



COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Committee of Ministers
Comité des Ministres

25 September 2007

HDIM.IO/212/07
27 September 2007

Preliminary draft study on forms of participation of Roma and Travellers¹ in decision-making processes (extracts of chapters concerning participation in political parties and parliaments²)

Prepared by Sampo LÖF, stagiaire, under the supervision of Michaël GUET, Head of the Roma and Travellers Division, DG3 Social Cohesion, Council of Europe

Please note that this document is still a preliminary version of a document based primarily on:

- replies from governments of Council of Europe member states³ to a questionnaire from 2003 on forms of participation of Roma/Travellers and related groups in decision-making processes;
- state reports submitted to the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities;
- any additional information received or collected through reliable sources, such as results from national elections, official websites, etc.

Should you have additional information, or should you find any incorrect information, please do not hesitate to contact:

Roma and Travellers Division
Migration and Roma Department
DG3 Social Cohesion
G Building, Council of Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg cedex, France
Tel.: + 33 3 88 41 20 00
Fax: + 33 3 88 41 27 31
Email: sampo.lof@coe.int or michael.guet@coe.int

¹ This analysis covers the various Roma groups (Roma, Sinti, Kale), Travellers, as well as other related groups, such as the Yenish, Ashkali, Egyptian and Beash communities.

² The full study covers the following forms of participation: political parties, parliaments, ministries, ministerial commissions or other governmental structures, non-governmental consultative structures and anti-discrimination bodies, national, regional and local self-governments, and associations.

³ Replies to the questionnaire were obtained from the following member states: Albania, Andorra, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Ukraine and United Kingdom.

Preliminary remarks

When replying to the questionnaire on forms of participation of Roma/Travellers and related groups in decision-making processes (2003) a number of member states stressed that it was difficult to give details of ethnic origin because it was legally impossible for them to collect statistics on an ethnic basis

Out of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe (in 2007), the following 9 member states have declared that they do not have Roma, Travellers or other related groups on their territory: Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, and San Marino.

I. Participation at the level of political parties

1.1. *Absence of Roma political parties*

There are virtually almost no countries left in Europe where establishing political parties on an ethnic basis is expressly prohibited. However, in **Bulgaria** such a prohibition still exists. Bulgarian Constitution states that there shall be no political parties on ethnic, racial or religious lines. According to Bulgarian Constitutional Court (decision No.1 of 29. February 2000) this restriction is applicable to “a party founded on ethnic grounds when its constitution does not allow persons belonging to other ethnic groups to become its members”. Thus, founding a party representing the interests of Roma, for example, is possible only if its membership is open also to other ethnic groups.⁴

Most of the member states which acknowledge that there are Roma and/or Travellers on their territory (see preliminary remarks) have no political parties at federal/national/regional/local level specifically representing Roma or Travellers.

Member states with no political parties specifically representing Roma and/or Travellers: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and United Kingdom).

This may be for a variety of reasons:

1. legislation authorises it, but the Roma minority has not formed a political party because of restrictive conditions, which, although generally applicable, sometimes have specific consequences for Roma or Traveller communities (e.g. amount of signatures required for the registration of a political party might be high for the Roma community. Since many members of these communities are often without identity papers, and cannot prove their identity, citizenship or place of residence, they are unable to exercise their electoral rights);
2. special living conditions of these communities play also a role in this matter. The fact that some Roma frequently travel, even outside of the country, constitutes easily an obstacle for the participation in the decision-making process, at the local level in particular. In addition, largely widespread illiteracy among Roma communities constitutes a large obstacle not only for the participation as a candidate but also as a voter. Isolation of the communities is one another barrier for participation.
3. legislation authorises it, but the Roma minority has not formed a political party by choice or for lack of coordination;
4. the interests of the Roma minority are represented by other parties, whether generic political parties, i.e. parties not defined on an ethnic basis, or parties belonging to other minorities.

1.2. *Roma political parties*

However, there are some countries in Europe where political representation of Roma is not only possible but has materialised with the emergence of one or more political parties which have an ethnic basis or specifically defend the interests of Roma communities.

In **Hungary**, for example, there are ten or so political parties, most of them active at regional level. One Roma party participated in the last Hungarian parliamentary elections, held in 2006, but failed to gain any seats.

⁴ See Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 1st Opinion on Bulgaria, ACFC/OP/I(2006)001 paras. 61-63.

