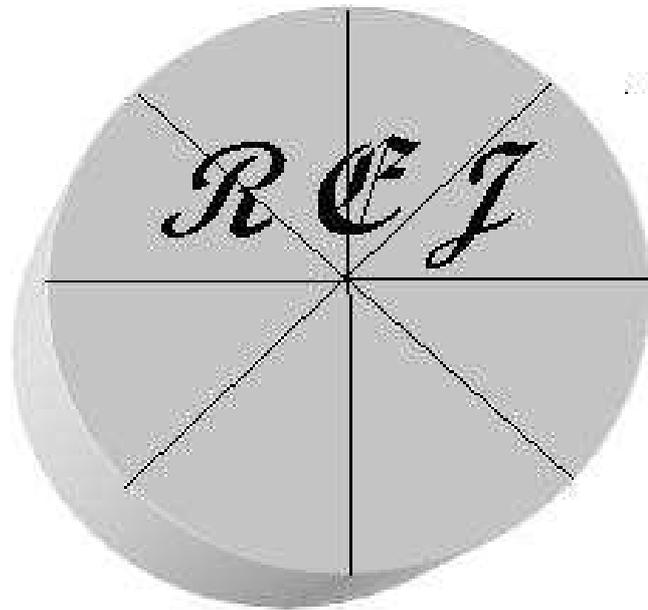


# *Romani E Journal*

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## Concepts and Definitions

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## **Editorial and Summary of Contributions**

People who are involved in Romani related matters use a certain terminology. However, although most of these people often use the same words and concepts, the definitions of the same words and concepts may vary quite a lot depending on who is speaking. As an example, some people use the concept “integration” as a synonym for “assimilation” while others see the two concepts as having different meanings. The way in which we define a concept decides how we think, speak and act in connection to it. Our definition of a concept may also decide how we are understood when using the concept. If we define the concept “Europe” as a geographical entity all countries with territory in Europe will be European and all people living in Europe will be Europeans. If we however define “Europe” as a cultural community or an identity based on a set of common values only certain countries will be European and only certain people will be Europeans. The same can be said about concepts in legal instruments and policy documents. Differences in definitions of concepts might seem abstract, but they may also have quite concrete consequences in the lives of human individuals.

This issue of Romani E Journal contains one article written by Gregor Dufunia Kwiek. In a philosophical way he discusses the definitions of various concepts used in connection to strategies of Romani inclusion of the European Union. Two central concepts in this context are “integration” and “inclusion”. Kwiek concludes his discussion by saying that there is a variety of definitions but the purpose of the various definitions is to contextualize them into strategies for Romani inclusion.

# **EU Strategies for Romani Inclusion: Terms and their Meaning**

**by**

Gregor Dufunia Kwiek

The purpose of this article is a practical one. The European Union has begun implementing strategies in several member states towards Romani inclusion. A problem that continually comes up during the stage of implementation is an issue related to terminology and the definitions of certain terminology. Terms that have become quite common in these strategies are those like “inclusion” and “exclusion”, “antiziganism”, and “bridge builders/mediators”. Inclusion has come to be a synonym for integration, and exclusion for segregation, while antiziganism has been understood to be a form of racism towards Romani people, and mediators are described in different ways by different people. To an extent the misinterpretation of these terms or their distance to what they are associated, constructs obstacles to the very objective of these strategies. In other words, the objective of the strategy is harder to meet when these terms are improperly applied outside of their intent. For this reason, this article shall explore the association of these terms, contextualize their meaning, what obstacles come about because of interpretation and even suggest what needs should be addressed in relation to these terms.

## **Inclusion and Exclusion**

Inclusion has become synonymous with integration within the strategies for Romani inclusion. The dictionary.com has the following definitions for integration:

1.  
an act or instance of combining into an integral whole.
2.  
an act or instance of integrating a racial, religious, or ethnic group.

3.

an act or instance of integrating an organization, place of business, school, etc.

4.

Mathematics. the operation of finding the integral of a function or equation, especially solving a differential equation.

5.

behavior, as of an individual, that is in harmony with the environment.

6.

Psychology. the organization of the constituent elements of the personality into a coordinated, harmonious whole.

7.

Genetics. coadaptation (def 2).

Thus what we can conclude from these definitions for the word integration is a combination of various parts into one whole. We can conclude, based on this understanding of integration that humanity has not been very successful as far as integration is concerned. This however does not mean that there is no effort in the area.

