

ERIO ACTIVITIES

ERIO partakes in Forum of the Platform for Intercultural Europe

On June 8th, ERIO participated in the forum “The Distinctive Contribution of the Arts to Intercultural Dialogue. A View from and on the Arts” organized by the Platform for Intercultural Europe. The main topics of the morning session were the role of arts in intercultural action and outside expectations of the arts. The importance of arts as a bridge-building and informative tool was stressed. Thereafter, participants joined discussion groups where they were encouraged to reflect on how arts can enable intercultural dialogue as well as risks and limitations of the arts in intercultural dialogue. In the afternoon session, the presentations took academic and journalistic approaches to the topic, where the importance of different identities in intercultural dialogue was emphasized. This was followed by the first General Assembly of Members of the Platform for Intercultural Europe in which the work plan, budget and membership fee were presented and adopted. Candidates to the steering group of the Platform presented themselves followed by the election of seven members, including ERIO.

EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

EU Council adopts conclusions on Roma

The Council of the European Union (in its Social Affairs composition) invites Member States and the European Commission, in close cooperation, and in accordance with their respective competences:

11. to take into account the Common Basic Principles, where appropriate, when designing and implementing policies to promote the full inclusion of the Roma, as well as when designing and implementing policies to defend fundamental rights, uphold gender equality, combat discrimination, poverty and social exclusion, and ensure access to education, housing, health, employment, social services, justice, sports and culture, and also in the EU's relations with third countries;

12. to make use of the integrated European platform for Roma inclusion for the exchange of good practice and experience between the Member States and with those countries with a perspective of joining the EU, and in the cooperation between all parties and international organisations concerned by Roma issues;

13. to continue the work on the integrated European platform for Roma inclusion, where appropriate, including consideration of the possibility of further developing its structure;

Full text available on: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/108377.pdf

CoE: Third report on Ukraine on minorities protection

07/05/2009 - The processes of democratization of the Ukrainian society have opened wide opportunities and stirred up the constructive forces among Roma communities that can effectively influence the solution of Roma problems. It's possible to confirm that recently the situation of Roma in Ukraine has begun to change for the better. According to data as of January 1, 2009 there are 88 Roma organizations registered in Ukraine. Two of them function at the national level

- the Union of organizations "Congress of Roma of Ukraine" (chairman P.GRYGORYCHENKO) and Ukrainian organization "Centre of Consolidation and Protection of Roma Rights" (M.KONDENKO). The International Roma organization "Ketane" (Y.IVANENKO) operates at the international level. Other organizations have regional or local status. The activity of Roma organizations is mainly focused on the revival and promotion of Roma language, culture, traditions and customs; some organizations are engaged in activities on the protection of Roma rights. Unfortunately, there is no coordination and cooperation among Roma organizations. However, the positive moment is willingness and readiness of the Roma community to integrate into Ukrainian society while preserving and developing their national identity.

Read more on http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/3_FCNMdocs/PDF_3rd_SR_Ukraine_en.pdf (pages 62-64)

ROMA NEWS FROM AROUND EUROPE

Xenophobia: post-communist societies remain acutely susceptible to racism

One autumn evening almost 12 years ago, young Dusan Jovanovic left his home in central Belgrade to buy a fizzy drink. He never made it to the shop. His father found the teenager's lifeless body outside his home just minutes later, mauled to death by a group of skinheads. Dusan became Serbia's first Rom known to have been slain in a racially motivated attack. Since his killing, assaults on ethnic minorities, particularly Roma -- one of the most victimized groups in Serbia and indeed Europe -- have continued unabated. "They attacked me for no reason and brutally beat me up. I fell to the ground," a Romany man who was attacked by strangers in the streets of Belgrade last year tells RFE/RL's Balkan Service. "I was barely able to walk back home." Serbia is not alone. Over the past decade, countries of the former communist bloc have provided fertile soil for ultranationalism and racial violence.

