



**GREEN EUROPEAN
FOUNDATION**

A photograph of two young women, likely Roma or Traveller, looking intently at something off-camera. The woman on the left is holding a coiled cable. The image is partially obscured by a green semi-transparent box containing the title and editor information.

Roma and Traveller Inclusion in Europe. Green questions and answers

Editor: Kati Pietarinen

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The Green European Foundation is a European-level political foundation whose mission is to contribute to a lively European sphere of debate and to foster greater involvement by citizens in European politics. GEF strives to mainstream discussions on European policies and politics both within and beyond the Green political family. The foundation acts as a laboratory for new ideas, offers cross-border political education and a platform for cooperation and exchange at the European level.

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Marina Barbalata (GEF) and Ville Ylikahri (Visio)
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This publication can be ordered at:
The Green European Foundation – Brussels Office: 15 Rue d'Arlon – B-1050 Brussels – Belgium
Tel: +32 2 234 65 70 | Fax: +32 2 234 65 79 – E-mail: info@gef.eu | Web: www.gef.eu

Green European Foundation asbl: 1 Rue du Fort Elisabeth – L-1463 Luxembourg

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Foreword

by Heidi Hautala and Ville Ylikahri

Despite being widely present in Europe for centuries, Roma and Traveller groups remain by and large on the fringe of European societies. This is true for Eastern as well as for Western Europe. While the number of Romani groups is much higher in the Central and Eastern parts of our continent, the nature of the question of Roma inclusion does not differ as much. Regardless of their geographical location Roma groups are characterised by strikingly low education rates, high unemployment or precarious employment and reduced access to basic rights such as health care or decent housing. These issues are not new. On the contrary, all these questions have been dominating the Roma inclusion debates for many years. The novelty in the political debate around Roma issues comes from the change in focus. What used to be a discussion about minority inclusion turned to being one about core issues of European integration.

Günther Grass famously called the Roma “the only true Europeans”. And indeed, the problems Roma groups face are illustrative of Europe’s current crisis. In 2010, France and Italy’s expulsions of EU citizens of Roma origin from their territories were the visible expression of a European citizenship concept void of both solidarity and shared responsibility. The weak answers of the European Commission to this infringement of freedom of movement were symptomatic of a Europe of parts rather than one of unity. Finally, the economic and financial crisis has hit the EU’s poorest citizens hardest and the European Roma were no exception. Economic austerity has since then reinforced the vicious circle of extreme poverty triggering marginalisation. Throughout the continent anti-Roma sentiments have surged.

The Finnish Green Cultural and Educational Centre Visio came up with the idea of publishing this book after a heated political debate in Finland. The Finnish Greens were the most

vocal political group trying to find sustainable solutions for the problems Roma migrants face, while some others demanded evictions, deportations and begging bans. At the same time the Greens were aware that the problems of Roma migrants cannot be solved at the local or national levels alone. Nonetheless, they were lacking knowledge of what is being done in other European countries and cities. There was and there is a need for European level exchange. The Green European Foundation (GEF), therefore, gladly took on the proposal of Visio to produce this book as a part of these coordination and exchange efforts.

Our book is published only shortly after the Hungarian Presidency of the European Union launched the EU’s Roma Integration Framework in summer 2011. This European-level framework strategy aims at furthering inclusion of Roma people in European societies. It was generally welcomed as a step in the right direction, as it recognises that integration strategies need to be developed locally and have to be adapted to specific contexts. At the same time, however, there is an intrinsic weakness to this strategy. The same administrations that have been closing their eyes on extreme discrimination are the ones now responsible for devising strong inclusion strategies. This is why we also believed it to be an optimal timing to produce an overview of the situation of Roma and Travellers in Europe and to emphasize several promising initiatives on the issue from a Green point of view.

We are thus proud to publish this book that tries to tackle questions related to Roma inclusion from a local, national and European perspective. We hope it will be encouraging to read that there are good practices and solutions that make steps towards greater inclusion of Roma people in Europe. When we showcase those good practices we also point to those who have implemented them, in the hope to network these initiatives.

The political questions around Roma are diverse and complicated: we are dealing with questions of minorities, poverty, racism, of continued divisions between Eastern and Western Europe and of safeguarding core EU freedoms such as the freedom of movement. This book does not claim to have a “one fits all” answer to Roma inclusion issues. It does, however, put forward several successful examples of integration practices from the local to the European level, as the problems that different Roma minorities face in the EU are a perfect example of issues that need both local and European level solutions. If multiplied, small steps in a good direction could ultimately lead to a long lasting solution to the current problems.

We hope you can take inspiration from these examples into your work!

Heidi Hautala is Co-President of the Green European Foundation. She is the Finnish Green Minister for International Development and has previously been Member of the European Parliament, where she chaired the Subcommittee on Human Rights.

Ville Ylikahri is the Secretary General of the Green Cultural and Educational Centre Visio. He is member of the Helsinki City Council and chair of the Helsinki Greens.

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Green voices for inclusion

Kati Pietarinen

In the summer of 2010, due to the high profile expulsion of EU citizens of Roma origin from France, the situation of European Roma and Travellers suddenly gained huge political momentum. Conversation around the expulsion highlighted the perseverance of anti-Romani racism all around the continent and brought attention to the misery many Roma and Travelling groups face on a daily basis. Despite the lack of real improvements – and in some cases, even radical deterioration – for the situation of these minorities, this momentum seems to be slowly fading away a year later. The Green European Foundation and the Finnish Green Cultural and Educational Centre ViSiO coincided in their shared wish to not allow this to happen: it is important to keep the topic at the forefront and unite our efforts to improve the precarious situation of Roma and Travellers in Europe. The publication you have in your hands was thus born from the wish to enforce Green policy and activism related to Roma and Travellers.

This publication aims to give readers a general idea of the problems Roma and Travellers face in their everyday lives, through insightful articles by experts based on central societal themes. As the protection of human rights and minorities has always been a fundamental issue for Greens around Europe, Greens on a local, national and European level have long been involved in initiatives to improve the situation of Roma and Travellers. This volume portrays a part of the wealth of examples of how Green parties or individual Green activists or sympathisers have acted together to try to solve acute problems; from fighting to improve the EU Framework for Roma Strategies this spring, to campaigning for Roma employment issues in Greece, and from creating adequate halting sites for Travellers in the United Kingdom, to resisting the evictions of migrant Roma in Helsinki. It is hoped that this publication will serve as a starting

point for the creation of stronger networks of discussion, analysis, policy and action for the rights of Roma and Travelling groups.



Philippe Leroyer

Roma and Travellers – a patchwork of minorities

Before continuing to the presentation of these initiatives, it is important to get a general idea of who Roma and Travellers are, and to understand the concepts used when speaking about these groups.

Europe's largest and most impoverished minority, the Roma, are a people of common ancestry originating from India. Currently European Roma number 10-12 million. Despite an original shared language and culture, centuries of contact with different cultures, as well as attempts to assimilate and destroy Romani communities have changed Romani language, tradition and way of life. European Roma are an extremely heterogeneous group, including dozens of national and ethnic sub-groups. The expression "Roma" is currently widely used¹ as an umbrella term to cover all these groups.²

Travelling people,³ who number an estimated several hundred thousand in Europe, do not share common ancestry, language or culture; they are united by their tradition of an itinerant way of life. By custom many Travellers worked as itinerant

¹ For example, official EU and UN documents, as well as human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

² It is important to note that this concept is political, not sociological. Not all Roma consider themselves the members of a common group: members of different subethnic groups may not consider each other "real Roma". Moreover some of the groups seen from the outside as Roma – such as the Ashkali and Egyptians of Kosovo – do not consider themselves Roma at all, often because of the stigma associated to the concept.

³ The best known Traveller groups are Irish Travellers living in Ireland and the UK, Scottish Highland Travellers, Funfair Travellers and New Age Travellers, the Jenisch (or Yénichel) people living traditionally in France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and Austria and the Mercheros of Spain.

craftsmen, salesmen and performers; a tradition which for many has continued in present day. Many groups traditionally speak languages of their own that are based on local European languages. While most Travelling groups are not Romani, centuries of interaction have fused aspects of Romani culture and language with some of these Travelling communities. For some groups it is difficult to define whether their origins are Romani or not.⁴ It is largely due to this connection that the two minority groups are commonly discussed together.⁵



European Greens' meeting on Roma inclusion during the EGP Council, Budapest 2011

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Especially during the last few decades, Roma and Travellers around Europe have experienced deep misery, due to widespread poverty and unemployment, inadequate housing and health care, discriminatory treatment and outright racist violence. This has not changed in 2011. With few headlines concerning these issues in the press, European governments continue to ignore international law, when it comes to the Romani minority: in Marseille alone, 500 Roma were evicted from camps between June and August 2011. In Rome, between March and May 2011, 154 targeted evictions took place and affected 1800 Roma. In Hungary and the Czech Republic this spring and summer, governments have faced anti-Roma violence by extremist groups with complacent inaction.

An emphasis of this publication is that despite a very real difference in the severity of poverty or

the scope of racist attacks, when comparing for instance Hungary and Romania with Sweden and Germany; the problems Roma and Traveller communities face are not uniquely Eastern European problems. It is estimated that under one fifth of Romani children go to school in Italy and infant mortality is three times as large as in the majority population. According to some estimates up to 80% of Swedish Roma are unemployed. In Finland the rate is estimated at 20-50%, with surveys suggesting that half of Romani children receive special education. Travellers do not fare better: Irish Travellers die on average 13 years before settled people in Ireland, while in France the voting rights of the travelling groups are curtailed. Thus there is much work to be done everywhere in Europe – probably also in your home town.

Roma? Sinti? Romanichals? Gypsies? Travellers?

The common current use of Roma(ni) as an umbrella term for all groups does not come without its problems, as in many Western European states (e.g. Germany, France, Italy, UK, Ireland) *Roma* or *Rom* is actually used not as a general term but to design a subethnic group; generally, those Roma who have arrived from Eastern Europe since the 19th Century. In Germany and Italy, Roma with a Western European background have insisted on a separate identity as *Sinti*; and literature and policy in these countries speaks of Roma and Sinti. French Roma might call themselves *Sinti* or *Manouche* and in the UK *Romanichals* or *Romany Gypsies*.⁶

Further confusion arises from traditional terms (such as the English *Gypsy*, French *Tsigane*, Spanish *Gitano*, German *Zigeuner*, and Italian *Zingaro*) which originate from the false belief that the Roma are from Egypt. In some languages, the use of this concept is considered deeply offensive (e.g. Romanian,⁷ German⁸). In other languages (e.g. French, English, Spanish), the concept is frequently used as a neutral term but nevertheless receives some criticism as being politically incorrect. Sometimes the concepts officially deemed less correct are the

4 For example, Swedish and Norwegian Travellers and Lowland Scottish Travellers.

5 For example, the European Parliament and the European Council use Roma as an umbrella term covering Travelling groups also.

6 Weyrauch, Walter O. *Gypsy law: Romani legal traditions and culture*. University of California Press. London 2001, p.VII.

7 ERRC Re: *Romanian proposal to rename Roma "Tigan"* 10.12.2010, available at www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/romania-letter-rename-gypsy-10-december-2010.pdf (30.6.2011).

8 Weyrauch 2001 p. XII.

ones used by local Roma themselves: for example in Hungary many Roma continue to call themselves *cigány*, despite an official policy in recent years of using the word *roma*.⁹

An extra complication is due to the use of the concept Traveller in some cases some as a synonym for Romanies; this is common in countries where Roma populations have lived travelling lifestyles. In France the administrative term *Gens du voyage*, although legally designating only those currently living a nomadic lifestyle, is frequently used for all those of nomadic ancestry as well as for all Roma. Also in the UK, Travellers and Roma are sometimes referred to commonly as Gypsies, Gypsy Travellers or Romany Gypsy Travellers.

Do take care when you try this at home

Experts have warned that the current obsession with identifying best practices in inclusion projects can be detrimental, as the wish to figure as a best practice can lead actors to gloss over problems and mistakes, or in a worst case scenario, actually present failed projects as best practices. Too little emphasis on the limits of such inclusion projects and the problems they inevitably encounter can result in mistakes being repeated should the project be copied by other enthusiastic actors.¹⁰

Another important critique of such projects concerns the lack of Roma and Traveller voices in publications, seminars, and policy formulation. This is admittedly one of the shortcomings of this publication also, where authors of Roma and Traveller background are only minimally represented. Unfortunately this publication is not alone in the failure to involve Roma and Traveller authors: while an increasing number of experts and researchers of Roma (and a lesser extent Traveller) background exist, their number remains small. The scarcity of Roma and Traveller politicians is an acute issue around Europe – and something to which Green parties could also give thought.

However, it is also important to remember that common ethnicity does not necessarily guarantee legitimate representation. It is easy to mistake the

perspectives of an ethnically Roma or traditionally Traveller seminar speaker or panel member as “the Romani view” or “the Traveller perspective” and gloss over the differences in traditions, wealth, gender, influence and internal power structures among and inside the heterogeneous and diverse Roma and Traveller communities of Europe.

Unfortunately, at times traditional leaders might emphasize group cohesion at the expense of allowing alternative voices to be heard from within (as has been the case with silencing of gendered perspectives).¹¹ In the worst case of such silencing and domination from within, a narrow elite group of educated Romani families can end up controlling all inclusion initiatives, locally or even nationally. This leads to a risk of inclusion becoming a business, where profits are corruptly shared internally at the expense of the good of the whole Romani community. While unfortunately corruption can be present in all walks of life, in the case of Roma inclusion an additional problem can be a fear of negative stereotyping which can lead non-Roma to turn a blind eye on true Roma problems.

When you explore the initiatives presented in this publication, do so with an open mind. In the seven chapters of this publication, you will encounter six central themes: employment, education, housing and health, culture and language, discrimination and racism, and migration. Pick the theme of your interest or gain a deeper understanding of the whole field of questions; delve into an individual initiative that interests you or compare them all; find a new (or even an improbable) initiative and present it at home. My sincere wish is that Green – and non-Green actives, politicians and citizens around Europe find this publication useful and inspiring.

However, please bear in mind that the initiatives presented in this publication are not best practices to be copied: they are ideas and initiatives to inspire you. If you get interested, do contact the authors, NGOs or people involved with these initiatives to gain a deeper understanding. Remember to find out about both their successes and the problems and limits they have faced. If you find individual ideas or entire projects or initiatives

⁹ Tenigl-Takáts, László 2007 6. Szentmárton könnyei. Liget.

¹⁰ See for example Romani activist and researcher Valeriu Nicolae’s eye-opening article, in which he urges to focus on and study failed inclusion projects. In the volume *Roma: a European Minority, The Challenge of Diversity* (ed. Monika Flasíková-Benová, Hannes Swoboda, Jan Marinus Wiersma) 2011. Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, available at www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/gpes/media3/documents/3693_EN_SD_Roma_book.pdf (15.9.2011).

¹¹ Oprea, Alexandra 2003. Re-envisioning Social Justice from the Ground Up: *Including the Experiences of Romani Women*. Essex Human Rights Review Vol. 1 No. 1.

which could work in your own surroundings; take time to research, develop and adapt them. Also, do pay attention to *who* is given the role to represent Roma and Travellers for such projects; *who* is charged with implementing these initiatives, and take heed of the incorruptibility and legitimacy of such figures, organizations and expertise. It is not an easy task, but good preparation is essential for creating future initiatives that can actually make a real difference.

Change in the situation of Roma and Travelling groups will not come without work, but as you will find when reading these texts, change is possible.

Courage with your work!

Kati Pietarinen is an independent journalist and editor specializing in migration and minority issues. She has published journalistic articles on Roma and Travellers in Europe and has written an MA thesis on Roma migration.

1. EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES

1.1 / Exclusion of Roma: continuity and change

Miika Tervonen

Despite histories marked by hardship, the current predicament and westward migration of many Central and Eastern European Roma does not reflect timeless “nomadism” or a “culture of poverty”. Nor can they be seen simply as the result of unchanging racism or antiziganism. Rather, many of the current problems are results of a specific recent development: the swift and near-complete segregation of Roma from the rest of the society after the fall of the communist regimes. Western European countries have both influenced and been affected by this process, while also Western Roma and Traveller groups are facing hardening attitudes and policies.

Before elaborating on these arguments, a brief historical detour is made related to long-term continuities in the Roma and Travellers’ position in Europe.

The deep roots of exclusion

Various groups of Roma and Travellers have not always and everywhere been poor, marginalised or itinerant. On the contrary, in many historical cases they have had a functioning economic role as artisans, peddlers, entertainers and seasonal labourers. Well into the 20th century, this was frequently connected with an established local position, with Roma and Travellers living in daily interaction with peasant communities.

Yet, there has also been continuity, dating back to the early 16th century, in Roma and Travellers being treated as idlers, vagrants and criminals by state authorities, clergy and local elites. Although the deep roots of anti-Gypsy policies in Europe are difficult to disentangle, a number of historical layers stand out:¹²

Criminalization of “vagrancy”:

From the late Middle Ages onwards, a combina-

tion of mobility and poverty became increasingly criminalised and labelled as “vagrancy”. This was connected to landowners’ efforts to secure cheap labour by restricting mobility, as well as to the development of local poor relief systems based on a strict separation between citizens and non-citizens. “Gypsies” became in this context seen and treated as a category of permanent vagrants. Simply being labelled as a “Gypsy” thus became criminalised in many parts of Europe, often leading to harsh punishments, such as summary executions, whippings, expulsions, imprisonment, enforced military drafting or enslavement.

The rise of nationalism and pseudo-scientific racism:

From the late 18th century onwards, “nation” and “race” became key concepts in European thought and politics. Together, they highlighted cultural and state boundaries, and problematized the position of what came to be seen as “non-national” minorities. Debates on the “Gypsy question” consequently emerged in numerous European countries during the 19th century, with attempts to either forcibly assimilate or expatriate them. Biological racism, meanwhile, gave pseudo-scientific legitimacy to anti-Gypsy stereotypes and discrimination, while also casting suspicions on the supposedly “mixed” Traveller populations. From the turn of 19th and 20th century onwards, public policy in many European countries increasingly targeted the Roma and Travellers on the explicit basis of race.

Modern border control and identification techniques:

As nation-states were consolidated from the 19th century onwards, border crossing of non-citizens became increasingly seen as a problem. Mobile groups of Roma, Sinti and Travellers came in this context to be considered as particularly suspicious “stateless” people. They were made into a kind of a “laboratory” for developing new controlling techniques, such as biometric identification cards (e.g. the French *Carnet antropométrique*, enforced on Roma and Travellers

¹² The points below are based on a wide literature on the history of Roma and Travellers in Europe. In particular, the following texts have been utilized here: Ilse About, “De la libre circulation au contrôle permanent. Les autorités françaises face aux mobilités tsiganes transfrontalières, 1860-1930.” *Cultures & Conflits*, 76, 2010, 15-38; Leo Lucassen, *Eternal Vagrants? State Formation, Migration and Travelling Groups in Western Europe, 1350-1914. Gypsies and Other Itinerant Groups. A Socio-Historical Approach*. Macmillan: Basingstoke 1998. 55-73; Michael Zimmerman, “The Wehrmacht and the National Socialist persecution of the Gypsies”. *Romani Studies* 5, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2001. 111-135.

between 1907 and 1969), fingerprinting, special ethnic censuses and ethnic registering.

The three strands described above can still be distinguished in present-day debates and policies concerning Roma and Travellers. Together with anti-Gypsy stereotyping, by the 20th century they produced a deeply stigmatized perception of “Gypsies” as a pathologically criminal, non-national and racially inferior group. The brutal culmination of this was the murdering of approximately 250 000-600 000 people considered as “Gypsies” or “Gypsy *Mischlinge*” (persons of “mixed race”) by the Nazi regime and its allies during the Second World War.

From the point of view of later developments, it is important to note that the Roma genocide (also known as *Porajmos*) during the Second World War did not constitute an isolated incident, but was part of a policy continuum. It was based on a European-wide development which had started well before the rise of the Nazi regime. This was illustrated for example by the efforts of Central European police forces to produce an international register of itinerant Gypsies during the inter-war period (incidentally, forming the basis of Interpol). Moreover, the most murderous ‘cleansings’ took place in areas such as Austria and Western Czechoslovakia, where pre-war legislation and local initiative functioned as the crucial basis for subsequent mass arrests and killings.

Nor was there a complete break in anti-Roma policies after the Second World War. This was visible in post-war attempts to tackle what was still more or less automatically framed as the “Gypsy problem” (as well as in the refusal of the German state to recognize Roma as one of the victim groups of the Holocaust). Thus, common policy instruments on both sides of the iron curtain included “tools” such as targeted border control; the building of special Roma camps; demolition of “illegitimate” campsites and housing; ethnicity-based special registering; sterilization campaigns; and taking into custody of children. In today’s Europe, examples such as Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi’s anti-“nomad” campaign in 2007 make it clear that the legacy of these anti-Gypsy policies is still far from being just history.



Julie Kertész

Post-communist transition and new segregation of the Roma

What makes the Roma “issue” topical again in today’s Europe, however, are not so much policy continuities as the dramatic changes after the fall of the communist regimes in Central- and East-Europe.

The legacy of the communist regimes vis-à-vis Roma is mixed. Many of the current problems can be traced directly to the discrimination practiced behind a veil of what was presented as universal comradeship, supposedly overriding national and ethnic differences. However, it is also a fact that many Roma groups of Eastern and Central Europe recovered reasonably well from the shocks and dislocations of the Second World War, and actually experienced relative upward social mobility between the 1960s and 1980s. However, the fall of the communist regimes and the transition to market economy quickly reversed the relative gains which many Roma had experienced in employment, housing, schooling and health-care. Again, it is challenging to disentangle the multitude of factors at play, but at least two large-scale processes stand out as causes of the rapid marginalization of Roma:¹³

■ **Economic “shock therapy”** – The fall of the communist regimes was followed by a rapid collapse of state-led command economies. The harsh pace with which state industries and agriculture were privatised or shut down was partly a result of political and financial pressure exercised by the EU, US and international funding bodies, all of which were eager to push through rapid neo-liberal reforms. As Sigona and Trehan argue (2010, 2), one side-effect of this is the “[...] marginalization and

¹³ The division below follows the interpretation presented in Nando Sigona & Nidhi Trehan (ed.), *Romani Politics in Contemporary Europe: Poverty, Ethnic Mobilization, and the Neo-liberal Order*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

pauperization of groups which do not, for various reasons, 'fit' the new socio-economic regime. Amongst these are millions of Romani citizens, for whom chronic unemployment and social exclusion have become the norm". Sigona and Trehan illustrate the extent of marginalization with the example of Hungary, in which the unemployment of Roma men went up from 15% in 1985 to 70% by 2009 (Sigona & Trehan 2010, 4). Also elsewhere, the Roma quickly emerged as the "biggest losers of the transition".

■ **Revival of ethno-nationalism** – The ideological vacuum left by the fall of communism was in many Eastern European countries filled by a revival of ethno-nationalism. The Yugoslavian Wars were the most visible and violent result of the radical politicisation of identities after 1989, but also only the tip of the iceberg of a phenomenon felt throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Almost everywhere, the Roma quickly emerged as one of the main targets of nationalist incitement, racism and xenophobia. Since the fall of the communist regimes, there have been recurrent waves of anti-Roma violence. Scapegoating and anti-Gypsy hate speech have been frequently employed across the political field, not just by the populist extreme right movements but also by mainstream parties and politicians.

Over the last two decades, the dual impact of *laissez-faire* policies and resurgent ethno-nationalism has been dramatic. Many Roma communities have experienced a continuous and absolute decline in their living standards, even during times of general economic growth, becoming endemically poor and sometimes literally walled out from the surrounding society. Many people who were previously far from "nomadic" are being uprooted and pushed to find their living outside legitimate economy – and increasingly outside their home countries.

The primary (although certainly not only) causes of the current westward migration of many Eastern European Roma can thus be traced back to political and economic decisions and processes which took place during the past two decades. During this brief period, the European Union has not always self-evidently played a benevolent role. From largely overlooking the worsening situation of the Roma in order to not slow down enlargement process in 1990s, to the subsequent prioritizing of economic growth over human development, into the targeted border control and

expulsion policies of 2000s, the European Union and its western Member States share part of the responsibility for the continuing plight of Eastern European Roma groups. Moreover, attitudes have hardened also towards centuries-old West-European Roma and Traveller groups such as French *Yeniche* and Italian *Sinti*, who have been lumped together with Eastern European newcomers and targeted with discriminatory policies.

All of this is not to disregard the numerous development projects funded by the EU, or to argue that they would have been without any positive results. However, the visible overall failure to secure better living conditions to the largest minority in Europe makes clear the need to break with the past and to look for new ideas, solutions and resources.

Miika Tervonen is a historian specializing in ethnic relations, migration and nationalism. He defended his doctoral dissertation at the European University Institute in 2010 and is currently working on a research project titled *History of the Finnish Romani people*.

1.2 / Perspectives on Roma inclusion in the EU

Eva Sobotka

The salience of the Roma as a critical issue of EU policy has never been greater than today. While the EU had already devoted some attention to the Roma in the years before the eastward enlargement, mainly in the context of its policies on fundamental rights and the promotion of economic stability and minority protection in the accession countries, there were at that time no high-profile internal EU initiatives specifically targeting Roma. Since the enlargement in 2004 the picture has changed significantly: now a variety of EU policy frameworks, new institutional mechanisms as well as key EU documents – including European Council conclusions, European Parliament Resolutions and Communications from the European Commission – specifically address the issue of the Roma. The EU has repeatedly called upon Member States to step up their efforts to promote the social inclusion of their Roma populations, and in the context of the "Europe 2020" strategy, the Commission and the Parliament have forcefully argued that there is a compelling economic case to be made for giving priority to the issue. More than ever the EU is calling upon



Second European Roma Summit

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Member States to invest more serious policy effort in “Roma inclusion”.¹⁴

Despite a number of policy efforts and the strengthening of the human rights framework within the EU, diverse factors – including high levels of racism and discrimination, but also the political and economic climate, the lack of a ‘positive visibility’ of Roma within society, and the lack of engagement with and between the majority population and Roma as solution drivers – continue to influence negatively the situation of Roma. The EU has offered Member States important new opportunities for local social change in this field, for example through introducing new regulations on the use of the structural funds or inviting Member States to submit national Roma integration plans by the end of 2011. Yet, EU policies are affected and changed by the dynamics present in the national and local political context. Many domestic and local politicians have continued to try to frame the issue of the Roma as a “security problem” or a “problem of criminality”, and some have evaded national or local responsibility by calling it a “European issue”.

