The status of Romani in Europe

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1.   The Romani language and its dialects

1.1   Names

Romani is the only Indo-Aryan language (related to Hindi, Bengali, Panjabi, and so on) that has been spoken exclusively in Europe since the middle ages. Speakers generally call their language *řomani čhib* 'the Romani language', or *řomanes*, 'in a Rom way'. Both names are based on the word *řom*, which means literally 'a member of the (Romani) group' as well as 'husband' (with the feminine counterpart *řomni* 'wife'). Some populations use the word as a name for the group itself, hence the cover-term 'Roma', while others use one of a variety of other appellations (e.g. *Kaale, Sinti, Manouche, Romacil/Romanichel*). The English term *Romani* has been in use by scholars since the late nineteenth century. Before that, the language was usually referred to in scientific discussions as the 'Gypsy language'. In some recent texts, the spelling *Rromani* has been employed in English. While in many Romani dialects the pronunciation of the /r/ in the word 'Romani' justifies a special spelling, there is no such justification when the word is used in English (or in other languages) and is adapted to English pronunciation. We adhere therefore to the now established, modern scholarly tradition of using *Romani*, and advise other texts to do the same.

1.2   Numbers and distribution

There are no reliable figures about the number of speakers of Romani, either in Europe or in other continents (to which speakers have migrated primarily since the late nineteenth century). The most conservative estimate would suggest that there are upwards of 3.5 million speakers in Europe, and upwards of 500,000 in the rest of the world. The actual number may be much higher. This makes Romani one of the larger minority languages in the area represented by the Council of Europe, and probably the second-largest minority language (after Catalan) in the European Union since its enlargement in May 2004, with the prospect of becoming the largest minority language once Romania and Bulgaria join. The largest speaker populations are found in southeastern Europe, especially in Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro, as well as in Greece, Slovakia, Moldavia, and Hungary. Sizeable Romani-speaking populations exist in most other countries of central and eastern Europe. Romani communities that settled in the westernmost 'fringe' countries, such as Portugal and Spain, the United Kingdom, and the Scandinavian countries (with the exception of Finland), some 5-6 centuries ago, have abandoned Romani and have adopted the majority language (albeit retaining some Romani vocabulary in group-internal conversation). Speaker communities in these regions consist predominantly of later immigrants from central or eastern Europe.

1.3   Uniformity

A common misconception in popular reference to the language of the Roma is that there are multiple "Gypsy languages" or "Roma languages". This plural reference is erroneous. It is based on lumping together two different populations: the community of Romani speakers, most of whom have been settled in their respective regions for the past 4-5 centuries or even longer, some of whom however have migrated between European regions in certain historical periods over the past two-three centuries; and the diverse populations of Travellers.

The latter, the various Traveller communities, generally have no linguistic features in common. Some, however, have their own individual speech forms. These usually consist of a distinct but small vocabulary, usually up to 500 words that are occasionally inserted into conversation in the dominant or majority language. They are usually referred to by linguists as 'special lexicons'. Examples are the special vocabulary of the Jenisch Travellers in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria, the special in-group vocabulary of the Irish Travellers (called 'Cant' or 'Gammon', and in some publications 'Shelta'), and that of the Woonwagenbewoners in the Netherlands and Belgium (called 'Bargoens'). There is no historical connection between these individual vocabularies, and they are generally not

similar to one another. While it is acknowledged and appreciated that users of such special vocabularies regard them as tokens of their respective group-identity and heritage, and often refer to them as 'languages', it must be emphasised that special lexicons are fundamentally different from the ordinary concept of what a 'language' is, since they serve only particular conversational functions, and since they consist primarily of a limited set of distinct vocabulary and have no distinct grammatical structures at all.

By contrast, the Romani language is a fully-fledged language which possesses its own extensive everyday lexicon as well as grammar and sound system. It is a distinct and coherent language by any measure. Lexicon, grammar, and sounds are, as in most European languages, subject to geographical variation, but historically speaking this variation is young, having emerged only over the past 600-500 years. The various dialects or varieties of Romani derive from a single ancestor idiom, and the differences among them resemble to a considerable extent the kind of differences found among dialects of major European languages such as Italian or German.

Having established the difference between Romani and the diverse set of special vocabularies used by various Traveller populations, we must however also mention the existence of a kind of 'blend' between the two: Some Traveller communities, such as the English Romanichals, the Welsh Kaale, or the Swedish so-called Tattare, but also the Spanish and Portuguese Gitanos (who are not, usually, Travellers), descend from Romani-speaking populations that, due to various historical circumstances (such as bans on the use of their language, or intermarriage with indigenous groups) gave up their language and shifted to that of the surrounding majority population. However, they tend to retain a vocabulary of Romani origin as an in-group special lexicon. These speech forms, while historically derived from Romani, are functionally more akin to the diverse special lexicons of Travelling populations. Confusingly to outsiders, users tend to call these styles of speech (into which Romani vocabulary is selectively embedded) by the same term as we call the language itself, namely 'Romani'.

