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*Finland's Romani People*

**E Rhoma and i Finlandia**

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH

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## *The current situation*

Finland's Romani people enjoy the same civil rights and are subject to the same civic duties as all other Finnish citizens. They are both Finnish and Romani, and they have played an active part in building Finnish society. There are an estimated 10,000 Finnish Roma living in Finland and around a further 3,000 living in Sweden. The 1970s brought the first signs of a change in Finnish social policy with the enactment of the first piece of anti-discrimination legislation. The assimilation policy of the early part of the century was abandoned and special measures were introduced to improve the economic, educational and social position of the Roma and the Sami. In the 1980s, special government funding began to be channelled into the teaching of Romani language and culture.

There are Romani communities in every part of Finland, although the majority of Roma live in the towns and cities of the south. They nowadays live in permanent homes, but often move around during the holiday season. Like other Finns, most Roma belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Some are also active members of the Pentecostal Movement and other nonconformist Christian denominations.

Roma are on average worse off both economically and socially than other Finns. The radical restructuring of the Finnish economy and Finnish society since the Second World War has undermined the traditional Romani means of livelihood and created economic problems for the Roma. This is one of the reasons for the high rates of unemployment among the Roma and their social exclusion. The Roma have traditionally been suspicious of education, as the schools have been used to assimilate them into the majority population. During the 1990s, however, they have begun to take a more positive attitude towards education, a development undoubtedly influenced by the growing strength of their language and culture. Use of the word *romani* has become widespread in Finland during the 1990s, replacing the traditional designation *mustalainen* (gypsy).

In spite of their equal legal status, the Roma have still not achieved real equality with the majority population in Finland. Roma continue to experience discrimination in their everyday lives. Cases of discrimination are dealt with in the general courts, although only a tiny fraction of the actual cases of discrimination in working and business life are ever brought before the courts.

Despite continuing problems, the position of the Roma has undoubtedly improved over the past few decades due to the combined efforts of the public authorities and the Roma themselves. The majority population have learned to understand Romani customs and respect Romani culture. The more positive climate has been influenced by the active work of Romani organisations and the various seminars which have been put on for the majority population. The advertising of educational opportunities in the Romani press has in turn led to a more positive attitude towards education on the part of the Roma, while the introduction of radio news in Romani and the participation of Roma in the arts world have also helped to create a more positive attitude among the majority population.

## *The 1995 constitutional rights reform*

The general change in attitudes was reflected in the reform of constitutional rights in 1995. The Constitution now unequivocally condemns discrimination: no-one can without good reason be placed in an unequal position on account of their sex, age, ethnic origin, language, religion, beliefs, opinions, state of health, disability or other personal factor. Another important reform was the right of the Sami and Roma to maintain and develop their own language and culture. Although the provision mentions by name two traditional minorities in Finnish society — the Sami and the Roma — the terms also apply to other minority groups as well. The position of the Roma was now guaranteed by law for the first time. Although the final legislative text expressly mentions only the right of a minority group to maintain and develop its own language, the preamble to the bill, which carries a great deal of weight in Finnish law, in fact obligates the public authorities to give their support as well. This represents a considerable infusion of support for improving the position of the Roma.

Two treaties of the Council of Europe which came into force at the beginning of 1998 and have subsequently been confirmed through national legislation represent milestones on the path of strengthening the position of the Roma in Finland. In ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Finland identified Romani as a non-territorial minority language of Finland, and in ratifying the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Finland identified the Roma and the Sami as traditional national minorities.

In fact, the protection afforded to the Roma by law and treaty is in practice inadequate, as Romani people continue to experience discrimination in their everyday lives. Romani women can be considered to suffer from double discrimination on account of both their sex and their ethnic background and related style of dress.

