

92ND PEN INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

29–30 September 2026 · Online

Romani PEN

A transnational literary home for
Romani writers

Presented for admission to PEN International

Proposed by PEN Català · Seconded by PEN Sweden



"Safeguarding our Romani Language", 6th International conference
with Romani PEN Founding members,
ERAC Berlin, 5 November 2025

WHO WE ARE

A community defined by a language, not a border

Romani PEN is a transnational community of Romani writers, poets, translators, linguists, journalists, bloggers, academics, editors and cultural workers committed to literature, freedom of expression, and the protection and promotion of the Romani language and creativity.

Constituted in accordance with the Charter of PEN International.
Administrative coordination is hosted at the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERAC), Berlin.

23

signatories to the PEN
Charter

15

countries across Europe
and beyond

WHAT WE BUILD ON

Founded on ERIAC's Romani Language Initiative, independent in its own right

ERIAC's Romani Language Initiative, launched in 2020, works under a Council of Europe mandate on the harmonisation of the Romani language. Romani PEN inherits that infrastructure.

Romani PEN will operate independently, and on a much broader scope. Its constitution guarantees that its governance, membership, activities, finances and decision making are determined exclusively by its own governing bodies.

Constitution of Romani PEN, § 1

OUTPUTS OF THE ROMANI LANGUAGE INITIATIVE

Database of Romani language experts — a resource for translators, language educators and interpreters

A network of universities: Bucharest, Sorbonne, Charles, Pécs, Novi Sad, Söderthorn, Graz, Manchester and Helsinki

The annual International Conference “Safeguarding Romani Language”

Educational materials: textbooks for adults at A1, A2 and B1 level, based on the Curriculum Framework for Romani

A TRANSNATIONAL LANGUAGE

Romani belongs to no single state

An Indo-Aryan language that spread from the Indian subcontinent through Persia, Armenia and the Byzantine Empire into Europe, absorbing Greek and European influences along the way.

Its dialect groups — Balkan, Vlax, Central and Nordic — remain largely mutually intelligible across South-Eastern and Central-Eastern Europe.

3.5m

speakers — among Europe's largest minority languages

1992

recognised as a non-territorial language by the European Charter

10

states have applied the Charter to Romani; implementation remains uneven

AN ENDANGERED LANGUAGE

Romani is listed in UNESCO's Red Book of Endangered Languages

3.5 m

speakers of Romani, out of 12 to 14 million Roma worldwide (every fourth Roma person speaks the language)

Over the years there have been repeated attempts to standardise Romani. Despite recognition at European level, the sociolinguistic conditions of its speakers continue to reveal structural challenges.

1

Limited access to education

2

Social stigmatisation and self-censorship

3

Unequal institutional recognition

3

Fragmentation and lack of standardisation

4

Digital marginalisation

Romani PEN is therefore also a platform for the preservation and development of the Romani language.

A literature without a state needs a centre without borders

Freedom of expression became constrained not through direct censorship, but rather through structural inequalities and linguistic exclusion.

Romani Language and Freedom of Expression in Europe — assessment report prepared for the Romani PEN initiative

PEN Centres are founded on linguistic and literary identity, not on geography or statehood. Yiddish PEN and Tibetan PEN are our precedents.

Romani literature is inherently transnational, yet its writers work in fragmented national environments without coordinated international support.

For centuries Roma have been written about from the outside. Romani PEN exists so that Roma write, publish and translate on equal footing.

THE LEGACY

A Romani PEN existed before

Rajko Đurić (1947–2020) was a pioneering scholar and author who wrote the first history of Romani and Sinti literature, served as President of the International Romani Union, and was General Secretary to a former attempt to build a Romani Centre under the auspices of PEN International.

Romani PEN is founded in continuity with the legacy of Roma intellectuals and activists who have worked since the First World Romani Congress in 1971 to advance Romani language, literature and cultural expression.

The initiative to re-establish the Centre was developed in March 2025 by Timea Junghaus, in her capacity as executive director of ERIAC, together with the writer and poet Nedjo Osman.



Barcelona, 1996 — Universal Declaration on Linguistic Rights. Roma PEN, with Rajko Đurić as General Secretary, remained active until 2012.

