

The prejudicial treatment of 'our' and 'other' Romas in Finnish education

ROMtel
Fred Dervin
University of Helsinki
Finland



← Tweet



Harri Simolin @harrisimolin 2h

Romanit kertoivat tänään, että @HelsinkiPoliisi potki heitä hereille taas puistossa. Koska ihmisarvoa alentava kohtelu loppuu @HuhtelaJussi?

← 5 ♡ 1 ✉



Tinyphantazma @tinyphantazma 1h

@harrisimolin @JussiMarttila @HuhtelaJussi nii siis eiks laillisesti maassaolevilla ole oikeus leirytyä maanomistajan luvalla.

← ♡ ✉



Harri Simolin @harrisimolin 1h

@tinyphantazma @JussiMarttila @HuhtelaJussi Helsingin kaupunki kommentoi, että puistot ovat tarkoitettuja KAIKILLE lepäämistä varten

Reply to Harri Simolin

← Tweet



Tinyphantazma @tinyphantazma 1h

@harrisimolin @JussiMarttila @HuhtelaJussi jep. Ei asumista varten.

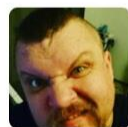
← ♡ ✉



Harri Simolin @harrisimolin 1h

@tinyphantazma Ei siellä kukaan ole asunut, vaan nimenomaan levännyt. Oikeus kaikilla, muuten kyse syrjinnästä @JussiMarttila @HuhtelaJussi

← ♡ ✉



Tinyphantazma @tinyphantazma 1h

@harrisimolin @JussiMarttila @HuhtelaJussi aaaa eiks ne nukkunut siä teltoissa?

← ♡ ✉



Harri Simolin



Reply to Harri Simolin

FINLAND = WHO?

- so-called autochthon Roma > **'OUR' MINORITY**
- newly arrived Roma from other EU countries and outside the Union > **IMMIGRANTS**

FINLAND = WHO?

- so-called 'local' Roma > **MINORITY**
- newly arrived Roma from other EU countries and outside the Union > **IMMIGRANTS**

Background info

The Finnish Roma

- **500 years in Finland**
- Finland gained independence in 1917, but the Finnish Roma were given official citizenship status only in **1919**
- The Finnish Roma commonly belong to the **Kalé Roma groups** living primarily in Finland and Sweden
- About **10,000** Roma people in Finland (and **3,000** Finnish Roma in Sweden)
- Mother tongue mainly **Finnish (Swedish/Romani)**

- The 'Finnish' Romany language is under serious threat and **included in the UNESCO list of endangered languages**

- live in **the cities of southern and western Finland**
- Roma communities throughout the country
- Like other Finns, some Roma belong to the **Evangelical Lutheran Church**. Some are also active members of the **Pentecostal Movement** and **other nonconformist Christian denominations**

- Despite their **equal legal status**, the Roma continue to experience **discrimination** in their everyday life
- On average, they are in a **weaker economic and social position** compared to other ,Finns‘

- The **dress** is distinct from the clothing of the mainstream population
- Roma women wearing the dress are vulnerable to **discrimination and prejudices** in public places, in access to **employment and services**



Finnish Roma children in schools

- From the 1950s onwards **the state removed several Roma children** from their parents and placed them in state institutions, generally on the basis of poor housing conditions
- **every third Roma** child grew up in a **state institution** from the 1950s to the **1980s**.

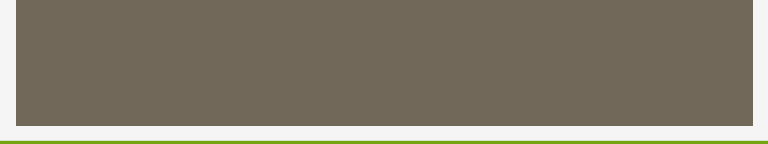
1995 ✨ Constitutional amendment:


- Roma's rights to their own language and culture guaranteed.
- Educational legislation amended to allow the teaching of Romani as a mother tongue in schools and its use as a language of instruction.
- Support for Romani language and culture incorporated in the educational objectives of the Decree on Children's Daycare.
- Start of weekly national network radio news broadcasts.

1999 ✨ Legislation on the Finnish Broadcasting Company amended to produce services in Sami, Romani and sign language.

Education legislation completely reformed:

- two hours a week of mother tongue instruction to be provided if there are at least four children in the group;
- for minority language groups such as Sami, Romani and sign language it is possible to receive full instruction, resources permitting, in the mother tongue.



