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European Academic Network on Romani Studies

5th Meeting of the Scientific Committee
of the European Academic Network on Romani Studies
(Marseilles, 25 September 2013)

A European Union / Council of Europe Joint Programme
(June 2011 – May 2015)

Report

The report has been prepared by Mr László Fosztó, Secretary of the Network.

Event: 5th Meeting of the Scientific Committee

Date: 25th September 2013

Venue: Room 701, Grand Horizon, 13 Bd de Dunkerque 13002 Marseilles

Participants:

- a) Members of the Scientific Committee: Colin CLARK, Victor FRIEDMAN, Jean-Pierre LIEGEOIS, Elena MARUSHIAKOVA, Yaron MATRAS, Ciprian NECULA, Elisabetta VIVALDI, Elisabeth TAUBER joined the morning session on Skype). Not present: Henriette ASSEO, Eva SOBOTKA, Michael STEWART, Peter VERMEERSCH.
- b) Coordinators and staff from the European Commission and Council of Europe: Laura CASSIO, Kathrin MERKLE, Network Secretary László FOSZTÓ, and administrative assistant Elena DUBININA (replacing Katharina FOUQUET).
- c) Special Guests: Sixto MOLINA Head of the Support Team for the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma – attended the morning session. The meeting was visited by Ms Gaëlle LENFANT, Vice-President of the Region Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur déléguée à la Jeunesse, au Conseil régional des jeunes, aux Solidarités, Prévention et Sécurité, Lutte contre les discriminations.

Executive summary:

Main objectives of the meeting were:

- a) Evaluating the results and experiences of the First Phase of Network-project (2011-2013);
- b) Fine-tuning the planning for the Second Phase of the Project (2013-2015);
- c) Identifying and expanding synergies and the potential involvement of the Network in the work of the EC, the CoE and other relevant bodies.
- d) Overviewing the internal operation of the network and the communication strategy (internal communication and external visibility).
- e) Electing the Chair of the Scientific Committee for the forthcoming period September 2013-March 2014.

The meeting day has been divided into two morning sessions (09:30-11:30 and 12:00-13:30) and an afternoon session (15:00-17:00). The topics a), b) and c) were discussed and decisions adopted during the morning sessions while points d) and e) were addressed during the afternoon.

Two special guest attended the morning session: Mr Sixto MOLINA Head of the Support Team for the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma participated in the exchanges with particular focus on the cooperation between the Network and other Roma-related actions at the Council of Europe and Ms Gaëlle LENFANT Vice-President of the Region Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur has addressed her welcome to the SC and to the Network in Marseilles, European Capital of Culture, 2013.

Details about the discussion and decision adopted during the meeting:

- 1) A short overview of the main results of the First Phase has been presented and discussed. (See annex 1.)

Decision:

The First Phase achieved its main goal: the structure of the network has been established and communication is ongoing. During the Second Phase the emphasis will be on the interface between the academia and policy making. A more intense involvement of the Network members in policy advisory roles and policy relevant activities will be carried out.

- 2) Discussion on the lessons learned and the vision for the future of the Network were initiated by the Chair and the Secretary based on a position paper and an initial round of feed-back was provided by the SC members present.

Decision:

The revised position paper will be circulated among the SC and comments and feed-back will be gathered by 15 October 2013. Following that the paper will be shared with all the members of the Network in order to generate further discussion.

Responsible: The Secretary will circulate the draft at the beginning of October.

- 3) A discussion on identifying and expanding synergies in the work of the EC, the CoE and other relevant bodies was started with input from Laura CASSIO, Kathrin MERKLE and Sixto MOLINA.

Decision:

1) The report and action plan adopted following the meeting in Strasbourg on 22 May (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/romastudies/Report_meeting_22May2013.pdf) will be followed more closely and implemented as only a few points have been realised and many of them are delayed to this date. Sixto MOLINA expressed his full support for implementing the actions agreed. 2) Regarding the collaboration with the European Commission, the initiated contacts with the DGs (Culture and Education, Justice, Regio etc.) will be maintained and possibilities for further participation in the EC activities identified.

Responsible: The Secretary will interact more closely with the CoE team. The Secretary - with the support of Laura CASSIO will explore the possibilities to organise trainings by Network members for employees of the EC services.

- 4) The budget and types of actions planned for the future period were discussed.

