

**Center for Documentation and Information  
on Minorities in Europe - Southeast Europe (CEDIME-SE)**

**MINORITIES IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE**

**Roma of Romania**

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# **MAJOR CHARACTERISTICS**

**Updated: November 2001**

**State** Romania

**Name (in English, in the dominant language and, if different, in the minority language)**

Roma (English), Țigani, or sometimes Romi (Romanian), Rom (the language of the minority).

**Is there any form of recognition of the minority?**

Yes. The government Department for the Protection of National Minorities has a National Office for Roma. As a recognised national minority Roma are afforded protection under the constitution and the domestic legislation adopted with national minorities in mind. They are also guaranteed rights under the international agreements signed by Romania. In addition, since 1990 a significant number of Roma associations have been formed (see Addresses).

**Category(ies) (national, ethnic, linguistic or religious) ascribed by the minority and, if different, by the state.**

National.

**Territory they inhabit.**

Very scattered. Communities exist countrywide.

**Population**

According to the 1992 census, 409,723 (1.8 per cent). Other estimates; up to 1.8 million (7.9 per cent). Some organisations have put the figure as high as 2,5 million (Minority Rights Group, 1997: 240). The Research Institute for Quality of Life estimates a number between 1,452,700 and 1,588,552 (hetero-identified) in 1998, among them there are 922,465 to 1,002,381 (self identified) (The Research Institute for Quality of Life, 2000).

**Name of the language spoken by the minority (in English, in the minority and, if different, in the dominant language).**

Romani, spoken by approximately 60 per cent.

**Is there any form of recognition of the minority's language?**

Romania signed and ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 1995 in which it is stipulated that "every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use freely and without interference his or her minority

language, in private and in public, orally and in writing” (Article 10, 11 and 14). Romani is the language of instruction in some classes in an increasing number of schools.

**Dominant language of the territory they inhabit.**

Mainly Romanian. In some areas of Transylvania the Hungarian language is dominant (Harghita, Covasna, and isolated areas in other counties).

**Occasionally or daily use of the minority language.**

Depending on the area, Romani is either used occasionally (i.e. in communities where Roma are not a majority and do not have regular contact with other Roma) or daily (i.e. by children in schools).

**Access to education corresponding to the needs of the minority.**

The institutional school system is not responding satisfactorily to the needs (see section 6) (Florin Moisa, 2000).

**Religion(s) practiced.**

Orthodox (83.5 per cent), Catholic (4.7 per cent), and Protestant (4.3 per cent) depending on the area in which they are located and the dominant religion in that area (Census from 1992, Vol. I, 1994: 784).

**Is there any form of recognition of the religion(s)?**

Yes. All are recognized officially.

**Communities having the same characteristics in other territories/countries.**

Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey. Ireland and the U.K. have populations of ‘Travellers’ (not to be confused with ‘New-Age Travellers’ or ‘Gypsies’). There are also people who refer to themselves as ‘Roma’ in the U.K.

**Population of these communities in the other territories/countries of Central and Southeast Europe.**

All of the following are from the World Directory of Minorities (Minority Rights Group, 1997) except where stated otherwise.

- Albania – 1989 census no figure returned. Estimated up to 100,000 (2.9 per cent)
- Bosnia-Herzegovina – Estimated pre-1992 at 100,000 (2.3 per cent)
- Bulgaria – (1992 census) 312,000 (3.7 per cent)
- Croatia – thought to be as high as 18,000 (0.37 per cent)

- Czech Republic – 33,500 (0.3 per cent). Other estimates; up to 300,000 (2.9 per cent)
- Cyprus – 500 – 1,000 (0.07 – 0.13 per cent)
- Federation Republic of Yugoslavia – 137, 265 (1.3 per cent). Other estimates; 500,000 (4.8 per cent)
- Greece – official estimates: 160,000 – 200,000 (1.5 – 1.9 per cent); MRG-G estimates around 350,000
- Hungary – (1990 census) 143,000 (1.3 per cent). Other estimates; 250,000 – 800,000 (2.4 – 7.8 per cent)
- Macedonia – No census figures. Other estimates 200,000 (10.3 per cent)
- Moldavia – 20,000 – 25,000.
- Poland – 15,000 (0.03 per cent)
- Slovakia – 80,600 (1.5 per cent). Other estimates; up to 350,000 (6.6 per cent)
- Slovenia – 2,293 (0.11 per cent). Unofficial estimate; 7,000 (0.35 per cent)
- Turkey – approx. 50,000 (0.08 per cent)

## PRESENTATION

### 1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### o *Important historical developments*

Early accounts of the existence of Roma people in mediaeval Europe are scant. It is believed that these first Roma came to Eastern Europe from India. Over the course of centuries they moved westward through Persia, Armenia and the Byzantine Empire towards Europe. They were mentioned in the year 1000, when they reached the Byzantine Empire (Timeline of Romani History, 2000). It is difficult to find consensus on when Roma first entered Wallachia and Moldavia (the two Romanian historic provinces). According to Jonathan Fox (Fox, 1995) it is clear that they arrived by the 11<sup>th</sup> century from what are today's Northwest India and Pakistan as part of a great migration. Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu translated and analysed (between 1867 and 1877) some documents from Tismana monastery's archives. One of these, from 1387, signed by Mircea the Great, indicates that Gypsies had been in Wallachia for almost a century before that. The other document, dated 1385, was in a form of a receipt for forty families of Gypsy slaves presented as a gift (Hancock, 1999).

The issue of Roma slavery is very controversial. Jirechek, Potra and Chelcea (cited by Hancock, 1999) have suggested not only that slavery was an inherent condition of Roma, originating in their pariah status in the Sudra caste in India, but also that they were slaves from the very time of their arrival in south eastern Europe, since they were brought in as such by the conquering Tatars. Another possibility is that they were forced to sell themselves into slavery in order to pay off debts. Soulines and Gheorghe, (cited by Hancock, 1999), challenged this. As Gheorghe mentioned (cited by Hancock, 1999), the first Roma who reached the Romanian principalities were free people. They found there an economic niche favorable to the skills they brought from India or had learnt in the Byzantine Empire: metalworking, carpentry and entertaining. Due to the depleting effects of the Crusades in earlier centuries, the Wallachian society first encountered by the Roma was technologically backward and agriculturally centered. However, when the peasant economy gradually shifted to a market-oriented one, it became dependent more and more upon the artisan skills of the Roma (Hancock citing Gheorghe, Roma Slavery, 2000).

Nicolae Gheorghe (a Roma specialist, presently Senior Advisor on Roma and Sinti Issues for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) argues that the slavery was the result of the increasingly stringent measures taken by the landlords, the court and the monasteries to prevent their Roma labor force from leaving the principalities. Roma people had already started to leave the Romanian principalities in order to get rid of the ever more burdensome demands upon their skills, and from the shift of their "limited fiscal dependency upon the Romanian princes" to an "unlimited personal dependency on the big landlords of the country, the monasteries and the boyars" (Hancock citing Gheorghe, "Roma Slavery," 2000). Under slavery the treatment of the Roma was extremely harsh. They had fewer rights than the native serfs, with landlords having the right to sell individuals or give them away as gifts (Kenrick, 1998: 138). The Civil Code stated that Roma arriving from abroad were the property of the state. In addition, every Roma born was automatically classified as a

slave (Liegeois, 1968: 110). The Code of Basil the Wolf of Moldavia, dated 1654, contains references both to the treatments and punishments that the slaves had to endure.

According to Gheorghe, the process of enslavement of the Roma by the feudal landlords lacked any legal base. The outsider's status Roma had at the time surely emptied them of the power to resist. Thus, the Roma also qualified for the Islamic world-view of the occupying Ottomans, for whom dominated non-Muslim populations were "fit only for enslavement" (Sugar, 1964, cited by Hancock, Roma Slavery, 2000).

Throughout the Middle Ages historical upheavals dictated the treatment of the Roma, and others, in the region. In 1503 Wallachia and Moldavia finally succumbed to the Turks. This meant that payments had to be made to the Ottoman Empire, although both provinces retained control over their internal affairs. Under Turkish influence social and economic life changed, with the division of urban society into guilds representing certain skills. Roma slavery became increasingly integrated with the turning of the peasants into serfs. The Roma, however, were significant in the region for their skill as craftsmen, and they began to be categorized both by who owned them and the type of work they did. Thus, there were distinctions made between those who worked in houses (*țigani de casă*) and agricultural workers (*țigani de ogor*). Similarly, those slaves owned by the crown or state were categorized according to whether their owners were nobles (*sclavi domnești*), the Court (*sclavi curte*), or rural landowners (*sclavi gospod*). The Romanian Orthodox Church owned *sclavi mănăstirești* who, in turn, were categorized as *vatrași* (households), or *lăieși* (artisans). Those slaves belonging to the Crown were classified according to their particular trade. For instance, bear trainers were known as *ursari* and spoon carvers as *lingurari* (Crowe, 1991: 63). This latter categorization remains even today, with the forty Roma tribes represented in Romania retaining these titles. The position of both Roma and peasants declined so far during the ensuing decades that it was "impossible to speak of the enslaved Gypsies without mentioning at the same time the enslaved peasants" (Crowe, 1995: 109).

Laws were passed at this time to render slavery even harsher, with death becoming a not uncommon punishment. By the end of the fifteenth century any non-Roma who got a Roma woman pregnant and married her was forced into slavery himself. Stealing resulted in cruel punishment and, according to a law of 1652, "a slave who rapes a woman shall be condemned to be burnt alive" (Crowe, 1995: 109-110). Legislation was also enacted to prevent illegal slave trading. Roma slaves were valuable due to their skill as craftsmen, and those who tried to escape faced harsh punishment (Crowe, 1991: 63).

By the 1500s, the terms "rob" and "țigan" had become synonymous with "slave," although the latter was originally a neutral ethnonym applied by the Europeans to the first Roma.

Roma under Hungarian rule in the province of Transylvania fared no better. During the era of the Austro-Hungarian Empire a policy of forced assimilation was begun, which echoed what would come later under Communism. Roma were forbidden to

speak the Romani language or to practice their traditional trades (Helsinki Watch, 1991: 10). The punishment for those caught speaking Romani was twenty-five lashes. Traditional styles of clothing and the practice of nomadism were also prohibited (Liegeois, 1986: 106). Even referring to oneself as a Roma was forbidden, and *Uj Magyar* (new Hungarian) was the term adopted instead. Anti-Roma feeling was widespread, and Roma rapidly became scapegoats for crimes ranging from petty theft to cannibalism and vampirism. The punishment for the latter crimes was particularly brutal. In one instance, forty Roma were put on the rack and then cut into pieces in 1782, accused of roasting and eating a number of Hungarian peasants, a charge later proven to be false (Hancock, 1987: 51).

The beginning of the nineteenth century saw a change in attitude. Throughout Europe a new order was emerging and new ideas were coming to the fore. Among them was the assertion that slavery was barbaric and should be stopped. By the middle of the century several slave owners had set an example in Romania by freeing their own slaves (Helsinki Watch, 1991:10). In 1842 this began in Moldavia, and in 1844 the church there did the same. The Wallachian church followed suit in 1847, but the laws held firm. It did appear as though change was imminent in 1848, when a radical provisional joint leadership succeeded to the central government in Bucharest and issued a proclamation deploring the barbarism of slavery and announcing the immediate freedom of all Gypsies. This was too short-lived however, as in December 1848 the two principalities were invaded by Russians and Turks who reinstated many of the laws, and the nobles took possession of their slaves once more. The invaders chose two new individuals to serve on their council - Alexandru Ghica and Barbu Stirbei. This they did until 1855, when Grigore Ghica, Alexandru's cousin, and Stirbei were given control of Moldavia and Wallachia respectively. Grigore, while denouncing slavery, was slow to actually abolish it, but he eventually capitulated under pressure from his advisor and eldest daughter. On December 23, 1855, the Moldavian Assembly voted unanimously to abolish slavery within the Principality. The Wallachian Assembly did likewise on February 8 the following year (Hancock, 1987: 34-35). Complete legal freedom came in 1864. Prince Ioan Couza, ruler of the now-united principalities, reinstated the Roma as free people to the estates they had worked at. It is estimated that at the time the number of slaves was about 600,000 (Romani Culture and History, 2000).

Once slavery had been abolished many Roma left Romania for Western Europe and North America. Those who remained soon found that their situation had not improved a great deal. They were set free, but they were not given any land. This pushed them to specific occupations that maintained their condition of poverty and discrimination. They developed auxiliary occupations such as metalworking and carpeting. They also started to use low resources (with a low economical potential) such as procuring and selling empty bottles or marginal exploitation of the public (divination, begging) (Zamfir, Zamfir, 1993: 29). Having been dependent upon their 'masters' for so long they had no way of supporting themselves, and many ended up returning to where they had been enslaved and offering themselves for sale once more. This is believed to have affected demographic patterns of Roma in Romania up until the Second World War (Hancock, 1987: 37).

The First World War and the peace treaties that followed increased Romania's minority population by over 18 per cent, from 10 per cent before the war to more than 28 per cent after it. Of these, 133,000 were Roma, comprising 0.8 per cent of the total population. In return for the acquisition of new territory Romania was obliged to commit itself to international agreements relating to human rights and it was therefore hoped that the situation of the Roma would improve. The government, however, had visions of a homogenous nation state, nationalism dictating that the minorities should, at the very least, be integrated. Industrialization began in earnest and many people found themselves crippled by the taxes levied by the government in order to achieve this. Worsening conditions dictated the need for a scapegoat, a role that Roma have played continually in Romania and elsewhere. Authorities harbored the belief that, as Roma did not possess a culture or a history that was defined in written terms, they were therefore not entitled to the same rights as other minorities in Romania (Crowe, 1991: 68-69).

A change occurred at that time, when Roma began to organize themselves collectively (Helsinki Watch, 1991:11). Nineteen thirty-three saw the founding of the General Association in Bucharest, and in the same year a journal, *Glusul Romilor* (Voice of Roma) was established and published for six years. Other newspapers followed this lead, and organizations were already being set up throughout the country. The first had been in Calbor in 1926. A conference was held in 1934 to establish the General Union of Roma in Romania. Between 1934 and 1939 the Union worked to promote equal rights for Romanian Roma, but the growth of fascism and the eventual outbreak of the war put an end to that (Kenrick, 1998: 139).

Adolf Hitler's opinion of Roma is well known. In Romania, Marshall Ion Antonescu's pro-Nazi government was vehemently anti-minority, and especially anti-Roma. Mass deportation of Roma began, particularly of nomadic Roma who were primarily thought to be criminals. Some 25,000 Roma were thus sent to land captured from the Soviet Union (Transdnistria), in 1942. Approximately 19,000 died (Kenrick, 1998: 140). The Romanian People's Court set up a War Crimes Commission in the aftermath of the war. According to the Commission, 36,000 Roma died in Romania during the war, the highest number from any European country (although as a percentage of the Roma population it was far lower than in countries such as Poland and Germany) (Helsinki Watch, 1991: 13).

According to Iulius Rostaş, just before the deportation of nomadic Roma, a census was made by the Romanian Jandarmery in order to register Roma criminals. The people taken away from their homes were not only criminals, as the Romanian Government at that time implied, but normal people that did not belong to the criminals' category. (Rostaş, 2000).

During the Communist regime, especially in the 60's, nationalism became a first class ideological tool as a counteracting strategy against the Kremlin policy and a proof of its independence. From that moment on "nobody could be a patriot or a nationalist besides within the party" (Pons, 1999: 27). The consolidation of national unity, of the idea of a homogeneous Romanian society, was introduced. Under the pretext of a unique pattern of the socialist worker, the regime tried to complete the process of



assimilation. The target was to gradually eliminate national differences but actually they were trying to eliminate ethnic minorities (Pons, 1999: 28).

Roma were considered to be foreign elements that had to become Romanian, their culture being considered as one of poverty and underdevelopment (Pons, 1999: 29). Because of that something had to be done in order to destroy the specific culture of Roma and their distinct pattern of living – the most important element that has made them different for centuries. The state by eliminating any references to it from its discourses denies the specificity of the Roma community within Romanian society. According to the principles of the communist regime “private” occupations had to disappear. Therefore all privately owned factories were confiscated by the state. The state also confiscated the tools and the materials used for traditional occupation of Roma (metalworking, carpentry, jewelry making), especially the gold used by Roma for jewelry. At the same time, Roma were integrated in agricultural activities by the agriculture production cooperatives. Those who were good in processing metals were recruited by the metallurgical cooperatives. Until the collapse of the communist regime, 48-50 per cent of Roma workers worked in agriculture. Trade was a prohibited activity for them. Those who had continued to practice their traditional occupations were not considered as authentic workers anymore. But the law proscribed them, considering them to be “social parasites” being at a high risk to be punished (imprisoned or put forcibly to work) (Pons, 1999: 34).

Mainly after the beginning of the 60’s the Communist regime, in order to assimilate the Roma population, pursued various policies and measures regarding Roma – such as settling them forcibly and later ignoring their very existence. They did not have the right to represent themselves as an ethnic minority, free to promote its own cultural traditions, compared with Hungarians and Saxons. Socialism or communism destroyed many of the traditional occupations and elements of their life style, and Roma had started to get integrated into the imposed life style. For the Roma, as for all Romanian citizens, under communism jobs were provided on state farms and in factories. Even if many of these effects had been obtained by coercion, though, many families benefited with a certain economical and social security from this sedentarization and forced work integration politics. In that way they were able to have the possibility to support their families (they were force to work) and also to have a place to live (the state gave them apartments) (Pons, 1999; 34).

Until 1956, as Trond Gilberg mentioned (cited by Pons, 1999: 37), the Roma population had the lowest rate of educated people. They were not present in the high schools and especially in the universities. After the stated assimilation policy Roma families were forced to register their children in schools. On one hand this was a good thing because in this way the children had the same opportunity as the rest of the population. Beginning with 1966 many Roma had a basic education; some of them started to attend professional schools and technical ones. However, it also had bad consequences because many of them started to deny their ethnicity, being afraid of discrimination and motivated to get higher positions in the social structure. Even if there was a high tendency of school abandonment among Roma children, the educational system “had to” provide them with a graduation certificate, thus producing unskilled workers, which were not able to qualify for employment and therefore ended up being unemployed. Iulius Rostaş argues that “these factors have

violated the equal opportunities principle in education and contributed to the consolidation of negative features: a low level of school frequency, a high level of school abandonment, a low percent completing the primary school” (Rostas, 2000). Because of these, the prejudices have continued. Police raids against Roma were allegedly a common occurrence, during which jewelry and other possessions were seized, the authorities claiming that they were the proceeds of black-market dealing (Kenrick, 1998: 140).

In 1977, when the Ceaușescu’s ‘personality cult’ was emerging, a new assimilation program began, which was not publicly announced. Roma who continued to practice their traditional occupations were forced by the police to go back to their work in factories or on the construction sites. There were some Roma who continued to practice their trades, especially those which were more discrete and more difficult to be checked out by the communist regime, like those of traders, white washers, bucket makers. Roma people were also the “beneficiaries” of systematization politics of the territory by force. Districts where they lived were destroyed, and they had to move into new buildings that were not necessarily better but in which Roma need more time to get used living in different conditions from their way of life. They also “benefited” from the deal made between Romania and the former Federal Republic of Germany. Starting with the beginning of the 80’ the Saxon could emigrate to the Federal Republic of Germany if that state paid a tax for every man, woman and child. This deal was known under the name of “selling the Saxon population.” The state also confiscated the Saxons’ houses and it forced Roma people to live there (Pons, 1999: 36; Zamfir, Zamfir, 1993: 157).