## *History*

The Roma arrived in Finland via Sweden and the Baltic provinces (nowadays the Baltic States) during the 16th century. Finland was at that time part of the Kingdom of Sweden. The attitude towards the Roma among the authorities was distinctly negative, and they were denied access to the sacraments and other services of the Church; they were also denied access to hospital care. A law was introduced in 1637 which made it legal to kill any Roma discovered to be in the kingdom. During the 19th century, when Finland was a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire some effort was made to integrate the Roma into Finnish society. The Roma came into contact with the majority population at grassroots level through commercial activities.

Public opinion in the early years of the 20th century sought to assimilate the Roma into the majority population. Means used included taking Romani children away from their parents and forcibly placing them in children's homes. Until the middle of the century assimilation continued to be the main aim of official policy.

When Finland became independent in 1917 all ethnic groups within the population became Finnish citizens. The cultural and linguistic rights of the Swedish-speaking minority were guaranteed at that time. The subsequent service by Roma in the Finnish forces during the war years 1939-1945 had a strong influence in shaping their Finnish identity. The Finnish Roma thus have a dual identity: they feel themselves to be both Finns and Roma, and consider themselves primarily to be a national minority. They justify this view on the basis that they have lived in Finland since the 16th century and are therefore every bit as much Finns as everybody else.

## *Language and culture*

There used to be a large number of Romani speakers in Finland, and the lack of written material in the past posed no threat to the survival of the language. However, a number of factors have contributed to the subsequent weakening of the position of Romani in Finland. One important factor was the generally negative attitude towards the language in the political climate at the beginning of the century, as a result of which Romani was not used in public or taught in the schools. Another factor was the dependency of the older generation of Roma on the majority population for shelter during the cold winter nights. It was more important to find shelter from the cold than to speak Romani. Thus, Finnish gradually became the dominant language among the younger generation. The extended family encompassing several generations has given way to the smaller nuclear family, reducing the interaction between the generations. The older members of the community use the language most. The middle-aged and the young use mainly Finnish as their everyday language, although they still understand spoken Romani. The language seminars, summer schools and teacher training courses for teachers of Romani which have been held in recent years have, however, shown that there are more people who can speak the language than was previously realized.

The teacher training courses for teachers of Romani, the production of Romani-medium teaching material and the introduction of Romani as a subject in the schools in 1989 have all helped to breathe new life into the language and

encourage its use. They have also led to an increasing number of articles in Romani appearing in the newspapers of the Roma. A weekly news broadcast in Romani on national radio has also contributed to the modernisation of the language and its vocabulary.

Work began on gathering and writing down the vocabulary of Finnish Romani as early as the second half of the 18th century, but development of the written language as such did not begin in Finland until the end of the 1960s. Since then, an elementary textbook intended for use in vocational adult education, an alphabet book for use in the comprehensive schools, a Romani-English-Finnish dictionary, a handbook and grammar for teachers of Romani, a children's songbook and some parts of the Bible have all been published in Romani. EU funding has been used to help gather biographies and tales of the Romani people with a view to using this material in future textbooks.

The Romani approach to bringing up their children seeks to produce responsible, morally upright adults with a knowledge of their own language and culture and the ability to get on well with others. Romani children are brought up to respect their parents, while at the same time they also learn Romani customs. These educational ideals differ somewhat from the typical Finnish ideals. The goal of Romani education is to produce an extravert child with good social skills. Emotional warmth, close family ties and the maintenance of contacts with other Roma are all highly valued qualities.

## *Living conditions*

In the past the Roma lived in a version of the extended family. In addition to the father, mother and children, this extended family also included the grandparents and other close relatives. The post-war structural change in Finnish society from a predominantly rural to a predominantly urban, technology-centred way of life has had a major impact on the living conditions of Romani people. Their families have become smaller, and there is less contact between the generations. Grandparents no longer have the chance to pass on their customs or their linguistic heritage to their grandchildren. The modern Romani nuclear family normally lives in a block of flats owned by the local authority.