Decisions:

1) The sum of €35.000 will be allocated for Early Career Researchers travel grants for the whole period of the Second Phase (2013-2015). The maximum amount of the support for one travel grant is €500. One person can be awarded this grant once in a calendar year. Early Career Researchers will be offered grants supporting: (a) conference participation, (b) attending summer schools, (c) travel support for internships. Eligible applicants will present a proof that they are presenting at a conference, have been accepted to a summer school, or are offered an internship opportunity.

2) The remaining budget of € 132.000 will be dedicated to actions targeted at bridging the world of academia and policy makers. The following types of activities will be supported:

(a) meetings with the National Contact Points for the Implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies (NCP). These meetings will be initiated in 4 selected countries (Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania) and extended to two other countries (Italy and Czech Republic) in a next phase. These meetings will be organised with the involvement of the Network members from each of these countries. Officials and national authorities -including the NCP-will be present.

(b) Thematic meetings on issues which are relevant for policy makers.

(c) Workshops aimed to raise the profile of Romani Studies, also involving policy makers.

For (b) and (c) an open call will be issued and circulated before the end of 2013 (proposed deadline March 2014) and the proposals will be evaluated during the 6th SC meeting (in April 2014). Priority is given for proposals which have an explicit involvement of policy makers and stakeholders. Forms of involvement can include: partnership agreement with local, regional or national authorities / active participation of the policy makers in the event organised / or the event produces a policy paper as an outcome which will be used by the authorities.

Responsible: The Secretary will draft the revised call for Early Career Researchers and consult with the SC on the details of the other calls.

5) The rules for decision taking were discussed.

Decisions:

It was agreed that transparency in communication and consensual decision making are key to the success of the RAN project and will be applied by the SC as basic rules. If consensual decision is not possible, the SC will use simple majority voting. The SC will evaluate during its face-to-face meetings the applications for the workshops and thematic meetings, where decisions will be taken on substantial resources and actions. On-line decision taking (via email) will be continuously used for other decisions such as: 1) validating new members, 2) evaluating applications for travel grants. Non-reply by a SC member means tacit agreement.

6) The communication strategy of the network was discussed.

Decisions:

The internal and external communication of the network needs to be improved. The email-list will be kept as a main channel for messages between the members but the internal communication channels of the network should be diversified according to different topics using the Forum applications. The functionalities of the website have to be revised and extended.

Responsible: The Secretary will prepare a short description of the present operation of the communication system (email-list, Facebook page, website etc.) and share it with the SC members to facilitate planning and implementation of an improved communication strategy. (See annex 2.)

7) The rules for the recruitment procedure were discussed.

Decision:

No revision of the membership criteria is necessary. The recruitment procedure will be followed as it stands and attention will be paid to check the eligibility of the candidates

for associated membership (the minimum requirement is MA / more typically PhD students) in order to maintain the academic character of the network.

- 8) The issue of Elections for the SC were discussed as well as a reform for the voting procedure for full and associated members.

Decisions:

The distinction between full / associated members will be maintained and the structure of the SC will remain as is. The next elections will be organised as planned in February 2015 before the mandate of the present committee expires. The exact details and procedures for voting will be revisited and discussed again before the next elections during the 6th meeting of the SC.

- 9) The issue of the vacant position in the SC was addressed.

Decisions:

The vacant position will be filled using the same procedure as applied earlier: the candidate(s) obtaining the highest number of votes from the 2012 results lists will be invited to join the committee. As on the list there are currently two candidates with equal number of votes (29): Judit Durst and Cătălin Berescu, both of them will be invited and if both would like to join the present members of the SC will be asked if any of them would like to step back and be replaced by a new colleague.

Responsible: The Secretary will contact the two candidates and report back to the SC on the process.

- 10) The date and the place of the next meeting of the SC was discussed.

Decisions:

The 6th Meeting of the SC will be organised in Cluj-Napoca, Romania on April 6-7. The meeting will be held in conjunction with the Consortium meeting of the MIGROM12 project which is funded by the European Commission's FP7 Scheme. The coordinator and principal investigator of the MIGROM12 is Yaron MATRAS and several of the SC are members of the advisory board of the project. László FOSZTÓ will act as coordinator for the Romanian partner.

Responsible: The Secretary, with the support of Yaron MATRAS, will plan and organise the details of the meeting.

- 11) The election of the Chair of the SC for the forthcoming period was carried out.

Decision: Elisabeth TAUBER was renewed for 6 months as the Chair of the SC of the RAN (until April 2014).

