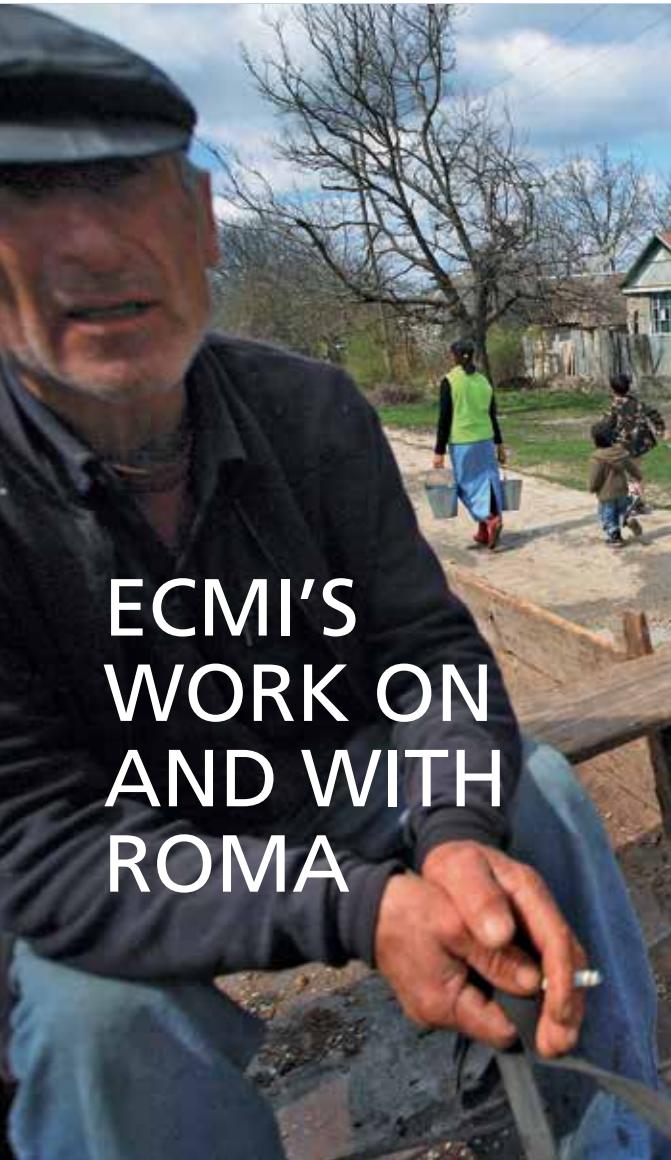


# ECMI

# ROMA IN FOCUS



EUROPEAN CENTRE  
FOR  
MINORITY ISSUES



ECMI'S  
WORK ON  
AND WITH  
ROMA



FROM RESEARCH  
TO ACTION  
FOR EMPOWERMENT

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for Minority Issues (ECMI)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION: ECMI AND ROMA

### 1.1. ECMI

Drawing on the synergy between standards, research, and action, the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) is Europe's leading institution on minority protection and empowerment. This status and the activities that secure it are firmly rooted in ECMI's view of human diversity as a European heritage and cultural pluralism as a great asset. Put simply, minorities matter. ECMI's specific purpose is accordingly to provide actors with new knowledge and tools that empower and equip them to mitigate differences and exchange views through constructive dialogue about how to build a peaceful and diverse Europe.

ECMI was established in 1996 by the governments of Denmark, Germany, and Schleswig-Holstein. With its head office in Flensburg, ECMI has at various times over the years maintained a field presence in Bulgaria, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Serbia. At present, ECMI Regional Associates operate in Prishtinë/Priština and Tbilisi, but the geographic reach of ECMI's portfolio is much broader, not only covering all the member states of the Council of Europe, but also extending to other regions of the world where European minority standards are seen as a guide for standard setting.

ECMI's vision involves bridging gaps between theory and practice; research and politics; and mainstream politicians and minority activists; as well as between different academic traditions. To this end, ECMI employs an interdisciplinary approach in conducting practice and policy-oriented research, providing information and documentation, and offering advisory services concerning minority-majority relations in Europe.

ECMI research treats minority standards not only as guiding principles, but also as a means of identifying areas and situations where minorities face risks as a result of non-compliance, regardless of whether these failures occur in times of violent conflict or in stable, developed states.

ECMI foto: Roma Festival in Tbilisi



## INTRODUCTION ECMI & ROMA

In order to ensure that its research contributes to the synergy between standards, research, and action, ECMI follows a cyclical Knowledge Development Process involving intensive external review as well as internal consultations in designing projects. The final stages of ECMI research projects generally include generating and disseminating practical recommendations – often in the form of handbooks – together with the other results of the project. These outputs subsequently provide the basis for action projects.

ECMI's action projects share a common general aim of supporting those areas of minority existence that have not seen adequate adoption and implementation of global minority rights. More specific objectives generally include capacity building, competence development, and institution building. These objectives are in turn reached through advisory support, technical assistance, and targeted trainings.

Given Roma's status as Europe's most marginalized minority, ECMI's approach is particularly relevant for addressing their situation. Moreover, insofar as Roma comprise a minority in all countries where they reside, Roma matter everywhere for ECMI.





## 1.2. Roma in Europe

The nature and timing of the event that resulted in the genesis of the group now called Roma are matters of debate. Even so, there is general agreement among scholars from various disciplines that the Roma originated on the Indian subcontinent.<sup>1</sup> There is also broad agreement on the basis of linguistic evidence that Roma probably arrived in Europe before the thirteenth century after traveling through Persia.<sup>2</sup>

Despite numerous internal divisions, Roma in general refer to themselves as such (singular 'Rom') when speaking with other Roma. Among non-Roma, however, the use of this terminology was exceptional until the 1990s, with Roma more often called by names that are either derived from the word *Atsinganoi/Atsinganos/Atsinkanos/Athingani* (e.g., 'Cigan') or that reflect the belief common in the middle ages that the Roma had originated in Egypt (e.g., 'Gypsy'). Moreover, despite a shift to the use of 'Roma' in official terminology, it remains common for non-Roma as well as for Roma to use terms like 'Gypsy' in conversations with non-Roma. In some countries in Eastern Europe, autochthonous populations the members of which identify as Ashkali, Beyash, Egyptians, Kovachi, or Mileti consider themselves distinct from Roma on cultural and historical grounds but are generally considered Roma by self-identifying Roma as well as by non-Roma.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Ivan Bernasovsky and Jarmila Bernasovská, *Anthropology of Romanies (Gypsies): Auxological and Anthropogenetical Study* (Brno: NAUMA/Universitas Masarykiana, 1999); Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995); Donald Kenrick, *Gypsies: From India to the Mediterranean* (Toulouse: Gypsy Research Center/CRDP Midi Pyrénées, 1993); Elena Marushakova and Vesselin Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire: A Contribution to the History of the Balkans* (Paris and Hatfield: Centre de recherches tsiganes and University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001); and Albert Thomas Sinclair, "The Word 'Rom,'" *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 3 (1909-1910): 33-42.

<sup>2</sup> Education of Roma Children in Europe, *Arrival in Europe* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2006); William G. Lockwood, Balkan Gypsies: An Introduction, in Joanne Grument, ed., *Papers from the Fourth and Fifth Annual Meetings of the Gypsy Lore Society, North American Chapter* (New York: Gypsy Lore Society, North American Chapter, 1985); John Sampson, "On the Origin and Early Migrations of the Gypsies," *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 2.4 (Series 3): 156-169; George C. Soulis, "The Gypsies in the Byzantine Empire and the Balkans in the Late Middle Ages," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 15 (1961): 142-165.

## INTRODUCTION ECMI & ROMA

Since their arrival in Europe, Roma have been subject to a variety of policy approaches at different times and in different places. Whereas in much of Europe “Gypsies”<sup>3</sup> were targeted for mass killing from at least the sixteenth century through the eighteenth century, Roma in the Ottoman Empire did not suffer systematic repression but were in various periods the objects of ethnically specific policies aimed at facilitating tax collection. By way of contrast, policy aimed at Gypsies in Hapsburg Hungary sought to destroy the characteristics defining Gypsies as a group without killing the group’s members through a series of decrees designed to settle the Gypsies and bring about their absorption into the surrounding population.

The twentieth century saw Roma in Europe targeted for extermination and assimilation on a scale much larger than that of previous initiatives. In Nazi Germany, classification of Gypsies as an “alien race” (*artfremde Rasse*) provided a formal basis for further negative eugenic measures, ranging from a prohibition on marriages to the killing of at least 250 000 persons classified on biological grounds as Gypsies.<sup>4</sup> After the Second World War, Communist policy makers in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania sought to eliminate the social space for Gypsiness which they associated with feudalism and thus to bring about the Gypsies’ assimilation into a nascent proletarian culture through policies of sedentarization, permanent employment, subsidized housing, and free, obligatory education. In the end, however, Communist assimilation policy failed, paradoxically leaving Roma in a vulnerable position at the change of regime precisely because

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<sup>3</sup> In this document, the term ‘Gypsies’ is used only to present policies the declared objects of which were Gypsies (rather than Roma).

<sup>4</sup> Education of Roma Children in Europe, *Holocaust* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2006), p. 7; Michail Krausnick, *Wo sind sie hingekommen? Der unterschlagene Völkermord an den Sinti und Roma /Where Did They Come From? The Unrevealed Genocide on the Sinti and Roma* (Gerlingen: Bleicher, 1995), pp. 138-139.



ECMI foto: Roma Festival in Tbilisi

of Communists' visibly preferential treatment of Gypsies in the areas of education, employment, and especially housing, which resulted in a worsening of relations between Roma and non-Roma.

