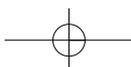


### **Roma, Travellers, Gypsies ...**

The first edition of this book, published in 1985, was entitled *Gypsies and Travellers*. The title of the 1994 edition was *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*. Readers will understand that it is hard, for reasons explained in the sections dealing with social and political organisation, to find a single term for a number of communities that wish to have distinct identities, and equally hard to make a book title out of a list of names. Over the years it has become the practice of European institutions when adopting a text (such as a resolution or recommendation) to use the term 'Roma', followed by a note to the effect that it should be understood to include other designations, of which 'Sinti', 'Gypsies' and 'Travellers' are just a few.

There have been changes, too, in the way language is used and in the connotations of words. Before the 1980s the word 'Rom' was scarcely known in the western part of Europe and so the term 'Gypsy' was used – even by organisations that Roma had founded – in order to make their identity clear to those around them. It was the geopolitical upheaval after 1989 that brought the term 'Rom' to the fore and this was reflected in the European institutions' texts and reports, where usage shifted around 1995 from 'nomads' and 'Gypsies' to 'Roma' and 'Travellers'. Council of Europe practice was to use the term 'Roma/Gypsies' until a fresh shift took place in 2005 when 'Travellers' began to be preferred to 'Gypsies'. The Council of Europe administrative division responsible – the 'Roma and Gypsies division' – thus became the 'Roma and Travellers division'. Likewise, the group of





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*Roma in Europe*

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government representatives set up in 1995 was known as the Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies (MG-S-ROM) until 2002, when it became the Specialist Group on Roma, Gypsies and Travellers. Under the new terms of reference adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 12 July 2006, the MG-S-ROM was then renamed the Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers.<sup>2</sup>

By focusing on the word 'Roma', the title of the new edition reflects this process of change, but it may be understood to mean 'Roma, Travellers and Gypsies', taking account of the variety of communities potentially covered by one or other of the terms, and in some cases by two of them. Experience with translation of the earlier editions also made me aware that, in several languages, there is no equivalent for the term 'Travellers', either as part of a book title or in the body of a text, and in these cases either two terms were used or a different term, better suited to the local context and language, was substituted. The important considerations are to be flexible, to stick as closely as possible to reality and the ways in which language expresses reality, and to respect the range of terms used by the people concerned to refer to themselves, both among themselves and in exchanges with others.

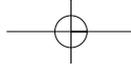
Drawing on information included in the 1985 edition or in other texts that I published before 1985, and paraphrasing the sometimes lengthy notes nowadays inserted at the start of most of the relevant reports, I would say that the term 'Roma', which will be the most frequently used and which features in the title, refers to members of a very wide range of communities: people who may call themselves, for example, 'Roma', 'Travellers', 'Sinti', 'Gitanos', 'Manus' or 'Gypsies'. Prioritising the term 'Roma' in no way minimises or detracts from the diversity and originality of the communities concerned.

As well as 'Roma', the terms 'Roma/Gypsies' and 'Roma and Travellers' will be found throughout the book, used in most cases as shorthand for the whole group of communities under consideration. In some cases, too, the names 'Roma' and 'Travellers' will be used in ways that the reader will understand as a reflection of territorial reality, local or national, and the term 'Gypsies' will also feature, as the designation applied politically by third parties over the course of history and occurring in official texts as well as in social representations and stereotypes.

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2. The French *Gens du voyage* is a very marginal term in the European context. It is an administrative (and literally almost untranslatable) neologism that came into recent use in France to designate a global entity with no singular form (the word *gens* implying more than one person), and even in the context where it originated its administrative application is very restricted. Section 1 of the French Act No. 2000-614, passed on 5 July 2000, concerning the accommodation and living conditions of *Gens du voyage* – the only law specifically directed at that named group – stipulates, for example, that “municipalities shall have a role in accommodating the persons known as ‘*Gens du voyage*’, who traditionally live in mobile homes”. The persons in question thus comprise a limited number of population groups characterised with reference to travel and identifiable – both under the law and in the public eye – by the fact that their homes are moveable. The purpose of the Act is to lay down technical conditions for the accommodation of a particular category of people: it is in no way concerned with a group perceived as culturally or ethnically distinct or as a minority. Some of the people in question may be Roma.





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*A European approach*

It is to be hoped that this book, which sets out to raise awareness and to bring information to those who need it, will reach the largest possible number of readers. Achieving this will demand an effort, as a major flaw in the distribution of such publications – preventing them from doing what they set out to do and keeping information locked within closed circuits – is that they are ordered, acquired and kept by people other than those who need them most. We do hope that anyone with a copy of this book will put the text into circulation. The various sections of the Council of Europe can use it to raise awareness among national administrators, local and regional authorities and other involved parties. The Council of Europe has consistently supported distribution of the book among Roma/Gypsy organisations, where it can be a tool for learning and discussion, assisting such organisations in their dealings with various bodies. The fact is, however, that Roma/Gypsy organisations – for reasons outlined in the second part of the book – are sometimes sceptical about the impact that information can have, taking the view that there have already been too many words, but not enough action to improve what is a difficult situation. It is up to the reader, through his or her response, to prove the contrary.