During the last years of the Communist regime social disorganization and the economical crises stopped the process of “modernization” (the state provided them with places to live, with jobs and with opportunity for the children to attend school) and assimilation of the Roma people. This also led back to the traditional strategies (living at the edge of society in conditions of poverty and isolation) of getting used to difficult situations of living in a new context. Because many Roma lost their jobs and also the employment privileges (such as children’s allocation, pension right or the right to have a house) some turned to illicit activities, which recycles marginalization, delinquency and poverty. It also justifies negative stereotypes about the Roma and enhances hostile attitudes by the majority population (Zamfir, Zamfir, 1993: 159).

The execution of Ceaușescu in 1989 brought new hope for Romania’s citizens but, as in the case of the abolition of slavery, Roma discovered that their situation did not improve very much or at all and, in many cases, became markedly worse. Roma have been the most affected by the transition to a market economy because of the lack of a qualified labor force, which leads to a high rate of unemployment within that population (see section 1.2). Those who worked in the state-owned agricultural households have no jobs anymore, since these lands have been given back to their owners, so most of them own no land though the law (Law on Land and Estate, No. 18, February, 1991 has stipulated that each family has to get a piece of land) (Pons, 1999: 50).

Romania’s law allows them to form associations and publish newspapers, but they also became the scapegoats for the rest of the population as the country struggled with

the transition to a market economy. Violence against Roma, which had not been a feature of communist Romania, became more widespread and even tolerated. It began in March 1990 when the miners were called to Bucharest to ‘defend’ the government, after which they went to Roma neighborhoods and carried out indiscriminate attacks (Kenrick, 1998: 140). The same month saw inter-ethnic clashes in Târgu-Mureș, in the aftermath of which a disproportionate number of Roma were arrested and tried, despite evidence that they had not even been present (see section 2.3.1.).

Throughout the course of this decade the pattern of discrimination against Roma has become increasingly worse, on numerous occasions reaching the level of physical violence on the part of communities. Roma have had their houses burnt to the ground and been driven away from their villages. Some of these attacks have even resulted in the deaths of members of certain Roma communities (Szente, 1996: 9). The European Roma Rights Center conducted a fact-finding mission to Romania in 1996 and discovered that this pattern was changing and that police raids on Roma communities were gradually replacing community violence against Roma. The decrease in mob violence has left many cases as yet unresolved with non-Roma perpetrators still to be brought to justice. Unfortunately those who commit crimes against Roma are seldom if ever, made to answer for them.

## ***1.2. Economic and demographic data***

***Demographic data:*** There has always been controversy surrounding the number of Roma in Romania.

According to the research conducted by the Research Institute for Quality of Life in 1998 the following numbers were provided:

1930: 242,656 (1.70%)

1956: 104,216 (0.60%)

1966: 64,197 (0.37%)

1977: 227,398 (1.05%)

1992: 409,723 (1.76%)

1998: 1,452,700 – 1,588,552 hetero-identified; between 922,465 and 1,002,381 among them self-identify as belonging to the Roma minority (Research Institute for Quality of Life, 1998).

A huge discrepancy can be noticed between 104,216, the numbers registered in the 1956 Census (soon after Roma deportation to Transnistria, where 19,000 died) and those registered in 1998. This decrease has no other explanation than that of statistical manipulation (Pons, 1999: 45).

In 1977 (at the census) the figure given was 227,398, and three years later there were officially said to be 260,000 Romanian Roma. Even then, however, the real number was an estimated one million, although when the World Congress of Roma challenged the Romanian government on the subject they were told that there were no Roma at all in the country (IHF, 1989: 37-38).

The 1992 census recorded 409,723 Roma in Romania although the actual figure could have been far higher (Minority Rights Group, 1997: 242). This was an 80.2 per cent increase on the 1977 figure (Bugajski, 1995: 197). Despite this, the actual number of

Romanian Roma is estimated to be over two million, which would make them the largest minority in the country (Helsinki Watch, 1994: 3). Gauging the population accurately is extremely difficult as many Roma report themselves as Romanian or Hungarian, etc. on census forms, and that happened, as Florin Moisa explained to us, because of the negative connotation associated with the ethnic identity of the Roma (Moisa, 2000). In addition, many do not complete the forms at all due to high levels of illiteracy. Research conducted by sociologists from Bucharest University in 1993 estimated that the number of Roma still living the 'traditional Romani life,' or close to this way of life, was approximately 1,010,000 or 4.6 per cent of the total population (Zamfir, 1993: 8). The current Roma population has not been accurately measured. In 1998, the Research Institute for Quality of Life initiated a project on studying, stocking and spreading information that the Roma population is confront with. An estimation of the Roma population was done for this project. It came out that there are between 1,452,700 and 1,588,552 individuals that were hetero-identified, as Roma at the national level and 63.5 per cent was self-identified. Vasile Ghețău (Ghetau, 1996: 78) in a prospective demographic study believes that the Roma population in Romania numbers between 1,500,000 and 2,000,000 persons.

Roma are present in all regions of Romania. According to the 1992 census they were most numerous in Transylvania where they made up 2.8 per cent of the population. The next highest concentration of Roma was in Crișana-Maramureș in the north of the country where they comprised 2.6 per cent. The population of the Banat in western Romania was 2.1 per cent Roma, while Wallachia, south east of Transylvania, and Oltenia in the south were found to have 1.9 per cent and 1.5 per cent respectively. The lowest concentrations of Roma were found in Moldavia in the northeast (0.8 per cent) and Dobrudja, on the Black Sea (0.7 per cent) (Abraham, 1995:60).

Looking at the urban and rural populations as a whole, in 1992 Roma comprised 1.4 per cent of the former and 2.3 per cent of the latter (Abraham, 1995: 61). It should be noted that figures from the 1992 census are quite possibly no longer accurate.

According to The Research Institute for Quality of Life in a study carried out in 1998, the following results were obtained: the Roma population is a young one (the average age in the sample is 25.1; also, a proportion of 33.9 per cent of the population is aged between 0-14 years old; and, 4.3 per cent of the population is over 65 years old), and its fertility rate is double that of the majority population (The Research Institute for Quality of Life, 2000).

A major factor affecting demography is health and access to medicine. Health education is uncommon among the Roma. Marriages, especially in the communities that are living in a traditional way of life (Moisa, 2000), tend to be far earlier than among the non-Roma population, resulting in a higher birth rate (double the national rate) and, subsequently, high rates of premature births and infant mortality. 33.7 per cent of the women in the sample aged 15 to 19 years old have already gotten married; the average age of the first marriage is 19 years old. (The Research Institute for Quality of Life, 2000).

Childhood illnesses also pose problems as many Roma prefer not to send their children to the hospital and the importance of inoculations is not understood.

Respiratory and cardiac illness is widespread amongst Romanian Roma, and smoking is endemic, even among children. Substandard living conditions also contribute to health problems. Life expectancy for Roma in Romania is between 15 and 20 years shorter than the norm, averaging between fifty and fifty-five years (Braham, 1992: 19). More recently, in a study conducted by the Research Institute for Quality of Life (The Research Institute for Quality of Life, 2000), the Roma stated as the most frequent diseases those of the digestive and cardiovascular system.

***Economic data:*** Economically the Roma population is the most disadvantaged in Romania. Prior to the events of 1989 employment was compulsory and all jobs had to be sanctioned by the government. Under communism, the majority of Roma were employed in agriculture, forestry, building and construction, and food processing. Since the collapse of the centralized economy, unemployment has grown unchecked. The active population proportion of Roma is very close to the entire Romanian population proportion (60.2 per cent compared to 63.3 per cent for Romania in 1998 – National Board on Statistics, 1998). In spite of this, the occupational percentage for Roma is significantly lower. Only 47 per cent of the entire Roma population is attending school compared to 59.6 per cent, the percentage for Romanians. It is interesting to notice that the unemployment rate is very low - 0.5 per cent compared to 6.3 per cent, the rate for the entire population of Romania in 1998. There are at least two factors that could explain the discrepancy between the level of occupation and the unemployment rate. The first one deals with their education. Only a few Roma have completed their education and are used to having a job and work cards that permit them be officially registered as employees. The second one deals with the fact that only a small proportion of the active Roma population was employed, and because of that now it is now officially registered as unemployed (The Research Institute for Quality of Life -Sorin Cace-, 2000).

Traditional trades are now declining in the current climate of political change. But a reinvigoration of the traditional occupations can be noticed -3.9 percent in 1992 and 10.3 percent in 1998. Sorin Cace explained to us this reinvigoration using the Romanian economical evolution from 1992 to 1998. During this period many Roma lost their jobs being forced to return to their traditional occupations (at least that is what they declare). Another explanation, given by the same researcher, is that many Roma organizations have insisted recently on the reinvigoration of the traditional occupations. The current trend is toward new occupations because of a higher proportion of qualified people. On the other hand, a 27 per cent decrease of those individuals that have no occupation can be noticed. There is another specific aspect of Roma population. Men represent 65 per cent of the entire active population. That means that the Roma still keep the traditional pattern of the male breadwinner (The Research Institute of Quality of Life, 2000).

The collapse of Communism led to lower living conditions for Roma (Rostaş, 2000). The results are reflected by poor living conditions – an average number of individuals/living place double than the assembly of Romania population, a living place/individual two times smaller than others are and an average number of individuals/room two times higher than others are. Besides a quarter of those who were part of the sample have no certificates for the land on which they built their

houses. More over, their houses do not have proper kitchens or sanitation or plumbing (Research Institute for Quality of Life, 2000).

According to the constitution, discrimination is forbidden, regardless of ethnicity or religion. Despite this, employment discrimination is rife, and legislation in this area is severely lacking. One of the most problematic aspects currently in evidence is newspaper advertisement for jobs specifically excluding Roma applicants (Weber, 1998: 221). This situation is monitored by the Roma associations (political and civic) and is sanctioned immediately (Moisa, 2000). Another is the fact that when employers deem it necessary to downsize staff, Roma are the first employees to lose their jobs, despite the fact that they have the same constitutional rights as other Romanian citizens. Those Roma who do secure employment tend to work in unskilled, manual jobs such as street sweeping. Others are self-employed and are skilled craftsmen and tradesmen. Although figures are not available for these, a small number are regarded as “living very comfortably.” Over 60 per cent however, are considered to be living on or near the poverty line. Some Roma cooperatives have been formed with considerable success to raise crops or produce tools and other metal products, but these tend to be the exception rather than the rule (Braham, 1992: 15).

#### *o Defense of identity and/or of language and/or of religion*

Rather than defend their identity, many Romanian Roma tend to deny it, preferring to adopt the language and religion of the majority population in the area in which they live. Discrimination is prevalent throughout the country, however, and has been particularly pronounced since 1990. The Democratic Union of Roma in Romania (DURR) was established in February 1990, and rapidly became an umbrella organization for various Roma parties and organizations. The purpose of the DURR is the protection and promotion of the culture and language of Roma in Romania, and of their political freedom. To these ends it set up the Ethnic Federation of Roma, civil rights NGO, and has been effective in establishing ties with Roma groups outside Romania. Since then, numerous additional Roma organizations have been formed throughout Romania. As most are regional they tend to be competitive, this lessening their effectiveness and obstructing the establishment of a more united Roma front (Bugajski, 1995: 223). The Roma representative from the National Office for Roma is pessimistic about the effectiveness of Roma organizations to defend Roma identity and rights. Moreover, the fact that the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) is involved in so many cases in Romania is a clear indication that outside help is needed.

Iulius Rostaş argues that the Roma have obtained a considerable number of rights. Vasile Ionescu has disputed this aspect. Considering the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – 2000 Report, he underscores the following idea: “During the ten years of existence, there was no legislative initiative of this group (the parliamentary political group of the deputies of those organizations formed by individuals that belong to the national minorities, other than the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania - DAHR). Roma deputies such as Gheorghe Răducănu till 1997 or Mădălin Voicu till 2000 have been obedient to the majority parties. The later joined the Party of Social Democracy in Romania in 1999, and he was elected president of the Minority Board of PSDR.” (Ionescu, 2000).

There is also a discrepancy between what Iulius Rostaş wrote about certain amounts of money granted by the budget for minority protection and Vasile Ionescu’s point of view. “There are three main funding sources from the State budget for NGOs of the national minorities in Romania; here there are a few numbers, only for Roma NGOs (in ROL thuds):

Year	Partida Romilor	National against anti-Semitism and campaign racism, xenophobia and intolerance		Common projects and programs	
		Total	for Roma	Total	for Roma
1997	530,000	274,000	154,000	102,780	22,000
1998	1,489,000	700,000	435,745	880,000	465.487
1999	4,600,000	835,000	697,678	3,030,300	2,606,991
2000	9,200,000	900,000		3,500,000	

For the 2000 budgetary year there is also 1,2 billions lei for participating in the programs with external financial support. There is also a Counterpart Fund of 3 billions lei for improving the situation of Roma.” (Rostaş, 2000).

Vasile Ionescu asserts the contrary: “the Roma associations have not benefited from any financial support for “common projects or for financing the national campaign of combating the racism and intolerance” in 1998.” (Ionescu, 2000).

Florin Moisa on the other hand has a different opinion. While he was presenting the Resource Center for Roma Communities, which he heads, he said that many NGOs have been recently created. “These organizations set out to improve the life situation of the Roma communities as well as to obtain certain rights by means of political action. On the one hand, due to the lack of interest of the Roma community in the political (electoral) processes, and to their difficulty in making political decisions; and, on the other hand, due to the inability of Roma political leaders to elaborate a joint agenda, politics has led to few concrete positive results wherever the Roma communities are concerned. Parliamentary and local government representation is well under the threshold of the percentage of the population the Roma represent. As a consequence of the somewhat modest success of the political initiatives, after 1993, all across the country were created several non-governmental organizations, founded by persons belonging to the Roma minority; these organizations aimed at offering educational support, expressing Roma culture and traditions, community and economic development, research and social intervention, combating the prejudices and stereotypes.” (Moisa, 2000).

## 2. ETHNIC OR NATIONAL IDENTITY

### 2.1. Describing identity

#### 2.1.1. Cultural characteristic(s) differentiating it from the dominant group

Iulius Rostaş claims that “being marginalized and oppressed, subject of forced assimilation and discrimination for centuries, the Roma have developed their own strategy of survival which differentiates them from the non-Roma. The experience of

Porrajmos - the equivalent of Holocaust in Romani language - has given to the Roma a sense of belonging to the same community everywhere they live.” (Rostaş, 2000).

The historical experience of different groups has generated a variety of historical characteristics. Being a minority wherever they lived, the Roma had to adapt to a changing environment. This led to differences in culture, customs and language. They can be differentiated according to their traditional trades and dialects they are using. Many different groups live in Romania. Even though there is a relative distance between groups, there is a sense of belonging to the same community, strengthened by the adversity of non-Roma.

Romanian Roma constitute approximately forty different groups including Căldări (tinsmiths and coppersmiths), Fierari (blacksmiths), Ursari (bear trainers), Grăstari (horse dealers) and Lăutari (musicians). Many have foregone the more traditional nomadic lifestyle under duress rather than by choice. Cultural amalgamation has also been widespread among the various groups, yet the divisions still exist and are extremely important within the communities themselves (Helsinki Watch, 1991: 7).

Language marks many Roma communities as distinct. As mentioned in Section 3, approximately 60 per cent of Romanian Roma speak some dialect of Romani. The majority population, however, tends to respond unfavorably to the different customs observed by Roma and the values held by them, which are often misunderstood. For instance, family life is strictly regulated, with the male as the head of the family, the breadwinner. Kalderash Roma, living in a traditional way of life and strictly keeping their rules and habits (Moisa, 2000), are particularly strict, with girls above the age of eight forbidden to keep the company of boys unsupervised, which sometimes makes school attendance problematic. Marriages tend to be at a young age - fifteen years, and even younger, is not unusual - and girls live with their parents until they are married. The non-Roma community (Remmel, 1993: 201, 212) generally criticizes such young marriages.

An extremely important aspect of Roma culture is its music, something apparently recognized by the communist regime as they forbade singing in Romani - Romanian was the language to be used - and many Roma musicians were removed from folk bands. In fact, Roma music was banned outright in much of Romania prior to 1989 (Helsinki Watch, 1991: 21). One of the tribes of Romanian Roma are known as *Lautari* (musicians), thus indicating that music is more than a tradition to Roma; it is a way of life. As illiteracy is so widespread it has been supposed that Roma are unable to read musical scores. This makes their musical fame throughout Europe all the more remarkable. Roma are equally renowned for their dancing talent, although often the character of the dances is taken to be lascivious, although it only appears so to non-Roma. Yet this provides another reason for non-Roma to view Roma as ‘immoral’ (Clebert, 1963: 144, 152).

As regard religion, outwardly at least Romanian Roma tend to follow the majority population in its beliefs, and the religion to which they subscribe therefore depends on the demography of the area in which they live. Traditional Roma also live by a very strict code of beliefs, which affects every area of life from marriage and relationships, as mentioned above, to the hierarchy within the home (Remmel, 1993: 216). All of the



arguments above mark Roma as ‘different’, often causing them to be singled out for maltreatment.

### 2.1.2. Development of the minority’s awareness of being different

Romanian Roma have long been treated as ‘different’ by members of the non-Roma community. As described in other sections, self-preservation often causes them to deny their identity when dealing with non-Roma because of the discrimination they were exposed to.

An important proof is the difference between self-identified individuals – those who declare that they belong to the community and therefore assume their identity – and the individuals who are identified by others as belonging to a certain ethnic group. Comparing the data of the two researches: the one in 1992 (Zamfir, Zamfir, 1993: 60) and the one in 1998 (The Research Institute for Quality of Life, 2000) it can be noticed that the self-identification level decreases while the main ethnic group level increases.

<b>Self-identification</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1998</b>
<b>Rom</b>	76.5%	63.5%
<b>Romanian</b>	11.7%	34.2%
<b>Hungarian</b>	6.6%	1.8%
<b>Turk</b>	1%	0.5%
<b>Nothing</b>	4.2%	

Considering the self-hetero-identified relationship of Roma, Cătalin Zamfir and Elena Zamfir (Zamfir, Zamfir, 1993: 57) set several ethnic levels:

- a) Roma who show all traditional ethnic characteristics and who self-identified as Roma under any circumstances (officially – administrative and informal);
- b) Roma who show all traditional ethnic characteristics, that are also identified as Roma by others who see their lifestyle, but who do not self-identify as Roma in official-administrative circumstances;
- c) “modernized” Roma who change their lifestyle, being more modern now, and who don’t show any visible marks of their traditional lifestyle, but who self-identify as Roma in both circumstances (ethnic militants, businessmen);
- d) “modernized” Roma who tend not to identify as Roma anymore or to do it only from time to time, and whom the others can or cannot identify as Roma;
- e) “former Roma” who have integrated into the majority population and don’t have any traditional features left, and who have given up to self –identify as Roma even for themselves.

According to Nicolae Gheorghe (former coordinator of Romani CRISS and a member of the PER Romani Advisory Council and presently Senior Advisor on Roma and Sinti Issues for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), Roma are passing through a process of “ethnogenesis” - building a new Romani group identity as other groups had done in the 19th century. He says that the present goal, especially in Romania, is to upgrade the status of members of the community from “țigan” (a word that inherently involves pejorative connotations) to “Roma.” In other words, a

symbolic move from “slaves” to equal status as citizens in a state governed by the rule of law with the right to identify themselves as belonging to the Romani minority is tried to be done (Images and Issues: Coverage of the Roma in the Mass Media in Romania, 1997).

Within Roma communities however, their identity is strong and asserts itself in numerous ways: language, music, traditional dress and, in fewer and fewer instances, traditional crafts, and especially their way of life.