As recently as the 1960s the living conditions of the Roma were very poor. The first step taken at the beginning of the 1970s was an allocation in the government budget for the acquisition of homes for Romani people. This also gave a strong signal to the local authorities that they should take responsibility for solving the problem of housing for Romani families and thereby make it easier for their children to attend school. Between 1975 and 1981 the living conditions of Romani people were improved through a special government housing loan facility which provided subsidised loans to both local authorities and individual members of the Romani community. By the 1980s approximately 20% of Romani households were still living in inadequate accommodation.

In 1996, the Ministry of the Environment carried out a survey on the living conditions of the Roma in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. This showed that most Roma were (for social reasons) living in government-subsidised rented housing, while one in three was in urgent need of somewhere to live. Roma often face prejudice when applying for an apartment, but there are also municipalities where there is good cooperation between the Roma and local officials.

The standard of accommodation is the same as that experienced by members of the majority population living in the same type of housing. The ethnic prejudices of the majority population and the weaker economic position of the Roma make it very difficult for them to find accommodation on the private housing market. The Finnish housing market has recently become much more competitive - a state of affairs reflected in the worsening housing situation among the Romani minority.

## *Social and healthcare services*

Romani culture is marked by the strength of support and security provided by the family. Roma do not always know what social and healthcare services are available or how to go about applying for them. Although Romani language and culture should always be taken into account in the provision of social and healthcare services, medical and nursing care continue to be provided both in the community and in institutional settings on the terms of the majority population. The services offered to the Roma should be improved by recruiting more Roma for training in the social and healthcare sector.

The poor economic position and bad housing conditions of the Roma are still reflected in the health of elderly and middle-aged members of the community. The incidence of sickness is higher among the Roma than among the Finnish population as a whole. The family normally takes care of the sick and disabled, as there is a reluctance to put them into an institution. The training of healthcare personnel already includes some information on Romani culture, and a guidebook has been produced for healthcare professionals.

## *Children's day care and school attendance*

There have been increasing numbers of Romani children in municipal day care in recent years. This is largely due to young women taking vocational adult education and going out to work. Some day care centres have also begun to recruit Romani members of staff, which has helped to make Romani children feel safer and more at home. The educational goals of day care now include supporting the language and culture of Romani children in cooperation with the home. This helps to give them a better preparation for starting school.

Most Romani children are cared for at home, as their parents feel this is the best way to support their traditional childraising goals. Nevertheless, the changing occupational structure of the Roma is increasing the demand for municipal day care.

The Romani language began to be taught in the comprehensive schools in 1989 after an initiative by two teachers of the language. The organisation of instruction has been hampered by a lack of teachers and the inadequacy of teacher training in the subject.

Children can currently get mother tongue instruction in Romani at school for two hours a week, or, where resources allow, Romani can actually be used as the language of instruction for all subjects. There must be at least four pupils in the group.

As of the beginning of 1999 a school's official language of instruction may be either Finnish or Swedish, but, should it so wish, it can also use Sami, Romani or sign language as a language of instruction. Finnish, Swedish or Sami can be taught as a mother tongue, while Romani can also be taught if there is demand from parents. The law at present allows a student to take Romani as a second mother tongue in the matriculation exam at the end of upper secondary school.

The constitutional rights reform and the reform of educational legislation sought to ensure equality of education in different parts of the country and strengthen the position and rights of minorities. The result has been a noticeable increase in the number of Romani children attending school. However, Roma continue to experience more problems at school than other children. This is due in part to discrimination and failure on the part of the school to take into account the special features of Romani culture. Romani parents are also often unaware of the way the school operates and what it is trying to achieve. As many have themselves spent their childhood in travelling families, their own education is not very good. This makes it hard for them to support and motivate their own children to study. The cultural conflict between the home and the school also often leaves the child feeling isolated and alone.

The Finnish spoken in Romani families differs from mainstream Finnish in both vocabulary and usage. The consequent problem of unrecognised semilingualism is often the real reason for the difficulties Romani children experience at school. Inadequate mastery of both their own minority language and the language of the majority population lead in the end to social exclusion. The resulting poverty of the child's basic education makes it hard to go on to further education or vocational training. This explains part of the reason for the difficulties experienced by Roma in finding a job.