How can the EU call on Member States to reinforce their efforts in to enhance Roma inclusion and what could be the Green political family’s contribution to the effort? I argue that the EU

mechanisms are a real catalyst for local social change, yet they need to be picked up by responsible politicians who will address the problems facing the local community “as a whole”. Without such support even promising initiatives may not lead to lasting positive results on the ground. Initiatives which target “Roma inclusion” narrowly, without consideration for the wider environment, fall short of their objective of enhancing the position of Roma and may raise tensions between Roma and other sections of the local population.

The situation at hand

In 2010, the European Commission, responding to the political guidelines expressed in Council conclusions, issued a Communication on The social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe¹⁵ as well as a Commission Staff Working Document describing progress in this field.¹⁶ These documents took up many of the issues identified in the Commission Report on Roma social inclusion,¹⁷ European Parliament Resolutions, as well as the opinions of the FRA and of other international organizations and institutions working on Roma. The Communication was a first attempt to operationalise the Common Basic Principles of Roma Inclusion.¹⁸ More importantly, the Communication emphasized that the key to the success of the Structural Funds is political will and the capacity of Member State governments to allocate budgets and support projects which are multidimensional (taking the whole reality of Roma life into consideration) and clearly targeted at the Roma (though not ethnically exclusive, *i.e.*, allowing for participation of other persons in similar situations regardless of their ethnicity). The Communication notes that this should be the case for action by European institutions, national, regional and local governments, as well as civil society and private business. On 19 May 2010, the Parliament and the Council adopted a Regulation¹⁹ allowing the extension of financial support from the European Regional Development Fund to housing interventions for extremely poor and marginalised communities,

14 The umbrella term “Roma” was adopted to cover a variety of people from different cultural and national backgrounds, including not only those who call themselves Roma but also people who use self-designations such as Sinti, Kale, Gypsies, Gens de Voyage and related names.

15 COM/2010/0133 final.

16 Roma in Europe: The Implementation of European Union Instruments and Policies for Roma Inclusion – Progress Report 2008-2010.

17 Issued in July 2008.

18 *Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Non-discrimination and equal opportunities: A renewed commitment. Community Instruments and Policies for Roma Inclusion.* COM(2008) 420.

Available at: ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=88&langId=en&eventsId=105&furtherEvents=yes

19 Regulation (EU) No 437/2010 amending Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 on European Regional Development.

including many Roma communities.²⁰ Housing interventions eligible for this kind of support thus now include the renovation of houses in rural areas and the replacement of houses, irrespective of the area, urban or rural.

Institutional mechanisms that aim at bringing together a variety of actors, including civil society organizations, to discuss thematic issues related to Roma, are prioritized in the Roma Inclusion Road map, adopted during Spanish Presidency of the EU in 2010.²¹ An example of these initiatives is the Integrated Roma Platform. The Roma Summits, which bring together all relevant stakeholders, have had the ambition of increasing political attention to the situation of Roma EU-wide, by drawing in, in particular, high level national policy makers.

In September 2010 the European Commission further established a Roma Task Force (RTF) to review the impact of the Structural Funds on the situation of Roma and propose systemic changes that could increase their impact on Roma inclusion. The FRA participates in the Task Force. The RTF produced a report²² in December 2010 that served as the basis for the Commission Communication of April 2011. This Communication proposes to set clear national integration goals in the area of education, housing, employment and health, interlinking at different levels of governance. It also points out a need for rigorous monitoring of the situation and the involvement of Roma communities. The Communication tasked the FRA with regularly providing comparable data on the situation of Roma in all EU Member States.

The Agency is committed to expanding its ongoing survey work, strengthening cooperation on developing indicators and assisting in developing mechanisms to monitor Roma policy impact in cooperation with Member States.²³ Measuring further inclusion of Roma against compliance with fundamental rights standards could also facilitate further debate concerning the develop-

ment of accountability for human rights at a local level and bring in new actors, such as business and the financial sector, which have increasingly started to look at human rights compliance as an asset for secure investments.

Following these institutional developments and policy decisions at the EU level, action in the area of addressing discrimination and improving social inclusion now needs to follow, in particular at the national and local level. Some good examples, such as housing projects in Spain could inspire policy makes in other countries.²⁴ Policy makers, organisations and individuals, Roma and non-Roma, have already started to raise questions about the impact and effectiveness of policy measures in place at national level: to what extent are actions to combat discrimination designed to address deeply rooted anti-Romani prejudice, also called anti-Gypsyism? To what extent are Roma inclusion projects and programmes sustainable? Are they sufficiently linked to the integration policy frameworks in place in a number of EU Member States? Are there examples of successful policies that could be followed? In order to improve the efforts made, the Ten Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion provides a useful reference framework for guiding policy makers in adapting their policies when addressing the situation of Roma.

The FRA's EU-wide survey on minorities' discrimination experiences, EU-MIDIS, revealed a bleak picture for the estimated 10-12 million Roma in the EU. It showed that Roma experience the highest overall levels of discrimination across all areas surveyed.²⁵ 66-92% of Roma (depending on the country) did not report their most recent experience of discrimination to any competent authority, while 65-100% of Roma respondents reported lack of confidence in law enforcement and justice structures.²⁶ Another FRA report on the impact of the Racial Equality Directive documented that in some Member States both employer organisations and trade unions often did not acknowledge

20 Council Regulation (EU) No 437/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 amending Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 on the European Regional Development Fund as regards the eligibility of housing interventions in favour of marginalised communities, available at: eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:132:0001:0002:EN:PDF

21 Roma Inclusion Road map is available at: ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=849

22 10 Years to Make a Difference: An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies by 2020, presented in April 2011.

23 Communication 173/4 of 2011 on An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. See also Coffee with the Director of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=APmklw9Z20c

24 Case studies on specific housing initiatives for Roma and Travellers. Available at: fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/research/publications/studies_discussion_papers/case-study-roma-housing_en.htm

25 EU-MIDIS asked the respondents about discrimination they had experienced, in the past 12 months or in the past 5 years, in nine areas: 1) when looking for work; 2) at work; 3) when looking for a house or an apartment to rent or buy; 4) by healthcare personnel; 5) by social service personnel; 6) by school personnel 7) at a café, restaurant or bar; 8) when entering or in a shop; 9) when trying to open a bank account or get a loan.

26 Roma: Data in Focus report, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, available at: fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/EU-MIDIS_ROMA_EN.pdf

discrimination against Roma as racial discrimination.²⁷ At the same time redress mechanisms, such as Equality Bodies, mandated to intervene in cases of discrimination and provide help to victims, are little known, and often not sufficiently resourced: 80% of all EU-MIDIS respondents could not think of a single organisation that could offer support to victims of discrimination – be it government-based; an independent institution or authority, such as an Equality Body; or an NGO.

Green Options

The so called integrated approach is one that sets EU Roma integration goals, targeted actions and sufficient funding to deliver them. Those in charge of delivering are primarily local authorities. In my view, there are four critical points in ensuring an adequate change in the situation of Roma, both from the point of view of human rights compliance by states, as well as at the level of perception of Roma.

■ First, the “policy dialogue” between different levels of governance – European, national and local – needs to intensify to ensure coordination, learning across the board and adequate overview of measures in place. Here, the European Platform for Roma Inclusion is a useful forum for debate and concerted action of all relevant stakeholders: EU institutions, national governments, international organisations, academic and most importantly Roma civil society representatives.

■ Secondly, the concept of Roma inclusion needs to find its practical implementation locally, including also majority populations within the agenda of inclusion. Importantly, local and regional authorities will have to be drawn into closer discussion on the situation of Roma. The policy dialogue should encourage local authorities to implement priority actions enhancing the access to education, employment, housing and health and thus play a role in the implementation of the European Framework for national Roma integration strategies.

■ Third, a critical balance between social inclusion pragmatism and fundamental rights compliance needs to be reached. Forming a clearer understanding of the situation in localities with a sizeable Roma population and gaining adequate feedback on the impact of policy measures on the

ground assist the development of appropriate policies at the local level. This requires the systematic collection of data. This approach should take into account disadvantaged regions and the four groups of Roma identified in the Commission’s Communication from April 2010: (1) Roma in disadvantaged, highly concentrated urban districts; (2) Roma in disadvantaged parts of small cities/ villages in rural regions; (3) Mobile Roma with citizenship of another EU Member State; (4) Mobile and sedentary Roma who are third-country nationals, refugees, stateless persons or asylum seekers.

■ Fourth, a locally generated wider societal debate, including open debates to generate further shared meaning and understanding, needs to include majority populations and their concerns. This should be the case not only when evaluating the impact of policy measures, but also at the planning stage. While Roma should be targeted with relevant policy response, the views of majority populations and the inclusion of local level political structures should also be foreseen.

What decision-makers could pick up on?

Local authorities sometimes tend to address the problems that Roma face as security rather than human rights and social inclusion issues. Roma, like non-Roma, face a variety of challenges related to the behaviour of individuals in their communities. It must therefore be stressed that generalisations about “Roma” behaviour and stereotyping of Roma cannot and should not be used as a pretext for not respecting their individual fundamental rights. In this context stronger awareness raising efforts by different actors are necessary to draw attention to the human rights situation of the Roma. At the same time the image of Roma as the perpetual victims of human rights violations is also counterproductive and does not reflect the variety of social positions Roma individuals represent. The real-life success stories of Roma people, which have slowly started emerging (also as a result of Roma inclusion efforts over the past twenty years) would be important stories to share.

EU Member States are faced with an important task: to put in place adequate policies or optimise current ones, to resource these policies sufficiently, and to implement and monitor their im-

²⁷ See *The impact of the Racial Equality Directive - Views of trade unions and employers in the European Union*. Available at: fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Racial-equality-directive_conf-ed_en.pdf

pact effectively. Optimal Roma inclusion policies, as defined in the Ten Common Basic Principles, are those based on multi-sectoral and integrated approaches and that target Roma explicitly, but not exclusively; these must be accompanied by targeted policies to address overall discrimination and exclusion. Given the recognition that long-term exclusive targeting of Roma through specific policies can lead to further exclusion, it is important to shift to a concept of inclusive/integrated societies. Such policy consideration will require strong coordination across relevant ministries, as well as vertical coordination across a variety of levels of governance: European, national and, in particular, local. The effective participation of Roma, including specifically Romani women, children and young people, in their design, implementation and impact assessment should be part of any relevant policies. Policies need to be firmly based on the principle of equality and non-discrimination, and fully respect fundamental rights.

Local authorities in particular should take up the assessment of the impact of Roma inclusion policies and promote dialogue on this topic within society in town halls and local government structures. Roma should be engaged in this dialogue, which can become an empowering experience and an example of effective participation. Furthermore, policy makers need not only statistical data, but also an understanding of the variety of Roma communities, as well as contextual qualitative information, to enable the design of “tailor-made” responses to local needs. “Deliberative engagement” which could take the form of panel discussions on relevant issues in local communities with Roma and non-Roma individuals in order to collect their views, experiences and opinions can provide such contextual information. Such engagement could significantly contribute to improving social inclusion: accepting Roma as neighbours, maintaining Roma children in desegregated local schools, employing Roma or providing Roma with services on an equal footing and in a respectful manner. For the success of these social inclusion goals, the attitudes and behaviour of non-Roma will be a decisive factor.

Finally, a synergy between the approach of social inclusion and the fundamental rights perspective will be essential. As we develop human rights architecture within the EU, there is an increasing convergence between a rights-based approach and arguments for economic and social efficien-



cy. There is a growing recognition of the fact that the costs of exclusion and discrimination take a heavy toll on social cohesion, while social inclusion is both economically smart and ethically sound. Put very simply, the argument for linking economic and human rights concerns centres around the contribution of human rights to creating more cohesive and equitable societies. Respect for basic human rights creates more stable societies, and stable societies generate stronger growth and economic development. Studies show that inclusive education policies directed towards the youngest, fastest growing and most impoverished demographic segment of Europe’s population will yield substantive benefits in the future, as they will enable young people to compete in the labour market and take their place in society as active citizens. Roma inclusion needs to be seen not just as beneficial for Roma: integration brings along benefits for the entire society in terms of lower rates of welfare dependency and higher rates of production.

In conclusion, the following elements are crucial for the successful implementation of a Roma inclusion policy and would benefit from emphasis and support by a variety of political families:

- as experience has shown, successful anti-discrimination and equality actions need to focus on the local level and foster a broad sense of belonging. This will benefit not only the Roma, but the entire community;
- effective assessment and monitoring of Roma inclusion policies need to put in place;
- cooperation between public bodies, NGOs and the private sector together with a strong participa-

tion of Roma are essential elements for improving the access of Roma to employment and their school achievement, as well as their equitable access to local health services and housing opportunities;

■ political will, but also political courage, will enhance the impact of the efforts of policy makers both locally, nationally and EU-wide.

Roma and non-Roma need to be engaged in dialogue on how to achieve better inclusion, as the majority population has a decisive influence on the success of Roma inclusion efforts. Therefore their views must also be taken fully into account.*

Eva Sobotka is Programme Manager in the Department Equality and Citizens Rights at the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

For further information, please contact:

- Eva Sobotka, at eva.sobotka@fra.europa.eu
- EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, at www.fra.europa.eu

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1.3 / EU framework for national Roma integration – a Green commentary

Barbara Lochbihler

Throughout history, Roma have suffered from racism, discrimination and exclusion. Still, they do not seem to be subject to general public interest and awareness. Instead, public opinion on Roma, where it exists, tends to have negative and false associations regarding their life, culture and appearance. Furthermore, authorities in many countries and regions fail to foster decent living conditions and to guarantee the most basic needs. By contrast, many national and local governments turn out to be at least co-responsible for expelling Roma from the rest of society and letting them live in territorial segregation.

To tackle the multiple aspects of discrimination against Roma citizens of the European Union, the European Union adopted a Directive²⁸ in

2000 which implemented the principle of equality regardless of racial or ethnic background. It took many years for Member States to endorse it, i.e. to translate this Directive into national law. In 2009 the *Treaty of Lisbon* came into force and the *EU Charter of Fundamental Rights* became part of EU legislation, guaranteeing fundamental rights to every citizen – independently of nationality, religion, gender or any other characteristic.

However, the situation of millions of Roma in Europe painfully proves that adopting Directives and regulations does not automatically translate into adequate protection and efficient measures against discrimination and exclusion. Ironically, many Eastern EU Member States like Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary – which formally have the most developed and precise national frameworks of anti-discrimination and Roma inclusion – experience particular difficulties regarding implementation.

Aims and benchmarks of the framework

Thus it is clear that further improvements have to be made, and with its *Framework for National Roma Integration*,²⁹ the European Union intends to do so. The framework, presented in April 2011, describes a number of goals for Roma inclusion, and suggests that each Member State should have to develop its country-specific strategy for Roma inclusion until the end of 2011.

The Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament has been actively involved in drafting and improving the framework. We submitted 90 amendments, many of which were accepted or included in compromise amendments, and eventually found their way into the final document. We mainly focused on combating discrimination as a precondition for a true socio-economic inclusion; the elimination of unlawful practices such as intra-EU returns or forced returns to third countries; equal access to recourse; the fight against impunity and any possible discrimination in legal systems; the empowerment of Roma in the decision-making process; the facilitation of access to funds for Roma NGOs; and an efficient evaluation of national action plans, based on benchmarks and indicators established by the *EU Fundamental Rights Agency*.

²⁸ Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin.

²⁹ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, COM(2011)173, 5 April 2011.

The framework rightly underlines that it is of utmost importance that all Roma children should at least finish primary education, and that Roma participation in higher education should be increased considerably. Roma children continue to be treated as a separate group in many countries, and they are forced into special Roma-only education programmes – a first step towards lifelong educational and social exclusion. Therefore, it will not be enough for Member States to simply push for higher school attendance within the Roma community. Segregation must end, and there is a need for teachers and social workers trained with intercultural skills to get in touch with Roma parents in order to convey the importance of education in a cooperative and non-commanding way, and to start two-way discussions with the Roma community which benefit all parties involved. Since economic exclusion is a common problem, scholarships will also play an important role in reaching the educational objectives of the EU framework.

On employment, the framework aims at achieving 75 per cent employment of the Roma population by 2020. This is a tough benchmark, given that Roma are much more affected by unemployment than non-Roma citizens. Still, there are numerous concrete measures that can help achieve this goal, including the aforementioned focus on education, specific training programmes and after-school support as well as special consideration of Roma applications when recruiting civil servants.

As the framework points out, access to health care remains highly restricted for millions of Roma, especially women and children. There is a huge lack of information concerning vaccinations and the right to basic health services. Therefore, Roma should be provided access to healthcare in the same way as all other citizens. Training and encouraging Roma to work in the health sector would not only increase employment opportunities, but also spread knowledge on health-care-related issues.

Finally, it will be crucial to also improve housing conditions and infrastructure. It is unacceptable that in several EU Member States, thousands of Roma have neither access to clean water nor electricity. Even more alarming is the fact that Roma are regularly being resettled into what can only be described as ghettos, on demand or at



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least with the silent consent of national governments. Only recently, a Hungarian mayor could publicly announce his plans to intensify the creation of Roma ghettos, without a tangible reaction by the Hungarian government. Similarly, recent violence against Roma villages by right-wing militia in Hungary could happen without a real response from Budapest. This is unacceptable and underlines the fact that housing conditions are intrinsically linked to social exclusion of and racist activities against Roma.

A need for sound monitoring

Having regard to such gaps between theory and praxis, be it in Hungary or any other European country, it is regrettable that – although the Greens within the European Parliament tried to push for stricter rules – the requirements on Member States in the new EU framework turn out to be rather weak. It is true that the framework demands that all Member States develop their national action plan and their own monitoring system, but it would be naïve to think that the situation of Roma communities will automatically improve. Of course, it is important to let Member States develop their own country-specific programmes. But it is equally essential that there be a common standard and control system. Therefore, the European Union – especially the European Commission in its function as the guardian of the treaties – will have to ensure that Member States comply with the framework and future national action plans. Indeed, the Union should go much further in monitoring Member States than is suggested by the framework.

To further improve the process, it is paramount that all steps be designed and realised in close cooperation with local, regional authorities and of course Roma representatives themselves – an aspect that is almost entirely missing in the framework. Their experience, their understanding of existing problems, and their ideas of how to possibly solve them are invaluable. Without their participation, measures could easily reveal themselves as wrongheaded or be misinterpreted, misunderstood or simply ineffective.

Vigilant monitoring by NGOs and members of civil society is equally important. The *European Roma Policy Coalition*, an informal gathering of NGOs operating on EU level, has already announced that it will follow the developments around the EU Roma framework very carefully. Other NGOs and civil society organisations should join in. Obviously, the European Parliament will do the same. In spring 2012, the European Commission will report to the European Parliament and the European Council for the first time on the achievements of the framework, and will do so annually afterwards. This provides an opportunity to positively and actively push for an efficient implementation of the framework and national action plans in all member states of the European Union.

Finally, it has to be clear that the framework does not replace any other policy in the area of Roma integration. Up to now, the most important EU tools in this regard have been the *European Social Fund*, the *European Regional Development Fund* and the *European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development*. Member States can continue to apply for resources from these funds to finance their Roma-related programmes, and the framework should not be used as an excuse to stop doing so.

A long road ahead

The *EU Framework for National Roma Integration* is a step in the right direction. Still, we are only at the beginning of the process. Many more concrete and binding measures must be taken, and an efficient monitoring system created to ensure real progress – in the field of education as much as on employment, healthcare, housing or issues that are regrettably not even mentioned in the framework, including access to justice, institutional discrimination, hate speech and violence against Roma. If we fail to do so, the framework may end up as another well-intentioned regula-

tion without much actual effect on the living conditions of people concerned.

Therefore, Member States should start to take the fight against Roma discrimination seriously. After all, like any other union, the EU draws its strength from the unity of its inhabitants, as diverse as they may be. Freedom, democracy, peace and inclusion are only achievable with the help of society as a whole. And even if, at least today, reality all-too often suggests the contrary – each and every Roma is an integral part of this society, and an integral part of the European Union.

Barbara Lochbihler is a German Member of the European Parliament. She is chairwoman of the Human Rights Subcommittee of the European Parliament and human rights coordinator of the Greens/EFA.

For further information, please contact:

- Barbara Lochbihler at barbara.lochbihler@europarl.europa.eu
- German Greens in the European Parliament www.gruene-europa.de

French Roma and Travellers in a Nutshell

- Population: 300,000-500,000
- Percentage of national population: 0,62%
- Groups and languages: traditionally nomadic Manouche (Sinti) speaking Romani and sedentary Gitans (Kalé); the biggest travelling group is the Yéniche, speaking Yenish.
- Currently those living nomadic lifestyles are estimated at 250,000.
- Travelling groups are known as gens du voyage, often including also those of nomadic background who no longer travel; sometimes mistakenly used to refer to Roma migrants.
- Nomadic Roma and Travellers must bear circulation documents that need to be presented regularly. They need to be registered as inhabitants of a certain municipality for 3 years before getting the right to vote (vs. 6 months for other citizens); a limitation of 3% nomadic inhabitants per municipality limits the possibility of election.
- Since the early 2000s, thousands of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma have lived in France; in 2007, the number grew to an estimated 12,000-15,000. They are commonly known in French as Roms. Thousands of Roma have been deported yearly, peaking at 10,000 in

2009 and over 8,000 in 2010, with expulsions continuing in 2011.

Sources:

- *Rapport d'information sur le bilan et l'adaptation de la législation relative à l'accueil et l'habitat des gens du voyage* www.assemblee-nationale.fr/13/dossiers/habitat_gens_voyage.asp (5.9.2011).
- *ERRC: Factsheet: Roma Rights Record 2011*. errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3828 (27.5.2011).

1.4 / European citizens, let's take our chance!

Hélène Flautre

After the disastrous summer of 2010 in France followed by the resolution of the European Parliament condemning France for its latest expulsions,³⁰ the situation of Roma as citizens of Europe was highlighted as an important European topic. However, the European institutions had not waited for the repatriation, stigmatization and discrimination of Roma to hit the headlines over Europe before tackling the question. Based on the historical work of the Council of Europe and of the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA); EU summits, resolutions, and reports of the European Parliament and of the European Commission regarding Roma inclusion have succeeded one another since the EU enlargement of 2004.

The Communication of the European Commission in April 2011 and the Decision of the European Council in June 2011, regarding the European strategy for Roma inclusion is an opportunity to move from words to deeds. Member States have to prepare national strategies for Roma inclusion by the end of 2011, respecting European law guaranteeing fundamental rights, freedom of movement, socio-economic capabilities and protection against discrimination. Plans will be implemented under European monitoring in order to guarantee results especially in access to education, work, health and housing by 2020.

While numerous innovative inclusion projects have emerged throughout the years, they have not had much visibility. For example, specific and innovative programmes regarding social support to Roma were developed in Valencia, Spain for migrants coming from Eastern Europe, on the basis of the experience of social work with native Roma.³¹ In the United Kingdom, programmes to enhance and promote school education were set up in Leeds.³² In Italy, a very original project of building and renovating homes with and for Roma migrants was initiated in the city of Turin.³³ European networks – such as the platform of municipalities *Romanet*, or *Eu-roma* (concerning EU funding),³⁴ support the development of Roma inclusion projects all over Europe.

Initiatives for inclusion in France

In France at a local level NGOs, social workers, local representatives and mayors are very involved in the inclusion processes. For instance in 2008 in the Lille area, a project of “inclusion villages” started. Roma families from Eastern Europe willing to participate in the project were housed in bungalows and gained special social support for access to the labour market, sending their children to school and learning French. At the end of the process, they should have access to the same rights and services as other residents in the area, such as standard housing. In autumn 2010 the project was strengthened to offer more places.

In France (as well as 14 other European states), mediators trained by the Council of Europe now contribute to a better understanding between local institutions and the Roma population; health mediators support the access to healthcare. Financing innovative projects need the implication of European, national and local actors.

However, the situation is still very critical and the inclusion process needs more support. In France, transitional arrangements for Bulgarian and Rumanian citizens create administrative barriers especially for access to the labour market and housing. Access to fundamental rights and services – such as a registered address, school, healthcare, water, waste collection and housing – remains a day-to-day struggle for all Roma liv-

30 In September 2010.

31 www.gitanos.org

32 www.grtleeds.co.uk

33 Read more about this in the article *DADO – A green yellow house in Turin*. in this volume.

34 www.euromanet.eu



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Roma leader speaking at a demonstration against far right marches in Roma villages, Hungary

ing in unauthorised camps, as well as the non-Roma NGOs and local representatives aiming to support them.

Also French Travellers struggle for equal access to a registered address, the vote and basic education, while facing racism and stigmatization. In many cases, the issues they face are similar to those faced by Roma migrants. In France, NGOs working on access to school for French Travellers living in unauthorised camps also work with Roma children and young people coming from Eastern Europe. However, there is a need to be careful: most migrant Roma live a sedentary life and have never lived in a caravan before arriving to France; thus public policies for French Travellers are not suitable to deal with their situation.

A need for networking

To foster good practices and a better understanding of Roma, I organised a seminar on Roma inclusion projects in Lille in November 2010. Stakeholders from the whole region had the opportunity to meet representatives of good practice

projects from Western Europe, as well as actors such as the European Commission, the Council of Europe and European Roma civil society. Following on from this, I organised a meeting at the European Parliament in Brussels on Wednesday the 29th of June 2011 to present the European strategy for Roma inclusion to local actors – NGOs, social workers, local representatives and mayors. This conference gives ground for a collaborative elaboration of the national strategy of Roma inclusion in France. I believe that this national plan may be strengthened by inclusion projects.

At a European level, it is very important to continue to network and reinforce all good local, national and European initiatives and to facilitate their use of EU funding. The European Commission must monitor the implementation of national action plans of Roma inclusion and be particularly careful vis-à-vis the respect by Member States of the European Charter for Fundamental Rights. As a European deputy, I will continue to be vigilant with my colleagues at the Parliament and foster all innovative inclusion projects. This new step in Roma inclusion is a chance to be taken for all of the Union's citizens, because European citizenship is a guarantee for equal rights for every one of us. Surely, guaranteeing in facts and acts the respect of Roma – the largest minority in Europe – is a way to strengthen the project of Europe.

Hélène Flautre is a French MEP in charge of Roma issues in the Greens/EFA group. She is also a member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.

For further information, please contact:

- Hélène Flautre at [helene.flautre\[at\]europarl.europa.eu](mailto:helene.flautre[at]europarl.europa.eu)
- French Greens in the European Parliament at europeecologie.eu

2. LIVING CONDITIONS, HOUSING AND HEALTH

Housing, health and living conditions of Romanies in and outside of the European Union

Edit Szénássy

Outside and within the borders of the “new” EU Member States, large Romani communities live under barely habitable conditions that pose a direct hazard to their health and physical safety on an everyday basis. Forced evictions and disastrous infrastructure in Romani settlements and campsites, limited access to public amenities such as safe water supply, sewage system, electricity and proper roads in rural areas, and ghettoisation into ethnic neighbourhoods in urban areas lacking proper infrastructure or public transportation constitute a pressing need to address the legalization of Romani settlements and the improvement of community services all over the continent.