In the years immediately after the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, documents published by intergovernmental organizations active in Europe emphasized protecting Roma against discrimination and violations of their rights as individuals and as members of a minority. A similar emphasis can be found also in documents generated and adopted by the governments of many individual states in Europe. In the early 2000s, this conceptualization of Roma as bearers of rights was expanded by some intergovernmental organizations active in Europe to include not only protection against discrimination and violations, but also access to resources needed for development. Increasingly apparent in the last several years (but also present since at least the first few years of the 2000s) are considerations of the economic significance for society as a whole of the situation of Roma. Without denying the differences (or liabilities) among the various approaches adopted over the last two decades, all have in common the goal of improving Roma's situation.



ECMI foto: Roma Festival in Tbilisi

Running from 2005 to 2015 with the aim of “eliminating discrimination and closing the unacceptable gaps between Roma and the rest of society,”<sup>5</sup> the Decade of Roma Inclusion initially brought together the governments of nine East European countries with a set of international partners under the leadership of the Open Society Institute and the World Bank. By 2014, another three governments had joined the Decade as full members, with three more joining as observers.<sup>6</sup>

The Terms of Reference of the Decade of Roma Inclusion designate education, employment, health, and housing as the Decade’s “priority areas,” with poverty, discrimination, and gender mainstreaming to be taken into account by participating governments as cross-cutting “core issues.”<sup>7</sup> Available data suggest that education is the priority area in which the most progress has been made in improving the situation of Roma relative both to what it was at the beginning of the Decade and to the situation of non-Roma. Smaller bodies of available data on

<sup>5</sup> International Steering Committee, *Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015: Terms of Reference* (Bucharest: International Steering Committee, 2005), p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> As of February 2014, the countries participating in the Decade are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Spain. Norway, Slovenia, and the US participate as observers. More information on the Decade of Roma Inclusion is available at [www.romadecade.org](http://www.romadecade.org).

<sup>7</sup> International Steering Committee, *Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015: Terms of Reference* (Bucharest: International Steering Committee, 2005), p. 3.

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and variations among participating countries in achievements in the priority areas of employment, health, and housing make ranking among them more difficult, but the findings of quantitative and qualitative assessments taken together suggest that health has seen more progress since the beginning of the Decade than has employment or housing. With the partial exception of anti-discrimination, the cross-cutting issues have generally been neglected.

The declaration signed at the launch of the Decade by the prime ministers of the participating governments committed the governments to adopting National Action Plans for systematic improvement of the situation of Roma, to ensure Romani participation in designing and implementing relevant initiatives, and to monitor and evaluate implemented initiatives. Realization of these commitments has been uneven. On the positive side, there has been a considerable increase in Roma's participating in designing and implementing initiatives undertaken in the framework of the Decade, which has also made an important contribution to raising awareness about the situation of Roma. Experiences with National Action Plans have been less positive, with adoption by most participating countries not bringing funding allocations sufficient to secure implementation. Finally, participating governments have not fulfilled their commitments in the area of monitoring and evaluation, in most cases failing even to collect relevant ethnically disaggregated data.

At the level of the European Union, the 2011 *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies* takes as an explicit premise that non-discrimination is not sufficient to bring about the social inclusion of Roma.<sup>8</sup> Calling on Member States to adopt targeted but non-exclusive policies around the same four themes designated as priority

<sup>8</sup> European Commission, *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. Communicatio from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions COM (2011) 173 final* (Brussels: Commission of the European Communities, 2011), p. 3.

## INTRODUCTION ECMI & ROMA

areas of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the Framework appears to have brought an overall change in approach in only five countries: Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Portugal, and Sweden.<sup>9</sup> The other six Member States which elaborated a targeted strategy in response to the EU Framework had previously adopted a broadly similar policy in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, with another four submitting targeted strategies adopted prior to publication of the Framework. The remaining twelve submissions are not targeted policies, but documents describing relevant general policies.

Overall, despite some visible progress in recent years, Roma remain Europe's most marginalized minority.

### 1.3. Overview of ECMI activities with Roma

ECMI projects and publications which address Roma cover all 28 EU Member States as well as the countries of the Western Balkans outside the European Union (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia) and Georgia. Major geographical foci of ECMI project activities with Roma have been Kosovo and Macedonia, with five distinct initiatives each. Other countries in which Roma have been addressed through more than one ECMI project are Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia.

#### 1.3.1. Projects

The situation of Roma has been a focus of ECMI activities since 2000, when Romani non-governmental organizations played a key role in the establishment of the ECMI NGO Network for the Improvement of Interethnic Relations in the Republic of Macedonia. Since that time,

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<sup>9</sup> Eben Friedman, *Education in Member State Submissions under the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2013), p. 18.

another 16 distinct ECMI initiatives have addressed Roma in one way or another, with 13 focusing primarily on Roma. Most (12) of the initiatives with a focus on Roma have consisted primarily in action. These initiatives, which are summarized in the table below and discussed in more detail in the main section of this paper, have generally concentrated efforts on building the capacities of relatively small numbers of carefully selected direct beneficiaries – 200 or fewer Roma and non-Roma in any given initiative – with an eye to equipping them to make a lasting impact on the situation of local Romani communities and broader Romani populations.



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## ECMI projects with a focus on Roma

Project title	Year(s) of implementation	Donors	Countries
ECMI NGO Network for the Improvement of Interethnic Relations in the Republic of Macedonia	2000-2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DfID (Great Britain)</li> <li>• FRESTA (Denmark)</li> <li>• MFA Norway</li> <li>• Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)</li> </ul>	Macedonia
Toward Regional Guidelines for the Integration of Roma: Macedonia Needs Assessment	2003	Sida	Macedonia
Toward Regional Guidelines for the Integration of Roma: Serbia and Montenegro Integrated Analysis	2004	Sida	Serbia and Montenegro
Macedonia: Romani Expert Groups for Romani Integration	2004-2006	Sida	Macedonia
Supporting Local Romani Coordinators in Serbia and Montenegro	2005-2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sida</li> <li>• UNDP Serbia</li> </ul>	Serbia
The Aspect of Culture in the Social Inclusion of Ethnic Minorities	2006	EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Czech Republic</li> <li>• Estonia</li> <li>• Latvia</li> <li>• Slovakia</li> <li>• Slovenia</li> <li>• Sweden</li> </ul>
Strengthening Capacity and Partnership Building to Improve Roma Condition and Perception*	2006-2008	EUROPEAID	Romania
Elaboration of a Methodology for the "Decade of Roma Inclusion" Implementation Assessment	2006-2007	UNDP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bulgaria</li> <li>• Croatia</li> <li>• Czech Republic</li> <li>• Hungary</li> <li>• Macedonia</li> <li>• Montenegro</li> <li>• Romania</li> <li>• Serbia</li> <li>• Slovakia</li> </ul>

Project title	Year(s) of implementation	Donors	Countries
Improvement of the situation and inclusion of the disadvantaged ethnic minorities with a special focus on Roma*	2008-2009	EUROPEAID	Bulgaria
Enhancing Minority Governance and Developing Civil Society in Minority Regions of Georgia	2008-2010	MFA Norway	Georgia
Building Sensitivity for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Schools	2010-2011	OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities	Kosovo
Support to Development of Romani Communities in Georgia	2011-2013	Open Society Georgia Foundation	Georgia
Improving the Delivery of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities' Education in the Municipality of Fushë Kosovë/ Kosovo Polje	2011-2012	UNICEF	Kosovo
Support to Minority Communities During and After the Decentralisation Process	2011-2013	MFA Finland	Kosovo
Enhancing the Positive Impact of the Law for Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups (VMGs) in Kosovo	2011-2013	EU	Kosovo
Promoting the Economic Empowerment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women in Kosovo	2013	EU/UNDP/UN Women	Kosovo
Training Roma Researchers	2013	European Academic Network on Romani Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bulgaria</li> <li>• Romania</li> </ul>

\* ECMI participation in consortium led by Human Dynamics

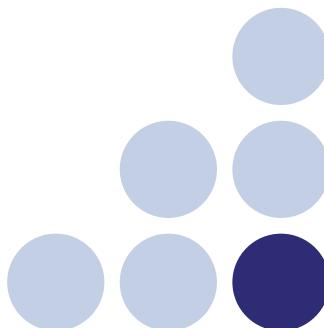
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### 1.3.2. Publications

Where ECMI publications are concerned, attention to Roma is first evident in a 2001 special issue of the *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* (JEMIE). In addition to the six contributions to the special issue, in which experts external to ECMI treated various aspects of political activity by and policy toward Roma, ECMI has published 25 documents with a focus on Roma.<sup>10</sup> Just over half the total number of publications (i.e., 16 of 31) were produced in the framework of ECMI projects.<sup>11</sup>

Details of ECMI publications with a focus on Roma are given on the next two pages.



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<sup>10</sup> ECMI also contributed to the United Nations Development Programme's *Quantitative Indicators for the Decade of Roma Inclusion Progress Monitoring: Review of the Existing Experience and Possible Approaches for Bulgaria* (Bratislava: United Nations Development Programme, 2007).

<sup>11</sup> A list of relevant ECMI publications is given in Annex 3.

## ECMI publications with a focus on Roma

### 2001

Barany, Zoltan D. 2001. Romani Electoral Politics and Behaviour. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, no. 1.

Fox, Jonathan. 2001. Patterns of Discrimination, Grievances and Political Activity among Europe's Roma: A Cross-Sectional Analysis. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, no. 1.

Kovats, Martin. 2001. The Political Significance of the First National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (Országos Cigány Kisebbségi Önkormányzat). *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, no. 1.

Kovats, Martin. 2001. Problems of Intellectual and Political Accountability in Respect of Emerging European Roma Policy. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, no. 1.