Let us look towards the United States, where we have a melting pot of various religions, ethnic groups and races. In the U.S. calendar, we will find religious holidays that are Christian and Jewish, we will find days marked as St. Patrick's Day, and Black History Month. These holidays and calendar markings are explained to U.S. citizens at an early age, both via school curriculum as well as media. In this way, members that make up the U.S. population have knowledge about dominant groups that they themselves may or may not belong to directly, but form and shape a single group of various peoples that share this knowledge. Catholics and Protestants differ from one another, and yet both are Christians. The differences between the two are known and those differences are taught by the preachers to the congregation. The two beliefs differ, but are integrated into one category because they have similarities, which are commonly known to its respective followers, while the distinctions are taught to show what

distinguishes them apart from one another. This does not mean that there is tolerance and no friction between the two groups of beliefs, but what this does show is that knowledge about these two beliefs is what integrates them into a single category as Christian.

To examine this interpretation of integration further, and where integration can lead to tolerance, let us examine a neighborhood where various people live. If the neighbors do not share the same religion, and have no knowledge of one another's religion, there will be less tolerance among them, when members of these various religions will actively practice the norms and traditions of their respective religion. Hence, when a Jewish neighbor fasts, and looks weak and tired, his/her Christian neighbor understands more so why such a person has such an appearance rather than assuming that the person in question is hung-over, on drugs, or whatever else that can come to mind in association to such an appearance.

Based on this reflection, we can conclude that in order to acquire integration, people in contact with one another need to learn about one another, in order to tolerate one another; hence one creates integration where all members of different groups come together to form a larger group, and is a group because it shares certain knowledge about one another that permits them to co-exist in greater harmony with one another.

Now that we have examined not only the definition of integration but the method that is used to create it, let us examine the word inclusion. Dictionary.com uses the following definition for inclusion:

1.  
the act of including.
  
2.  
the state of being included.
  
3.  
something that is included.
  
4.  
Biology. a body suspended in the cytoplasm, as a granule.

5.

Mineralogy. a solid body or a body of gas or liquid enclosed within the mass of a mineral.

6.

Petrography, xenolith.

7.

Logic, Mathematics. the relationship between two sets when the second is a subset of the first.

Prior to comparing inclusion to integration, let us consider first what inclusion is. In the definitions 1-3, we understand inclusion to be a part of something, in contrast to not being a part of something. This very idea of this interpretation can easily be understood as being synonymous with integration. But let us examine the definition in number 7. Ice cream for example can have two sets, one would be the ice cream itself, then the second set would be the flavors it is available in and this would be the subset of the first. Even if the ice cream has only one flavor, that single flavor will still be a subset of the ice cream. The absence of a flavor cannot exist, it must be included, and after all, the ice cream is not flavorless. So what are we saying? Are we saying that inclusion means that a set cannot exist without a subset? Certainly not! Exclusion is real and exists, but only in contradiction to inclusion. What is being said is that an object has various elements that make it a whole, like a shoe with strings and other things that make it a shoe. So for example, if employment is an abstract object that contains elements made up of humans performing certain functions in exchange for money or other products, then employment is a whole when all parts are included. Without those parts, employment cannot exist! And since employment does not demand that these humans have a particular skin color, social ranking, or a historical background, the concept of employment should be available to all humans regardless of their social stand. It is understood that one human may be chosen over another because of a skill that one individual may have in a recruiting situation. However the recruitment looks more at the ability to carry out the tasks the job demands rather than looking at the social background of the person.

Thus the distinction that can be drawn between integration and inclusion is that integration seeks to bring together different parts to make a whole, while inclusion is something that is a whole with different parts. Certain members and groups of society are excluded from

participation in areas such as housing, employment, healthcare, and education, even though their membership within such a group gives no reasonable or logical argument to why such groups or individuals should be excluded and yet they are.

Romani inclusion should not be reliant on integration, although measures towards integration can be used to reach Romani inclusion. Generally employers need not have social knowledge about a person applying for the job, as long a person has the qualities that the job requires. We however know that often this is not the case! Let us use another example with housing. A landlord need not know very much about a prospecting tenant's religion, if the prospect fulfills the criteria set forth by the landlord for renting, then this is what the landlord should consider and not the applicant's religious beliefs. To put it simply, integration is more of a matter of choice, while inclusion is something that should be available to all humans in the same way. Now that we have addressed the difference between these terms, let us look further towards how one shall address this problem, by looking at the counterparts of the terms discussed earlier.