Annex 1: Mapping the Romani Studies Network and Presenting its Potentials

1. Membership demography

In the present (September 2013) there are 326 validated members of the network: 191 full members (58.6%) and 135 associated members (41.4%). The membership is widely distributed geographically, gender balanced, composed of an increasing number of young and dynamic, highly qualified academics, who are rather dispersed in term of institutional affiliation (there are few institutional centres in Europe hosting 2 or more members of the network).

- a) **Geographic distribution:** members of the Network reside in 37 countries. There are members in almost all EU Member States (for exceptions see the list annexed). The large majority of the CoE countries are also represented. Countries with the highest number of members are: UK, Romania, Hungary, France, Spain, Bulgaria, Italy, USA, Germany, and the Czech Republic.
- b) **Sex ratio:** there is gender balance among the members, there are 170 female (52.1%) and 156 male (47.9%) members.
- c) **Academic degrees:** all members have academic advanced degrees or are candidates for a degree: 194 members (59.5%) hold doctoral degree, 87 members (26.6%) are doctoral candidates, 38 members have been awarded a Masters degree, and 7 members have other qualifications.
- d) **Age:** If academic maturity is measured by the date of the doctoral degree awarded (PhD), the network membership is relatively young. 144 members have been awarded their doctorate after the year 2000 (74% of the 194 PhDs). In terms of the recent decades: 10 members have their degrees from the 1970's, 14 from the 1980's, 26 from the 1990's, 104 from the 2000's, and 40 members received their degrees after 2010.
- e) **Academic disciplines:** There are more than 50 disciplines and sub-disciplines represented in the network. Highest numbers of members come from: Anthropology, Sociology, History, Ethnology, Political Science, Linguistics, and Legal Studies / Human Rights, but the range of disciplines encompasses most of the Humanities and Social Sciences.
- f) **Institutional affiliations:** The membership is dispersed in more than 250 institutions; there are only 24 institutions which have 2 or more network members. This means that the network has developed into an important communication infrastructure connecting researchers in this domain.

2. Areas of interests and expertise

- a) **The regional interest** of the members covers the countries of Central and Eastern Europe where the highest proportion of Roma live (Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria), and also countries in Southern and Western Europe (Italy, France, Spain, UK), or more broadly the EU and its neighbouring regions.
- b) **Language competencies:** There is high number of languages spoken by the members of the network and the majority of the members speak three or more languages.

- c) **Thematic expertise:** The keywords describing the academic interest of the members are very varied and cover a wide area of expertise and academic knowledge including the cultural, linguistic, social and historical research in European Roma communities.
- d) **Policy work:** In addition to the academic research experience many members have previous involvement in evaluation and consultancy work in domains including, but not limited to, education, language and cultural rights, human rights, cultural policy, housing, and local development.

3. *Network Experience in providing training and policy expertise*

- a) **Higher education and training;** a summer school was organised in Budapest (20 teachers and more than 50 participants (June–July 2012) in two modules: one for PhD candidates and the second for policy practitioners; to mainstream the Roma related knowledge in academic forums and beyond the Academia,
- b) **Consultancy for research methodology and policy monitoring;** during the spring of 2012 members of the network has been involved in preparatory seminars organised by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) aiming to provide advice on *qualitative research methodologies and participatory action research* in evaluating development policies.
- c) **Policy advise and reviewing policy documents;** for example generating commentaries on the progress of national strategies - as a response to an invitation from the European Commission, DG Justice – during February 2013; aiming to improve the implementation of the National Strategies for Roma Inclusion in the EU Member States.
- d) **Anti-discrimination measures and positive action for Supporting Roma in Academia;** 3 Romani interns at the ECMI - European Centre for Minority Issues in Flensburg (D), and 4 seminars in European research centres in Chisinau (Md), Cluj-Napoca (Ro), Budapest (Hu), and Liverpool (UK), involving more than 16 professors and approx. 40 young scholars of Romani background from all over Europe and the postsoviet countries.

4. *Potentials and challenges for the future*

- a) to make the **policy advisory orientation of the network a priority** by further work with the policy making community and the relevant international (CoE, EU, FRA, etc.) and national bodies (Equality Bodies, National Roma Contact Points etc.);
- b) to **valorise the monitoring and policy evaluation expertise** embodied by the network membership by taking up further documents for analysis and evaluating implemented policies;
- c) offer **advice on research methodology** in order to support the development and implementation of evidence based policies in Europe in the domain of Roma inclusion,
- d) to **offer training sessions to policy practitioners and officials** working on Roma related issues in order to enhance the understanding of Romani culture, society and the challenges Roma face
- e) continuing to **promote dialog, foster social inclusion, and fight discrimination** by supporting Roma in Academia;

Annex 2:

The Communication Channels of the European Academic Network on Romani Studies
(16 October 2013)

The communication of the network is based on on-line information tools. The main platforms for communication are: 1) the CoE webpage, 2) the Network website, 3) the Facebook page of the network, and 4) the Yahoo email-group of the network.

