

# **Roma people and the Europeanization process. The status of European minority.**

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**Abstract:** The paper: "Roma people and the Europeanization process. The status of European minority" focuses on the Europeanization process for the Roma people and what are the main key moments in defining them as an European minority. Furthermore, it is important to present how the Europeanization process impacted the Roma community and what are the principal changes that have emerged through gaining the status of European minority.

**Keywords:** *Europeanization, European minority, Roma people*

## **1.Introduction**

The process of "Europeanization" is an often used term that sometimes captures competing processes and sometimes staggered ones that specifically refer to institutional isomorphism and policy convergence. It is also suggestive of the movement, far from a purely intergovernmental organisation towards a European policy, or at least, a more integrated European political regime. Krasner suggests that regimes are "sets of principles, norms, rules and implicit or explicit decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a particular area of international relations"<sup>1</sup>

The Institutions of the European Union have contributed to the development and building of a pan-European Roma identity. This new identity is primarily a political one because, linguistically and culturally, the Roma are still largely a heterogeneous group. Europeanisation has helped to develop a general human rights regime and a 'solution-oriented' human rights narrative. For its part, this has presented to minority groups, especially the Roma, a series of previously unknown political opportunities, both at European Union level and at the level of the other states in the European area.

As a consequence of Europeanisation, ethnic/minority groups realize and/or discover a more pronounced, consolidated national identity, or at least the shell of one. The expectations and assumptions of minority groups, in this case the Roma, and the ways of contention at their disposal, align themselves in such a way as to produce regularity and synergy between a previously dispersed community.

## **2.The Europeanization process**

Europeanization is a somewhat amorphous process. However, it is suggestive of several contemporary developments, namely, the harmonization of institutional convergence policies, and normative reordering between (and within) European states. It has been identified both as a cause and as a consequence of European integration. Europeanisation is a concept closely linked to the accession and

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen D. Krasner, „Structural causes and regime consequences: regimes as intervening variables,” in *International Regimes*, ed. S. D. Krasner, (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1983), 2.

post-accession processes and encapsulates the 'merging' and 'bringing together of cultures' and political institutions in a broader European policy (or decision-making for a).

However, most may agree that Europeanisation is a multi-stage, complex and multi-level process. Radaelli stipulates that: "Europeanisation consists of processes of (a) construction, (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalisation of norms, procedures, political paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and common beliefs and norms which are first defined and strengthened in the EU policy process and then incorporated into the logic of internal discourse (national and sub-national), political structures and public elections"<sup>2</sup>

This is a comprehensive definition of the Process of Europeanisation, which highlights the downward flow of regulatory standards and institutional practices from the Institutions of the European Union to the Member States and emphasises structure, discourse and public choice. There is both a deliberate and unintentional side to this process, with norms, ideas and expectations generated at European, civil society and Member State level (which also exist outside Europe).

The European Union, and in particular the Commission, has been instrumental in supporting Europeanisation and the development of an ethos or a 'European' programme throughout the Union. This is, after all, one of their main functions. However, other European institutions outside the EU, such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), have done much to support the development and construction of a pan-European rights regime. In the field of Roma rights and integration, the OSCE has contributed to several comprehensive integration strategies and 'action plans'. Many of their recommendations are based on a particular conceptualisation of the Roma as a European minority (and, strangely, not a national minority) with a common cultural history and identity. The Council of Europe 1203 (1993) recommendations on Roma in Europe provide for:

1. One of the objectives of the Council of Europe is to promote the emergence of a genuine European cultural identity. Europe is home to many different cultures and all of them, including the many minority cultures, enrich and contribute to Europe's cultural diversity.
2. A special place among minorities is reserved for the Roma. Living scattered throughout Europe, not having a country to call their own, they are a real European minority, but one that does not fit into the definitions of national or linguistic minorities.
3. As a non-minority, the Roma contribute greatly to Europe's cultural diversity. In different parts of Europe, they contribute in different ways, whether through language and music, or through their crafts and crafts<sup>3</sup>

The first dating of Roma as an ethnic minority belonging to Europe was given by the Council of Europe in the late 1960s when it referred to "populations of nomadic origin" or "Gypsies and traveling groups"<sup>4</sup>.

In its Recommendation 563 (1969) on the situation of the Roma and other nomads in Europe, as well as the numerous questions it put to the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly drew attention to the situation of Roma communities.

The Minority Rights Group (GDM) first published a report on the Roma (or 'Gypsies', as they are known in Western Europe) in 1973 and has since followed with great interest the developments affecting

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<sup>2</sup> Adrian Favell and Virginie Guiraudon, eds. *Sociology of the European Union* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights has published several reports and 'action plans' summarising the difficult situation of the Roma and proposing a short- and long-term policy to help alleviate some of the institutionally generated prejudices that negatively affect Roma and Sinti. A report entitled, *The implementation of the Action Plan on improving the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area*, focuses on human security, police brutality and educational opportunities.