### **2.1.3. Identifying this difference as ethnic or national**

As we already mentioned above (1.1), the Roma ethnic group was not recognized as such by the State. Even if they had to be registered in the Census, it was not seen as a real ethnic group (Pons, 1999: 29) before 1989. Roma in Romania are recognized as a national minority, under the auspices of the governmental Department for National Minorities, where there is a separate office dedicated to working for Roma. Ethnic identity is very strong among the majority of Romanian Roma, although as previously mentioned, self-preservation often causes members of the minority to subdue this identity, at least when in contact with non-Roma communities.

### **2.2. Historical development of an ethnic or a national identity**

As slaves, Romanian Roma were defined by whom owned them; church, Crown, or individual. They were then categorized according to where they worked and what their skills were (Crowe, 1991: 63). As mentioned previously, even after slavery was abolished, many Roma found themselves forced to return to their old masters, unable to survive in any other way. Self-organization, so vital to minority identity, did not begin amongst the Romanian Roma until the 1930s, when increasing anti-Roma sentiments and a government who did not believe they deserved the same rights as other minorities moved them to act. The first Roma organisation was formed in Clabor in 1926 and members of the minority began to enter universities. 1930 saw the establishment of the journal *Neamul Țiganesc* (The Gypsy Family), and three years later the General Association of Roma in Romania was formed. The latter was only in existence for a year, but during that time it produced two publications; the aforementioned *Glăsuț Romilor* (Voice of Roma) and another newspaper, *O Rom*. The Association also advocated the adoption of a national holiday to celebrate Roma emancipation, and plans for a library, hospital and university for Roma were discussed, although none ever came to fruition. The Gypsy World Congress of 1933 was also partially planned by the Association. The Congress advocated a program for raising ethnic awareness among Roma and demanding greater minority rights (Crowe, 1991: 69-70). In 1934 the General Union of Roma in Romania (*Uniunea Generală a Romilor din România*) was created in Bucharest. Led by Gheorghe Nicolescu, it pressed for an end to nomadism. The Second World War, however, ended the rise of Roma organizations throughout Europe (Liegeois, 1986: 146). The advent of communism in Romania ensured that Roma did not have another chance to establish organizations until after the fall of the regime in 1989.

The ethnic identity of Roma in Romania can be seen, among some groups at least, in their wearing of traditional dress and pride in their music and traditional trades. Many

Roma, however, prefer to deny these aspects of their identity so as not to prejudice employment prospects or their children's chances of an education. The specter of violence, prevalent in Romania since 1990, is another reason for the seeming reluctance of many Roma communities to assert and organize themselves. This is by no means universal throughout the community, however, as can be seen by the number of Roma organizations that have emerged since 1990.

Conversely, Donald Kenrick cites discrimination, or the refusal of the majority population to accept them, as the principal reason their identity has not been destroyed. Even attempts at forced assimilation by various East European governments failed, because the societies into which they were to be assimilated would not accept them (Kenrick, 1998: 56). Therefore, the treatment of Roma at the hands of the non-Roma population may be one of the principal reasons for the continuation of their identity and culture.

The communist regime, with its policies of forced settlement and mandatory education and employment, shielded the Roma from the ethnic hatred felt by many non-Roma towards them. Since 1990 they have no longer been afforded this protection and now face isolation within communities and discrimination in education and employment (Braham, 1992: 28).

Yet Roma identity still persists. It has been observed that cultural differences are so important in Eastern Europe due to communist attempts at assimilation and the subsequent re-enforcement of cultures in response. Given the extremely harsh nature of the Romanian regime pre-1989 and the multi-ethnic structure of the society there, members of minorities were that much more determined to hold onto their identities. For Roma, the problems inherent in this were compounded by their lack of a homeland. This has rendered them more likely, in many instances, to have more in common with members of the majority population than with other groups of Roma elsewhere. A certain amount of distance from the non-Roma population is therefore important to enable Roma to maintain their identity (Stewart, 1997: 95).

Some NGOs, for instance Rromani Criss, partially or primarily staffed by Roma, are working to prevent discrimination and facilitate understanding between Roma and non-Roma. There is obviously much work still to be done, but Roma need to lose their dependence on a state which cannot, or will not, support them as it did in the past.

### **2.2.1. The minority's resistance to or acceptance of assimilation**

While Roma have a tendency to adopt the language and even religion of the area in which they live, sometimes reporting themselves as ethnicity other than Roma on census forms, this is probably motivated more by self-preservation than by any other factor.

While many Romanian Roma have 'abandoned' certain aspects of their traditional culture, others have been maintained. The Romani language, for instance, lives among 60 per cent of the population. Certain tribes also maintain traditional dress. Conversely, in order to obtain employment or become educated, Romanian Roma are often forced to conform to non-Roma practices.

During the communist period attempts were made to assimilate Romania's minorities, Roma included. That this failed can be seen in the 1966 census results concerning language. These figures show significant areas in which minority languages were being used at the time instead of the dominant Romanian language. According to the census, 42.5 per cent of Romanian Roma adopted Romanian, while 46.2 per cent maintained the Romani language and 8.7 per cent (resident in Transylvania) were Hungarian speakers (Gilberg, 1980: 214-5).

In the 1970s the official policy regarding Roma changed. They were simply to be ignored (Helsinki Watch, 1991: 18). Towards the end of the decade however, the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) obviously realised that they could not merely look the other way and pretend that the Roma did not exist. In 1977 fresh attempts at assimilation were made although these were not terribly successful, probably because by then Ceaușescu's 'personality cult' was emerging, and the government was becoming increasingly nationalist. Culture became a target of this feeling and Roma culture paid dearly for the actions of the regime. Roma are famous for their musical talent, and this was as true in Romania as elsewhere. As the government increasingly emphasized Romanian culture at the expense of that of the minorities, Roma musicians began to be excluded from folk music groups. The Romani language was also forbidden, which meant that those Roma who did sing could only do so in Romanian (Helsinki Watch, 1991: 20). Such policies could only have a detrimental effect on a culture that was already looked down upon by the majority.

Examination of the relations between Roma and non-Roma in Romania, particularly the authorities (section 2.3) indicate clearly that assimilation has not been an issue since 1989.

### **2.2.2. The minority's resistance to or acceptance of integration**

Living as they do on the outskirts of society, integration is not something that has affected many Romanian Roma and has not been attempted since the communist period (See section 1.1.). The specter of community violence has resulted in many Roma losing their homes and being forced to leave areas in which they may have spent their whole lives, due to the fear of further attack.

This fear has caused many Roma to leave Romania and seek asylum elsewhere. Immediately following the fall of the Ceaușescu regime several thousand Roma left, France and Germany being the most popular destinations. Between 1990 and 1992, 179,676 Romanian Roma traveled to the latter to claim political asylum. The three principal causes for this were defined as a 'natural nomadic tendency', economic necessity or desire, and ethnic discrimination. The first of these has always been attributed to Roma, despite the fact that nomadism was outlawed under communism and by the time the regime fell less than 5 per cent of Romanian Roma were nomadic (see Section 1.2). Poverty is certainly a feature of the lives of most Roma in Romania and, indeed, in other countries also, but the very real fear of ethnically motivated violence prompted many to make the journey (Braham, 1992: 23-24). More recently Ireland has been the recipient of Roma asylum seekers from Romania.

Far from being integrated, the vast majority of Roma in Romania are outcasts. Stereotypes abound, and the media does nothing to stem the tide of discrimination. There is the tendency within state structures to view the Roma as a social problem and treat them as such (Rostaş, 1998: 2). As long as this continues, Roma will never really be accepted by or integrated into non-Roma communities in Romania.

### **2.2.3. Awareness of having an ethnic or a national identity**

The current self-perception of the Roma community tends to be similar to the perception of Roma held by the majority (Save the Children, 1998: 16). Research conducted by Helsinki Watch would seem to support this theory: ‘Not only do Romanians look down on Gypsies, but Gypsies frequently approach other Gypsies with the same stereotypes’ (Helsinki Watch, 1991: 74). Of course one cannot claim this for every individual. It depends upon the particular community and the area in which that community is based. Discrimination within schools, as discussed in section 6, ensures the self-perpetuation of this vicious cycle.

However, there is currently movement within the Romanian Roma community towards the development of a Roma identity within the political arena. If the average Romanian Roma person denies their identity in public, intellectuals within the minority are no longer hiding behind an identity allied with the majority population. Before 1989, the latter group would not admit to being Roma, yet now they lobby openly for recognition for the entire community. This awareness of their ethnic identity has grown out of the social identity prevalent during centuries of slavery. A strong proof is represented by the many parties set up soon after 1989 (Democratic Roma Union, the Ethnical Federation of the Roma, The Roma Party and the Roma Union etc.). The individuals belonging to the Roma ethnic group, after 1993 set up more than one hundred non-governmental organizations. They were aimed at offering educational support, expressing Roma culture and traditions, community and economic development, research and social intervention, and combating the prejudices and stereotypes (Moisa, 2000).

According to Nicolae Gheorghe, the process of nation building in Europe did not affect the Roma in the same way that it transformed the identities of other groups from social to national, due to the exclusion of the Roma from the political process. Only now is the community moving towards changing its stigmatized identity. A popular means of achieving this is the promotion of the Roma as a national minority. In Romania this means that they have a seat in parliament, along with all of the other recognized national minorities. Yet such a national identity may not be the best thing for the Roma community as it reinforces the nation-state. In addition, states promoting themselves as containing ethnic minorities do so in order to underline that the state does, in fact, belong to an ethnic majority (Gheorghe, 1997: 158).

The growing use, therefore, of political structures by this class of Romanian Roma is a clear indication that the minority is aware of its status as a national minority. The fact that those emerging onto the political scene no longer hide their identity reinforces the ‘ethnic’ nature of being a Rom in Romania.

Vasile Ionescu has a different opinion: “As the Roma were recognized as a national and/or ethnic minority, in 1990, the self awareness of the Roma was divided between contempt and self-esteem. The self-contempt (as the effect of stigmatization and its internalization) leads to ethnic dissociation, to an extension of the assimilation politics. This is also stressed by the absence of some minimal programs for preventing and eliminating racism; programs that should focus on this liberty. Roma associations involved in emphasizing the self-esteem of Roma cultural communities campaign underscore the spiritual “desalinization” and the cultural ethnocentrism deconstruction importance.” (Ionescu, 2000).

#### **2.2.4. Level of homogeneity in the minority’s identity**

During the Communist era Roma were not even recognized as a minority, and the forced assimilation attempts described above were designed to erase any trace of ‘difference’ that the Roma may have felt. There are other opinions concerning this government policy however. Nicolae Gheorghe told Helsinki Watch that he believes the Romanian government had basically good intentions in doing this.

“Every time the government wanted to do something good for Gypsies they started with settling them. The basic assumption in European cultures among sedentary people is that being settled is the best way. Still, the premise was perhaps wrong, and even the intentions were sometimes bad, but basically the government was trying to improve the living conditions for Gypsies” (Helsinki Watch, 1991: 17). This naturally had a deep and lasting effect on the Roma community, many of who lost their identity during this period.

The end of the repressive Ceaușescu regime provided hope for Romania’s minorities that they would finally have a chance to assert themselves in a democratic society. For Roma the changes meant that their situation became even worse than before. Under the socialist system there had been discrimination against Roma, but it tended to be subtle. The vast majority of Roma interviewed by Helsinki Watch asserted that their situation was better under Ceaușescu than afterwards (Helsinki Watch, 1991: 32). Following the events of December 1989, incidents of violence against Roma became alarmingly common. This could help to explain the discrepancies between the number of Roma as stated in the 1992 census and the number as claimed by Roma organizations and others.

Mr. Gheorghe’s observations, as mentioned in the previous section, clearly indicate a separate class of Roma in Romania, a minority within the minority, who are distanced from the mainstream Roma community by virtue of the fact that they are far more integrated into non-Roma society. Nevertheless, their acknowledgement of their Roma identity, and their will to work for the Roma community as a whole, would suggest that these Roma intellectuals are not so distanced from the community as it might appear.

Though, as the Human Rights Watch World Reports for Romania since show, the government has not done enough to stop discrimination of Roma that starts in schools, then continues in the process of looking for a job and ends with the way they are treated by the policemen. (Human Rights Watch, 1998, 1999, 2000).

## ***2.3 Actual political and social conditions***

### **2.3.1 Relations with the state**

Community violence and the search for employment meant that previously settled Roma communities have been forced to abandon their homes. In cases of community violence they are, of course, denied the choice of returning. Many communities have therefore ended up settling on the outskirts of towns and cities in makeshift accommodation (ERRC, 1998: 26). Contact with authorities tends to be limited to local and regional health and educational services and, of course, the ever-present police. Amnesty International has documented cases in which Roma have been assaulted by police in public, actions which reinforce the belief that violence against Roma is not a crime (Amnesty International, 1995:25).

Since 1990 there have been over 30 conflicts in Romania in which Roma have been either injured, sometimes fatally, or driven from their homes. Such incidents typically begin as an argument between one or several Roma and one or several non-Roma and often escalate to the point where whole communities are involved. Romanian authorities have consistently denied the inter-ethnic nature of such incidents, but the fact that no one has been seriously punished for committing such a crime against a Rom clearly shows the attitude of the state (Weber, 1998: 221). Research conducted by Helsinki Watch in 1991 found that not only was there a lack of protection for Roma communities under threat of attack, but one of the most pressing human rights concerns at the time was the absolute failure of state authorities to prosecute non-Roma for crimes perpetrated against the minority (Helsinki Watch, 1994: 6).

At the beginning of the 1990s, Helsinki Watch claimed that there was no political will in Romania to combat racial violence against Roma and to afford sufficient protection to Roma victims of crime (Helsinki Watch, 1994: 5). They also observed several cases in which authorities displayed overtly anti-Roma sentiments, such as the assertion that the burning of Roma homes is “in the public interest.” Statements such as this make the racial prejudice of authorities quite clear (Helsinki Watch, 1994: 8).

Action taken by authorities since 1990 has also reflected this attitude. Following the violence in the Transylvanian town of Târgu-Mureş on March 19 and 20, 1990, Helsinki Watch observed that the prosecutor’s office seemed to be attempting to make scapegoats of the Roma who were present at the time. According to the prosecutor’s office, of the thirty-one individuals under investigation following the violence (which began as an inter-ethnic clash between Romanians and Hungarians), twenty-four were Roma. A further number of Roma were arrested for offences such as the possession of weapons and disturbance of the peace. The latter were tried under Decree 153, dating from 1970, and directed against “‘parasites’ of the socialist order.” In addition to the fact that this decree was considered an extremely abusive tool invented by the Ceauşescu regime, its use violates due process. The legal counsel representing seven of the Roma defendants stated that their trial began the day after they were arrested. In addition, there were witnesses present who testified to the innocence of the defendants, while one of the witnesses for the prosecution nullified his earlier statement by saying that he had been drunk and could remember nothing of the events

of March 20, and then it emerged that the second witness had a long history of convictions and was himself in jail for his involvement in the violence. The Roma themselves gave testimony that contradicted their statements, which they had been unable to read due to a lack of education. One of the defendants also claimed that he had signed the statement under duress. Despite all of this, the defendants were given sentences ranging from three months of work with a penalty to five months in prison. The legal counsel attested to the fact that she was threatened after agreeing to represent the Roma and that the other Roma arrested after March 20 were not represented by counsel at all. They all received the maximum sentence of six months (Helsinki Watch, 1990: 7).

Instances such as this underline the need for change in the attitude of authorities toward Roma. In a 1993 report, the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF) observed that Romanian authorities tended to brand groups of Roma as “criminals,” thus ensuring that the issue of attacks on Roma communities became, instead, a debate about crime committed by Roma. IHF was also told that rebuilding Roma houses, which were destroyed, was contingent upon the non-filing of charges against the guilty parties. The IHF found this, coupled with the legitimization of crimes against Roma by stereotyping Roma communities as inhabited by criminals, as particularly worrying, as such sentiments expressed by individuals in authority serve to encourage racist violence (IHF, 1993: 3-4).

The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that the Romanian police publish crime statistics imputing specific offences to Roma. The only other group to be singled out is foreigners who commit crimes in Romania. The authorities also tend to make general comments about the criminal activity of the Roma minority as a whole, which fuels anti-Roma feeling and heightens the possibility of community violence. The Roma Association of Romania has spoken out against this practice, but it continues. In the public arena extremist politicians expound racist rhetoric against Roma without censure. On 16 August 1998, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, leader of the Greater Romania Party (PRM) issued a statement outlining a ten-point program to be carried out if his party is victorious in the elections in the year 2000. Part of the program proposed the isolation of ‘Roma criminals in special colonies’ in order to ‘stop Romania being transformed into a Gypsy camp’. In response to those countries that are critical of Romania’s human rights record concerning Roma he promised to ‘open the borders of Romania and expel Roma criminals precisely to those countries which pretend to care about their fate’ (Institute of Race Relations, 1999: 35-36).

Local law enforcement officials have facilitated attacks against Roma communities, both by encouraging the violence as it occurs, and by remaining silent and allowing it to happen. Local government has been known to frequently support acts of vigilante violence, such as that which occurred in Hădăreni in Mureș County in 1993. The incident was sparked when an argument between an ethnic Romanian and two Roma ended with the fatal stabbing of the former. Two Roma later died at the hands of a mob, while a third burnt to death when the same crowd prevented him from leaving a burning house. The houses of other Roma were destroyed (APADOR-CH, 1997: 46). A Helsinki Watch report claimed that approximately 170 Roma were forced to flee the village (Helsinki Watch, 1994: 24).



In 1998 in Valea Largă, Mureş County, the Téglás family formally complained against the Harkó family. Since the police refused to get involved in the argument between two Roma families, a violent conflict took place on January 31, 1998, between the two families: one member of the Harkó family was killed, the Téglás family was expelled from the village and their houses were burned.

Those in authority have perpetrated actual attacks on Roma. One such incident occurred in Bucharest in 1992 when Roma were attacked at a market, by military police. The Roma were beaten and property was damaged in revenge for a fight between a Sergeant Major from the military police and a Roma individual, which had occurred two days before, as a result of which the former had to be hospitalized. Following the incident, none of the policemen were disciplined, and no compensation was paid for the damage to property as it was ruled as ‘unintentional’ (Helsinki Watch, 1994:18-19).

The period 1995-1996 saw many instances of police raids on Roma settlements. There were raids, for instance, in Acîş and Mihăieni, Satu Mare County, on August 25, 1995; Colentina, Bucharest, several times during the summer of 1996; Pata-Rât, Cluj County, on June 23, 1995; Bonţida, Cluj County, on February 25, 1995 and February 23, 1996; Bălteni, Dîmboviţa County, on several occasions in 1996. Several people were beaten, and some were forced onto trucks and taken to police stations to be used as cleaners there. Usually they were released after a few hours at the police station, with the warning not to speak with anybody about what had happened to them.

Roma are usually afraid to speak in public about these raids. The police, however, invited TV crews to some of the raids, and millions of viewers saw the commandos as they broke into houses with the help of axes without any prior warning. They saw how half-naked Roma were trying to put on some clothes, and how they were thrown on the floor and handcuffed.

The European Roma Rights Center noted in 1996 that such attacks by authorities had become commonplace and in many cases had replaced the vigilante violence so prevalent in the early 1990s. This was exacerbated by a 1993 agreement between Romania and Germany under the terms of which the latter deported Roma to Romania. Potential victims of racially motivated violence were therefore sent to a state in which the authorities were often the aggressors (Szente, 1996: 10). The alleged purpose of police raids is to ‘prevent’ Roma from committing ‘anti-social acts’. However, they serve to frighten rather than achieve anything practical (Weber, 1998: 221).

APADOR-CH has observed that in cases of vigilante violence against Roma, local authorities tend to establish the manner in which the violence occurs, but not the perpetrators. According to the organization (a legal association which established a Legal Defense Bureau for the Roma Minority in 1996), the habitual lack of action of local authorities in these instances adds to the adage that Roma are violent criminals and that communities are therefore justified in taking the law into their own hands (APADOR-CH, 1997: 4).