Each of these are described below with details on the content, management and traffic of information. The overview also offers with some ideas about improving the communication and alerts to potential remaining issues with respective communication channels.

1. CoE webpage: <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/romastudies/>

Description:

The webpage is part of the Council of Europe official hub of communication and contains the main details about the project, calls for membership and for early career researchers, list of meetings, reports about the SC meetings etc. It has links to the Network website, Facebook page, and a number of other useful links. The CoE webpage is regularly updated (with the support of Ms Sandrine MAROLLEAU) with reports and information regarding the meetings. The list of the membership is brought up to date.

Traffic: There is only one indirect source about this: about 1.267 visits to the Network website were channelled by the coe.int domain during the past year.

2. Network website: <http://romanistudies.eu/>

Description:

This is the main communication and visibility tool of the Network. It contains sections on the project, the Scientific Committee, events, call for applications and members. Each member has his/her own profile, can log into the website and update information about his/her own activity. The main content of the website is produced by the Secretary, news items are posted, member profiles added and managed, call for applications posted.

Members: 326 registered members of the network.

Traffic: 26.343 page views from about 3.000 people in one year. (15 October 2012 – 14 October 2013). This means approximately an average 500 views per week distributed unequally as for example during the elections the number of views was higher while there are periods when the activity is lower.

3. Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/romanistudies.eu>

Description: The Facebook page has been created by Ms Sandrine MAROLLEAU and it is managed by the Secretary. The total number of posts is 873. The content of posts include: news and reports (including photographs) about Network activities, call for applications, opportunities for publications, and events, conferences, and new publications of interest.

Regular followers: There are 890 Facebook users who 'Like' this page. These followers belong to a 'general public'. The majority of them are not members of the Network, but they are interested in the Roma topic and regularly read the posts, occasionally also comment and share the content posted with their Facebook connections.

Traffic: The number of weekly visits of the Facebook page is between 600 and 2.000 on all post, which adds up to approximate 100.000 visits per year on the whole page.

4. Network Yahoo email-list:

http://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/romani_studies_network/info

Email Address: romani_studies_network@yahoogroups.com

Description:

This is a closed group. Only members can post messages and read the messages posted by others. The message archive of the list and other facilities (list of the members, pools, files, photos, etc.) is accessible for members who have a yahoo account. The list is moderated by the Secretary. The content circulated includes: 1) announcements and calls to the Network members, 2) requests for policy advice, consultancy and reviews of documents (ex. DG Justice, World Bank, ERTF), 3) general calls and opportunities which are of interest for the membership, 3) queries about topics, references and/or contacts - posted by individual the members, 4) positions, opinions and issues proposed for debate.

Members: 328 network members (1 list-owner, 1 moderator).

Traffic: The total number of the messages posted during 2012 and 2013 is 466. The average number of messages varies between 27 and 76 per month during 2013 (in 2012 there was much less traffic).

5. Conclusions

a) Ideas and suggestions

- The different channels should be more integrated -where possible- and used complementarily, where necessary.
- The role of the Network website should be more central.
- A novel space offering “research news” should be added to the network website to feature latest policy-relevant research and attract audiences, i.e. from the policy-making world.
- To make better use of the Forums section of the website in order to ‘move’ some of the discussions from the email group to the public domain.
- Using more visual content (photographs, graphics and videos) on the website and the Facebook page will make them more attractive and also encourage the users to share the content posted on these platforms with their connections (multiplication effect).
- Channelling the traffic of the Facebook page towards the website in order to increase the number of visits, so the overall visibility of the Network would increase.

b) Issues

- The majority of the Facebook page followers are non-specialists and not part of the policy making bodies. The Facebook page could succeed as a marketing tool for the network, but it seems difficult to send targeted messages through it.
- The email group being a ‘push media’ has a relative advantage over the Forums: users receive messages in their inbox and are thus more likely they reply. Forums will need animators / moderators to make them work.
Policy makers are not targeted by selected and relevant content by any of the existing channels. The novel “research news” space on the network website might address this.