In an attempt to underline the mutual inter-relatedness of housing and health as two distinct, yet intertwined topics, these issues must be dealt with a sense of urgency. Out of these two of the four priority areas of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015) this overview emphasizes health over housing, due of the dearth of information and awareness surrounding it.

Living conditions and Roma housing

The right to adequate housing is seen as the “right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity”.³⁵ This is certainly not in line with the housing realities Roma face around Europe, as dire living conditions especially in East-Central and South-Eastern Europe are the rule rather than the exception for hundreds of thousands of Roma. This overview deals with the housing-related problems of Roma living in poverty only, and assimilated Roma are excluded from the scope of this paper.

A crucial distinction is due regarding the lifestyle of nomadic (or semi-nomadic) and sedentary Romanies, the former usually designated as Travellers or Traveller Gypsies. While in Western Europe often thought of as nomadic, to this day, the vast majority of Roma lead a sedentary life, and have been settled for decades if not centuries. The boundaries between sedentarism and nomadism are, however, occasionally blurred, such as in the case of repeated forced evictions or living under provisional conditions. According to rough estimations, 40 percent of European Roma travel at some part of the year, the remaining 60 percent being sedentary.³⁶ In East-Central Europe, forced sedentarisation was used as an integrational policy since centuries. In Western Europe nomadism, formerly prohibited, became optional after the end of the World War II.

Residential segregation and exclusion

Besides historical segregation of Roma dating back to their arrival to the continent, recent political-economic changes in East-Central and Eastern Europe have played a major part in the sharp deterioration of the housing situation of Roma after the socialist era.³⁷ Excluded from the opportunities arising from transition to market economy, unemployment became a widespread problem and was followed by the loss of accommodation and the erection of makeshift shelters that were originally not designed as permanent dwellings. Increasing anti-Romani sentiments, repressed under the communist regime, gained popular support, and existing structures were unable to accommodate the growing number of poor Roma.

A consequence of negative public opinion on governmental and non-governmental attempts to improve the housing conditions of Roma³⁸ was the erection of further unofficial settlements lacking basic infrastructure, in which Roma have had no lawful entitlement to the houses they may have

35 Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No.4, The Right to Adequate Housing, UN Doc. E/1992/23, paragraph 7.

36 European Committee on Migration, *The Situation of Gypsies (Roma and Sinti) in Europe*, Council of Europe. Doc. CDMG (95) 11 final. Strasbourg, 1995, p. 5. These estimations are difficult to assess.

37 OSCE, *Report on the situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area*. The Hague, 2000, p. 102.

38 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Case Study: *Roma housing projects in small communities, Slovakia*. Luxembourg, 2009, p 5.

lived in throughout their entire lives.³⁹ This was in sharp contrast with the former socialist policy of affordable, almost universal – if, in the case of Roma, often inferior – public housing. Moreover, authorities have often misused the notion of an assumed shared cultural background to justify the ethnic segregation and ghettoization of Roma into substandard public housing projects.

An infamous, often quoted example of this phenomenon is the case of Luník IX in Košice, the second largest city in Slovakia.⁴⁰ Although not originally conceived of as a Romani ghetto in the 1980s, large numbers of Roma were relocated into this marginal suburb in the mid-1990s. Officially, the policy was not applied on an ethnic basis – citizens whom authorities deemed as not regular rent payers or not taking proper care of their flats were relocated to Luník IX. In actual fact, however, it was a concentration of poor Roma perceived as “problematic” who were relocated into a dozen high rise apartment buildings on the outskirts of the city, remote from non-Roma suburbs, with minimal public transport facilitating their travel into other parts of the city. Presently, the high rise buildings in this de facto ghetto are in such a desolate condition that they are being bulldozed and their inhabitants evicted.

In Spain, the 1980s transition to democracy meant that great numbers of Roma were relocated from slums into “neighbourhoods of special typology” with improved infrastructure, thereby creating further segregated settlements which with time deteriorated yet again into slums.⁴¹ Urban planning and development work has seldom taken into account the presence of Romani settlements even in areas where these settlements have existed for decades.⁴²

Many Roma around Europe have experienced rejection from municipalities or prospective non-Roma neighbours, who have prevented them from settling or purchasing a tenement. In the Czech Republic, the 1997 floods in Ostrava forced dozens of Romani families to move out of their residences into provisional container houses, only to face the rejection of the municipalities to settle back into any part of the city after the floods were over.⁴³ Such practices stand in direct opposition to the resolutions and recommendations of the European Parliament and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, demanding alternative solutions to the ghettoization trends and unsanitary living conditions Roma live under.⁴⁴

Substandard is the norm

Even when allowed to settle, many Roma live under substandard conditions that exacerbate poverty and isolation from the majority society. Ethnic exclusion takes the form of the building of walls or plots around Romani communities and settlements to separate them from majority society in Slovakia.⁴⁵ Combating residential segregation is no less arduous in Hungary, where 72 percent of Roma live in actual segregation, out of which 2 percent have their dwellings far away from their town, 42 percent live on the outskirts, 6 percent live in isolated settlements, the remaining 22 percent living in the town but in ethnic (read: Roma) ghettos.⁴⁶

Often Romani settlements are located in areas that are unsuitable for human habitation or pose explicit, serious health risks. In Aspropyrgos, in the vicinity of Athens, Roma reside in the middle of a garbage dump.⁴⁷ One of the largest Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian settlements in the city of

39 Research revealed that in Driza, Albania, Roma were unknowledgeable about the fact that the land they lived on was not in their property and that they were thus not in legal possession of their houses. See European Roma Rights Centre, *Standards Do Not Apply: A Report by the European Roma Right Centre – Inadequate Housing in Romani Communities*. Budapest, 2010, p. 25.

40 For a detailed description of the controversial policy enabling a possible ethnic profiling in the choice of citizens to be transferred see OSCE, 2000, pp. 103-104.

41 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Case Study: Improving Roma housing and eliminating slums, Spain*. Luxembourg, 2009, p. 8.

42 European Roma Rights Centre, 2010, p. 7.

43 OSCE, 2000, p. 106.

44 See European Parliament, *Resolution P6_TA(2005)0151 on the Situation of Roma in the European Union*, available at: www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2005-0151+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN as well as OSCE, *Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area*, 2003, available at: www.osce.org/documents/pc/2003/11/1550_en.pdf

45 For a recent iconic example see the BBC report on the wall around the settlement in East-Slovakian Ostrovany village. Nich Thorpe, “Slovakia’s Separation Barrier to Keep Out Roma”, *BBC Online*, 9 March 2010, available at: news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8548417.stm

46 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Case Study: Combating Roma residential segregation, Hungary*. Luxembourg, 2009, p. 6.

47 Theodoros Alexandridis, “Not enough action: Government policy on Roma in Greece,” *Roma Rights* No.2/3, 2001, European Roma Rights Centre. Budapest, p. 74.

Nikčić, Montenegro, is located at a distance of four kilometres from the city and two kilometres from the nearest school, in the vicinity of a steel factory that lacks filters and releases hazardous discharge.⁴⁸ A 2008 report funded by the Irish government found that 82.5 percent of the surveyed halting sites (facilities constructed for accommodating Irish Travellers) or group housing schemes were located in close proximity to some form of environmental threat. No emergency equipment was available at 77.5 percent of these locations.⁴⁹

Forced evictions

The lack of personal documents, unawareness of or inability to secure one's legal entitlement to dwellings, and insufficient knowledge of eligibility for housing benefits allow the continuation of discriminatory practices against Roma and impede access to social housing.

Consulted or unannounced forced evictions or threats of future evictions make Roma especially vulnerable and insecure about their living conditions, as well as violate their human dignity. Forced evictions are results of a complexity of factors, ranging from urban gentrification and "beautification" trends or prejudice against Roma⁵⁰ to residents' difficulties with long overdue payments or unpayable debts accumulated over an extended period of time.

Roma may live on land that is considered as attractive and having high economic value, such as in the case of Dolno Maalo neighbourhood in Macedonia, where one hundred Romani families live under the constant threat of forced eviction.⁵¹ In 2010 alone, Italian authorities conducted 61 forced evictions of Roma and Sinti in Milan, rendering former residents homeless.⁵² The inhabitants of Dale Farm, the largest Traveller community in the United Kingdom, yet again faced threats of eviction and demolition of their properties, scheduled to take place in August 2011.⁵³ Some of these evictions may come as a



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surprise to Roma, and authorities often neglect their responsibility to provide adequate substitute housing.

Roma health and well-being

The majority of Roma live in marginalised situations and experience widespread, everyday discrimination in all walks of life, including access to health care services. In general, most strategies aiming to improve the position of Roma in the societies they live in, have stressed that Roma have higher than average ratio of illness rate, coupled with a lower than average measure of access to adequate medical care.⁵⁴ In fact, poor Roma all

⁴⁸ European Roma Rights Centre, 2010, p. 28.

⁴⁹ K. Treadwell-Shine, F. Kane and D. Coates, *Traveller Accommodation in Ireland: Review of Policy and Practice*. Dublin: Centre for Housing Research, 2008. Quoted in European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Case Study: Traveller participation in decision making on housing issues, Ireland*. Luxembourg, 2009, p. 7.

⁵⁰ European Roma Rights Centre, 2010, p. 34.

⁵¹ European Roma Rights Centre, 2010, p. 36.

⁵² European Roma Rights Centre, "Rights Groups Urge International Action to Stop Evictions on Roma in Italy", 5 May 2010, available at www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3589

⁵³ For a human rights based initiative to save Dale Farm from evictions and its residents from further human rights abuse see the www.dalefarm.wordpress.com

⁵⁴ Open Society Institute, "Minority Protection in the EU Accession Process". Budapest, CEU University Press, 2001, p. 37.

Quoted in European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Breaking the Barriers – Romani Women and Access to Public Health Care*. Luxembourg, 2003, p. 14.



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around the world have high rates of illness, low vaccination figures, high infant mortality and meagre life expectancy.⁵⁵ A poorer health status is a direct result of the third world-like living conditions many Roma live in across the continent, exacerbated by unemployment, segregation, deficient education level and unsatisfactory sanitation infrastructure missing safe waste disposal, running water or electricity.

Defined by the World Health Organization as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being,” health is conceptualised as “not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”.⁵⁶ Health status is an important indicator of the quality of life, yet health is composed of physical as well as psychological well-being, a result of multiple factors affecting individuals’ lives, out of which biological factors are only one.

Whilst it is a well-known fact that Roma health lags behind that of majority populations, there is a continual lack of solid data to prove this gap.⁵⁷ Consistent data analysis is needed to identify the inequalities in health status between Roma and non-Roma populations using a valid and reliable measure. When evaluating Roma health in general, it is important to stress that all valid assessments of Roma health must take into account the variables applicable to majority societies as well, namely, age, sex, gender dynamics, income level, location of residence, employment status, and

education level. Disaggregated data collection based on ethnicity is a key to obtaining further reliable data. However, qualitative data collection is problematic with a population that is difficult to access, meaning high potentials for the researcher being viewed by the group with hostility and suspicion, partly as a result of unpleasant historical experiences, and partly because of present everyday inconveniences with non-Roma and authorities.

Inequalities in health

Compared to the majority population, a 2004 study on UK Gypsy Traveller health⁵⁸ showed that the most marked inequalities facing Travellers were self-reported anxiety, respiratory problems (asthma, bronchitis) and chest pain. The excess prevalence of miscarriages, stillbirths, neonatal deaths and premature death of older offspring was also conspicuous. There was less inequality observed in diabetes, stroke and cancer. The scale of inequality between the study population and the UK general population was found to be large, with reported health problems between twice and five times more prevalent among Travellers. The study showed widespread communication difficulties between health workers and Gypsy Travellers, with defensive expectation of racism and prejudice. Reluctance of GPs to register Travellers or visit sites, practical problems of access whilst travelling, mismatch of expectations between Travellers and health staff, were frequent. The research leaves little doubt that the health inequality between the observed Gypsy Traveller population in England and their non-Gypsy counterparts is striking, even when compared with other socially deprived or excluded groups and with other ethnic minorities. More qualitative studies of similar nature, focusing on health, well-being and health beliefs would be needed to gain a complex understanding of Roma health in specific communities.

A 2000 article⁵⁹ assessing published literature on Roma health reported limited results, yet

55 In Slovakia, Romani women’s life expectancy is 17 years lower, while men’s is 13 years less than the majority population. Open Society Institute, Public Health Program, *Understanding Risk: Roma and HIV Prevention*, Public Health Fact Sheet, 2007, available at: www.soros.org/initiatives/health/focus/roma/articles_publications/publications/fact_20070921/fact_20070921.pdf

56 World Health Organization, “Constitution of the World Health Organization”, *Basic Documents*, Forty-fifth edition, Supplement, October 2006.

57 Health-related research is particularly needed for the South-Eastern European Romani populations.

58 Glenys Parry et al., *The Health Status of Gypsies & Travellers in England: Summary of a report to the Department of Health*. Sheffield: The University of Sheffield, 2004, p. 8.

59 Steve Hajioff, Martin McKee, “The health of the Roma People: a review of the published literature,” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 2000; 54:864-869.

evidence suggests increased morbidity from non-communicable disease. The fragmentary evidence that is available suggests poorer access to health care services and uptake of preventive care. The authors found that the topics receiving most attention are concentrated around the issue of contagion or social Darwinism, indicating a greater concern with the health needs of majority populations, hence treating Roma as a possible pollution to the gene pool.

Research on mental health is particularly sparse – contrary to expectations, findings show a higher prevalence of suicide and parasuicide when compared with the general population among Roma in Hungary.⁶⁰ Precarious conditions lead to trauma, depression, anxiety, and mood disorders. Headaches, back pain and breathing problems are also frequently reported.⁶¹ In Portugal, 20 percent of the Roma population suffers from disability or disease,⁶² 11 percent of Roma in the Czech Republic have high blood pressure and 8 percent have stomach ulcers.⁶³ Hungarian Romani women are three times more likely to die from cancer than non-Romani women, though 90 percent of these deaths could be prevented if detected and treated in time.⁶⁴

Communicable diseases, especially low immunization coverage among Roma, attract most attention from public health officials. Low vaccination rates are particularly disturbing, as this means that many Roma continue to be affected by diseases that are easily preventable by vaccination.⁶⁵ HIV seroprevalence among Roma is lower than the majority population in Spain,⁶⁶ yet potentially problematic in countries like Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Serbia.⁶⁷ The lack of running water and inadequate hygiene results in high rates of grave communicable diseases,

such as tuberculosis, hepatitis A and B, or the acquirement or easy transmission of scabies, pediculosis (lice infestation) or other serious skin problems.⁶⁸ Contagious disease is easily spread by unsafe water, also increasing the probability of urinary tract infections and intestinal ailments.⁶⁹

Women's health

Contingent on the community's level of integration to majority society,⁷⁰ the age of Romani versus non-Romani mothers at first birth is significantly lower and their fertility rate higher, though this difference is levelled when socio-economic status is equal. Non-egalitarian gender dynamics may often restrict Romani women's lives primarily to the private sphere, serving as a further impediment for their access to health care.

Since 2003, there has been considerable public debate about the issue of coerced/involuntary sterilizations of Romani women around Central Eastern Europe. Human rights research by non-governmental organizations⁷¹ indicates that this major surgery was systematically applied for non-therapeutic reasons, without the women's due consent or while in labour. Since the 1970s, governments in Central Eastern Europe took specific measures to decrease the high fertility rate of their female citizens of Romani ethnicity by monetary incentives and special benefits, provided after women's consent to sterilization. There is reason to believe that, at least in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, this essentially irreversible operation was also performed without either the free or the informed consent of the persons undergoing the procedure until the early 2000s. Although these policies rarely openly targeted the Romani population, contemporary sources imply that this intent is more than obvious.⁷²

61 European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2003, p. 17.

62 Fundación Secretariado Gitano, *Health and the Roma Community - Analysis of the Situation in Europe. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain*. Madrid, 2009, p.33.

63 Ibid, p. 34.

64 For more on the campaign against breast cancer targeting Romani women see the Open Society Foundations' *Public Health News* blog, available at: blog.soros.org/2011/06/campaign-aims-to-give-roma-women-an-equal-chance-against-cancer/?utm_source=Open+Society+Institute&utm_campaign=c450ae041e-health-20110621&utm_medium=email

65 European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2003, p.16.

66 Steve Hajioff, Martin McKee, 2000, p. 866.

67 Open Society Institute Public Health Program, *How the Global Fund Can Improve Roma Health: An assessment of HIV and TB programs in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania, and Serbia*. New York, 2007.

68 European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2003, p. 15.

69 Ibid, p. 15.

70 Potančoková et al., "Slovakia: Fertility between tradition and modernity," *Demographic Research*, Vol. 19, Art. 25, 973-1018, 2008.

71 Centre for Reproductive Rights and Poradňa pre občianske a ľudské práva, *Body and Soul: Forced Sterilisation and other Assaults on Roma Reproductive Freedom in Slovakia*. New York and Bratislava, 2003.

72 Final Statement of the Public Defender of Rights in the Matter of Sterilizations Performed in Contravention of the Law and Proposed Remedial Measures, Available at: ochrance.cz/en/index.php

The above cases demonstrate a clear link between human right violations and discrimination within the health system.⁷³ They also point to inadequate access to and information on family planning and reliable contraception. A gender and discrimination focus is at the core of the themes of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015), and should thus be an integral part of all projects designed to improve Roma health. Discussion and programmes targeting reproductive health and family planning must take into account the practice of forced sterilizations. A thorough assessment of the health needs and interests of Romani women is essential, as they tend to be the primary care-givers and the ones responsible for the sick within the family. Reproduction-focused programmes should, however, not fail to educate Romani men, emphasizing their role in family planning and sexual health.

Child health

Roma children are twice as likely to be born prematurely as their non-Roma counterparts in Hungary, also reflecting the association between low infant birth weight and mothers' low education level. Lead poisoning and burns, findings consistent with environmental exposure, were found to be more common among Romani children.⁷⁴ Compared to non-Roma, Roma children in Romania were recognised to suffer from vitamin deficiencies, malnutrition, and anaemia to a considerably higher degree.⁷⁵ In Slovakia, a large scale health survey found that 32 percent of Romani children were overweight (as opposed to 17 percent of adults), whereas 20 percent were affected by obesity (the figure being 17 percent in the case of Romani adults).⁷⁶ Children's health is especially adversely affected by overcrowded living conditions and lack of safe and clean playgrounds. Balanced diets (nutrition also affecting dental health), and the omission of early age tobacco and substance abuse are crucial factors in

child development.⁷⁷ When possible, breast feeding of infants should be encouraged instead of the usage of instant formulas.

An obvious way of redressing these inequalities and closing the gap between Roma and non-Roma children would be the integration of adequate information on family planning/sexual health, nutrition, hygiene education and disease prevention into school curricula in culturally sensitive ways. This would directly result in the participation of Romani youth in improving their own health.



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Making sense of cultural sensitivity

Many Roma perceive health as absence of disease, whereas disease is seen by some as a phenomenon linked to death.⁷⁸ Qualitative studies on health beliefs demonstrate a cultural pride in self-reliance. There is stoicism and tolerance of chronic ill health, with a deep-rooted fear of cancer or other diagnoses perceived as terminal and hence avoidance of screening.⁷⁹ It is argued that for some Roma a stay in hospital for a reason other than childbirth is associated with death,⁸⁰ which may lead to a rejection of some methods of healthcare.⁸¹ Taboos concerning ritual purity and pollution may for some Roma groups play an important role at the medical encounter,⁸² whereas beliefs with regard to fate and predestiny may be a factor in the poor uptake of preventive services.⁸³

73 World Health Organization, *World Health Organization: 25 Questions and Answers on Health and Human Right*. Health and Human Right Publication Series, Issue No. 1, July 2002.

74 Steve Hajioff, Martin McKee, 2000, p. 866.

75 Open Society Institute, *Minority protection in the EU access*, Budapest: CEU University Press, 2001, p. 398. Quoted by European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2003, p.16.

76 European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2003, p.16.

77 Many Roma in an age as early as 10 years take on smoking (European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2003, p. 16).

78 Directorate-General for Public Health, Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs, *Health and the Roma Community: Analysis of action proposals*. Madrid, 2004, p.13.

79 Glenys Parry et al., 2004, p. 7.

80 Isabella Fonseca, Bury Me Standing: *The Gypsies and their Journey*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1995.

81 Steve Hajioff, Martin McKee, 2000, p. 867.

82 For more on purity and impurity beliefs among American Roma, partly applicable to many European Romani populations, see Anne Sutherland, "Gypsies and Health Care," *The Western Journal of Medicine*, 1992 Sep, Vol. 3, Issue 157:276-280.

83 Steve Hajioff, Martin McKee, 2000, p. 867.

Increasing sensitivity to cultural beliefs is essential for providing better quality care, albeit there is a need to differentiate between tremendously heterogeneous Romani groups to elude gross generalizations. The trap of overemphasizing – vaguely definable – cultural values should be avoided, as these may be misinterpreted to hold Roma themselves responsible for not seeking out sufficient care. Cultural competence of health service staff facilitates access, but Roma should be treated with the same respect and care as others. Hospital segregation, not uncommon in East-Central Europe, must come to a halt.

Redressing differential access

Although inequalities remain largely under-researched, health-related human rights abuse of Roma has received some attention,⁸⁴ as Roma in Eastern and Central Europe have been insulted and subjected to degrading treatment by medical professionals. Not surprisingly, emergency care is more often sought than among non-Roma populations, and there is little trust in professional care. Differential access to health care ultimately leads to unattended health problems and increased social exclusion. A vast amount of negative experiences with prejudiced health personnel is rarely outweighed by positive impulses, yet when sympathetic health professionals are met, they are treated with equal respect by Roma. Romani health mediators were successfully employed in Finland, Bulgaria and Romania to integrate Roma into the health care system and encourage discussion and action in issues pertaining to their health.⁸⁵

The lack of legal documents (identity cards, birth certificates, etc) makes access to public services

tedious for Roma.⁸⁶ Further impediments on access to proper care are financial barriers (money for medicines and trips to the doctor) and lacking awareness of already existing support structures and mechanisms. More effective information dissemination is needed on the fact that in many Member States, free medical insurance is contingent on registration and monthly visits to an employment office. For those who lead a travelling life style, obtaining proper documentation qualifying them for public health care may be especially problematic. Moreover, an egalitarian social protection should include access to non-contributory health insurance and other health-related benefits,⁸⁷ including affordable medication for the poor.

In spite of the recommendations of the Council of Europe for equitable health care for Roma,⁸⁸ in some countries the effort to move the issue of Roma health higher up in the public agenda may be met with nationalistic, if not outright racist responses. Lacking advocacy on behalf of their health problems, Romanies rarely bring their discrimination in the health care system to court, which keeps the issue invisible. Major steps have however been taken by the World Bank, the European Roma Right Center⁸⁹ and the Open Society Institute to counter this imbalance.

Edit Szénássy is a PhD candidate of socio-cultural anthropology at Charles University Prague, Czech Republic. Her research interests include the anthropology of Roma, gender, and medical anthropology. She conducted a number of qualitative researches among Roma, including a long-term fieldwork research on the intersection of population politics and the reproductive decision-making of Romani women in a poor Slovakian Romani settlement.

84 See especially European Roma Rights Centre, *Ambulance not on the Way: The Disgrace of Health Care for Roma in Europe*. Budapest, 2006.

85 Open Society Institute, Network Public Health Program, *Mediating Romani Health: Policy and Program Opportunities*. New York, 2005.

86 Agency for Community Development, *Roma access to social services: 2005 Facts and Trends*. Bucharest, 2006, p. 33. This study gives an example of a large Romanian Romani community, 90 percent of whom are not registered with a GP.

87 European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2003, p. 7.

88 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation Rec(2006)10 of the Ministers to member states on better access to health care for Roma and Travellers in Europe, 2006, available at: wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1019695&Site=COE

89 The ERRC has been involved in a great amount of Roma health rights abuse documentation, as well as in strategic litigation efforts.

Bulgarian Roma in a Nutshell

- Population: 700,000 to 750,000.
- Percentage of national population: 10,33%.
- Languages: Romani (60%), Bulgarian (25%), Turkish (5%).
- Religions: 45.2% Eastern Orthodox, 15.2% Muslim, 10% Protestant.
- About half of the population live in towns.
- General and functional illiteracy has increased by over 60% between 1992 and 2011, when 23,3% of Roma over 20 were illiterate.
- For the last 20 years, between 37% and 61% of Roma in active working age have been unemployed. Those employed usually work temporarily or without contract.
- Almost half of Roma live in dwellings with no water supply. 75% of households do not have access to sewage. Over 33% of Roma population permanently live in frame-built houses which threatens the health and lives of their inhabitants.
- Over 75% of Roma live in segregated communities, compared to 49% in 1980.
- Infant mortality is 2.6 times higher than with non-Roma.
- 50-80% of trafficked persons are Roma.
- About 50% of children in state-run children's homes are Roma.
- Over 40% of households in some Romani neighbourhoods have at least one member working abroad.

Sources:

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- *Open Society Institute, Health Status of Roma in Bulgaria – Situation and Perspectives, Sofia, 2007*
- *ERRC: Factsheet: Roma Rights Record 2011. errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3828 [27.5.2011]*
- *Representative survey "Formation of a socialist way of life among Bulgarian citizens of Romany origin", 1980*
- *ERRC and People in Need: Breaking the silence. Trafficking in Roma communities. March 2011. errc.org/cms/upload/file/breaking-the-silence-19-march-2011.pdf [27.5.2011]*

Green initiatives

2.1 / A call for a Green policy on Roma housing in Bulgaria – What the European Parliament can do

Vasil Kadrinov

In Bulgaria, a large percentage of the Roma minority of about 600,000, live in separated neighbourhoods in the biggest cities: an estimated 100,000 people in Sofia, 40,000 in Plovdiv and 20,000 in Pazardzhik. In rural regions, Roma families usually live in neighbourhoods of some 10-15 houses or in sheds with poor infrastructure, located on the outskirts of the villages.

Overpopulation of urban Roma neighbourhoods

Currently, Roma living in villages do not inevitably suffer from a lack of housing. As a result of the ageing population in Bulgaria and of migration to the big cities and to Western Europe and the USA, there are many affordable houses for sale in villages. Moreover, it is not expensive to buy land in rural areas in order to start farming. The prices of agriculture products are increasing. Hence, agriculture and farming could offer excellent employment opportunities for rural Roma.

