

Culture against Racism – Establishing a European Roma Institute

Film screening and moderated talk

16th of March, 7.30 pm
Radisson Blu EU Hotel
Rue d'Idalie 35 (besides European Parliament)

How to use the power of Romani arts, culture, history, thought and talent to strengthen the identity of Roma and its communication in public space? How to break negative stereotypes by highlighting the contribution of Romani people to European culture? Romani artists, scholars and activists have asked themselves these questions for a long time. As one response, an alliance of Romani activists – alongside with the Council of Europe and Open Society Foundations – has now taken the initiative to create an institution that shall serve both as creative hub and education center for Romani culture and arts: The European Roma Institute.

Auschwitz Requiem (28') by Kristof Asbot is the story of and around a musical piece that brings together, for the first time, Roma and Jewish witnesses of the Roma Holocaust from all over Europe. The film goes back and forth between a memorial concert, held in 2012 in Budapest, and the intertwined memories of the witnesses and previously unseen footage of the genocide of the Roma by Nazis.

On 2nd of August 1944, the Gypsy lager of Auschwitz-Birkenau was annihilated to make place for the arriving Hungarian Jewish deportees. Survivors and witnesses confess and open up in montages blended with tokens of remembrance expressed in various art pieces. Produced by **The Romedia Foundation in cooperation with The Sinti- and Roma Philharmonic Orchestra, Original Music by Roger Moreno Rathgeb in the framework of the Requiem for Auschwitz European Project.**

After the screening, Romani activists will speak about their personal efforts in fighting Antigypsyism and how this journey has led to the idea of a European Roma Institute. The film screening and the moderated talk will be followed by a reception.

With

Ms Anna Mirga, PhD candidate in Social and Cultural Anthropology

Mr Ulrich Bunjes, Council of Europe, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues

Ms Katalin Barsony, Executive Director Romedia Foundation

Dr Iulius Rostas, Visiting Lecturer Corvinus University of Budapest

Dr Ciprian Necula, Founding Member of Romano ButiQ and the Roma Culture Museum Bucharest

EUROPEAN ROMA INSTITUTE

AN EXPLAINER PREPARED FOR THE PARTICIPANTS OF „CULTURE AGAINST RACISM – ESTABLISHING A EUROPEAN ROMA INSTITUTE”

WHAT IS EUROPEAN ROMA INSTITUTE?

The „European Roma Institute” (ERI) is proposed as an independent organization under national law with the mission of increasing the self-esteem of Roma and decreasing prejudice of the majority towards the Roma by the means of arts culture, history and media. ERI is envisioned to have three core functions:

- As a *creative hub*, ERI will support the exchange of existing and creative new ideas and materials across cultural borders, cultural domains and Romani identities, in order to document the historical experience of Romani people in Europe. ERI will be the promoter of Romani contributions to European culture and talent, success and achievement.
- As a *communicator* and *public educator*, ERI will disseminate a positive image and knowledge about Romani people, and will use public spaces for dialogue, such as schools, mainstream cultural institutions and media.
- As a *policy advisor* ERI will provide expert advice in its areas of competence, when required by the Council of Europe, its member States and other partners.

WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING ERI?

The proposal and vision to establish ERI is grounded in six founding principles, which will define the Institute’s establishment, core functions, governance, structure and membership:

- Respect of the dignity of Romani people and Romani identity;
- Diversity and plurality of Romani identities and cultures;
- Romani leadership with the support and co-operation of non-Roma, key to breaking the stereotypes by representing talent capability, confidence in taking responsibility, cooperation and inclusiveness;
- Engagement and contribution of Romani organizations and individuals in the establishment and on-going activities of the Institute;
- Political autonomy and non-partisanship, openness for collaboration with public authorities and political institutions as partners;
- Highest quality standards in the domains of arts and culture, as well in as its own operational performance.

WHAT IS THE ADDED VALUE OF ERI?

Many projects tackling anti-Roma prejudice have been implemented for decades. However, Romani people face challenges that go beyond the local scale or short-term projects. Changing negative prejudice will take a long time, it is therefore necessary to establish a viable institution which can achieve a critical impact, building upon — and scaling up — existing initiatives in order to give them long-term sustainability.

No other international institution has ever systematically documented and promoted Romani arts, culture, history, talent and their cultural and intellectual contributions to society.

WHO ARE THE FOUNDERS OF ERI?

The founders of ERI will include the Council of Europe, the Open Society Foundations and the “Alliance for the European Roma Institute” (“the Alliance”). The Alliance, currently in its formation phase, is made up of Romani organizations and individuals who have publicly demonstrated their commitment towards the initiative of a European Roma Institute. The Alliance engages with other organisations, individuals, governments and other stakeholders actively supporting this initiative. Moreover, the Alliance is ready to contribute financial, material, intellectual, creative and reputational assets to ERI.

HOW WILL THE KEY CONSTITUENCIES HAVE OWNERSHIP?

Besides the Alliance as one of the founders, ERI will be open to all formal or informal groups, organizations and individuals who support ERI’s mission and founding principles and are ready to contribute to change. Members will have key roles in building the resources of ERI, engaging in creative exchange and co-production, taking ownership of ERI’s initiatives and engaging in its decision-making. Members will have full access to ERI’s information and knowledge resources, collections, archives and database.

ERI membership is based on contribution in terms of financial, intellectual, material and creative resources, in order to strengthen ERI’s impact. ERI will organize its membership through particular thematic sections (arts, culture, media, knowledge), to which members should commit. Membership is open to organizations and individuals.

HOW WILL ERI BE LEAD?

The governance structure of the ERI will be composed of two layers, the ‘Barvalipe’ Academy and the Board (‘Pakiv’):

- The ‘Barvalipe’ Academy is the agenda-setting and strategic body of the Institute, composed of up to 30 highly regarded, publicly acknowledged people in the areas covered by ERI activities. Two thirds of the Academy members must openly declare their Romani ethnicity, respecting the diversity among the Romani communities. Gender balance must be ensured.
- The Board (‘Pakiv’) is ERI’s statutory and founding body. It supervises the adherence of operational work to the statutory norms. The Board ‘Pakiv’ is made up representatives nominated by the founders, who will be joined by ‘Barvalipe’ Academy delegates once it is established. The majority of the Board ‘Pakiv’ must be made up of members who openly declare belonging to Romani origin.

WHERE WILL ERI BE LOCATED?

The question of the seat remains open for the time being. The Secretariat will mainly host the administrative functions, while ERI activities are organised throughout Europe; ERI will function as a creative hub, its activity must therefore be present in as many countries and locations as possible. The Secretariat location is therefore not a priority issue.