HOW THE CENTRE WAS FORMED

Two public meetings



27 MARCH 2025 · ERIAC BERLIN AND ONLINE

First public meeting

Writers, poets, translators, journalists and scholars convened with PEN International Vice President Carles Torner. A temporary steering committee was appointed to draft the constitution.



5 NOVEMBER 2025 · INTERNATIONAL ROMANI LANGUAGE DAY

Second public meeting

Held at the 6th International Conference on Safeguarding Romani Language, with the Council of Europe. Founding members signed the PEN Charter.

91ST CONGRESS · KRAKÓW,
SEPTEMBER 2025

Romani PEN at Kraków, as an aspiring Centre

Delia Grigore attended on behalf of the temporary steering committee, meeting the PEN International leadership and colleagues from other aspiring Centres.

She reported back to the founding membership in Berlin that November.



Delia Grigore with PEN International leadership



With colleagues from the aspiring Yiddish PEN Centre



OUR COMMITMENT

Every member has signed the PEN Charter

We stand for literature without borders, artistic freedom and the diversity of opinion, and we advocate for authors who are threatened, persecuted or hindered in their freedom of expression.

Constitution of Romani PEN, § 2

Three interlinked commitments

01

An international network

Writers, translators, scholars and editors across borders, with annual assemblies and representation at the PEN International Assembly.

02

Publication pathways

Agreements with European publishers, a first supported volume by 2028, and an open-access digital library of Romani literature.

03

Freedom of expression

Visibility, solidarity and international connection for Roma writers and journalists working in fragmented national environments.

The questions a centre can help answer

“How one might write, as a Roma author, not a ‘Roma subject’ but literature, in such a way that identity is present within it, yet not as a theme but as a point of view.”

The question at the heart of the winning proposal by Tamás Jónás, founding member of Romani PEN

Building on the existing partnership between ERIAC and the DAAD, Romani PEN will facilitate literary residencies and support mobility for its members.

FOUNDING MEMBERS

Twenty-three signatories, fifteen countries

1 of 2



Sevdija Abdulova
Translator, poet
North Macedonia



Tayo Awosusi-Onutor
Writer, singer
Germany



Kateřina Badoová
Representative of
Paramisara, Roma
women writers club
Czech Republic



Nikolaos Batzalis
Philologist, book editor
Greece



Isaac Blake
Executive director, RCAC
United Kingdom



Jake Bowers
Journalist, filmmaker
United Kingdom



Ismael Cortés
Executive Director,
Instituto de Cultura
Gitana
Spain



Delia Mădălina Grigore
Ethnologist, poet
Romania



Ian Hancock
Linguist, Romani scholar
United States



Gilda Horvath
Journalist
Austria



Sejhan Jasarov
Translator
North Macedonia



Tamás Jónás
Writer
Hungary

FOUNDING MEMBERS

Poets, novelists, journalists, translators, scholars

2 of 2



Timea Junghaus
Art historian, curator
Hungary



Hristo Kyuchukov
Professor, Romani
language expert
Bulgaria



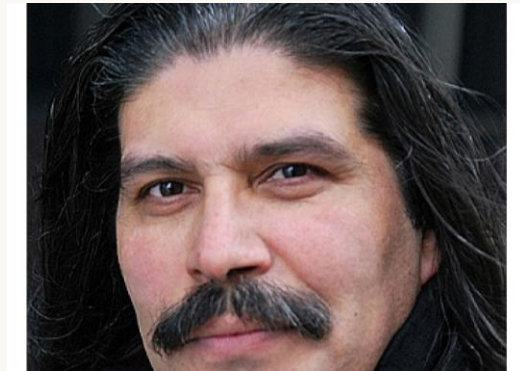
Damian James Le Bas
Writer, filmmaker
United Kingdom



Luminița Mihai-Cioabă
Writer in Romani
Romania



Anna Mirga-
Kruszelnicka
Executive director, ERIAC
Poland



Nedjo Osman
Poet, theatre director
Serbia / Germany



Madeline Potter
Author
Romania / UK



Frances Roberts Reilly
Author, poet
Canada



Diana Sima
Translator
Romania / Germany



Santino Spinelli
Musician, composer
Italy



Mihaela Zătreanu
Romani language expert
Romania

THANK YOU

A people whose literary tradition
transcends national borders has a
rightful place within an international
community built upon literature.

With thanks to the Board of PEN
International

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Romani PEN · hosted at ERIAC, Berlin ·
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