Violence is not the only way in which the Romanian State has shown its opinion of Roma since 1990. According to a 1995 Reuters report the Romanian government officially replaced the name “Roma” with “Tigan,” despite the fact that the latter is seen as a distinctly pejorative term. The change was justified as necessary to bring Romanian terminology into line with that used by such organizations as the United Nations (Szente, 1996: 11). Another explanation was apparently given as avoidance of any confusion between the terms “Roma” and “Roman” meaning a Romanian man (Kenrick, 1998: 141). A Ministry of Foreign Affairs disposition changed this situation at the beginning of 2000. It has stipulated that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not in charge to establish the denomination of the Roma minority and proposes the use of terms consecrated in international relations. The 1996 change in government made many of those working in the field of human rights hopeful for positive change. In the local elections the Roma organisations obtained places in local and county councils (Rostaş 2000):

- in 1992..... 104 seats and 2 deputy mayors;
- in 1996..... 173 seats and 1 mayor;
- in 2000..... 164 seats.

Nevertheless, these changes haven’t brought a considerable improvement in Roma lifestyle. The use of hate speech and negative stereotypes continued in mass media even after the nationalistic-extremist political parties entered the opposition. There are many studies that can provide examples of hate speech against Roma community. The Roma people are presented as being dirty, violent, thefts (Andreescu, 2000). According to the Human Rights Watch report for 1998 and 1999, Roma continued to be the victims of police violence during that year. Both the European Roma Rights Center and the Romanian Helsinki Committee urged investigation into such cases and the prosecution of those suspected of having committed crimes on racial grounds. The government has tended to respond to such requests slowly and with inaccurate information, or sometimes not at all (Human Rights Watch, 1999). According to Vasile Ionescu (Ionescu, 2000) there is no mechanism to provide the Roma minority “the proper legislative frame that would assure individuals belonging to the national minorities the right to preserve, develop and express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity.”

Another important aspect regards the position of the state concerning Marshall Ion Antonescu’ rehabilitation. In June 1991 and also in 1992, the Romanian Senate paid homage to Antonescu on the anniversary of his death. In July 1991, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution condemning this act as one of anti-Semitism and intolerance. After six years, in 1997, the General Prosecutor of Romania recommended to the Supreme Court that it approve the posthumous rehabilitation of members of wartime (1940-1945) Antonescu Government who had been convicted of war crimes. Again, the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe protested and these cases were terminated. However, on October 14, 1999, the Romanian Chamber of Deputies approved a law on the rehabilitation of and compensation for those who used military means to resist the Communist regime. Some of these anti-Communist guerrillas of the late 1940s and the 1950s were Iron Guard members or sympathizers, who persecuted and killed Jews and Roma (Helsinki Commission Releases Letter to Secretary Albright on Romania, November 22, 1999) (see section 1.1).

## A. Discrimination and Racial Violence

### Communal Violence

In several countries, victims encounter significant obstacles in their efforts to secure legal redress for these attacks. A notable example is Romania, where Romani communities were victims of a considerable number of serious incidents, in the course of which some Roma were killed while the homes of many others were burned, in the period between 1990 and 1996. There have been prosecutions in respect of only a few of these. In those cases, only some of the people believed to have been involved in the attacks were ever charged; fewer still have been convicted.

One case, in which there have been convictions, is the well-known case of the Hădăreni<sup>1</sup>; a case the Romanian official may have had in mind<sup>2</sup> that exemplifies the point. On 23 September 1993, three Romani men were killed by a mob of ethnic Romanians and Hungarians in Hădăreni, a village in Mureş County. The immediate provocation was the stabbing to death of an ethnic Romanian by one of the three Romani men earlier that day. This Rom's crime became the collective crime of Roma, and a pogrom ensued. After clubbing to death the two Romani brothers who had been involved in the fatal stabbing and burning a third Rom in his home, a group of villagers set fourteen Romani houses ablaze and damaged others. That night, 175 Roma, whose families had lived in Hădăreni for some seventy years, were chased out of the village. An appeals court reduced the sentences of two of those convicted from seven to six years. According to Romanian NGOs, the government now asserts that the statute of limitation prevents further prosecutions in most of the cases from the early 1990s.

The leader of an extremist opposition party has made racist statements. On August 16, 1998, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, leader of the Great Romania Party and Senator in Romania's Parliament, reportedly announced a ten-point "program to run the country" which included "isolat[ing] the Roma criminals in special colonies" in order to "stop the transformation of Romania in[to] a Gypsy camp." In another meeting, an official in Romania's Ministry of Interior stated, when asked about authorities' responses to pogroms against Roma in the early 1990s, that "these conflicts [were] a reaction of the majority to the behaviour of the Roma minority"; the Roma were not, therefore, victims of racist violence. These assertions capture in microcosm the phenomenon of racial stereotyping that has long afflicted Roma. The official's remarks apparently were based upon the behavior of specific individuals, whose conduct was generalized to describe that of the group to which they belong. This form of ethnic stereotyping is not only misleading, it is dangerous (Max van der Stoep, 2000: 44).

On August 11, 1997, five witnesses saw how the Roma man, Cioc Liviu, was beaten by four police officers and a civilian, and then taken in a car and left in a forest in a critical condition, only because he had been confused with another Roma person who had robbed the civilian. Mr. Liviu was hospitalized in the period August 12-22, 1997. According to the medical record provided by the Institute for Court Medicine, Cioc Liviu needed 22-24 days of medical assistance. His complaint to the Mureş Military Prosecutor's Office was not even considered. On April 9, 1998, the Human Rights Office of the PRO EUROPA League sent a letter to the Military Prosecutor to obtain

information about the case, and the cassette, which Cioc Liviu had recorded while policemen and mayors from Idiciu and Ibănești were trying to make him repeal his complaint.

Following the letter, and on the basis of the cassette - accepted as evidence - the case was reopened. Despite all of the evidence, in 1999 - after two years of investigation - the Military Prosecutor's Office ruled that the police officers had only made a 'mistake' by allowing the civilian to beat Cioc Liviu. In the version of the prosecutors the police officers had not participated in the beating. Neither did they offer any explanation as to how Cioc Liviu had been forced into the car and was subsequently left in the forest. On the basis of this ruling, the policemen involved were absolved of any criminal responsibility. The police of Mureș County punished two of the four police officers with five extra workdays without pay.

Apart from that, some Roma are excluded from public health care by virtue of the fact that they lack birth certificates, identification cards, or other official proofs of registered residence. The Romanian daily *Ziua* reported on September 7, 1999 that Roma without either the means to pay for health services directly or proof of state medical insurance had been banned from the Iași County Hospital. State health services are provided for all citizens who are employed and pay social security benefits, and for those who are officially registered with the State as unemployed. Apparently, many Roma in the area are not registered with the government and therefore, in the eyes of the local Fund for Social Security and Health, were not eligible for state health care (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 122).

Oftentimes, Roma women are unaware of the need to modify their lifestyle during pregnancy, including in terms of food, vitamin intake, physical effort and work. This was shown in a joint UNICEF/Rromani CRISS local primary health care project in Balta Arsa, Romania. Roma women are less likely than others to seek prenatal and antenatal care; a trend that is influenced by factors affecting access to health care generally, such as the lack of funds or mistrust of non-Roma medical institutions, as outlined above. In addition, women may not prioritize their own need to seek medical care and support. Studies suggest that many Roma women do not conceive of their own health as being a significant factor in making decisions (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 124).

A number of positive developments have been witnessed in the last few years. A government decision adopted in 1997 established the Council of National Minorities to advise the Department for the Protection of National Minorities on issues relating to minorities. The Council is composed of "representatives of all the organisations of the citizens belonging to the national minorities that were legally founded up to September 27, 1992" (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 142).

To assist Romania in meeting the EU's accession criteria, including in particular the political criterion of protecting minorities, the European Commission made available to the Romanian government a PHARE grant totaling ECU 2 million. In August 1998 the government established an Inter-Ministerial Commission on National Minorities, chaired by the head of the Romanian Government's Department for the Protection of National Minorities (DPNM), to elaborate a national strategy. In November 1998, the

government created an Inter-Ministerial Sub-Commission for Roma Issues, which is co-chaired by the head of the DPNM's Office for Roma and a representative of the Working Group of Roma Associations (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 148).

This PHARE program is now running, according to Florin Moisa (Moisa, 2000), having MEDE European Consultancy and Minority Rights Group International implementing agencies. First the government elaborated, in close partnership with Roma representatives, a national strategy to improve the situation of Roma. The second stage entailed the design and implementation of innovative pilot projects, again in close consultation with Roma representatives (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 148).

Some representatives of Romania's Roma community maintain that government officials responsible for developing the initial EU proposal or terms of reference for the PHARE did not consult them. To address concerns about their exclusion from this process, representatives of thirty-six Roma NGOs met in Mangalia, Romania, on January 22-23, 1999, and decided to form a Working Group to negotiate with the government on the elaboration of its national strategy. At this meeting eight Roma experts were elected to represent Roma on an ad hoc basis during a meeting with government officials that took place on January 28-29, 1999 (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 148).

This meeting was organized and mediated by the U.S.-based Project on Ethnic Relations (PER), in the hope that it could contribute to the resolution of outstanding issues. At this meeting, which was also attended by representatives of the European Commission and the Council of Europe, the Roma negotiators proposed a plan for ensuring Roma participation in various stages of elaborating the national strategy (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 148).

At another meeting in Sibiu, Romania in February 1999, a broad coalition of Roma leaders elected a fifteen-member Working Group of Roma Associations to represent them in further discussions with government representatives. This group, in turn, developed a list of twenty-seven Roma specialists in areas relevant to the national strategy, of whom eight would, they hoped, be able to participate in the meetings of the government's Sub-Commission on Roma Issues. In mid-March, 1999, the government agreed to their participation in meetings of the Sub-Commission, and this commitment was formalized through a protocol signed by the Working Group and the DPNM on 3 May 1999 (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 148).

Roma representatives have participated in recent meetings of the Sub-Commission, whose other members include representatives from key government ministries. As noted, this body has essentially advisory powers; it will make recommendations to the Inter-Ministerial Committee, but it is the latter body that will make final decisions in respect to the elaboration and implementation of the government's national strategy on Roma. The Roma leaders are participating in the decisions made by the government in order to develop a national strategy (Rostaş, 2000). While Roma representatives have thus succeeded in their efforts literally to get a seat at the Sub-Commission's table, the ultimate effectiveness of this consultative process will turn on the degree to which their views are reflected in Romania's national Roma policy (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 149).

The Government of Romania adopted on April 25, 2001 Resolution no. HG 430/2001 on the Strategy for the Improvement of the Situation of the Roma Population, the most important document ever in Romanian history concerning the country's Roma minority. The official version of the text is available in Romanian and English at [www.rroma.ro/gov\\_whitepaper.htm](http://www.rroma.ro/gov_whitepaper.htm).

The document was adopted in order to fulfill the political requirements of the EU accession. The objective is to make it the basis for a social and economic program, to be undertaken in the next 10 years jointly by the Government and Roma organizations. The Minister of Public Information, Vasile Dincu, originally estimated that the implementation of the strategy would require 100 million euros, out of which 68% of the funds would be allotted to Romania from the European Union, the United Nations and the World Bank. Nevertheless, Ivan Gheorghe, Deputy State Secretary at the National Office for Roma, declared recently that the budget of the program should be doubled to ensure smooth implementation.

Eugen Crai, project manager at MEDE, the consulting agency for the implementation of the strategy, stated that the commission that is to be evaluating the projects' for strategy implementation has not yet been created. As he explained, "There is no budget, therefore, there is no strategy." Rupert Wolfe Murray, PHARE Roma project coordinator briefly argued that, "it is too early to say anything yet." (Inforrom, October 2001).

However, some of the envisaged health projects are underway (vaccination campaigns and information programs on public hygiene) and identity documents have been issued for about 3,150 ethnic Roma.

The elaboration of the draft of a Law against All Forms of Discrimination, which the Romanian government plans to submit to the Parliament, is now pending signature from the relevant Government ministries (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 53). In the meantime, Romania has developed mechanisms for conflict mediation, with apparently positive results in at least some regions. The Romanian initiatives were triggered by a surge in mob violence against Roma communities between 1990 and early 1996 and the failure of police to provide protection. In most of these cases, the Romanian police "were seen as contributing, through direct or indirect means, to the severity of these incidents and the consequences for Roma citizens" (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 55).

The Ministry of Education initiated at the beginning of academic year 2001/2002 a positive discrimination program, a support program for education in the mother tongue as well as training programs for Roma educators. (More on this only in Romanian at: <http://www.edu.ro/invrrom.htm>.) The PHARE program and the European Commission allotted 2 million euros for programs initiated by various Roma organizations, which aim primarily at contributing to the development of local partnerships. The European Union published on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001 the results of the evaluation process carried out under the Partnership Fund for the Roma, which resulted in 40 projects selected with a total value of 899,999 Euro. (More information at: <http://www.rroma.ro/grants.htm>.)

With the assistance of the Project on Ethnic Relations and the U.S. Department of Justice Administration, University of Louisville, the Romanian General Inspectorate of Police developed a program to improve relations between Roma and police and to enhance the capacity of the police to respond effectively in situations of tension between Roma and non-Roma communities. The first step taken by national police authorities was to organize meetings between police representatives and Roma leaders so that they could “identify the problems that [the Roma] have and . . . build together a social peace and stronger community.” A hallmark of the program was to develop regular meetings between police and representatives of Roma, as well as non-Romani communities, at both the local and national levels (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 55).

Roma leaders are not uniformly enthusiastic about the Government’s initiatives. Some regard as ominous the fact that the umbrella for the Government’s program, which began as a “Mob Violence Prevention Program” within the General Inspectorate of Police of the Ministry of Interior, was later renamed the “Institute for Research and Prevention of Criminality.” In their view, this signified that a program initially conceived to enhance police protection of Roma was now more concerned with “Roma criminality” (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 56).

Still, the very fact that the General Inspectorate of Police has established a framework for communicating with Roma leaders makes it easier for the latter to raise and address these and other concerns. In 1997, Roma associations negotiated a protocol with the Inspectorate to address concerns about the manner in which police dealt with Roma communities; the protocol entered into effect in 1998. Some Roma leaders involved in this initiative and others familiar with it believe that there have indeed been improvements in relations between Romanian police and Roma communities. They cite in particular the situation in the city of Sibiu, where representatives of police and of both Roma and non-Roma communities meet regularly and seek to negotiate joint methods of problem solving (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 56).

According to Florin Moisa, “Partida Romilor,” the main political association of the Roma signed protocols with the Police Inspectorates in order to prevent criminality within the Roma communities and avoid possible abuses by the police (Moisa, 2000). Vasile Ionescu estimates that “there were 2,500 criminal grievances in 1998 against the senator Corneliu Vadim Tudor. He proposed to imprison Roma in a camp. Roma associations requested State institution to get involved in this problem, but their request received no answer.” (Ionescu, 2000)

Interestingly enough, when Mr. Ion Rotaru Mayor of Piatra Neamt (eastern Romania) launched the idea at the beginning of October 2001, of transforming a former chicken-farm building just outside Piatra Neamt into a two-storey block of flats for Roma, generously called a “housing project,” emotions were stirred up, reminding some of the above-mentioned “camp” and hate speech.

According to Mr. Rotaru, the idea behind the housing project was that most of the Roma moving there do not have any source of income, they generally refuse to work and they have already destroyed housing provided to them by the welfare authorities. He claimed that the compound would be a “modern district, with a church, a school, a

medical center and a sports hall.” And he added: “The Roma will be put to work and will be forced to learn; and they will be completely separated from the rest of the town. We are just trying to discipline them.” (Marian Chiriac, 2001)

The truth is that such a generous plan would have implied extensive investment that none of the local or central authorities could support. In addition, Roma NGOs said that the so-called housing project was just a well-orchestrated act of discrimination and segregation. They argued that none of the promises will be kept.

Romanian leaders also criticised the mayor of Piatra Neamt. The President, Ion Iliescu, said that the solution proposed by Rotaru is “unwise,” because it serves segregation of Roma rather their integration. His position was probably influenced by the circumspection not to shed a bad light on Romania’s struggle for European accession. The Prime Minister, Adrian Nastase, argued that solutions leading to ghettoization should not be used to speak of integration.

Eventually the Mayor of Piatra Neamt relented and he announced that places in the planned compound would only be offered to those in need. So far (November, 2001) construction works have not yet started at the alleged site of the future compound.

### **2.3.2. Relations with the dominant ethnic/national group in society**

Since the fall of communism in Romania there has been a considerable increase in nationalism and ethnically motivated incidents. While several minorities have been targeted as a result of this, Roma, as the weakest members of society, have been singled out as scapegoats by authorities and the majority population alike (Helsinki, 1994: 7).

Between 1990 and 1995 community violence against Roma was a feature of life in Romania. The problem has not been one-sided. While attacks have generally been sparked by a crime committed by a Roma against a non-Roma person, the reaction has typically seen whole non-Roma communities turn against the local Roma population (Braham, 1992:17), as happened in Hădăreni, as mentioned above, and in several other towns and villages in Romania. Non-Roma individuals are rarely, if ever, brought to justice for these attacks, even in cases where Roma have been fatally injured.

The earliest episodes of community violence were not reported in the national media. In Virghiș, Covasna County, villagers killed two Roma and destroyed two houses on December 24, 1989; in Turulung, Satu Mare County, one child disappeared and 36 houses were burned on January 11, 1990; in Reghin, Mureș County, locals set five houses on fire on January 29, 1990; in Lunga, Covasna County, the non-Roma population killed four Roma and set six houses on fire on February 5, 1990.

From June 13-15, 1990 coal miners from the north, brought in by special trains to break up anti-Iliescu demonstrations in the capital, took time off from their dubious assignment and, together with policemen, rampaged through Roma settlements on the outskirts of Bucharest, allegedly destroying flats and houses, severely beating many Roma men, and raping Roma women. Many detained Roma males returned home,



uncharged with any crime, only weeks later. More violence followed: in Cuza Vodă, Constanța County, an angry mob of locals set 34 houses on fire on July 10, 1990, and in Cașinul Nou, Harghita County, villagers burned 29 houses on August 12, 1990.

The first case, which reached the wider public occurred in Constanța County, in the village of Mihail Kogălniceanu on October 9, 1990, where a furious crowd set 36 houses on fire and rendered another four uninhabitable. The authorities did nothing to identify the perpetrators, and the official reaction to such “social conflicts” was that they were “understandable from an emotional point of view.” Roma throughout the country began to be subjected to threats that if they did not “behave,” they would end up similarly to those from Mihail Kogălniceanu.

These threats were followed by action: in the spring of 1991, Roma inhabitants in several neighboring settlements in Giurgiu County were chased out from their homes. In Bolintin Deal, Giurgiu County, a town with 7,000 inhabitants, 150 of whom are Roma, villagers set 22 houses on fire and destroyed another two houses during the night of April 7-8, 1991.

On Orthodox Easter Sunday, April 7, 1991, shortly before midnight, a non-Roma man named Cristian Melinte set off for Bucharest in his car. Ion Tudor stopped the car and asked Melinte to give him a lift. The refusal was followed by an argument, after which Tudor stabbed Melinte, who died immediately. The police caught and arrested Ion Tudor two hours later. On the next morning --Easter Monday-- at 9 a.m., unnamed individuals set off a siren and approximately 2,000 inhabitants of the village gathered in the center of the village. The police informed the Roma that they had better flee.

Soon after, the non-Roma crowd went from one Roma house to another --the houses were scattered throughout the village-- looted the houses and then set 22 of them on fire. When thirty-four of the expelled Roma attempted to reoccupy one of their houses a month later, two thousand non-Roma gathered once again and burnt that house and two other houses belonging to Roma to the ground.