In **Slovakia** there used to exist up to 20 political parties representing the interests of Roma at national or regional level. However, changes to the political party law in 2005, requiring parties to reregister led to dissolution of many parties. As a result, there is now only one Roma party registered in Slovakia. Amended law also introduced a new regulation requiring parties to submit a deposit with their candidate list in the parliamentary elections. This may create a significant obstacle for Roma parties to participate since the deposit is high (approximately 13,000 euros) and recovered only if the party passes a three percent threshold.⁵

In **Bulgaria**, due to constitutional limitations (see 1.1 above), registered parties exclusively defending the interests of Roma are not legally possible (i.e. they have non-Roma specific names or they do not restrict the membership on ethnic grounds etc.). However, it is estimated that there are seven or so duly registered political parties whose supporters are mainly Bulgarian Roma.⁶

In **Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina**, as well as in the **Czech Republic** one Roma political party exists. In these countries Roma parties have not been able to gain strong support enough for success at the parliamentary level. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, a political party has been registered since parliamentary elections in 2002. Taking into consideration both the low Roma turnout in elections and a minimum share of the vote set at 3% at State or Entity level, it is unlikely that this party will gain any seats in parliament. Nonetheless, there is no information on the party's participation on the last parliamentary elections in 2006. In the Czech Republic one Roma political party participated in parliamentary elections in 2002 without any remarkable results and ceased functioning some time after the elections. A new Social Democratic Roma party was registered only in 2005. However, this party did not participate in the last parliamentary elections in 2006. Instead, party gave its support to the generic Social Democratic party.

In **Romania, Serbia** and in "**the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**" existing Roma parties have even had some success at the parliamentary level. Generally-speaking, it is recognised that there have been some improvements in the political representation of Roma through their own parties. In Romania a party promoting the interests of Roma (The Social Democratic Roma Party) is represented in parliament. In "**the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**" there are five political parties that specifically represent the interests of the Roma community (out of a total of 69) and two others that defend the interests of Egyptians. In the most recent elections one Roma MP (from the United Party of Roma in Macedonia) was elected to the parliament, which was also the case in the last elections (the MP was belonging to another Roma party). Successful parties were both part of larger coalitions. In Serbia four Roma political parties have been active during the last years. In 2007 two political parties formed by the Roma minority (The Roma Party and the Roma Union of Serbia) took part in the parliamentary elections of Serbia. Both parties run with an independent list and won one seat each. This was possible due to recent changes in the Serbian electoral law. Current law allows lower threshold for minority parties.⁷ In addition in **Kosovo, a Serbian province currently under UN administration**, there are political parties for Roma, Askhali and Egyptians. These parties are currently represented in the Assembly of Kosovo. This has been possible due to the system of reserved seats.

In a number of the above-mentioned countries several competing Roma parties often emerge, reflecting different political tendencies as in the case of generic parties. It is true that the more parties there are from the same minority, the greater the chance that different trends in opinion within that minority will be represented. However, this also has the drawback of generating division between the Roma parties, which usually benefits the generic parties. To overcome this disadvantage, Roma parties have two options: either they decide to form a coalition to boost their chances of entering parliament and influencing policies on Roma communities (as in "**the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**") or they negotiate their support for a generic party and their entry into the government (as in **Hungary** and **Romania**).

It is also worth noticing that generally existence of a specific Roma party does not preclude the incorporation of Roma issues into the election platforms of generic political parties or parties which defend the interests of other minorities, especially if their platform has a strong social component (see section 2.1 below).

⁵ *Roma Participation in the 2006 Slovak Parliamentary Elections*, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, available at: http://www.accessdemocracy.org/library/2076_sk_roma2006elections_100106.pdf.

⁶ See FCNM 1st Country report on Bulgaria, ACFC/SR(2003)001 p. 87.

⁷ According to Serbian Law on the elections of representatives only natural threshold (0,4%) applies to minority parties.

Countries where political parties that specifically represent Roma exist:			
Country	Level	Number	Name of the party (in bold if represented in the Parliament)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	State and Cantons	1	Democratic Party of Roma of Bosnia and Herzegovina – established in November 2002.
Croatia	National	1	The Roma Party of Croatia (<i>Stranka Roma Hrvatske</i>)
Czech Republic	National and Local	1	Roma Democratic Social Party (<i>Romská demokratická sociální strana</i> , RDSS) – established in March 2005.
Hungary	National and Regional	Approx. 10	MCF Roma Union Party (<i>MCF Roma Összefogás Párt</i>) – established in 2006 prior to parliamentary elections. Different parties at regional level.
Romania	National	1	Social Democratic Roma Party (<i>Partida Romilor Social-Democrată</i>).
Serbia	National	4	The two parties present in the Serbian Parliament are The Roma Party and The Roma Union of Serbia .
Serbia (Kosovo)	Regional (Kosovo)	3	The three parties present in the Assembly of Kosovo are The New Democratic Initiative of Kosovo which is representing the Egyptian ethnic minority; Democratic Ashkali Party of Kosovo and United Roma Party of Kosovo .
Slovakia	National	1	The Slovak Roma Initiative (RIS)
"the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	National	5 + 2	Party for Complete Emancipation of Roma Union of Roma from Macedonia The United Party of Roma in Macedonia Party for Unity of Roma from Macedonia Democratic Integration of Roma + Party for Democratic Movement of Egyptians Union of Egyptians