2000  New Constitution takes effect:

- section 6 guarantees equality before the law
- section 17.3 includes Roma's rights to develop and maintain their language and culture.

- Finnish education has been accessible to Finnish Roma people **the past 30 years**

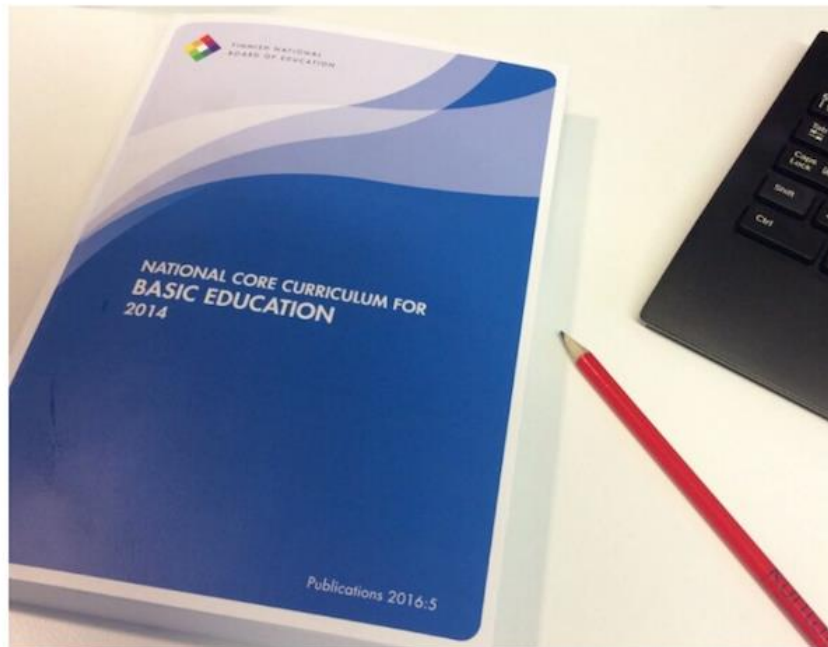


Children who are in schools now are only the **second generation of educated Roma children**

Key areas of education in the Finnish National Policy on Roma

- **Enhancing the participation** of Roma children in early childhood and pre-primary education
- **Enhancing the social inclusion** of Roma children and youth in basic education and upper secondary education
- Enhancing the participation in vocational education and **training of adult Roma**
- **Promoting the development of the Romani language and culture**

- The national curriculum is ‘supportive’ of Roma children
- “may take part in the instruction of the Roma language”

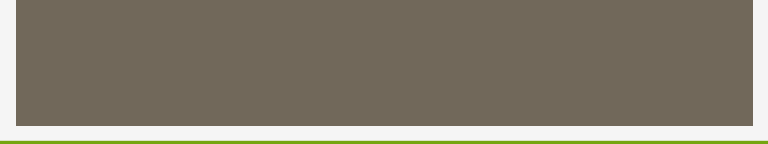


- **Bias in the description of skills** to be acquired vs. e.g. speakers of other languages (immigrants)
- **Metalevel not included** for Romani
- Very much a directed approach
- ~~“to provide the pupil with tools for seeking, exploring, and assessing information in the mother tongue and to support the pupil adopting a self-directed approach to studying his or her mother tongue”~~

- **provision** for the teaching of Romani language at schools
- Romani language policy = Romani language lessons can be offered at schools with at least four Roma pupils
- However, despite the recommendation, the **municipal authorities are not obliged to arrange Romani language teaching in their schools**
- for **financial reasons** most of the municipalities have not opted for the teaching
- A **lack of qualified Romani language teachers**

Realities

- Vs. discourses
- Vs. 'good intentions'

- 
- 1. during 2008 to 2015, 2,3 m€ has been distributed to municipal authorities to support Roma education**

- 2. Children often placed in **special education without diagnostics of learning**

Arranging teaching of the Romany language

- government aid for **a maximum of 2 hours per week**
- teaching **takes place during the school day**

- The task is to support the balanced development of **pupils' dual identity** and their **ability to integrate into both the Roma and the Finnish community**.
- Teaching aims to **activate the pupils' skills** and use of the Romany language so that Roma pupils are able and have **the courage to use their own language** as a tool of interaction both within the Roma community and outside it.
- Pupils are instructed in understanding the importance of their **own language for the vitality and identity of their own culture** and the position of the Romany language as a language next to all other languages.