In big cities, however, Roma neighbourhoods are overpopulated and housing conditions of most of inhabitants are extremely poor. Employment opportunities for Roma in the cities are mostly restricted to street cleaning, waste collection, municipal gardening, low qualified industrial jobs and collecting of metals and paper for recycling. Many Roma families in cities cover their subsistence through money transfers and remittances from family members working in Greece, Italy, Spain, France, Germany or the Netherlands. Oftentimes Roma migrant workers from Bulgaria are employed in these countries in agriculture and home cleaning, and there are cases where Roma turn to the sex industry to earn their way. However, these money transfers are usually not enough to change the housing situation of Roma living at home in the bigger cities. The vicious circle of *poor family – bad housing – low education – low-paid job – poor next generation family* is difficult to break.

In the last 12 years, a particularly bad practice has developed in Bulgaria of planning and (in very few cases) realizing pilot projects for Roma social

housing. Such pilot projects have become similar to Potemkin villages, and they are often presented to visitors from EU institutions as models of the “beginning” of efforts to solve the Roma housing problem. These projects are listed in reports which usually include alarming data on the Roma housing situation. The pilot projects are usually presented as “best practice”, to be used in future efforts by future governments. These plans, however, are never realised. Successive government are under the powerful influence of the same Bulgarian oligarchy, who continue their interest in the use of EU funds for construction of modern roads to their own ski resorts, or for building waste water cleaning stations for their own hotel resorts at the seaside.

A need for a Green lobby for EU funds

Bulgaria is the poorest country in the EU. It is not to be expected that in 2014-2020 period the economy will turn to stable growth. Even now, the Bulgarian Government and local authorities do not have enough funds of their own to provide social housing for Roma or to manage housing support programmes. EU funding allocated to Bulgaria for Roma social housing in 2007-2013 are only 8 million EUR for pilot projects, a figure which is clearly insufficient given the scale of the problem. However, there has been no advocacy for increasing EU funds for Roma housing projects for this next funding period by Bulgarian MEPs, as powerful construction firms in Bulgaria have influenced MEPs by active lobbying for the allocation of the EU funds, most of which is intended for road construction. There is no political will amongst the ruling parties in Bulgaria to plan more than pilot projects for Roma social housing for the period 2014-2020 of EU financing.

The Green Group in the European Parliament is committed to advocating for human rights, social solidarity and sustainable development. They have supported the Bulgarian Roma several times during the last years. In 2005, they opposed the anti-Roma hate speech of the nationalist *Ataka* (“Attack”) party. They supported the idea of appointing Roma deputy ministers. In 2006, Green MEPs Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Els de Groen,



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Hiltrud Breyer and Bart Staes, sent an open letter to the Bulgarian authorities and thus saved the Roma settlement *Batalova Vodenitsa* in Sofia from forced demolition by the authorities. Dozens of parliamentary questions have been tabled by members of the Greens/EFA in the EP related to Roma issues.

There is hope amongst the Bulgarian Roma that their Green friends in the European Parliament will insist that the EU not only discuss strategies but will allocate appropriate levels of funding. In Bulgaria in the period 2014-2020 there is a need for no less than 300 million EUR for Roma social housing programmes. These programmes should include a broad range of opportunities for solving the prevailing social problems faced, ranging from loans for buying houses in villages to the construction by Roma families of new inexpensive homes in suburban areas. The housing support programmes of the US Department of Agriculture⁹⁰ could be used as good examples to replicate.

Finally, the Greens in the European Parliament should participate in conceiving a permanent system of control of funding allocated for Roma housing in Eastern Europe, including a systematic, regular monitoring mechanism on the use of EU funds related to the environment, human rights, social solidarity and sustainable development in Eastern Europe, where after half a century of totalitarianism, corruption is widespread and civil society (and the local Green parties) are weak.

⁹⁰ See US Department of Agriculture, Single Family Housing Loans and Grants at www.rurdev.usda.gov/HSF_SFH.html and US Department of Agriculture, Multi-Family Family Housing Loans and Grants www.rurdev.usda.gov/HMF_MFH.html

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Vasili Kadrinov of the Bulgarian Center for Green Economy is a social researcher and supporter of the Green movement in Bulgaria.

For further information, please contact:

- Bulgarian Center for Green Economy www.bczi.ekonet-bg.org
- Zelenite, The Greens in Bulgaria www.zelenite.bg

Romani and Travelling groups in Italy in a Nutshell

- Population: 110,000-170,000.
- Percentage of Italian population: 0,23%.
- Groups with Italian citizenship include sedentary Italian Sinti (30,000) and Italian Roma (30,000). Sicilian Camminanti (10,000) are semi-sedentary.
- An estimated 40 percent of the population are foreign citizens from the western Balkans, Romania and Moldova, who have migrated mostly since the 1990s. They belong to various groups. Many have lived in Italy for prolonged periods without a defined legal status, excluded from social assistance. Over 18,000 live in camps.
- An estimated one third of all Roma live on sites in relatively isolated areas or in the peripheries of large cities. Many sites lack water, gas, electricity and sewage.

- Life expectancy is estimated to be at least nine-ten years below the national average. Infant mortality is three times higher.
- An estimated 17,3% of Roma children are enrolled in school; most drop out during primary school.
- In some areas unemployment rates can be close to 100%.
- Since May 2008 a State of Emergency is in place to deal with Roma. Aggressive evictions are common: in Milan alone since 2010, authorities have evicted more than 3,600 people.

Sources:

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2.2 / DADO, a green yellow house in Turin - Social inclusion and environmental sustainability through self-managed recovery

Oliviero Alotto and Giulia Vassallo

Turin province has a remarkable number of unauthorised Roma camps, most of which have no access to water, drainage system, electricity, garbage collection and other basic public services. According to a research conducted by our non-profit charitable organization, Terra del Fuoco,⁹¹ there are 14 such settlements in the city of Turin alone.

Since 2005 Terra del Fuoco has been involved in initiatives targeted at unauthorised camps in the Turin area. The association's work in this area combines initiatives aimed at improving school attendance, literacy and health care. The association now works in three unauthorised camps located on the northern outskirts of Turin; in total, the association supports almost 1000 people. The association has organised a weekly mobile clinic that provides vaccinations for children as well as prevention and cure of infectious diseases.

In 2010, Terra del Fuoco worked with Legambiente, the Green movement, cultural mediators and camps inhabitants as well as the city waste disposal company to sanitize an unauthorised camp where the health and sanitary situation had been deplorable. People lived on the embankments of a river, in locations contaminated by tons of refuse. The project included the removal of 1,000 tons of refuse, disinfestations and rodent control measures. Camp inhabitants were assigned the responsibility of maintaining the cleanliness of the area in the months following the sanitation. They were also trained and provided with the tools necessary to respond immediately in the case of fire.

The Dado Project

The Dado project began in 2005, when Terra del Fuoco was involved in regular work with a small Roma community residing in an illegal camp



Unauthorized camps in Turin

near Turin. After the destruction of the camp by an accidental fire in 2006, Terra del Fuoco and other associations began to support the Roma people who lived there, in order to find a place where they could stay. In 2008, the City of Settimo Torinese assigned to our association the use of a building which required serious renovations, and which would become the future Dado house.

The process began by identifying families suitable for the project in the Roma settlements monitored by Terra del Fuoco. Following the concept of "self-managed recovery", urban recovery work on the building was conducted directly by these families – the future beneficiaries of the building. This also guaranteed the participants important work experience, which helped with their reintegration into the labour market. Moreover, Terra del Fuoco established a cooperative, called "Terra del fuoco lavoro" in order to offer work placements to members of these families.

The Dado is both a much-needed housing structure and the first example in Italy of self-managed recovery conducted by Roma migrants. Currently it hosts four Roma families with 13 minors; they share the residential structure with two Terra del Fuoco workers. Families are offered three years residence in the house, after which they are assisted in finding a new residence. Families living at Dado are required to agree with and accept the community rules governing the use of common spaces, which require the families' joint collaboration in all activities, ranging from items applicable to the building structure to the upbringing of children. In order to emphasize that the Dado is not a welfare structure, the families are request-

⁹¹ Established in Turin in 2001, the association's objectives are the growth of an engaged community and the promotion of the peoples and cultures of developing countries.



The DADO house

ed to pay a nominal rent, which underscores their personal commitment to the scheme.

The structure is open to the public and through its activities is becoming an important reference point for the area of Settimo Torinese, promoting a new model of welcoming and integration. Furthermore, during the summer of 2009 Terra del Fuoco began a six-month welcome programme for youth who have obtained humanitarian protection status. The experience began with Austin Ada, a young Nigerian survivor of a dramatic migratory experience.

The journey towards a community in which the families are the main actors was achieved through various types of activities, supported by cultural

mediators and employees of Terra del Fuoco. All of the children now attend school. They have integrated well with their classes and achieve excellent results. According to their teachers, their degree of absenteeism during the 2008-09 school year was less than that of their local classmates. Moreover, the parents are becoming autonomous in handling school-related matters. Social inclusion has been an area of focus for the project: in spite of being Romanian citizens (and therefore citizens of the European Union) at the time of their arrival to the area the Dado's new residents had no administrative documents (health cards, driver's licences, identity cards), nor did they know how to obtain them. The project has also aimed at supporting employment, as the dignity of families and their inclusion in society depends, among other things, on employment, which allows for full independence in personal decision-making.

Dado's environmental sustainability: EcoDado

Until 2010, the consumption of electricity and natural gas in the Dado house, equal to 164 000 kw/h represented a significant problem. The EcoDado project aimed at reducing environmental impact, consumption and relative costs, as well as promoting a culture of respect for the environment. Once again Terra del Fuoco used a self-managed recovery approach. Within six months Terra del Fuoco proceeded to:

Action	Reduction of energy [Kw/h]*	Reduction of CO ₂ (tons/year)*
Insulate opaque horizontal and vertical surfaces, reducing energy consumption	50,000	23
Replace the water heater and electric stove with a low-efficiency boiler with a high efficiency condensing boiler	14,000	7,6
Install solar panels to produce hot water for domestic use	4,500	2,2
Replace the fixtures to improve the energy performance of the building	10,800	5,7
Install a photovoltaic system on the roof which covers one third of a family's annual electrical consumption (1 MW). The plant is designed to produce annually 17,500 kw / h, which means savings of about 4,000€.	17,000	9

* Figures given are approximate

Thanks to these measures the Dado house's total consumption decreased from 164,000 kw/h to 67,700 kw/h per year. Builders were provided training in the installation of the photovoltaic system. The use of auto-building and auto-restructuring in the installation of the system, as well as partnerships with suppliers reduced installation costs, without affecting the quality of the structure. The restructuring process, closely monitored by professionals, was an important training opportunity for the builders. It also improved the culture of energy saving and environmental protection. Thus the process contributed to the integration of the Roma community into the Italian surroundings, while also improving the quality of life of Dado's inhabitants, making the house an example of environmental sustainability, economic and social development.

Future opportunities

The presence of camps and the low integration of Roma people concern many European cities. The lack of essential services, such as water, electricity and garbage collection, as well as poor hygienic conditions, often exacerbated by large amounts of waste, require early intervention. Moreover, the isolation of the Roma community increases poverty and crime.

In Dado, Terra del Fuoco has developed a method of integration and inclusion that can act as a pilot project. Thanks in part to its low start-up and management costs, it is a sustainable method. The excellent results obtained should act as an incentive to replicate Dado's experience in different areas and contexts. It is only by investing in public policies aimed at integration, education, employment and housing assistance that real changes can be achieved – changes that improve both collective social welfare and the quality of life of every individual.

Oliviero Alotto is President and founding member of the NGO Terra del Fuoco and member of the Green Movement.

Giulia Vassallo is active in the Green Movement and works at Terra del Fuoco. She has researched the environmental and social impact of unauthorised camps.

For further information, please contact:

- Oliviero Alotto, at oliviero.alotto@terradelfuoco.org
- NGO Terra del Fuoco at terradelfuoco.org

Romanian Roma in a Nutshell

- Population: 1 200 000– 2 500 000.
- Percentage of population: 8,32%.
- Groups: Romanianised Roma, Rudari, Căldărari, Ursari and Cărămidari.
- Romanian Roma are sedentary.
- 22% of Roma above the age of 14 are illiterate and only 9% of young adults are secondary school graduates.
- 28% were unemployed in 2002. Almost one third of economically active Roma work in agriculture and forestry. 43% of Roma mostly get their living from state help and charity.
- Roma live mainly in peripheral rural areas. Two thirds of homes have no access to sewage, gas, water, or power supply and they are overcrowded. One third of Roma in urban areas live in improvised or abandoned houses.
- Roma life expectancy is ten years lower than the average citizen. Child mortality is rising up to 40 per thousand.
- An estimated 30,000-60,000 Roma do not have valid IDs, forming an obstacle to access social services.
- An estimated half of victims of human trafficking for forced labour in Romania are Roma.
- In some regions, up to 80% of the population in children's homes are Romani.

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2.3 / Red ribbons and drug use – A need for research on Roma health issues in Romania

Costin Militaru

In 2010 a total of 16,697 cases of HIV/AIDS were registered in Romania.⁹² More than 70% of new HIV infections diagnosed in 2010 among adults were heterosexually transmitted. The second most common way of getting HIV infection is via blood infections, and especially worryingly via the use of shared drug injecting equipments. In 2010 alone, 21 cases of HIV infection were diagnosed among injection drugs users in Romania. In Bucharest there are estimated 17,000 heroine users, of whom more than 70% use shared needles.

The economic, social and cultural realities of the Roma population make it more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infections and drug consumption. The Roma community's more limited access to education and health care services can lead to a lack of information, and can foster many misconceptions about HIV transmission and the risks related to drug consumption.

There are no official statistics on injecting drug addicts or commercial sex workers of Roma origin. However, according to my personal experience during eight years of work with the Romanian Anti-AIDS Association's and the Integration Association's Service for Risk Reduction associated to drug use, more than half of the beneficiaries I have worked with came from families with at least one Roma parent.

The main aim of the Service for Risk Reduction is to reduce vulnerability to HIV infection and drug use, as well as facilitate the access to indiscriminate social and medical services by:

- including HIV and drug use prevention activities in the working programmes of sanitary mediators;
- ensuring access to HIV/AIDS testing and treatment regardless of the patients' health insurance status;

- promoting risk free behaviour among Roma teenagers and young adults, by offering peer educators, distributing condoms, facilitating access to services tailored for young people and preventing drug use;
- commissioning local and national studies on the causes of risk behaviour among Roma;
- strengthening the capacity of Roma organizations to develop activities promoting healthy lifestyles, including preventing HIV/AIDS and drug use.

In general, the approach used in working with persons of Roma origin does not differ from the approach used in working with individuals originating from the majority population. However, when discussing issues related to HIV/AIDS and drug use, it is beneficial if the interlocutor is also of Roma origin. On the other hand, for communicating with injecting drug users, origin is less relevant than personal experience: former drug users are the most convincing for discussing drug use. Also, dominant cultural influences in certain Roma communities – such as the prohibition of the use of condoms for religious reasons, or the use of shared needles by injecting drug user couples – need to be taken in account in some cases.

An urgent need for monitoring and concrete plans

The Roma community has been the focus of several Romanian public policy programmes from 2001 onwards.⁹² The premise of these policies is the general improvement of the living conditions of the Roma,⁹³ the diminishment of poverty and social exclusion⁹⁴ and the promotion of social inclusion policies.⁹⁵

A number of research, monitoring reports and evaluation programmes have been conducted in relation to the above mentioned strategies. However, in the field of health most of these programmes have a predominant focus on evaluating a single measure: the sanitary mediation programme.⁹⁶ While this measure has proved useful in improving the access of Roma to some health services, a major current challenge is the lack of evaluation reports in the health field more gener-

91 Report of the Department for Monitoring and Evaluating the HIV/AIDS Infections in Romania.

92 The Governmental Strategy, The National Anti-Poverty Program for Promoting Social Inclusion (NAPpsi) as well as the Joint Social Inclusion Memorandum.

93 Governmental Strategy.

94 NAPpsi.

95 The Roma inclusion decade: 2005-2015, documents connected to the National Development Plan 2007-2013.

96 Sanitary mediators are Roma peer educators, who have been trained on issues related to HIV, sexually transmitted infections and injecting drug use.



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ally, which could reveal correct and recent data regarding the broad health conditions of the Roma communities and their access to health services.

In order to develop and implement concrete measures that will contribute to improving health standards inside the Roma community, there is an urgent need to analyse the current situation and to develop a monitoring and evaluation plan. Also the situation of injecting drug users and HIV infections related to Roma community should be documented by NGOs and taken on board by the state. The longer problems remain unaddressed, the more difficult it will be to deal with them in the future. Changes need to take place within the next decade.

Costin Militaru is a doctor and trainer on harm reduction, currently working as the medical co-ordinator of the ARAS Titan Opioid Substitution treatment centre. He is also vice-president of the Green party Miscarea Verzilor Demokrati Agrarieni.

For further information, please contact:

- Costin Militaru at [costin.militaru\[at\]miscareaverzilor.eu](mailto:costin.militaru[at]miscareaverzilor.eu)
- Romanian Green party Miscarea Verzilor www.miscareaverzilor.eu
- Asociația Română Anti-SIDA www.arasnet.ro
- Integration Association www.integration.org.ro

Travellers and Roma in the UK in a Nutshell

- Population: 150,000-300,000.
- Percentage of population: 0,37%.
- Traditional travelling groups, with their own cultural values and language include Irish Travellers, (30,000), Indigenous Scottish Highland Travellers (mostly settled, 20,000), Scottish Lowland Travellers, Funfair travellers (25,000) and Bargees. New Travellers (15,000), originate mostly from the settled community. Roma groups include Romanichal or Romany Gypsies (65,000), Scottish Lowland Travellers, Welsh Kale (2,000).
- An estimated several thousand Roma from numerous Eastern European groups have arrived since the 1990s as asylum-seekers and EU citizens.
- A quarter of Roma and Travellers live in caravans on unauthorised encampments.
- Gypsies and Travellers are seen as the groups "most at risk in the education system".
- Studies show higher maternal death and infant mortality rates and lower levels of life expectancy for in comparison with the average

Sources:

- Council of Europe Roma and Travellers orum data, www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/archive/documentation/strategies/statistiques_en.asp (26.5.2011)
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2.4 / A Green pledge to enhance Traveller sites in Brighton

Liz Wakefield

In the UK, Gypsies and Travellers suffer a high level of inequality, particularly in the fields of life expectancy and in their level of literacy and education, usually caused by sporadic school attendance. They also suffer from discrimination and racial hatred. Gypsy, Roma and Travellers (GRT) are covered by the Equalities Act of 2010.

The Traveller groups that visit Brighton and Hove are mainly Irish Travellers, English Gypsies and New Travellers. We have more Travellers during the summer season. Circus people and Fair-ground people (Showmen) also regularly visit our area; however these groups do not suffer the same levels of prejudice from the settled community.

A group that is possibly unique to Brighton and a few other urban areas in England are “van dwellers”. These are people who work locally but live in vans, usually due to the lack of affordable housing. This group tends not to be nomadic.

Green Traveller strategy

The biggest problem that Travellers experience is the lack of adequate sites to stop in. In 1994, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (passed while Margaret Thatcher was Prime Minister), removed the duty on local authorities to provide sites. Until recently, Travellers in Brighton and Hove faced a “merry-go-round” of evictions from one site, only to move onto another site in or near the town. Often these sites were public parks and other sensitive areas.

We, as the Green minority administration in Brighton and Hove City Council recognise that Travellers are a marginalised and a much maligned group. Our aim is to protect both the Travellers’ right to travel and indeed stop, as well as to protect the settled communities’ rights to enjoy parks and open spaces. As part of our positive Traveller Strategy, we have developed a “firm but fair” approach. We aim to provide enough permanent pitches to meet the needs of the GRT community, as well as to provide adequate temporary or transit sites. We currently have one transit site in Brighton. Due to the current lack of authorised stopping places for Travellers, we have opened up temporary short term encampments for use by Travellers, but under strict conditions. To fulfil our aims we are working closely with our local Green MP Caroline Lucas, Friends and Families of Travellers (a National charity), the East Sussex Traveller Education Support Service, our local council Traveller Liaison Team and the police.

We are committed to stopping any antisocial behaviour, be it from the settled or Travelling community. The police will act in a measured and equal way to both. Before any Travellers are moved from where they are parked, the council always carries out a welfare assessment involving the health and education needs of the Travellers.

The need of cohesion and education

One of our desires is to promote cohesion between the Traveller community and the settled community. This is not easy, as the press usually prints sensational one-sided stories about Travellers. An additional problem is that the current



An annual gathering of Gypsies and Travellers in the town of Appleby in Cumbria, England

British Government has cut funding for the Traveller Education Services.

I worked as Head of Traveller Education for the London Borough of Havering for the past 6 years, but was made redundant by current cuts. My experience is that Traveller Education Services play a vital role in getting the GRT children into local schools and liaising between the schools and parents. These teachers are dedicated and go beyond their official remit within education, usually helping with liaison between the GRT families and health services, local councils and other official bodies. Traveller Education Teachers are a trusted face for the GRT community.

While we recognise that we cannot solve all the injustices that the GRT community have experienced,

we aim to work with our neighbouring councils to provide more adequate sites and provision.

Liz Wakefield is Green Party Councillor and Cabinet Member for Housing in the Brighton and Hove City Council, as well as former Head of Traveller Education Services in Havering, London.

For further information, please contact:

- Liz Wakefield, at
liz.wakefield@brighton-hove.gov.uk
- Brighton and Hove Green Party
www.brightonhovegreens.org
- NGO Friends, Families and Travellers
www.gypsy-traveller.org
fft@gypsy-traveller.org

3. EMPLOYMENT

The Roma and employment

Lari Peltonen

For the past two decades, Roma in Central and Eastern Europe have suffered from the collapse of the socialist system and the subsequent closure of much of heavy industry which tragically led to massive unemployment for a vast number of Roma families. In Northern, Western and Southern Europe, industrially manufactured products and the automatization of labour has resulted in a decline in the need for the traditional occupations of the Roma, such as peddling and handicrafts, although this change has taken place over a longer period of time. The unemployment rate of the Roma across Europe is alarmingly high, especially among women and rural communities, due to blatant discrimination against the Roma, heightened educational requirements for work and ever increasing competition for even low-skilled jobs. Also, many Roma live in remote settlements with limited employment possibilities.

A short history of Roma employment

The Roma are believed to have arrived from India to the Balkans in the mid-14th century, to Western Europe in the 15th century and to the Nordic countries in the 16th century. Broadly speaking, the arrival of Roma in Europe coincided with the slow transition from feudal to market-oriented economy. Differentiated exchange created a need for specialised craftsmanship, skills often mastered by Roma. In many regions, entire Roma groups became known by the prevalent occupation within their group. Accordingly, some Balkan and Eastern European groups continue to be called Kalderashi (coppersmiths), Ursari (bear-trainers) and Lăutari (musicians). In some parts of Europe, Roma were highly recognised craftspeople – for instance, in the 14th Century Bohemian and Hungarian King Sigismund's court the Roma were highly regarded "castle musicians" and their skills in metal forging were valued in

arming the royal soldiery.⁹⁷ Elsewhere, like in Walachia and Moldavia (southern and eastern parts of today's Romania), the Roma were enslaved over centuries until the abolishment of slavery in 1864.⁹⁸

Working as blacksmiths, goldsmiths, coppersmiths, musicians, dancers, actors, circus performers, animal trainers, traders and fortune tellers, the Roma filled a niche in the society and could keep their independence and liberty – aspects important to the Roma culture – and enjoy social appreciation. Accordingly, as the demand for traditional products and services has steadily diminished in the post-Second World War Europe, many Roma have found it difficult to adapt to the new wage-based working culture, characterised by big production units where income has increasingly become dependent on working for an outside employer. French sociologist Jean-Pierre Liégeois argues that often in Roma communities "work must leave an individual in control of his or her own time" which is perhaps why self-employment is preferred over waged labour.⁹⁹

Also, in the Western and Nordic Europe the emerging consumerism, cheap industrially manufactured products and entertainment industry left many Roma unable to sustain themselves or continue their traditional – often travelling – way of life. For instance, in Finland, the deterioration in living conditions led to the political activism of the 1960s where the Roma defended their social, economic and cultural rights. The subsequent evolution of the Finnish welfare state lifted Roma from extreme poverty, but social welfare actions could not resolve the social exclusion which results from unemployment and discrimination, issues which are still considered prevalent for the Finnish Roma.¹⁰⁰

In Central and Eastern Europe, the employment of Roma took a different turn due to the socialist system and the rigorous control of the state. The socialist production model relied on heavy industry, which brought the Roma closer to the majority population by offering work also for the often-unschooled Roma. Furthermore, although

⁹⁷ Crowe, David. *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia*. 2nd ed. New York: St. Martins Press, 1996, pp. 70.

⁹⁸ Hancock, Ian. *We Are the Romani people*. 3rd ed. Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2007, pp. 25.

⁹⁹ Liégeois, Jean-Pierre. *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1994, pp. 95.

¹⁰⁰ Syrjä, Hannele; Valtakari, Mikko. *Romanien pitkä matka työn markkinoille. Tutkimus romanien työ- markkinoille sijoittumisen edistämiseksi*. Ministry of Labour of Finland: Helsinki, 2008, pp. 53, 80–84.

the emphases of nationality policies differed between countries, all of them aimed at the assimilation of the Roma to the majority's way of life and the termination of vagrancy of the travelling Roma (although majority of the Eastern European Roma had been sedentary for centuries).¹⁰¹ For instance, in Ceaușescu's Romania, the traditional means of livelihood of the Roma (such as peddling or playing music), were declared illegal and the Roma were settled in permanent accommodation.¹⁰² Thus, socialism ended to a great extent the travelling lifestyle of the Roma in Eastern European countries and narrowed the social gap between Roma and the majority population, even if it did so only through force.

Current employment situation

Historical reasoning shows that the distinct problems faced by Roma communities throughout Europe have developed over the course of centuries – lower economic and social status, social isolation and discrimination have resulted in a vicious circle of exclusion and poverty, one symptom of which is the tenacious unemployment experienced by the Roma in the whole Europe.