In conclusion, the general trend in Europe is for Roma and Travellers not to be represented at the level of political parties, except in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", as well as indirectly, due to certain Constitutional limitations, in Bulgaria.

II. Participation at the level of parliament(s)

2.1. Representation through generic political parties

From the beginning of the decade there has been an increase in the number of Roma candidates elected on the lists of so-called generic political parties. Few states have or have had Roma MPs elected on the lists of generic political parties. However, the last elections have not shown too many signs of improvement in this regard.

In **Hungary**, in the most recent parliamentary elections, held in April 2006, three Roma were elected on the lists of two so-called generic parties. In **Bulgaria** there is one Roma representative in the parliament. He has been elected on the list of a generic political party at the 2005 elections. In both countries this is one candidate less than in the previous elections. In **Romania**, according to authorities, there are also Roma representatives elected on the lists of generic political parties in the Romanian parliament but no detailed information can be found on this matter.

However, even such a slight representation is rather unusual in the member states. In the **Czech Republic** one Roma woman MP from a generic party sat in the Chamber of Deputies from 1998 to 2002. No member of the Roma community has ever been a senator, and none have sat in the Chamber of Deputies since 2002. Likewise, one Roma MP served in the **Latvian** parliament from 1998 to 2002, representing a generic

party. He won he's seat with 20,000 votes in 1998 elections but he was left off the party's electoral list in the next elections.

In **Slovakia**, for instance, none of the Roma candidates on the generic parties' lists were elected to parliament. In **Finland** seven Roma candidates stood on generic party lists in the most recent elections (2007), but none were elected. In **Ireland** in 2002, for the first time, a member of the Irish Travellers community stood for the *Seanad Éireann* (among the candidates for the universities), but was not elected.

Although several political parties in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** voice support for the Roma, no Roma have been elected at the Cantonal, Entity or State level. This system may limit the Roma community's influence where Roma representation within generic parties is marginal and subject to the majority policy within the political movement to which the Roma representatives belong.

A number of countries in Europe nonetheless deem representation via generic parties preferable to minority interest representation.

Countries where persons belonging to Roma communities have been elected to the parliament during the last elections on the lists of generic parties				
Country	Year of the referred elections	Number of the elected Roma deputies	Change from the previous elections	Political parties in question
Hungary	2006	3	- 1	Hungarian Civic Union (FIDESZ) Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP)
Bulgaria	2005	1	-1	List of coalition for Bulgaria (<i>Koalicija za Bălgarija</i>) - Bulgarian Socialist Party and partners.
Romania	2004	n.d.	n.d.	Possibly Roma representatives elected on the lists of generic parties but there is no detailed information.
Countries where persons belonging to Roma communities have been elected to the parliament during the last elections on the lists of Roma parties				
Country	Year of the referred elections	Number of the elected Roma deputies	Change from the previous elections	Political parties in question
Serbia	2007	2	+2	The Roma Party (<i>Ромска партија</i>) The Roma Union of Serbia (<i>Унија Рома Србије</i>)
Serbia (Kosovo)	2004	4	-1	The United Roma Party of Kosovo (Partia Rome e Bashkuar e Kosovës) 1 representative; The Democratic Ashkali Party of Kosovo (Partia Demokratike e Ashkanlive të Kosovës) 1 representative; The New Democratic Initiative of Kosovo (Iniciativa e re Demokratike e Kosovës) 2 representatives. Party represents the Egyptian ethnic minority.
"the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	2006	1	=	The United Party of Roma in Macedonia (<i>Obedinita Partija na Romite na Makedonija</i>)
Romania	2004	1	=	Social Democratic Roma Party (<i>Partida Romilor Social-Democrată</i>)

2.2. Representation through other minority parties

It is just as difficult for Roma to carve out a place for themselves within political parties defending the interests of other minorities, where those who are elected and sit in parliament are more often than not (if not exclusively) representatives of other minorities (e.g. in **Albania**, Union of Human Rights Party, OMONIA).

This is why parties for the specific defence of Roma interests have come into being in some countries. This is the case, for example in **Serbia** and "**the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**" (see 1.2. above).