On May 17, 1991, following the stabbing of a bartender by a Roma man, three thousand residents in the village of Ogrezeni, Giurgiu County, gathered and destroyed seven houses belonging to Roma. Villagers in the neighbouring village of Bolintin Vale subsequently gathered to express their solidarity with the villagers of Ogrezeni by setting on fire thirteen Roma houses on May 18. In Găiseni, also in Giurgiu County, villagers set three houses on fire and destroyed another six houses on June 5.

In Plăieșii de Sus, Harghita County, a town with 3,200 inhabitants, 200 of whom are Roma, villagers burned 28 houses and killed a Roma man on July 9, 1991. This violence had been triggered by the July 6, 1991 incident when four Roma men beat Ignác Daró, a night guard, because he had interfered while they were beating up their horse. Shortly after the incident, the crowd beat two innocent old Roma men as revenge. One of the old men, Mr. Ádám Kalányos, later died of the injuries he had sustained.

In the meantime the police had arrested the four Roma men. Two days later a warning sign appeared on the outskirts of the settlement where the houses of the Roma families

stood, informing the inhabitants that on June 9, Sunday evening, their houses would be set on fire. The Roma informed both the police and the village municipal authorities, but all was in vain. Nobody intervened. On Sunday in the afternoon they fled to the stable of the local cooperative farm. An organized group of villagers then cut the electrical wires leading to the Roma settlement --to avoid a short circuit that would leave the whole village without electricity - knocked down the telephone pole connecting the village with the neighboring village of Miercurea Ciuc and then set all of the 28 Roma houses on fire. Other pogroms followed in Vălenii Lăpuşului, Maramureş County, on August 13, 1991, where villagers burned eighteen houses, and in Cărpiniş, Timiş County, on March 17, 1993, where five houses were destroyed. At that point, however, the media had already lost interest in the topic.

The Hădăreni pogrom in Mureş County brought anti-Roma violence to the attention of the general public once again. Three Roma were killed, fourteen houses were set on fire and four houses were destroyed — all on September 20, 1993, the day Romania became a member of the Council of Europe. Hădăreni is a town with approximately 900 inhabitants; about 125 of them are Roma.

On September 20, 1993, a group of Roma was waiting at a bus stop to get to the neighbouring village of Luduş. The Roma had an argument with the ethnic Romanian Gligor Cheţan who approached them with a whip. After throwing Cheţan on the ground, the Roma, fearing retribution by his three sons and others nearby, tried to escape. During the scuffle that followed, the Roma Rupa Lupian Lăcătuş stabbed Crăciun Cheţan with his knife. He immediately fled the site with his brother Pardalian Lăcătuş and their brother-in-law Zoltán Mircea into the nearby house of a local Roma who was not at home at the time. A crowd subsequently gathered in front of the house.

The police officers that arrived at the scene failed to break into the house and arrest the Roma men inside. The impatient crowd then set the house on fire and beat to death two of the Roma as they attempted to escape the smoke and flames. The third man, Zoltán Mircea, was later found burned to death inside the house. When more policemen arrived in the village, the crowd broke into smaller groups. These groups then set another thirteen houses on fire and razed to the ground another four, while the policemen allegedly did nothing to stop the destruction. They stood by, watching to make sure that there were no traffic accidents, since the village is located on the two sides of a major road.

The government promised swift action after that incident. For a while it seemed that the government would be able to stop further incidents of community violence. However, optimism did not last long. In Racşa, Satu Mare County, on May 29, 1994, villagers set nine houses on fire; in Băcu, Giurgiu County, on January 7, 1995, locals burned four houses, and seriously injured two Roma individuals. Throughout Romania, houses of Roma in approximately thirty settlements have been set on fire since the fall of the Ceauşescu regime, with mobs applying collective punishment to local Roma communities.

Research published in 1995 found that 40 per cent of the non-Roma population had “very unfavourable” feelings towards Roma and a further 34 per cent had “unfavourable” feelings. In all regions of the country feelings regarding Roma

inclined towards “unfavourable,” although some groups, such as Hungarians, were weakly positive in their attitudes (Abraham, 1995:15). However this research also claims that these feelings are not inspired by Roma ‘ethnicity,’ but rather by the ‘way of life’ of the minority and the manner in which they assert themselves (Abraham, 1995: 16).

In an opinion poll conducted by the Center for Urban and Regional Sociology as recently as December 1997, 67 per cent of those questioned declared an unfavorable attitude towards Roma. Moreover, the age groups most likely to claim “unfavourable feelings” towards Roma are those in their mid-thirties or younger. The fact that the younger population is manifesting these opinions means that the situation could easily become worse as time passes if, as is likely, these individuals maintain their negative attitudes and pass these on to future younger generations (Rostaş, 1998: 4).

Mădălina Voicu and Monica Şerban (The Research Institute for Quality of Life -M. Voicu, M. Serban-, 2000) analyzed the research and the surveys done from 1993 to 1999. They were looking to see if there was any change in the level of prejudice against Roma. They noticed that there is considerably less prejudice than there used to be. A high level of prejudice against the Roma population could be noticed in 1993. Then it decreased. An explanation of this diminution could be the fact that the Romanian society is involved in a process of democratization, and therefore its population has started to be more tolerant towards “alterity.” In spite of all these findings, according to Ethno-barometer 2000 May-June, the rejection degree of Roma still registers a high level (There is still a significant percent of Romanians who would not allow Roma population to live in Romania: (38.8 per cent) – “I would not allow Roma in the country.” (The Research Center of Interethnic Relations, 2000).

Nationalist organizations also use inflammatory rhetoric directed against Roma. *Vatra Romanească* (Romanian Hearth) is an extremist nationalist group that began in Târgu-Mureş shortly after the fall of communism, and is believed to have been instrumental in the inter-ethnic violence, which occurred there in March 1990. Vatra singles out Roma in its objective of “a bloody struggle against Gypsies and other minorities.” The organization claims, “the holy ground of Romania has been spoiled by the feet of Asiatics, Huns, Gypsies, and other vagabonds.” The current treatment of Gypsies in Romania and other countries in the region is seen by Donald Kenrick as “not so much genocide as ethnic cleansing, an attempt to persuade the Gypsies to emigrate *en masse*” (Kenrick, 1998: 60). The balance between freedom of speech and protection of minority groups against racism is a delicate one, but it is vital for the survival of Roma populations in Eastern Europe. Examination of cases involving violence against Roma since 1990 clearly indicates both the attitude of the population towards Roma and the lack of willingness of the government to do anything to change this attitude.

Though Iulius Rostaş argues that “after 1996 there was not communal violence against the Roma,” the Report for Romania prepared by “Human Rights Watch” contradicts this statement (Rostaş, 2000, Human Rights Watch, 2000).

The media are also active in promoting anti-Roma stereotypes. Some titles in the period of May-July 1998 from two national newspapers show this attitude very clearly. “*A Bloody Settlement of Accounts between Two Gypsies*” (Adevărul, May

20, 1998), *“The Trial of Fane Căpățână — Confrontation between Gypsy Mafias”* (Adevărul, June 24, 1998), *“The Gypsies from Căzânești Fight for the Stolen Aluminium”* (Adevărul, July 13, 1998), *“The Fights Between Gypsy Mafias take a Break — The Perpetrators of ‘Assault from Străulești’ Were Arrested”* (Ziua, July 14, 1998), *“Two Groups of Gypsies, Armed with Baseball Bats, Fought in the Zone of Ștrandul Tineretului”* (Ziua, July 29, 1998).

By doing this, according to Vasile Ionescu (Ionescu, 2000), the Constitution stipulations, referring to all forms of discrimination, (the 30th Article, Romanian Constitution, 1991) are broken. In August, the Romanian government took some measures with a governmental decree in order to combat all kinds of discrimination.

Apart from the distorted and biased articles, which create negative stereotypes, there are articles that are pure fabrications. This was the case with an article published in *Transylvania Jurnal* (a regional newspaper) on July 25, 1998 and signed by Oana Patricia under the title *“The Tragedy of a Family from Arad — ‘They Blinded Him to Make Him a Beggar.’”* The journalist presents the story of a non-Roma person who had been beating a group of Roma. The non-Roma person explained in a half-page account that his son had been stolen by Roma, then was made blind and used as a beggar. After he found his son, he swore to beat up every Roma he sees. *“They had taken my son’s eyes with a hot iron rod. They cut the hand of another person and took another one to the railway to cut his legs, so that they use him as a beggar. Tell me, are there any laws to save me from this? And I am happy, because I at least found my child, even though he is blind. How about other parents?”*

The PRO EUROPA League sent a letter on July 28, 1998 to the Timișoara Police Chief with a request for information on the event described in the article. The Police Chief of Arad said that there was no such case registered. Thus it was proven that the article was only a fabrication, a ‘good story’ for good sales of the newspaper.

### **2.3.3. Relations with other minorities if any**

Community violence against Roma has been a feature of relations between Roma and Hungarians in Romania just as it has been with the majority population. At times both Romanians and Hungarians have joined force in attacking local Roma communities (Weber, 1998: 220). One such incident occurred in 1990 in Casinul Nou, a predominantly Hungarian town in Harghita County. On August 11 of that year the entire Roma population was chased from the town and their houses destroyed by arson or other means. The police did nothing to prevent the violence, and the vast majority of the Roma did not return to the town, but went instead to the neighbouring village of Plaesii de Sus, or to Bucharest. A Rom who witnessed the event from a distance was not asked to make a statement by those investigating the events. Those Hungarians whose evidence was included by investigators cited past crimes committed by members of the Roma community as justification for the attack. All denied involvement and claimed that it had been too dark to see who had been responsible. According to the Romanian legal defense organization, APADOR, those Roma who did not return to the town ever received any compensation for their loss of property (APADOR, 1997: 15-16).

Roma are faced with prejudice from all of the other minorities in Romania. Research conducted in 1995 showed that they are rejected by 100 per cent of the German minority, 50 per cent of the Hungarians, 63 per cent of the other nationalities (Ukrainians, Jews, Lipovan Russians, etc) and, perhaps most shocking, by 24 per cent of themselves. Only 5 per cent of the individuals surveyed failed to respond to the questions regarding Roma, a clear indication that the Roma issue is at the forefront of public consciousness. Rural populations were found to view Roma more favorably (22 per cent) than urban (16 per cent), according to the research (Abraham, 1995:103). Ethnobarometer 2000 May-June shows that the negative attitude of Hungarians towards Roma (I would not allow Roma in the country) has been also diminished. It has reached the same level as Romanian's attitude (40.7 per cent) (The Research Centre of Interethnic Relations, 2000).

#### **2.3.4. Relations between the regions inhabited by the minority and the central authorities**

Roma in Romania do not inhabit one specific region and their presence cannot be defined in geographical terms. They reside in every region of Romania and move frequently, often because of community violence (Weber, 1998: 221). Therefore one cannot talk about 'relations between Roma-inhabited areas and central authorities' in the same way in which this can be applied to other minorities.

As outlined in Section 2.3.1., Romanian authorities do discriminate against Roma, both directly, by failing to punish those who commit crimes against members of the minority, and indirectly by the non-introduction of sufficient legislation to protect the rights to which Roma are entitled.

- **LANGUAGE**

#### ***3.1. Describing the language***

##### **3.1.1. Linguistic family**

In addition to speaking the language of the area in which they happen to be, be that Romanian, Hungarian, or something else, many Roma in Romania speak the Romani language. It has a limited vocabulary and is very closely related to the language spoken in modern-day India. It is widely believed that Roma are descendants of low-caste Indians, part of the Dome caste who were musicians and rope-makers (Moss, 1993: 138).

In eighteenth century Hungary, a study was carried out comparing the Romani language with Indian languages, which seemed to indicate that there was a strong link between the two. Linguists subsequently confirmed this link and more recent research shows that these findings were already chronicled by Persian and Arab historians (Liegeois, 1995: 7).

Structurally it is an inflected language, meaning that word ending change to reflect concepts such as case and gender, as in Latin (Kenrick, 1998: 68). There are five or

six cases, two genders (male and female) and a number of tenses (Kenrick, 1998: 137).

### ***3.1.2. Dialects and unity; linguistic awareness***

Linguists claim that although Romani probably entered Europe in a unified form, it has since split into numerous dialects, many of them influenced by the majority languages of those states inhabited by Roma. Estimates ranging from 13 to 30 dialects have been made, and it is thought that over 80 per cent of the European Roma population speak one of these (Kenrick, 1998: 68). These dialects can, however, be placed in two major groups; 'Vlah' and 'non-Vlah.' The former predominates in Romania and has consequently been influenced by the Romanian language (Rommel, 1993: 226).

In the current climate in Romania, however, it is difficult for Romani to flourish. It is not forbidden to speak it in public and in a very small number of schools it is one of the languages of instruction, but due to the high level of discrimination against Roma in Romania, both subtle and overt, many deny their ethnicity and therefore their language. Often the younger generations have never learnt Romani and instead speak the majority language of the area in which they live.

### **3.1.3. Instruments of knowledge: description of the language and norms (history of the written form and of its standardization)**

Prior to 1990 there was no standard form of Romani. It was written in different forms in each country, primarily using the alphabet of the majority language. In 1990 the Fourth World Romani Congress was held near Warsaw. A decision was made at the congress to unify the various dialects with a standardized form of the language. The Congress accepted the system of spelling proposed with few abstentions, but it is yet to win wide acceptance (Kenrick, 1998: 68).

## ***3.2. The history of the language***

### **3.2.1. Origins**

It is difficult to find consensus on the origins of Romani, but it is thought to be related to Punjabi and Hindi and to have come from India with the initial migration (Kenrick, 1998: 68). Various studies carried out would seem to support this theory (see Section 3.1.1.). Studies carried out by a Hungarian pastor studying in the Netherlands during the 1700s and later research in England around 1780 support the theory (Kenrick, 1998: 137).

### **3.2.2. Evolution**

On the way from India, Romani borrowed words from various other languages. For instance the word *baht* (luck) came from Persian, while Greek provided *drom*, meaning a paved road (Kenrick, 1998: 68).

Once the Roma entered Europe and dispersed to various states the language developed dialects (see Section 3.1.2.), which were largely influenced by the languages of the majority populations and were often written in the alphabets used by speakers of the majority language. Examinations of the various dialects used within Romani indicate the paths taken en route from India. Similarly, examination of the vocabulary and, more specifically, the number of local words found in Romani, indicate the length of time the Roma stayed in any one place (Liegeois, 1986: 36).

### **3.2.3. Cultural production in the language (literature, oral tradition)**

Roma have a rich oral tradition in their native language. Romani writers are beginning to emerge, but no such person of note has come to the fore in Romania thus far. Literary production in the Romani language did not actually begin until the 1920s, when a number of magazines were published in Eastern Europe. The genocide of Roma during the Second World War brought about a lull in this, but literature began to be produced once more when the war ended. Since then, several novels, autobiographies, and legends have been published, in addition to collections of poetry and short stories. Newspapers and magazines have also emerged. Theatre companies in several countries have performed plays in Romani, both original works and translations. The New Testament has also been translated (Kenrick, 1998: 68).

#### **o *Actual sociolinguistic data***

##### **▪ Territory in which the language is used**

Roma are present in every region of Romania. They no longer tend towards nomadism in the territory, but discrimination and fear of community violence are reflected in a constant movement of the Roma population. It is therefore impossible to pinpoint precisely the territory in which Romani is used, particularly when one considers the fact that only 60 per cent of the Roma in Romania are competent in Romani.

##### **▪ Number of persons using this language (in territory and among emigrants)**

Sixty per cent of the Roma in Romania speak Romani, usually in addition to Romanian. Smaller groups speak Hungarian, German, Turkish or Bulgarian (Minority Rights Group, 1997: 242). Due to policies of assimilation many Roma have lost their own language, something that has had a resounding effect within the minority itself.

There are approximately 2.4 million people worldwide speaking one of the various dialects of Romani. All of the following approximations are conservative. These include the Vlah dialects, widespread in Europe, particularly Romania, and spoken by 710,000 individuals. Erليا, a Balkan dialect concentrated in Bulgaria, the countries of the former Yugoslavia and Greece, has 570,000 speakers, while 500,000 speak dialects of the Baltic States. Those dialects spoken in the Balkans, which are 'non-Vlah', have 110,000 speakers, members of clans who have become settled since the turn of the century. 40,000 Roma in Poland, Hungary, southern Slovakia, Burgenland, Transylvania and Ukraine speak Carpathian or Rumungro dialects, while 400,000 Roma in the Czech Republic and Slovakia are also Romani speakers. In Italy 2,000

Roma in Calabria and Abruzzese have their own distinct dialect, while 7,000 Roma in Finland and Sweden speak Kaalo. Western Europe is home to 30,000 Roma speaking Sinti and Manouche dialects, concentrated in Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Population movement in recent years has meant that speakers of the Balkan Romani dialects can now be found in most parts of Western Europe (Kenrick, 1998: 138).

○ ***Freedom of expression in the minority language***

▪ **Level of acceptance or resistance to the minority's language**

The extent to which Romani is accepted is directly linked to the level of acceptance of the members of the minority themselves. As Roma are marginalised and many have been driven from their communities there is, as already discussed, a tendency among the Roma to try to integrate by speaking the majority language in the area in which they live.

▪ **Ways in which the state protects or impedes use of the minority language**

The state clearly accepts the Romani language as legitimate as it is now a language of instruction in a number of schools throughout the country. Discrimination within the system and the classroom itself, however, ensures that the actual numbers studying in Romani are very low.

The Ministry of National Education has consented to an experimental program that aims at training Roma students for being educators, teachers – individuals who know which are the educational and cultural needs of Roma children by communicating with them in the Romani language. The program started in 1990-1991. This program collapsed in 1998 because of the lack of information of the beneficiaries (Roma population) and because of the inappropriate preparedness of the teachers (Ionescu, 2000). In 1993 the Didactical and Pedagogical Printing House printed a textbook in 5,000 copies for this category, and Kriterion Printing House printed a Romanian-Romani dictionary conceived by Gheorghe Sarău (Pons, 1999; 59).

Article 127 of the Romanian Constitution stipulates: “Citizens belonging to national minorities, as well as persons who cannot understand or speak Romanian have the right to take cognizance of all acts and files of the case, to speak before the Court and formulate conclusions, through an interpreter; in criminal trials, this right shall be ensured free of charge”(Romanian Constitution, 1991). There is also a law concerning local public administration modified after 1996 that stipulates that in localities where the citizens belonging to national minorities represent over 20 percent of populations, they can use their mother tongue in relations with authorities, the denominations of localities and institutions shall be also in their mother tongue, the laws of local authorities shall be published in their mother tongue (Public Administration Law No. 69, October 1991, No. 24, April, 1996).

#### **4. RELIGION**



The majority of Romanian Roma are followers of the Orthodox faith. Those who are not, tend to worship according to the area in which they live (Romanian Human Rights Institute, 1993: 93). Vasile Ionescu points out the following aspect: churches that have sermons in Romani have no financial support from the State Secretariat for Cults (Ionescu, 2000).