Sobotka, Eva. 2001. The Limits of the State: Political Participation and Representation of Roma in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, no. 1.

Vermeersch, Peter. 2001. Advocacy Networks and Romani Politics in Central and Eastern Europe. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, no. 1.

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### 2004

European Centre for Minority Issues. 2004. *Toward Regional Guidelines for the Integration of Roma. Macedonia: Narrative Report*. Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues.

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### 2005

European Centre for Minority Issues. 2005. *Toward Regional Guidelines for the Integration of Roma. Serbia and Montenegro: Integrated Analysis*. Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues.

Romani Expert Groups for Romani Integration. 2005. *Roma on Integration: Analyses and Recommendations*. Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues.

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### 2006

European Agency for Reconstruction, and European Centre for Minority Issues. 2006. *Minority Issues Mainstreaming: A Practical Guide for European Agency for Reconstruction Programmes*. Thessaloniki and Flensburg: European Agency for Reconstruction.

Malloy, Tove H., and Michele Gazzola. 2006. *The Aspect of Culture in the Social Inclusion of Ethnic Minorities*. Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues.

Romani Expert Groups for Romani Integration. 2006. *Roma on Integration II: Analyses and Recommendations*. Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues.

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### 2007

European Centre for Minority Issues. 2007. *Supporting Local Romani Coordinators: A Practical Guide to Integrating Roma in Municipal Government*. Belgrade and Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues.

Friedman, Eben. 2007. A Dual Challenge for the Year of Equal Opportunities for All: Roma in the Western Balkans. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* 6, no. 1.



## ECMI PUBLICATIONS WITH A FOCUS ON ROMA



### 2009

**European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo.** 2009. *Strengthening the Institutional System for Communities in Post-Independence Kosovo*. Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo.

**European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo.** 2009. *Voter Education in the 3+1 New Municipalities*. Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo.

**Sordia, Giorgi.** 2009. *A Way Out? Initial Steps Towards Addressing Romania Issues in Georgia*. Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues.

**Szakonyi, David.** 2009. *No Way Out: An Assessment of the Romani Community in Georgia*. European Centre for Minority Issues.

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### 2011

**Vizi, Balázs.** 2011. The Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union: Focus on the Neighbourhood and on a European Roma Strategy. *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* 10, no. 1: 123-34.

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### 2012

**Berisha, Alejtin, Andrea Najvirtova, Rebecca Darts, and Taner Boynik.** 2012. *Baseline Study: Delivery of Education to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje Municipality*. Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo.

**European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo.** 2012. *Minority Communities in the 2011 Kosovo Census Results: Analysis and Recommendations*. Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo.

**European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo.** 2012. *Segregated Education in Kosovo*. Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo.

**European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo.** 2012. *Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups in Kosovo: A Legal Handbook*. Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo.

**European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo.** 2013. *Segregation in Education in the Municipality of Gjakovë/Dakovica*. Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo.

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### 2013

**Friedman, Eben.** 2013. *Education in Member State Submissions under the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies*. Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues.

**Pancaldi, Valentina.** 2013. *Promoting the Economic Empowerment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women in Kosovo*. Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo.

**Tremlett, Annabel, and Aidan McGarry.** 2013. *Challenges Facing Researchers on Roma Minorities in Contemporary Europe: Notes towards a Research Program*. Flensburg: European Centre for Minority issues.

## 2. A CLOSER LOOK AT ECMI ACTIVITIES WITH ROMA

ECMI's approach to Roma takes into account their long-standing marginalization in a holistic approach aiming at empowerment in four broad domains: informational, political, social, and cultural. In the latter three domains, ECMI's work to date can further be broken down into multiple thematic areas, as shown below.

INFORMATIONAL	POLITICAL	SOCIAL	CULTURAL
Data and information	Capacity building	Education	Culture
	Civil rights	Employment	
	Participation	Health	Gender
	Policy	Migration	

As will become clear by the end of this section, most of ECMI's activities with Roma bridge multiple themes and domains in a reflection of the complexity of Roma's needs. Irrespective of breadth of coverage, however, the activities under all domains share a commitment to laying foundations for active, equitable, and informed participation by Roma in addressing the issues which affect them most. In other words, whatever the theme, ECMI's approach remains one of developing and providing sustainable tools to be applied and adapted as conditions demand.

Consistent with ECMI's overall approach, ECMI's activities with Roma are rooted in minority standards and ground action toward more effective realization of those standards in expert research. At the same time, from early on ECMI has distinguished itself for the degree to which Roma have been actively involved at all stages of project design and implementation.

ECMI foto: Roma Festival in Tblisi



## A CLOSER LOOK AT ECMI ACTIVITIES WITH ROMA

This section presents ECMI's work with Roma in each of the four domains. The sub-section for each domain begins with a brief introduction to the domain as a whole, followed by a more detailed presentation of ECMI research and action in relation to each theme under the domain. Each thematic presentation begins in turn with an overview of the current situation and a summary of developments since the early 1990s in order to place ECMI's work and its results in context. Attention is also paid under each theme to overall geographical coverage.

### **2.1. Informational empowerment**

The truism that information is power takes on special significance where Roma are concerned, as Roma have at various times suffered from both the presence and the absence of data about them.

On the one hand, the meticulous gathering of data on Roma characteristic of extermination policies in Nazi Germany remains several generations later a major barrier to efforts to solicit information from Roma to be used in designing policies to improve their situation. Roma's trust in state institutions was also presumably not helped by East European Communist regimes' production of official figures about Gypsies on the basis of ascription by state officials rather than from the declarations of the people being counted. While both official terminology and census-taking methods changed following the collapse of the Communist regimes, today many self-conscious Roma declare in censuses an ethnicity different from the one with which they identify in daily life in order to avoid stigmatization. On the other hand, consistent underestimation of the size of Romani populations throughout Eastern Europe sometimes allows governments not to follow through on their declarative commitments to work toward improving the situation of Roma. Considerable gaps in data on Roma have also contributed to ungrounded speculation from within majority populations on Roma's migration, fertility, and reliance on social welfare systems.

### 2.1.1. Data and information

Although the last ten years have seen repeated efforts by international organizations to promote evidence-based policy making for Roma, attention to issues of monitoring and evaluation at the level of policy design and in implementation generally remains insufficient. On the positive side, the quality of census data on Roma has begun to improve, apparently due to the increased participation of Roma in carrying out the census in many countries. The largest volume of data on Roma, however, comes from regional surveys commissioned by UNDP in 2004 and by UNDP, the World Bank, and the European Commission in 2011.<sup>12</sup>

Taking into account the considerable problems related to the quantity and quality of official data on Roma, seven of ECMI's project initiatives targeting Roma have addressed issues of data gathering. The fact that among these initiatives are similar numbers of research and action projects points not only to the salience of data issues in work with Roma, but also to the mutual reinforcement of research and action in ECMI's work. The countries covered by ECMI initiatives in which such issues are addressed are Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Sweden.

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<sup>12</sup> See Andrey Ivanov et al., *At Risk: Roma and the Displaced in Southeast Europe* (Bratislava: United Nations Development Programme, 2006); United Nations Development Programme, "Data on Roma," web page available at <http://europeandcis.undp.org/data/show/D69F01FE-F203-1EE9-B45121B12A557E1B>.

## A CLOSER LOOK AT ECMI ACTIVITIES WITH ROMA

ECMI's work with Roma includes three 'firsts' in relation to gathering quality information on Roma's situation:

- In 2003, ECMI designed and conducted the first global assessment of the needs of the Romani population of Macedonia, making use of a methodology combining quantitative and qualitative research methods while involving Roma as sources not only of raw data but also of ideas and as integral members of the research team.
- In 2004, ECMI completed an assessment making use of the same methodology with Roma in Serbia and Montenegro – also the first of its kind in that (now-defunct) country.
- In 2008, ECMI published the first systematic overview of the situation of Roma in Georgia (including Abkhazia).

Additionally, among the activities of the Romani Expert Groups established and trained by ECMI in Macedonia from 2004 to 2006 as a follow-on to the needs assessment conducted in that country was original research on aspects of Roma's situation in the areas of civil rights, education, employment, and health identified as relevant by the members of the Expert Groups themselves.

ECMI has also contributed to monitoring and evaluation in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, working together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2006 and 2007 on developing and piloting a methodology for assessing the progress of the Decade with an eye to supporting participating governments in meeting the goals laid out in their (respective) National Action Plans.



ECMI foto: Roma Festival in Tbilisi



## A CLOSER LOOK AT ECMI ACTIVITIES WITH ROMA

Issues of data gathering in relation to Roma are treated in 11 ECMI publications, including nine project-based publications as well as one contribution to JEMIE and one ECMI Working Paper.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.2. Political empowerment

In recognition of the urgent need for changes in the political sphere as a basis for measures to improve the situation of Roma in other domains, the largest part of ECMI's work with Roma has been concentrated here. As explained in more detail below, in order for Roma to access their rights and to participate as equals in public life, they must be equipped in short order with the knowledge and skills that make this possible, while non-Romani duty-bearers must understand Roma's needs as well as their own roles in working together with Roma to address those needs. Also crucial is that the design of policies toward Roma at local, national, and EU levels be informed by knowledge not only of Roma's needs, but also about past successes and failures in addressing those needs.