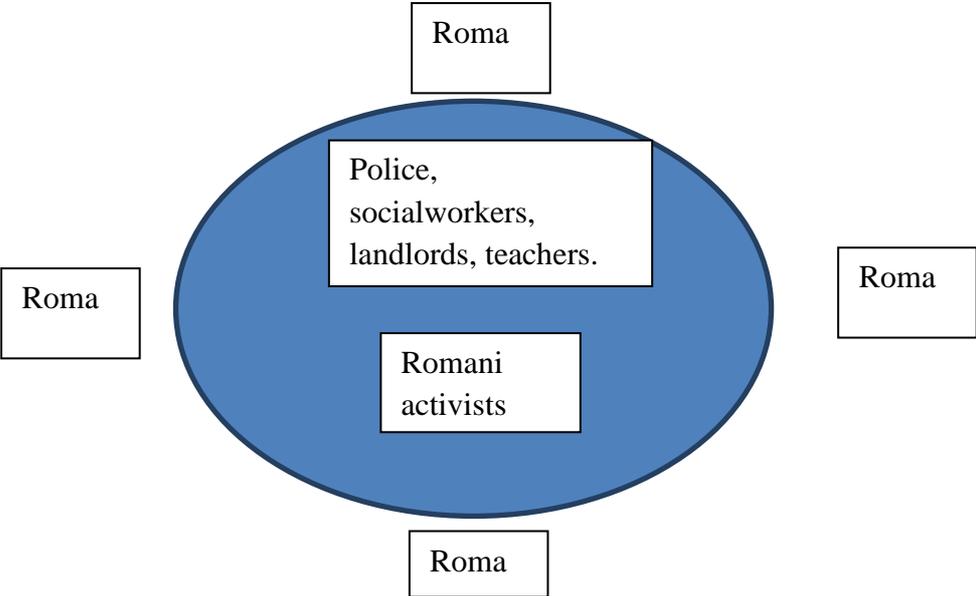
Like integration, segregation can be a matter of choice. In fact, segregation can be used to promote inclusion. The Romani population in Europe has been excluded historically. As an example, Roma were not given the opportunity to attend schools in Sweden until the late 1960's. This meant that Romani children who went to school during the 1970's had parents who had little understanding of the educational system, and were not able to be of assistance to their children that were going to school. The fact of the matter is that Roma were not only excluded from social arenas in education, employment, healthcare and housing, they were not a part of the developmental stage in the voting process, business, unions, safeguard systems like insurance, laws and regulations, the process to affect government and society. And as such, and because of this, there are Roma who lack basic knowledge in these areas. What many take for granted in society in general, are large steps for many Roma. As this is the case, specific methods that are aimed at the Romani population alone, separate from other groups in society, are tactics that can be viewed as a form of segregation, however the objective of these tactics are geared towards the promotion of inclusion.

### **Antiziganism**

There are those that apply the term antiziganism to racism towards Roma, and although racism towards Roma can be a part of antiziganism, racism towards Roma is more so an

effect of antiziganism than antiziganism itself. Anitiziganism is based on associations commonly attributed to negative stereo-types. In other words, antiziganism is a perception, where people tend perceive Roma according to an image of what a Cigan or Gypsy is rather than the actual persons that are Roma. There are those that argue that the term should be antiromanism, but since Cigan/Zigan and Gypsy is a name placed upon the Roma by non-Romani members, and the proper name is Roma or Romani, antiziganism is based on the perception people of the Cigan/Zigan rather than the actual Roma. Furthermore, even Roma themselves contribute to antiziganism since they commonly lack knowledge about their own history, believe in some of the external stereotypes that have been applied to them, such as not being able to achieve great things in society as non-Roma do, and have prejudices as well about other Romani groups because of the lack contact between them. The difference between Romani society and non-Romani society when it comes to these prejudices is that when it comes to the Roma, those prejudices may hinder integration, but do not have so much an effect on inclusion as does non-Romani society. Meaning that the Roma may limit themselves from participating in the integration process, but cannot exclude non-Roma from areas such as employment, housing, healthcare and education, while the non-Roma can when it comes to Roma.

Antiziganism is a mechanism that leads to exclusion and segregation. Largely, many members of the Romani community are afraid and distrust majority society; hence they keep a distance from it in some cases, and often conceal identity because of this. While although many members of the majority society also have fears and distrust Roma, the difference between them is that the fears and distrust of the majority society leads to the exclusion of the Roma.



In the chart above, the inner circle is inclusive of Romani activists, officials and others in positions of power that come into contact with Roma. The method and idea within the circle is to gather input from Romani activists in order to work with Romani people, this however is problematic since the Romani activists within the circle lack knowledge about the various groups, have their own prejudices, are affected by those within the circle rather than affecting those within the circle. This circumstance can lead to the exchange of one image for another and can bring negative affects in the meetings between these officials and Roma, resulting in even further exclusion.

To challenge antiziganism one need know an abundance about Romani culture and traditions (although this is helpful for Romani integration), but to understand the circumstances. Once these circumstances are understood, that is the conditions which create antiziganism, it is far easier to take a critical approach towards information that is given about Roma, and with that one be bettered prepared for interaction with Roma.

