



FACT SHEET 28

An overview of the work on Roma of international organisations and networks

July 2006

This fact sheet aims to provide ENAR members with a brief overview of international governmental and non-governmental organisations which work with and on behalf of Roma in Europe. Each entry gives a short introduction on the organisation's work (based on information provided on the organisation's websites), and a web link.

1. Non-governmental international organisations and networks

- **ERGO, European Roma Grassroots Organisations**

Five independent Roma organisations have recently joined together, forming this international network. The aim is to work for equal opportunities for Roma in Central and Eastern Europe to participate in all spheres of life, while keeping their identity and being free to express it. ERGO focuses on Roma empowerment based on a strong grassroots Roma movement. Convincing the majority Roma population to participate in a movement able to solve Roma issue is in the interest not just of Roma but also of the majority population.

Website: <http://www.ergonetwork.org/> (in English, still under construction)

- **ERIO, European Roma Information Office**

ERIO, established in 2003 and based in Brussels, contributes to the political and public discussions surrounding Roma by providing factual and in-depth information. It works to counteract the discrimination and exclusion of Romani communities and to contribute to equal representation and participation of Roma in political decision-making. In particular, ERIO seeks to convince EU institutions of the importance of prioritizing equitable development opportunities for Roma in all current and future EU member states, especially those with large Roma populations. ERIO concentrates its efforts in the areas of desegregation and anti-discrimination policies in schools, citizenship and housing rights. ERIO's activities focus on information provision, lobbying and advocacy.

Website: <http://www.erionet.org/> (English + 11 other languages)

- **ERRC, European Roma Rights Centre**

The ERRC is an international public interest law organisation engaging in a range of activities aimed at combating anti-Romani racism and human rights abuse of Roma. The approach of the ERRC involves, in particular, strategic litigation, international advocacy, research and policy development, and training of Romani activists. Since its establishment in 1996, the ERRC has endeavoured to give Roma the tools necessary to combat discrimination and win equal access to government, education, employment, health care, housing and public services. The ERRC works to combat prejudice and discrimination against Roma, and to promote genuine equality of treatment and equality of respect.

Website: <http://www.errc.org/> (English, Romani, Russian)

- **ERTF, European Roma and Travellers Forum**

The ERTF is an international independent NGO which aims to give Roma and Travellers the possibility to participate in and influence decision-making processes in issues concerning them, openly and officially. The idea behind the ERTF was to create for the Roma a body having close and privileged links with the Council of Europe. This relationship can take the form of a hearing, participation at meetings, providing expert advice. The Forum may also seek consultative relations with other international institutions and organisations, and with governments. The Forum is open to Roma, Sinti, Kale, Travellers and other related groups. The ERTF members are national umbrella organisations and Roma international organisations.

Website: http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/FERV/default_en.asp (English and French) - New website under construction: <http://www.ertf.org/>

- **OSI, Open Society Institute**

OSI is a major NGO funder and policy advocate on Roma issues in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, working on a wide range of issues, including civil society development, education, media, gender, local government and health.

- **Roma Initiatives (RI)**

OSI established the RI office in order to improve the combined impact of its Roma work and to make a consistent contribution to the Decade of Roma Inclusion (see below). The purpose of this office is to guide and coordinate all aspects of OSI network programming and grant making activity related to Roma beneficiaries, including work presently undertaken by other OSI initiatives and Soros foundations.

Website: <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/roma> (English)

- **Roma Participation Program (RPP)**

The RPP is a grants program that supports Roma activism in Central and Eastern Europe to take charge of their lives, to participate in decisions that affect them, and to advocate for their rights as equal citizens of their own countries. RPP provides institutional support and training to grassroots Romani NGOs engaged in community-issues advocacy. In addition, RPP supports broad-based campaigns aimed at systemic policy reform at the national level through funding projects by Romani NGOs that

have the requisite professionalism to operate on the national and international levels. The desegregation of schools is the current primary example of this type of funding. Website: http://www.soros.org/initiatives/roma/focus_areas/rpp (English)

- **Roma Women's Initiative (RWI)**

The RWI promotes the human rights of Roma women by empowering Roma women activists in Central and Eastern Europe, in particular young Romany women's leadership. RWI raises public awareness in the Roma community and society in general about the human rights of Roma women, who face a range of prejudices coming from both "traditional" Roma communities and societies with strongly defined gender roles. The Roma Women's Initiative seeks to prepare Roma women activists to address discrimination and advocate for policy change at local, national and international levels. It does this through networking, capacity-building, technical assistance, leadership development, educational and economic empowerment, advocacy and lobbying programmes.

