

**Opening Speech by the Ambassador of Germany to Bulgaria at the National Conference
on International Romani Day, 08.04.2025**

Ladies and Gentlemen, esteemed colleagues, dear friends,

It is truly inspiring to be here with so many committed individuals and organizations that share the vision of a more inclusive Europe for all.

In Bulgaria, there are approximately 700,000 Roma people, and across the European Union, the Roma population is estimated at around 10-12 million. These numbers are a reminder of the diversity within our societies, and of the immense potential that lies in fully integrating the Roma community into the social, economic, and political life of our countries. And I think there is a bigger role for the EU to assume.

That is why today's conference is so important. It provides us with an opportunity to highlight the progress that has been made in recent years, as well as to discuss the ongoing challenges we face in achieving true equality and inclusion. We have certainly seen significant strides in the integration of Roma, thanks to the tireless efforts of civil society organizations, local communities, and government partners. The European Union, through various initiatives and programs, has supported the Roma community in Bulgaria and across Europe. And here, I would like to acknowledge the work of organizations like Amalipe, whose advocacy for equal opportunities in education has brought about concrete improvements in the lives of Roma children and their families.

Yet, we must also acknowledge that the road to full integration is still a long one and certainly not a one way. Integration works best when it is understood as a two-way process. All efforts “from the outside” will vaporize if not welcomed from the inside. This is why I highly appreciate Amalipe’s focus in education.

Education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty and exclusion, and we must ensure that no Roma child is left behind. And I would like to thank our partners from the business community who have understood that the Roma community has so much potential also in the economic world, especially as the European market needs more skilled workers.

As a member of the Group of Ambassadors on Roma Issues (GARI), I am proud to support efforts aimed at overcoming these challenges and building a more inclusive society for all. Our collective goal is to ensure that the Roma community has a strong voice in European decision-making processes and that the fight for equality and justice continues at all levels of society. We have made progress, but we must remain vigilant and committed to tackling the inequalities that persist.

Together, we can overcome the challenges that remain, and build a Europe where every individual, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to thrive. Europe will benefit from this.

In Romani, I want to close with a warm greeting to all of you: "Voj o drom, sasti." (Meaning: May the road be safe! / Follow your path!)

Thank you.