### **Bridge builders/Mediators**

Rather than using both terms, mediators and bridge builders, we have chosen to use bridge builders for the discussion in relation to this term in this section. The idea behind having bridge builders is for the bridge builders to build a bridge of trust between the Romani community and the majority society. Most Romani activists are in agreement that bridge builders need to be a part of institutions that have contact with Romani people and at the planning/strategic level as well. The discussion in the section above on antiziganism stipulates that Romani participation in such institutions can contribute to antiziganism rather than combating it, however, when such a contribution is made, it is related to the prejudice or lack of knowledge that bridge builders have. For this reason we will first discuss what a bridge builder needs to know before we actually understand the role and function of a bridge builder.

The Romani exodus from India took place approximately 1,000 years ago. The Romani language came into being once it fused with other languages it acquired along the way into Europe. The Roma began to spread into different parts of Europe during the 1300's. As the Roma spread into different parts of Europe, and were separated from one another for several centuries, the culture, religious beliefs, and language underwent both an evolutionary change as well as an influenced one.

The evolutionary process that changed the Romani language is one that has occurred with all languages. Economization is a process where speakers tend to shorten words. The word kodova (that one) was shortened by different Romani groups in different ways. The word kodova was shortened to kova among some dialects, while in others it was shortened to dova or kodo. A number of other words have undergone a similar process, add to this influence from other languages they came into contact with, where words were loaned, and even accentual affect took place, and the dialects then soon began to come to point to where speakers had difficulty communicating with one another.

To add further to this, the lack of contact between Romani groups, and the lack of media tools such as radio, and literature, has led to there being little knowledge about various Romani groups amongst various Romani groups. It is for this very reason that researchers have spread incorrect information about the Roma, since they always had a small group of Romani informants that commonly belonged to a single family or clan, who they themselves regarded Romani culture according to the way they practiced it without knowing that other Roma may practice them differently from themselves.

It is thus vital that Romani bridge builders have an understanding of this occurrence, without actually knowing about all of the distinctions of all the Romani groups. It is vital that they come to know that the distinctions exist, so they themselves do not contribute with misinformation in portraying the Roma as a collective that does not have distinctions in it.

The acquisition of this knowledge is also relevant so that bridge builders can await to encounter Roma that are distinct in culture from what they understand Romani culture to be, and this helps them in the process with being prepared to learn and acquire knowledge about the various groups they come into contact with.

Along with this knowledge, bridge builders need to learn more about structures, regulations and laws that organize the institutions they work in. The roll of a bridge builder is a function, and that function is to build a bridge between the Romani community and majority society. Bridge builders themselves must find the method with which they create this bridge of trust, however, it needs to be understand that the role requires knowledge in how to communicate information across the bridge and back, and should also be reliant on pre-existing networks that bridge builders already have as a starting point.

The purpose with this function is to create a bridge that will eventually not be needed. Hence, the bridge builder not only has the function of building trust between the two groups, but to create a transition, where Roma can go from exclusion to inclusion. But the question is how?

The Romani population has largely been excluded from participation in majority society. Earlier we had used education as an example to show how exclusion in this area has led to the situation where Roma have little tradition and understanding with/of the schooling system. Thus the bridge builder needs to assist in developing this tradition and understanding of the various bodies of service where the Roma are excluded. This would mean that the bridge builder not only has the objective of spreading information to the Romani community in his/her role but also needs to spread information on how the Romani community can obtain information relevant to them on their own.

The work tasks that are most relevant for the bridge builder are not the administrative duties he/she has in his/her institution, but the very planning of what is needed for their function to bring prosperity. For the sake of inclusion, those that hire the bridge builder should be prepared to make the bridge builder a part of their structure, by slowly integrating their function into the institution, meaning that the tasks a bridge builder has should slowly be integrated or replaced by tasks that are common to the institution. Why is this important? Let us say that the bridge builder works at a welfare office, this bridge builder will eventually need to target other groups that come into contact with the welfare office. This can be done by taking the position of a receptionist or other positions that are a contact point with people for example. This in itself will have an effect on the way people perceive the Roma. They will grow accustomed to seeing Romani people in such positions, instead of being treated as a “special group”. In order to achieve Romani inclusion this transition must take place. If bridge builders are only used for the function of developing a bridge of trust, without this transition, the bridge will collapse before it can be actually used.

## **Conclusion**

This article was largely a philosophic discussion. Naturally, one can find various definitions for these terms that have been presented above, however the purpose with the definitions and clarifications around these terms for this article has been to contextualize them into the EU strategies for Romani inclusion.

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