Romani Education Unit Activities (1995)

- Producing teaching materials in Romani
- Starting professional training of Romani cultural coordinators
- Organising exhibitions and events on Romani culture
- Seminars on parenting and education, and on Romani language and culture

Other development work by the Finnish National Board of Education

- Summer courses in the Romany language
- Further training for teachers of the Romany language
- Workshops for Roma parents in different parts of the country
- Learning materials, dictionaries and brochures
- Latšo Diives magazine

- only **8% of Roma children** received teaching in their own language (2012)

- Their bilingualism still considered a **handicap**
- **“Lost potential”**

Linguistic genocide?

Article 3.1 of the United Nations *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (E 793, 1948) states that “Prohibiting the use of the language of the group in daily intercourse or in schools, or the printing and circulation of publications in the language of the group” is *Linguistic Genocide* (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Skutnabb-Kangas notes that:

Linguistic genocide as defined by the UN is practiced throughout the world. The use of indigenous or minority language can be prohibited overtly and directly, through laws, imprisonment, torture, killing and threats. (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1998)

Lack of understanding Roma culture & inclusion of

- “There was a case that the school employed a Roma assistant, so it happened, for example I was in the school cafeteria with my coat on, and we had quarrels about that with the teachers,
- I told them I cannot be without my coat in the presence of an older Roma, that it is your fault if you have employed an older Roma person. I just could not be without the coat.
- The teachers could not understand and we quarrelled often about that.”

Transformative education for Roma (Gypsy) children: an insider's view

HRISTO KYUCHUKOV

- nothing is written about the Roma and their history in history textbooks;
 - nothing is written about the Roma and their influence on world music and culture in music textbooks;
 - nothing is written about Roma writers and the influence of Roma on world literature in literature textbooks.
-
- **Etc. (e.g. contribution of Roma people to war efforts)**

Recommendations

- Increasing the **number of Roma people** working in schools, church and in family services needed
- Increasing **the collaboration** between schools and Roma families needed
- Understanding of **Roma lifestyles** needed in schools and kindergartens
- **Information about early childhood education and schooling** needed for Roma families
- Actions needed to reduce **bullying** of Roma children in schools
- **All Roma children need to be able to access the teaching of Roma language and culture at least 2 hours/ week – Finnish Roma language disappearing!!!**

- Teacher education should raise awareness and take on an activist and political approach

1.

The Finnish public daycare and educational systems, as well as family and social services, would greatly benefit from personnel with Roma background. Special importance should be placed on Roma classroom assistants, primary and secondary school teachers and youth workers, who would teach and interact equally with mainstream and Roma pupils.

2.

All professionals working with Roma children should have access to updated information and knowledge on Roma culture, history and ways of living. Special sections on Roma culture should be added to teacher's education to increase their knowledge on the Finnish Roma. Furthermore, information on the Roma people as a part of Finnish society and history should be added to the official school curriculum and text books. The Government should promote awareness of the Roma minority among the general public and the Finnish media.

3.

The Roma children and young people increasingly need pastime activities which support their ethnic identity as Roma, such as Roma language clubs and children's clubs. However, Roma children should have equal opportunities to participate in the pastime activities and hobbies offered to the mainstream Finnish children.

4.

The Roma language is at the verge of extinction in Finland, therefore the language should be safeguarded. All Finnish Roma children should have a possibility to participate in Roma language lessons at least two hours a week at their choice. In public services, as well as in private Roma homes, the use of Roma language should be encouraged and promoted.

5.

Roma children and youth need to have more opportunities to participate in the local and governmental decision-making and to make their concerns heard to the state officials. The viewpoints of the Roma children and young people should be taken into account in preparing decisions concerning their rights and well-being in Finnish society. Greater involvement of Roma children is needed in the state structures, as well as within the Roma groups and community.

6.

Roma parents and families should be provided with parenting and family support services following their individual needs. Innovative and flexible support services and multi-professional networks should be developed in cooperation with Roma organizations, state services, municipalities, schools, youth services and local Roma groups.