In conclusion only a few countries have Roma representatives elected in their parliament (Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"). They were elected either through generic parties or Roma party lists.

It is also worth noticing that generally existence or not of a specific Roma party does not preclude the incorporation of Roma issues into the election platforms of generic political parties or parties which defend the interests of other minorities, especially if their platform has a strong social component. For example, in its reply to the questionnaire on participation of Roma in decision-making processes, Germany, pointed out that, although Roma interests were not represented at the level of the political parties, the latter were in agreement on the need to promote activities in favour of Roma, as evidenced by the virtually unanimous parliamentary ratification of international legal instruments such as the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities or the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

2.3. Positive discrimination in respect of minority parties (lower thresholds and reserved seats)

Several member states exercise positive discrimination in respect of parties representing minority interests, by lowering (**Albania, Serbia**) or completely removing (**Germany, Poland** in the Lower Chamber) the electoral threshold allowing these parties to be represented in parliament.

Legislation in some countries (**Germany**) allows political parties defending minority interests to be funded by donations from the kin state. However, in the specific case of minorities without a kin state, such as Roma, this type of financial support is not forthcoming, and their situation is therefore less favourable than that of other minority groups.

Only **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Romania** and **Slovenia** indicated that they had a system of reserved seats for representatives of minorities. In addition, the Constitutional Framework for the Provisional Self-government of Kosovo (Serbia) provides reserved seats for minorities in the assembly of province. In the case of Slovenia such a possibility does not apply to Roma but to other minorities.

However, the current situation shows that it is solely in **Romania** that a reserved seat in the national parliament is actually occupied by a Rom. Under the electoral law, a seat is reserved in the Chamber of Deputies for a Roma organisation (*Partida Romilor*) if it obtains at least 5% of the average number of votes required for the election of an "ordinary" MP. In Romania, national minorities' non-governmental organisations may stand for election in order to enter parliament. Each national minority (except the Hungarian minority) may obtain only one seat, but the total number of representatives of minorities sitting in parliament is not restricted (it varies according to the number of minorities which obtain enough votes in the elections). In the Assembly of Kosovo (Serbia) there are 20 seats reserved for different minorities. Representatives of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians are entitled to have four out of these seats. At the moment all the seats are occupied by members of these communities.

In **Croatia**, the national minorities have had reserved seats in the single-chamber parliament since 1992. The Roma are not among the minorities that have elected a representative so far. However, following changes to the law on parliamentary elections in 2003, the minorities, including the Roma, are permitted to elect a total of eight members of parliament. There exist eight seats reserved for 22 minorities. One minority can elect three representatives (Serbs), two minorities one representative each (Hungarians and Italians), and 19 other minorities may elect together three representatives according to certain groupings. Roma

belong to a group of 12 minorities entitled to elect one deputy.⁸ Since the Roma community is the largest of the group of 12 minorities, in principle it has a real chance of electing a representative. However, where there are a number of candidates from the same minority, the chance of electing an MP from that minority is smaller. So far this seat has not been occupied by a Rom.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** at the level of the parliaments of the Entities, four seats are reserved for "the others" (i.e. people belonging to national minorities) in the House of Peoples of the Republika Srpska and seven in the House of Peoples of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Though the Roma are the largest minority, none of the eleven reserved seats has been attributed to a Roma representative (MPs in this type of house are nominated, not elected).

This system of reserved seats does not exist in the other member states of the Council of Europe. However, the government of "**the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**" has recently (August 2007) submitted a law proposal with such a provisions to country's parliament. Proposed amendments to the electoral code would provide 10 seats for the smaller ethnic communities, four for the Turkish, two for the Serbian and Roma community each, as well as one MP post for the Vlachs and Bosnians each. If the new legislation will be adopted it will most likely be implemented for the next election round.

Ireland has a system of reserved seats in the upper house (*Seanad Éireann*) for certain sectors of society (defined in the Constitution). Representing one of these sectors (farming, industry and commerce, public administration, etc.) has nothing to do with an individual's ethnic or cultural origin. In 2002, for the first time, a member of the Irish Travellers community stood for the *Seanad Éireann* (among the candidates for the universities), but was not elected.

In conclusion, the advantage of reserved seats is that they afford the Roma minority minimum access to the decision-making process, notably in legislative terms. On the other hand, this substantially restricts the opportunities for representation, since usually no more than one seat is allocated to the Roma minority, which nevertheless forms quite a large proportion of the population of the countries concerned. All in all, this representation system is little used in Europe.