1.4   Language history

There is no doubt that Romani is at its core an Indo-Aryan language, and this is reflected in the retention not just of Indic core vocabulary, but of complex morphological inflection patterns, grammatical vocabulary, and key features of the sound system. The established consensus among linguists specialising in Romani is that the language emerged in Central India; for it shares some of its most ancient sound developments specifically with the languages of that region, such as Hindi. Later developments, however, are shared with languages of the Northwest of India, such as Kashmiri, which indicates that the speaker

population migrated to the Northwest at some stage, possibly toward the middle of the first millennium. Further structural developments in the grammar and sound system point to continuous contact with the other languages of India well into early medieval times. From a strictly linguistic viewpoint, the period of departure from India appears to have been sometime around the ninth or tenth century.

Romani was later strongly influenced by Byzantine Greek, in both vocabulary and grammatical structure, and, to a lesser extent, by Iranian languages (Persian, Kurdish, and possibly others), and by Armenian and other languages of the Caucasus, from which it absorbed a limited amount of vocabulary. Earlier studies regarded these layers of loans as evidence of successive migrations toward Europe, but it is also possible that all influences were acquired during the same period of stay in or around eastern Anatolia, sometime between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.

With the gradual decline of the Byzantine Empire, Romani-speaking groups began to migrate into Europe; the dispersion during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was followed by a period of settlement, during the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, and it was apparently during this period that the major differences between the dialects of individual groups emerged, owing partly to the influence of different contact languages such as Romanian, Bulgarian and Macedonian, Turkish, Hungarian, German, Polish, and so on.

1.5   Present-day dialect diversity

Dialect diversity within Romani is not fundamentally different from dialect diversity within any average European language. Taking into account the fact that there are no measurable criteria to distinguish between related 'languages' and 'dialects' – Dutch and Flemish are acknowledged as two mutually intelligible 'languages', while the German 'dialects' of the Lower Rhine area and of Bavaria are hardly mutually comprehensible – cross-dialect communication in Romani is impeded predominantly by the following factors:

a) All Romani speakers are bilingual, and are accustomed to freely integrating words and phrases from their respective second languages; this creates potential difficulties when trying to communicate with Romani speakers from other countries.

b) Romani was traditionally used primarily within the extended family and close community, and there is little experience in communicating with those who come from farther away and whose speech form is distinct. (It is this inexperience that often leads speakers of Romani to label the speech of other Roma as a different 'language').

c) There is no tradition of a literary Standard to which speakers can turn as a compromise form of speech.

This situation is changing with growing mobility and growing opportunities to encounter Roma from other regions and engage in conversation with them. Romani intellectuals especially acquire the skill to handle conversations without resorting to insertions from their respective second-languages, and patterns of mutual accommodation in the choice of words and even grammatical structures can be observed.

Because of the ambiguity of the criteria defining a 'dialect', it is also difficult to enumerate the dialects of Romani. The scientific literature has over the past decade or so operated with a consensus classification grid, which differentiates around 4-5 principal divisions among dialect groups, with further sub-divisions. The differences are, essentially, geographical. For the purposes of the present paper, it is sufficient to characterise dialect differentiation in the following way: Almost all Romani dialects that are spoken in southeastern Europe (more precisely: between Turkey and Slovenia, including Romania and parts of Hungary), are mutually intelligible with minimal effort (apart from second-language insertions). The same can be said about the dialects of central-eastern Europe (northern Slovenia, the Czech and Slovak Republics, southern Poland and western Ukraine). Another very closely-related group of dialects is spoken between central Poland, the Baltic states and Russia. Somewhat more distinct, and therefore more difficult for outsiders to understand, are the Romani dialects of Germany (also represented in neighbouring countries, such as France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria, and northern Italy), southern Italy, and Finland, respectively. The picture is somewhat further complicated by the presence of 'migrant' dialects in many countries, which are usually similar to the dialects of the region from which the migrants originated, rather to the present-day neighbouring dialects.

