

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Towards the creation of a “European Roma Institute”

***Consultation document
prepared by the Council of Europe Secretariat***

Executive summary

This consultation document sets out the revised concept of a “European Roma Institute” (ERI) [*working title*], to be created with the active involvement of the Council of Europe.

ERI is conceived as an instrument to support the implementation of the “Strasbourg Declaration” (2010) in two particularly important fields: improved self-esteem of the Roma community, and improved dialogue and comprehension between Roma and non-Roma. It will have the potential to develop unique functions and contribute in its field of competence to the implementation and innovation of the policy agenda of the Council of Europe related to Roma.

ERI will pursue its objectives through a programme of activities including conceptual and methodological advice, public outreach events, expert conferences and co-operation activities.

It is proposed to set up ERI as an independent institution linked to the Council of Europe in various ways (CM endorsement; Council of Europe representation on the governance organs; reporting to the Council of Europe organs). Council of Europe co-funding will be necessary at least in the start-up phase, where a contribution of € 200K per year may be envisaged.

The terms for the ERI seat will have to be determined. ERI could start operations in the second half of 2015.

Political context

Although some progress has been made in recent years, much remains to be done to end the widespread economic and social marginalisation of Roma communities in Europe. The achievements have been insufficient to produce a major and deep change. It seems that integration strategies remain of limited impact if the widely held stereotypes and open hate against Roma are not addressed more assertively, and if the Roma communities themselves are not put into a position to acquire a more positive self-image. As the “Strasbourg Declaration”¹ explicitly states, inclusion and effective human rights protection “*must be embraced and supported by society as a whole*”, and genuine participation of Europeans of Roma origin “*is a precondition for success*”. The Committee of Ministers, the Secretary General, the Parliamentary Assembly and other organs of the Council of Europe have repeatedly emphasised this aspect.²

The political function of a “European Roma Institute”

A “European Roma Institute” can be an important tool to support the policy agenda of the Council of Europe in the member States. As an independent institution under the appropriate stewardship, it can contribute significantly to higher Roma self-esteem; and as a platform for dialogue and policy advice it can assist civil society, member States and European institutions in addressing ignorance, stereotypes and hate.

ERI will thus have three overriding aims:

- (1) Promote Council of Europe values, standards and tools and enhance its action to strengthen the integration of Roma, particularly of Roma women and youth;
- (2) Improve Roma self-perception, as a prerequisite for empowerment and participation;
- (3) Improve the perception of Roma by the majority population, as a prerequisite for successfully combating discrimination.

The added value of the ERI lies in its unique function; none of the ERI aims are currently pursued as a priority by the OSCE, EU/FRA, World Bank or comparable other institutes.³ Hence, ERI will be able to assist the policy-making in member States. More generally, it is expected to have an innovative function for Roma policies by providing access and outreach for local and national initiatives. ERI can provide a significant input to Council of Europe policy development and implementation. Not being an advocacy institution as such, it does

¹ CM(2010)133final

² CM Declaration on the Rise of Anti-Gypsyism and Racist Violence against Roma in Europe (February 2012): “*The effectiveness of strategies, programmes or action plans ... can be significantly reinforced by resolute action to combat anti-Gypsyism and action to improve the trust between Roma and the wider community...*”. Also CM/Rec(2008)5 on policies for Roma and/or Travellers in Europe; Recommendation Rec(2001)17 on improving the economic and employment situation of Roma/Gypsies and Travellers in Europe. SG Report 2014 “on the State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Europe”, pp.46-47. PACE Resolution 1927 (2013) “Ending discrimination against Roma children”, § 4. Congress Resolution 366 (2014) “Empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional levels”. ECRI General Policy Recommendation no.13 on Combating anti-Gypsyism and Discrimination against Roma. Position Paper from the Commissioner for Human Rights, “*Positions on the human rights of Roma*”, (CommDH/PositionPaper(2010)3).

³ E.g. the “European Roma Rights Centre” (ERRC) in Budapest, the “European Centre for Minority Issues” (ECMI) in Flensburg/Germany, or the “European Roma Information Office” (ERIO) in Brussels.

not compete with civil society organisations such as the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF).

Objectives and working methods

The overriding aims translate into three main objectives: (1) to advise, in its field of competence, international organisations and member States in order to make international and national action more effective, including Roma National Action Plans and Strategies; (2) to contribute to dialogue between Roma and non-Roma; and (3) to showcase Roma culture in its diversity, and demonstrate its contribution to European culture.

