  3. *Urges* the promotion of inclusive and effective educational systems, based on the principles of equity, non-discrimination and respect for diversity, which will contribute to the integration of the Romani population in each country;
  4. *Invites* states to implement programs to reduce and eventually extinguish the stigmatization of health-related issues among Romani populations by:
    - a. Building trust between Romani communities and local healthcare officials,
    - b. Ensuring accessibility to healthcare for all,
    - c. Educating Romani communities on various health issues, such as:

- i. The seriousness of mental health issues, as well as the potentially tragic consequences of ignoring these,
    - ii. The importance of reproductive health, especially in young girls,
    - iii. The benefits of modern medicine,
  - d. Breaking down language barriers;
- 5. *Reaffirms* the importance of not only unilateral, but also bi- and multilateral collaboration to extend health programs as exemplified in 4. across borders;
- 6. *Stresses* the importance of education in keeping the Romani out of poverty and promoting social integration, and therefore urges countries to:
  - a. Increase the participation rate of Roma children, especially Romani girls, in the pre-school and pre-university education system by:
    - i. Organising information and awareness campaigns for parents to register and enroll children in the compulsory curriculum,
    - ii. Supporting educational initiatives including recommendations to include Romani culture into the curriculum,
    - iii. Ensuring the access of Romani children to kindergartens and nurseries,
    - iv. Ensuring the transport of Romani children in the localities that do not have a teaching institution at the institution in the nearest locality,
    - v. Providing Romani students under the conditions established by law with textbooks,
  - b. Improve the education of Romani children (6-18 years) by compulsory schooling in order to reduce the rate of absenteeism and early school drop outs by:
    - i. Providing Romani students with accommodation in the homes of technical and higher education institutions,
    - ii. Encouraging nations to include the Romani language as as elective classes in school curricula,
    - iii. Recommending that nations integrate Romani cultural studies in to school curricula,
    - iv. Training of educators and teachers in densely populated Romani communities on interethnic tolerance, intercultural tolerance and the elimination of prejudices,
    - v. Encouraging Romani parents to participate in boards of administration of educational institutions,
    - vi. Ensuring access of young Romani to studies with budget funding for programs in the field of security and public order;
- 7. *Recommends* governments make explicit reference to the Romani population and culture in their education laws;
- 8. *Asks* countries guarantee decent housing conditions for Roma people and improve the quality of their lives by:
  - a. Implementing projects and programs for the construction of social homes for ethnic Romani in disadvantaged families,
  - b. Connecting households of Romani people to the electricity, gas and water supply network,
  - c. Identifying the possibilities of granting material aid to Romani from socially vulnerable families for the rehabilitation/reparation of dwelling houses, according to the legislation in force,
  - d. Increasing the rate of employment of Romani people by

- i. Registering Romani people seeking employment at the territorial agencies for the employment of persons and providing mediation services for the purpose of employment or re-employment,
    - ii. Providing guidance and training services to Romani people, especially women, registered with the territorial employment agencies,
  - e. Supporting the number of Romani people benefiting from social protection by
    - i. promoting entrepreneurial activity and securing employment in the public private sector,
    - ii. Granting social protection in case of unemployment, in accordance with the legislation in force,
    - iii. Organizing information and awareness campaigns for the Romani community on employment opportunities,
    - iv. Organizing training courses for Romani people, especially women, who want to start a business,
    - v. Providing social assistance to Romani families;
- 9. *Encourages* countries to adopt legislation that,
  - a. recognizes the Romani people as an official minority,
  - b. protects the right of the Romani people to use their own language;
- 10. *Welcomes* the integration of Romani people in the society, thereby combatting discrimination, by:
  - a. Registering Romani children and releasing civil status documents to Romani people,
  - b. Organizing campaigns to inform Romani communities about their rights, as well as the need and benefits of documentation through identity papers (information campaigns, distribution of informative materials, TV spots, posters, announcements in local newspapers),
  - c. The creation of national contact institutions for the protection of the rights of Romani people giving legal aid if necessary.