2.   The degree of recognition accorded to the language
2.1   International resolutions

The Council of Europe has assumed a leading role in the process of granting Romani international recognition. In 1981, the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities called on member states to recognise Romanies as ethnic minorities and to grant them "the same status and advantages as other minorities enjoy, in particular concerning respect and support for their own culture and language" (Resolution 125 (1981) on the role and responsibility of local and regional authorities in regard to the cultural and social problems of populations of nomadic origin). In 1983, the Council of Cultural Co-operation recommended that "the Romany language and culture be used and accorded the same respect as regional languages and cultures and those of other minorities". In 1989, the Council of Ministers of Education declared as its aim to promote teaching methods and

teaching materials that "give consideration for the history, culture and language of Gypsies and Travellers" and to encourage research on those topics (Resolution 89/C, 153/025). In the European Charter for Minority and Regional Languages of 1992, Romani (Romany) is mentioned explicitly as an example of a non-territorial language, to which some parts of the Charter may be applied. In 1993, the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly called for the establishment of "a European programme for the study of Romanes and a translation bureau specialising in the language", and recommended that "the provisions for non-territorial languages as set out in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages should be applied to Gypsy minorities" (Rec. 1203/1993). In February 2000, the Committee of Ministers recommended to the member states that "in countries where the Romani language is spoken, opportunities to learn in the mother tongue should be offered at school to Roma/Gypsy children", and that "the participation of representatives of the Roma/Gypsy community should be encouraged in the development of teaching material on the history, culture or language of the Roma/Gypsies" (Res. 2000/4).

A consistent position has thus been established, recognising a coherent language (called "Romani", "Romany", or "Romanes"), and recognising the need to give it consideration especially within the education system.

2.2 State recognition: legislation and ratification of treaties

Romani has constitutional status in several European countries. The   of Macedonia, in its constitution of 1992, recognises Roma as one of the nationalities in the state, whereby the right of nationalities to make official use of their language and alphabet is also recognised. Macedonia was one of the first countries to sponsor a consultation on the codification of Romani, also in 1992, to adopt guidelines for a national written Standard, and to accept Romani as one of the languages of official government documents. Austria recognised Roma in 1993 as a minority in accordance with its Ethnic Minority Law, which foresees financial support for cultural activities and the right to use the minority language in interaction with officials. In 1998, an amendment was passed to the Law on Protection of Minorities of the Burgenland province, guaranteeing the particular group of Burgenland Roma additional school instruction in Romani (Romanes). The constitution of Finland gave Romanies (alongside Sami and "other groups") in 1995 the right to "maintain and develop their own language and culture". In addition, the Education Act was amended in 1999 to include Romani as one of the possible languages of instruction. The Hungarian constitution of 1997 recognises the rights of minorities to education in their native languages; Roma are recognised as a minority, though a larger proportion of Hungarian Roma in fact speak Hungarian as their first language.

Of the eighteen states that have ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, ten apply it to Romani: Austria, Croatia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, and Sweden. In many of these countries, however, concrete implementation of the Charter in respect of Romani is yet to be achieved. Croatia for example includes Romani in the list of minority languages, but in practice it does not implement recognition, claiming difficulties resulting from the fact that the language is not standardised, and that Romani pupils have difficulties learning Croatian. Hungary, too, includes Romani, but in its latest report on the implementation of the Charter, from 2002, it admits that concrete action is yet to be undertaken. The situation is similar in the Netherlands, which has a Romani-speaking population of only several thousand, and where formal recognition has not led to any practical measures in support of the language. Norway distinguishes in its report on the implementation of the Charter from May 2005 between "Romanes" (i.e. inflected Romani as spoken by a small population of several extended families belonging to the Lovara group), and "Romany", which it claims is spoken by a few hundred or a few thousand Travellers. The latter refers to the Romani-derived vocabulary used occasionally within Norwegian conversation (see above). Slovenia lists in its Charter report from June 2005 primarily Romani-language literary activities carried out independently by Romani non-governmental organisations, alongside general schooling measures aimed at the Romani population (which, however, do not take into consideration the Romani language). In Germany, most practical measures in support of Romani, including the provision of translators in court proceedings and other public offices, had existed at the local and regional levels even before ratification of the Charter; the privileges granted by the Charter, such as the freedom to use the language in local elected assemblies, have so far not been claimed.

