Mrs. Dr. Diyana KIRILOVA

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank you for the invitation to attend this event today and tomorrow. It is truly a pleasure to be here, to discover this beautiful place, and to learn more about one of the initiatives of Romano Kher in Barcelona.

My name is Diyana Kirilova. I am originally from Bulgaria and have been living in France since 1999.

I hold a PhD in Anthropology and Philosophy of Education from Paris V Sorbonne. Since 1996, I have been working on issues related to the Roma people, particularly in the areas of education, culture and language. In the short time I have today, only 10 minutes, I would like to share a few key reflections on the situation of Roma communities.

The Roma people share a deep sense of common belonging that transcends borders. One of the strongest symbols of this shared identity is their language. Throughout history, the treatment of Roma communities has varied depending on the political context of the countries in which they lived. Sadly, across much of Europe, Roma people have often been victims of discrimination, oppression and racism.

Yet one of the most remarkable and defining characteristics of the Roma people is their resilience. Despite adversity, they have continuously adapted, survived and preserved their identity. Their ability to make the most of what they have, wherever they are, deserves both recognition and respect. It would not be an exaggeration to describe them as a wise and strong people, a Romani nation, though I will not delve into that discussion today.

In recent decades, migration has presented new challenges for Roma communities, affecting their cultural continuity, access to education and social inclusion. Over time, they have been assigned many different social labels: nomadic, itinerant, sedentary, migrant and so on.

When we speak of education, it is important to distinguish between two forms: the traditional familly based education transmitted within Roma households, and the formal education provided by national institutions. I invite you to consult my latest publication, which focuses on Roma women and education. It presents a synthesis of my doctoral research, combining anthropological perspectives and philosophical reflections on the meaning and value of schooling for Roma people. (You may access it here: cc…)

As Jean Pierre Liégeois has pointed out, education plays a vital role in the integration of communities.

The Romani language itself offers important insights into the geographical origins of the Roma people. Contrary to popular belief, their identity has never been rooted in a fixed territory. Rather, it has developed over time through a historical process shaped by politics, forced displacement and wide scale dispersion, conditions that have made the formation of a national identity

There are many different cases concerning the development, preservation and transmission of the Romani language. I invite you to consult my article on this topic for further details. Culturally, Roma traditions are extraordinarily rich. They can and should be integrated into national cultures and the broader mosaic of minority traditions through educational programs, cultural events, rituals, cuisine, music, dance, poetry and literature.

In recent years, we have seen encouraging progress. For example, the teaching of the Romani language is being developed at various levels, both in formal education and in informal community settings. From early education to university programs, I have contributed to several such initiatives and would be glad to share them with you. Looking ahead, I would like to draw attention to the situation in Spain. Much valuable work is already underway, but I believe Spain is uniquely positioned to lead further progress. This country can serve as a model of tolerance and recognition, particularly with the adoption of anti-discrimination legislation.

Romano Kher in particular has the potential to become a key platform for cultural commemoration, language promotion and inclusive education. It could help integrate the Romani language and culture more fully into Spain's national identity and into the broader framework of minority cultures. Such efforts could eventually lead to the formal recognition of Romani as a minority language in the Spanish Constitution these initiatives would help ensure that Roma people in Spain can live as equal and emancipated citizens, recognized as Roma and as full members of the society in which they live.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Yous, D. KIRILOVA