Full article on: http://www.rferl.org/content/Postcommunist_Societies_Remain_Acutely_Susceptible_To_Racism/1748366.html

Spain: Catalan Roma Federation organizes workshop on Participation of Roma

The 28th and 29th of May, FAGIC - Federation of Roma Associations of Catalonia - organized a workshop on Roma Participation, as part of a European project -- "Enhancing Roma Participation in Europe", coordinated by ERIO and financed by Education, Audiovisual and Cultural Executive Agency of the European Commission. The meeting took place in Barcelona and was attended by Roma associations from several autonomous provinces of Spain as well as members of the National Council for the Roma. The meeting aimed at discussing good practices and recommendations to improve Roma participation in Spain. Four workgroups discussed four main themes within the context of social and political participation: Social and Political Participation, Education and Social Participation; Roma Immigration and Social Participation, and European Participation of Roma. It was concluded that there is a low rate of participation among Roma people in Spain in several political and social matters, especially in terms of decision-making on Roma related matters. Therefore, it was agreed that there is a need to mobilize the Roma people in order to create a unified, national organization with a democratic nature, which represents the whole Roma community. Based on the recommendations and conclusions of the meeting, FAGIC will contribute to the project with a report on Roma participation in Spain as well as organize a National Panel, which will take place in Barcelona the 29th of June. This meeting will gather policy makers, national associations, activists and stakeholders, aiming at discussing the recommendations for enhancing Roma participation in Spain.

Germany: officials perplexed about new Gypsy arrivals

Berlin, 05/06/09 - Berlin authorities are puzzled. A group of Roma families from Romania have arrived and appear intent on staying, despite only having limited tourist visas. The conundrum could be a foretaste of immigration riddles to come. "It's going good here," said a young Roma woman to SPIEGEL ONLINE earlier this week, pushing a stroller through Spandau. She wore an ankle-length dress, a faded sports jacket, slippers and a black headscarf. How long might she stay? She shrugged her shoulders. Why did she come to Germany? She moved her hand to her mouth to indicate hunger. Then she asked for money, and pushed her stroller, containing a small boy, in the direction of a subway station. For over two weeks a group of some 80 Roma has befuddled Berlin authorities by settling in a park, an artists' squat, a Catholic church and now public housing in Spandau. The Romanian Gypsies have asked for jobs and asylum. But no city department so far has taken responsibility for them, and one Green politician in Berlin, Volker Ratzmann, has called the official confusion "an embarrassing ping-pong game between the (Berlin) Senate and local districts." The Romas' public housing home in Spandau is little more than a stop-gap measure. Because Romania is part of the European Union, the immigrants have little chance of winning asylum. But because Germany has not yet completely opened its borders to all EU members, the Roma are in Germany on 90-day tourist visas and cannot stay indefinitely. Borderless travel, though, also means that it isn't entirely clear when they entered the country. "They would be happy to stay here and receive services from the state," said Anja Wollny, spokeswoman for the Berlin Senate's Integration, Labor and Social Administration. "For instance, a home."

Source: <http://euronews.us/?p=1862>

Czech Radio's Roma programme chief flees to Canada

Prague, 04/06/09 - Czech Radio said Wednesday the head of its programme for the Roma minority had followed in the steps of other Gypsies and asked for asylum in Canada over "rude attacks" on her family. "We have decided to ask for asylum... because of constant attacks on my family and the increasingly radical society," the 46-year-old Anna Polakova wrote her employer in an email. Hana Hikelova, head of the public radio's news services, told AFP the journalist left the Czech Republic after her son was attacked by four skinheads and her husband was blackmailed. Polakova, who was in charge of a programme aimed specifically at the 300,000-strong Czech Roma community, added that she and six family members had applied for asylum at the Toronto airport. Canada became a popular destination for Roma refugees, claiming discrimination and attacks from extremists in the Czech Republic, after it lifted the visa duty for Czechs in 2007. In the first quarter of this year, 653 Czechs applied for asylum in Canada, according to data from the Canadian embassy in Prague, following 853 applications in 2008. The influx led Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper to warn of possibly reintroducing the visa duty during his visit to Prague a month ago. The Roma minority held a rally early last month following an arson attack on a Roma-inhabited house in April, which injured a young couple and left a two-year-old girl struggling for life with burns over 80 percent of her body.

Source: http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20090603/wl_canada_afp/czechcanadaracismromamedia_20090603180844

UK: House of Lords date for singer who honed skills in Burbage

London, 05/06/09 - A Romany girl who honed her vocal skills at the Rosevale Park Travellers' site on the edge of Burbage has sung at the House of Lords. Olivia Ayres, 13, performed her favourite song during the official opening of National Gypsy Roma Traveller History month -

and apparently she blew the crowd away. Olivia was nominated by her aunt Sharon Kefford, who lives on Rosevale Park. Sharon said: "She is just a lovely Traveller girl, and she is representing her people. I couldn't think of anyone better, and she truly did us proud." After her performance of LeAnn Rimes hit Blue, Olivia said: "It was very good, really exciting. "I was a bit nervous, and it was quite scary, but I really enjoyed it. "Everyone was clapping at the end - and one lady even came up to me and asked me to take part in a singing competition because she was quite impressed." A few weeks ago Olivia, from Bulkington, had no idea she would be performing. But Sharon, who has watched her sing since she was a toddler, decided it would be too good an opportunity to miss, and put her forward. "She's sung since she was a little girl, with my girls, other family and friends," Sharon said.