It appears that among the signatories of the Charter, the most intensive governmental efforts to promote Romani have been carried out in Finland and in Austria, both countries with relatively small Romani populations. In both countries, the government has funded large-scale projects involving community representatives and experts in order to compose teaching materials and to train language teachers, supported Romani-language publications and, albeit to a limited extent, radio broadcasting, supported linguistic research and documentation of Romani, and enabled the adoption of Romani into the school curriculum at the local level. In Finland, a Romani Language Board has been set up, consisting of officials, linguists, and community representatives, whose task is to draft Romani language policy. In Sweden, the right to receive Romani-language instruction is guaranteed, and the government has supported the creation of some teaching materials, radio broadcasting, and the creation of a Romani Council to consult it on language and other policies relating to the

Romani minority. The strongest practical support for Romani within the education system is found in Romania, which has not ratified the treaty or granted Romani any constitutional recognition, but where a national Romani language curriculum was adopted in 1999, and has since received widescale implementation, through all levels, from pre-school to higher education (see below).

3.   Issues relating to codification and corpus development

3.1   Attempts to create a single 'Standard'

In historical perspective it is worth noting that successful efforts to codify Romani were made in the Soviet Union in the 1920s, coupled with the production of numerous literary, political, and educational texts, all in the North Russian dialect of Romani, in an adapted form of the Cyrillic script (see documentation on http://www.rombiblio.ru). Since the establishment of the International Romani Union in the early 1970s, the creation of a single Standard Romani has been on the agenda of at least a small circle of activists. None of the suggestions made, however, succeeded in gaining any wide basis of supporters. In 1990, delegates at a meeting of the IRU in Warsaw confirmed, for a trial period, an alphabet drafted by French language activist Marcel Cortiade. In the aftermath of the Warsaw meeting, much effort was put into further developing and disseminating this alphabet, along with a standardisation concept which included the creation of technical and political vocabulary, and a strategy which included the creation of a dictionary, a Romani encyclopaedia, and educational materials. Within a relatively short period of time, however, the concept was abandoned by most of the activists who had signed the Warsaw resolution. Its main success has been its imposition as a Standard by the Romanian Ministry of Education. Outside Romania, the concept is used by several individual writers in Albania and Macedonia. Its popular rejection is connected in part to its reliance on a set of abstract, metaphonemic symbols, such as {θ} to represent both /d/ and /t/ in the Romani nominal ending *-te/-de* (both written *-θe* in this system), {ʒ} to represent inter-dialectal variation between sounds, and more.

Noteworthy is also an attempt to create an artificial form of Romani for written purposes in Spain; this variety, called *Romanó-Kaló* by its authors, is a blend of Romani lexical roots and selected grammatical features, taken from various dialects and adapted to Spanish orthography and sometimes even grammatical rules. It has been in use since the early 1990s in a series of political publications by a Spanish Romani NGO.

3.2   Regional and local codification efforts

The bulk of Romani language publishing has a regional or local orientation, and lays no claim to becoming an international Standard. We therefore refer to the process as 'codification', to indicate the ambition that is demonstrated to create a written form of the language, but not to impose it in any global way, as a 'standard', on others. This kind of process faces essentially three challenges. The first is to design a writing system for the language. The choice of most symbols is straightforward, since almost all codification attempts employ the Roman alphabet. Problems arise with those sounds that are historically absent in Latin, and for which modern European languages tend to find diverse solutions, most notably the sounds represented by the English graphemes {sh, ch, j}, by French {j}, and the palatal pronunciation that is common in many central and eastern European languages, cf. Polish {ś, ć, ź}, or Czech {ď, ľ, ň}. In addition, Romani has aspirated sounds, which are generally represented as {ph, th, kh, čh}.

The second challenge is to identify the variety or dialect that is to be written. The choice here is, for almost all writers, also straightforward: they employ their own variety, which is usually the variety of the local or regional Romani community that constitutes their immediate target audience. Third, there is the challenge of finding the resources needed to produce, print and disseminate written work in Romani. So far, the bulk of literacy activities has been carried out within the Romani NGO sector, financed by grants from foundations, international organisations, and sometimes local authorities and governments. Although there are exceptions, most products have been distributed free of charge within a rather closed network of contacts.

One of the earliest examples of regional codification of Romani was the production of texts in Czechoslovakia in 1968, in the East Slovak variety of Romani, using an alphabet based on that of Czech, featuring the diacritics {š, č, ž, ď, ľ, ň, ť}. The concept was revived in the early 1990s and is now used in numerous Romani-language publications, in print and on the internet, including media, educational and literary productions, in both the Czech and Slovak Republics. In Macedonia, a writing system based on the Roman script, using either the Arli or Džambazi (Gurbet) variety of Romani, was propagated in the 1970s in a manuscript by Jusuf & Kepeski, later published as a book in 1980. A related concept was adopted by the 1992 Romani Language Standardisation Conference sponsored by the Macedonian government, and is in use today. In neighbouring Serbia, a closely related system is used, employing the Roman script with diacritics {š, č, ž, ć, đ}, and based largely on the Gurbet dialect. In Hungary, Romani-language publications use the Lovari dialect and a writing system which, unlike Hungarian, uses the combinations {sh ch zh} and avoids indication of vowel length, while on the other hand Hungarian symbols for palatals {ny gy

