

*NEW YORK*—The Open Society Foundations today announced it is pledging €100 million (\$109 million) to the empowerment and development of Europe’s Roma communities—marking a new stage in the organization’s three decades of support for the Roma people.

The funding commitment, running until 2030, will be delivered through a new independent foundation, headquartered in Brussels, that will be the first institution of its scale and scope to be managed by Roma leaders when it launches next year.

In addition to becoming the new channel for Open Society support for Roma causes, the new foundation will also seek to develop additional funding sources to advance its mission.

Announcing the €100 million pledge, Alexander Soros, chair of the Open Society Foundations, said:

“With a new generation of exceptional Roma leaders determining strategy and funding priorities, I am confident the new foundation will be a dynamic force--dedicated to realizing the full potential of the Roma people, and overcoming the deep-rooted barriers they face. We will do everything we can to support the foundation and its leadership in a mission that will benefit not only the Roma, but Europe as whole.”

The Open Society Foundations has been the leading private supporter of Europe’s Roma—the continent’s largest ethnic minority--since the early 1990s, when their cause was first embraced by Open Society’s founder, George Soros.

The new Roma Foundation for Europe will work with Roma groups in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, Spain, Italy, and Germany. It will be headed by [Zeljko Jovanovic](#), who has overseen Open Society’s Roma Initiatives Office since 2010.

The foundation will inherit and develop Open Society’s founding partnerships with four leading Roma-led initiatives: the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture; the Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative, Roma for Democracy; and the Roma

Education Fund. It will also continue Open Society's work with a range of national Roma movements, including *Aresel* in Romania, *Opre Roma* in Serbia, *Kethane* in Italy, Roma Standing Conference in Bulgaria, and *Avaja* in North Macedonia, among others.

Jovanovic, who will be executive director of the new foundation, said:

"We will work with all those who can advance our mission—to combine the electoral and economic potential of the biggest minority in Europe with the voice of its most credible advocates, supportive allies, and influential friends. Our goal will be to build a foundation that not only delivers positive change for Roma, but that also contributes to a European future grounded in justice and fairness."

Open Society's support for the Roma has included:

- The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture, launched in 2017, which was the first institute of its kind dedicated to promoting Roma pride and dispelling anti-Roma prejudice through the arts.
- The Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative, which since 2016 has sought to empower Roma communities economically by supporting Roma-owned small businesses.
- Roma for Democracy, a program aimed at promoting Roma participation in elections and democratic representation.
- The Roma Education Fund, established in 2005 to provide scholarships and grants promoting high-quality, inclusive education for Roma students in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe and Turkey.

With an annual budget of over \$1 billion (€917 million), the Open Society Foundations is the world's largest private funder of groups working to advance justice, free expression, and equity. The new approach to support for Roma issues comes against the background of a broader recalibration of the way Open Society works around the world.