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<sup>13</sup> See European Centre for Minority Issues, *Toward Regional Guidelines for the Integration of Roms. Macedonia: Narrative Report* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2004); *Toward Regional Guidelines for the Integration of Roms. Serbia and Montenegro: Integrated Analysis* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2005); Romani Expert Groups for Romani Integration, *Roms on Integration: Analyses and Recommendations* (Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2005); Tove H. Malloy and Michele Gazzola, *The Aspect of Culture in the Social Inclusion of Ethnic Minorities* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2006); Romani Expert Groups for Romani Integration, *Roms on Integration II: Analyses and Recommendations* (Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2006); Eben Friedman, "A Dual Challenge for the Year of Equal Opportunities for All: Roms in the Western Balkans," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* 6.1 (2007); David Szakonyi, *No Way Out: An Assessment of the Romani Community in Georgia* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2008); Giorgi Sordia, *A Way Out? Initial Steps Towards Addressing Romani Issues in Georgia* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2009); Alejtin Berisha et al., *Baseline Study: Delivery of Education to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje Municipality* (Prishtinë/Pristina: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012); European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, *Minority Communities in the 2011 Census Results: Analysis and Recommendations* (Prishtinë/Pristina: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012); Annabel Tremlett and Aidan McGarry, *Challenges Facing Researchers on Roma Minorities in Contemporary Europe: Notes towards a Research Program* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2013). Also see United Nations Development Programme's *Quantitative Indicators for the Decade of Roma Inclusion Progress Monitoring: Review of the Existing Experience and Possible Approaches for Bulgaria* (Bratislava: United Nations Development Programme, 2007).

### 2.2.1. Capacity building

The need to build capacity within Romani populations is made particularly salient by Roma's low levels of educational attainment and high levels of unemployment, which often combine to place Roma in a particularly difficult position when it comes to agenda setting and implementation. At the same time, the virtual absence of Roma from policy making processes until relatively recently makes it crucial also to prepare non-Romani public officials at both local and central levels to attend to Roma's needs, as well as to work together with Roma in assessing and addressing those needs.

A key ingredient of ECMI's overall approach of providing tools rather than imposing an agenda is taking steps to ensure that Roma as well as non-Romani duty-bearers are informed about the options available to them and are able to follow through in putting their informed choices into practice. ECMI work on capacity building has accordingly aimed at both individual and institutional levels.

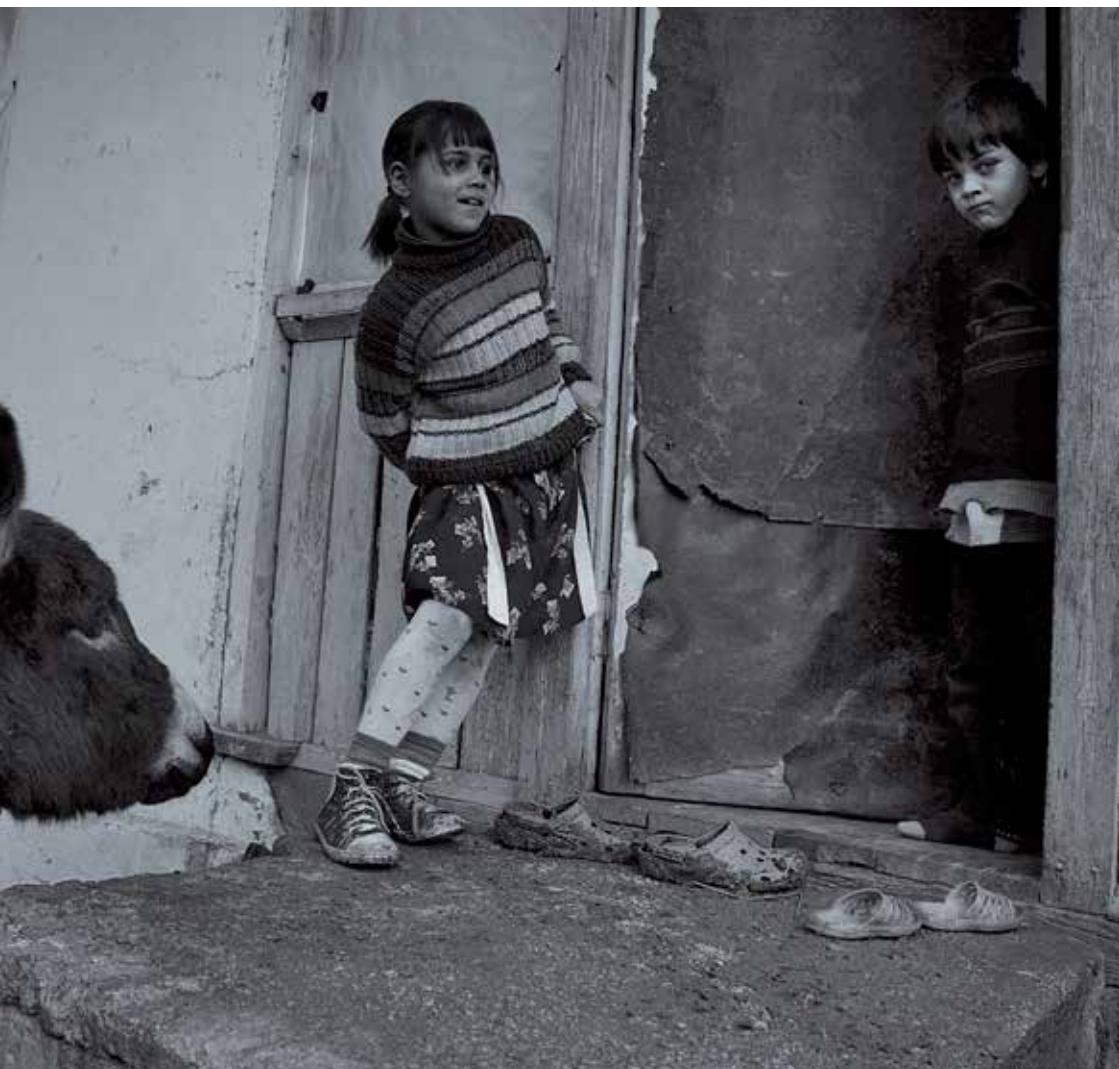
Most of ECMI's project initiatives targeting Roma (13 of 17) have had a capacity-building element. The countries covered by these initiatives are Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia.

Some ECMI initiatives have aimed directly at raising the capacity of Romani activists and professionals. A case in point are the Romani Expert Groups established and trained by ECMI in Macedonia from 2004 to 2006, the approximately 40 former members of which now account for a considerable portion of Roma employed in public administration and international organizations in Macedonia. Other initiatives, such as the project "Improving the Delivery of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities' Education in the Municipality of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje," focus largely on making non-Romani officials more responsive to Roma's needs. Finally, ECMI's support to Local Romani Coordinators in Serbia brought Romani professionals together with their closest non-Romani counterparts in municipal government

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ECMI foto: Romani children



for a series of training modules designed to facilitate their cooperation. While capacity-building is more common in ECMI's action projects than in projects consisting primarily in research, an important exception in this regard is ECMI's selection by the European Academic Network on Romani Studies to host three young Romani researchers for internships in early 2013.

An emphasis on building capacity is also evident in nine of ECMI's publications, which include manuals for individual citizens as well as guidebooks aimed at supporting authorities in responding more effectively to the needs of their Romani, Ashkali, and Egyptian constituents.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.2.2. Civil rights

The combination of disintegrating multinational states and economic transformation which occurred in much of Eastern Europe in the 1990s was particularly hard on Roma. On the one hand, low levels of education and occupational qualification left Roma ill equipped to access rights ranging from citizenship to social assistance. On the other hand, Roma have frequently been blamed by majority populations for the negative effects of the political and economic transformation. Notwithstanding the adoption of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in most countries of the region, structural discrimination

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<sup>14</sup> See European Agency for Reconstruction and European Centre for Minority Issues, *Minority Issues Mainstreaming: A Practical Guide for European Agency for Reconstruction Programmes* (Thessaloniki and Flensburg: European Agency for Reconstruction, 2006); European Centre for Minority Issues, *Supporting Local Romani Coordinators: A Practical Guide to Integrating Roma in Municipal Government* (Belgrade and Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2007); *Communities: Know Your Rights. A Booklet for Communities and Their Members* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2009); *Strengthening the Institutional System for Communities in Post-Independence Kosovo* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2009); *Voter Education in the 3+1 New Municipalities* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2009); *Improving the Delivery of Education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities: Good Practices and Recommendations* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012); *Manual on Operationalisation of Municipal Action Plans: A Step-by-Step Guide for Municipal Officials* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012); *Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups in Kosovo: A Legal Handbook* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012); Valentina Pancaldi, *Promoting the Economic Empowerment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women in Kosovo* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012).

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remains, as does resistance to affirmative measures designed to redress existing inequalities. Moreover, recent years have seen a rolling back of the modest advances previously made in some countries as growing discrimination against Roma is manifested increasingly in the form of organized events and violent attacks.

Civil rights appear as a theme in six ECMI initiatives which target Roma, including two research projects, three action projects and one project containing elements of both research and action. The relevant initiatives have been implemented in Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia.

Research on Roma's access to civil rights constituted an integral part of ECMI's needs assessments with Roma in Macedonia in 2003 and in (the then State-Union of) Serbia and Montenegro in 2004, as well as of the project "Enhancing Minority Governance and Developing Civil Society in Minority Regions of Georgia," which ran from 2008 through 2010. Among ECMI's action projects, awareness of Roma's civil rights has been raised among Roma and non-Roma by the Romani Expert Groups established and trained by ECMI in Macedonia from 2004 to 2006 and, more recently, through the project "Enhancing the Positive Impact of the Law for Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups (VMGs) in Kosovo."

Perhaps not surprisingly, Roma's civil rights are treated in publications produced in the framework of all of these projects, in the form of needs assessment reports<sup>15</sup>, original research by members of the Romani Expert Groups in Macedonia<sup>16</sup>, an ECMI Working Paper and an ECMI Issue Brief

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<sup>15</sup> European Centre for Minority Issues, *Toward Regional Guidelines for the Integration of Roma. Macedonia: Narrative Report* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2004); *Toward Regional Guidelines for the Integration of Roma. Serbia and Montenegro: Integrated Analysis* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Romani Expert Groups for Romani Integration, *Roma on Integration: Analyses and Recommendations* (Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2005); *Roma on Integration II: Analyses and Recommendations* (Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2006).