Unfortunately, across Europe Roma are perceived as lazy, criminal and inferior especially, but not exclusively, by mushrooming ultranationalist groups. Álvaro Gil-Robles, the former Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, has cited numerous examples of discrimination against Roma job seekers including a Romanian job announcement stating that “no Roma need apply”, and that in Finland and Sweden qualified Roma applicants were denied the invitation to the interview because their names were recognised as Romani names.¹⁰³ Such examples of discrimination against Roma in employment are not rare: according to the EU-MIDIS survey on discrimination in many coun-

tries Roma are the group that encounters discrimination most frequently, in all spheres of life.¹⁰⁴

Examples from Northern, Western and Southern Europe

Roma who are citizens of the Nordic, Western and Southern European countries are entitled to the employment and social welfare services of their native countries. They usually speak fluently the majority language of the country and know the culture and can be therefore employed with relative ease. Also, most European Travelling communities live in Western European countries where the specific needs and the full labour potential of Travellers and other such groups are rarely taken into sufficient consideration.

The largest Roma community of Western Europe live in Spain, where there are from 600,000 to one million Roma.¹⁰⁵ According to a comprehensive study on Roma employment in Spain,¹⁰⁶ there are two significant differences between the Roma community and the majority population. Firstly, Roma are characterised by a higher birth rate and a younger population: nearly half of the Roma population over the age of 15 is under 30 years old. The young age of the Roma population sets challenges and creates potential opportunities in resolving the approaching “pension bomb.”¹⁰⁷ Secondly, Roma have a significantly lower record in attaining academic degrees (0.3 % of the Roma interviewed for the study compared with nearly 20 % of the majority population had a higher academic degree), in addition to which the Roma lose out to other Spaniards in literacy (the share of illiteracy was 7.8 % and 0.46 % respectively).¹⁰⁸ Partly due to low academic attendance, Roma start their working life at a younger age than the majority population.¹⁰⁹ However, unemployment affects the Roma population to a greater extent:

101 Ringold, Dena. *Roma and the Transition in Central and Eastern Europe: Trends and Challenges*. Washington: the World Bank, 2000, pp. 5–6.

102 Ringold, Dena; Orenstein, Alexander Mitchell; and Wilkens, Erika. *Roma in an Expanding Europe: Breaking the Poverty Cycle*. Washington: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2005, pp. 91. siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTROMA/Resources/roma_in_expanding_europe.pdf.

103 Gil-Robles, Alvaro. On the Human Rights Situation of the Roma, Sinti and Travellers in Europe, Final Report. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2006, pp. 26. wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=962605&BackColorInternet=FEC65B&BackColorIntranet=FEC65B&BackColorLogged=FFC679.

104 European Union Fundamental Rights Agency. *EU-MIDIS – European Union Minorities and Discrimination: Survey Data in Focus Report / The Roma*. Vienna: FRA, 2009, pp. 2. fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/EU-MIDIS_ROMA_EN.pdf.

105 Ringold, Orenstein, and Wilkens, pp. 19.

106 Conducted by the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG), a prominent Spanish Roma NGO.

107 Fundación Secretariado Gitano. *Roma Population and Employment: A Comparative Study*. Madrid:

Fundación Secretariado Gitano, 2005, pp. 15. www.gitanos.org/publicaciones/estudioempleo/index.htm.

108 Ibid. pp. 69.

109 Ibid. pp. 73.

in 2004–2005, the Roma had an estimated unemployment rate of 13.8 % compared with 10.4 % of the majority population.

Another example from Western Europe comes from the Irish Travellers' community. Irish Travellers are the largest ethnic minority in Ireland, an indigenous group often mistakenly confused with the Roma. According to the most recent census from 2002, there are nearly 24,000 Travellers in Ireland.¹¹⁰ In the past, Travellers travelled by horse-drawn wagons and earned their livelihood as tinsmiths, horse traders and peddlers. Today, horse caravans have given way to mobile homes and the traditional occupations have been modernised: Travellers earn their livelihood mainly by dismantling cars and recycling scrap metal, although this source of livelihood is threatened by increased regulation of the car dismantling and car scrappage industry, along with the drop in value of recycled materials.¹¹¹ This means engaging in the informal and self-employed economy which supports an independent and nomadic way of life. But there is the risk that these forms of work will further expose Travellers to social exclusion, and amplify this exclusion because of the majority population's intolerance of such work. Accordingly, Irish Travellers are highly vulnerable to unemployment: the 2002 census figures estimate that nearly 40 % of the Travellers are unemployed.¹¹²

Massive unemployment in Eastern Europe

Roma in the former socialist countries, such as Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Ukraine, have suffered considerably due to the collapse of the socialist system and the resultant unemployment and economic difficulties. Their squalid situation can be considered a major developmental challenge and the most severe human rights problem in Europe. In these countries, the roughly five million Roma population often faces blatant discrimination in employment, fuelled by widespread hostility.

In addition to human suffering and millions of people living on the fringes of society is also a huge missed economic opportunity. The World Bank has calculated that due to the low education and unemployment of the Roma, the annual productivity losses of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania and Serbia amount to as much as much as 5.7 billion Euros.¹¹³

After the collapse of the socialist system, the Eastern European countries' economies crashed and many state-owned enterprises were closed down. The Roma were often among the first to be fired. For example in Hungary an estimated two thirds of workplaces employing Roma were closed down at the beginning of the 1990s. Many have been without a steady job since.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, as the massive grocery and general merchandise retailers such as Tesco, Billa and Auchan have conquered markets in Eastern European countries, the prospects for the Roma to make a living peddling and trading at traditional outdoor markets have further diminished. Wide unemployment and the decrease in employers' demand for human labour has continually whittled down the work places available to those living on the edge of society.

Individual Roma, who interviewed for the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report, considered unemployment to be the most serious problem affecting the Roma. According to the report, unemployment nudges up to 100 % in many places, although accurate figures are not available due to the inadequacy of the statistical data.¹¹⁵ When compiling unemployment data from different countries, the citizens' ethnic background is rarely taken into account, most often due to legal restriction on collecting ethnic data. Moreover, as work is largely understood as equal permanent paid work, often-times temporary or informal work is not included in the statistics.

However, unemployment rarely equals idleness: a great share of Roma in Eastern Europe earn their

110 The Government of Ireland, Central Statistics Office. *Census 2002 Volume 8 - Irish Traveller Community*. Cork, Central Statistics Office, 2004, pp. 11. www.cso.ie/census/documents/vol8_entire.pdf

111 Pavee Point Travellers Centre. *Dismantling the Traveller Economy? – A Case Study of the impact of increasing regulation on the Traveller economy: the implications of the EU Directive on the 'End of Life Vehicles'*. Dublin: Pavee Point's Travellers Economic and Social Inclusion Programme, 2003, pp. 1, 3. www.paveepoint.ie/pdf/Dismantling-theTrav-economy.pdf

112 The Government of Ireland, Central Statistics Office, pp. 25.

113 The World Bank. *Economic Costs of Roma Exclusion*. The World Bank, 2010. siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTROMA/Resources/Economic_Costs_Roma_Exclusion_Note_Final.pdf

114 The United Nations Development Programme. *Avoiding The Dependency Trap*. Bratislava: UNDP, 2002, pp. 32.

115 Ibid. p. 39.

livelihood within the informal sector and are thus beyond the reach of statistical data compilation. Many Roma work as street vendors or collect and sell recyclable materials. Also child labour is left out of official statistics: according to the UNDP report a few percent of the Roma children between the ages of 5 and 9 had to contribute to the family income by selling flowers or cigarettes, washing cars, begging or collecting recyclable materials.

Employment of migrant Roma

During the last decades, Western European countries have received migrating Roma from the Eastern European countries. Since 1990, the collapse of the socialist regimes and the opening of borders enabled many Roma to flee poverty and unemployment and travel to the West. Later during the decade, the Yugoslav War and ethnic persecution drove many Roma to seek asylum, especially in Italy. This was especially the case after the conflict in Kosovo: nearly 90% of Roma and Ashkali were forced to flee violent attacks of Albanian nationalists.¹¹⁶

Most recently, Roma have migrated after the new Member States were admitted to the European Union in 2004 and 2007. The so-called Directive of Freedom of Movement (2004/38/EC) lays out the right of migrants to move and reside freely within the EU, which has caused a migration of Roma especially from Romania and Bulgaria to the West. These Roma have in recent years been the subject of heated political discussion.

Migrant Roma are a heterogeneous group, some of whom have lived in the destination countries for years, while others only intend to stay for a short time to save some money. However, many have had a particularly hard time finding employment. With limited or no education and little or non-existing knowledge of the local language, the only options for many are badly paid odd jobs or no jobs at all. Furthermore, their vulnerable position is often subject to exploitation. For instance, in the United Kingdom, many Roma from Eastern Europe have been lured to work in England, only to find out that “the work was low paid, irregular and short term.” Many were promised well-paid steady jobs by private employment agencies which



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charged them large sums of money for “completing paper work, arranging registration cards, and even on occasions finding accommodation.”¹¹⁷

There are, nevertheless, also good examples of local level interventions for providing employment for the newly arrived Roma. For example, in France, the City of Cesson drafted a programme of social integration for four Romanian Roma families who were to be evicted by a tribunal order for occupying a halting site designated for Travellers for several years. By means of the social integration programme, the Roma received fixed housing and formal employment, in addition to which their children attended the local school. Both the Roma and the city were committed to implementing the programme and in the end also residents of Cesson were convinced that integrating foreign Roma is achievable.¹¹⁸

Addressing employment issues

Despite some worried voices already during the last decades of the 20th century, it is mainly since the latest enlargement cycles of the European Union and the preceding negotiations that the international community has begun to address concerns with the situation of Roma in Europe. Due partly to the movement of Eastern European Roma towards the West, today the problems of the Roma are discussed more than ever. To a certain extent the Roma situation has given an opportunity for the foreign powers like China and the United States to call attention to

¹¹⁶ Ringold, Orenstein, and Wilkens, pp. 15.

¹¹⁷ European Dialogue. *The Situation of Roma from new Member States of the European Union and the Role of Local Authorities in their Settlement and Inclusion*. European Dialogue, 2009, pp. 15–16 equality.uk.com/Resources_files/strategicguide.pdf

¹¹⁸ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. *Selected positive initiatives – The situation of Roma EU citizens moving to and settling in other EU Member States*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009, pp. 9–10.



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the flaws of European governments and the European Union. However, the discussion over the issues has encouraged the European Union and other European organizations, such as the Council of Europe and the OSCE to develop and implement programmes and strategies to enhance the integration of the Roma. Despite the number of strategies, action plans and social programmes that address inter alia, the employment situation of the Roma, political commitment to implement these tools still staggers, especially due to the current difficult economic situation and strong anti-Roma and anti-immigrant sentiments in many countries.

The Council of Europe, which includes all European countries excluding the Holy See and Belarus, has a long tradition in advancing the status of the Roma. The Committee of Ministers, composed of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of its member states, issued in 2001 a specific recommendation on improving the economic and employment situation of Roma and Travel-

lers in Europe. Its primary recommendation is that *"Roma/Gypsy communities and organisations should participate fully in the processes of designing, implementing and monitoring programmes and policies aimed at improving their economic and employment situation."*¹¹⁹ This is especially important, as many previous attempts to improve the situation of the Roma have failed without the contribution of Romani stakeholders.

The new Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, has shown great interest in including Roma affairs on the agenda of the Council of Europe and restructuring the organization to better meet their challenges, for instance by nominating the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma to increase co-operation of different actors dealing with Roma affairs within the Council of Europe. In October 2010, a high-level meeting on Roma was organised in Strasbourg, resulting in the *Strasbourg Declaration on Roma*. The Declaration contains an entry calling for ensuring *"equal access of Roma to employment and vocational training in accordance with international and domestic law, including, when appropriate, by using mediators in employment offices."*¹²⁰ Mediators, preferably of Roma background, have proven a useful means in solving culture related conflicts between the Roma and the majority population in work places, searching for work and accessing services. For instance, in Finland, there are Romani mediators employed in the Labour Service Centres who provide administrative expertise and are familiar with the needs of the customers, both Roma and of majority population.¹²¹

The OSCE first recognised the particular problems of the Roma in the so-called *Copenhagen Document* in 1990. Since then, the organization has actively contributed to advancing the equality of the Roma and fighting against discrimination, reaching also countries outside Europe. The crowning achievement of the OSCE is the *Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area*, which was approved by consensus between all 56 Member States in 2003. This comprehensive document contains a

119 The Council of Europe, The Committee of Ministers. *Recommendation Rec(2001)17 on improving the economic and employment situation of Roma/Gypsies and Travellers in Europe*.

The Committee of Ministers, 2001. wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=241681&Site=COE

120 The Council of Europe, The Committee of Ministers. *CM(2010)133 final, The Strasbourg Declaration on Roma*. Strasbourg: The Council of Europe, 2010. ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com_2011_173_en.pdf

121 The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland, 2009. *The Proposal of the Working Group for a National Policy on Roma: Working Group Report*. Reports of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2009: 57. pp. 59. www.stm.fi/julkaisut/nayta/_julkaisu/1477342

section addressing the unemployment and economic problems of the Roma, calling for “increased representation of qualified Roma and Sinti people in public employment” and “policies and programmes, including vocational training, to improve the marketable skills and employability of Roma and Sinti people, particularly young people and women.”¹²²

Having started as a trade association, the European Union has had a long tradition in advancing employment and labour mobility. Moreover, as the human rights and social policy dimension has become increasingly important for the Union, Roma affairs have become an essential focus of policies enhancing inclusion and social cohesion.

A major undertaking of the EU in relation to employment is the *Europe 2020 Strategy*, which was approved by the European Council in June 2010. One of the five targets of the Strategy is to raise the employment rate of the population aged 20–64 from the current 69% to at least 75%.¹²³ Another aspect which is relevant for the Roma is also the target to reduce the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion – out of whom many are Roma – by at least 20 million by the year 2020. Furthermore, one of the seven flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the *European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion*, covers actions related to employment and social inclusion of the Roma.

The most recent milestone is the issuing of the *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, approved by the European Council in 24 June 2011. It is the single most comprehensive document produced by a European Union organ that addresses the social exclusion of the Roma. However, it has been criticised of having fallen short of the recommendations contained in the Report to the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, endorsed by an overwhelming majority in the European Parliament Resolution on March 8, 2011. As regards employment, the Communication contains the following entry:

“[...] Member States should grant Roma people full access in a non-discriminatory way to vocational training, to the job market and to self-employment tools and initiatives. Access to micro-credit should be encouraged. In the public sector, due attention should be given to employment of qualified Roma civil servants. Public Employment Services can reach out to the Roma by providing personalised services and mediation. This can help attract Roma to the labour market and thus increase the employment rate.”¹²⁴

Conclusions

Given the disturbingly high unemployment rate of the Roma in the whole Europe and the costs associated with Roma exclusion, intervening in the situation needs both working tools and patience. The problem of social exclusion, a product of centuries of discrimination and huge structural changes, will not be solved overnight.

However, as outlined above, European organizations have taken the particular problems of the Roma on to their agendas. An especially positive step is the recent action of the European Union to combat the social exclusion of the Roma. With expertise of handling employment-related problems, its funding and influence, the EU can take prompt actions to improve the situation of the Roma. However, this is best done in cooperation with other European organizations such as the Council of Europe and the OSCE, that have a long experience in human rights and deep understanding of the situation in the field, also in countries outside the EU.

Finally, all policies, programmes and projects should be planned, implemented and monitored in deep mutual understanding and cooperation with the Romani stakeholders. The main weight and responsibility in equal and fair employment lies on the local-level employers and authorities, not forgetting the responsibility of the Roma to take sustainable actions to rise from poverty and exclusion

¹²² The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. *Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area (MC.DEC/3/03)*. Maastricht: The OSCE, 2003, pp. 8. www.osce.org/odihr/17554

¹²³ The European Commission. *Europe 2020*. ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm.

¹²⁴ The European Commission. *COM(2011) 173 final, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*. Brussels: the European Commission, 2011, pp. 6. ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com_2011_173_en.pdf

Lari Peltonen is a Social Anthropologist specializing in Eastern European development challenges. He has worked for the Finnish Church Aid and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs for Finland on Roma inclusion issues. Mr. Peltonen has also released a book "Hate Speech against the Roma in Romania."

Hungarian Roma in a Nutshell

- Population: 400,000 -1,000,000.
- Percentage of population: 7,05%.
- Groups and languages: Romungró (speaking mostly Hungarian), Boyash (speaking Hungarian and Boyash), Lovara (speaking Wallachian dialects of Romani), as well as minor Romanian Roma communities and Sinti (speaking mainly Sinto-Romani).
- Most are Roman Catholic.
- The vast majority of Roma drop out of the schooling system without a secondary school degree.
- 65% of children in state care are Romani.
- Estimates of Roma unemployment range from 50–60 %. In 2003, there was no work-related income in 73 % of Roma households in the Eastern counties. The average per capita income in Roma households was one third of the national average.
- Over half of the Roma population lives in a rural environment
- Sporadic cases of coercive sterilization of Romani women have been reported as recently as 2008.
- Since 2008, 48 violent attacks against Roma have lead to the death of 9 people, including 2 minors. Of 22 examined cases, only in 1 case the perpetrator was convicted and in 12 cases prosecution was pending.
- At least 40% of victims of human trafficking are Roma.

Sources:

- *Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Forum data*, www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/archive/documentation/strategies/statistiques_en.asp (26.5.2011)

- *ERRC: Coercive sterilization of Roma women*, May 5 2011. errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3843 (27.5.2011)
- *ERRC: Factsheet: Roma Rights Record 2011*. errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3828 (27.5.2011)
- *ERRC and People in Need: Breaking the silence. Trafficking in Roma communities*. March 2011. errc.org/cms/upload/file/breaking-the-silence-19-march-2011.pdf (27.5.2011)
- *ERRC: Attacks against Roma in Hungary: January 2008–April 2011* errc.org/cms/upload/file/attacks-list-in-hungary.pdf (27.5.2011)
- *ERRC: Imperfect Justice: Anti-Roma violence and impunity*. March 2011. errc.org/cms/upload/file/czech-hungary-slovakia-imperfect-justice-06-march-2011.pdf (27.5.2011)

Green initiatives

3.1 / A plot of their own - Igrici's First Roma Cooperative

Kristóf Szombati

Between 1985 and 1993 close to 70 000 Hungarian Roma lost their jobs. As a result Roma men's rate of activity plunged from around 80 % to around 30 %. This staggeringly rapid change of fortunes resulted from a number of factors. Firstly, under socialism Roma had been encouraged to work in heavy industrial plants which were the most severely hit by the collapse of Comecon.¹²⁵ Secondly, the Roma population was concentrated in the country's North-Eastern periphery, which is where unemployment took its heaviest toll. Thirdly, approximately 60 % of Roma lived in villages, making it difficult for them to get hold of the jobs that were still available in the cities. While the non-Roma living in rural areas at least had access to land, most Roma did not, since the First Compensation Act of 1991¹²⁶ failed to redress their historical exclusion from land ownership. Fourthly, Roma tended to be less qualified than those belonging to the majority population. Since low skilled workers were more

¹²⁵ The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (the Socialist Bloc's reply to the formation of the OECD) was dissolved in 1991.

¹²⁶ The Act on Partial Compensation of Damage unjustly caused to the Property of Hungarian Citizens by the State (known as the First Compensation Act) was adopted by Hungary's newly elected democratic parliament in 1991. The Act created a uniform legal basis for claims to compensation for those affected by the nationalization and expropriation of private property (businesses and land) after 8 June 1949 by the socialist regime. The legal claims for compensation arose from a moral obligation on the part of the constitutional state to remedy the unjust socialization of property. Since Roma were de facto excluded from land ownership before 1949, the state „naturally” had no general legal obligation to compensate them.

likely to lose their jobs, Roma were hit harder than others. Finally, ethnic competition also contributed to Roma workers' plight.

These sociological factors also shaped the destinies of Igrici's 400 Roma inhabitants. Most men had previously worked in the factories of Miskolc or the mines of Borsod County. The socialist system's stable wages and pensions allowed them to build houses similar to those of their non-Roma neighbours, with whom they not only shared fences but workbenches and occasional beers too. This period of economic security and social peace has, however, been relegated to a distant past. The "new democracy" had brought almost total unemployment, social immobility, deteriorating living and health conditions for Roma whose life trajectory and cultural outlook began to gradually diverge from those of "the peasants". Relations between the groups had, although not as dramatically as elsewhere, deteriorated due to the non-Roma's growing sense (fed by personal grievances and spurred on by far-right propaganda) that Roma had become lazy and unruly.

250 tons of cucumber

I arrived in Igrici in 2008 to work on a participatory development project which I formulated with the help of an action researcher who had previously worked in the area. A Budapest-based NGO¹²⁷ agreed to finance the project, whose main goal was to empower Roma Minority Self-Governments¹²⁸ operating in the Mezőcsát Micro-Region by helping them propose cultural and economic initiatives. Out of the four localities the project targeted it was in Igrici that our efforts proved most successful. This was mostly thanks to Zoltán Nótár, a vegetable producer and merchant and leader of Igrici's Minority Self-Government, who originally suggested the idea of creating a Roma-led agricultural cooperative.

Between May 2008 and February 2009 we raised funds, negotiated with non-Roma landowners (who were initially reluctant to sell land to Roma), sought advice from agricultural experts, drafted the charter of the business and registered it officially. By March 2009 the First Roma Cooperative had acquired 52 hectares of land and signed a



Workers at the Igrici Roma Cooperative

contract with a company processing pickled vegetables. In the first year (2009) the cooperative produced 250 tons of cucumbers, generating 45,000 EUR in income. The 20-40 people who worked the land between March and October received a monthly wage of 350 EUR, allowing their families (25 in number) to increase their net income by 50 to 90 %. In 2010 the cooperative bought another 15 hectares of land which was planted with paprika and tomatoes. The whole plot produced approximately the same yield (250t), but earned the cooperative a net income of 120,000 EUR. The 40-70 Roma working for the cooperative received an average monthly income of 450 EUR, but some of the 50 affected families earned as much as 1,500 EUR a month. The substantial change in their material conditions resulted – according to both Mr. Nótár and Csaba Kislászló, Igrici's mayor – in a decrease in petty crime and the weakening of anti-Roma sentiment in an area where the far-right party (Jobbik) had registered significant gains.

Seen in the context of dwindling employment opportunities and growing xenophobia, it is no wonder that the Igrici project was depicted as a widely acclaimed model initiative in the Hungarian (but also international)¹²⁹ press. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that its success stemmed from at least three factors. Firstly, there was a figure, who not only possessed extensive agricultural knowledge, but also the capacity to lobby stakeholders and organize the life of the cooperative. Secondly, a state-owned horticultural co-

¹²⁷ For more information, see the Polgár Foundation's website: www.polgáralapítvány.hu/en/index.html

¹²⁸ In Hungary, since the introduction of the Minority Act in 1993, thirteen officially acknowledged ethnic minority groups possess the right to form representative bodies with the aim of collectively exercising political and cultural rights.

¹²⁹ See for example: videos.artefr.com/videos/hongrie_succes_d_une_cooperative_agricole_de_roms_-3475452.html



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Workers at the Igrici Roma Cooperative

operative had existed until the end of the 1980s, allowing Roma men and women to acquire crucial technical skills on which the new initiative could rely. Thirdly, mentors provided an injection of much-needed cultural and social capital, allowing Mr. Nótár to forge crucial professional and political alliances.

Based on this we can formulate the conclusion that similar agricultural projects may prove viable wherever Roma express a desire to adopt the lifestyle characteristic of peasants. Since anthropological research has shown that most Roma communities have historically tended to define themselves precisely *against* peasant lifestyles and identities,¹³⁰ it is plausible that such projects will only prove attractive in Roma communities which have entertained close ties with peasants. In the EU Member States such communities are to be found in larger numbers in North-eastern Hungary, the areas of Romania known as Partium and the Transylvanian Plain, and parts of eastern Slovakia. These territories nonetheless are home to a substantial Roma population, so the adaptation of the “Igrici model” is very much a possibility in the future.

A Green programme for Roma employment

The project was also promoted as a model initiative by the opposition Green party LMP during the parliamentary elections of 2010. The Greens were the only political force to propose a detailed programme for Roma integration and to campaign actively on this issue. Treating employment as a key to social integration, LMP proposed to alleviate Roma unemployment through:

- State investment into energy efficiency: the upgrade of collective transport infrastructure, and the ecological rehabilitation of waterways, in view of creating 100,000 jobs in four years.
- The reduction of employers’ social security contributions: in view of increasing demand for low-skilled labour.
- The improvement of employment and child care services, and measures aimed at fostering geographical mobility, in view of increasing the offer of low-skilled labour.
- The continuation of the education reform (bent on improving basic skills and promoting the integrated schooling of Roma and non-Roma children) introduced by the last social-liberal government, with the aim of improving the quality of the work force.

Beside these measures the party also proposed a social land programme which would have used land remaining in the state’s property to form independent cooperatives such as the one operating in Igrici. The importance of this latter proposal was demonstrated by a movement of local mayors in the spring of 2011. Following Mr. Nótár’s visits to both Hungary and Slovakia fifteen impoverished municipalities of North-eastern Hungary publicly declared their interest in starting their own vegetable-growing cooperatives – pledging to provide free land for the unemployed. Leaders from these municipalities have lobbied the state to provide 1.5 million EUR to serve as seed capital, but have recently been turned down by the Ministry of National Economy, on grounds that they should look for other options than the state. Recent worrying developments in the country’s political life unfortunately warrant the suspicion that the government’s denial was in fact rooted in a reticence to support independent initiatives. Whatever the case, the initiators have not given up. As Mr. Nótár pointed out to me, no matter how difficult the situation is, they “have an obligation to keep people’s hopes alive”.

130 See for example Michael Stewart’s publications: web.ceu.hu/sun/sun_2003/CV/michael_stewart_2003.htm

Kristóf Szombati of the EcoPolis Foundation is co-founder of the Hungarian Green party LMP ("Lehet Más a Politika") and former mentor of Igrici's First Roma Cooperative.

For further information, please contact:

- Kristóf Szombati, at [szombati.kristof\[at\]okopoliszasalapitvany.hu](mailto:szombati.kristof[at]okopoliszasalapitvany.hu)
- LMP, the Hungarian Greens at lehetmas.hu

Greek Roma in a Nutshell

- Population: 180,000 to 350,000.
- Percentage of population: 2,47%.
- Groups include Greek orthodox Roma, who mostly speak Greek; and Muslim Roma (less than 10%) who speak Romani and often Turkish. Romani migrants from Albania, Bulgaria and ex-Yugoslavia also live in the country.
- 70% of Greek Roma live in permanent houses, 22% are permanently settled on settlement-camps on the edges of towns. 3% are nomads.
- 68% do not know to read, 66% do not write. Only 36% of families with children younger than 15 years old reported a child attending school.
- Only 22.7% of Roma aged between 16 and 65 has a relatively stable participation in the labour market, whilst 67% do not pay social security contributions and, as a result, do not have access to the vast majority of social security benefits.
- Only 1.6% of Roma are older than 65 years, compared to 16.7% of the general population. Infant mortality is also high at 11.6%.
- Roma lack full access to health services, they remain vulnerable to forced evictions.

