



Roma Education Fund



PRESS RELEASE

Embracing the future: Identity, culture and artistic expression in education of Roma children

- Seminar about the role of arts and culture in building positive cultural identity for Roma -

Budapest-Venice, October 15, 2007 -- Embracing the future: Identity, culture and artistic expression in education of Roma children is the title of a seminar starting today in Venice, Italy, with over 40 participants from around Europe.

The seminar will touch the important issue of culture and artistic expression in the education of Roma children as a way to build a positive cultural identity for Roma.

Participating are academics in the field of Roma culture, heads of Roma university centers, representatives of civil society and governments involved in developing methodological tools and approaches for introducing Roma culture in the classroom.

"Governments of the Roma Decade Countries are either introducing Roma culture in education programs, though in a very limited way, or at least have some plans to do so", said Alexandre Marc, the Director of the Budapest-based Roma Education Fund (REF), the main organizer of the event.

"However, most of these components focus on the history of Roma, language and folk art. Very few include contemporary art, dance and music and therefore children tend to have a vision of identity focused on their past and referring to the time when Roma lived in relative separation from mainstream society" concludes Marc.

To change that trend, REF supports collaboration between civil society organizations and governments to develop programs of education for Roma children that include contemporary Roma arts and culture, so to shift the focus from the past to the contemporary values and from separation to inclusion.

Such was a project in which REF supported the strengthening and development of Roma university centers in order to undertake the research and methodology work that would provide Roma children and youth with pedagogical materials and methods to learn, understand and relate to Roma culture.

REF hopes the Venice seminar will help identify areas for development of the existing programs of those centers and explore ways to establish systems of equivalence for students in the field of Roma culture and programs of exchange.

Many of Roma university centers still have limited coordination. Exchange between them should be increased and developed to ensure a global impact. The seminar in Venice aims to contribute to that trend and set-up an international network.

The seminar is co-organized by Paradise Lost-The First Roma Pavilion at the Venice Biennale of Contemporary Art. "Today Roma artists are penetrating Contemporary Art in music, films and visual arts", said Timea Junghaus, curator of the Roma Pavilion, and a program officer in the Arts and Culture Network Program of the Budapest-based Open Society Institute.



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“A new generation of Roma intellectuals and artists is emerging, along with a new Roma consciousness. Contemporary arts and culture can have positive impact on building Roma identity, while in the same time accessing the mainstream audiences. By creating images that oppose those that existed of them in the past, Roma artists are fighting to reverse long-held stereotypes.”

The Roma Education Fund was created in the framework of The Decade of Roma Inclusion. Its goal is to contribute to closing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma, through policies and programs to support quality education for Roma including desegregation of educational systems. The Roma Education Fund finances projects that are proposed and implemented by Governments, NGOs and private organizations. It supports greater research, studies and evaluations that contribute to effective policies and programs for inclusion of Roma in national education systems.

The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015 is a political commitment by governments in Central and Southeastern Europe to improve the socio-economic status and social inclusion of Roma within a regional framework. The Decade focuses on the priority areas of education, employment, health, and housing, and commits governments to take into account the other core issues of poverty, discrimination, and gender mainstreaming. The nine countries taking part in the Decade are Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia. All of these countries have significant Roma minorities, and the Roma minority has been rather disadvantaged, both economically and socially. Each country participating in the Decade has developed a national [Decade Action Plan](#) that specifies the goals and indicators in the priority areas.

Paradise Lost is the first exhibition at the Venice Biennale of Contemporary Art representing an international selection of Roma artists from eight European countries. The ultimate goal of Paradise Lost is to utilize, analyze and destroy the exotic stereotype of the “Gypsies” that has been prevalent in Europe since the 19th century and to put Roma artists on an equal footing in the international art world. This Pavilion, created across national boundaries, will address some fundamental questions and controversy: Is a separate Roma Pavilion necessary? Is there such a thing as Roma art? Does creating a separate space for Roma artists help or hinder social inclusion?