ECMI foto: Roma Festival in Tbilisi

on Roma in Georgia,<sup>17</sup> as well as in two policy briefs and three practical publications produced by ECMI Kosovo.<sup>18</sup> Even before these projects, however, a 2001 contribution to JEMIE had reported on a test of a model linking discrimination to protest and rebellion via grievance formation.<sup>19</sup>

### 2.2.3. Participation

Whatever the shortcomings of the Decade of Roma Inclusion to date, one of its successes has been a considerable increase in Roma's participation in public life, perhaps most notably through an intensification of contacts between Romani NGOs and governments. While this applies broadly at European, national, and local levels, the situation varies from one country to the next. Thus, whereas legislative provisions promote the political representation of minorities in Croatia, Hungary, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia, the participation of Roma

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<sup>17</sup> David Szakonyi, *No Way Out: An Assessment of the Romani Community in Georgia* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2008); Giorgi Sordia, *A Way Out? Initial Steps Towards Addressing Romani Issues in Georgia* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, *Minority Communities in the 2011 Census Results: Analysis and Recommendations* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012); *Segregated Education in Kosovo* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012); *Communities: Know Your Rights. A Booklet for Communities and Their Members* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2009); *Improving the Delivery of Education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities: Good Practices and Recommendations* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012); *Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups in Kosovo: A Legal Handbook* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Fox, "Patterns of Discrimination, Grievances and Political Activity among Europe's Roma: A Cross-Sectional Analysis," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* (2001).

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in central-level management and advisory bodies related to policy toward Roma is uneven, while Romani women's participation in developing relevant strategic and policy documents has generally been limited. On the other hand, in many countries Roma have played key roles in designing and/or implementing various initiatives undertaken at local level since the first half of the 2000s.

The participation of Roma in public life has been a focus of five ECMI project initiatives, all of them action projects. Of these, two were implemented in Macedonia and one each in Georgia, Kosovo, and Serbia.

- In Macedonia, Romani NGO members of the explicitly interethnic NGO network facilitated by ECMI from 2000 to 2006 drew on capacity built through activities within the network to engage in dialogue with local and national policymakers on issues of concern to multiple ethnic communities. In late 2004, the Romani Expert Groups established by ECMI in Macedonia participated in consultations with government toward finalization of the *Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia*.
- The years 2005-2007 saw ECMI undertaking intensive work with local Romani coordinators and their closest non-Romani counterparts in municipal government in Serbia with an eye to promoting the coordinators' effective and sustained participation in local public administration.
- In fall of 2009, ECMI Kosovo carried out a voter education campaign for Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians (as well as for Serbs), providing technical information on voting procedures as well as background information needed for informed participation in the electoral process in four newly established municipalities.
- Most recently, ECMI Caucasus' support to Romani communities in Georgia in 2011-2013 promoted Roma's participation in public life by facilitating the establishment of three non-governmental organizations to articulate and raise awareness about Roma's interests and needs.



Roma's participation in civil and political life is also addressed in nine ECMI publications, of which two are project based:

- A guide designed to facilitate the integration of Romani coordinators in municipal government,<sup>20</sup> and
- A report on ECMI Kosovo's experience in carrying out voter education with Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians (as well as with Serbs).<sup>21</sup>

Relevant publications produced outside ECMI projects include six contributions to JEMIE, as well as a 2013 ECMI Working Paper identifying attention to multiple Romani perspectives as a key challenge to be addressed in both research and policymaking.<sup>22</sup>

#### **2.2.4. Policy**

The early 1990s saw many governments in Eastern Europe officially recognizing Roma as a legitimate minority with rights to state support for preserving and developing its culture. While this recognition constituted a clear improvement over the policies previously enacted by Communist regimes in much of the region for the purpose of bringing

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<sup>20</sup> European Centre for Minority Issues, *Supporting Local Romani Coordinators: A Practical Guide to Integrating Roma in Municipal Government* (Belgrade and Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, *Voter Education in the 3+1 New Municipalities* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> See Zoltan D. Barany, "Romani Electoral Politics and Behaviour," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* (2001); Jonathan Fox, "Patterns of Discrimination, Grievances and Political Activity among Europe's Roma: A Cross-Sectional Analysis," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* (2001); Martin Kovats, "The Political Significance of the First National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (Országos Cigány Kisebbségi Önkormányzat)," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* (2001); "Problems of Intellectual and Political Accountability in Respect of Emerging European Roma Policy," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* (2001); Eva Sobotka, "The Limits of the State: Political Participation and Representation of Roma in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* (2001); Peter Vermeersch, "Advocacy Networks and Romani Politics in Central and Eastern Europe," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* (2001); Annabel Tremlett and Aidan McGarry, *Challenges Facing Researchers on Roma Minorities in Contemporary Europe: Notes towards a Research Program* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2013).

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about Gypsies' assimilation, it generally brought little in the way of concrete policies addressing Roma's disadvantage relative not only to the majority, but also to other minorities. This state of affairs began to

change in the early 2000s, as nine countries elaborated national-level policy documents in preparation for the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Subsequent years saw a growth in policy activity in relation to Roma also at local level. A relative latecomer to policy toward Roma, the European Union has increased its engagement on this front in recent years, publishing the *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies* in 2011 as a call to Member States to pursue the integration of Roma through a comprehensive and targeted approach focused explicitly on Roma while leaving room for covering also others in need.<sup>23</sup>

Three of ECMI's action projects – one each in Kosovo, Macedonia, and Serbia – have contributed directly to policymaking for Roma.

- The first of these initiatives was implemented in Macedonia, where the four thematic Romani Expert Groups established and trained by ECMI submitted a total of 96 recommendations on a draft version of the *Strategy for Roma in the Republic of Macedonia* in late 2004. Eighty-two of these recommendations were incorporated in the final version of the *Strategy*. Additionally, in early 2006 the Expert Group on Civil Rights elaborated an electoral system design designed to increase minorities' presence in Macedonia's parliament.
- In Serbia, in 2006 and 2007 ECMI supported the elaboration of local action plans for Roma through focused training for local Romani coordinators and their closest non-Romani counterparts in municipal administration.

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<sup>23</sup> European Commission, *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. Communicatio from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions COM (2011) 173 final* (Brussels: Commission of the European Communities, 2011).

- With an eye to improving the delivery of local services and policies for Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians, ECMI Kosovo has supported the drafting and operationalization of local action plans with a manual produced in 2012 on the basis of its work on education in the municipality of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje.

Policy toward Roma has also figured as a prominent concern of ECMI publications with a focus on Roma, including four contributions to JEMIE, two ECMI Working Papers, and three practical guides. Of the contributions to JEMIE, two focus on policies at national level (one in Hungary, the other in the countries of the Western Balkans), whereas the other two address policy issues at European level.<sup>24</sup> The two Working Papers – both published in 2013 – further elaborate concerns raised by European-level developments in policy toward Roma.<sup>25</sup> Finally, the practical guides draw on ECMI work with local government units in Kosovo and Serbia, as well as on ECMI experience in developing and delivering training for operational centers of the European Agency for Reconstruction.<sup>26</sup>

On the basis of its experience in working with Roma, ECMI has also been included in EU-level discussion on policy toward Roma.

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<sup>24</sup> Martin Kovats, "The Political Significance of the First National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (Országos Cigány Kisebbségi Önkormányzat)," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* (2001); "Problems of Intellectual and Political Accountability in Respect of Emerging European Roma Policy," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* (2001); Eben Friedman, "A Dual Challenge for the Year of Equal Opportunities for All: Roma in the Western Balkans," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* 6.1 (2007); Balázs Vizi, "The Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union: Focus on the Neighbourhood and on a European Roma Strategy," )," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* 10.1 (2011).

<sup>25</sup> Eben Friedman, *Education in Member State Submissions under the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2013); Annabel Tremlett and Aidan McGarry, *Challenges Facing Researchers on Roma Minorities in Contemporary Europe: Notes towards a Research Program* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> European Agency for Reconstruction and European Centre for Minority Issues, *Minority Issues Mainstreaming: A Practical Guide for European Agency for Reconstruction Programmes* (Thessaloniki and Flensburg: European Agency for Reconstruction, 2006); European Centre for Minority Issues, *Supporting Local Romani Coordinators: A Practical Guide to Integrating Roma in Municipal Government* (Belgrade and Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2007); European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, *Manual on Operationalisation of Municipal Action Plans: A Step-by-Step Guide for Municipal Officials* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012).

## 2.3. Social empowerment

ECMI activities with Roma have attended to three of the priority areas of the Decade of Roma Inclusion – education, employment, and health – since before the Decade began! From ECMI's ground-breaking needs assessments with Roma in the early 2000s through strategic litigation in the present day, Roma's disadvantage in these three areas has been the basis for research and action focusing on bringing about changes in the social sphere, with particular emphasis placed on education as a viable way out of marginalization. Also addressed from the standpoint of social empowerment is migration, which ECMI treats as a social phenomenon to be understood in the same way as movement of persons from groups without Roma's reputation for nomadism.

### 2.3.1. Education

The educational situation of Roma in Eastern Europe generally worsened in the years immediately following the change of regime. A variety of factors contributed to this change, including perhaps most notably reductions in pre-school capacity and the introduction of fees for goods and services previously offered free of charge coupled with reductions in family income as a result of rising unemployment among lower-qualified workers. Also relevant in the observed deterioration is the increasing educational segregation resulting on the one hand from rising residential segregation and on the other from legislative changes allowing parents to decide which schools their children attend.