Full article on: http://www.hinckleytimes.net/news-in-hinckley/tm_headline=house-of-lords-date-for-singer-who-honed-skills-in-burbage&method=full&objectid=23797042&siteid=105367-name_page.html

UK: Barton Travellers consultation

London, 05/09/09 - A new consultation on permanent Travellers' sites, focusing on the views of Travellers in Barton-Upon-Humber, is set to be launched in July. The six-week probe follows earlier consultations which narrowed possible sites down to a short list of Caistor Road in Barton-Upon-Humber and Normanby Road in Scunthorpe. The consultation will look to find out if the families want to live in Barton and how far out of the town they would consider living on alternative sites. Councillor Mick Grant said: "It is important that we consider all views and that includes Travellers. We already have families living in Barton, so it is only right that we ask them what they think. "It is part of our ongoing work to find the right location. If any landowner has any land that might be suitable for us to consider, I'd be very interested to hear from them. "It is without a doubt a difficult task choosing the right site. There are always people who don't want Travellers on their doorstep. But we must consider that they have rights too, just like anyone else. "They will pay rent and council tax, so it's not as though they will be living there for free. "It is far better to have properly managed and secure sites in place, than for them to camp illegally, which is what they are doing now. That way we maintain control."

Source: <http://www.thissscunthorpe.co.uk/news/Baton-gypsies-travellers-consultation/article-1055817-detail/article.html>

Hungary's far right party Jobbik enters European Parliament

Budapest, 08/06/09 - Hungary's main far-right party, accused by rights groups of spreading anti-Semitic views and hatred towards the country's up to 800,000 Gypsies, known as Roma, has received three seats in the European Parliament, official results showed. The far-right Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik) got over 15 percent of the ballots, much better than expected. The main center right opposition party Fidesz was seen gaining 14 seats. Hungary's ruling Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) was the big loser, holding on to just four seats, amid public anger over the country's deepest recession in decades, results showed. The tiny conservative Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) managed to reserve one seat in the 736-member European Parliament. At Jobbik's campaign headquarters in Budapest shouts of "Hungary, Hungary" and "Hungary belongs to Hungarians" reverberated throughout the room after the results were announced. Jobbik President Gábor Vona told supporters his party had been feeling like "Palestine being bombed by Israel," but that Jobbik managed to prevail. He personally thanked Jobbik's paramilitary wing Magyar Gárda, or Hungarian Guard, for playing a role in his party's victory. Wearing uniforms and waving flags used by Hungary's pro-nazi regime, Magyar Gárda recruits have been marching through Roma villages and settlements. The Budapest based European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), a major advocacy group, has said that groups such as Jobbik's Magyar Gárda

contributed to an atmosphere of hatred in Hungary where at least 7 Roma were killed in recent attacks.

Full article on: <http://www.worthynews.com/5820-breaking-news-hungarys-far-right-party-enters-european-parliament>

Hungary: Roma community member Livia Járóka defends her EP seat

Livia Járóka, a Roma MEP from Hungary, will remain at the EP. Her FIDESZ party won 56.37 % of the vote in the EP elections. She will evidently be the only Roma MEP for the 2009 – 2014 session. During the last session the Roma had two MEPs, Járóka and another MEP from Hungary, Viktória Mohácsi. Járóka was the second-ever MEP of Roma origin in history. The very first was Juan de Dios Ramirez-Heredia, a Spanish Rom who was an MEP from 1994 - 1999. In Hungary, the MCF Roma movement, bringing together several Roma organizations, did not succeed in the polls. They received 13 440 votes, or 0.47 %. The movement was striving for the votes of the 500 000 – 600 000 Hungarian Roma (Hungary has 10 million inhabitants), one of the largest Roma communities in Europe.