The ERI programme of activities will include:

- Conceptual advice for the Council of Europe (CM/CAHROM/SRSG), member States and local and regional authorities on the basis of expert and civil-society input;
- High-visibility events with European attendance and strong outreach into the Roma and non-Roma communities (e.g. “annual campus”);
- Regular expert activities to advance the policy reflection on Roma issues, with a special focus on the role of arts and culture for identity-building;
- Programmes to support the professional development of young Roma scholars (fellowships, residencies);
- Co-operation with civil society organisations, academic and research institutions;
- Media relations.

The programme scope and the working methods will have to be developed in detail by the ERI governance structures, depending on the available budgets and access to policy makers.

Legal format

It is proposed to set up the ERI as an independent institution under national law. ERI would be linked to the Council of Europe mainly in three ways:⁴

- (1) The Committee of Ministers endorses ERI as an instrument (tool) for achieving some of its policy aims regarding Roma integration;
- (2) The Council of Europe has a significant role within the ERI governance structure;
- (3) ERI regularly reports to the Council of Europe (CM and/or CAHROM and the Secretariat).

The Council of Europe will not take any long-term financial obligations; provision of initial start-up funds may however be necessary.

⁴ The proposal follows the logic chosen in the case of the “European Wergeland Centre”, which is attached to the Council of Europe through a CM decision, a co-operation agreement and the membership of Council of Europe representatives on the EWC Board. See CM documents CM(2007)178 rev (*concept note*), CM(2008)104add (*Statutes*), CM(2008)104 (*Co-operation Agreement between Norway and the Council of Europe*), CM/Del/Dec(2008)1032/7.1 (*CM decision*), DD(2011)96 (*CM exchange of views with the EWC Executive Director*). www.theewc.org/

Budget

The expected initial budget during the five-year start-up phase will start at around € 600K per year, covering operational and staff costs as well as a minimum level of activities.⁵ It will be necessary to bring together several funding sources, including the Council of Europe and the Open Society Foundations; ERI, in turn, will have to engage in fund-raising activities. A possibility to revise the financial arrangements is foreseen after an initial two-year period, based on an evaluation of the ERI performance.

Informal consultations during 2014 have shown that a multi-stakeholder start-up funding scenario could be achievable, involving the Council of Europe, one or several member States, the Open Society Foundations and other funders contributing towards the initial budget (a realistic contribution of the Council of Europe would amount to one third of the budget, i.e. approximately € 200K per year in 2015 and 2016).

Governance and management

The governance structure of the ERI will be composed of two layers:

- (1) Representation of the Roma community in its diversity, as the “think tank”, agenda-setting and advisory body;
- (2) ERI Board as the decision-making organ, composed of Roma representatives; Council of Europe representatives (CM/CAHROM, SRSG, PACE and Congress); representative(s) of member States and other donors in function of their political/financial commitment; representative(s) of the Open Society Foundations.

The Institute will organise regular meetings of a “Partner Conference”, a consultative mechanism which brings together selected NGOs, academic networks and private partners.

ERI will be managed by a secretariat.⁶

Location

The question of the seat remains open for the time being.

Member States are invited to make suggestions. The definitive decision will be taken by the major stakeholders involved in the start-up phase, including the Council of Europe, interested contributing member States and the Open Society Foundations.

Roadmap

Provided that at the 2nd informal consultation with Council of Europe member States tentative agreement on the concept as a basis for further consultations is reached, the following roadmap could be envisaged:

⁵ Based on the budget estimate provided in May 2014 (subject to revision)

⁶ Apart from activity costs, an annual start-up budget of € 600K is expected to cover operational and staff costs, based on a calculation for five to 12 persons depending on the qualification structure and local salary scale (subject to revision).

Period	Action
October- November 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal consultations with other major stakeholders, including the Open Society Foundation, EEA/Norway Grants and the European Commission • Consultations with CAHROM, ERTF, Roma Academic Network (<i>continued</i>) • Bilateral consultations with interested member States
November- December 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interim report of the Secretariat to the GR-SOC, exchange of views • Continuation of consultations • Start of the drafting of statutory texts
January-February 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation of draft statutory texts with major stakeholders
March-April 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report of the Secretary General to the Committee of Ministers, debate and CM approval of statutory texts
May 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal setting-up procedure starts
Q3-Q4 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERI starts functioning