While the last several years have seen some progress toward closing the gap in educational outcomes between Romani and non-Romani populations, serious problems remain. Arguably the most pressing of these is the overrepresentation of non-disabled Romani children in special primary schools and classes intended for children with mental disability. Segregation in standard education also persists, often resulting in Roma receiving education of inferior quality despite the lack of a nominal difference between the schools and classes they attend and those attended by their non-Romani peers.



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In recognition of the key role of education for bringing sustainable improvements in the situation of Roma in the medium to long term, education is second only to more immediate capacity building with regard to the frequency with which it is addressed in ECMI project initiatives, with a majority (nine) of ECMI projects targeting Roma attending to issues of education. Together, these initiatives cover a total of five countries: Bulgaria, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Romania.

Among ECMI initiatives which attend to issues facing Romani populations in the area of education, action projects predominate by a considerable margin, but education has also figured prominently in the assessments on the situation of Roma conducted in Georgia and Macedonia.

ECMI's practical work with Roma in the area of education has focused on both academic and vocational training. In Georgia, for example, ECMI simultaneously addressed the immediate educational needs of Romani children and Romani adults by improving access to pre-school education on the one hand and to organizing driving and sewing courses on the other. The occupational qualifications gained by the Romani adults resulted in new employments, in turn bringing an increase in the number of Romani children attending school. In order to address a similar problem in a different set of local conditions, ECMI Kosovo took another approach to increasing school participation, providing two months of daily intensive catch-up classes for 31 Romani, Ashkali, and Egyptian out-of-school youth in the municipality of Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje so that the youth could join regular classes in the 2012-2013 school year.

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Another pressing issue addressed through ECMI's action projects has been segregation in standard education: In 2013, ECMI Kosovo supported eight parents of Romani, Ashkali, and Egyptian children in a strategic litigation case related to segregated primary school classes in the municipality of Gjakovë/Đakovica.

Ten ECMI publications attend to Roma's situation in the area of education. Among these are nine project-based publications and a 2013 ECMI Working Paper examining the treatment of education in submissions under the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.<sup>27</sup> Of the project-based publications, six are research reports<sup>28</sup> and two are policy briefs addressing segregatory practices in Kosovo's educational system.<sup>29</sup> Also produced by ECMI Kosovo was a manual of good practices and recommendations aimed at improving the delivery of education for Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> References to the project-based publications are given in the three notes which follow this one. For the ECMI Working Paper, see Eben Friedman, *Education in Member State Submissions under the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2013).

<sup>28</sup> European Centre for Minority Issues, *Toward Regional Guidelines for the Integration of Roma in Macedonia: Narrative Report* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2004); Romani Expert Groups for Romani Integration, *Romani on Integration: Analyses and Recommendations* (Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2005); *Romani on Integration II: Analyses and Recommendations* (Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2006); David Szakonyi, *No Way Out: An Assessment of the Romani Community in Georgia* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2008); Giorgi Sordia, *A Way Out? Initial Steps Towards Addressing Romani Issues in Georgia* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2009); Alejtin Berisha et al., *Baseline Study: Delivery of Education to Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje Municipality* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012).

<sup>29</sup> European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, *Segregated Education in Kosovo* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012); *Segregation in Education in the Municipality of Gjakovë/Đakovica* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, *Improving the Delivery of Education for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities: Good Practices and Recommendations* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012).



### 2.3.2. Employment

The nominal full employment and the more tangible need for a mobile pool of unskilled workers characteristic of Communist economies quickly disappeared following the change of regime. As a result, Roma, who were mostly unskilled workers, were among those worst positioned to weather the economic transformation. Roma have consequently been disproportionately represented among the long-term unemployed, with unemployment rates in some Romani settlements stable at close to 100 percent. Moreover, gaps between Roma and non-Roma in relation to employment increased between 2004 and 2011 in most of the countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion.<sup>31</sup> Recorded differences in employment opportunities and wages further cannot be explained exclusively in terms of differences in levels of educational attainment, with discriminatory employment practices a central factor in Roma's decisions to leave their country of residence to settle in another country.<sup>32</sup>

Employment has featured as a theme of five ECMI project initiatives, implemented in Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, and (then-) Serbia and Montenegro. Initiatives with a research component on the employment situation of Roma are the broader assessments undertaken in Georgia, Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro.

In Macedonia, issues raised by the needs assessment were subsequently taken up by the Romani Expert Group on Employment, which undertook (and reported on) two of its own research projects with technical support from ECMI: one on Roma's motivation for employment, the other on the effectiveness among Roma of state-administered active employment measures. More recently, in 2013 ECMI Kosovo undertook in cooperation with the Network of Roma, Ashkali

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<sup>31</sup> Nial O'Higgins, *Roma and Non-Roma in the Labour Market in Central and South Eastern Europe* (Bratislava: United Nations Development Programme, 2012), pp. 31-32.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45; Stoyanka Cherkezova and Ilona Tomova, *An Option of Last Resort? Migration of Roma and Non-Roma from CEE Countries* (Bratislava: United Nations Development Programme, 2013).

## A CLOSER LOOK AT ECMI ACTIVITIES WITH ROMA

and Egyptian Women's Organizations of Kosovo a project designed to increase the employability of approximately 40 Romani, Ashkali, and Egyptian women while at the same time raising institutional awareness about the socio-economic situation of women from these communities and advocating for increased support authorities at both central and local levels.

The employment situation of Roma receives attention in seven ECMI publications, including six research reports and a 2013 review report produced in the framework of the project "Promoting the Economic Empowerment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women in Kosovo."<sup>33</sup> Beyond ECMI's attention to the employment situation of Roma through its project initiatives, ECMI offices in Belgrade, Prishtinë/Priština, and Skopje have through the years employed a total of eight Roma in management and/or research positions. Roma previously employed in ECMI offices have successfully continued their careers in public administration and international organizations, as well as in the NGO sector.

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<sup>33</sup> European Centre for Minority Issues, *Toward Regional Guidelines for the Integration of Roms. Macedonia: Narrative Report* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2004); *Toward Regional Guidelines for the Integration of Roms. Serbia and Montenegro: Integrated Analysis* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2005); *Romani Expert Groups for Romani Integration, Roms on Integration: Analyses and Recommendations* (Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2005); *Roms on Integration II: Analyses and Recommendations* (Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2006); David Szakonyi, *No Way Out: An Assessment of the Romani Community in Georgia* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2008); Giorgi Sordia, *A Way Out? Initial Steps Towards Addressing Romani Issues in Georgia* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2009); Valentina Pancaldi, *Promoting the Economic Empowerment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women in Kosovo* (Prishtinë/Priština: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012).



ECMI foto: Roma Festival in Tbilisi

### 2.3.3. Health

Both fertility and infant mortality rates among Roma tend to be higher than those of the majority population. Further, adult Roma generally have a markedly lower life expectancy than do non-Roma as a result of a combination of poor living conditions,

lack of access to healthcare, and low levels of awareness of preventive healthcare practices. In the course of their relatively short lives, Roma are disproportionately affected by infectious and chronic ailments ranging from upper respiratory ailments (most common in childhood) to diabetes and high blood pressure (in adulthood). Together, Roma's relatively high fertility rates and short lifespan make Romani populations younger overall than the majority, with the proportion of children higher and the proportion of elderly persons lower among Roma than is the case among majority populations. While recent years have seen some improvements in Roma's access to healthcare and medicines, large gaps between Roma and non-Roma remain.

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Health has featured among the foci of three ECMI initiatives targeting Roma, including two initiatives undertaken in Macedonia and one in Georgia. The initiatives in Macedonia are integrally related to one another, with a needs assessment conducted in 2003 laying the groundwork for the establishment of and work with Romani Expert Groups from 2004 to 2006. Following on the identification of health as a core area in the needs assessment, the Romani Expert Group on Health undertook three original field research projects in 2005 and 2006, visiting Romani settlements to gather information on the following themes:

- Vaccination, lifestyle, and environmental factors affecting the health of the Romani population;
- Awareness of family planning and sexually transmitted diseases; and
- Trust in healthcare institutions.

The combined research and action project “Enhancing Minority Governance and Developing Civil Society in Minority Regions of Georgia” also included attention to the health of the Romani population. In the 2008 ECMI Working Paper produced in the framework of this project, access to medical care is identified as a major problem for Roma in Georgia, with high infant and child mortality rates as well as low life expectancies noted.<sup>34</sup> With an eye to remedying this situation, training was organized the following year for 15 potential Romani community leaders on civil rights including but not limited to health care.



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<sup>34</sup> David Szakonyi, *No Way Out: An Assessment of the Romani Community in Georgia* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2008), p. 13.

The five ECMI publications which deal with issues of health among Roma consist of the report from the needs assessment in Macedonia mentioned above,<sup>35</sup> the two volumes of reports on the research conducted by the Romani Expert Groups in that country,<sup>36</sup> the ECMI Working Paper reporting on the first systematic research on the Romani population in Georgia,<sup>37</sup> and a 2009 ECMI Issue Brief following up on many of the issues raised by the research of the previous year.<sup>38</sup>

### 2.3.4. Migration

Migration is clearly central to the history of Roma in Europe. More controversial is whether nomadism is an inherent feature of Romani life. In the absence of reliable information about the preferred mode(s) of residence of the ancestors of the Roms on the Indian subcontinent, however, available evidence seems to indicate that their migrations north and west into Europe were undertaken in response to events which made life in their momentary place of residence difficult to impossible. Moreover, Romani migrations within Europe until the end of the Second World War seem to have been conditioned in large part by the hostility of non-Romani populations and, in one major instance, by the end of slavery in the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. Migration during the Communist period, on the other hand, appears to have been primarily a response to conditions arising out of the political economy of Communism, with migration since that system collapsed arising in response to conditions social, political, and economic. To the extent that nomadism differs from flight on the one hand and

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<sup>35</sup> European Centre for Minority Issues, *Toward Regional Guidelines for the Integration of Roms. Macedonia: Narrative Report* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2004).