Source: http://www.romea.cz/english/index.php?id=detail&detail=2007_1240

Bosnia: law tying candidacy to ethnicity is contested

Sarajevo, 05/06/09 - A Bosnian Jew and an ethnic Roma have appealed to the European Court of Human Rights to overturn laws that prevent ethnic minorities from running for president. Under the Dayton peace agreement that ended the Bosnian war in 1995, only Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats may run for the office. Minorities and those from ethnically mixed marriages also do not have the right to run for the upper house of Parliament. Jakob Finci, head of the Jewish community and Bosnia's ambassador to Switzerland, and Dervo Sejdic, a member of the Roma Council of Bosnia, say the Constitution violates the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as other international laws. "I think it's high time to step away from ethnic patterns that were necessary to stop the war," Mr. Finci said. "It's time for Bosnia to enter its European phase." The court is expected to issue its ruling in September.

Source: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/06/world/europe/06briefs-Bosnia.html?_r=1

Canada: Roma refugees play waiting game in quest for 'a better life'

As the Bohemians took to the soccer pitch before their fifth game of the season on Saturday, coach Tibor Lukacs pointed at them from the sidelines, "These guys are the real European Union," he said. This young team, composed of Roma refugees from the Czech Republic who have arrived in Canada since 2008, symbolize the true spirit of the EU because their people are borderless, he said. The Roma are scattered across Europe, where they say they face segregation, discrimination and often violent attacks. These cases are increasing with the rise of neo-Nazi groups and nationalist political parties with paramilitary branches composed of young men from the countryside. The FC Bohemian jerseys are blue and green, the quintessential Roma colours. Mr. Lukacs explained by pointing to the sky and then to the grassy ground of the Hamilton first division, senior league soccer field. "It's not political sh--, you know. It's because we don't have anything," he said.

Full article on: <http://www.nationalpost.com/news/story.html?id=1673170>

EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Debate and photo exhibition on Roma at European Economic and Social Committee

The EESC and its President Mario Sepi organised a multidisciplinary event on the integration of the Roma on Wednesday 10 June 2009. The event opened with the photo exhibition /Roms/ by the Swiss photographer Yves Leresche. This was followed by a debate on "Integration of minorities: The Roma" and the contribution of the European Economic and Social Committee*. The purpose of the event is to give EU officials, civil society representatives and wider EU audiences a special opportunity to learn about the impact of selected EESC opinions on European, and in particular Roma, integration. The event has brought together several actors whose experience and involvement in Roma integration has been crucial in different sectors of society. The EESC and Sepi would also like to provide further concrete examples of how culture - as a belief system based on shared values - plays an essential role in communicating highly relevant European issues and raising awareness of the social condition of the Roma in Europe.

UK: Gypsy artists are coming to town

London, 29/05/09 - Top Gypsy artists are coming to Doncaster to mark the second national Gypsy Roma Traveller History month. The Baro Ziro Big Time Festival will be running for a week in June as part of the Hothouse arts programme, and will take place at three venues across the borough - including a traditional circus tent in Chequer Road's Arts Park. The main marquee line-up will feature entertainment from world music chart-toppers, KAL, Czech Eurovision entry Gypsy CZ and the rarely seen Traveller music legend Ambrose Coop and Family. There will be tales of life on the road with the UK's leading Traveller storyteller, Richard O'Neill, an evening of performance, tunes and stories directed by the internationally acclaimed theatre director Alan Lyddiard, and a special screening of Shane Meadows' iconic film King of the Gypsies. The gallery at The Point, on South Parade, will play host to the creation of an installation by renowned British Traveller artists Delaine and Damian Le Bas, and British Traveller photographer Patricia Knight will bring her exhibition to Cusworth Hall. Baro Ziro runs from Saturday June 13 to Saturday June 20. Tickets are available from the Doncaster Civic Theatre box office on 01302 342349

Source: <http://www.gypsygirlpress.net/gypsynews/2009/06/gypsy-artists-are-coming-to-town.html>

Venice Biennale: The Perpetual Gypsy Pavillon will be officially launched

Venice, 07/06/09 - The launch of the Perpetual Gypsy Pavilion is a response to a twofold crisis. While 2007 saw the acclaimed first Roma Pavilion in Venice (<http://www.romapavilion.org>), the planned Roma Pavilion in 2009 was canceled at very short notice. This highly unfortunate situation is made all the more acute by the fact that in 2009, the Venice Biennale is taking place amid extreme violations of the human rights of Romani People (Gypsies) in Italy and in other European countries. The Perpetual Gypsy Pavilion is an immediate, yet long-term response to this situation. It is a mobile, that is, a traveling pavilion, inaugurated at the Venice Biennale 2009. The first Residence of the post-launch Gypsy Pavilion - with its own spaces, buildings, artists, curators and concepts - is already planned for HELSINKI Suomenlinna-Sveaborg (The Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art - NIFCA's former location). It will take place in the context of a new artistic format: an Arts Assembly. The second Residence will take place in BELGRADE. More Gypsy Pavilions are to follow in the lead-up to the Venice Biennale 2011. The artists of the Perpetual Gypsy Pavilion will include the leading representatives of Roma, Romanichal, Sinti, Kale, Traveller, Manush, Romanisael (some of the related Gypsy-Romani cul-