The preparatory stage of preschool education is thus vitally important for Romani children as a way to soften the culture shock of school and provide them with better linguistic tools to participate in school work. It is also vital for schools to put greater effort in the future into supporting Romani children's own cultural background.

Teacher training also needs to be reformed to take proper account of the principles of equal participation and minority awareness. Teaching material should include information on the Romani minority, their culture and their history. The incorporation of Romani as a regular part of the curriculum has improved the position of Romani children in those schools where the subject is taught. Support for bilingualism is also very important for Romani children's chances of going on to further education after leaving school. Romani children have been enthusiastic in their response to the teaching of their language, and even those who have been alienated from school have discovered a sense of purpose in learning and in attending school. Teachers of Romani serve as a link between the majority population and the Romani people, and at the same time make both children's and parents' attitudes towards school more positive.

There is a shortage of formally qualified Romani language teachers and day-care staff, and this has contributed to the problems experienced in developing day care and language teaching to meet the needs of the Romani people. Efforts have therefore been made to recruit and train members of the Romani community themselves to carry out these tasks, and the stipulations on formal qualifications have been relaxed to allow easier recruitment of suitable and enthusiastic candidates. This has proved a success.

In 1997, the Ministry of Education approved the introduction of two new vocational qualifications to improve the further education opportunities for the Romani people: a Diploma in Romani Cultural Instruction and a Special Diploma in Romani Cultural Instruction. The idea is that holders of the special diploma could, for example, specialise in teaching Romani.

## *Labour market training*

For almost twenty years the employment authorities have worked in cooperation with the Romani community to provide vocational training for adult Roma. This cooperation has facilitated commitment to the joint objective of reforming the traditional vocational structure to meet the demands of the present day. The most popular fields of training at present are social welfare and healthcare, teacher training for teachers of Romani, training for youth instructors, information technology and music.

*Finnish Romako* is a joint project of the Finnish labour administration and the European Social Fund for Roma who want to take training or enter the labour market. The idea is to develop a packet of measures which will facilitate equality for Romani people in working life. Participants each receive an individualised assessment of their current skills and capacities and the opportunities available to them for both training and work. The project will run through to the end of the year 2000.

The above-mentioned vocational adult education has meant a general rise in the level of education among the Romani people. Roma find it easier to participate in training when there are other members of their own community studying alongside them. Many Roma are now keen to take further vocational training, but they still find themselves in a difficult position in the labour market.

## *Participation and organisational activities*

The development of the Romani people's own organisational activities raises the profile of the Roma and makes the wider society more likely to listen to their opinions. The efforts of the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs have led to Roma becoming involved in decision-making at both national and local level in Finnish society. But much still remains to be done. Indeed, one of the current challenges facing Finnish society is to support Romani participation in the democratic decision-making process. In recent years, a number of Roma have been elected to their local councils and other local decision-making bodies. There are at present five national Romani organisations.

The oldest Romani organisation in Finland is the Romano Missio, founded in 1906. This is a Christian organisation which provides social and child welfare services and runs a children's home and two foster homes. The Romano Missio cooperates with Evangelical Lutheran parishes to organise Romani summer camps and church services in Romani. It publishes its own magazine five times a year, mainly in Finnish but containing some material in Romani.

The Finnish Free Romani Mission was founded in 1964. It publishes a magazine four times a year, mainly in Finnish but with some articles in Romani. It also arranges various religious events, camps for children and young people, and seminars.

The Finnish Romani Society was founded in 1967. It concentrates on pursuing social questions such as discrimination and human rights issues through political channels and the press.

The Association of Romani Contact Persons began work in 1993 in cooperation with the Romani Education Unit in the National Board of Education to develop a network of contact persons in the Romani community. Each contact person serves as a link between local government and the local Romani minority, assists Roma with their problems in the areas of housing, employment and education, and organises events to inform the public on Romani culture.

