

## **Launch of Romany Language Website Aims to Save Culture**

A project was launched in January 2006 to preserve the endangered language and culture of one of the world's most marginalised and maligned populations.

Romany is spoken by small groups in 42 European countries but since it has a largely oral tradition and those conversant in it are stateless and scattered, it has been driven to the brink of extinction, appearing on a list published by the University of Manchester of the world's most threatened languages.

The university has transcribed the many Romany dialects for the first time, and the launched website allows people to locate different dialects on a world map and listen to examples of them.

It is hoped that this will help the Romany people to codify their language and agree on how words are spelt, as well as provide a resource ensuring the language is eventually included in the mainstream media and school curriculums. "We also hope it will inspire governments across Europe to develop policy in educational and cultural development," said Professor Yaron Matras, who heads the Romany linguistics project at the university.

Many Romany lack access to computers, but those who do have discovered that they may at last communicate with compatriots as far apart as Norway and eastern Russia. Chatrooms for speakers of the language are beginning to flourish.

"In the UK, we are also discovering that Romany immigrants from central Europe are being approached by British Roma who have only a few words and asked for help," said Professor Matras.

The website address is: [www.llc.manahcester.ac.uk/Research/Projects/romani/](http://www.llc.manahcester.ac.uk/Research/Projects/romani/)

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