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TRAINING ON ROMANI HISTORY AND CULTURE

“ROMA(NI) PAST - EUROPE’S FUTURE. WHY EMBRACING EU’S LARGEST ETHNIC MINORITY MATTERS”

Hosted by
EUROPEAN ROMA INSTITUTE FOR ARTS AND CULTURE (ERiac)

SEPTEMBER 13 2023

WEST UNIVERSITY TIMISOARA
Bulevardul Vasile Pârvan 4, Timișoara 300223, Romania

10.00-17.00 EEST / 09.00-16.00 CET

Context and objectives

The Roma (commonly referred to as “Gypsies” which is an ethnic slur) have been part of the European and national histories and cultural landscapes for over 700 years. Today, the Roma constitute the biggest ethnic minority in Europe with some 10 million citizens in the EU, and a global diaspora of over 15 million people. Yet, despite their centuries-old presence, the Roma remain largely unknown to majority societies. As a people, the Roma are mostly thought of and treated as a social problem, perceived through the prism of marginalization, exclusion and poverty. Moreover, the Roma today are the most stigmatized and the least accepted minority group in the EU; diverse manifestations of antigypsyism - the specific form of racism against the Roma people – are a regrettable feature of daily lives of Roma in Europe. On the other hand, however, the Roma remain a highly resilient and creative population whose diverse contributions to European social, cultural, economic, political, artistic, and even linguistic fields are yet to be acknowledged and embraced.

This training course will provide a brief overview of Roma history and culture as a point of departure to reflect on the social, political, cultural, economic and environmental importance of positioning Roma at the core of EU’s public debates regarding our societal futures. The training, organized in the frame of the ERiacNET4EU project and in connection to the Timisoara European Capital of Culture 2023, is specifically tailored for members of staff of public administration and of

the European Union Institutions. The course will explore the difficult, sensitive or contentious issues related to Roma and antigypsyism, and help identify and incorporate human rights concerns into the work of public officials. This year, the training will specifically target Romanian public authorities by hosting a specific session dedicated to the history and culture of Roma in Romania and by providing simultaneous Romanian-English translation. Speakers of other sessions will be invited to incorporate specific examples which illustrate the Romanian context.

Content of the course

The training will build on scholarship produced in the framework of the [Bavarlipe Roma Online University](#), to reflect most recent and influential academic discussions in the field of Romani Studies. The Barvalipe Roma Online University is an online educational platform where Roma and non-Roma can access knowledge about the Roma identity(ies), history(ies) and culture(s) thorough a collection of high-quality lectures delivered by leading Roma scholars on topics ranging from the Roma Holocaust to Roma cultural productions.

To create a dynamic and participatory learning space, each segment of the course will include a lecture as well as at least twenty minutes of discussion. The course will rely on audio-visual materials to provide more engaging resources and illustrate the discussion.

Trainers: The course will be delivered by a group of experienced Roma scholars, with relevant expertise in the field, including knowledge of the most-recent discussions in Romani studies as well as most-recent Roma-related EU and Romanian developments.

Language of training: English and Romanian (simultaneous translation provided). The training will be streamed live and will be open to public, upon prior registration under [this link](#).

Duration: Six hours, divided into two three-hour seminars, with a lunch break in between

Course schedule:

10:00 – 10:10 EEST Opening remarks by dr. Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka, ERIAC Deputy Director

10:10 – 11:10 EEST **“Introduction to Romani history and identity” by Dr. Adrian Marsch**

Who are the Romani people? Where do they come from? How can we understand the complexity of Romani and Traveller identities and cultures throughout Europe and the world? In this segment, the participants will be given a brief historical overview of Romani and Traveller history, from their departure from the Indian lands, their sojourn in the mediaeval Byzantine Empire, their *diaspora* throughout early modern Europe, the experience of ethnic exclusion, marginalisation and extermination in the modern period, and the communities today.

(40 min lecture + 20 min discussion)

11:10 – 11:20 EEST Break

11:20 – 12:20 EEST **“Roma culture – Europe’s heritage” by Dr. Rosemary Cisneros**

Centuries of presence of Roma in Europe also translates into multifaceted contributions to European and national cultural landscapes. From visual arts to music, from crafts to fashion, the Roma have contributed to the richness of European cultures, from folklore to contemporary arts. In this segment, the participants will discuss multiple contributions and achievements of Roma as part of the European cultural heritage.

(40 min lecture + 20 min discussion)

12:20 – 13:30 EEST Lunch break

13:30 – 14:30 EEST **“Antigypsyism in theory and practice – unpacking different dimensions of racism against Roma communities” by Dr. Iulius Rostas**

Antigypsyism is a specific type of racism against Roma, a phenomenon which is deeply ingrained into majority perceptions and institutions. In this segment, the participants will understand the diverse manifestations of antigypsyism and will learn about different strategies of working against it. Specific examples will be provided to show the multilevel and complex

character of antigypsyism in daily lives, media, public institutions, among others. Historical and contemporary stereotypes will be examined and deconstructed in dialogue with the participants.