#### **4.1. Identifying a religious minority**

#### **4.2. Religious freedom enjoyed**

#### **4.3. Relations with the dominant religious community and the other communities**

#### **4.4. Ways in which the state protects or impedes minority religious activities**

### **5. GENERAL LEGAL STATUS**

#### **5.1. Past**

As slaves, Roma in Romania had no legal rights at all. As described in section 1.1., they could be bought and sold upon the whim of their ‘owner.’ The earliest legal documentation in which Roma are referred to as slaves dates back to 1331. Within the Austro-Hungarian Empire treatment was also extremely harsh. Roma were enslaved in Transylvania too, and under Maria Theresa attempts were made to forcibly assimilate them. It was therefore forbidden to speak Romani, wear traditional clothes, or refer to oneself as Roma. Discrimination and anti-Roma feeling were widespread, with incredibly harsh punishments meted out, often to innocent victims, as in the case (mentioned in section 1.1.) of forty Roma broken on the rack and cut into pieces in 1782 after they were accused of roasting and eating several dozen Hungarian peasants - a charge that was later found to be groundless (Hancock, 1987: 16, 51). Many Roma children were taken from their families and were given to be raised by Romanian, Hungarian or German families. The objective was to educate them and to assimilate them. But many of them succeeded to run away and find their parents (Pons, 1999: 14).

Following the abolition of slavery their situation did not improve and many offered themselves for resale to their previous owners. This can be seen reflected in the demographic pattern of Romanian Roma until the Second World War (Hancock, 1987: 37).

In the aftermath of the First World War Romania gained a significant amount of territory and with it a large minority population. Minorities therefore comprised 28 per cent of the total post-war population, where they had comprised just 10 per cent beforehand. The Romanian government was forced to sign several agreements guaranteeing minority rights and it was therefore hoped that the situation of the Roma would improve. However, the new government wished to ‘Romanize’ its new population and thus create a truly homogenous state. Roma suffered as a result of this, particularly due to the redistribution of land that they were ill equipped to make proper use of. Increased taxes also became a burden, worsened by the Depression of 1929. As government policies became more oppressive, traditional anti-Roma attitudes were strengthened. Officially the minority was not considered to have a history or a culture or civilization due to their oral tradition, so there was nothing in writing to support their claim to minority rights. Their status in the inter-war period in Romania was

therefore similar to that of the Jews - second-class citizens shunned by the population and whose rights were ignored (Crowe, 1991: 68-69).

The war itself proved to be devastating for Roma throughout Eastern Europe. It is estimated that between a quarter and half a million died, which in terms of percentage of the population is comparable to the losses suffered by the Jewish community. The Romanian government expelled tens of thousands of Roma to land seized from Ukraine (Transdnistria) where many succumbed to starvation, cold, and diseases such as typhus (Fraser, 1992: 268). It is believed that the official policy was never to annihilate the Romanian Roma completely, but to rid the Romanian nation of them. Most of the Roma who were transported across the Dniester were taken from Bucharest and its environs in 1941-2. In addition, as part of the same policy all of the inhabitants of one village in what is now Moldova were taken to a camp in Ukraine where many of them died. No other large-scale actions are documented against Romanian Roma during the war, and the remainder managed to live in comparative freedom, with some serving in the Romanian army (Kenrick, 1995: 109-111).

Those Roma still present in Romania after the war suffered under varying communist policies of forced assimilation interspersed with attempts to simply ignore the Roma population. The regime did not consider them to be an ethnic or national minority at all, and therefore any policies formulated with minorities in mind did not apply to Roma. The period before 1989 most books fail to mention Roma at all. For instance, a 1977 publication, *Romania's Population*, stated that Romanians, Hungarians and Germans constituted almost 90 per cent of the total population, with the remaining percentage comprised of various named minority groups in addition to 'etc.'. Failure to recognize the minority officially gave the state license to ignore their problems (Helsinki Watch, 1991: 16-17).

## **5.2. Present**

During certain political periods since 1990, nationalistic rhetoric has been a feature of Romanian politics. This led to the submission of some draft bills that became legislation, which ran contrary to the provisions of the constitution and restricted minority rights on various levels. Certain articles were also in contravention of some of the international agreements signed by Romania in which the government had made a commitment to protect minority rights. It is interesting to note that nowhere in Romanian legislation is the term 'national minority' defined, despite the fact that the constitution employs the term several times (Weber, 1998: 199, 212).

In addition, a Council for National Minorities was formed to fulfill Romania's obligations as a member of the Council of Europe (Dianu, 1997: 2). This proved ineffective from the outset however, and was radically altered with the establishment of the governmental Department for National Minorities after the 1996 election. Including a National Office for Roma, the department is still in its early stages, but there are high hopes for its effectiveness (Weber, 1998: 246).

The current constitution, adopted in 1991, contains several articles, which guarantee the rights of minorities within Romania. All articles refer to individuals and collective rights are not a feature of the constitution. The right to identity (Art. 6) and protection

from discrimination regardless of race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, sex, opinion, political adherence, property or social origin (Art. 4 (2)) are provided for.

Changes have occurred in the area of domestic legislation since 1990, mainly in education and local public administration, two areas, which do not tend to affect Roma directly. There is no domestic legislation making specific reference to Roma. Since 1990, the area of law and jurisprudence has been a problem for those Roma who are charged with committing criminal acts. As mentioned in section 2.3., crimes against Roma have been commonly used in retribution for criminal acts by members of the Roma community. In cases where Roma are victims of crime, the police do not tend to take action, and state prosecutors rarely take Roma cases. The majority of Roma lack the financial means to procure legal representation, and there is no legal aid system in Romania. The legal system, it seems, is swift to mete out punishment to Roma, but not so quick to defend them (Braham, 1992: 22). In addition, access to legal recourse is extremely difficult to obtain in cases of police ill treatment, which affects Roma disproportionately. The military prosecutor has jurisdiction over such complaints and tends to show reluctance to indict police officers for abuses. There is no other recourse in cases of maltreatment by police (Human Rights Watch, 1999: 2).

The problems for Roma with regard to justice did not improve with the change of government at the end of 1996, despite high hopes at the time that they might. The Amnesty International Report on Romanian for 1998 cites cases of abuse of Roma by police. Some of these occurred during raids of the type investigated by the European Roma Rights Center in 1996 (Amnesty International, 1999: 2).

Internationally, Romania is a signatory to numerous documents dealing with the issue of human rights. As a member of the Council of Europe since 1993 the state is bound by the terms of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the document that lays down the basic principles of the Council. It has also signed the documents of the Organization (formerly Conference) for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), including the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, the first such agreement to be formulated after the fall of communism, which underlines the need to monitor the treatment of minorities within member states and to “pledge to improve continuously their situation.” The OSCE agreements are not legally binding, but they do represent a political commitment by their signatories to abide by the terms therein. As a member of the United Nations, Romania has also committed itself to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and more recent documents, including the United Nations Declaration in the Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, adopted in December 1992.

Merely being a signatory to such agreements, however, does not guarantee that minorities will enjoy the realization of the commitments. Examination of the current situation of Roma in Romania, particularly with regard to relations with authorities and access to legal recourse, would suggest that the Romanian government has a long way to go before Roma enjoy in practice the rights they have been guaranteed on paper.

## **6. AVAILABILITY OF EDUCATION FOR THE MINORITY**

## **6.1. Brief history of the education system in relation to the minority**

Roma are historically the least educated minority in Romania. Even those who have received an education have very often only completed primary school. Very few Roma succeed in completing their education and fewer still manage to get to university. The numbers of illiterates within this community are very representative: 44 per cent of men and 59 per cent of women are illiterate (Zamfir, Zamfir, 1993: 93).

During the Communist period, education was compulsory for all children up to the age of fifteen (the first eight grades), a policy that may have worked for Roma had there not been discrimination. Prior to 1989 there were numerous reports of teachers discriminating against Roma children because of the way in which they were dressed. Poverty was seen as being synonymous with stupidity, and many Roma were automatically placed at the back of the classroom and ignored (Helsinki Watch, 1991: 25). Romanian was the language of instruction and while in theory pupils could study in their mother tongue, Romani did not feature in schools until after 1990.

The study of the Romani language and literature in the Romanian schools began in 1990, together with the establishment of three forms for training of Roma primary school teachers at the Normal Schools from Bucharest, Targu-Mures and Bacau. After 1992 it was taught also at primary school level, when the Romani language lessons were introduced in the schools in Santana (Arad County) and Bobesti (Ilfov County) (Rostaş, 2000).

Important in the issue of education is the fact that legally, children who have been out of state schools for three years or more cannot return. There is currently proposed legislation to limit this to two years. Nevertheless, without a minimum of a Grade VIII education, Romanians cannot legally be hired by any employer and procure a work card (*Carte de Muncă*), which theoretically entitles the holder to a pension, unemployment and health insurance as well as a median wage established by the government for that particular type of employment. But, as Florin Moisa specifies, there are some regulations that permit getting a professional qualification and workcards without having completed eight grades (Moisa, 2000).

Studying the Romani language is very important and only in this way the Romani culture can be perpetuated. On the other hand, written proofs about Roma tradition can be left for posterity (E. Pons, 1999: 59). Though, the lack of means available for the community leads to a lack of interest for studying and teaching in school this language. According to E. Pons and considering many Roma statements, the problem of education cannot be solved by Romani schools, but by the achievement of an elementary education that would allow them to get out of a vicious circle of poverty and social marginalization. But Roma people have also a request. They consider that Roma culture and history should be also in the textbooks children use in school. Therefore they demand it (Pons, 1999: 61).

## **6.2. Availability of teaching material for the minority**

Iulius Rostaş stresses the following idea: “the efforts made by Phoenix Foundation that came out of some bilingual Primer Romani-Romanian and Romani-Hungarian books.” He mentioned the following textbooks that are used to teach Romani language and literature:

“- the textbook for Communication (Vakarimata) for grade I, published by Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House, Bucureşti, in 1998, translated by Mihaela Zătreanu, Camelia Stănescu and Gheorghe Sarău;

- the Romani Primer for grade II;

- the Anthology of texts in Romani language. II-IV years of study for grade II-III, author Gheorghe Sarău, Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House, Bucureşti, 1995, republished in 1999;

- the Romani language for grades of Roma pre-school teachers (author: Gheorghe Sarău - DPPH, 1994 in grades IX-X, and the above mentioned Anthology for grades XI-XII. In grade XIII the pupils get acquainted with the methodological and practical aspects contained in the guide included in the Textbook for Communication. (Ministry for National Education in Romania - The Ethos of Education for National Minorities in Romania, 2000)” (cited by Rostaş, 2000).

Both E. Pons and Iulius Rostaş say that the “real problem is the content of the school books. There are no references to the history, culture and traditions of minorities. The lack of information about minorities is a source of xenophobic and racist behaviour.” (Pons, 1999: 57, Rostaş, 2000).

Given that just 60 percent of the Roma in Romania speak the Romani language, and very few schools include it as a language of instruction, very little effort has been made either to produce or procure teaching materials in Romani.”

Florin Moisa (F. Moisa, 2000) argues that The Open Society Foundation Romania is probably the most important actor in the field of funding Roma Programs. Annual Reports of OSF Romania can give a perspective of the level of funding and main program lines (Annual Report – Open Society Foundation, 1999).

### **6.3. Official position**

Chapter XII of the 1995 Education Law makes provisions for minority education. Article 118 of this law echoes the constitution in stating that, “The persons belonging to national minorities have the right to study and receive instruction in their mother tongue at all levels and all forms of education in accordance with the present law.”

In addition, a 1998 ordinance by the Ministry of Education specifically mentions the Romani language as one of those minority languages to be offered for four hours per week in grades I-IV and VI-IX, and five hours per week in grade V, a clear indication of the state’s recognition of the language and willingness to teach it in schools. Teaching is in classes of 15-25 pupils, or groups of 7-15. However, other numbers of students may also be catered for. Introduction of this was planned for the academic year 1998/99, so there has not yet been time to judge the level of implementation or effectiveness (Romanian Ministry of Education, 1998).

During the last two years strategic programs were elaborated for the education of Roma over a seven-year period. It has been aimed at forming a Roma elite by giving them special places and different facilities when they take exams to get to the universities or colleges (based on some decrees signed by the Ministry Of National Education). On the other hand, the collaboration between the Ministry of National Education and NGOs that develop educational projects for Roma is also important to be mentioned. In May 1998, an inspector for Romani language was appointed. In 1999, 20 Roma and 18 non-Roma inspectors were in charge with the education of the Roma (Rostaş, 2000). But this reformatory program has not aimed at solving the problem of the rights of learning using the mother tongue (specifically Romani, in this case). Its target has been to develop recovery scholar programs by proliferating “special classes” that are able to discourage mother tongue studying. On the other hand, the Roma inspectors have recorded difficulties in registering Romani language even as an optional subject (Ionescu, 2000).

At the same time, (1999) the guidance of the Roma children towards religious and vocational education was facilitated similarly to the school recovery of young Roma who had abandoned their studies by issuing some orders made in 1999 and 2000 by the Ministry of National Education (Rostaş, 2000). Vasile Ionescu denies this in the MFA Report. He says that religious and vocational education is what they need the most (Ionescu, 2000).

Probably more noteworthy than any provisions made for minorities within the education system is the fact that, for many reasons, many Roma children in Romania do not attend school at all. Discrimination by the system itself is rife. There are many instances of Roma not being permitted to attend school due to laws demanding a residence permit in order for a child to be eligible to register. As mentioned earlier, community violence in the early 1990s destroyed many Roma houses and resulted in the expulsion of whole Roma communities. These people subsequently moved to larger towns and cities and now live in makeshift housing for which they are unable to obtain residence permits (ERRC, 1998: 34). Birth certificates are another hurdle that must be overcome. Many Roma children do not have these as mothers often fail to register births.

Those Roma children who do attend school face discrimination from other quarters, ranging from school separation to the refusal to admit Roma to school at all. In some schools classes are formed which are predominantly or totally Roma (Save the Children, 1998: 8-9). Discrimination is not uncommon on the part of the teachers and other children. Roma children are often ignored by teachers and insulted by other students. Communication between teachers and Roma parents is also very often lacking causing even those parents who may have an interest in their children’s education to lose patience with the system. Beating is also said to be a ‘method’ of schooling that is resorted to by some teachers (Save the Children, 1998: 10). It is quite understandable that children would not wish to attend school under those circumstances.

The racial barriers encountered by Roma children in the Romanian city of Timișoara led many parents to persuade a Roma educator, Professor Letitia Mark, to establish an educational program in her home. With funding from the Open Society Foundation,

the Gypsy Women's Association "For Our Children" inaugurated this program in June 1997. The program's main activity is tutoring Romani children, many of whose parents are illiterate and thus unable to help their children with homework. If it were not for the program in Professor Mark's home, many would have dropped out of school in the face of racist treatment by teachers and fellow students. Other aspects of the program are targeted at older children who dropped out of school some time ago and are functionally illiterate. Some of these teenagers are preparing to take equivalency exams that will enable them to obtain a diploma. Located near the western border of Romania, Timișoara has large numbers of Roma families who migrated abroad in the early 1990s, principally to Western European countries, and who were forced to return home by the countries to which they had emigrated. In a number of instances, parents encountered resistance when, upon their return, they attempted to enroll their children in public school (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 91).

The project received funding from Open Society Foundation Romania – Roma Program, during 1997-2000, approximately 12,000 USD each year in order to sustain the activities in the school. There are no signs from the Ministry of National Education of taking over these activities by now (Moisa, 2000).

Having lost several years of schooling during their years abroad, these children would have been older than most of their classmates if they had been allowed to register. Although this should not have prevented their enrolment, many were denied the right to register on the grounds that they were "too old." As these experiences suggest, there is widespread discrimination against Roma children in Timisoara's public schools. It has been a common experience for them to be directed to sit in the back row of classrooms, where teachers ignore them. Accounts of physical assaults of Roma children by non-Roma classmates are not infrequent, and some report having been kicked or hit by teachers. After such experiences, some Roma children have been unwilling to return to school (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 74). Florin Moisa argues that there are many cases in which all these "technical" problems were overcome by school principals and teachers that understood the importance of education for Roma children (Moisa, 2000).

#### **6.4. Activists' initiatives**

Educational programs devised specifically to meet the needs of Roma have been carried out with considerable success in the communities in Pata-Rât and Mangalia (Save the Children, 1998: 12).

The Civic Alliance in Cluj also ran an intensive program finished in 1998, for Roma children to prepare them for entry into the state school system. Over an eight-month period the children, aged between 7 and 9, learn the alphabet and other basic literacy and numerical skills. They were also taught about the kind of behavior that is expected in schools, something that many Roma children tend to miss out on through the non-attendance of kindergarten and lack of socializing with other children. Groups, in a familiar environment like a family home, do all of the teaching and although the program is still in its infancy, it has thus far met with considerable success (Bocu, 1998).

Just as Roma inhabit all regions of Romania, projects are being run nation-wide, many of them in the area of education. International NGOs such as Save the Children and UNICEF are involved in many of these. Funding also comes from abroad for locally run initiatives.

Florin Moisa explains that Open Society Foundation Romania has, within its educational component, a special program dedicated to School Development in Communities with Roma and that there are involved about 28 schools all over the country. Also, the Roma Program funded several projects coming from Roma NGOs in the field of social and educational support for Roma children (Moisa, 2000).

With the support of the Open Society Foundation, a kindergarten located near a garbage dump on the outskirts of Bucharest, Romania, has recently developed innovative programs for its predominantly Roma students. A fundamental feature of the program is the effort to engage the children's parents, most of whom are poor and illiterate; (according to the school's headmistress, more than half of them make a living by foraging for bottles in the local garbage dump). Both the kindergarten's social mediator and its teacher's assistant are parents of children enrolled in the school. Other Roma parents help supervise children in their various classroom activities, and there is a parents' room at the school. While a key goal of the school is to improve the children's Romanian language skills, Roma culture is featured prominently in its programs. For example, the teacher's assistant teaches Romani and her husband, a folk musician, has performed for the children. And last, but not least, the kindergarten's programs are based on the principle of individualization. The school is set up with several activity areas, and children are encouraged each day to select the activity area in which they will concentrate that day. The teachers respect each student's pace of development, and downplay competition between students. Above all, the headmistress's approach to her students is based on the overarching premise of respect and compassion (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 90).

## ***6.5. Present situation at different levels:***

### **6.5.1. Nursery school and primary education**

Up until the age of 7, many children in Romania attend kindergarten. While the emphasis is not necessarily academic in such schools they are invaluable for preparing children for their first years in primary school. They learn how to behave in a social group, to sit at a desk and pay attention without distracting other classmates, and perhaps most importantly, they become accustomed to socializing with other children of a similar age.

Research published in 1992 found that 29.9 per cent of Roma children between the ages of 7 and 9 had never attended school. Between ages 10 and 16 the figure was 17.2 per cent. These children had therefore missed out on the development of social and behavioral skills. Those failing to attend primary school (Grades I to IV) were also denied the basic education in reading, writing and arithmetic provided during those years. Furthermore simply attending school does not necessarily mean that a child will successfully complete his or her education. Absentee rates are extremely high, and the same research report estimated that close to half of the children studied



would not complete primary education (Grades I-VI) (Save the Children, 1998: 7).

The current situation is gradually getting worse, a decline that can be attributed to a number of factors and influences both inside and outside the minority itself.

The increase in violent attacks on Roma communities since 1990 has also had repercussions on school attendance. Many parents have claimed that they dare not send their children to schools as they fear for their safety. Children have also expressed reluctance to attend under these circumstances (Helsinki Watch, 1991:76). Unfortunately the majority population has a tendency to see this as a ruse by Roma to avoid sending their children to school, a belief that has clear overtones of the old 'they don't want to learn' stereotype.

Social and economic factors have a large part to play in the lack of education in the Roma community. There are practical considerations in sending a child to school. Many Roma parents do not have the money to dress their children well or to buy them paper and pencils. The schools themselves are generally not funded sufficiently so they are unable to help supply these basic things. Many Roma parents are unwilling to send their children to school in dirty or old clothes. Those children who do go are often subjected to bullying by non-Roma children or they simply feel 'different' from the other children and are not comfortable in the school environment, so they become reluctant to go back. In some cases help is supplied in the form of clothes and shoes, but often this is badly organized, and what the children receive does not fit them. Their parents then sell what they have been given leading the teachers to conclude that Roma cannot be helped (Save the Children, 1991:10).

