



Appendix VI

Manual to Participation in the European Roma and Travellers Forum

European Roma and Travellers Forum
c/o Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 67000 France
tel: (33) 03 9021 5350
www.ertf.org

Participation in the European Roma and Travellers Forum

Step one. In each country of the Council of Europe, Roma organizations may send an 'expression of interest' to the ERTF. This lets the ERTF know that the organization wants to participate.

Step two. Some organization(s) in each country will offer to arrange a meeting for all the organizations which sent their 'expression of interest' to the ERTF. The ERTF will share with the organizer(s) of the meeting the list of organizations which sent their expression of interest and which must, therefore, be invited.

Step three. The meeting will take place. The meeting should establish a national forum, or standing conference. This group may ask for membership in the ERTF and may select delegates to represent it at the ERTF. The organizer(s) of the meeting will send a report to the ERTF.

Step four. The ERTF Electoral Review Commission will study the report and advise the ERTF whether correct procedure was followed.

The ERTF Executive Committee will decide on approval of members and delegates to the ERTF.

An ERTF plenary assembly will bring together all delegates to meet in Strasbourg.

The ERTF insists that every national forum, which wants to be a member of the ERTF, must be open always to new members. Any Roma organization which sends its expression of interest to the ERTF should have the right to participate, by joining the national forum.

The members of the ERTF are national fora. A national forum must be a standing conference of organizations which have first sent their expression of interest to the ERTF.

Read below for more details and answered to usual questions.

Why be interested in the ERTF?

The European Roma and Travellers Forum is the first and only organization of its kind. It was created after negotiations between Roma organizations, Council of Europe officials, and representatives of more than 40 European governments. The European Roma and Travellers Forum has a unique Partnership Agreement with the Council of Europe, making it a special consulting partner on policies and activities concerning our communities. The European Roma and Travellers Forum is today the largest international Roma and Traveller organization. The Forum is the only international-level Roma

organization bringing together NGOs, political parties, religious organizations and other types of representation like “self-governments”.

The European Roma and Travellers Forum, ERTF meets and cooperates with the United Nations, European Parliament, European Commission, OSCE and Council of Europe structures like the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, ECRI, Commissioner for Human Rights and others.

What is the ERTF?

The ERTF is the largest and most representative international Roma organization. It is the only international Roma organization which brings together NGOs, political parties and other types of institutions.

The ERTF is an independent structure; it is not governmental or part of any intergovernmental institution. The ERTF has a unique Partnership Agreement with the Council of Europe. The Partnership Agreement makes the ERTF a special consultation partner on policy and activity which concerns Roma and Traveller peoples. The ERTF has observer status or other formal arrangements with Council of Europe institutions and with key international organizations which work on Roma issues.

What is the job of the ERTF?

As written in the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers document CM(2004)179, the Forum aims “to secure the effective exercise by Roma and Travellers of their rights and fundamental freedoms, to prevent racism and discrimination, and to further their integration in the countries where they are located.” The Forum’s main task is to offer “opinions and make proposals to decision-making bodies in Europe at international, national, regional or local level in order to influence decision-making processes”.

I What type of organization can be involved?

The European Roma and Travellers Forum (the Forum) is open to any interested organization of Roma, Sinti, Kalé, Travellers and related groups in Europe, as written in the organization’s statute. To be short, all types of persons who may face discrimination because the majority see them as ‘Gypsies’ or “Travellers” will be called Roma in this manual.

The Forum is open to participation of many types of organizations. The first step is to register; any organization may register with the ERTF by filling out the ‘expression of interest’.

International NGOs *and* national organizations are welcome.

National organizations such as NGOs, political parties with Roma elected members in the national or regional Parliament, advisory bodies or “self-government” bodies can participate.

An international NGO which wants to participate should have members in at least ten countries of the Council of Europe, should have at least 4 years of activity and produce annual audit statements for them and must be financially independent of national government support.

Who or what is a member of the ERTF?

People are not members of the Forum. National fora can be members of the ERTF. **All the organizations in each country which want to participate in the ERTF will come together in one national meeting and will make a national forum.** The national forum must have at least 75% of those organizations which have sent their ‘expression of interest’ to the ERTF. **The national forum may become a member of the ERTF.**

International Roma organizations also have the right to become members of the ERTF. See section IV.

What is an “expression of interest”?

The ‘expression of interest’ is a questionnaire. Filling it out allows the ERTF to know that your organization wants to be involved. In each country, there will be a meeting and all the organizations in that country, which sent their registration expression of interest to the ERTF will be invited.

Who organizes the national meeting?

Any type of organization can be the convenor of the meeting. It will be organized by an organization, which must first ask the ERTF for permission. If more than one organization asks for permission to hold the meeting, the Forum will ask them to cooperate and to arrange the meeting together. Several organizers may co-organize the meeting.