ty} are included. In Finland, the Finnish or Kaale dialect of Romani is used as a written language, based on an alphabet designed in the early 1970s, and inspired primarily by the use of diacritics {š, č, ž} in international academic transliteration conventions. The same idea is behind the choice of a somewhat similar graphemic representation for texts in the Kelderash-dialect, produced in Sweden in the 1980s-1990s, and for materials in the Lovari dialect, produced in Norway in the mid-1990s. In Bulgaria, a similar system, using the Roman rather than Cyrillic script, has been in use by some authors, though the majority now seem to be moving toward a system that avoids diacritics, using instead the grapheme combinations {sh, ch, zh}. The characteristic feature of the Bulgarian writing system for Romani is the presence of /w/, representing a central vowel. Writers in Bulgaria choose a variety of dialects, which is characteristic of the considerable dialectal variation of Romani in this country, though the most common choices are the Erli dialect of the Sofia region, and the so-called 'Drindari'-type dialect spoken in the central regions of Bulgaria.

In Austria, the Burgenland Romani variety was codified by a team of linguists from Graz University in cooperation with community representatives, using a German writing system, thus {sch, tsch, dsch} and so on, while other varieties, such as those of the Lovara, Kelderash, and Arlija, tend to use the international academic conventions. Apart from a handful of writers in Albania and Macedonia, only the Ministry of Education in Romania has adopted the Cortiade (Warsaw 1990) writing system, which it uses consistently for Romani in numerous school textbooks, readers, and other educational material, including at university level. Independent authors writing Romani in Romania, however, use their own systems, often a blend between the Romanian writing system and features of the international academic transliteration conventions. The most commonly used dialect in Romani publication in Romania is related to the Kelderash and other so-called 'Vlax' dialects of Romani.

On the whole, then, it is possible to make the following generalisations about the writing systems used for Romani: They tend to constitute a mixture of international writing conventions, sometimes combined with selected features of the alphabets of the respective national languages. As far as the international conventions are concerned, there are two main tendencies. The first is to use the diacritics {č, š, ž} along with other conventions, such as values of {x, j, ph, th, kh}. These derive, after all, from a consistent and more or less uniform system of transliteration which is commonly used for the various dialects of Romani in Romani linguistics, as well as in numerous applied publications such as grammars and dictionaries, including the multi-dialectal online Romani lexicon Romlex (http://romani.kfunigraz.ac.at/romlex/). The second option is to avoid diacritics, and to use the grapheme combinations {sh, ch, zh} instead. This is the preferred option in most email

communication, due to difficulties in the transmission of diacritics in some applications. It is widespread in Hungary and recently also in Bulgaria, as well as in the individual use of authors and translators (and appears to be the preferred option for translators working for international organisations, such as the Council of Europe or OSCE, or international NGOs, such as ERRC).

3.3   Flexibility as a strategy, pluralism as a policy

The concept of language standardisation, embraced by the International Romani Union in its early days, regarded written Romani language as a symbol of political unity, but also as a token of loyalty to a centralised policy of cultural emancipation. This concept has failed to win popular support among Romani language and culture activists and writers in the communities. This rejection was inevitable, for several reasons. Romani society has traditionally lacked any rigid hierarchical social structure, and there is therefore no dominant class, and so also no dominant form of speech that is acceptable to all. The geographical dispersion of Romani communities means that the propagation of a standard cannot be controlled by imposing sanctions or measures of exclusion on those who do not use it, and the absence of resources means that few incentives can be given in order to attract users. On the other hand, Romani language activists and educators value in the first instance the support of their immediate communities, and it is they who constitute their target audience. It is noteworthy however that although political unity (in the sense of a joint pursuit of issues of common concern) is on the agenda of most associations and initiatives, most do not regard linguistic diversity as an obstacle to unity.

Pluralism thus represents the overwhelming trend on the ground, with written Romani showing regional codification with some international orientation. No unification effort will succeed in bringing dozens or even hundreds of authors and thousands of other users of written Romani under the control of one, single authority. And, conversely, no language policy that ignores or tries to bypass these pioneers of written Romani will have a chance to succeed.