<sup>36</sup> Romani Expert Groups for Romani Integration, *Roms on Integration: Analyses and Recommendations* (Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2005); *Roms on Integration II: Analyses and Recommendations* (Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2006).

<sup>37</sup> David Szakonyi, *No Way Out: An Assessment of the Romani Community in Georgia* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2008).

<sup>38</sup> Giorgi Sordia, *A Way Out? Initial Steps Towards Addressing Romani Issues in Georgia* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2009).



ECMI foto: Roma Festival in Tblisi

commuting on the other, then, there seems to be no reason to believe that Roma are essentially nomadic. This being the case, each instance of migration warrants separate examination of the concrete factors which brought it about, as well as of its practical consequences.

Four ECMI project initiatives targeting Roma have addressed issues of migration: two projects in Georgia and one project each in Macedonia and in Serbia and Montenegro.

- The first of these projects was the 2004 needs assessment with Roma in Serbia and Montenegro, which designated migration as one of three core areas in recognition of the urgency of the problems faced not only by Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians who fled Kosovo during the crisis of 1999, but also by Romani (as well as Ashkali and Egyptian) asylum seekers returned from Western Europe on the basis of readmission agreements.
- In Macedonia, on the other hand, migration was not a focus of the needs assessment conducted in 2003, but in 2006 the Romani Expert Group for Education conducted research on the integration of Romani refugee children from Kosovo in Macedonia's educational system.
- Whereas the project "Enhancing Minority Governance and Developing Civil Society in Minority Regions of Georgia" addressed issues of migration in a 2008 ECMI Working Paper and a 2009 ECMI Issue Brief, ECMI support to Romani communities in Georgia in 2012 included outreach to a particularly marginalized group of nomadic, Kurdish-speaking Roma.



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The total number of ECMI publications which treat issues of migration in relation to Roma is four, consisting of the report produced in the report on the 2004 needs assessment in Serbia and Montenegro, the second volume of research reports produced by the Romani Expert Groups in Macedonia, and the 2008 ECMI Working Paper and 2009 ECMI Issue Brief on the Romani population of Georgia.<sup>39</sup>

### 2.4. Cultural empowerment

The bulk of ECMI's activities with Roma in the domain of cultural empowerment have addressed issues of gender. This choice of emphasis stems on the one hand from ECMI's understanding of the risks associated with external interventions in minority cultures and on the other hand from its recognition of multiple discrimination against Romani women – marginalization on the grounds of both ethnicity and gender – as a complex problem which needs to be addressed in policy and practice by and among non-Roma as well as Roma.

#### 2.4.1. Culture

While recognition and acceptance by majority populations of minority cultures is undoubtedly important for minority-majority relations, insensitive handling of issues of culture has potential to cement and even deepen existing ethnic divisions. This is particularly evident in the treatment of such issues in the strategies and action plans for Roma adopted in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Among the six countries participating in the Decade which devote a thematic section of their National Action Plans to Romani culture, there is a

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<sup>39</sup> See European Centre for Minority Issues, *Toward Regional Guidelines for the Integration of Roms. Serbia and Montenegro: Integrated Analysis* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2005); Romani Expert Groups for Romani Integration, *Roms on Integration II: Analyses and Recommendations* (Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2006); David Szakonyi, *No Way Out: An Assessment of the Romani Community in Georgia* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2008); Giorgi Sordia, *A Way Out? Initial Steps Towards Addressing Romani Issues in Georgia* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2009).

tendency to treat culture as a set of traditions frozen in time.<sup>40</sup> As a result, activities ostensibly designed to promote Romani culture as worthy of respect by non-Roma as well as by Roma themselves risk of reinforcing *de facto* segregation rather than promoting integration. Examples of activities in this category include the annual “Roma of Albania” football cup and the construction of separate cultural facilities in Romani settlements (as foreseen in Bulgaria, Croatia, and Hungary).<sup>41</sup> The Serbian and Spanish National Action Plans for Roma are

exceptional for taking explicitly into account that Romani culture does not consist only of traditional practices, but is also in an ongoing process of development.<sup>42</sup>

To date, two ECMI initiatives have addressed issues of Romani culture: one research and evaluation project and one action project. Although the two initiatives differ considerably from one another, they have in common an understanding of culture as integrally linked to the quality of interethnic relations. As a result, they carefully avoid the pitfalls of reinforcing existing divisions.

The research and evaluation project “The Aspect of Culture in the Social Inclusion of Ethnic Minorities” examined the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of cultural policies aimed at the social inclusion of

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<sup>40</sup> Countries participating in the Decade which devote a section of their action plans to issues of culture are Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia, and Spain.

<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, *National Action Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2010-2015* (Tirana: of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2009), p. 16; Government of Bulgaria, National Action Plan: Roma Inclusion Decade 2005-2015 (Sofia: Government of Bulgaria, 2005), p. 27; Vlada Republike Hrvatske, *Akciski plan za provedbu Nacionalne strategije za uključivanje Roma, za razdoblje od 2013. do 2015. godine* [Action Plan for Implementation of the National Strategy for the Inclusion of the Roma, for the period from 2013 to 2015] (Zagreb: Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2012), p. 70; Government of the Republic of Hungary, *Decade of Roma Inclusion Programme Strategic Plan* (Budapest: Government of the Republic of Hungary, 2007), pp. 19-20.

<sup>42</sup> Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality, *Action Plan for the Development of the Roma Population 2010-2012* (Madrid: Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality, 2010), pp. 36-37; Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia (Belgrade: Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, 2010), pp. 55, 118.



## A CLOSER LOOK AT ECMI ACTIVITIES WITH ROMA

ethnic minorities (including but not limited to Roma) in six EU Member States in 2006: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Sweden. Taking a multidimensional view of social inclusion (and exclusion), the project treated culture as an element to be understood in interaction with economic, social, and political conditions. The detailed findings of the research are compiled in a report containing individual country studies as well as comparative analysis.<sup>43</sup>

In Georgia, ECMI Caucasus' support to Roma has aimed at creating a positive environment for better economic, social, and civic participation of marginalized Romani communities. Among the means to this end are pre-school education, courses for learning the Georgian language, and various forms of vocational training. In this context, the promotion of Romani culture is a means to the same overall end. More specifically, the increased participation of Roma in cultural festivals on the one

hand serves as a means of bringing together representatives of Romani communities from throughout the country and on the other hand contributes to raising awareness among non-Roma in Georgia about the existence and situation of the country's relatively small Romani population (estimated at 1 500 persons or less, including the disputed territory of Abkhazia).<sup>44</sup> It is also important to keep in mind that ECMI Caucasus' support to the development of Romani communities in Georgia is based on the first systematic research on Roma in Georgia, which was undertaken by ECMI in 2008 and the main findings of which were published in an ECMI Working Paper.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See Tove H. Malloy and Michele Gazzola, *The Aspect of Culture in the Social Inclusion of Ethnic Minorities* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2006).

<sup>44</sup> David Szakonyi, *No Way Out: An Assessment of the Romani Community in Georgia* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2008), p. 4

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

## A CLOSER LOOK AT ECMI ACTIVITIES WITH ROMA

### 2.4.2. Gender

Recent years have seen some progress in reducing gender gaps among Roma in the areas of education and health, but have also brought an increase in Romani women's disadvantage relative to Romani men in the area of employment.<sup>46</sup> At the level of policy, beyond occasional mention of the phenomenon of multiple discrimination – meaning that Romani women and girls are subject to marginalization on the basis of both ethnicity and gender – issues of gender have been largely neglected where Roma are concerned. As a result, women are frequently not considered as a distinct target group of measures aimed at Roma, even where certain problems particularly affect Romani women.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, general strategic documents on gender equality are not consistent in attending to the particular situation of Romani women.<sup>48</sup> Further, even the adoption of action plans for Romani women by two countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion – Macedonia and Serbia – has been of little use, with the European Commission noting in its 2012 Progress Report for Macedonia that “[i]nsufficient support to the National Action Plan for Roma Women renders its implementation almost impossible.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ewa Cukrowska and Angela Kóczé, *Interplay between Gender and Ethnicity: Exposing Structural Disparities of Romani Women* (Bratislava: United Nations Development Programme, 2013).

<sup>47</sup> Stephan Müller, *National Policies towards Romani Women in the Western Balkans* (Sarajevo: CARE International Northwest Balkans, 2011), pp. 14-15.

<sup>48</sup> Eben Friedman, *Regional Report on Anti-discrimination and Participation of Roma in Local Decision-Making* (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2013).

<sup>49</sup> European Commission, *The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2012 Progress Report* (Brussels: Commission of the European Communities, 2012), p. 54; Tatjana Perić, *Achieving Human Rights of Roma Women in Serbia: An Analysis of the Implementation of Existing Institutional Measures* (Niš: Women's Space, 2012); Roma Center Skopje, *Submission to CEDAW: Commentary on the Realization of the Romani Women Rights with Focus on the 2006 CEDAW Committee Recommendation No. 28* (Skopje: Roma Center Skopje, 2013).



ECMI foto: Roma Festival in Tbilisi

Attention to issues of gender is evident in ten ECMI initiatives targeting Roma. The countries covered by these initiatives are Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo Latvia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia, and Sweden.