Website: <http://www.romawomensinitiatives.org/> (English)

2. (Inter-)Governmental initiatives

- **Council of Europe (CoE), Roma and Travellers**

Since 1993, the Roma and Travellers issue has been at the heart of three of the CoE's top priorities: protection of minorities, the fight against racism and intolerance and the fight against social exclusion. In 1995, the Committee of Ministers set up a [Specialist Group on Roma, Gypsies and Travellers](#) issues, tasked with advising member states on all matters related to Roma, Gypsies and Travellers and encouraging international authorities to take action where needed. One of the main objectives of the CoE is to encourage member states to adopt a comprehensive approach to Roma and Travellers issues. One of the fundamental principles guiding the CoE is participation of the communities concerned, through Roma & Travellers representatives and associations.

Website: http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/Default_en.asp (English and French)

- **Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005-2015**

The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 is an initiative adopted by eight countries in Central and Southeast Europe and supported by the international community. An action framework for governments, the Decade will monitor progress in accelerating social inclusion and improving the economic and social status of Roma across the region. The Decade is a political commitment by countries to reduce disparities in key economic and human development outcomes for Roma through implementing policy reforms and programs designed to break the vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion. The Decade is a major international effort to meet the common European challenge of Roma inclusion in a coordinated, open and transparent way.

Website: <http://www.romadecade.org/> (English and Romani)

- **European Commission**

While much of the responsibility for addressing the challenges of discrimination and exclusion lies at national, regional and local levels, the EU has a range of policies and programmes which can help to support these efforts. Within the European Commission, an Inter-Service Group – bringing together 14 different departments and chaired by the Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities DG – coordinates the different policies and programmes tackling Roma issues. These range from the legal framework for equal treatment and non-discrimination to forums for policy cooperation and provision of financial resources. The Commission aims to promote social inclusion and combat discrimination against Roma. Given the broad nature of these challenges, support is also provided across a broad range of policy areas and activities.

Website (English, German, French):

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/roma/index_en.htm

- **EUMC, European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia**

Addressing the situation of Roma and Travellers has been an ongoing priority for the EUMC. Specific work on the Roma and Travellers includes: (1) special studies, such as Breaking the Barriers - Romani Women and Access to Public Healthcare and Roma and Travellers in public education, (2) close cooperation with intergovernmental organisations, such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe and (3) empowerment of Romani women. The EUMC has engaged in policy dialogue with the European Institutions, and other relevant partners in order to contribute to improvement of situation of Roma and Travellers in Europe.

Website: www.eumc.eu.int (English)

- **OSCE/ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti issues**

OSCE/ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) deals with a variety of issues related to Roma and Sinti: racism and discrimination; security of residence; trafficking in human beings; exclusion from public and political life; Roma rights in crisis and post-crisis situations. ODIHR's Contact Point for Roma and Sinti issues carries out activities in the framework of the 2003 OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area. The Contact Point addresses these issues either directly through its programmes or by promoting the establishment of institutional frameworks at local and national levels designed to advise governments and administrations on policy-making on Roma and Sinti affairs.

Website: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/18148.html> (English)

- **REF, Roma Education Fund**

The REF was created in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Its goal is to contribute to closing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma through policies and programs to support quality education for Roma, including desegregation of educational systems. The REF finances projects that meet its goals and are proposed and implemented by governments, NGOs and private organizations.

The REF supports greater research, studies and evaluations that contribute to effective policies and programs for inclusion of Roma in national education systems. The REF supports exchange of ideas, views and experiences across the Decade countries but also with any country that has relevant experience in promoting the goals of the REF. Website: <http://www.romaeducationfund.org/> (English)

For further information contact:

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ENAR is a network of some 600 European NGOs working to combat racism in all EU Member States. Its establishment was a major outcome of the 1997 European Year against Racism. ENAR is determined to fight racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, to promote equality of treatment between EU citizens and third country nationals, and to link local/regional/national initiatives with European initiatives.



ENAR is funded by the European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs, Anti-Discrimination Unit.



ERIO is an international advocacy organisation promoting political and public discussion on Roma issues by providing factual and in-depth information on a range of policy issues to the European Union institutions, Roma civil society organisations, government authorities and intergovernmental organisations. ERIO cooperates with a network of more than 250 organisations. ERIO promotes the inclusion of Roma into European societies and supports efforts by Roma NGOs to gain access to European Union structures. The ultimate aim of ERIO is to eradicate discrimination against Roma and social exclusion of Roma communities.