A new generation of Romani intellectuals is exposed to various forms of the language, both oral and written, through encounters with other Roma at international conferences, through internships and training seminars in the NGO domain, and through regular email communication and text messaging. It is especially via the latter two media that writing, including trans-national correspondence, has acquired a new position in the daily communication patterns of individuals. This generation can accept, comprehend and make creative use of different forms and varieties of the Romani language. For the younger generation especially, the future of any Romani-language movement, flexibility in respect of

the written language is supported by their practical experience as composers of text-messages and users of email and chat-rooms, all of which are media that stress that the practical reward in communication is being understood, rather than adhering to a fixed norm. New technologies support this trend: It is easy to search and replace one spelling convention by another in electronic texts in order to adapt a text to a different audience or setting. The Romlex online translator even incorporates an approximation algorithm that allows the user to look up words in a spelling form that is different from the one displayed by the authors of the facility – an impossibility in any printed dictionary.

As expressed recently in a statement by the European Roma and Traveller Forum, centralised standardisation can therefore no longer be a pre-condition for the allocation of resources in support of the Romani language. Instead, the urgent task on the agenda is to embrace a policy of linguistic pluralism which allows users flexibility and the freedom to experiment with local solutions as far as choice of a variety and writing conventions are concerned.

4.   Romani in the public space
4.1   Emblematic use in publications

Many uses of Romani in writing do not actually have an audience of readers, in the literal sense of the word. Rather, they are intended to make a point by manifesting that it is possible to produce written culture in the language, or are used to flag autonomous spaces of which the Roma as an ethnic group avail themselves. The most obvious example are perhaps the Romani-language titles of journals and magazines, the content of which appears in the state language, rather than in Romani, and the titles of CD sleeves or those of the Romani songs which they contain. Nonetheless, the importance of the emblematic function of such writing should not be underestimated. First, even token titles of this kind demand some creativity as far as the choice of written representation of the oral word is concerned. Thus they demonstrate that written Romani is in principle achievable. Bible translations and literary translations constitute an even more intensive attempt at elevating the status of the language. Despite the fact that their audience of readers is very small, they demonstrate the ability-in-principle of Romani to function as an all-purpose language and to extend its uses to the written public domain of culture, worship, and leisure. Romani-language literary productions, including original short stories and poetry, have appeared in the past 15 years in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom. Printed collections of oral folklore have appeared in Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, and

Ukraine. Probably the largest number of Romani-langauge literary publications appeared in recent years in Austria, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.

4.3   International and public communication in Romani

Over the past decade and a half, Romani has undergone a transformation from a language used primarily in private, with relations and friends, to a language of public debate and public negotiation. At numerous international conferences and events that are held every month across Europe, hundreds of Romani participants engage in oral face-to-face communication with Roma from other parts of Europe. This new experience has helped secure the status of Romani as a language of public address and international encounters. Such face-to-face semi-formal communication among strangers from different countries is then continued in the form of semi-formal written communication, by thousands of users of email in Romani, and hundreds of subscribers to Romani-language email debating lists, and hundreds more to Romani-language chatrooms. In these fora, written exchange in Romani is spontaneous and not controlled by any normative constraints. It is characterised by strategies of trial and error and mutual accommodation of users to the choice of words, style, and spelling conventions of others, offering a communication-driven, practical codification channel, rather than a top-to-bottom, symbolic concept.

4.4   Romani in the education system and educational material in Romani

Educational material, including readers/primers introducing children to the respective Romani writing system and to short tales and poems, are one of the principal areas of focus of Romani writers and language activists, often in collaboration with linguists and education specialists. Most educational productions are sponsored through grants from international foundations, which are given to NGOs as well as to individuals. In some cases, governments and higher education institutes have sponsored such materials as well. Romania remains in the lead in the systematic creation of Romani-language teaching materials; its Ministry of Education has commissioned numerous works for all school levels, many of them bilingual. Other governments that have made considerable investments in the production of Romani-language educational materials are those of Austria, Finland, and Sweden, and more recently also Bulgaria. Romani teaching materials have also been produced, largely through local initiative, in the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Macedonia, Serbia, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom.

Another matter entirely is the implementation of these materials in the education system. Regular inclusion of Romani into the curriculum is reported only from Romania, where it is by far the most systematic, with reportedly over 25,000 children enrolled in

Romani language classes at 300 different schools over the past few years; from Sweden, Finland, and the Austrian Burgenland district. It appears that elsewhere in Europe, introduction of Romani into the classroom is at best sporadic, experimental, and dependent on local initiative. In Hamburg, for example, the local authorities have made provisions for Romani classes, but teachers are left to compile their own teaching materials, with no professional advice or guidance. In both the Czech and Slovak Republics, only a single school, respectively, is reported to teach Romani regularly. Reports from Hungary are contradictory, but none conveys a picture of any regularity in the use of Romani in the classroom. In Bulgaria, the Ministry of Education has appointed a coordinator for Romani-language curriculum, though the main challenge is currently to motivate teachers to initiate Romani classes in their individual schools, and to motivate parents to demand and to support such classes. In Macedonia, teachers in classes with an overwhelming Romani majority have reported often using Romani as a medium of casual communication in the classroom, while documentation on any formal consideration in the curriculum is lacking.

