

# Supporting Roma people in Catalonia through the promotion of education and the dissemination of Roma cultural heritage

Beneficiary: Fundació Privada Pere Closa per a la Formació i la Promoció dels Gitanos a Catalunya

Location: Spain, Europe

Grant Cycle: 2023 - 2026

Type of Grant: three-year program support,

Delegació a Catalunya

Website: [fundaciopereclosa.org](http://fundaciopereclosa.org)

The Pere Closa Private Foundation was created in 1998 by a group of young Roma aware that a lack of formal educational and vocational training is one of the main obstacles Roma people face in society. The Pere Closa Private Foundation believes that overcoming this deficiency will provide Catalonia's Roma people with more opportunities to succeed within a society outside of their own. Since its inception, the foundation has dedicated itself to supporting the Roma people in Catalonia, and to promoting a positive image of the Roma people to those outside of the Roma community, while also preserving the Roma's rich cultural legacy.

Over the course of its 25-year history, the Pere Closa Private Foundation has promoted more than 30 projects aimed at improving the educational inclusion of Roma children and young people in primary education, secondary education, and professional or university studies so as to give them access to the job market and be citizens with full rights, without renouncing what is essential to their Roma culture.

The absences from school and educational struggles of Roma children have their roots in the education system's lack of knowledge about the Roma identity and mistrust of Roma families. Most schools do not understand Roma cultural codes, and Roma families can also struggle to understand the dynamics of a traditional school. There is widespread prejudice among educators that Roma students do not want to study and are likely to be illiterate, while many Roma parents believe that the teachers want to acculturate their children and make

them not Roma. As a consequence, Roma children and youths do not perceive the cultural values transmitted by schools and institutes as their own, which leads to demotivation, absenteeism, conflict, and failure. These conflicting cultural codes can also lead to feelings of emotional isolation because Roma students feel alone in the educational process— families do not support them and schools do not understand them. Roma communities in Europe often live on contaminated wastelands, with little to no running water or sanitation facilities in their homes as a result of environmental racism, according to the report "Pushed into the Wastelands: Environmental Racism Against Roma Communities in Central and Eastern Europe" by the European Environment Office (EEB), a pan-European network of environmental NGOs.

On a positive note, in general, greater awareness of the Roma people outside of Roma society has led to a decrease in discrimination and has given Roma youth and women more opportunities to progress outside of Roma society. On the other hand, there is still social and institutional discrimination and prejudice towards Roma communities throughout Europe. This has and still does cause a high degree of illiteracy among the Roma people and, in many cases, also creates a negative attitude towards education. Despite all this, the Roma people have been able to preserve their language, culture, and history and Romani remains one of the most vital minority languages in Europe. About 3.5 million people speak Romani. It is even an officially recognized minority language in 16 countries. Even

so, UNESCO classifies the language as “definitely endangered”. Very few boys and girls have the opportunity to learn in Roma language classes at school, and 3.5 million people does not seem like much when you realise that there are between 12 and 14 million Roma in the world.

Pere Closa Private Foundation works to guarantee the educational success of Roma students by working with students, teachers, and families to facilitate their integration into the classroom and promote gender equality. Furthermore, the foundation works to publicise the rich and heterogeneous Roma culture, in order to convey a positive image of the Roma people that is genuine and free from prejudices and stereotypes. This helps secure the Roma people the institutional recognition they deserve and helps earn them the respect they deserve within the rest of society.

In 2023, the project received a grant from the **Nado and Elsa Peretti Foundation - Delegació a Catalunya**, that provided Peretti-Pere Closa with Study Scholarships to benefit 200 students of primary and compulsory secondary education level. The project also supports 3,800 primary and secondary students from 60 educational centres primarily in Catalonia, although they may also be from other Spanish towns, and 100 adults from the general public.