## A CLOSER LOOK AT ECMI ACTIVITIES WITH ROMA

ECMI initiatives which focus on both Roma and gender are evenly split into research and action projects. Among the research projects, analysis of issues of gender is included in publications resulting from the needs assessments conducted by ECMI in Macedonia and in Serbia and Montenegro, as well as in the evaluation report *The Aspect of Culture in the Social Inclusion of Ethnic Minorities*. ECMI's action projects with Roma have approached issues of gender in two different ways. On the one hand, the inclusion of Romani women's NGOs in the ECMI NGO Network for Improvement of Interethnic Relations in the Republic of Macedonia and the attention to gender balance within the Romani Expert Groups (also in Macedonia) sought to promote the mainstreaming of such issues through the active and equitable participation of Romani women in project activities. On the other hand, ECMI's support to local Romani coordinators in Serbia as well as more recent ECMI work with Roma in Georgia and Kosovo target gender more directly:

- In Georgia, attention to the situation of Romani women has increased on the basis of needs identified in the course of prior project implementation, resulting in an overall expansion of activities for Romani women including the introduction of vocational training.
- In Kosovo, the most recent ECMI action initiative with Roma to address issues of gender – implemented in cooperation with a Romani, Ashkali, and Egyptian women's NGO network – is devoted entirely to the economic empowerment of Romani, Ashkali, and Egyptian women.





Issues of gender also receive attention in nine ECMI publications which focus at least in part on Roma.<sup>50</sup> All but one are project-based, with the exception the practical guide developed in 2006 for the European Agency for Reconstruction on mainstreaming minority issues, which also makes note of synergies between ethnic and gender mainstreaming.

Finally, women account for two of the three Romani researchers whom ECMI was selected by the European Academic Network on Romani Studies to host in early 2013.



ECMI foto: Roma children

<sup>50</sup> European Centre for Minority Issues, *Toward Regional Guidelines for the Integration of Roms. Macedonia: Narrative Report* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2004); *Toward Regional Guidelines for the Integration of Roms. Serbia and Montenegro: Integrated Analysis* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2005); Romani Expert Groups for Romani Integration, *Roms on Integration: Analyses and Recommendations* (Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2005); European Agency for Reconstruction and European Centre for Minority Issues, *Minority Issues Mainstreaming: A Practical Guide for European Agency for Reconstruction Programmes* (Thessaloniki and Flensburg: European Agency for Reconstruction, 2006); Tove H. Malloy and Michele Gazzola, *The Aspect of Culture in the Social Inclusion of Ethnic Minorities* (Flensburg: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2006); Romani Expert Groups for Romani Integration, *Roms on Integration II: Analyses and Recommendations* (Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2006); European Centre for Minority Issues, *Supporting Local Romani Coordinators: A Practical Guide to Integrating Roms in Municipal Government* (Belgrade and Skopje: European Centre for Minority Issues, 2007); European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, *Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups in Kosovo: A Legal Handbook* (Prishtinë/Pristina: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012); Valentina Pancaldi, *Promoting the Economic Empowerment of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women in Kosovo* (Prishtinë/Pristina: European Centre for Minority Issues Kosovo, 2012).

## 3. TAKING STOCK AND LOOKING AHEAD

### 3.1. Key ECMI contributions and remaining challenges

ECMI's more than ten years of work with Roma has produced some notable successes, especially in the domains of informational and political empowerment.

- ECMI has made a particularly significant contribution in gathering data and generating information on the situation of Roma. Perhaps most important in this regard are ECMI's three 'firsts' in assessing the situation of Roma in Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Georgia. While many gaps in the empirical record in relation to Roma have been filled through the regional surveys commissioned by UNDP in 2004 and by UNDP, the World Bank, and the European Commission in 2011, this positive development neither diminishes the importance of ECMI's early efforts nor makes the qualitative methods employed in ECMI assessments less relevant today for adding nuance to numbers. Another key ECMI contribution in this area was its work with UNDP in developing and piloting a methodology for assessing the progress of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.
- Of all themes under all domains, capacity building is the thematic area in which ECMI's work with Roma has proven most successful. In light of ECMI's experience in bringing minorities and majorities closer together prior to embarking on work with Roma, ECMI was particularly well positioned to extend this approach to Roma. As described in some detail in Section 2.2.1, capacity building has been a feature of most of ECMI's project initiatives targeting Roma, with efforts in this direction sometimes focused primarily on Roma, sometimes concentrating on working with non-Roma in institutions to fulfill their obligations toward Roma, and sometimes directly focused on bringing Roma and non-Roma together with an eye



to establishing routine cooperation. ECMI's experience to date shows that all three approaches can be fruitful, resulting in sustainable benefits for Romani populations where the direct beneficiaries are selected on the basis of their potential to make good use of their increased capacities to reach larger groups of stakeholders. The replication of some of ECMI's most significant work to build capacity in relation to Roma is encouraged in six practical guides.

- Another important ECMI contribution in the domain of political empowerment relates to the participation of Roma in public life. Part of this contribution has come through the publication of seven analytical works addressing various aspects of Romani participation at micro- and macro-levels. ECMI action in this thematic area has taken different forms in different countries, from training Romani and non-Romani municipal officials to facilitating the establishment of Romani non-governmental organizations. A major challenge which remains in relation to Roma's participation and to Roma's political empowerment more broadly, however, is their political representation.

Notwithstanding ECMI's considerable successes, significant challenges for ECMI's work remain in political, social, and cultural domains.

- In the domain of political empowerment, the theme of policy continues to demand attention. On the one hand, there is a wide range of policies adopted at national level, with access to data on their implementation and effects often problematic. On the other hand, the increased activity of the European Union in relation to Roma introduces a new dimension to policy toward Roma. As a result, extensive comparative analysis is needed to set a course for future ECMI action in relation to this thematic area.





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- While education as a crucial factor for Roma's social empowerment has been a focus of ECMI research and action for over ten years, the magnitude of the problems Roma face in this thematic area and the centrality of education for improving the situation of Roma over the long term in all domains combine to demand continued attention and new approaches. Recent innovations in ECMI activity in relation to the education of Roma include ECMI Kosovo's strategic litigation on segregation in standard education and an ECMI Working Paper on the treatment of education in submissions under the *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies*. Both make clear that much work lies ahead in order to bring palpable improvements in Romani populations' daily life.
- Within the domain of cultural empowerment, as discussed in Section 2.4.1 above, some ECMI action projects with Roma have attempted to mainstream issues of gender while others have targeted gender more directly. ECMI experience in this thematic area provides support for evidence from the Decade of Roma Inclusion that mainstreaming issues of gender where Roma are concerned brings with it a risk that the phenomenon of multiple discrimination faced by Romani women will not be adequately addressed. ECMI Kosovo's recent project focused exclusively on the economic empowerment of Romani, Ashkali, and Egyptian women provides an important basis for further developing ECMI's thinking on how to move ahead in addressing issues of gender among Roma.

## 3.2. Next steps

Toward addressing the challenges identified above, ECMI has embarked on an ambitious new research program. In its initial phase, the program will extend ECMI's work to date in the domain of political empowerment through:

- An analysis of the effectiveness of the legal and institutional arrangements for the political representation of Roma in selected European countries; and
- An examination of Member State submissions under the *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies*, aiming at identifying common challenges and relevant good practices, assessing possibilities for a synchronized EU policy for Roma with common mechanisms, and developing a system of indicators and standardized instrument for assessing the mechanisms.

In executing the research program and in continuing to develop its work with Roma in Europe, ECMI will draw on the following key aspects of its work to date:

- *Broad perspective.* In both research and action, ECMI's engagement with Roma and the pressing issues which face them pre-dates widespread attention to these issues at European level through the Decade of Roma Inclusion and EU policy discourse. Analytical work on the historical antecedents of current policies toward Roma throughout Europe further provides ECMI with a clear sense of the contexts within which today's policies are produced and received.
- *Conceptual precision.* Closely related to the broad perspective which ECMI brings to its work with Roma, ECMI is keenly aware of the need for clarity in defining the overall objectives of policy targeting Roma at local, national, and European levels, where confusion sometimes arises among notions like assimilation, inclusion, and integration.



## TAKING STOCK AND LOOKING AHEAD

- *Field presence.* ECMI actively maintains connections to the regions of Europe where Roma are concentrated through its Regional Associates in Georgia and Kosovo, a roster of experts, partnerships with relevant research institutions, and participation in networks. These links allow ECMI to respond quickly and appropriately on the basis of up-to-date information as developments occur.
- *Focus on empowerment.* From the beginning, ECMI's work with Roma has emphasized providing sustainable tools in the form of skills over one-off material donations with an eye to equipping Roma with the resources needed for playing an effective role in a democratic society based on the rule of law as well as for participating successfully in a competitive labor market. In this way, ECMI has promoted Roma's active participation as subjects rather than seeking primarily to make them more manageable objects of policy.
- *Linking research and action.* As is true of all ECMI activities, research on Roma is undertaken with an eye to action, while action with Roma draws on prior research. In this manner, ECMI avoids on the one hand research on Roma that is of questionable relevance for improving their situation and on the other hand action based on ungrounded assumptions about what Roma need.

Taken together, these characteristics give ECMI an important comparative advantage in designing and carrying out research and action on and with Roma in Europe.



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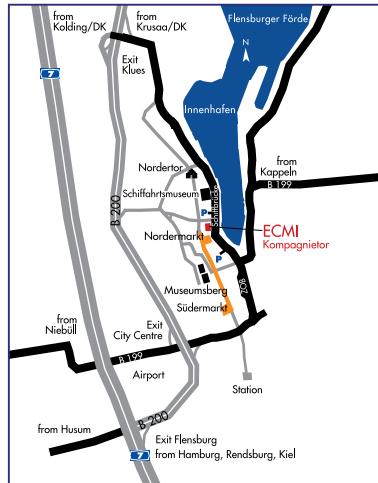
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