<sup>4</sup> Council of Europe, "The situation of Gypsies and other travellers in Europe," (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1969), "The role and responsibility of local and regional authorities in regard to the cultural and social problems of populations of nomadic origin," (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1981).

this minority. Following the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe and the significant changes in the situation of Roma communities in Europe as a whole, the GDM commissioned a fully updated report on The Roma/Gypsies: a European minority, from two recognized experts in this field. This report is seen as an active method of supporting the work of the Group on minority rights, especially where the GDM has established practical training initiatives with Roma communities to encourage emancipation and also multicultural education projects to inform and educate 'mainstream' communities.

Resolution 125 (1981) of the Permanent Conference of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CPALRC) which had as its main theme "On the role and responsibility of local and regional authorities with regard to the cultural and social problems of populations of nomadic origin" addressed in detail the general situation of Roma communities and presented a series of recommendations. In direct response to the education-related section of this resolution, the Council for Cultural Cooperation (CDCC) decided in 1983 to organise an international seminar, the first of its kind and which was to pave the way for the next. The Council of Europe has also provided both the initial impetus and the continued support for a number of publications, most of them related to education<sup>5</sup>.

It was not only the educational aspects that were taken into account. In 1983, the Committee of Ministers adopted Recommendation R(83)1 on stateless nomads and nomads of indefinite nationality. In 1986, the ad hoc committee of experts on the movement and identity documents of persons adopted the final activity report on the examination of legal issues relating to the movement of travellers. The Committee of Ministers highlighted some important points in response to members' questions. For example, at his meeting in April 1984, he gave an answer to question No. 271 "On the recognition of Roma as an ethnic minority".

The European Parliament adopted in March 1984 a resolution on the education of children with parents without a fixed home and another on the situation of Roma/Gypsies in which it recommended that the governments of the Member States coordinate their perspectives and called on the Commission to draw up Community-funded programmes aimed at improving the situation of the Roma without denying their cultural values<sup>6</sup>

### **3. The status of European minority**

However, bringing the Roma into question as a 'truly European' minority and launching programmes to monitor and improve the situation of the Roma is rather a post-social phenomenon. In the early 1990s, both the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe began to support the publication of extensive reports on the situation of Roma<sup>7</sup>.

The two institutions have also developed their own bodies that have been dedicated to Roma issues. The OSCE established a contact point for Roma and Sinti issues (the official name of the Roma minority in Germany) within the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in 1994 and formed the position of Adviser on Roma and Sinti issues in the OSCE area in 1998. The Council of Europe offered a place of coordinator on Roma issues in 1994 and set up a group of specialists on Roma, Gypsies and Nomads (also called travellers) in 1995, later called MS-S-Rom (Committee of Experts on Roma and Nomads) and initiated the European Forum for Roma and Nomads in 2004.

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<sup>5</sup> Training of Teachers of Gypsy Children, report of the twentieth Council of Europe seminar, Donaueschingen, 20-25 June 1983, Council for Cultural Cooperation, Council of Europe, DECS/EGT(83)63 (English, French and German editions, Council of Europe, Strasbourg;\*\*\* Italian version, Lacio Drom, Roma; Spanish version, Presencia Gitana, Madrid).

<sup>6</sup> Martin Kováts, "Problems of Intellectual and Political Accountability in Respect of Emerging European Roma Policy," Paper presented at the Romani Studies Seminar, University of Greenwich, 11 Jan., 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Rachel Guglielmo și Timothy Waters, "Migrating Towards Minority Status: Shifting European Policy Towards Roma", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 43, no., 4, (2005), Michael Merlingen, "Governmentality: Towards a Foucauldian Framework for the Study of IGOs", *Cooperation and Conflict*, 38, no., 4, (2003) 51 OSCE, "Implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area," (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2008)

For years, the EU has considered minority issues to be the internal affairs of the Member States. Later, although not as binding laws, but rather as a kind of 'common European standard', various policy principles of desirable minorities arose (European Convention on Human Rights, Copenhagen Document – 1990, Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities – 1995, Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam – 1997, EU Charter of Fundamental Rights – 2000).

The Commission and the Roma Research Centre of the René Descartes University in Paris have produced a critical overview of the situation in terms of providing school services to Roma/Gypsy children in the Community. The European Commission organised meetings of Roma/Gypsy experts to guide and coordinate the study and subsequently to discuss the recommendations; the resulting report, *School Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Children*, was published in late 1986. Following a continuation of the study to cover the new Member States of Portugal and Spain, the exercise culminated on 22 May 1989 with the adoption by the Council and the Ministers of Education of a resolution on the provision of school services for Roma children.

At the beginning of the 1990s, a change in speeches and practices from the European institutions could be seen, the Roma would become partners in programmes aimed at improving their socio-economic situation.