Countries where the system of reserved parliamentary seats for minorities exist s:			
Country	Chamber in question	Maximum number of seats reserved for / possible to be occupied by Roma or Travellers	Factual number of persons belonging to the Roma minority occupying reserved seats
Bosnia and Herzegovina	House of Peoples of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	7 (Seats shared by 17 minorities)	0
	House of Peoples of the Republika Srpska	4 (Seats shared by 17 minorities)	0
Croatia	Sabor (parliament)	Possibly 1 (deputy chosen among 12 minorities)	0
Romania	Chamber of Deputies of Romanian Parliament	1	1
Serbia (Kosovo)	Assembly of Kosovo	4	4
Slovenia	National Assembly of Republic of Slovenia	0 (does not apply to Roma)	0
"the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia	Possibly 2 in future, depending on the adoption of the amendments to the electoral code	0

⁸ Other minorities in this group are Austrians, Bulgarians, Germans, Poles, Romanians, Rusyns, Russians, Turks, Ukrainians, Vlachs and Jews.

2.4. Participation of Roma in parliamentary committees and sub-committees

There are many parliamentary committees and sub-committees in Europe which deal with minority issues, and therefore Roma and/or Traveller issues, such as (non-exhaustive list):

- human rights committees (and minority rights and/or religious affairs committees, etc.) in Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Ukraine;
- interethnic relations committees - Serbia;
- justice and equality committees - Ireland;
- domestic affairs committees - Germany, Slovenia;
- social affairs committees – Greece, Latvia;
- legal affairs committees - Estonia; Germany, Ireland;
- education and cultural affairs committees - Estonia; Latvia;
- regional development committees - Norway;
- migration and integration committees - Denmark;
- petitions committees - Croatia, Czech Republic, Serbia, Slovenia.

Where members of the Roma community have been elected to parliament, they tend to sit on these committees (**Bulgaria, Hungary, Serbia, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"**) or even to chair them (**Romania**).

In **Croatia**, for example, a Roma representative (not an elected MP) sits on the Sub-Committee for National Minority Rights of the Parliamentary Committee for Human Rights and National Minority Rights.⁹ Likewise, in **Slovakia**, there is an advisory body on the rights of the Roma minority, whose members are not parliamentarians; this body advises the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** the Law on Protection of National Minority Rights provides for the establishment of National Minority Councils, including a Roma representative, responsible *inter alia* for working in close cooperation with the parliaments of the Entities. Decision on the creation of the Council for National Minorities has been taken on 13 April 2006.

In 1999 **Spain** experimented with a parliamentary sub-committee which specifically looked into Kale (*Gitanos*) issues (under the authority of the Committee on Social Employment Policy); this committee no longer meets. Regional parliaments (Andalusia, Aragon, Catalonia, Murcia) have tabled or indeed adopted a number of parliamentary motions specifically concerning Kale (*Gitanos*).

Likewise, in **Hungary**, there used to be a sub-committee specifically dealing with the employment of Roma (*Cigany*) under the authority of the Committee on Employment Issues but it ceased functioning in 2006. Currently at least one sub-committee dealing with integration and equal opportunities at schools is somewhat concentrating in the Roma issues.

In countries with a federal structure such as **Germany**, the committees of each *Land* parliament responsible for dealing with Roma issues are those in charge of monitoring the affairs of the ministry with a predominant role in the defence of national minorities. This varies from one *Land* to another.

In some countries there is also the possibility of appointing representatives of minorities or religious groups as observers in parliament with an advisory function in religious and educational matters, but this does not appear to concern Roma. It is the case in **Cyprus** where "minorities" are defined as religious groups which have been asked, in order to make the Constitution applicable, to choose between membership of the Greek community or the Turkish community. It appears the Roma have not been recognised as a fully-fledged religious group, but that "because of their religion (Muslim) [they are] considered as members of the Turkish-Cypriot community". They apparently live mostly in the northern part of the island.

An alternative solution to involve Roma in parliamentary consultation is holding parliamentary hearings, to which Roma representatives are invited if the topics being discussed in parliament affect them. This system is practised in **Finland** and in the **Russian Federation**.

⁹ This information is based on the situation in October 2003. Current situation of the sub-committee is not known.

In conclusion, with but a few exceptions (Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"), participation of Roma at parliamentary level remains fairly modest throughout Europe. After the last elections it can be even said that the level of Roma representation has not increased but rather decreased in a number of countries, despite the fact that the Roma population in all member states has increased during the same period. Only special arrangements (lower thresholds, reserved seats, etc.) seem to be able to provide a minimum degree of representation.

As a positive development, a few countries with large Roma populations have recently adopted, or are about to adopt, measures which make better participation of Roma possible (e.g. Croatia, Serbia, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia").