It is important that every organization which sent its expression of interest to the ERTF is invited to the meeting and that each has one vote. The ERTF will give the organizer or organizers of the meeting the list of all organizations to be invited.

As explained above, an expression of interest is like voter registration. Each organization fills out one expression of interest and should have one vote at the national meeting.

My organization is an umbrella group with many NGOs inside it. Do we have more votes than other organizations?

Section III 3 b of the Rules of Procedure explains that one umbrella group is counted as one organization with one vote. If an umbrella group wants its member organizations to each have the right to vote, then each organization may fill out and send to Strasbourg an ‘expression of interest’ form.

At the meeting, participants should do three things:

Firstly, at least 75% of the organizations which are registered with the ERTF should form a common association (a national forum or standing conference). That forum does not need to be a legal entity but it must have signatures of participation of all its member organizations. The ERTF must be able to know that it truly has the signed and agreed membership of at least 75% of those same organizations which registered with the ERTF.

This new national forum has the right to ask to become a “member” of the Forum. As a member, it may send a delegation to Forum meetings.

Second, the members of the national forum may nominate and elect delegates to represent itself to the ERTF.

Third, they should elect substitutes who can go to ERTF meetings if the delegates are unable. (see section IIIe)

A national forum will only be allowed to become a member of the Forum if its members include at least 75% of the organizations which registered with the Forum. The ERTF will only accept one member umbrella group from each country.

After a meeting where a forum is made and delegates selected, the organizer of the meeting should send a report to the ERTF. The ERTF **Electoral Review Commission** will study the report and make a recommendation to the ERTF’s leadership on whether the rules have been followed and whether any investigation or other action is needed. Anyone who wants to offer to be the organizer of a national meeting for electing delegates should read the Forum’s statute and Rules of Procedure.

What is the Electoral Review Commission?

The Commission is a voluntary group which studies results of national forum meetings and reports to the president of the ERTF on whether ERTF rules were followed. The Commission is comprised of persons from the OSCE, Council of Europe, European Parliament and legal counsel to the ERTF.

III How many delegates can a national forum send with voting rights to the Forum?

According to the Rules of Procedure, the number of voting representatives from one country at a Forum plenary session depends on the number of Roma in that country.

- 1 - 100 000 1 delegate
- 100 000 - 500 000 2 delegates
- 500 000 - 1 million 3 delegates
- over 1 million 4 delegates

Every delegate should have three substitutes.

IIIa Why must organizations in a country have a forum? What is its role?

The organizations in your country which want to participate may, as a group, send delegates to the ERTF. It must be clear who a delegate represents, who sent him or her. Therefore, it is necessary that the organizations which have expressed interest in participation in the ERTF (at least 75% of those organizations) come together and form a group, so that there is some group which gives the delegates his/her mandate and to whom the delegate must be responsible.

In our country, we already have an umbrella group or federation in which many Roma organizations participate. Why create another?

The group which wants to send delegates to the ERTF must have, as its members, at least 75% of those organizations which sent their 'expression of interest' to the ERTF.

What is a delegate?

A delegate is a person chosen by the national forum to represent that national forum at meetings of the ERTF.

The ERTF does not pay delegates. Delegates' travel, accommodation and some other expenses for their participation in ERTF meetings will be covered. The delegates are not employees of, and are not representatives of the ERTF. They are representatives to the ERTF; they are representatives of their national forum.

What is a substitute?

A substitute is a person elected by the national forum to represent it if, for any reason, the delegate is not able to go to an ERTF meeting. The substitute, when replacing a delegate, will have the same rights which a delegates normally has (including voting rights).

International Roma Organizations

An international NGO should have members in at least ten countries of the Council of Europe, should have at least 4 years of activity and produce annual audit statements for them and must be financially independent of national government support.

Any international Roma NGO which meets these criteria may send its 'expression of interest' to the Forum. The Executive Committee of the Forum will decide whether to approve the international Roma NGO as a member. International Roma organizations which have membership in the Forum have the right to appoint three delegates to the Forum.

What is the Executive Committee?

The Executive Committee is a group of 22 Roma who created the ERTF. According to the Statutes, their role is to lead the organization until the first general assembly of delegates. They have several responsibilities at this phase according to the Statutes and Rules of Procedure.

Gender Balance

According to the statute and Rules of Procedure of the Forum, any member of the ERTF should consider gender when choosing delegates.

Who finances the Forum?

The ERTF has financial support from the Council of Europe.

Languages in the ERTF

The statute gives the Forum three working languages; Romani, English and French. At meetings of the Forum, interpreters will provide translation for those three languages.

Where is the ERTF located?

The Forum is legally registered in Strasbourg, France. It has a Secretariat (office) at the Council of Europe.

Contact:

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