There are other problems of a logistical nature also. Very often the physical position of the Roma community on the outskirts of a community or sometimes even further away makes it very difficult for children to get to school, particularly under adverse weather conditions (Save the Children, 1998: 9).

The lack of an educational tradition between Roma causes difficulties for children wishing to attend school. The success of a child in school often depends upon having the right home environment for study and family members who are willing (and able) to assist the child with homework. Very often Roma parents discount the value of an education, as they did not receive one. In addition, a child who is either at school or doing homework is not available to help around the house or, perhaps, earn badly needed money. The long-term benefits of an education are not terribly convincing when compared to the short-term benefits of seasonal work that meets immediate material needs. This can be attributed not only to attitudes within the Roma community but also to the culture that emerges within communities severely affected by poverty.

Very traditional Roma communities also have misgivings about allowing boys and girls to mix in the absence of adult supervision. The modern school with its co-educational classes arouses distrust.

Language can also cause difficulties. Roma children who speak the Romani language at home often find that they are unable to keep up with the class because they do not

speak Romanian well enough (Helsinki Watch, 1991:26). Classes are large and even a well-intentioned teacher cannot possibly give every child individual attention. Roma children tend therefore to fall further and further behind until they eventually drop out, often without even the minimum education needed to be employable in Romania.

Ministries of Education statistics for the academic year 1998/99 are available for all educational districts of Romania, although they do not give separate figures for primary and secondary schools. In comparison with non-Roma pupils, numbers of Roma children attending school are extremely low nationwide. For instance, one school in the Transylvanian town of Alba Iulia has a total of 608 pupils attending grades I-VIII. Of these, just 23 are Roma. Most Roma students study in the Romanian language, although according to government statistics, there are currently 1,680 pupils whose language of instruction (and mother tongue) is Romani. This figure represents twice as many pupils as the previous academic year (Romanian Ministry of Education website).

### **6.5.2. Secondary education**

Secondary education in Romania is comprised of Grades V to XII, the first four of that are vital, if a child is to have a fair opportunity to secure employment. Unfortunately, for all of the reasons mentioned above, few Roma children in Romania manage to begin their secondary education, let alone complete it. For many the jump from Grade IV to Grade V is too much to cope with. The former involves the basic tuition mentioned above, with one teacher per class. The latter means a jump to eight different subjects, each with a different teacher, making it extremely difficult for students to establish a personal relationship with him or her. Help at home is even more vital during these years as there is little individual attention in class. While this is not only a problem for Roma children, they seldom receive this, and absenteeism and dropout rates are extremely high (Krohn, 1999).

As stated above, separate statistics are not available for Roma pupils in secondary education. They do, however, list several schools in Transylvania attended by Roma children in which the language of instruction is Hungarian (Romanian Ministry of Education).

### **6.5.3. Higher education and research**

One can scarcely talk about higher education with reference to Roma in Romania as so few succeed in reaching this educational level. Given the mixture of lack of attention and quite often discrimination at school and a lack of interest in education at home it is hardly surprising that many Roma children do not become well educated. These children then pass on their own negative experiences and attitudes to their own children and the vicious circle continues. There are, of course, also serious repercussions in the area of employment.

As with education at other levels however, the situation appears to be changing. The Romanian Ministry of Education statistics for the academic year 1998/99 lists 136 Roma attending universities throughout Romania, either as full-time students or teaching/research assistants. The subjects studied are as diverse as law, sociology,

natural sciences, and literature. Most of these students study in Romanian, but the University of Bucharest has a Romani language department that is attended by both Roma and non-Roma students (Ministry of Education website).

The percentage of Roma who matriculate in university is still minuscule. Even so, the achievements of those who have graduated from university is a testament to the potential efficacy of efforts to increase Roma participation in higher education. Among the younger generation of Roma leaders, some attended university with the assistance of government programs aimed at enabling Roma to obtain advanced degrees. These range from the use of quotas to the provision of scholarships. An example of the former approach is a Romanian policy pursuant to which the government has set aside places for Roma students at public universities since 1993. The program started with ten reserved spaces for Roma students at a university for social work in Bucharest; in 1999, the program had expanded to potentially cover some 150-200 Roma students. The system does not necessarily ensure that every reserved place will be filled; applicants must still pass a qualifying exam. But it does make it more likely that Roma students will attend university (Max van der Stoel, 2000: 92). Now there are around 600 Roma studying in Romanian Universities, due to affirmative action measures of the Ministry of National Education, according to Florin Moisa (Moisa, 2000).

## **7. COMMUNICATION AND AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA**

### **7.1. Legal situation**

The National Audio-Visual Council oversees the media in Romania, a body comprised of eleven members that came into being with the Audio-Visual Act on May 19, 1992. The government was criticized at the time due to the fact that all eleven members of the council were ethnic Romanians. Complaints were justified, as minorities comprise approximately 10 per cent of the total population of the country and as such should be entitled to representation on the Audio-Visual Council (Helsinki Watch, 1993: 51).

### **7.2. Press**

There is very little print media produced directly by or for Roma, a handful of publications being the sum total. Nevertheless, given the illiteracy problem within the Roma community and the poverty, which makes things such as the purchase of newspapers and certainly television sets a rare rather than an everyday occurrence, this is not so surprising.

The Open Society Foundation in Bucharest produces *Romathan: studii despre Romii*. This is something of a research journal, written in both Romanian and Romani. It includes academic articles about aspects of Roma culture, etc. The Resource Center for Roma Communities Cluj-Napoca started in 2000 a publishing program in which several materials will be produced and distributed: Romani Language Manual, dictionaries, literature, Romani Language audiotape course, conversation guide, etc, in order to reduce the lack of information in the field of Roma issues (Moisa, 2000).

Vasile Ionescu says that only one of ten Romani publications (“Asul de Treflă”) is financially supported by the state. This does not lead to the mass media development for the Roma community (V Ionescu, 2000).

### **7.3. Radio**

There are some radio-programs in Romani using the national radio station frequencies. Also, Open Society Foundation funded in 1997 a radio program in Targu Mures, a program run by Mr. Rudolf Moca (F. Moisa, 2000). There used to be a 15 minutes radio program in Craiova, but it doesn’t exist anymore (Ionescu, 2000).

### **7.4. Television**

Romanian National Television (TVR) broadcasts one brief program per week for Roma, at an off-peak time. Again, perhaps more noteworthy is the discriminatory treatment of Roma on Romanian television. Now, as Vasile Ionescu suggests, there is no more a television program dedicated to the Roma minority, but only sporadic moments within a TV program “Conviețuri.” Moreover, they are also presented in the Romanian language (Ionescu, 2000).

### **7.5. Internet**

Internationally produced and maintained websites containing information about Roma abound. Within Romania the Ministry of Education maintains a section on its website about Roma education, including names and addresses of organizations and individuals working in the field (although many are not Roma). The website is only in Romanian.

The Resource Center for Roma Communities Cluj-Napoca, an organization set up by Open Society Foundation Romania started a website program that will cover its activities in the field. Also, Mr. Vasile Ionescu is starting a project that aims at setting up a press agency, having an Internet bulletin (Moisa, 2000).

## **8. CONCLUSION**

Officially, according to the 1992 census results, there are 409,723 Roma in Romania, comprising 1.8 per cent of the total population. Self-preservation and widespread illiteracy, however, have affected this figure and Roma organizations put the real figure at somewhere between 1.8 and 2.5 million. The actual number of Roma in Romania at present is not known.

They inhabit all regions of the country. Due to community violence and ill treatment at the hands of the police since 1990, many Roma have left their homes and moved to makeshift housing in other areas, for which they cannot procure residence permits. It is therefore impossible to accurately estimate numbers of Roma in any part of the country.

Members of the minority face problems in virtually every aspect of life. Historically treated as property to be bought and sold at will and then as second-class citizens, they

have spent centuries struggling against oppression. Living standards are low, lack of hygiene facilities and awareness leads to the spread of disease and a high infant mortality rate. The average marriage age remains far lower than that of the majority population. It is not uncommon for girls to marry at 13 or 14 years of age (Helsinki Watch, 1991: 76). Not only does this cut their childhood short, but also it leads to an inevitable increase in the size of family groups, worsening the problems of poverty.

Poverty within Roma communities leads to other problems as well. Hygiene standards tend to be low, often due to a lack of running water or electricity. The quality and quantity of food tends to be worse in the winter in many Roma communities, with meat and dairy products unavailable much of the time (Save the Children, 1998: 6). In such conditions the sheer size of family groups and lack of health education are major contributory factors to conditions such as malnutrition, anemia, rickets and height-weight deficits (Save the Children, 1998: 13). Many Roma children are not vaccinated, as their parents are not taught the importance of this.

Access to medical services is made difficult by fact that a large number of Roma do not possess the necessary documents. Those who do are often resident illegally in an area other than that stated on their identity card, so their medical records are not available to health-care staff. These problems concerning permanent residence coupled with a lack of income, which makes it impossible to pay for medical insurance, means that many Roma families couldn't have a family doctor under the terms of the new law on health and social insurance (Save the Children, 1998: 15). The purchase of medicine is also problematic as prices are often prohibitive, particularly in cases where Roma believe that the more expensive the medicine, the more effective it is.

The situation of Roma in Romania deteriorated sharply after 1989. In a climate of change which left other minorities hopeful about the future, Roma have faced discrimination, poverty and in some cases, death.

Roma in Romania are educationally disadvantaged. Discrimination, both within the system through which one must apply for a place in a school, and within the schools themselves, is widespread and discourages many children from attending. Education is also affected by the chronic poverty found in so many of Romania's Roma communities. Those children who do manage to begin school often fail to complete even primary level and therefore face insurmountable difficulties when seeking employment. This in turn tends to lead to a rise in crime and a perpetuation of the cycle of poverty.

Discrimination is a problem faced by Roma in Romania in areas other than education also, and takes the form of both physical violence and ill treatment by authorities. Community violence, giving way to a pattern of police raids, has been regular abuses endured by Roma since 1990. Whole communities have been branded as criminals and expelled from areas in which they have lived for decades, their only 'crime' their ethnicity. These people have been forced to move to towns and cities in search of work. Those who are qualified and apply for jobs find that their ethnicity is often a hindrance there, too.

Radical change is needed in order to improve the situation and this change is needed both within and without the Roma community. Non-Roma authorities involved in the field of education need to show a deeper understanding of the particular problems of the minority and, in many cases, prejudices must be overcome. Within the Roma community, understanding is also needed. An understanding of the long-term benefits of education and the necessary assistance to make it possible, even if that simply entails a change of attitude. In cases where a lack of communication exists between teachers and Roma parents, both should make the effort to bridge the gap in the interests of the child. Non-governmental organizations can also help by providing educational programs specifically designed to meet the needs of Roma. If steps such as these are not taken, the downward spiral currently evident in the area of Roma education is set to continue, leading to worsening poverty, and rising unemployment and crime levels, thus reinforcing one of the most consistent stereotypes of Roma.

Viewed as a whole, the problems faced by Roma in Romania are daunting, yet a beginning could be made to find solutions to all of the above were individuals more open to understanding the differences between the communities.

Education is clearly needed in order to overcome the prejudice and racism. Children are not born racist - they learn racist rhetoric in the home or from outside influences. Integration of Roma and non-Roma children is necessary at the earliest stages of schooling so that both learn to relate to one another. Unfortunately with the educational situation as outlined above this is almost impossible at present.

The media also has a vital role to play. Television has been accused of discrimination similar to that seen in the press in its portrayal of Roma. On June 13, 1990, the then director of television services, Mr. Emanoil Valeriu, announced on-air that Roma had attacked and destroyed the television studios. Mr. Valeriu then called on the Romanian population to protect the studios (Helsinki Watch, 1991: 88). The telling of such a blatant untruth on television could only have been done with one purpose in mind – to incite further anti-Roma feelings among the population. Mr. Valeriu's action prompted the Ethnic Federation of Roma to file a complaint against the former for violations of the Penal Code. The Prosecutor's office subsequently dismissed this complaint (Helsinki Watch, 1991:89).

Current Romanian state-controlled news broadcasts involving Roma perpetuate the most common negative stereotypes held – criminality and poverty. This has been effectively employed for political purposes, with close-up shots of Roma participants at political demonstrations used to compromise the opposition (Helsinki Watch, 1994: 7).

It is clear that Romanian journalists need to develop a greater sense of responsibility. The media is one of the most powerful tools of manipulation in any state and can be used to shape public opinion with disastrous consequences. The Romanian government and the media itself should recognize this potential and aim for a more balanced unbiased portrayal of Roma, and other minorities, in the interests of stability.

The emergence of an intellectual class amongst the Romanian Roma could benefit this minority enormously. Roma who are equipped both mentally and socially to deal with

non-Roma at an intellectual and political level can help to increase awareness of the problems faced by the community and promote greater understanding of the Roma way of life.

Education is also needed within Roma communities themselves. A common anti-Roma complaint is that they do not respect the laws of the non-Roma communities, and it is true that this does sometimes happen. If real understanding is to be reached then the effort must come from both sides. Putting the onus on the non-Roma community alone is a certain recipe for failure.

## ADDRESSES

### 1. Cultural institutions and/or associations founded by the minority

- Agenția de Dezvoltare “Împreună”  
Scărlătescu St., No.44, Sector 1, 7000, București  
Tel: 01-2524250, 094-759565  
Fax: 01-2524250  
E-mail: [imaria@dnt.ro](mailto:imaria@dnt.ro)  
Contact: Ionescu Maria
- Alianța “Casa Romilor”  
Mărășești St., No.26, Ploiești, 2000, Prahova  
Contact: Mihai Grigore
- Ansamblul de Cântece și Dansuri “Roma Bahtale”  
Sticlei St., No.10, Mediaș, 3125, Sibiu  
Tel: 069-843002  
Contact: Rezimeș Valentin
- Asociația “Fraternitatea”  
I.L. Caragiale St., No.27, Negrești, 6552, Vaslui  
Tel: 035-457795  
Contact: Romanescu Ioan
- Amare Phrala Cluj Napoca (youth organization)  
Someșului St., No. 18, Ap. 2, Cluj-Napoca, 3400, Cluj  
Tel: 064-139802, 094-277209  
Fax: 064-139802  
Contact: Doghi Dan Pavel
- Asociația Ansamblul de Cântece și Dansuri al Romilor ȘATRA (song and dance)  
Iuliu Maniu St., No. 3, Bloc 33, Ap. 3, Mediaș, 3125, Sibiu  
Tel: 069-824708  
Contact: Mircea Ionuț, Jucki Alexandru
- Asociația “Casrom”  
Rovinari St., Bl 32/A, Ap.20, Târgu-Mureș, 4300, Mureș  
Tel: 065-134204, 092-520502  
Contact: Rudolf Moca
- Asociația Căldărarilor din România Than Romano  
Sintești, Vidra, Sintești, Ilfov  
Contact: Mihai Ion
- Asociația “Centrul Crestin al Romilor (the Christian Center of the Roma)  
Morii St., Nr. 226, Sâmpetru, Brașov



Tel: 094-843783  
President: Rad Vasile

- Asociația “Chakro”  
Gheorghe Doja St., No. 9, Târgu-Mureș, 4300, Mureș  
Tel: 065-164421  
Fax: 065-168573  
Contact: Cristian Eparu
- Asociația Crestina Apostolica a Romilor din Romania  
Oltului St., No. 2, Târgu-Mureș, 4300, Mureș  
Tel: 065-164015  
Contact: Rad Petru
- Asociația Culturală “Barbu Lăutaru”  
14 Decembrie 1989 St., No.2 bis, Room 9, Iași, 6600, Iași  
Tel: 032-113506  
Contact: Ion Șerban
- Asociația Culturala a Romilor Lautari (Cultural Association of Roma musicians)  
Gloriei St., bl.19, Ap.52, Roman, 5550, Neamț  
Contact: Rudichi Vili
- Asociația Culturală Ion Drăgoi  
Lalelelor St., Bl.10, Ap.3, Bacău, 5500, Bacău  
Tel: 034-142080  
Contact: Părăluță Ion
- Asociația Democratică a Romilor Liberi  
Mihai Viteazu St., No.B 3/2, Ap.1, Cluj-Napoca, 3400, Cluj  
Tel: 093-321925  
Contact: Ioan Gorăcel
- Asociația Femeilor Rome din România  
Colentina St., No.43, Bl.R 13, Ap.83, 7000, București  
Tel: 01-6885385  
Fax: 01-6885385  
Contact: Dumitru Violeta
- Asociația Femeilor Țigănci “Pentru Copiii Noștri”  
Dorobanților St., No.62, Timișoara, 1900, Timiș  
Tel/Fax: 056-208929  
Contact: Mark Letiția
- Asociația “Infratirea”  
Al. Sahia St., No.5, cartier Palazu-Mare, Constanța, 8700, Constanța  
Tel: 041-551275, 098-618179, 041-666074

Contact: Anghel Petre

- Asociația Națională a Romilor din România  
Parcul Mic St., No.14, Ap.11, Brașov, 2200, Brașov  
Tel: 068-151434  
Contact: Iftimie Victor
- Asociația Patronilor Ploiești  
Cornului St., No.4, Ploiești, 2000, Prahova  
Tel: 044-156076  
Contact: Gheorghe Niculae
- Asociația Patronilor Romi din Romania  
Șoseaua Giurgiului No.113-115, Bl.O, Ap.4, Sector 4, 7000, București  
Tel: 01-6853277, 3365090  
Contact: Safta Gheorghe
- Asociația “Pod Peste Suflete”  
Mihai Eminescu St., Bl. 29, Ap. 7, Slobozia, 8400, Ialomița

Asociația Profesorilor Romi “Khetanes”

Principală St., No.71, Terebești, Satu Martel

Tel: 065-755172

Contact: Rozalia Bondrea

- Asociația “Rom Star”  
Mioriței St., Bl.10, sc. A, Ap.1, Bacău, 5500, Bacău  
Tel: 034-123351, 094-881569  
Contact: Bălan Paustin, Dumitru Bebe, Antonache Cornel
- Asociația Rom-Meser  
C. Porumbescu St., No.14, cartier Izvoare, Bacău, 5500, Bacău  
Contact: Iorga Nicolae
- Asociația Romano Tolah  
Aleea Parcului, No.21, 4350, Luduș, 4350, Mureș  
Tel/Fax: 065-471264  
Contact: Florina Zoltan, Rostaș Persida, Mailat Andrei
- Asociația Romilor Brazilia  
Margareta St., No.24, 4783, Nușfalău, 4783, Sălaj  
Contact: Lakatoș Sandor
- Asociația Romilor Creștini din Romania  
Mărăsești St., Bl.16, Ap. 35, Baia-Mare, 4800, Maramureș  
Tel: 062-415150  
Fax: 062-415153  
Contact: Berchi Gheorghe, Boldor Ioan