Within parliaments, elected and in rare occasion also non-elected Roma representatives sit in parliamentary committees, usually those dealing with minority/human rights issues. Parliamentary committees focusing specifically on Roma issues are not operational any longer (e.g. the parliamentary committee for Kale (*Gitanos*) issues in Spain or the sub-committee on employment of Roma in Hungary).

2.5. Representation at the European Parliament

In the European Parliament there are currently two Roma European MPs from **Hungary**, both women. They have been elected on the lists of two different generic parties. In the past, a Kalo from **Spain** had been also elected in the European Parliament.

Several EU member states are expected to have Roma candidates at the next elections for the European Parliament (2008).

See Appendix below about Information related to Roma, Travellers and related groups (official number and estimates, status, recognition under CoE legal instruments on minorities¹⁰, information about tribes, languages and religious denominations)

¹⁰ The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS no. 157) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS no. 148).

Appendix: Information related to Roma, Travellers and related groups (official number and estimates, status, recognition under CoE legal instruments on minorities¹¹, information about tribes, languages and religious denominations)

Country	Official number of Roma/Travellers (census date)	Estimated number of Roma/ Travellers	Groups/tribes (recognition under the Framework Convention)	Languages (recognition under the Language Charter)	Religious denomination
Albania	No official data	80,000 - 120,000	FCNM Ratified 28/9/1999. Four main tribes: Kallbuxhinj, Meçkare, Kurtofet and Cergaret. Roma considered an ethno- linguistic minority for the reason that they have no motherland. However, this does not limit the application of Framework Convention to Roma. Egyptians are not considered to be under the scope of the Convention.	Not ratified.	-
Andorra	No Roma	-	-	-	-
Armenia	No Roma	-	Ratified 20/7/1998	Ratified 5/1/2002.	-
Austria	No official data	20,000-50,000	Ratified 31/3/1998. Five larger groups can be distinguished: Sinti, Burgerland Roma, Lovara, Kalderash and Arlije. Roma minority considered to be national minority.	Ratified 8/6/2001. Romani (Burgerland Romanes) recognised under the Language Charter.	-
Azerbaijan	No Roma	-	Ratified 26/6/2000.	Not ratified.	-
Belgium	No official data	20,000-30,000	Belgium has not ratified the Framework Convention. However, in the Flemish Region, Travellers belong to the "minorities" group together with "allochthonous" people and refugees	-	-
Bosnia and Herzegovina	8,864 (1991)	20,000-60,000	Ratified 24/2/2000 Considered as an indigenous population of Former Yugoslavia. One of 17 minority communities according to the law and recognised under the Framework Convention.	Roma speak Bosnian, Serb or Croat and their mother tongue. The Language Charter has not yet been ratified.	The majority are Muslim, but they are also Orthodox and some of them belong to the Catholic church.
Bulgaria	370,908 (2001)	500,000-800,000	Ratified 7/5/1999. Bulgaria does not list the national minorities which are recognised officially. However, Roma persons who freely identify themselves as Roma are to be included under the scope of the	Bulgaria has not signed the Language Charter.	

¹¹ The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS no.157) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS no.148).

			Framework Convention.		
Croatia	9,463 (2001)	30,000-40,000	Ratified 11/10/1997. "National minority" (also recognised under the Framework Convention). Three main groups: Kalderash and Lovara Roma, but also Koritari/Beash groups who migrated from Romania in the 19th century.	Ratified 5/11/1997. Many Roma speak Romani (particularly those from former Yugoslavia). The Koritari speak Beash (a Romanian dialect). Romani is not covered by the Language Charter in Croatia, but some measures have been taken regarding its use in the media under the national programme for Roma.	A survey showed that 45.5% of Roma are Muslim, 31.1% Catholic, 16.9% Orthodox and some others Jehovah's Witnesses.
Czech Republic	11,718 (2001)	150,000-300,000	Ratified 18/12/1997. Recognised as a "national minority" under the Framework Convention. Some 500 Czech and Moravian Roma survived the Holocaust. The vast majority of Roma in the country came from Slovakia after the Second World War. They are sedentary, unlike the Vlach Roma, who were nomads until 1959 (when they were forced to become sedentary). The latter are more traditional in their outlook.	Ratified 15/11/2006.	-
Cyprus	No official data	1,500	Ratified 4/6/1996. Regarded from the constitutional point of view as belonging to the Turkish-Cypriot community.	Ratified 26/8/2002. Romani is not recognised under the Language Charter.	Muslim.
Denmark	No official data	1,000-10,000	Ratified 22/9/1997. Roma are not recognised as a national minority under the Framework Convention. Their legal status may be that of a foreigner or of a Danish citizen. The Roma can be regarded as a "national minority" in a non-legal sense, which is also the case with other groups.	Ratified 8/9/2000. Romani is not recognised under the Language Charter.	-
Estonia	542 (2000)	1,000-1,500	Ratified 6/1/1997. Having the Estonian citizenship, the Roma are recognized as a « national minority ».	Estonia has not ratified the Language Charter.	-
Finland	No official data	10,000 (plus about 3,000 or 4,000 Finnish Roma in Sweden)	Ratified 3/10/1997. Finnish Roma (Kaale). Recognised as an "ethnic national minority".	Ratified 9/11/1994. The Romani language is used only as a second language.	Belong mainly to the Lutheran Evangelical Church
France	No official data	300,000 –	France has not ratified	The Language	-