A new organisation, Gypsies' Future — a support group for young Roma — was set up in 1996 to provide support for Romani children and young people brought up or still living in institutions and foster families.

Poverty and social exclusion make it harder for people to participate in decisions which affect their lives. The principles of participation and partnership require both local and national institutions, the public and the private sector, and people everywhere to work together to eradicate the causes of social exclusion. Participation requires knowledge and the ability to grasp the issues at stake. The Roma generally have little knowledge of how society works.

## *International cooperation and human rights*

The Finnish and Swedish authorities and Romani organisations have been working together since 1969. The Nordic Council of Ministers has also been involved in this cooperation. This is an important area of work, as some 3,000 Finnish-speaking Roma live in Sweden and there is a constant flow of migration between the two countries. The Roma's own Nordic cooperation body is the Nordic Romani Council (Romernas Riksförbund), which has almost twenty member organisations.

The International Romani Union was founded in 1971 and the Roma in Finland have followed its activities from the outset. Finnish Roma also take part every year in the major religious events in the Romani calendar in different parts of Europe.

The United Nations, the European Union, the Council of Europe and other international organisations are paying increasing attention to the protection of national minorities. Both the public authorities and the Romani people in Finland are actively involved in this work.

The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs contributes financially to the work of the Council of Europe's Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies (MG-S-ROM). The Netherlands has also given financial support to MG-S-ROM's work. MG-S-ROM's function is to monitor Romani education, housing, employment and social issues and investigate cases of discrimination and infringement of human rights.

Finland has cooperated with the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to make the 'Finnish model' known around the continent. In this way the participation of Finnish Roma in decision-making affecting their own community has also had a positive impact on the position of Roma in other European countries. The OSCE and the Council of Europe have in recent years sought to develop in other European countries a cooperative body between the public authorities and the Romani minority along the lines of the Finnish model.

Within the EU, Finland has raised human rights issues related to the Roma and has, for instance, influenced the drafting in 1999 of *Guiding principles for improving the situation of the Roma* throughout Europe as a whole, in clarification of Article 13 on discrimination in the Treaty of Amsterdam.

In the international arena, Finland is seeking to develop cooperation on Romani issues between the Council of Europe, the European Union and the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).



The Ministry for Foreign Affairs' input to Finland's human rights policy has also been important for the Roma. One of the main planks of Finland's human rights policy is to monitor and support the development of equality for the Romani people in Europe. The official status enjoyed by the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs in Finland allows it to influence Finnish positions on human rights. The Board can also comment on country reports drawn up by Finland, and in this way raise important matters for general European debate.

## *The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs*

In 1956 the Finnish Government set up an Advisory Board on Gipsy Affairs in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. In 1989 the Board was given permanent status and its name changed to the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs. The Board serves as a link between the Romani people in Finland and the public authorities. Its members are appointed every three years by the Finnish Government. Half of the 18 members represent the Roma, and the other half represent central government.

The Advisory Board's role covers:

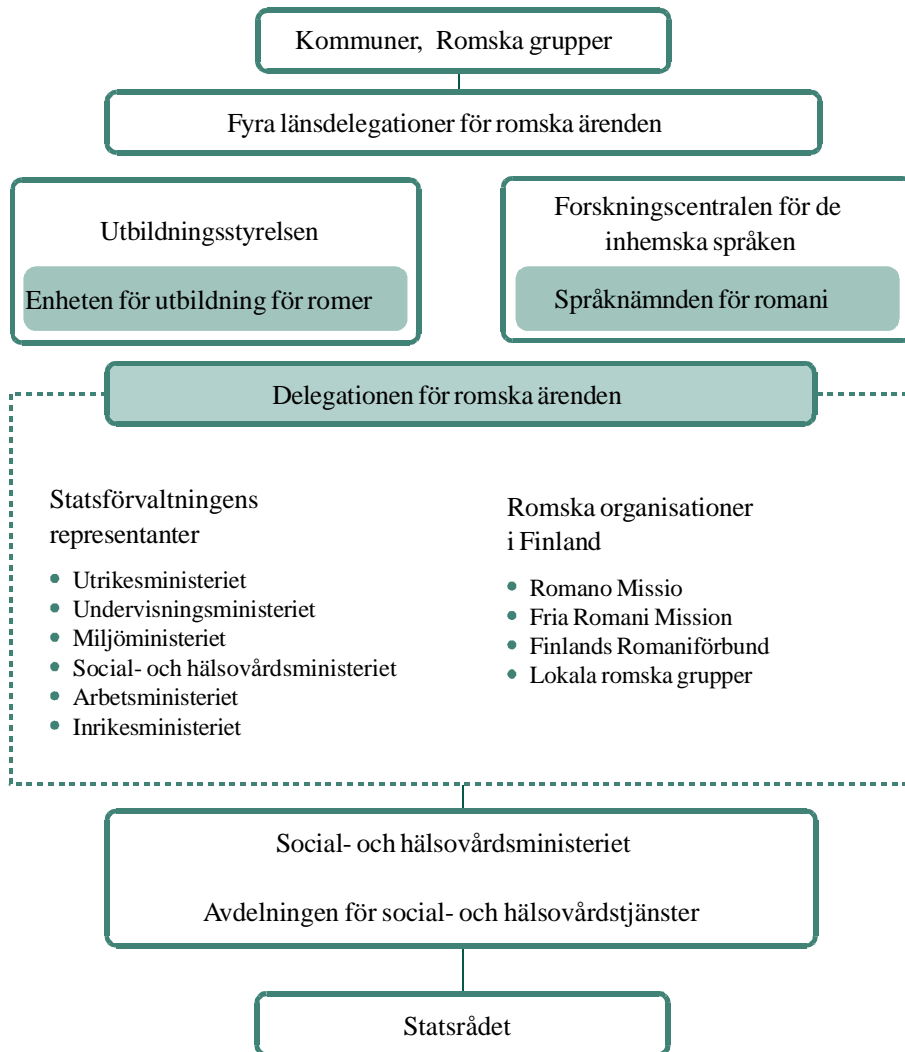
- monitoring and reporting to the authorities on the development of the Romani people's living conditions and opportunities for social participation;
- taking initiatives to improve the economic, educational, social and cultural living conditions of the Romani people and to promote the employment of Roma;
- working to end all forms of discrimination;
- furthering Romani language and culture; and
- participating in international cooperation to improve conditions for the Roma.

The Advisory Board has influenced developments in Finnish legislation and administration in areas which affect the Roma. It contributed to the introduction of positive discrimination in providing special home loans for Roma. It was also an initiative by the Advisory Board which led to the establishment in 1992 of a unit in the National Board of Education with responsibility for vocational training for the Roma; this later developed into the Romani Education Unit. Its functions include the production of educational material for the Roma and the development of adult vocational training tailored to their needs. Similar positive results of cooperation include the addition to the Finnish Constitution during the 1995 reform of constitutional rights of the obligation on the public authorities to take Romani language and culture into account, and the criminalisation in the Penal Code of racial discrimination.

The Advisory Board's work focuses on:

- increasing participation by the Romani people;
- strengthening the relevant statutory framework, and fundamental rights in particular;
- ensuring that Romani language and culture are taken into account in day care and the schools;
- improving the educational level of the Roma;
- disseminating information on social and healthcare issues and special features of Romani culture;
- in the area of housing, providing information for the provincial State offices and local authorities to help develop cooperation between the Romani people, housing officials and said local authorities;
- clarifying the priorities of the policy on Roma and strengthening the position of the Romani minority; and
- developing international cooperation in questions which touch the Romani people.