As a rule, Romani is at best offered as a subject, and it is never a language of instruction. But even as a subject, with the exception of Romania, there appears to be no curriculum planning and no clear setting of learning targets or even a vision of learning outcomes. In many locations it is not clear, for instance, whether Romani language classes are intended to teach Romani as a foreign language, to familiarise native speakers with an analytical approach to the grammar of the language, to train speakers in writing skills in Romani, or simply to flag the presence of the language within the institutional framework of the school – which latter seems to be the most common goal.

The study of Romani is offered in some countries at the level of higher education, though here too, practice differs considerably. Only Romania (Bucharest University) offers a degree course which trains teachers to implement the Romani-language school curriculum. This is enabled through the close link between the coordination of the Romani school curriculum within the Education Ministry, and the design and running of the university degree. A degree in Romani Studies ('Romology') is also offered at Charles University, Prague, the Czech Republic. Practical courses in Romani language are offered in addition at the universities of Pécs in Hungary, Novi Sad in Serbia, and at the Sorbonne in Paris, France. Courses on Romani linguistics have been offered in recent years at the discretion of individual lecturers and researchers, rather than as part of a fixed degree programme, at the universities of Graz (Austria), Manchester (United Kingdom), Amsterdam (the Netherlands), Barcelona (Spain), Aarhus (Denmark), and Shumen (Bulgaria). Since 1990, at least 7 PhD theses specialising in Romani language and linguistics have been completed, all at different universities. It is estimated that at the time of compiling the present report, at

least 8-10 PhD theses specialising in Romani linguistics are in preparation, in at least five different universities across Europe. Research grants in support of university-based research on the Romani language have been awarded during the past few years by national research councils in the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, and Finland, with further support coming from governments and private foundations.

4.5   Romani-language media (oral and written)

Perhaps the best example of the appearance of Romani in the public sphere in recent years is the expansion of Romani media. Printed Romani journals were part of the identity markers of Romani cultural and political NGOs, even before 1990, and their production has since expanded. There are currently at least 50 periodicals which appear on a regular basis, either entirely in Romani or, more commonly, in a bilingual format. They tend to report on events that are of concern to the local community, and are usually distributed free of charge, sponsored by grants given to NGOs. There is, as far was we can ascertain, at present no constituency of paying subscribers to any Romani-language medium. Nonetheless, while still a luxury in this respect, Romani-language media have in recent years turned from largely emblematic enterprises to actual sources of information. Noteworthy is the presence of several web-based journals in Romani (some running a Romani edition parallel to editions in other languages), which include weekly and even daily updates, and which are connected to a broad information network that supplies news from Romani communities around Europe. These, by contrast to the more traditional newsletters, are no longer just local productions. They are easily accessible to the young generation of activists and intellectuals who have web-access, they report on events all over Europe, and although they tend to follow the patterns described above and choose a local dialect and writing system, quite often they can be seen to incorporate contributions from other countries, which arrive, electronically, in other dialects and in other writing conventions, and are published unedited – a display of flexibility and linguistic pluralism at work. Among the more stable web-based enterprises are Rrommedia (www.romedia.net), Romano Vodi (www.romea.cz), Dženo organisation (www.dzeno.cz), and Romaweb (www.romaweb.hu).

Broadcasting in Romani has also expanded, though it is largely limited to local productions, and a small number of hours. Macedonia is perhaps the country with the most intensively-run Romani radio and television broadcasts, reporting mainly on local cultural events. State-run radio in Hungary broadcasts a daily 2-hour programme in Romani, and a weekly television programme. News bulletins in Romani are run by the state radio in Finland, and a Romani programme is produced in Berlin by a local station, in cooperation with state-run Deutsche Welle. Other radio and television broadcasts appear to be irregular,

though many programmes are available for downloading on the internet, and so accessible at the international level.

4.6   Reference works on Romani

The NGO sector has produced numerous amateur descriptions of Romani grammar as well as dictionaries over the past few years. Despite the lack of scientific basis in many such works, they testify to a growing academic interest in Romani language structures, and so to growing awareness that Romani can and should be a subject of investigation and study. Like other Romani-language publications, these reference works are usually produced by grants to NGOs and individual authors, and lack a consumer market. The list of scientific works on the Romani language is too long to be included here; a recent bibliography of works (books and articles) on Romani linguistics compiled by Peter Bakker and Yaron Matras, covering the past century, includes well over 1,000 titles. Specialist books and articles produced over the past 15 years are usually distributed by academic publishers to an audience of university libraries and specialists, and academic databases and library catalogues are likely to list them, or a selection.