tures and subgroups) and other Gypsy artists. Several renowned artists, thinkers, curators, public figures and national pavilions have already declared their solidarity and offered their support to the Pavilion. See the growing lists by going to our website, where there are lists of Supporters as well as Petitions and links to our newly launched Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=9417386654>. Please join to express your solidarity and receive news about the Gypsy Pavilions 2009-2011. <http://www.PERPETUALPAVILION.org>

Full article on: <http://www.e-flux.com/shows/view/6865>

Austria: Gypsy film festival kicks off in Salzburg

Vienna — A Roma and Sinti film festival opens Tuesday in the Austrian town of Salzburg, as part of an EU-wide project to raise awareness about the large Gypsy population of Europe. A total 14 films from Romania, Kosovo, Serbia, Israel and the United States will be screened until Friday, depicting the culture and everyday life of Roma and Sinti, the largest minority in Europe with an estimated population of between 10 and 12 million. Ironically, only one of the films was directed by a Roma: "A Gypsy in the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party" by Ludmila Zhivkova of Bulgaria. The festival, funded by the town and province of Salzburg, as well as the European Union and World Bank, is part of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, an EU project to improve living conditions for Gypsies. Concerts are also planned during the festival, and a commemoration is due to be held for 300 Salzburg Gypsies, deported and killed by the Nazis during World War II.

Source: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5j1atUmTmBzZSrgVX8gBAH5xJuqYg>

Czech Republic: energy and emotion on display at Prague Romany Festival

PRAGUE -- It's been a tough year for the Roma. In countries across Europe, including the Czech Republic, there is growing hostility to Romany communities. Prague's 11th annual celebration of Romany art and culture, however, didn't miss a beat. The Khamoro festival -- that's "little sun" in Romany -- draws hundreds of artists and volunteers from across Europe and the United States every year. They come to attend conferences on Roma history and culture, see art exhibits, take Roma dance classes, and, of course, listen to the biggest names in Roma music. The Italian Gypsy band Acquaragia Drom is one such group, having released one of the first Romany music CDs on the international market. As violinist Erasmo Treglia tells it, the band began performing Romany music before Romany music was cool.

Source: http://www.rferl.org/content/Energy_And_Emotion_On_Display_At_Prague_Romany_Festival/1748700.html

"Repassez plus tard" : short doc on a Roma delegation visit to the EU Commission

Please view this short documentary on a Roma delegation's visit to the European Commission in Brussels (in French).

Find it at: <http://vimeo.com/4982760>

France: Roma culture celebrated in Lille

At the occasion of the international arts and culture festival Europe XXL, the town of Lille (northern France) will celebrate the Romani culture, referred as the 28th European nation, from 8 to 14 June. Music, movies, pictures, gastronomy, debates will be organised in collaboration with Nadara, a cultural association. Free entrance.

For more information visit: <http://www.lille3000.com/>

Pictures from S.tes Maries de la Mer Pilgrimage

Last week, the 25th may, took place the Pilgrimage of Saintes Maries la Mer (France), which bring together all christians Roma of Europe. This year came many Roma, "Manouches" and "Gitanos" , for sharing a special time together. The Pilgrimage is about the St. Sara called the black Sara (i Kali Sara) which is considered as Gypsy by the people. You can have a look to the event (pictures of Eric Roset): <http://www.eric-roset.ch/blog>

Source: Slavka Stefanova, "Voice of Roma", Paris.

Vacancies at the Fundamental Rights Agency

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) invites applications for the post of:

- 1 Communication and Awareness Raising Officer
- 1 Senior Editor for English

More information: http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/recruitment/recruitment_en.htm

Closing Date: 12/06/2009 13:00



The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) is an international advocacy organization, which promotes political and public discussion on Roma issues by providing factual and in-dept information on a range of policy issues to the European Union institutions, Roma civil organizations, governmental authorities and intergovernmental bodies. ERIO cooperates with a network of a large number of organizations and acts to combat racial discrimination and social exclusion through awareness raising, lobbying and policy development.

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