## Administrationen för romska ärenden i Finland



## *The provincial advisory boards*

On the suggestion of the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, provincial advisory boards were set up on an experimental basis in 1996 with the aim of strengthening the position of the Roma through increasing opportunities for participation. The boards work together with both provincial and local authorities, disseminating accurate information, promoting tolerance and dispelling prejudice. They are also able to mediate in disputes between the authorities and the Roma. The provincial boards have developed into organs of cooperation between the Roma and the authorities. They do not function as interest groups to defend the rights of the Roma against the majority population. Minority participation in decision-making has helped increase cultural pluralism and the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity at local level.

## *The Romani Education Unit*

The Romani Education Unit is an operationally independent unit of the National Board of Education. The work of the Unit is directed by its own management group and is funded out of adult education allocations specially earmarked for Romani education. Its activities are based on the positions adopted by Parliament, the Government and the Ministry of Education, while the regulations governing the National Board of Education also give the Board responsibility for matters relating to the education of linguistic and cultural minorities.

The Romani Education Unit is responsible for:

- developing and implementing the education of the Roma at national level;
- furthering Romani language and culture; and
- educating and informing the general public.

The Unit organises seminars and courses, and together with various public authorities arranges meetings and information sessions for both the Romani people and the majority population. Its published material provides information on its functions and activities. In addition to this, the Unit is also involved in developing international cooperation, information services and support activities in the area of Romani education, while also offering its own expert and guidance services.

Nationwide improvements in Romani education achieved by the Romani Education Unit include the national Romani curriculum for the comprehensive schools in 1992 (and its updated version in 1995) and the national Romani curriculum for the upper secondary schools in 1998. In 1997, the Ministry of Education approved the Unit's recommendation for the introduction of two new vocational qualifications: a Diploma in Romani Cultural Instruction and a Special Diploma in Romani Cultural Instruction.

## *The Romani Language Board*

The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland now has a Romani Language Board with responsibility for conducting research into the Romani language and developing and setting normative standards for the language. The Institute arranges annual seminars on Romani in collaboration with the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, the Romani Education Unit and the Finnish Romani Society.

## *Strategies of the policy on Roma 1999*

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health published in 1999 a report entitled *Romanipolitiikan strategiat*. It will be published in English entitled *Strategies of the policy on Roma* in 2000. The report was written by two independent rapporteurs and based on a survey and the findings of the rapporteurs. After the relevant bodies have expressed their opinion on the report the Ministry will decide on any necessary further action. The rapporteurs found the following issues relevant to the further development of the policy on Roma in Finland.

The socio-economic position of the Roma is weak owing to their low educational level and the general prejudice and discrimination to which they are subjected. The implementation of full and effective equality in the economic, social, political and cultural arenas is still incomplete, although the legislative framework has been secured through the reform of constitutional rights and the ratification of international conventions. In practice, however, the situation on the ground is rather different. Central and local government have taken insufficient steps to secure *de facto* equality. The attainment of *de facto* equality and prevention of social exclusion will require considerable investment in the education of Romani children,

in reducing the prejudices of the majority population and in educating the authorities in minority issues. Romani culture will then be seen for what it is, a valuable cultural resource worth protecting.

Instruction in the Romani language must be made available from day care and pre-school education all the way through to adult education. The language instruction groups in the schools contribute to supporting the identity of Romani youth, and in the lower secondary school in particular language teaching clearly prevents social exclusion. Instruction can be given by a Romani language teacher employed by one or several municipalities who travels from one school to another in the area. The job description of the language teacher can, as far as possible, include the tasks of school assistant and welfare officer. Education is the most efficient way of preventing social exclusion among the Roma, since exclusion often begins in childhood. The provisions of the Children's Day Care Decree must be properly observed. Equality of opportunity must be implemented in practice in the same way as for children of the majority population. More material on Romani culture should be produced for day care and pre-school education, and government grants to the municipalities should be ear-marked for Romani education.

An important part of the policy on Roma concerns participation and influence. Participation is no longer seen as simply consenting to the cultural values of the majority population, but essentially involves protecting one's own cultural identity. The Roma should establish a central organisation of their own. Social policy on the Roma must be tailored to allow their participation in society, and this requires the steering of adequate resources to support the various existing forms of cooperation.