		500,000	the Framework Convention. The French Constitution does not recognise ethnic minority status. Issues linked to Traveller poverty and lack of security are addressed via general policies to combat social exclusion.	Charter has been signed but not ratified.	
Georgia	1,744 (1989)	Over 2,000	Ratified 22/12/2005.	-	-
Germany	No official data	70,000-130,000	Ratified 10/9/1997. Two groups: the Roma and Sinti are recognised as a "national minority" (associations of German Sinti do not want to be recognised as a "national minority" but as an "ethnic group within the German people").	Ratified 16/9/1998. Romani dialect (about 60,000 speakers) protected by the Charter.	-
Greece	No official data	80,000-350,000	Greece has not ratified the Framework Convention. Greek Roma do not constitute a national minority. They are considered Greek citizens.	Greece has not signed the Language Charter. The official language of Greek Roma is the Greek language.	
Hungary	190,046 (2001)	400,000-800,000	Ratified 25/9/1995. Three main groups: Hungarian Gypsies (Romungro, about 80%), Vlach Roma (10-15%), Beash Roma (5-10%). Roma are recognised as an "ethnic minority".	Ratified 6/4/1995. The Romungro speak Hungarian. The Vlachs speak dialects (Lovari) of the Romani language. The Beash speak a variety of old Romanian. According to official statistics, Hungarian is the mother tongue for 90%, Romani for 5% and Beash for 5%. The two languages are protected by the Charter (Part II).	
Iceland	No Roma	-	-	-	-
Ireland	24,000 Travellers (2002)	2,000-2,500 Roma; 30,000 to 36,000 Travellers.	Ratified 7/5/1999. Ireland believes that the native Irish Traveller community must be distinguished from the Roma, many of whom are asylum seekers (especially since 1998) from the Balkans and eastern Europe with a sedentary way of life. The latter have the status of a "foreign ethnic minority". The Travellers are recognised as a native community which does not constitute a separate group in terms	Ireland has not signed the Language Charter. The Shelta language, used solely by the Travellers, has a vocabulary of some 600 words.	The Travellers are mainly Catholic.

			of race, colour, descent or ethnic origin. The special status of the Traveller community has been recognised under the Framework Convention.		
Italy	No official data	120,000 – 160,000	Ratified 3/11/1997. The Roma-Sinti are considered as a “minority without a territory “.	Italy has not ratified the Language Charter. The Romani language is not covered by the national law protecting ethno-linguistic minorities, and therefore not by the Language Charter. An amendment to the national Law is however envisaged.	-
Latvia	8,205 (2000)	8,000 – 15,000	Ratified 6/6/2005. No information on the groups.	-	Lutheran, Catholic and Orthodox
Liechtenstein	No Roma	-	Ratified 18/11/1997.	Ratified 18/11/1997.	-
Lithuania	2,570 (2001)	2,570 – 4,000	Ratified 23/3/2000. Mainly Polish Roma. Recognised as a “national minority”.	Lithuania has not ratified the Language Charter. There exists a local dialect of the Romani language in Lithuania.	Mainly Catholic
Luxembourg	No Roma	100 - 500	Not ratified.	Ratified 2/6/2005.	-
Malta	No Roma	-	Ratified 10/2/1998.	Not ratified.	-
Moldova	12,280 (2004)	18,700 – 150,000	Ratified 20/11/1996. No information on the groups. Roma have the status of a “national minority”	Not ratified.	-
Monaco	No Roma	-	Not ratified.	Not ratified.	-
Montenegro	2,875 (2003)	20,000	11/5/2001.	Ratified 15/2/2006.	-
Netherlands	No official data	5,000-40,000	Ratified 16/2/2005. Roma are not recognised under the Framework Convention.	Ratified 2/5/1996. Romani is recognised under the Language Charter.	-
Norway	No official data	2,000-3,000 Roma/ Travellers and 300-400 Roma/ Gypsies	Ratified 17/3/1999. Two distinct groups: Roma/Gypsies (Vlachs) and Roma/Travellers recognised as “national minorities”.	Ratified 10/11/1993. No statistics.	-
Poland	12,731 (2002)	20,000-60,000	Ratified 20/12/2000. Three groups which are currently becoming settled: <i>Polska Roma</i> (the largest), Lovara and Kalderasha. A settled group: Carpathian Roma.	Not ratified. Various dialects of Romani.	Mainly Catholic.
Portugal	No official data	40,000- 50,000	Ratified 7/5/2002. Portugal does not recognize the existence of national minorities in its territory. Roma community recognized as an ethnic minority.	-	-