Jyväskylä 1.2.2011



Maria Kaisa Aula, Ombudsman for Children in Finland

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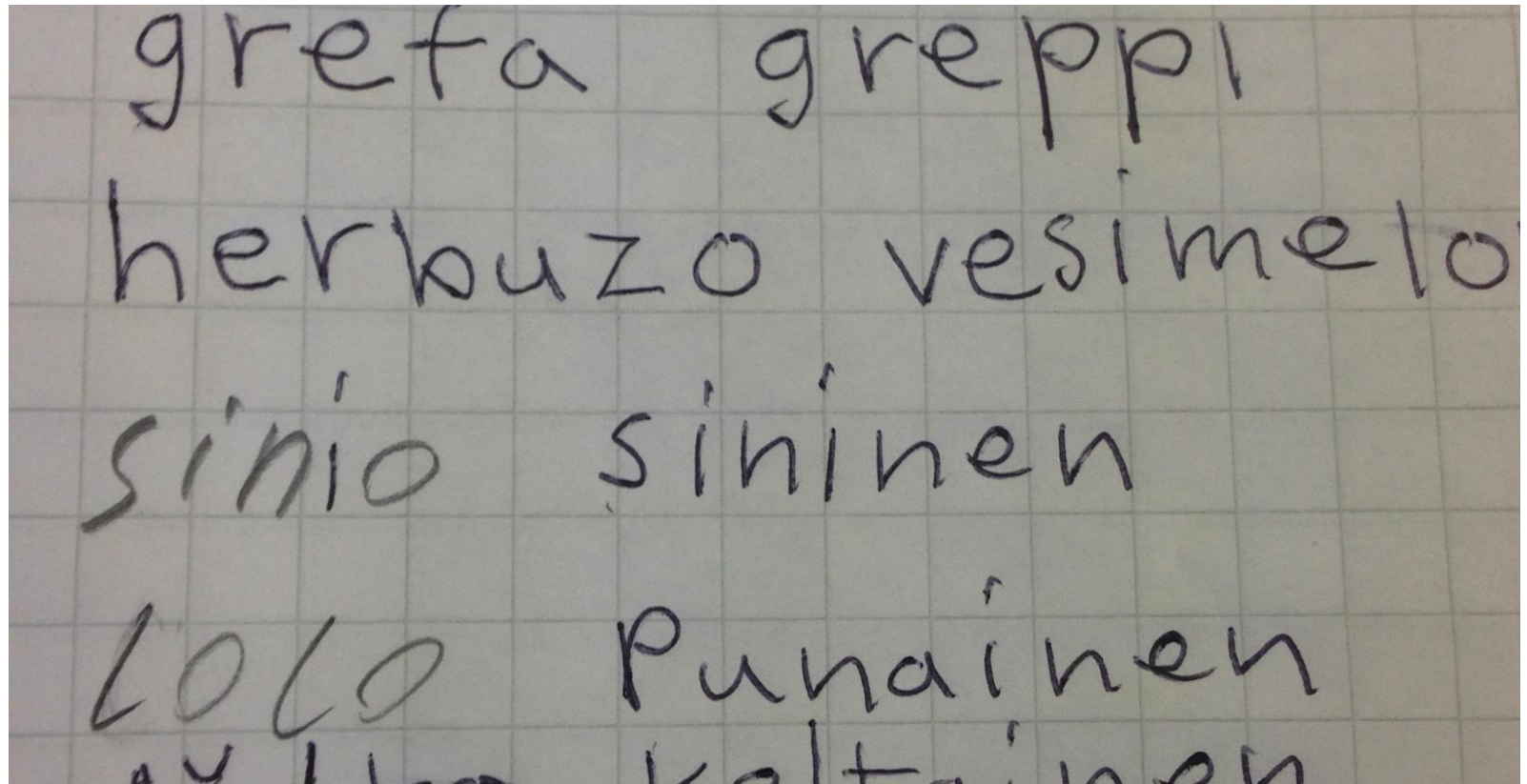
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Eastern European Roma children in Finnish schools?

- No statistics about the number of children in schools – estimation by the Finnish Roma Forum is approximately 50 children in whole Finland from Romania and Bulgaria
- ROMTEL schools in Järvenpää and Helsinki
 - Challenges to find the schools
 - Children in preparatory class or in a special education classrooms
 - Need to develop tranlanguaging methods identified

Language identified to be
Ursari (Romania) for 4 children
in Järvenpää:



grefa greppi
herbuzo vesimelo
sinio sininen
lolo Punainen
keltainen

- Preparing “tool kits” for translanguaging for the schools
- Story reading with the parents (“uncle”)
- MAIN IMPLICATIONS TOWARDS TEACHER’S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT for the city of Helsinki and for the teachers in Järvenpää