The strategies of the Romani people and the wider society can be brought together administratively in three different ways:

- 1) Joint planning can be instituted by setting up working groups on Roma in the municipalities, whose officeholders and political decision-makers can work with the Romani people to improve living conditions and opportunities for participation.
- 2) Municipalities with only a small Romani population should appoint a Romani contact person to convey information in both directions. This contact person could receive topical information from the authorities and convey it to the Romani community, while also establishing contacts with the local cooperation group on client service in respect of rehabilitation with a view to bringing about a diversified rehabilitation service for Romani people.
- 3) At the provincial level the most important measure is to regularise the status of the provincial advisory boards.

The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs needs additional resources, especially in view of the considerable increase in international contacts and requests for opinions. The Advisory Board was originally set up by an executive decision of the Government and is linked to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The rapporteurs propose that the Advisory Board be given a statutory basis in law and be simultaneously transferred to the Ministry of Education. This proposal is justified by the need to link the policy on Roma more closely to cultural, linguistic and educational policies which are essential for the protection of Romani culture and the prevention of social exclusion among the Romani people.

## *Chronology of the Roma in Finland*

- 1540-1750** Exile and execution of Roma. The Evangelical Lutheran Church denies Roma the sacraments and other services of the Church.
- 1750-1850** An interlude of greater tolerance.
- 1850-1900** Discrimination increases, including a vagrancy law affecting Roma.
- 1900-1969** Repeal of the law permitting the killing of Roma. First report on the policy on Roma produced in 1901. Assimilation policy introduced:
  - in 1952 it is estimated that 1,000 Romani children are in need of a place in a children's home; children are taken from their parents and forcibly placed in children's homes;

- the drive for cultural assimilation means the Romani language cannot be spoken in public;
- a change in policy finally comes at the end of the 1960s, the assimilation policy being abandoned and replaced with social policy;
- Romani organisations become active.

**1970-1990** The first law is passed prohibiting discrimination; social awakening among the Roma; a period of social, educational and cultural policy measures, improvement in housing conditions, beginning of adult education, development of the Romani language and a start to its teaching in the comprehensive schools.

**1991** Increased international cooperation in the human rights of minorities; the majority population reassess the status of Roma, while the Roma's sense of their own identity strengthens; e.g. the Civil Rights Committee proposes the inclusion of a clause in the Constitution safeguarding the right of Roma to maintain and develop their own culture and language. The Constitutional Commission concurs with the Committee's proposal.

**1995** A constitutional amendment is confirmed prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin; the Roma's rights to their own language and culture are guaranteed:

- educational legislation is amended to allow the teaching of Romani in the schools as a mother tongue and its use as a language of instruction;
- the legislation on children's day care is amended to include the goal of supporting Romani children's own language and culture in cooperation with the Romani people.

Weekly radio news broadcasts in Romani begin on the national radio network.

**1997** The law governing the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland is amended to extend the Institute's brief to cover research and standards in the Romani language:

- a Romani Language Board is appointed, four of whose members are Roma.

**1998** Finland signs two important Council of Europe treaties on minority rights:

- the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, in respect of which Finland identifies Romani as a non-territorial minority language of Finland;
- the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, in relation to which Finland identifies the Romani people as a traditional national minority.

**1999** The legislation on the Finnish Broadcasting Company is amended to provide for equal treatment for Finnish and Swedish speakers in programme production and the production of services in Sami, Romani and sign language, with some services also for other language groups.

Education legislation is comprehensively reformed:

- two hours a week of mother tongue instruction is to be provided if there are at least four children in the group;
- for minority language groups such as Sami, Romani and sign language it is now possible, resources permitting, to arrange comprehensive instruction with their own mother tongue as the language of instruction.

Two rapporteurs produce a report entitled *Romanipolitiikan strategiat (Strategies of the policy on Roma)* for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.