



ROMANI | CULTURE

Factsheets on Romani Culture: General Introduction

0.0

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In order to prevent unnecessary discussions and misunderstandings, we would like to mention that the term “culture” is henceforth always to be understood in the sense of the UNESCO definition:

Culture is a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of a society or a social group, and it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

Homogeneity among the Roma, Sinti, Calè and many other European population groups who are collectively referred to by the mostly pejorative term “gypsies” cannot be assumed, neither politically nor socially, let alone culturally. The introductory Factsheet 1.0 consequently concludes that “the reality of Romani culture is complex and multilayered”, a fact that pervades any serious description of Romani culture, not only in this context. Accordingly, the following presentation by no means meets the demands of a full description, but seeks to give an impression of plurality and heterogeneity of Romani culture. The ideal instrument for this is the open form of individual factsheets in open groups and lists which can be extended if necessary. The groups/lists started to date can be described as follows:

1_ GENERAL DESCRIPTIONS

Summary of Romani culture, such as Factsheet 1.0, or its development, such as 1.1, a general overview of selected features of the Romani culture, such as 1.6 and 1.7, the discussion of the socio-cultural situation of Roma in Europe’s major regions, such as 1.2, or the description of the socio-cultural situation of larger groups with a common, unifying characteristic, for instance in Factsheet 1.3 “Muslim Roma”.

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2_ CULTURAL VARIATION

This area comprises descriptions of specific features of Romani communities which are not necessarily found in all groups, such as internal jurisdiction, *kris romani*, in Factsheet 2.1, the institution of godparenthood, *kirvipen/kirvimos*, in Factsheet 2.2, or the belief in 'the evil eye', in Factsheet 2.3.

3_ ROMANI GROUPS

This area covers descriptions of the socio-cultural situation of individual Romani groups, such as the Gábor in Transylvania (Romania) in Factsheet 3.1, the Vlaxika Rom in Slovakia and the Czech republic in Factsheet 3.3, the Roma in Estonia in Factsheet 3.7, or the Russian Roma in Factsheet 3.15. The sequence and selection of the various groups represented are random and arbitrary and hence have no underlying logical plan.

These three areas can be extended and supplemented with additional areas within each frame.

LITERATURE

In accordance with the plurality and heterogeneity of the issue, there have so far been no comprehensive descriptions of the culture of the Roma, Sinti, Calè and all other European population groups who are collectively referred to by the mostly pejorative term “gypsies”. Titles which include “Romani culture” are for the most part limited to a few aspects or characteristics of the ethnic culture of local and regional groups. In addition to anthologies, it is especially articles in established journals which deal with various aspects of the topic, including:

Etudes Tsiganes (in French)

Romani Studies / Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society (in English)

Romano Džaniben (in Czech with English summaries)

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