5. Outlook

• The present report makes clear that Romani has entered the public sphere; it is present in international exchanges, both oral and in writing, in media, and in education. There are Romani-language cultural and literary productions, and numerous language reference works.

• Romani literacy is characterised by pluralism in the choice of variety as well as in the choice of writing system, though a strong tendency toward mutual compatibility of writing systems can be detected, which strengthens the potential for exchange and for widescale international accessibility of printed material.

• A young generation of Romani intellectuals and activists have engaged in the spontaneous and creative use of written Romani, supported by new technologies and guided by norms that allow more flexibility and creativity in writing; this generation shows a willingness to embrace linguistic pluralism.

• It is clear, therefore, that on the whole, and baring few exceptions, neither community attitudes nor the absence of a uniform standard constitute any serious obstacles to the promotion and use of Romani in the public sphere.

• Governments have begun to acknowledge the existence of a Romani language, and have recognised a duty to protect and promote it. In some countries, concrete measures have indeed been implemented, in collaboration with community representatives and experts. On

the whole, however, most initiatives to promote Romani in culture, media, and education, originate in NGOs. Romani is still largely absent from the state-run education system.

•   Governments and multilateral organisations are urged to contemplate the creation of a European Romani Language Network, which will assist local authorities and governments to train Romani language teachers and translators, and to prepare a pool of educational resources in the Romani language, along with strategies to adapt such materials to local needs (in both form and content). Such a network should involve Romani language activists, representatives of the Roma at the European level, and specialist linguists/experts.

Appendix 1: Comparison of writing conventions for Romani in some European countries

Aca-demic trans-literation	Email communi-cation	Bul-garia	Czech/Slovak Rep.	Mace-donia	Hungary	Finland	Sweden	Romania
a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a
b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b	b
c	ts	ts	c	c	c	c	c	c / ç
č	ch	ch	č	č	ch	č	č	ć
čh	ch	chh	čh	čh		čh	čh	ś
d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d	d / θ
dj	dy		ď		gy		dj	ď˘
e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e	e
f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f	f
g	g	g	g	g	g	g	g	g / q
h	h	h	h	h	h	h	h	h / ç
x	x	x	ch	h	x	x, ȟ	x	x
i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i	i
dž	j, dzh	dzh	dž	dž		dž	dž	ʒ
k	k	k	k	k	k	k	k	k / q
kh	kh	kh	kh	kh	kh	kh	kh	kh
l	l	l	l	l	l	l	l	l
m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n
nj	ny		ň		ny		nj	n˘
p	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	p
ph	ph	ph	ph	ph	ph	ph	ph	ph
r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r
ř	rr						rr	rr
s	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	s / ç
š	sh	sh	š	š	sh	š	š	ś
t	t	t	t	t	t	t	t	t / θ
th	th	th	th	th	th	th	th	th
tj	ty		ť		ty		tj	ť˘
u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u	u
v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
ə	e	w	y					ä
j	y, j	y	j	j	j	j	j	j
z	z	z	z	z	z	z	z	z
ž	zh	zh	ž	ž	zh	ž	ž	ź

Appendix 2: Selection of Romani-language web resources and internet media

http://www.romnet.hu/hirek/roma0311142.html

http://www.dzeno.cz/?r_id=29

http://www.dromedu.org/romavers.htm

http://www.romanohangos.cekit.cz/

http://romea.cz/romanes/index.php

http://www.rrominterpress.org.yu/html/Romano%20Them-rom.html

http://www.romano-centro.org/projekte_ro.html

http://www.rromanitv.com/

http://tvsutel.s5.com/panchtodi.htm

http://perso.wanadoo.fr/balval/WRRishi/WRRishiVDGK_Rom.htm

http://www.radio021.co.yu/multiradio/vesti.php?em=Vesti&je=Romski

http://www.rrommedia.net/romani/

http://www.multikulti.de/de/main/c/show.phtml?ID=84

http://lists.errc.org/rr_nr4_2001/romani1.shtml

http://www.susesonnenschein.de/

http://www.okradio.co.yu/ziveti_zajedno_roma.php

http://www.vurdon.it/romani.htm

http://web.tiscali.it/concorsoamicorom/romani.htm

http://www.euromnet.com/rom/start.html