Sources:

- Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Forum data, www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/archive/documentation/strategies/statistiques_en.asp (26.5.2011)
- ERRC: Factsheet: Roma Rights Record 2011. errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3828 (27.5.2011)
- Trichopoulou A. [undated]. "Social exclusion and health inequalities: the case of Roma population in Greece". www.sociology.org.cy/pdfs/Trichopoulou.pdf (accessed on 25 July 2010)

- United Nations (2009a). General Assembly, Human Rights Council, Tenth Session, Agenda item 3 (A/HRC/10/NI/5), "Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Including the Right to Development, Information Presented by Greek National Commission on Human Rights", 18 February 2009. and Guy W. (2009a). (on behalf of the) European Commission, Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion, Integrated Programme for the Social Inclusion of Roma, Synthesis Report
- Amnesty International, Annual Report 2011, Europe & Central Asia, Discrimination

3.2 / Roma access to employment in Greece: The gap still remains

Dionyssis Giakoumelos

Roma access to employment in Greece is strongly undermined by the chronic phenomena of exclusion from public life, extensive discrimination as well as the xenophobic and racist attitudes that their communities have to confront on an everyday basis. While Greek legislation, under the provisions of law 3304/2005¹³¹ protects the equal treatment of Roma and other vulnerable social groups in the field of employment, according to a study sponsored by the Hellenic Institute of Training and Career Guidance (IEKEP),¹³² young Roma face numerous problems concerning access to employment. Some of the main problems are the following:

- children aged 14-17 often already have their own families and have to undertake adult responsibilities and roles that are not compatible with school attendance;
- illiteracy, partly due to schools being an institution which is not a traditional part of Roma culture, where the family has the responsibility of educating children;

¹³¹ Law 3304/20059 on the "Implementation of the principle of equal treatment regardless of racial or ethnic origin, religious or other beliefs, disability, age or sexual orientation". The Law was adopted in order to incorporate Council Directive 2000/43/EC which establishes the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin and Council Directive 2000/78/EC which establishes a general framework of equal treatment in employment and occupation.

¹³² Pedagogical Institute, Institute of Training and Career Guidance (IEKEP), *Research of vocational training and employment access of persons at risk of social exclusion: The case of Roma*, Operational Programme Education and Initial Vocational Training (EPEAEK, 2nd CSF).



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- the need for compatibility of their occupation with their social and cultural identity restricts choices to a certain range of professions, such as seasonal agricultural works, art and itinerant trade. The criteria that may determine the choice of a certain occupation for young Roma are often connected to the flexibility of the occupation concerning place, time, family participation, and adaptability to certain conditions determined by different seasons of the year.
- The participation of children in their family's professional activities, apart from the financial contribution of their labour, is a basic means of socialisation to the values and culture of Roma society.
- Low socio-economic level, sub-standard living conditions and poverty.
- Discrimination, fear and distrust of the dominant social system and its structures, as a result of long term rejection and exclusion.
- Insufficiency and inefficiency of state measures and policies for the integration of Roma population on an equal –to the rest of society- basis.

Inadequate state response

Currently, the Hellenic Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED) is running a programme¹³³ especially designed for Roma professionals and trad-

ers aged 18-64 in the administrative region of East Macedonia and Thrace. Moreover, over the last few years, the Greek Ombudsman¹³⁴ (Synigoros) has initiated ongoing research on complaints about discrimination against Roma, including access to employment. A number of state-promoted measures and actions are also expected after the recent launch of "Dosta",¹³⁵ a Council of Europe awareness-raising campaign, which aims to combat stereotypes and prejudice against Roma citizens, strengthen access to and participation of Roma children in education and consequently facilitate their overall access to employment.

However, according to a report by the Hellenic National Commission for Human Rights:¹³⁶ *"the state does not seem to intervene efficiently for the resolution of this dramatic problem. In the field of training-employment, a number of European or mixed programmes of training in traditional but also less traditional occupations [plumbers, car engineers] have been implemented. The problem is that they only concern very few places (approximately 1,300 persons)".* Referring to a number of measures taken by the Greek government in the framework of an Integrated Action Plan in the areas of employment and access to social services the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) stated that while the measures address, to some extent, the problem of inequality in employment, Roma continue to lag behind and face discrimination in this area. As underlined in an ECRI report (2009), *"[most] Roma who live in settlements continue to earn their income from scrap and garbage collection and few are employed in the mainstream labour market, primarily due to discrimination and prejudice, although their lack of qualifications (as a result of a low education level) also play a role".*

Green actions

In the programme of the Greek Green Party, "Oikologoi Prasinoi", particular emphasis has been given to policies that ensure access of all members of the Roma community to employment, healthcare, preventive medicine, education, housing and public utilities. The Party's Human Rights Group has been constantly in touch with Roma communities around Greece and has

133 For further information (only in Greek): www.oaed.gr/Pages/SN_1391.pg

134 For further information: new.synigoros.gr/?i=stp.en

135 Dosta campaign in Greece was officially launched on 3 February 2011 by the Alternate Minister of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious affairs Ms Fofi Gennimata: dosta-coe.org/?q=en/content-127

136 For further information: www.nchr.gr/index.php?category_id=3

often intervened to support Roma rights at the local and regional level in collaboration with local party members, citizens groups and elected party representatives. In the European Parliament, Greek Green MEP Michalis Tremopoulos has taken initiatives to raise awareness on Roma issues.

Within the framework of inclusion policies concerning cultural minorities in Greece, the Greek Greens have actively raised Roma employment issues, thanks also to the representation of Roma candidates on the Green Party list at national and regional elections in the last two years. During the pre-election campaign of 2009, Roma candidates travelled around Greece, visiting Roma settlements and publicizing their main problems – among them exclusion from the labour market – in the local media, in collaboration with regional Green Party organizations.

In a public statement released on the 8th of April 2011¹³⁷ – International Roma Day- Oikologoi Prasinoi urged the Greek government to take all the necessary steps in order to combat Roma unemployment and bridge the gap between Roma and the rest of the population concerning employment. Over the last two years, Greens have supported a model programme of *biomatic-experiential teaching* for preschool Roma children, initiated by Roma teacher – and 2009 national election candidate of Oikologoi Prasinoi – Ms Vassiliki Tsakiri with Mr Athanassios Nikolaides, a retired professor who has long been very active in the support of Roma rights. The

method involves interactive games, songs and storytelling, and has been practiced in several Roma settlements, mainly in Attica.¹³⁸ It aims to ensure the smooth transition to school and thus combat illiteracy starting from an early stage, as this is one of the main factors that may limit the spectrum of future employment opportunities.

With a view to the submission by the Greek government of a national Roma integration strategy by the end of the year and its presentation to the European Commission, the Party is preparing a long-term campaign. It includes the proposition of measures at different levels of public administration¹³⁹ as well as awareness raising visits to regions with Roma settlements, meetings with central and regional government representatives, press releases and art events.¹⁴⁰ The lack of access to employment – especially of the younger generation – will be one of the central issues of focus for the campaign.

Dionyssi Giakoumelos is scientific advisor of the Human Right's Group of the Greek Green Party (Oikologoi Prasinoi).

For further information, please contact:

- Dionyssi Giakoumelos at [dionyssi.giakoumelos\[at\]ecogreens.gr](mailto:dionyssi.giakoumelos[at]ecogreens.gr)
- Green Party in Greece at www.ecogreens-gr.org
- NGO Childrens Ark International www.barnensark.se/english/

¹³⁷ The full statement (in Greek): “Παγκόσμια Ημέρα των Ρομά: Η σκέψη μας στους πολίτες μιας άλλης Ευρώπης”.

¹³⁸ Recently Mr Nikolaides stated that the programme is under evaluation by the General Secretariat of Lifelong Learning of the Greek Ministry of Education in order to decide whether it could be adopted as a pilot program in Roma preschool education.

¹³⁹ Measures will be elaborated in collaboration with local Green party political groups. Concerning employment, they will take into consideration the conditions and features of local labour markets. They will be oriented towards both state sponsored programmes for access to employment, as well as private sector or NGO initiatives wherever this is feasible.

¹⁴⁰ Recently, Kostas Diakos, an elected Green representative at the regional council of Attica and other party members have visited regional authorities in the town of Elefsina to stress the dramatic situation of the Roma community in the region (namely the settlements of Aspropyrgos), while in the first week of September the Party's Human Right's Group is planning a visit to the settlement of Examilia near the city of Korinthos, as well as meetings with local authorities and representatives of the NGO “Children's Ark”, which does important work with the local Roma population. A number of documentaries concerning the situation of Roma in Greece will be presented next autumn in different regions of Athens, in collaboration with the Party's Cultural Group, following a series of successful similar events that took place last April and May.

4. EDUCATION

Overview on the educational situation of Roma and Travellers in Europe

Barbara Bello

"Many Roma parents are illiterate and cannot read the notifications sent to them to enrol their children in kindergarten or school. Families often live in marginalised settlements, often illegal or unregulated. Their children are not included in the usual call for enrolment. Just getting to school can be an obstacle as Roma settlements are often far, over bad roads, and do not have regular public transport. With poor access to health care, Roma children may not have the medical certificate required for registration. Many Roma families are so poor that they do not have money to dress children appropriately for school. Especially in bad weather, they keep their children home rather than sending them out without shoes or a coat. Money for school supplies may also be an obstacle".

Katy Negrin, Open Society Foundations¹⁴¹

Education is a key instrument for promoting social cohesion within the European Union,¹⁴² because, apart from providing knowledge and developing skills, it also shapes attitudes and empowers young people to adapt to today's European fast changing social and economic scenario. However, studies carried out both at the European¹⁴³ and at the national level¹⁴⁴ draw a discouraging picture of the educational situation concerning Roma children in most EU countries.

Poverty, substandard living conditions in segregated suburban areas with poor or no infrastructure and poor access to health services are considered to be the main obstacles to Roma pupils' access and attendance to school in many countries in the EU¹⁴⁵ and Former Yugoslavia.¹⁴⁶ A wealth of investigations shows that the situation of children belonging to Traveller communities is even worse, because of their nomadic or semi-nomadic way of life.¹⁴⁷ These children are confronted with prejudices against communities that "move around",¹⁴⁸ as well as with standardised school curricula, activities and teaching strategies inappropriate for a travelling lifestyle.¹⁴⁹

141 In Vandenbroeck, M. et al., 2010. *Addressing Bias and Prejudices in the Early Years: Historical and Conceptual Backgrounds*. Una Working Paper 5. Prepared by the Una Programme Development Learning Group p. 18.

142 European Commission, 2005. *Modernising Education and Training: a Vital Contribution to Prosperity and Social Cohesion in Europe*, Brussels, 30.11.2005 COM(2005) 549 final available at: www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/doc/progressreport06_en.pdf [05.08.2011].

143 Open Society Institute, 2009. 10 Goals for Improving Access to Education for Roma, pp. 16. Available: www.euromanet.eu/upload/90/23/education_20090302.pdf [05.08.2011]; Open Society Institute, 2006. Monitoring Education for Roma. A Statistical Baseline for Central, Eastern and South Europe.

Available: www.soros.org/initiatives/esp/articles_publications/publications/monitoring_20061218/table_2008.pdf [05.08.2011].

144 See www.romaeducationfund.hu

145 Bennet, J., 2010. *Early Childhood Care and Education, Regional Report: Europe and North America*. World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education., pp. 79-85. Available: unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001892/189211e.pdf [06.08.2011]; Bravi, L and Sigona, N., 2005. Educazione e rieducazione dei campi per "nomadi": una storia. Sanfilippo, M., *Studi Emigrazione "I campi per stranieri in Italia"*, XLIII, 164, pp. 857-874.

146 Open Society Institute, 2006. *Monitoring Education for Roma*. Available: www.soros.org/initiatives/esp/articles_publications/publications/monitoring_20061218/monitoring_20061218.pdf [05.08.2011].

147 Save the Children, 2001. *Denied a Future? The Right to Education of Roma/Gypsy and Traveller Children*. Available: www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_2317.htm www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_2317.htm [05.08.2011]. Shimhandl, K., 2006. Western Gypsies and Travellers - Eastern Roma: the Creation of Political Objects by the Institutions of the European Union. *Nations and Nationalism*, 12, 1, pp. 97-115; Cudworth, D., 2010. Policy, Space and the Education of Gypsy/ Traveller and Roma children in Europe. ECPR Fifth Pan European Conference, Porto, 24th - 26th June, 2010. Available: www.jhubc.it/ecpr-porto/virtualpaperroom/063.pdf [05.08.2011]; Danaher, P. A. et al., 2007. *Teaching Traveller Children: Maximising Learning Outcomes*. Stoke on Trent, UK and Sterling: Trentham Books; Forray, K., 2003. Results and Problems in the Education of Gypsy Community. *European Education*, 34, 4, pp. 70-90.

148 Cudworth, D., 2009. There is a Little Bit More Than Just Delivering the Stuff - Policy, Pedagogy and the Education of Gypsy/Traveller Children. *Critical Social Policy*, 12(3), Sage.

149 Cudworth, D., 2010. Op. Cit., p.9. Wilkin, A.. et al, 2009. *Improving the Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils Literature Review*, pp. 73. Available: www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DCSF-RR077.pdf [05.08.2011].

Pre-schooling could be a key

According to recent data, a maximum of 20% of European Roma children are enrolled in pre-schools; the figure can reach 50% and more in the year before compulsory schooling. Better enrolment results for the pre-school year are obtained in countries that make the pre-school year obligatory, e.g. Hungary, even if the shortage of places in kindergartens challenges the real access of these children. In many countries, up to 80% of Roma children enter obligatory schooling without any prior preparation.¹⁵⁰ For example, data for Bulgaria and Romania shows that whereas “three quarters of children participate in pre-school education, only 16% and 17% respectively of Roma children are enrolled in this level of education”.¹⁵¹ Many Roma children fail to access pre-schooling because enrolment is too expensive. Other causes are the lack of necessary documentation required for enrolment, for example in Romania and many German Länder,¹⁵² or the lack of proof of vaccination.

Poor access to pre-school facilities negatively impacts Roma children's socialization process and their preparation for primary school, because they miss out on the initiation to school rules and schedule.¹⁵³ Pre-school participation should be fostered, also in those states where it does not belong to compulsory education. It helps those Roma children who do not speak the language used at school to learn the language.

Local projects to support the participation of both Roma and Traveller children in pre-schooling in-

clude the “Mosaic” model of bilingual pre-school education in Kosovo,¹⁵⁴ where only an estimated 0,2% of Roma children attend pre-schooling¹⁵⁵ and intercultural activities related to Traveller lifestyle and culture designed by local authorities in the United Kingdom. According to available studies, kindergarten attendance positively impacts the success in primary and secondary schools of Roma and Traveller pupils.¹⁵⁶ Further research on this topic is recommended.¹⁵⁷

First things first – primary education

In many EU Countries, such as Hungary, Italy, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain, primary school is the education phase in which the highest enrolment rate of Roma and Traveller pupils is registered,¹⁵⁸ although it is still low compared to non-Roma children.¹⁵⁹

While in Austria, Denmark, France, Hungary and Spain, it is estimated that over 50% of Roma children regularly attend primary school,¹⁶⁰ in Romania 28% of Roma children are not enrolled in primary education and, of those attending just 31% complete it.¹⁶¹ In the Czech Republic only 25% of Roma pupils enrolled in primary schools and aged 12 have completed it.¹⁶² In Albania about 58% of Roma children between 7–14 years old are enrolled in the primary school, while just 24% of those aged 15 years and above completed primary education. In Bosnia and Herzegovina the school completion rate rises to 32.6%. In the school year 2008-2009, there were 6,628 Sinti and Roma pupils enrolled in Italian primary schools (30% more than the previous year).¹⁶³

150 Bennet, J., 2010. *Op. Cit.*; FRA, 2006. *Roma and Travellers in Public Education. An Overview of the Situation in the EU Member States*. Available: fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/roma_report.pdf [05.08.2011]; Open Society Institute, 2006. *Monitoring Education for Roma. A Statistical Baseline for Central, Eastern and South Europe*. Available: www.soros.org/initiatives/roma/articles_publications/publications/monitoring_20061218/table_20061218.pdf [05.08.2011].

151 *Ibid.*

152 Picum, 2009. *Undocumented Children in Europe: Invisible Victims of Immigration Restrictions*. Report, pp. 36.

153 Zentai, V., 2009. *How do Schools in Old and New Member States of the EU Treat Minority Ethnic Youth and Shape their Performance? Edumigrom (Ethnic Differences in Education and Diverging Prospects for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe)*, 2. Available: edumigrom.fss.muni.cz/doc/edumigrompolicybrief2.pdf [05.08.2011].

154 Bennet, J., 2010. *Op. Cit.*

155 *Ibid.*

156 *Ibid.*

157 The most updated and comprehensive study in this field is Bennet, J., *Ibid.*

158 *Ibid.* See also Cudworth, D., 2010. *Op. Cit.*

159 While in some countries (e.g. Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy) elementary school consists of the first 4-5 years of school, in others (Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Portugal, Sweden) it corresponds to the first 9-10 years. These differences should be taken into account in comparative studies of Roma and Travellers access to school and drop-out rates. In countries participating in the Decade for Roma Inclusion, some common parameters for reporting data on Roma education exist, see OSI, 2008. *International Comparative Data Set on Roma Education - 2008*. Available: www.romadecade.org/files/downloads/Education%20Resources/table_2008.pdf [05.08.2011].

160 *Ibid.*

161 *Ibid.*

162 *Ibid.*

163 Data on the Italian education system on the webpage of the Ministry of Education, University and Research. Available: oc4jesedati.pubblica.istruzione.it/Sgcns/reportElenco.do?desTypMen=JAVA&codMen=ALUN_ISCR&codiFunz_2=INIT&codiFunz_3=ALUNNI&codiFunz_4=ALUN_ISCR&codiFunz_5= [04.04.2011].



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There can be many reasons for the low enrolment and high drop-out rates of Roma from schools. Many teachers and school directors still assume that Roma pupils are not able to cope with the mainstream curriculum, but they do not provide these children language courses, support lessons or support for doing homework after school hours. Many good practices show that when these activities take place, Roma benefit from them extremely much in terms of school attainment.¹⁶⁴

Social stigma and the stereotypical representation of the Roma lifestyle are causes of wide disaffection to the school system. In most cases the Roma and Traveller population is ignored in textbooks, while in the Czech Republic in 2009 Roma NGOs protested against a workbook for children, which used the term “Gypsy” (“cikánský”), deemed offensive.¹⁶⁵ Some projects have been developed, for example in Bulgaria¹⁶⁶ for increasing knowledge about Roma history, culture and traditions in primary and secondary schools.¹⁶⁷

Prejudice and common discriminatory practices can lead to assimilation programmes which disregard that, for some Roma and Traveller pupils, the local Roma or Traveller language is their first one. In Norway, additional funding is provided to schools where Roma pupils are enrolled, so that

they can receive the attention they need to get basic literacy and to stay on at school.

Despite advocacy by Roma NGOs, many Roma people still lack awareness of their rights and the actions to take. For many Roma, the lack of access to education is exacerbated both by distrust towards the national justice and political systems (e.g. Hungary, Italy, Romania), which are perceived by a number of Roma people as discriminating against them, and by the fear of retaliation in the case they take action and lodge complaints reporting discriminations against them.

Some Roma or Traveller families resist sending their children to mainstream schools, due to the fear that they could be bullied or discriminated against by their classmates or teachers, especially in areas when harsh anti-Roma episodes take place at local level. In some cases Roma parents prefer schools with a high rate of Roma pupils, in other cases they prevent their children from attending school at all. In the United Kingdom many Traveller parents opt for Elective Home Education.¹⁶⁸

Absenteeism, low attainment and poor performance can be negatively impacted also by Roma intra-group reasons, such as the family structure. For example many Roma¹⁶⁹ and Irish Traveller girls are tasked with baby-sitting of younger siblings. Many chose to follow tradition and marry young, or are pressured to do so. Consequently, they give birth earlier than their non-Roma peers, leading many girls to abandon school very early.¹⁷⁰

In the United Kingdom an initiative to involve school authorities in accommodating registration in several schools at once attempts to foster Traveller children's primary school attendance. As different Traveller communities do not share the same patterns and levels of mobility, this diversity has to be taken into account in school strategies in the UK.¹⁷¹ Another initiative is the establishment of the Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers in

164 See the autobiographic histories available at: www.istruzione.lombardia.it/temi/intercultural/alunni-stranieri/materiali/ [05.08.2011]. See also: www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se/english_art/0,2683,8101,00.html [05.08.2011].

165 See www.romadecade.org/roma_realia_protests_childrens_textbook_using_the_term_gypsy_cikansk [04.08.2011].

166 Lesovitchrt, L., 2005. *Report.Roma Educational Needs in Ireland Context and Challenges*, published by the City of Dublin VEC in association with Pavee Point Travellers Centre and the Roma Support Group, p.54.

167 Bennet, J., 2010. *Op. Cit.*

168 Cemlin, S., 2009. *Op. Cit.*

169 Kocze, A. & Popa, R.M., 2009. Missing Intersectionality. Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in Current Research and Policies on Romani Women in Europe. Budapest: CEU-Centre for Policy Studies, pp. 70.

170 Cemlin, S., 2009. *Op. Cit.*

171 Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2011. *Inclusive Educational Approaches for Scotland's Travelling Communities Within the Context of Interrupted Learning*. Guidance for Local Authorities, Schools and Support Services, pp. 40.

Ireland, which provides support to Traveller children and their parents in enrolment, in the transition between primary schools and further levels of education and for the preparation of State exams.¹⁷² In Italy, the attendance of children belonging to the itinerant Camminanti communities of Sicily is supported by small local projects. In Switzerland, pupils belonging to travelling communities are allowed by some schools to work per correspondence during the moving times.¹⁷³ Several Scottish local authorities have established a Gypsy/Traveller inter-agency to facilitate the dialogue between Gypsy/Traveller communities, NGOs, elected officers and public services. The aim is to avoid, for example, that families are forced to move from a camping site, while schools are engaging with their children.¹⁷⁴ In some areas, such as Romania and in various German Länder, regular documents are required for the school enrolment of non-citizen pupils, while many Roma people lack these.¹⁷⁵ In France¹⁷⁶ and in Italy, for example, forced evictions of Roma living in unauthorised camps compel families to relocate to different parts of the city (or even in other cities) and interrupt the children's school attendance. Forced evictions thus prevent Roma and Traveller pupils' regular attendance around Europe; for example in the UK, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Serbia. Concerning the nomad- and semi-nomad communities, the lack of sufficient permanent and transit stopping places (e.g. for the Jenisch in Switzerland, Gens du voyage in France)¹⁷⁷ inevitably impacts also school attendance.

Increased dialogue and improved cooperation among parents, various Roma stakeholders, teachers and school directors, has proved to be very useful for preventing exclusion of Roma pupils from school and their reduced drop-out rates. The appointment of Roma mediators in schools has helped communication between Roma families and non-Roma teaching staff in many countries, e.g. Italy, Spain and Germany. The multiplication of these successful initiatives, however, is still unsatisfactory. One reason for this is also the limited and non effective use of the EU funds in many states.¹⁷⁸

For Roma young people, in addition to standard education, the alternative pathways to training and access to working life offered by non-formal education¹⁷⁹ and the support of NGOs can also be of vital importance. One example is the Roma youth-initiated network "Ternipe", which gathers together youth NGOs from nine (EU and non EU) states, and uses non formal education tools to give the opportunity to Roma young people to speak up for themselves, "to become active citizens, and to influence changes in their communities, as well as in their societies."¹⁸⁰ The European Commission has also recommended that relevant stakeholders of the Youth in Action Programme involve Roma youths.¹⁸¹

In a class of their own - Segregated education

Discriminative practices, such as inappropriate or culturally biased psychological testing for school entrants can lead to inter-school and intra-school segregation. Inter-school segre-

172 Department of Education and Science's Visiting Teacher Service for Travellers in conjunction with Dublin City University Access Service (2004) Traveller Parent Development Day Your Child and the Post Primary School - Access, Participation and Outcome. Available: www.dcu.ie/students/access/pdfs/traveller_parent_day.pdf [04 August 2011].

173 Council of Europe, 2006. Education of Roma Children in Europe. Texts and Activities of the Council of Europe Concerning Education. Council of Europe Publishing, pp. Available: www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/Source/TextsActivitiesISBN_EN.pdf [05.08.2011].

174 Ibid.

175 Osce, 2006. *No Registration, no Rights: Helping to Break the Vicious Circle Affecting Roma*. Available: www.osce.org/odihr/57510 [05.08.2011].

176 Romeurope National Human Rights Collective, 2010. Report On the Situation of Roma Migrants in France, pp. 148. Available: www.romeurope.org/IMG/RomeuropeReport2009-2010%20def.pdf [05.08.2011].

177 ECRI, 2010. Report on France, pp. 60. Available: www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/France/FRA-CbC-IV-2010-016-ENG.pdf [05.08.2011].

178 Unicef, 2010. A Review of Roma Education Initiatives in Central and South-Eastern Europe, pp. 80. Available: www.unicef.org/ceecis/ROMA_PAPER_FINAL_LAST.pdf [05.08.2011].

179 Non-formal education has been defined in different ways. It consists of "a purposive but voluntary learning that takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations for which teaching/training and learning is not necessarily their sole or main activity. These environments and situations may be intermittent or transitory, and the activities or courses that take place may be staffed by professional learning facilitators (such as youth trainers) or by volunteers (such as youth leaders). The activities and courses are planned, but are seldom structured by conventional rhythms or curriculum subjects. They usually address specific target groups, but rarely document or assess learning outcomes or achievements in conventionally visible ways". Chisholm, L., 2005. Bridges for Recognition Cheat Sheet: Proceedings of the SALTO Bridges for Recognition: Promoting Recognition of Youth Work across Europe, Leuven-Louvain.

180 More information at: romayouth.com/ternipe-members [05.08.2011].

181 European Commission, 2010. *Improving the Tools for the Social Inclusion and Non-Discrimination of Roma in the EU*. Report, prepared by the European Roma Rights Centre and the Roma Education Fund, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, pp. 64.

gation, reported e.g. in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia,¹⁸² does not depend only on public educational policies and the organization of school districts in a way that intentionally avoid mixing Roma and non-Roma. It is also generated in almost all EU and SEE countries, by the urban segregation of many Roma communities, accounting for Roma majorities in schools in these areas, for example in Italy and Spain.¹⁸³ Moreover, non-Roma parents take their children away from Roma majority schools. Intra-school segregation, on the other hand, can consist in the creation of separated classes, by isolating Roma children at the back of the classroom or in the differentiation of “curricular standards within the same class”¹⁸⁴ (intra-class segregation).