(40 min lecture + 20 min discussion)

14:30 – 15:30 EEST **“From Roma Resistance to Roma Agency” by Dr. Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka**

What are the strategies employed by Roma to deal with diverse manifestations of antigypsyism they face in their daily lives? How are the Roma themselves becoming agents of change in their own communities and the society at large?

Recounting the story of the Roma Uprising in the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp during WWII will be a starting point to reflect on the history of social, cultural and political resilience developed by Roma in response to the historically hostile social environments.

This segment of the course will discuss Roma Resistance strategies by providing specific examples, ranging from political activism, civic participation, Roma cultural movement, as well as Roma youth activism, Roma women’s movement and the struggle of the LGBTIQ Roma people.

(40 min lecture + 20 min discussion)

15:30 – 15:40 EEST Break

15:40 – 17:00 EEST **“Romanian Roma – from slavery to emancipation” by Dr. Ioan Valentin Negoii and Adela Bobu**

Roma have lived on the territories of contemporary Romania for centuries and during this time have been subjected to slavery and other forms of mistreatment. At the same time, Roma have provided innumerable contributions to contemporary Romania’s culture, society and economy. Romania is also a country with the biggest population of Roma in the EU. In this segment, the participants will receive a detailed historical overview, followed by a discussion of the current situation of Roma communities in Romania.

(50 min lecture + 30 min discussion)

BIOGRAPHIES OF THE TRAINERS:

Adela Bobu is a law and psychology student with a background of 10 years of volunteering. She had a couple of corporate jobs but felt the need to do something more meaningful while staying true to her beliefs and identity. Now she is an activist for Aresel.

Dr. Rosemary (Rosa) Kostic Cisneros is a researcher, dancer, choreographer, sociologist and curator who works at the Centre for Dance Research (Coventry University) and works closely with the RomArchive, European Hip Hop Studies Network and many NGOs. She leads various EU-funded projects which aim to make education and arts accessible to vulnerable groups and ethnic minorities, and part of cultural heritage projects that bring dance, site and digital technologies together.

Her PhD is in Sociology with a focus on Roma women, intersectionality, dialogic feminism and communicative methodologies and was awarded Summa Cum Laude. She also sits on academic Journals as an editorial assistant and those include the Journal for Embodied Practices, International Journal of Romani Studies and OneDance UK's HOTFOOT Online magazine.

Cisneros' dance films have screened in the UK, US, Colombia, Mexico, Greece, Cyprus and Germany and her medium-length documentary won best documentary from the UK in 2016.

Dr. Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka is an anthropologist and a Roma activist, born in Poland. She earned her Ph.D. in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). She is the author of various policy evaluations, reports and articles, as well as co-editor and author of books.

She has been an employee, member, founder, and collaborator of numerous Roma organisations in Poland and Spain i.e. a European project coordinator at the Federation of Roma Associations in Catalonia (FAGIC) and an Open Society Foundations Roma Initiatives Fellow, conducting a comparative study of the Roma associative movements in various countries of Latin America and Europe. She was also the coordinator and curator of the Academic Section (aka. Roma Civil Rights Movement Section) in the RomArchive – Digital Archive of the Roma. Between 2017-2018 she was a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow of the Romani Studies Program at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest. She serves as the deputy director of ERIAC since January 2018.

Dr. Adrian R. Marsh is of U.K. Romany-Traveller origins, a researcher in Romani Studies and an expert consultant in Romani and Traveller early years' education, working with Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities and NGO's (such as ERIAC, the RomArchive, and the Edirne Romanlar Foundation) in the UK, Sweden, Turkey, Egypt, Azerbaijan, and across Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

Dr. Adrian Marsch has been lecturing and publishing in Romani Studies and was a Researcher in Romani Studies at Greenwich University (London). He has worked with the UK Traveller Education Service in London (2000-2002), as a consultant for Save the Children Sweden (Europe programme), the British Council in Turkey, the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, the European Commission in Brussels, the Delegation for Roma Questions in Sweden, the European Roma Rights Centre in Budapest and taught at plenty of universities in Europe and around the world.

Dr. Ioan Valentin Negoï has a PhD in History since 2021. His doctorate degree was obtained from the Valahia University from Târgoviște, Romania. In 2023 he published his doctoral thesis "Deportation of ROMA from Muntenia to Transnistria during the period 1942-1944".

He graduated the Faculty of Humanities, specialization in history within the Valahia University of Târgoviște and the master program of the "Unity of European history" on the same university. He is currently a pre-university teacher. In addition, Valentin is also a librarian/archivist at Roma Education Fund.

Dr. Iulius Rostas is a Visiting Professor at the National School of Political Studies and Administration (Romania) and teaches courses on racism at the University of Stuttgart and Dortmund University of Applied Sciences, currently living and working in Berlin. He has worked for the Open Society Foundations, the European Roma Rights Center and the Government of Romania and consulted the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the World Bank, the European Commission and the Roma Education Fund.