The activities that led to the design of the first Council of Europe and OSCE documents attempted the 'transnational' option of an external symbolic homeland in the mid-1990s. These first specialised European programmes for the Roma used the language of human rights as a kind of international moral standard and gradually reached a transnational community approach, which could be called 'post-national citizenship'. This special status of Roma seems to have been strengthened by the Council of Europe Decision No. 1203, which refers to Roma as "a real European minority".<sup>8</sup>

More and more actions have been taken at both State and Union level, in particular the development of a multilingual newsletter and support for publications, inter-school exchanges, the organisation of regular meetings, the creation of networks of pilot projects, assistance to enable Roma/Gypsy organisations to organise meetings on school-related topics, etc.

At the end of the Copenhagen meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the OSCE in June 1990, the participating states adopted a very important document. This last document says that these states have come together "to strengthen respect for and exercise all human rights and fundamental freedoms, develop human contacts and solve related humanitarian problems". Chapter IV is entirely dedicated to national minorities: Article 40 focuses on issues related to racism, and it is important to note that Roma/Gypsies are the only minority nominally mentioned in this context.

Following the Copenhagen meeting, an OSCE expert group on national minorities held a meeting in Geneva in July 1991. In Chapter VI of the final report of this meeting, the participating states expressed their concern about the spread of acts of violence on racial, ethnic or religious grounds. In this context:

Participating States ... to reaffirm its recognition of the specific problems of roma (gypsies). They are ready to take effective measures to achieve full equality of opportunity between people belonging to Roma communities who habitually live in their state and the rest of the resident population. They also encourage research and studies on the Roma and the specific problems they face''<sup>9</sup>.

Following a hearing in 1991, CALRE organised a meeting in Slovakia in 1992, bringing together local authorities, representatives of Roma communities and experts. This confirmed the results of the 1991 hearing. Its conclusions stressed both the need to update and reactivate the 1981 resolution and to present concrete working proposals. CALRE decided, on the basis of the combined conclusions of the hearing and the colloquium, to prepare a new text. Resolution 249(1993), entitled 'On the Gypsies of Europe: the role and responsibility of local and regional authorities', was adopted in March 1993.

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<sup>8</sup> Soysal, "Changing Citizenship in Europe," pp. 17–29.

<sup>9</sup> Document of the Copenhagen meeting of the conference on the human dimension of the CSCE, 1990. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/c/14304.pdf>.

One of the internationally recognized Roma activists, Nicolae Gheorghe together with Andrzej Mirga, launched in the mid-1990s in a policy document, the transnational identity project that can be used as a political strategy and as a political goal, remarked: "Why have we used the concept of 'transnational' from a wide range of concepts at our disposal to describe non-territorial or dispersed minorities? The idea is to indicate that we can evolve in a different way from the national minorities of nation-states [...] We can build an ethnic dynamic and a new image [...] by interacting with non-national or supra-national institutions"<sup>10</sup>

Recommendation 1203 of 1993 of the Council of Europe stated that "living scattered throughout Europe, without having a specific country of their own, gypsies are a real European minority [...] which contributes to Europe's cultural diversity"<sup>11</sup>

At an OSCE-organised seminar on minorities (Warsaw, 1993), in connection with the work of the subgroup on 'dispersed minorities', questions about the Roma were again highly discussed. In 1994, the OSCE, in cooperation with the Council of Europe, organised another seminar in Warsaw, this time focusing on the situation of Roma communities in particular. This seminar confirmed and strengthened the working guidelines and concepts developed over several years, and a significant willingness for inter-institutional cooperation has been demonstrated in connection with the development of a partnership involving Roma organisations. The Roma showed up again at the OSCE meeting in Budapest in the autumn of that year, when the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) was mandated to develop a "contact point" for Roma issues.

In June 2000, a general anti-discrimination programme called the 'EU Directives on Race and Occupation' was adopted. The deadline for implementation of the Directives in the Member States was July 2004. However, according to REIR (European Network against Racism), few Member States have complied with.

#### **4. Conclusion**

As a first conclusion after going through these data, we can see the road that the Roma population had to travel, a road that is part of their cultural identity. Through the years, their identity suffered many challenges and changes that have emerged into forming a new form of political status.

The Europeanization process marked a turning point in the evolution of the Roma people and its community by offering a series of opportunities that were never unlocked before. By undergoing this process, they managed to develop a new identity, which will shape their day to day lifestyle. Furthermore, the Roma people have acquired new skills that are required as an European member.

The European Union and especially, the Council of Europe played an essential role in shaping this new identity for the Roma people. Through their many Recommendations, they managed to secure a place for the Roma as an European minority.

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<sup>10</sup> Gheorghe Nicolae 1997, p. 161 apud David Mayall, *Gypsy Identities 1500–2000. From Egipcians and Moonmen to the Ethnic Romany* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

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