Romania	535,140 (2002)	1,2 million – 2,5 million	Ratified 11/5/1995. Roma recognised as a “national minority”. Numerous groups.	Not ratified (ratification process under way). The Romani language will be recognised by the Language Charter.	-
Russian Federation	182,617 (2002)	450,000 – 1,000,000	Ratified 21/8/1998. Roma (“Gipsies”) recognised under the framework Convention.	Not ratified.	-
San Marino	No Roma	-	Ratified 5/12/1996.	-	-
Serbia	108,193 (2002), Kosovo excluded.	400,000-800,000 (in addition there are about 100,000-120,000 Roma IDPs from Kosovo)	Ratified 11/5/2001. Roma considered as a “national minority” and recognised under the Framework Convention.	Ratified 15/2/2006. “Roma” recognised as a minority language under the Language Charter.	-
Slovak Republic	89,920 (2001)	320,000-520,000	Ratified 14/9/1995. Rumungri (settled) and Vlach Roma (nomadic) and some Sinti. They have the status of a “national minority”.	Ratified 5/9/2001. Several variants of Romani Chib (that of eastern Slovakia has gained the upper hand). 49 of the 53 provisions of Part III of the Charter apply to the Romani language.	-
Slovenia	3,246 (2002)	7,000-10,000	Ratified 25/3/1998. Three groups originally from Hungary, Croatia and Austria (Sinti). Recognised as an “ethnic group/minority”.	Ratified 4/10/2000. 3,834 speakers of the Romani language (officially). Recognised under Article 7, § 1-4 of the Language Charter.	-
Spain	No official data	600,000-650,000	Ratified 1/9/1995.	Ratified 9/4/2001. Romani and Kalo.	-
Sweden	-	40,000-50,000 Roma (including Sinti and Travellers)	Ratified 9/2/2000. Non-Nordic Roma from central Europe and the Balkans (Lovara, Arlija), Kelderasha, Finnish Kaale and Travellers (Roma are recognised as a “national minority”).	Ratified 9/2/2000. Romani Chib is recognised as a national minority language; Arlij is spoken by the group from the Balkans.	Arlija are Muslim.
Switzerland	No official data	35,000 Yenish: 32,000 settled and 3,000 semi-settled	Ratified 21/19/1998. Yenish (main group), Sinti (Travellers are regarded as a “national minority”).	Ratified 23/12/1997. Yenish (recognised as a traditional language under Article 1.c)	-
"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	53,879 (2002)	80,000-250,000	Ratified 10/4/1997. Roma (Barucii, Topaancani, blacksmiths, Dzjambas and others), and Egyptians. The Roma are recognised as a “national minority” or “nationality”.	"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" has not yet ratified the Language Charter.	Muslim, Christian (Orthodox), atheist (31%)
Turkey	No official data	300,000-3,5 million	Turkey has not signed nor ratified the Framework Convention. The Turkish State does not officially recognise	Turkey has not signed nor ratified the Language Charter.	-

			the existence of ethnic minorities in the country.		
Ukraine	47,600 (2001)	50,00-400,000	Ratified 26/1/1998. Lovari, Servys, Colderari (Roma are regarded as a "national minority").	Ratified 19/9/2005.	Christian (Orthodox)
United Kingdom	4,096 (2001) – including 2,219 Travellers of Irish Heritage and Gypsies in England and Wales + 167 in Scotland + 1,710 in Northern Ireland	Up to 300,000	Ratified 15/1/1998. Gypsies in England and Wales and Travellers of Irish origin. Gypsies and Travellers considered a racial group under national legislation. Principles of the Convention apply to these groups.	Ratified 27/3/2001. according to Committee of Experts on the Language Charter Romani languages exist in United Kingdom but status of these languages under Charter is still unclear.	