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Notes for the editor:

For more information please call Alexandre Marc on +36-30-565-7098

More about REF: <http://romaeducationfund.hu/>

More about Paradise Lost-The First Roma Pavilion: www.romapavilion.org or write to press.romapavilion@osi.hu

More about Roma Decade: www.romadecade.org

Access to seminar is limited due to the limited space available in the Roma Pavilion.

If you are interested to attend please call Alexandre Marc on +36-30-565-7098.



	<p style="text-align: center;">VENICE SEMINAR Agenda</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Embracing the future: Identity, culture and artistic expression in education of Roma children. The Role of university centers”</p>
<p>Sunday 14 October, 2007</p> <p>19: 30 -21: 30</p> <p>Monday 15 October, 2007</p> <p>9:00- 9:45</p> <p>9: 45-11: 15</p> <p>11:15- 11:30</p> <p>11:30- 13:00</p>	<p>Location: Roma Pavilion Palazzo Pisani, San Marina, Calle delle Erbe, Cannaregio 6103</p> <p>Welcome cocktail and tour of the Roma Pavilion</p> <p>Location: Istituto Veneto Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere de Arti Campo S. Stefano, 2945, 30124</p> <p>Opening of the seminar</p> <p>Opening speech Delia Murer, Deputy Mayor, City of Venice Framing the agenda Alexandre Marc, Director, Roma Education Fund</p> <p>Roma culture and identity in a globalized world Moderator: Rumyan Russinov Deputy Director, Roma Education Fund</p> <p>Roma culture’s contribution to global values Delia Grigore President, . Roma Center “Amare Romentza” and University of Bucharest</p> <p>Roma language as a world language Dieter Halwachs, Institute für Sprachwissenschaft, Graz</p> <p>The emergence of Roma visual art on the world art scene, and the significance of the Roma Pavilion Daniel Baker Roma artist, London</p> <p>Roma music in a globalized world Katalin Kovalcsik Institute of Musicology, Budapest</p> <p>Coffee Break</p> <p>The role of Roma university centers in contributing to the build identity among Roma children and youth. (Achievements and shortcomings)</p> <p>(Each panelist will present her/his views in 5 minutes and then a moderated discussion will follow with a view to assessing what has</p>



	worked and what has not worked). Moderator: Gabriela Hrabanova, Advisor, Prague Panelists: Elena Marushiakova, Bulgarian Academy of Science Agnes Daroczi, Hungarian Institute for Culture and Art Thomas Acton, University of Greenwich Adrian Marsh, Promoting Romani Rights in Turkey research program Tomas Senkyrik, Romani Museum of Brno
13:00- 14:00	Lunch
14:00- 15:30	A vision for the future. What should be the role of university centers? (Each panelist will present possible directions in a 5- to 10- minute presentation. This will be discussed with the audience). Moderator: Jean- Pierre Liégeois, University René Descartes, Paris Panelists: Delia Grigore, University of Bucharest Svenka Savic, University of Novi Sad Juan Francisco Gamella, University of Granada Nadezhda Demeter, Russian Academy of Science
15:30- 16:00	Coffee Break
16:00- 17:30	Establishing a network to support the development of university centers (This panel will make concrete proposals on the role and activities that a network of university centers could play. As in the previous panel the proposals will then be discussed by the audience) Moderator: Gabor Daroczi, National Development Agency, Budapest Panelists: Calin Rus, Intercultural Institute, Timisoara Mihai Surdu, Roma Education Fund, Budapest Florin Manole, University of Bucharest
Tuesday 16 October, 2007	Location: Istituto Veneto Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti Campo S. Stefano, 2945, 30124
9:30- 10:00	Presentation of a proposal for establishing a network based on the previous day's discussion.
10:00-12:00	Discussion of proposal: Activity, timing, membership
12:00- 12:30	Closing Next steps in establishing the network. Alexandre Marc