- Asociația Romilor din Coltău  
Arieșului St., No. 269, Coltău, com. Săcălășeni, Maramureș  
Tel: 062-89081  
Contact: Covaci Iosif
  - Asociația Romilor “Espoir-Criss”  
Mintia, 2733, Hunedoara  
Contact: Rafi Tiberiu
- Asociația Romilor Harghita  
Revoluția din Decembrie St., No. 28, Ap. 18, Miercurea-Ciuc, 4100,  
Harghita  
Tel: 066-123357  
Fax: 066-172363, 066-172457  
Contact: Ioni Geza
- Asociația Romilor Harghita – Filiala Gheorghieni  
Piața Libertății St., No.10, Gheorghieni, 4200, Harghita  
Tel: 066-163865  
Contact: Varga Karmen
  - Asociația Romilor “Prietenia” (Association of Roma “Friends”)  
Piața Libertății St., No.10, Baia-Mare, 4800, Maramureș  
Tel: 062-431970  
Contact: Chereji Radu
  - Asociația Social Culturală a Romilor Bihor (Bihor Social and Cultural Association)  
Gheorghe Șincai St., No. 1, Oradea, 3700, Bihor  
Tel: 094-602547
  - Asociația Social Culturală a Romilor din Banat - Timișoara  
I. B. Deleanu St., No. 5, Timișoara, 1900, Timiș  
Tel: 056-215883  
Contact: Rezvimeș Cornel
  - Asociația Socio-Culturală a Romilor Tehara  
Mehedinți St., No.17, Bl.O2, Ap.87, Cluj-Napoca, 3400, Cluj  
Tel: 064-167959  
Contact: Dandoș Albert
  - Asociația Tinerilor Romi Steaua Nordului, Baia Mare (Roma Youth association)  
Mărășești St., No. 16, Bl. 16, Ap. 35, Baia-Mare, 4800, Maramureș  
Tel: 062-778977  
Contact: Boldor Daniel

- Asociația Studentilor Romi  
Episcop Radu, No.31, Sector 2, 7000, București  
Tel: 01-2123750, 094-855612  
Fax: 01-2123750  
E-mail: feryp@leader.ro  
Contact: Cristinela Ionescu, Emilian Nicolae, Florin Risipitu

Asociația Studenților Romi Iași, ROMANITIM

Bucium St., No.23, Bl. B3-1bis, Ap.1; Ipsilanti St., Nr.25; Ciric St., No.54  
Bl. Q6, Ap.18, Iași, 6600, Iași  
Tel: 093-360824, 032-110271, 032-173514  
Contact: Iulian Dinu, Gheorghe Mantu, Acojocăriței Roxana

- Asociația Studenților Romi Romano Suno  
Rene Descartes St., No.6, Cluj Napoca, 3400, Cluj  
Tel: 064-194893  
Contact: Doghi Dan Pavel, Etveș Alexandra
- Asociația “Terne Rom”  
Malu Roșu St., No.126, bl. 10G, Ap.16, Ploiești, 2000, Prahova  
Tel: 044-140657, 092-685003  
Contact: Mihai Vasile
- Asociația Romilor din Depresiunea Cisăului  
Com. Cislău, 5191, Buzău  
Contact: Drezaliu Nicolae
- ASTRA ȘATRA - “Aven Amenta” Asociația Studentilor si Tinerilor Romi  
Antirasisti (Roma students and youth against racism)  
Ministerul Culturii, C.P. 22-165, 7010 București  
Băiculești St., No.25, bl. E13, Ap.66, 7000, București  
Tel: 01-222 3314, 6682765  
Fax: 01-6682765  
E-mail: av.satrap@mailbox.ro  
Contact: Vasile Ionescu, Atena Ilie
- ASTRA ȘARTA – Aven Amentza  
Obor St., No.33, Beclean, Cluj Napoca, 3400, Cluj  
Tel: 094-139603  
Contact: Mihaly Zoltan
- ASTRA ȘARTA – Aven Amentza  
Scărlătescu St., No.44, Iași, 6600, Iași  
Tel: 093-238302  
Contact: Constantin Laura
- ASTRA ȘARTA – Aven Amentza  
Băiculești St., No.25, Bl.E13, Ap.66, 7000, București

Tel/Fax: 01-6682765

E-mail: [av.satra@mailbox.ro](mailto:av.satra@mailbox.ro)

Contact: Lavinia Olmazu, Delia Grigore, Cazacu Carmen

- Centrul Creștin al Romilor  
Alba Iulia St., No.46, Sibiu, 2400, Sibiu  
Tel: 069-229863, 092-712590  
Fax: 069-228112  
Contact: Cioabă Florin
- Centrul Creștin al Romilor – Filiala Teleorman  
Eminescu St., No.36, Abatorului St., Baraci Cetate, Turnu Măgurele, 750,  
Teleorman  
Contact: Ștefan Marin
- Centrul de Asistență Socială, Economică și Profesională – CASEP  
Cartier Cornițoiu, Bl.H, Ap.20, Craiova, 1100, Dolj  
Tel: 051-420043  
Fax: 051-417223  
Contact: Fotescu Dan, Dumitru Tatian
- Comunitatea Etniei Romilor (Ethnic Community of Roma)  
Baia-Mare St., No.1, Bl.8, Ap.58, Sector 3, 7000, București  
Tel: 01-6487316  
Mobile: 094-542 282
- Comunitatea Etniei Romilor - Prahova  
Stânișoarei St., Bl.124, Ap.14, Ploiești, 2000, Prahova  
Tel: 044-161737  
Contact: Gheorghe Niculaie
- Comunitatea Etniei Romilor - Resita  
Fântânele St., No.6, Ap.6, Caraș-Severin, 1700, Reșița  
Contact: Neveanu Coriolan
- Forumul Romilor Românizați din România  
Beethoven St., No.7, Craiova, 1100, Dolj  
Tel: 051-418467  
Contact: Burtea Petre
- Fundația “Emanciparea și Școlarizarea Copiilor Romi”  
Radomir, Diosti, Radomir, 1111, Dolj  
Tel: 051/62 Dioști, Radomir  
Contact: Mitrică Biră
- Fundația “Ion Budai-Dealeanu”  
Seceretoarelor St., No.8, Sibiu, 2400, Sibiu  
Tel: 069-411 538, 093-534024

Contact: Radulescu Iulian, Cornescu Mirela

- Fundația “Ion Budai-Dealeanu”  
Armatei St., No.54, Bl.9, Ap.6, Tîrnăveni, 3225, Mureș  
Tel: 065-443789  
Contact: Demeter Zoltan
- Fundația “Filantropica” Dej  
Înfrățirii St., No. 5, Bl. B7, Ap. 20, Dej, 4650, Cluj  
Tel: 094-603592
- Fundația Lăuta Străbună  
Ștefan Cel Mare St., No.225, Roman, 5550, Neamț  
Tel: 030-734456  
Contact: Halangescu Dumitru
- Fundația O Del Amentza  
Piața Unirii, No.2, Room 14, Deva, 2700, Hunedoara  
Tel: 094-935146, 054-216151  
Fax: 054-216088  
Contact: Bologa Nicolae
- Fundația pentru Dezvoltare Socială a Romilor Ramses  
1 Mai St., Ap.2, Room 54, Dej, 4650, Cluj  
Tel: 09-3514202  
Contact: Moldovan Adrian, Moldovan Gelu
- Fundația pentru Tineret DEL  
Căpitan Buzatu St., No.43, Târgu Jiu, 1400, Gorj  
Tel: 053-223228  
Contact: Nelu Paul
- Fundația Phoenix  
Independenței St., No.202, Room 28, 7000, București  
Tel: 01-3131981, 094-542282  
Fax: 01-3131981  
Contact: Ion Costin Ionel
- Fundația Roma Umanitate  
21 Decembrie 1989 St., No. 108, Cluj Napoca, 3400, Cluj  
Tel: 092-350155  
Contact: Pascu Aurel
- Fundația Romani  
Nicolae Iorga st., No.7, Ap.4, Iași, 6600, Iași  
Tel: 032-232580  
Contact: Sava Adolf

- Fundația Romilor pentru ajutorarea Copiilor, Tinerilor și Batrinilor (Roma Foundation for helping children, youth and the aged)  
Carpați St., No. 73, Caracal, 800, Olt,  
Contact: Păun Marian

Fundația Rom-Rom

Dezrobirii St., No.28, Caracal, 800, Olt  
Contact: Vasile Ion

- Fundația Sindy Humanitas  
Morii St., No. 1016, Gilău, 3447, Cluj  
Tel: 094-801679  
Contact: Roșianu Aurel
- Fundația Social Culturală a Romilor “Ion Cioaba”  
Alba-Iulia St., No.46, Sibiu, 2400, Sibiu  
Tel: 69-229331  
Contact: Luminița Cioaba

Fundația Somrom – Fundație de Întraajutorare

Mireșului St., No.136, Șomcuța Mare, 4866, Maramureș  
Tel: 062-480803  
Contact: Boldijar Gherman, Lakatoș Tudor

- Fundația “Wassdas”  
Rene Descartes St., No.6, Cluj-Napoca, 3400, Cluj  
Tel: 064-194893, 094-267132  
Fax: 064-194893  
E-mail: asz@mail.soroscj.ro  
Contact: Otvos Geza

“Romani Criss” - Centrul Romilor Pentru Interventie Sociala si Studii

(Documents cases of human rights abuse and acts  
in some instances, trains mediators)  
Buzești St., No.19, Sector 1, 7000, București  
Tel/Fax: 01-6597813  
Contact: Nicolae Gheorghe

- “Romani Baxt”  
Națională St., No.24, Podul Iloaiei, Iași, 6600, Iași  
Contact: Rotaru Maria
- Societatea Tanara Generație a Romilor  
Marius Emanuel Buteică St., No. 2, Sector 2, 7000, București  
Contact: Costel Vasile
- Societatea Tanara Generație a Romilor  
Îngustă St., No.14, Glina, 7490, Ilfov

Contact: Costel Vasile, Nora Costache

- Uniunea Romilor  
Anton Pan St., No.24, Sector 3, 7000, București  
Tel: 01-3124766, 3239237  
Contact: Răducanu Gheorghe
- Uniunea Romilor – Iași  
14 Decembrie 1989, No.2 bis, Room 9, Iași, 6600, Iași  
Tel: 062-113506  
Contact: Andreescu Camelia
- Uniunea Apostolica a Romilor  
Marasești St., No. 16, Ap. 35, Baia-Mare, 4800, Maramureș  
Tel: 062-7778977  
Contact: Boldor Daniel
- Uniunea Asociațiilor Creștine Apostolice a Romilor din România  
Bohloc St., No.48, Săcele, Brașov  
Tel: 09-2356309  
Contact: Ghica Vasile
- Uniunea Creștin Democrată a Romilor din Banat  
Romulus St., No.11, Timișoara, 1900, Timiș  
Contact: Mihai Nicolae
- Uniunea Creștina a Romilor din Romania  
Oituz St., No. 54, Bl. 5, Ap. 64, Baia-Mare, 4800, Maramureș  
Tel: 062-431970  
Contact: Radulescu Ioan

Uniunea Culturală a Spoitorilor Independenți

Muncii St., No.33, Buzău, 5100, Buzău

Contact: Gheorghe Sterian

- Uniunea Democrată Liberă a Romilor – Dolj  
Fata Luncii st., No. 15, Craiova, 1100, Dolj  
Contact: Vâlcu Vasile
- Uniunea Democratică a Romilor  
No.357, Sadova, 1180, Dolj  
Tel: 03 Primăria Sadova  
Contact: Nicu Tănase
- Uniunea Democratică a Romilor – Sașa  
Sașa St., No.14, Petroșani, 2675, Hunedoara  
Tel: 054-546923  
Fax: 054-546923



E-mail: adrl@comtrust.ro

- Uniunea Democratica Culturala a Romilor - Valea Jiului  
Grivița Roșie St., No. 15, Ap.2, Petroșani, 2675 Hunedoara  
Tel: 054-541279  
Contact: Rad Marcel
- Uniunea Generală a Romilor,  
Mihail Kogalniceanu St., No. 25, Târgu-Jiu, 1400, Gorj  
Tel: 053-214840  
Contact: Bobu Nicolae
- Uniunea Generală a Romilor – Hunedoara  
(Also runs an educational programme)  
P-ța Unirii Nr. 2, Ap. 14, Deva, 2700, Hunedoara  
Tel: 054-214197
- Uniunea Generală a Romilor, Organizația femeilor – Hunedoara  
(Women’s organization)  
P-ța Unirii No. 2, Ap. 14, Deva, 2700, Hunedoara  
Tel: 054-219451  
Contact: Dîtvariu Simona
- Uniunea Romilor din Județul Constanța  
Buciumului St., No. 11, Constanța, 8700, Constanța  
Contact: Petrache Ivanciu
- Uniunea Romilor din Județul Mureș  
Vulturilor St., No. 30, Ap.13, Târgu-Mureș, 4300, Mureș  
Tel: 065-133520  
Contact: Csorkuly Sandor

Uniunea Romilor Turda  
Republicii St., No.15, Turda, 3350, Cluj  
Tel: 064-324169

## **2. Minority institutions and/or associations concerning education:**

- “CERCUL ȘTIINTIFIC ROMANI” UBB Cluj-Napoca  
(Roma Scientific Circle)  
M. Kogălniceanu St., No. 1, Cluj-Napoca, 3400, Cluj  
Tel: 064-139802, 177436
- Fundația “Academica Civică” Cluj-Napoca  
Firiya No. 4, Bloc A3, Ap. 9, Cluj-Napoca, 3400, Cluj  
Tel: 064-163426

## **3. Political parties and/or associations founded by the minority**

- Alianța pentru Unitatea Romilor  
Silvestru St., No.27, Ap.1, 7000, București  
Tel: 01-2114235  
Fax: 01-2103463  
Contact: Tabă Marius
- Alianța pentru Unitatea Romilor  
Principală St., Iveni, Galați  
Tel: 036-866566  
Contact: Toader Săndel
- Alianța pentru Unitatea Romilor  
Simion Bărnuțiu St., No.43, Caransebeș, 1650, Caraș-Severin  
Tel: 055-518124, 094-390727  
Contact: Corneliu Stănculescu
- Alianța pentru Unitatea Romilor  
Buciumeni, 6320, Galați  
Tel: 036-822703, 822721  
Contact: Ioan Petrișor
- Alianța pentru Unitatea Romilor  
Aleea Nordului St., Bl.F8, Sc.B, Ap.34, Slobozia, 8400, Ialomița  
Contact: Sandu Constantin
- Alianța pentru Unitatea Romilor  
Gheorghe Pătrașcu St., No.50, Bl.13A, Sc.1, Ap.2, Tecuci, 6300, Galați  
Contact: Cărlan Viorel
- Alianța pentru Unitatea Romilor – Bacău  
Mioriței St., No.10, Ap.1, Bacău, 5500, Bacău  
Tel: 094-292135  
Contact: Bălan Paustin, Bălan Diana
- Alianța pentru Unitatea Romilor – filiala Arad  
Sântana 2, Zefirului St., No.58, Arad, 2900, Arad  
Contact: Dorot Dezideriu
- Alianța pentru Unitatea Romilor  
Găvane 2 St., Bl.D18, Ap.4, Pitești, 300, Argeș  
Tel: 048-624200  
Contact: Dincă Vasile
- Federația Etnică a Romilor (Ethnic Federation of Roma)  
Silvia St., No. 34. Sector 2, 7000, București  
Tel: 01-6882433  
Contact: Pantalon Gheorghe

- Federația Etnică a Romilor din România  
(Ethnic Federation of Romanian Roma)  
B-dul 1 Decembrie 1918, No. 6, Mangalia, 8727, Constanța  
Tel: 041-759359, 092763220  
Fax: 041-759359  
Contact: Cobzaru Vasile
- Partida Romilor  
Victor Eftimiu St., No.1-3, Sector 1, 7000, București  
Tel: 01-3158545  
Fax: 01-3225199  
Contact: Ivan Gheorghe
- Partida Romilor - Bistrița  
Loc. Vermes, No. 97, com. Lechința, Bistrița-Năsăud  
Tel: 063-250787  
Contact: Racoti Stefan
- Partidul Alianța Democratică a Romilor  
(Democratic Alliance Party of Roma)  
Cartier Goranu No. 889, Râmnicu-Vâlcea, 1000, Vâlcea  
Contact: Stoica Octavian
- Partidul Democrat Creștin al Romilor - Cluj  
(Christian Democrat Roma Party)  
Morii St., No. 1047, com. Gilau, Cluj  
Tel: 064-991222, 094-253437, 094-253222  
Contact: Varga Rudolf
- Partidul Libertății și Unității Sociale  
(Liberal and Social Unity Party)  
Str. Luminei No. 2A, Sector 2, Bucharest  
Contact: Madalin Voicu
- Partidul Romilor Nomazi și Caldărari (represents two of the tribes)  
Alba-Iulia St., No. 46, Sibiu, 2400, Sibiu  
Tel: 069-229863  
Fax: 069-228112  
Contact: Florin Cioaba
- Partidul Romilor Nomazi și Caldărari - Gorj  
Meteor St., No. 14, Târgu-Jiu, 1400, Gorj  
Contact: Mihai Ilarie
- Partidul Unirea Romilor  
Zorilor St., No. 1, Bl. 280, Ap. 57, Alba-Iulia, 2500, Alba  
Tel: 058-813331, 094535851

Contact: Bumbu Ioan Gruia

- Sindicatul Liber al Romilor  
Cartierul Cornitoiu, Bl. H, Sc. 2, Ap. 20, Craiova, 1100, Dolj  
Tel: 051-420043  
Contact: Dan Fotescu
- Uniunea Democrata a Romilor  
Sasa St., No. 14, Petroșani, 2675, Hunedoara  
Tel: 054-546923  
Fax: 054-546923  
E-mail: adrl@comtrust.ro  
Contact: Burtea Toader
- Uniunea Democrata a Romilor din Județul Galați  
(Democratic Union of Roma from Galati county)  
Furnaliștilor St., No.8, Galați, 6200, Galați  
Tel: 036-441861, 426783  
Contact: Goțu Viorica
- Uniunea Democrata Libera a Romilor - Dolj  
(Liberal Democratic Union of Roma from Dolj)  
Fata Luncii St., No. 15, Craiova, 1100, Dolj  
Contact: Valcu Vasile
- Uniunea Democratica a Romilor și Lautarilor Armeniș  
(Democratic Union of Roma musicians from Armeniș)  
No.8, 1662, Armeniș  
Contact: Sandu Simion
- Uniunea Libera Democrata a Romilor din Județul Bihor  
Mihai Antonescu St., No. 20, Ap.5, Oradea, 3700, Bihor  
Tel: 059-134952  
Contact: Baloy Gyongyi

#### **4. Minority media**

##### ***Radio Stations***

Târgu Mureș

##### ***.1.1. Newspapers***

None

##### ***Magazines***

Asul de Trefla

Victor Eftimiu St., No. 1-3, Int. 5, Et. 5, Cam. 386,  
Sector 1, 7000, București

Tel: 01-3158545  
Fax: 01-3225199  
Editor-in-chief: Gheorghe Ivan

- Aven Amenta  
P.O. Box 22-175, 7010 București  
Tel: 01-2223310  
Fax: 01-2228270

Than Rromano: studii despre Rromi  
Mr. Vasile Ionescu, tel. 094-139824

### ***Television Stations***

- TVR (National station),  
Calea Dorobanților 191, 7000, București  
Tel: 01-2307769

Broadcasts one program per week with no useful content and at an inopportune time.

### ***Internet Web Sites***

- Resource Center for Roma Communities Cluj Napoca  
Țebeș St., No. 21, Cluj Napoca, 3400, Cluj  
Website: [www.romacenter.ro](http://www.romacenter.ro)
- RonConn Foundation owned by Liviu Gabriel Ratiu  
Website: <http://www.romconn.org/roma/>

### ***Publishing Houses***

Editura Alternativa, București  
Tel: 01-2234966

- Editura Didactica si Pedagogica, București  
Tel: 01-6139289  
Fax: 01-3122885
- Editura Kriterion  
P-ta Presei Libere No. 1, 71341 București  
Tel/Fax: 01-2243628

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## **MAIN LITERARY WORKS OF DIFFERENT PERIODS**

Although Roma writers of note are beginning to appear in the region, Roma in Romania have not yet produced such an individual. Centuries of discrimination have forced many Romanian Roma to deny their ethnicity and as a consequence their language. Problems of illiteracy have also affected the development of a literary tradition. Where Romani is spoken, an oral tradition is used to pass stories and history from generation to generation.

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