

Appendix 8

European Roma and Travellers Forum

Policy Paper on Romani Language October 2005

It is the view of the ERTF that;

- The Romani language must be recognized as a language, according to the Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, in every member state. It must be allocated a position in the national curriculum and afforded an appropriate budget.
- It is the belief of the ERTF that the Romani language should also have status as an European language.
- The lack of an internationally recognized 'standard dialect' is not a barrier to a state's implementation of rights related to language use and learning. Roma and Travellers, like others have language-related rights which can and should be respected.
- Roma and Travellers must have the opportunity to choose bilingual education, so that they may learn both in the national language and in their own language. This must be a choice of parents and not of the schooling system or others.
- Romani language teaching must be available in different forms for pupils who speak the language at home and pupils with no prior basis in the language.
- The goal of teaching Romani language is not only to enable a student to speak one dialect well but also to understand and have some knowledge of the Romani used by others across Europe. While a Standard Dialect is not needed, mutual comprehension and 'linguistic pluralism' are essential.
- It is desirable to pursue international networking for the production of texts and teaching materials in Romani, even if one accepts that material creation is ultimately regional, national or local. There is every reason to draw on a wider pool of talent, experience and expertise and pursue the development of language resources for Romani in an international context.
- Teacher training should not only be carried out on the national level; teacher training organized at the European level would be valuable.
- The acquisition of literacy itself is best carried out in the language variety that the learner – child or adult – can call their own. But subsequent

language teaching can and should incorporate strategies to acquaint learners with different forms of written Romani.

- An electronic pool of teaching resources would allow teachers to have access to a range of materials, and to choose and adapt those that may be of use to them. The ERTF should be entrusted with funds for a project which would create such an electronic multi-dialectal resource for educators;
- Much of the above goals are furthered well by the current work of the Council of Europe's ad-hoc group on a curriculum framework for Romani.
- Young people should be able to study Romani without losing the opportunity to study other subjects.
- Whenever a country's compliance to the Charter is examined, the Secretariat of the Charter should consult the ERTF on whether a Roma or Traveller population is present and has concerns.
- There is a link between protection of the Romani language and Roma's integration in the countries where they live. Protection and promotion of Romani teaches both Roma and their non-Roma neighbours that Roma have a place in that society.
- The ERTF asks the Committee of Experts of the Charter to consider taking a Romani person with relevant expertise as a permanent member of the Committee.