In many countries (e.g. Czech Republic,¹⁸⁵ Poland, Serbia,¹⁸⁶ Slovakia) numerous Roma children are placed in so-called “special schools” for children with intellectual disabilities, even if they would just need support in overcoming language and cultural barriers. In fact, the IQ tests used for placing children in these schools are based in the language spoken in the country, and do not consider that many Roma children do not have a good command of it.¹⁸⁷ It has been estimated that in Slovakia, approximately 60 % of children enrolled in special education in the 2008-2009 school year were Roma,¹⁸⁸ while in 2010 it was reported that one in five Roma children attended special schools in Poland.

In Italy, education policy is based on the consideration that all Roma are nomads, despite the fact

that apart from very small groups of Camminanti, Roma in Italy are not itinerant.¹⁸⁹ Local authorities thus either interpret education as a tool to “re-educate” Roma children,¹⁹⁰ or do not truly support these pupils’ progress in school, since they are not perceived as staying in the class in a long term perspective.

In Bulgaria, one valuable good practice for preventing or tackling the segregation of Roma children in special schools is known as the “Vidin model”, which provides various services like the appointment of councillors in the special schools in order to monitor Roma children’s attendance and performance.¹⁹¹ The transition of Roma children from special schools to regular ones allows a higher number of Roma pupils to proceed to higher education levels.

How high can you get – secondary and university education

The available data shows that transition to secondary and higher education for Roma is still very low in almost all countries. In Italy between 2009 and 2011, only 448 Roma were enrolled in lower secondary schools, while 74 were enrolled in upper secondary schools.¹⁹² In Macedonia, 148 out of 1,281 Roma aged 15 years and above had completed lower secondary education;¹⁹³ in Romania 189 out of 1971 had completed this level of education. In Hungary, only five percent of Roma youngsters finish secondary school and just 1.2 percent have a higher education, according to statistics. In the Czech Republic where 85 % of Roma children complete primary school, over 40 % of

182 ERRC, 2007. The Impact of Legislation and Policies on School Segregation of Romani Children. A Study of Anti-Discrimination Law and Government Measures to Eliminate Segregation in Education in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, pp.68 . Available: www.errc.org/cms/upload/media/02/36/m00000236.pdf [05.08.2011].

183 ECRI, 2011. Report on Spain, adopted on 7 December 2010. Available: www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/country-by-country/spain/ESP-CBC-IV-2011-004-ENG.pdf [05.08.2011].

184 Farkas, L., 2007. *Segregation of Roma Children in Education: Addressing Structural Discrimination through the Race Equality Directive*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, pp. 56. Available: www.migpolgroup.com/public/docs/5.Segregation_Roma_children_edu_en_07.07.pdf [05.08.2011].

185 See below the cases taken to the European Court of Human Rights.

186 ECRI, 2011. Report on Serbia, adopted on 23 March 2011. Available: www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/country-by-country/serbia/SRB-CbC-IV-2011-021-ENG.pdf [05.08.2011].

187 EUMAP, 2007. Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma. Volume 1, pp. Available: www.soros.org/initiatives/roma/articles_publications/publications/equal_20070329/2roma_20070329.pdf [05.08.2011].

188 Friedman, E & Surdu, M., 2009. School as ghetto. Systemic Overrepresentation of Roma in Special Education in Slovakia, pp. 113. Available at: www.romadecade.org/files/ftp/School%20as%20Ghetto.pdf [05.08.2011].

189 Bello, B.G. & Halilovich, G., forthcoming. *The Educational Situation of the Sinti and Roma in Italy*. Hornberg, S. & Brüggemann, C. Die Bildungssituation von Sinti und Roma in Europa; Bravi, L and Sigona, N., 2005, Op. Cit.

190 Bravi, L and Sigona, N., 2005, Op. Cit.

191 A more detailed description of the “Vidin model” is available at: drom-vidin.org/images/webpics/final.eng.version.pdf [05.08.2011]. See also Unicef, 2010. Towards Roma Inclusion A Review of Roma Education Initiatives in Central and South-Eastern Europe. Available: docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:FpXhRPlofCIJ:www.unicef.org/ceecis/ROMA_PAPER_FINAL_LAST.pdf+Towards+Roma+Inclusion+A+Review+of+Roma+Education+Initiatives+in+Central+and [05.08.2011].

192 Data on the Italian education system can be on the webpage of the Ministry of Education, University and Research. Available: http://oc4jesedati.pubblica.istruzione.it/Sgcnsr/reportElenco.do?desTypMen=JAVA&codMen=ALUN_ISCR&codiFunz_2=INIT&codiFunz_3=ALUNNI&codiFunz_4=ALUN_ISCR&codiFunz_5= [04.04.2011].

193 Ibid.

them fail to finish secondary education. In many countries data concerning secondary school enrolment and completion by Roma and Traveller youth is either not available or not updated; this is the case of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia,¹⁹⁴ as well as the Scottish Gypsy / Traveller youth.¹⁹⁵

The low level of qualification compromises their opportunities in the labour market and, consequently, also the chance to get a regular permit to stay in the EU for non-EU nationals.

Moreover, it prevents a substantial number of Roma from accessing universities. Scholarship programmes have increased the proportion of Roma young people in higher education in certain EU Member States, but it remains far below non-Roma peers. While more and more Roma young people throughout Europe consider school and University certificates as necessary for self-fulfilment and for finding employment,¹⁹⁶ it is noteworthy that for qualified Roma young people, the transition between school and working life is more difficult due to lower social network and ethnic based prejudice by prospective employers.

A lack of data and monitoring

National and local policies for Roma education are often not evidence-based. Poor data on Roma education is a fundamental problem impacting most EU countries.¹⁹⁷ Since most EU Member States do not disaggregate data on Roma pupils, most data has to be considered approximate. The problem of data collection is strongly related to the protection of sensitive data. Additionally, due to the stigma attached to the Roma and Traveller people, some Roma do not declare their ethnic background.



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Data on Traveller pupils is particularly difficult to assess, as available data mainly refers to the broad umbrella terms “Roma” or “Roma and Travellers”.¹⁹⁸ Also the decentralisation of the education system in many states complicates the collection of data, because the exhaustiveness and up-to-dateness of data depend on the local authorities’ initiative and commitment, even when central educational authorities recommend reporting updated data. For example in the UK and Ireland, data is often collected on a regional basis.¹⁹⁹ In order to improve data comparability, it has been suggested that the European Commission and Eurostat collaborate in establishing common indicators to develop data collection on education.²⁰⁰

Getting legal: the right to education

In legal and policy texts, education has been defined in different ways, but the focus has mostly been on institutional instruction within the national education system, as well as on the protection of the right to education in relation to formal teaching and learning in public (or, to a smaller extent, private) institutions.²⁰¹

194 OSI, 2006. Op. Cit.

195 Clark, C., 2006. Education. In Clark, C. & Greenfields, M (Eds.). *Here to Stay: The Gypsies and Travellers of Britain*. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press.

196 Bello, B.G., 2011. Looking at the EU Anti-Discrimination Measures towards the “Roma Minority” through the Glass of Intersectionality: a Comparative Study. Ph.D Dissertation, delivered in July 2011. University of Milan.

197 In Great Britain, the inclusion of the category “Gypsy / Traveller” in the 2011 Census is likely to provide relevant data. Open Society Institute., 2009. *10 Goals for Improving Access to Education for Roma*, pp. 16. Available:

www.euromanet.eu/upload/90/23/education_20090302.pdf www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_2317.htm [05.08.2011].

198 Hampshire Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) 2009. *Ibid*; Cemlin, S., 2009. Research Report: 12 Inequalities Experienced by Gypsy and Traveller Communities: A Review, p. 107. Available: www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/12inequalities_experienced_by_gypsy_and_traveller_communities_a_review.pdf [05.08.2011].

199 In the UK, for example, data is collected within some counties or regions. See Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), 2008. *Pupil Characteristics and Class Sizes in Maintained Schools in England*, January 2007 (Provisional). Available: www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000726/index.shtml [27 June 2011]. See also Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, 2008. *Mainstreaming Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations for Traveller Children in Schools*. Public Policy Statement 2, November 2008, pp.9. Available: www.equalityni.org/archive/pdf/TravellerChildreninSchools1208.pdf [05.08.2011]; Hampshire Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) 2009. *Guidance for Schools with Travellers Pupils*, pp. 30. Available: www3.hants.gov.uk/traveller-guidance-schools-oct09.pdf [05.08.2011]. About the Camminanti in Sicily (Italy), see Sidoti, P.S., 2004. *Apprendisti scolari, alunni renitenti. Il caso speciale dei camminanti di Noto*. *Antropologia*, pp. 118-137.

200 EUMC, 2006. *Roma and Travellers in Public Education*. An Overview of the Situation in the EU Member States, pp. 138.

201 Beiter, K.D., 2006. *The Protection of the Right to Education by International Law*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, pp. 705.

A number of documents proclaim the right to education, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,²⁰² while the UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education²⁰³ is the first international instrument in this field, providing the fundamental principles of non-discrimination and equality of educational opportunities into international norms. It stipulates that states have to ensure *"all types and levels of education, access to education, the standard and quality of education, and the conditions under which it is given."* Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,²⁰⁴ which has been considered the most comprehensive article on the right to education,²⁰⁵ underlines the need for equal access to education at different levels and the positive obligation to make education accessible for all, without discrimination.



Integrated school in Turin, Italy

This is called the social dimension of the right to education.²⁰⁶ In order to measure the enforcement of this obligation, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights²⁰⁷ defined the right to education as encompassing the acceptability, accessibility, adaptability and availability of education. Also the Convention of the Rights of the Child,²⁰⁸ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights²⁰⁹ and the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination²¹⁰ include provisions that have been interpreted as strengthening the right to education for minorities.^{211/212}

UN bodies that follow Roma education issues include the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which issued a recommendation on the topic in 2000; as well as the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which regularly monitors the situation of Roma girls and accepts reports from NGOs advocating for Roma rights.²¹³

Taking education to the courts – and other efforts of the Council of Europe

An important role in acknowledging the Roma right to education has been played by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in the application of the European Convention of Human Rights. Art. 2 of Protocol No. 1²¹⁴ to the Convention which guarantees the right to education for all, covering all forms of education offered within the signatory State.²¹⁵ Art. 2 should be read together with Art. 14, which bans any kind of discrimination on such

202 Article 26 (1) provides that elementary and fundamental education shall be compulsory and free. The general human right to education is provided for everyone and has to be read in conjunction with Article 2 UDHR which guarantees all rights in a non-discriminatory manner. Available: www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/ [05.08.2011].

203 See also Convention UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education (1960) and Articles 13 and 14 (Right to Education) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: A Comparative Analysis, pp. 63. Available: unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001459/145922e.pdf [05.08.2011].

204 The ICESCR is available at: www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm [05.08.2011].

205 Convention UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education (1960) and Articles 13 and 14 (Right to Education) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: A Comparative Analysis, pp. 63. Available: unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001459/145922e.pdf [05.08.2011].

206 Coomans, F., 2007. Content and Scope of the Right to Education as a Human Right and Obstacles to its Realization. Donders, Y & Volodin, V. (Eds), Human Rights in Education, Science and Culture, UNESCO 2007, p. 186. The paragraphs (3) and (4) of Article 13 ICESCR contain signatory States' negative obligation to safeguard the individuals' liberty and freedom of choice in the field of education (so defined "freedom dimension of the right to education").

207 E/C.12/1999/10, 8 December 1999, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment no. 13, para 6.

208 Convention on the Rights of the Child available at: www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm [05.08.2011].

209 The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, available at: www2.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm [05.08.2011].

210 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, available at: www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cerd.htm [05.08.2011].

211 Capotorti, F., 1979. Study on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities [UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/384/Rev.1], New York: UN.

212 CERD, 2000. General Recommendation No. 27: Discrimination against Roma : 08/16/2000. (General Comments). Available: [www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/\(Symbol\)/11f3d6d130ab8e09c125694a0054932b](http://www.unhcr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/(Symbol)/11f3d6d130ab8e09c125694a0054932b) [05.08.2011].

213 See, *inter alia*, the reports submitted prepared by the ERRC. Available: www.errc.org/en-research-and-advocacy-reports-intro.php [05.08.2011].

214 Of 20 March 1952.

215 International Recognition of the Right to Education p. 57.

grounds as e.g. race, colour, language, national origin, association with a national minority, in relation with each and all rights of the Convention. However, for many years the ECHR overlooked acknowledging that state parties should guarantee the substantive equality of Roma with non-Roma.

Only in 2007, in the breakthrough case *DH and others v The Czech Republic*,²¹⁶ the court found a breach of Art. 14 read in conjunction with Art. 2 of Protocol No.

1. It states that: *“the Court is not satisfied that the difference in treatment between Roma children and non-Roma children was objectively and reasonably justified and that there existed a reasonable relationship of proportionality between the means used and the aim pursued.”* (Para 208). Also in the next case of *Orsus v Croatia*,²¹⁷ the Grand Chamber of the court found a violation of Article 14 of the Convention and Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 and promoted the adoption of positive measures aiming at desegregating Roma pupils in schools, as well as at preventing their drop out. It rules: *“The facts of the instant case indicate that the schooling arrangements for Roma children were not sufficiently attended by safeguards that would ensure that, in the exercise of its margin of appreciation in the education sphere, the State had sufficient regard to their special needs as members of a disadvantaged group”*. This judgement is interesting also because stresses that *“as a result of their history, the Roma have become a specific type of disadvantaged group and vulnerable minority (...). They therefore require special protection. (...) special consideration should be given to their needs and their different lifestyle both in the relevant regulatory framework and in reaching decisions in particular cases (...) not only for the purpose of safeguarding the interests of the minorities themselves but to preserve*

cultural diversity of value to the whole community” (Para 147-148).

Among the Council of Europe's documents, also the European Social Charter supports the participation to education of vulnerable groups (e.g. Roma children),²¹⁸ as well as the access to vocational trainings for everyone, without discrimination. Under this Charter, violations of the right of education with regard to Roma children have been found in relation with the establishment of separate schools for them.²¹⁹

In the countries that have acceded to the Framework Convention for National Minorities (FCNM),²²⁰ this legal instrument provides a thorough protection of national minorities' language and cultures, including the right to receive education in their own language,²²¹ as well as the promotion of equal opportunities for access to education at all levels. This article does not impose on states the obligation to adopt positive action schemes, but it guarantees the freedom to establish private schools that teach in minority languages. Furthermore, the FCNM enucleates a number of actions that the signatory States should take *“to foster knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority”*, including the promotion of education and research in the area of minority language.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) complements the rights enshrined in the FCNM. Whereas it provides protection for regional and minority languages, non-territorial languages and less widely used official languages,²²² this Charter does not acknowledge individual or collective rights to individuals or groups on the basis of their languages. Some EU Member States have ratified both the FCNM and the ECRML and protect Roma rights under both of them.²²³

216 *DH and others v The Czech Republic*, App. No. 57325/00, judgment date 13 November 2007. Available: cmiskp.echr.coe.int/tkp197/view.asp?item=2&portal=hbkm&action=html&highlight=The%20%7C%20Czech%20%7C%20Republic&sessionid=71810760&skin=hudoc-en [05.08.2011].

217 *Orsus v Croatia*, [Application no. 15766/03], judgment 16 March 2010. Available: cmiskp.echr.coe.int/tkp197/view.asp?item=1&portal=hbkm&action=html&highlight=orsus%20%7C%20croatia&sessionid=71810760&skin=hudoc-en [05.08.2011].

218 Information Document “The Right to Education” under the European Social Charter, prepared by the Secretariat of the ESC on 17 November 2006. Available: www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Theme%20factsheets/FactsheetEducation_en.pdf [06.08.2011].

219 Factsheet “The European Social Charter and the Roma Rights”. Available: www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Theme%20factsheets/RomaRightsFactsheet_en.ASP [06.08.2011].

220 Framework Convention for National Minorities is available at: [www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/1_AtGlance/PDF_H\(1995\)010_FCNM_ExplanReport_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/1_AtGlance/PDF_H(1995)010_FCNM_ExplanReport_en.pdf) [06.08.2011].

221 Explanatory Report accompanying the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, para 74. Available: [www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/1_AtGlance/PDF_H\(1995\)010_FCNM_ExplanReport_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/1_AtGlance/PDF_H(1995)010_FCNM_ExplanReport_en.pdf) [06.03.2011].

222 Myntti, p. 11; Henrard, p. 215

223 For example Germany, in relation to the German Sinti and Roma national minority. See webpage of the German Interior Ministry at: www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Standardartikel/DE/Themen/MigrationIntegration/NatMinderheiten/Deutsche_Sinti_und_Roma.html?nn=854452 [06.08.2011].

The Council of Europe has also organised concrete programmes to enhance Roma education, such as training seminars for teachers working with Roma children and roundtables meetings for European stakeholders involved with Roma education. Its Committee of Ministers has issued Recommendations on the education of Roma children in 2000²²⁴ and 2009,²²⁵ the latter emphasizing that states should pay attention to the effects migration has on the education of numerous Roma children; as well as the situation of children living in unauthorised encampments or belonging to refugee families.

Tackling discrimination in the EU

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union²²⁶ proclaims the right to education and provides that *“everyone has the right to education and to have access to vocational and continuing training. This right includes the possibility to receive free compulsory education.”* It also prohibits discrimination on the basis of, inter alia, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, language, and membership of a national minority. After the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009, these provisions have the same legal value as the Treaties.

However, the most relevant binding legislation which can be used to tackle discrimination against the Roma pupils in the field of education is the Race Equality Directive.²²⁷ All Member States are supposed to have implemented this Directive, which sets minimum standards for tackling discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin in many fields, including education.²²⁸ It provides thorough definitions of harassment, as well as direct and indirect discrimination. The Directive also allows positive action schemes and shifts the burden of proof in some discrimination cases onto the respondent. States also need to establish competent offices to implement and en-

force those laws (Equality Bodies). In France, the National Equality Body has taken action against the denial of school enrolment of Traveller children, suggesting that also in other EU Member States these bodies should be more involved in the field of Roma education.²²⁹

The main pitfall of the Directive is that discrimination on the basis of nationality or related status (e.g. statelessness, refugee status) are not protected. This might enable discriminatory practice against non-citizen Roma pupils, by using nationality as a proxy of ethnic origin. Moreover, the fact that many Roma have an irregular status due to the loss or lack of documents, for example in Romania, Former Yugoslavia, and Italy, weakens the provisions of the Directive towards Roma people. However, the protection on the basis of racial and ethnic origin provided by this Directive applies to everyone in the EU, independent of nationality.

The Directive has not led to case-law of the European Court of Justice with regard to Roma children yet, but it provides a number of innovative legal tools in the field of anti-discrimination protection, which could be employed in taking cases to the national courts and planning strategic litigations for protecting Roma pupils from discriminatory practices. NGOs can contribute enormously in denouncing the existence of discriminatory practices by supporting cases lodged by Roma, by accomplishing testing cases, and by coordinating with lawyers to generate new anti-discrimination case law through strategic litigations.

Barbara G. Bello is an Italian Barrister and Ph.D candidate at the University of Milan. Her dissertation concerns a qualitative evaluation of EU anti-discrimination measures from the point of view of sixty young Roma women and men living in Italy and Germany. She also acts as the Italian expert in the Pool of European Youth Researchers.

224 CoE Recommendation [2000] 4 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Education of Roma/Gypsy Children in Europe, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 3 February 2000 at the 696th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies. Available: wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=336669&Site=CM [05.08.2011].

225 CoE Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)4 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Education of Roma and Travellers in Europe, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 17 June 2009 at the 1061st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies. Available: wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1462637 [05.08.2011]. See also

226 The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Available: www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf [04.06.2011]. Brown, C., 2002. The Race Directive: Towards Equality for all the Peoples of Europe?. Yearbook of European Law, 21, pp. 195-227.

227 Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, OJ L 180, 19/07/2000, 0022-0026. Available: eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32000L0043:en:HTML [06.08.2011].

228 Para 12, Article 3 (1)(g), also Article 5.

229 See the webpage of CASNAV: *Centre académique pour la scolarisation des élèves nouvellement arrivés et des enfants du voyage*. Available: casnav.ac-creteil.fr/spip/spip.php?rubrique53 [05.08.2011].

Green initiatives

4.1 / A Green campaign for inclusive education

Michail Tremopoulos

Despite the EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies²³⁰ as well as recent initiatives on cross-cultural education taken by the Greek Ministry of Education, Roma children in Greece face extensive exclusion from education as well as discriminatory treatment. According to last year's annual report of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights²³¹ only 26% of Roma respondents had a schooling of five years or more, compared with 97% of the general population.

Educational segregation in Athens

On June 5th, 2008, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) held that refusal by Greek educational authorities to enrol Roma children in the primary school of the Athens suburb of Aspropyrgos, as well as the subsequent placement of these children in a separate annex school attended only by Roma, constituted a discriminatory treatment denying the children's right to education.²³² Moreover, Greece seems to have failed to fulfil the obligation of executing the above mentioned judgment: on 25 March 2011 the ECHR found in principle admissible and communicated to Greece an application²³³ concerning the continuing segregation of Roma children to a ghetto school in Aspropyrgos. The application was filed by 140 Roma (98 children and 42 parents) through the NGO Greek Helsinki Monitor.²³⁴

During a recent visit to Aspropyrgos, the Human Rights Group of the Greek Green Party (Oikologoi Prasinoi) received a number of complaints from the local Roma community, concerning children who were not allowed to enter the school bus because they wore torn clothes or were considered "dirty" by the driver. People from the same community have been arrested and convicted for "stealing" electricity from the municipal power supply pillars, while their access to clean water is restricted. In the suburb of Halandri, at the



northeast of Athens, practically no child from the local Roma community is currently attending school. Last February, an urgent order issued by the Supreme Court Vice Prosecutor called on public prosecutors in all districts to consider complaints referring to incidents of exclusion of Roma children from public education.

A Green Campaign

Greece most certainly has a long way to go in order to meet EU Roma integration goals and reach the related overall targets of the Europe 2020 strategy. One of the crucial areas to be targeted is access to education, where the minimum goal is ensuring that all Roma children complete at least primary school. The Greek Green Party, in accordance with EGP policies for inclusion and access to education of Roma children, has initiated a long term campaign to raise the issue both at the national and local level in strong collaboration with its network of elected regional and local representatives. Our initiatives include the release of press releases, making contacts with public officers and Roma representatives as well as conducting on site visits to settlements and hosting a number of public events planned for next autumn. Our aim is to eradicate any racist or discriminatory treatment of the Roma population and put an end to the educational segregation of Roma children. They can no longer be considered as second class citizens.

Michail Tremopoulos is the only Greek Green Member of the European Parliament.

For further information, please contact:

Michail Tremopoulos, at
michail.tremopoulos@europarl.europa.eu

²³⁰ europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/11/789&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en

²³¹ EU Agency for Fundamental Rights Annual Report 2010, p.17. Available at www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/annual-report-2011_EN.pdf

²³² The case Sampanis and Others v. Greece, available at cmiskp.echr.coe.int/tkp197/view.asp?action=html&documentId=836273&portal=hbkm&source=externalbydocnumber&table=F69A27FD8FB86142BF01C1166DEA398649

²³³ Ioanna Sampani and Others v. Greece.

²³⁴ www.greekhelsinki.gr/english/index-countries/ghm-greece.html

4.2 / On the road toward inclusive education

Klára Laurenčíková

In the Czech Republic, Romani children do not enjoy equal opportunities in education.²³⁵ Disadvantage in education is related to the social environment in which children live. This mostly concerns children who grow up in socially excluded localities or in localities at risk of social exclusion. These results were gained from studies undertaken during 2008–2010, by the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, under the leadership of Green Minister Ondřej Liška. These studies contributed the very first data on the situation of Romani pupils in the Czech education system since 1990.

Nearly one-third of Romani children (27 %) complete their primary education in schools teaching according to a programme designed for children with slight learning difficulties. In practice, this means they will never be able to acquire any qualification other than that of manual labourers. While pupils of these schools are permitted by law to study at secondary schools, where they could achieve higher qualifications, primary schools for children with slight learning difficulties do not, in practice, prepare pupils for such a transition. Another question mark in the education of Romani children hangs over the existence of segregated primary schools. These have mostly sprung up near socially excluded localities and are attended almost exclusively by Romani children from these localities. The quality of the education achieved there is usually lower than at other primary schools. We do not know the precise percentage of Romani children educated at such schools, but it could be as high as 50 %.

A strategy for inclusive education

Between 2008 and 2010, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport developed a strategy for improving the situation of Romani children. The aim of that strategy was to create a system of early and timely care (for children from 0–6 years and their parents), to establish an educational framework for inclusive education, to transform schools for the lightly mentally disabled, to change the system of educational-psychological counselling, and to familiarize families and schools with the new system. The strategy was developed according to the principle of inter-ministerial cooperation at municipal, regional and state level. The process involved academic workplaces, non-profit organizations, and state institutions.

In 2009 the government approved by decree the basic framework for measures responding to the European Court for Human Rights judgment of 13 November 2007, in the case *D.H. and others vs. the Czech Republic*.²³⁶ The court observed that the children of 27 Roma families, who took legal action against the Czech Republic, were discriminated against in access to basic education: they had been placed outside of mainstream education, in so-called practical schools, which are meant for children diagnosed with mental disability. Information about these measures was then sent to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which oversees the implementation of the Court's judgments.²³⁷ That document introduced 12 steps to be taken toward inclusive education.

After expert discussion within the country, a plan of measures was designed for all children who need support; including children with medical disability, children with a medical or social disadvantage, as well as children who suddenly find themselves in difficult living situations. They all

235 Hlavní závěry rychlého šetření 1/2010, Ústav pro informace ve vzdělávání, 2010, Česká školní inspekce Souhrnné poznatky Tematická zpráva, č. j.: 8302/2010-I/1-ČŠI z tematické kontrolní činnosti březen 2010 (ČŠIG-821/10-G21) v bývalých zvláštních školách III. Materiál www.csicr.cz/cz/85126-zprava-z-kontrolni-cinnosti-v-byvalych-zvlastnich-skolach
Sociological research aimed at the analysis of the form and causes of the segregation of children – verze v angličtině, GAC spol. s r. o., Praha leden 2009

www.msmt.cz/socialni-programy/kontakty-1, www.gac.cz/cz/nase-prace/vystupy-ke-stazeni

Analýza individuálního přístupu pedagogů k žákům se speciálními vzdělávacími potřebami, Člověk v tísni o.p.s., Praha, 2009
www.msmt.cz/socialni-programy/kontakty-1

236 Case no. 57325/00.

237 See *Zpráva vlády České republiky o obecných opatřeních k výkonu rozsudku Evropského soudu pro lidská práva ze dne 13. listopadu 2007 ve věci č. 57325/00 – D. H. a ostatní proti České republice* www.msmt.cz/socialni-programy/zprava-vlady-ceske-republiky-o-obecnich-opatrenich-k-vykonu

See also *Zpráva vlády České republiky o obecných opatřeních k výkonu rozsudku Evropského soudu pro lidská práva ze dne 13. listopadu 2007 ve věci č. 57325/00 – D. H. a ostatní proti České republice: informace o výsledcích šetření a prvních učiněných závěrech* www.msmt.cz/socialni-programy/druha-zprava-vlady-ceske-republiky-o-obecnich-opatrenich-k

have the right to be educated together with other children and to receive the necessary support in mainstream classrooms in mainstream schools. The Education Ministry elaborated a schedule for the preparations of the systemic changes in two Action Plans, approved by the government by decree during 2009-2010.²³⁸

A broad working group of experts

During the first half of 2010, a Working Group was established, with representatives from a broad spectrum of leading experts in the fields of education, health care, pedagogical and psychological counselling as well as social work. The Working Group included academic workers, non-profit sector workers, teachers at primary schools, psychologists, regional authority staff, representatives of professional associations, social workers, and staff from various ministries. Implementation of the Working Group's activities was initiated.

The declared primary aims of the Working Group's activities are:

- to create a system of equalizing and support measures for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream classes and schools; as well as develop a catalogue of these measures to work as an instruction manual for teachers at mainstream schools;
- to professionally prepare existing and future pedagogical workers for instruction in classrooms that include children with special educational needs; and include a methodology to tackle this issue in the programmes of study at teaching colleges;
- to design changes to the Schools Act and related implementing regulations and to create a legislative framework facilitating the implementation of inclusive education in practice;
- to design changes to the system of financing nursery, elementary, and middle schools. The aim is to facilitate the financing of children with special needs through increased subsidies to mainstream schools. These would allow schools to create the conditions necessary for children with special needs, such as sign language instruction, instruction in reading Braille, assistants for children in wheelchairs, etc.;



Hidden Side

- to initiate the transformation of elementary schools independently established for pupils with light mental disability into mainstream schools;
- to regularly monitor the educational situation of pupils living with social disadvantage, such as Romani and other groups requiring targeted support for the creation of equal opportunities. Monitoring should allow for evaluation of the progress of aims as well as produce data on which necessary changes to the system might be based;
- to create a system of early childhood care for children living with social disadvantage, so that these children and their families receive support in time (in the best-case scenario between the ages of 0 – 6, i.e., from birth until the start of mandatory school attendance). This should help to combat low elementary and middle school achievement.

²³⁸ These are the Action Plan for Implementing the Concept of Early Childhood Care for Children from Socially Excluded Environments [Akční plán realizace Konceptu včasné péče o děti ze sociálně znevýhodňujícího prostředí] approved by the government by decree on 20 April 2009 and the National Action Plan for Inclusive Education [Národní akční plán inkluzivního vzdělávání], approved by the government on 15 March 2010 by Decree No. 206. See www.msmt.cz/socialni-programy/kontakty-1

Unfortunate election results – back to the beaten track

After the elections in the second half of 2010, extensive staff changes were undertaken at the ministries involved. These staff changes significantly affected the Education Ministry in particular. The team which had designed both Action Plans, the measures for executing the judgment in the matter of D. H. and Others vs. the Czech Republic, and which had initiated the implementation of various steps²³⁹ was completely dissolved, and the Working Group no longer collaborates with the Education Ministry.

The Greens attempted, during their government management of the Education Ministry from 2008-2010, to radically change the stance of society toward inclusive education of children from socially excluded environments. These efforts were met with warm acceptance from civic initiatives and sections of the profession. The current government has *de facto* destroyed these efforts and the situation has returned to the beaten track. Support for these children is merely being feigned now and real steps are not being taken. There is no positive change on the horizon, not even four years after the Czech Republic lost its case at Strasbourg.

The Czech Greens are actively doing their best, even from an extra-parliamentary position, to advocate for the principles of inclusive education. Today it is primarily the Greens who are leading and mobilizing the public debate on inclusive education in the Czech Republic. Green Party experts were part of the creation of a professional society for inclusive education and are still active in many activities and initiatives against racism and xenophobia.

Klára Laurenčíková acted as Green Deputy Minister of Education from 2009-2010. She is head of the Green Section of Social Policy and a member of the Green Section of Human Rights. Ms. Laurenčíková has established the Czech Expert Society for Inclusive Education.

For further information, please contact:

Klára Laurenčíková at

- [klaralaura\[at\]centrum.cz](mailto:klaralaura[at]centrum.cz)
- Czech Green Party www.zeleni.cz

4.3 / Roma women – Agents of change

Eva van de Rakt

In 2006, the Prague office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, in cooperation with Czech Roma organisations, began initiating and supporting projects to help Roma women participate in politics and civil society. The success enjoyed by these projects demonstrates how important it is to advance Roma women, who, as agents of change, are able to make an important contribution to the inclusion of the Roma minority in Europe.

Training Roma women



Lucie Horváthová (on the right) at a working meeting in Prague

© Markéta Nešlehová

The first important initiative was a one-year pilot project organised together with the NGOs Slovo 21²⁴⁰ and Athinganoi,²⁴¹ in which nine Roma women were trained. Between March and September 2006 the women participated in interactive learning sessions every other weekend. The weekend seminars dealt with subjects such as the political system and political party spectrum of the Czech Republic; political work at the local level; employment, labour market, welfare and health care policy; the situation of minorities in the education system; gender democracy and gender equality policy. Furthermore, debating and public relations workshops were offered. All participants completed internships in political organisations after the programme. Three of the women made immediate use of their newly achieved skills and stood as candidates in the 2006 Czech local elections.

²³⁹ The Group for Social Programs in Schools, established in 2008 by Education Minister Ondřej Liška.

²⁴⁴ See www.slovo21.cz/en/index.php?id=kdojsme

²⁴¹ See www.athinganoi.cz

Since then, a number of capacity building activities have taken place, and their success speaks volumes. Many of the women who received training are now active as politicians, opinion-makers, social workers, teachers or leaders of NGO programmes.

Heinrich Böll Foundation's documentary film: *Women (Re)present*

The Heinrich Böll Foundation, together with the NGO Slovo 21 and Bedna TV, decided to produce a documentary film about three of the women who had taken part in the training programmes. Director Markéta Nešlehová and her camera team spent six months accompanying Aurélie Balážová, Lucie Horváthová and Denisa Berousková to gain an insight into their daily lives at home and at work. The film *Women (Re)present* not only convincingly shows the successes of Aurélie, Lucie and Denisa, but also clearly demonstrates the problems and barriers with which they are confronted daily.

The film is deeply affecting and totally convincing due to the strength of its protagonists. With much feeling, and in an unadorned manner, the director shows the women's work and dedication in socially excluded areas, where the lack of prospects is the governing factor in the lives of many Roma, both men and women. She asks Aurélie, Lucie and Denisa, how to solve the vicious circle increasing numbers of Roma citizens in socially excluded areas are drawn into of poor educational opportunity, unemployment, poverty, and debt.

Change through political engagement and education

"Politics is hopeless, as is our current social reality. Which is easier to change?" asks Lucie in the film. She is convinced that change is impossible without political will, and that she needs to



Denisa Berousková with her family in Kolín

© Markéta Nešlehová



Aurélie Balážová (on the left) in Bruntál

become politically involved herself, if she wants to get things moving. Lucie, who participated in the first training programme, is today a member of the Czech Green Party. She stood in the 2010 parliamentary elections and was the number one candidate on the party list for the Pardubice constituency. Unfortunately, the Greens failed to clear the five percent electoral hurdle in that election, but Lucie remains active in the party. Lucie explains that she is a member of the Czech Greens because of the party's credible support for human rights and minority issues.

"I need more. My family is perfect but that is not enough for me. I need another challenge." These words are spoken by Aurélie, 37, who is a social worker today. She emphasises that if you want to change the situation you need to work on yourself. For her, this recognition means a break with deeply rooted attitudes toward gender. As she emphasises in the film, Aurélie was only able to successfully finish her training as a social worker after separating from her husband. The film portrays the need for greater access to information and education as well as overcoming gender stereotyping as prerequisites for change.

Roma women are role models

Aurélie, Lucie and Denisa are role models, and they recognise their responsibility. "When I am carrying out my duties as a social worker in the Roma ghettos I think – if I can be successful, then others can also be successful. All it needs is time – sometimes people need a mirror in order to see more clearly. If someone holds up the mirror for him or her to see properly, that can provide real motivation. I believe this film provides the perfect

© Markéta Nešlehová

kind of motivation,” Aurélie says in an interview with Radio Prague after the film’s premier at the 2011 Khamoro Festival. Lucie adds: Roma women have enormous potential and have tremendous things to offer, not just for minority society, but also for that of the majority.

Supporting Roma women in these aims and recognising and using their potential will remain a major focus of the Prague office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. From autumn 2011 onwards, the office will use the documentary *Women (Re) present*, which is also available with English subtitles, as a tool in educational work inside and outside the Czech Republic. It can be used to

discuss the prerequisites and challenges of successful Roma inclusion as well as the specific contribution of Roma women to this process.

Eva van de Rakt has been director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Prague since 2004. She has worked for the Foundation, focusing on minority rights, European affairs and energy policy since 2001.

For further information please contact:

Heinrich-Böll-Foundation Prague,
info@cz.boell.org
www.cz.boell.org

5. CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

Roma Culture and Language

Sílvia Carrasco Pons and
Bálint-Ábel Bereményi

In September 2010, after president Sarkozy's campaign against immigrant Roma, international media focused extensively on the larger situation of Roma in different EU countries. As researchers at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, we found it interesting that even the New York Times echoed European concerns and contributed to popularize the idea of a "Spanish model of integration" of the Roma people. This model gets its name from repeated Spanish policies which have addressed the promotion of Roma inclusion and has resulted in the relatively positive position of Roma in Spain (in terms of key indicators relating to the allocation of resources and public investment) in comparison with countries with large Roma populations in Eastern Europe and also compared with wealthier EU Member States such as the UK or France.

However, beyond the eventual impact of specific programs, that have not yet been seriously evaluated, or the proliferation of associations devoted to preventing and reporting anti-Roma discrimination, the strategies of survival and identity of Spanish Gitanos²⁴² are also the outcome of specific historical processes of their country, which make it difficult to take their case as a reference for policy addressed to other Roma groups in other countries. A brief reflection on this example helps to set the scene for this chapter on culture and language because, after centuries of assimilation pressures including the destruction of basic cultural elements by forced settlement and the complete language shift of the Gitano in Spain, part of their comparatively better situation is the result of becoming full citizens in the 1978 constitution (equalizing status, rights and entitlements), that advanced the social and political status of all nationals.

Still, as Kováts argues, *"The role of scholars is to aid policy makers' understanding of the complex conditions affecting the highly diverse people covered by the concept of "Roma". [But] to date, this has not been achieved, partly due to the blurring of boundaries between scholarship and political activism."*²⁴³ Many Gitano/Roma in Spain, as well as some Roma and non-Roma scholars – tend to express a sense of identity through a (self)protecting strategy: resisting policies that promote inclusion, because they are perceived as further assimilatory forces. An example of this is the still widespread belief that school attendance diminishes Gitano identity, especially that of girls. Political activism and political programmes, therefore, need better foundations to understand Roma cultural dynamics within the representations of Roma cultures at the local level.

The state of the art on Roma culture and language

Roma culture has been the object of contradictory representations in European societies over time. These representations have often and conveniently ignored the hard conditions experienced by the Roma of incorporating into European nation-states since the first news of them appeared in official documents. Underlying current stereotypes with ambivalent contents, we can trace back to both romantic and terrifying views of the Roma. Present day Roma are still partly depicted as the heirs of an image that presented them as a people who moved freely, who possessed hidden knowledge and mastered specific arts and crafts – from fortune telling to dancing and music – and who challenged all powers on behalf of their unique drive for freedom. But they also – and increasingly now, as in all times of crisis and fear – carry the burden of the scapegoat: perceived as the undesirable stranger prone to any kind of antisocial behaviour (from stealing, witchcraft or baby-trafficking to drug-dealing and other criminal activity in contemporary times), following a "primitive" culture (strongly family-oriented, apparently uninterested in modernity or unable to adapt to it, holding radical old-fashioned gender

²⁴² Teresa San Román, "La diferencia inquietante. Viejas y nuevas estrategias culturales de los gitanos" (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1997).

²⁴³ Martin Kováts, "Problems of Intellectual and Political Accountability in Respect of Emerging European Roma Policy," *Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority issues in Europe*, Autumn, 2001: 1-10.

values or ideas about conflict resolution and justice) and, allegedly, with a tendency to remain apart, even “preferring” marginality to integration. All these contradictory representations feed cultural fundamentalist attitudes that intend to justify the logic of the exclusion of Roma from *Europeanness* on the basis of “cultural difference”.

But who are the Roma and what is Roma culture, then? In recent times, a growing number of historians claim continuity between nomadic people arriving in Europe from Asia, in the 14th and 15th century, and the European Roma of today, although there is no clear supporting evidence yet. Moreover, the generally accepted hypothesis about the Indian origin of the Roma is based on significant linguistic similarities between present-day Romani language dialects and other Indo-Aryan languages, as well as some other anthropological explanations.²⁴⁴

To refer to the history of the Roma and present knowledge about their culture one must take into account the social construction of the Roma as that “exotic other”,²⁴⁵ reinforced by scholars, artists, mass media as well as Roma politicians themselves. Homogenised, simplified, profoundly distorted and static views on the Roma have served to eventually define them as a “problem”, rather than to understand how their culture has been developed within European societies and as citizens of modern nation-states.

But the Roma represent remarkably diverse and varied groups with a heterogeneous cultural heritage, depending on their historical experiences in particular social and political contexts. The main social organization of the Roma has been defined by the extended family or lineage. Productive activities and wider social relations with non-Roma are traditionally optimised by the size of the family group through unions and separations. On the one hand, preference for ethnic endogamy and, on the other, occasional intergroup quarrels have served as basic tools for assuring the sufficient manpower and for avoiding oversize of the groups. However, this is a well-known phenomenon from ethnographic description of other social

groups with limited political hierarchy and lack of political institutions. While endogamy is claimed to be practiced, it has been proved by ethnographic research to depend on wider socio-political and economic factors. Even though interethnic marriages have always occurred on a more extended or restricted basis, marriage between individuals belonging to two Roma families is often considered to be one of the most important social events that transcend extended family limits. Solidarity within extended family groups (lineage), does not apply to members of other lineage. In Roma groups, age and gender are the main organizers of status and inequality, just as in most other European societies. Due to forced settlement and re-housing campaigns of states and the gradual inclusion of the Roma in the mainstream labour market, particularly in the worst paid and least prestigious jobs, different Roma families have been obliged to live and work close to each other, a factor that has created undesired situations. These situations reinforce the public representation of the Roma as trouble-making and problematic people, while too often public policies addressing them do not take into consideration their basic social strategies developed in marginal situations, which are often incorporated as fundamental cultural practices. The majority of cultural norms, beliefs and practices that the Roma claim to share throughout Europe, nevertheless, cannot be defined as essential or inherent ones, for they have rather been developed as a reaction to the history of contact and relations between majority and minority.²⁴⁶

In summary, most of the characteristic traits that have been regarded for long as defining elements of the Roma culture raise important uncertainties and doubts, which make them seriously problematic in the light of policy design. For example:

Sense of commonness: One of the most important shared traits of different Roma communities is their self-definition as opposed to mainstream society. They are Roma (in their own self-definition: Gitano, Beash, Xoraxane, Manush, Sinti, etc.) as opposed to non-Roma (Gazho, Gogio, payo, paraszt, etc.). However, it can also be argued that

244 DDAA, “Romani project. Romani linguistics and Romani language projects”. (University of Manchester, Retrieved 06/26, 2011, from romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/index.shtml).

245 In the line of *Orientalism*; Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

246 John U. Ogbu & H. D. Simons, “Voluntary and involuntary minorities: A cultural-ecological theory of school performance with some implications for education”, *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 29, 1998).

“from the Gypsy point of view there is no such group as the Gypsies”²⁴⁷, i.e. different Roma communities do not necessarily feel commonness with other communities referred to as Roma. Due to this, some anthropologists describe Roma as not only transnational and transcultural, but also “multiethnic”.²⁴⁸ Ethnography shows that in each Roma community there is an explicit awareness of ethnic belonging and boundaries which do not coincide in diverse Roma groups, because primary identification is always locally defined. A sense of common origin of all the Roma seems to correspond to a common political project – to an important extent, as a result of a shared experience of discrimination and reject – rather than an extended belief among Roma individuals. By contrast, the extended family – traditionally of strict patrilineal descent – is still important as the primary community of socialization and belonging within neighbourhoods with high Roma presence, more than the sense of the common Roma group identity that is often perceived or attributed by non-Roma.

Nomadic tradition: There is a shared knowledge about nomadic tradition of the Roma, which is often based on migration experiences due to political, economic or social reasons in particular historical periods. For example, Romania is often mentioned for its Roma population that “still practices nomadism”, while here the Roma were submitted to slavery – hence could not by law practice migration – up to the mid 19th century.²⁴⁹ Particular migration processes are often taken for nomadism when attributed to Roma communities while, alternatively, the concepts of “migration” or “circular migration” are associated with non-Roma groups. These processes (political conflict, seasonal temporary work, rural-urban migration, etc.), usually do not exclusively include Roma people. In Spain, for example, where *Gitanos* have been long settled in both urban and rural areas, the fact that trade in itinerant street markets is still a common occupation among Spanish Roma does not imply any nomadic practice concerning residence nor, on the other hand, does it diminish their clear self-identification as nomadic when identity traits are often evoked,



mostly by elders or community leaders. Social scientists, journalists, artists, filmmakers and some Roma politicians themselves, in an effort to identify their ultimate essential traits, are often involuntarily behind this widespread and misleading notion by invoking, for example, the need for working in the open air as a sign of past idealised freedom of nomadic life.

Due to its importance for public policies, that are usually conceived from the standpoint of settled populations, this is a key aspect that needs further reflections. It is very important to understand that different social and cultural groups of Travellers do practise a nomadic way of life, for different inherited and contemporary reasons. Among these, there are Roma and non Roma groups. In the past, several groups such as the Irish Travellers and nomadic Roma made their living through the trade of goods not locally produced (practising traditional crafts, as basket makers, bucklers, etc.), offering services needed in farms and also urban areas (as tinker smiths), serving specific rural needs (as horse traders) or employing themselves in different seasonal work (as casual farm labourers). The names of these former activities are often used to refer to marginalized persons in many European languages. But today most of these activities are extinct and itinerant groups, from nomadic Roma to New Age Travellers, again find themselves together practising very similar activities in similar economic niches. For example, although New Age Travellers²⁵⁰ largely originated from festival-goers

247 Liégeois cited in Martin Kovats, “The historical importance of Roma politics”, Roma: A European minority. The challenge of diversity, eds. M. Flásková-Benová, H. Swoboda & J. Marinus Wiersma (European Parliament: Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats in the European Parliament, 2011) 161-169.

248 Csaba Prónai, “Előszó (introduction)”, “Nyugat-európa. cigányok Európában: Kulturális antropológiai tanulmányok. 1”, Csaba Prónai (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2000) 11-28.

249 Delia Grigore, “The Romanian right and the ‘strange’ Roma” (Open Democracy: Free Thinking for the World, 2011).

250 Richard Lowe & William Shaw, “Travellers: Voices of the New Age Nomads” (London: Fourth Estate, 1993).

in the UK in 1980s and are heirs to hippy world views, they adopted a traveller lifestyle and have lived by it through some generations, practising home-schooling in countries where this is possible, doing seasonal or temporary work on farms or building sites, working as self employed independent workers or running stalls at markets, as many Roma do. Finally, other groups that practised activities that implied itinerancy in the past, such as the Yéniche, mostly found in central Europe, in some countries do not identify as Roma (although they are seen as such by the non minority population) and their situation nowadays varies from being permanently nomadic in Austria to completely settled in south-eastern France. The focus here should be on the rights of traveller ways of life rather than on the rights of a specific people and their culture.

Autonomy: it is often claimed that the Roma live in a certain independence from mainstream society in social, cultural and economic terms. However, the Roma have always had an interdependent relation with the mainstream through continuous contact and exchange. Laws and policies related to the Roma have historically aimed to assimilate the Roma population, often by banning their marginal crafts and economic activities, along with their mobility. Even if incorporation into the ordinary labour market has recently increased among the Roma, their strategy to combine very diverse economic activities softens the exposure to the unequal competition on the mainstream labour market.²⁵¹ In the current economic circumstances of high unemployment rates and job insecurity, enhancing these traditional Roma strategies through tailored vocational training has proved to be highly adaptive in recent projects carried out in northern Italy.²⁵²

Language: It is argued that the Roma have a common language and it is used as an agglomerating factor in their political claims. Romani language, spoken by many though not all Roma/Gypsy groups, has four or five main different dialects.²⁵³ There are also Roma groups that use other distinctive languages such as Beash (an archaic version of Romanian) in Hungary, or

Catalan (by Catalan Roma in Southern France), the use of which also has a strong meaning of belonging to the locally defined ethnic category. Language is only one *cultural element* of the many that can, but not necessarily do define ethnic adscription. So, the Spanish Gitano who use only a limited number of romano-kaló words may have a strong Gitano ethnic identity just as much as the Hungarian Lovara who do use Romani in their everyday community life.

Therefore, one cannot speak about a single Romani culture but rather a very diverse one. Probably, the main distinctive characteristic of the Roma communities is that the Roma have a great capacity to adapt cultural contents of their environment and apply their use according to their eventual needs. Resistance should also be mentioned as a key factor in the socio-cultural survival of the Roma, especially in economically marginalized contexts. Definition of their norms, beliefs and social practices as opposed to mainstream society fills with meaning their ethnic-cultural adscription and confers a self-protecting sense of identity and belonging before the perceived and experienced hostility of the mainstream.²⁵⁴

We must, therefore, emphasise that when we speak about Romani culture and Roma people we tend to refer to groups of lower social status or marginalized situations. Roma individuals and families of middle and upper classes – are simply invisible for the mainstream society and for researchers, and their ethnic identity becomes meaningless from the point of view of public policies and integration strategies.

Central debates and orientations for inclusive policies

Linguistic and cultural rights have to be regarded as human rights and the object of clear and common politics of recognition.²⁵⁵ As such, the inner diversity of Roma cultures and languages deeply challenges the never neutral homogeneous moulds into which non-discrimination policies based on difference-blindness intend to make them fit. Nevertheless, the recognition

251 Michael Stewart, *The time of the Gypsies* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997).

252 Tommaso Vitale (in press).

253 Yaron Matras, "A geographical approach to the classification of Romani dialects", *"Ethnic identities in dynamic perspective. proceedings of the 2002 annual meeting of the Gypsy lore society"*, Sheila Salo, & Csabo Prónai, eds. (Budapest: Gondolat, 2003) 193-201.

254 This is a key point, advanced in his already classic model by Frederik Barth, "Ethnic groups and boundaries. The social organization of cultural differences" (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1998 [1969]).

255 Charles Taylor, "Multiculturalism and 'The Politics of Recognition'" (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

of differences – of Roma cultural and linguistic rights – should take into account as starting points the individual options and rights to which non-Roma EU nationals are entitled to, in order to ensure an **additive recognition** in the process of dignifying them. A misleading understanding of cultural relativism has too often overlooked or neglected the rights of individuals with a minority background – Roma and others – when eventual clashes of norms, values and beliefs emerge between minority and mainstream tradition and law. For example, cases of child brides, blood feuds and others of this kind should be examined in the light of this principle.

In this sense, far from being forbidden, prosecuted, looked down upon or neglected, **nomadic ways of life** should be available as acceptable options among any individual or group, regardless of their culture or income, and there should be ways to guarantee the access of nomadic people to social resources, for example, through flexible health and education arrangements that already exist for high income travellers and their children within the EU. But the diversity of regulations in this area is still enormous in the different Member States, where ethnocentric assumptions of settlement predominate.

In relation to language, none of the **variants of the Romani language** are official anywhere within the EU, but they are recognized as minority languages in certain European countries. The Romani language is only rarely taught at schools and it is not possible to use it in official relations with the public institutions yet. Different variants of the language are now in the process of being codified in Romania, Serbia, Montenegro and Sweden. Attempts aimed at the creation of a unified standard language should take into account that the languages taught should make sense both locally and internationally, from a cultural and political point of view, so that this promotion does not paradoxically reinforce effective language loss. On the other hand, non-Roma are not taught the local Romani dialect, which has served as a community tool of self protection rather than an open means of communication – and in some areas and circumstances still accomplishes this function. In this respect, local Roma communities should be part of the strategy of introducing the Romani language in all areas of life, to **fulfil**

the linguistic and educational rights of the Romani speakers, but carefully avoiding further segregation. For example, in the cases of Spain and the UK, countries of one strong international language, the goal of the Romani language teaching and learning activities should be addressed to international communication, provided that the local dialects have completely been lost as a result of assimilation processes. In all EU countries Romani languages should be regarded as part of an enriching linguistic diversity of their societies and as such, have to be recognized, studied, promoted and pushed to the academic level in schools and offered as subjects in secondary schools and universities.

The fact that the Roma are considered **a cultural or ethnic minority** does not imply that this status is recognised officially. Positions on this issue differ a lot among Roma themselves, between those who regard themselves as nationals of their country and also Roma or Gitano, or Sinti, and those who express their belonging to their ethnic group above national identifications. In Spain, for example, some would call themselves Spanish Gitanos and other would identify as Gypsy Spaniards.²⁵⁶ But these are political positions often held by political representatives and scholars, whereas the majority of the Roma population would not make such distinctions, while all states have specific views and ways to address the Roma specificity. For example, for the first time in 2011, the UK census categorised Romanies and Irish Travellers as distinct ethnic groups. In Spain and France, it is forbidden to keep records of citizens' minority status or to ask citizens to declare their ethnicity for any purposes, while since recently in Romania not declaring one's Roma ethnicity can be fined. Different values and goals underlie these practices and they respond to different notions of citizenship that only make sense at the domestic level. However, the first and the last example imply individuals being forced to choose an ethnic identity: this can be seen as a limitation of individual rights on behalf of a notion of group rights and of rights of the state. The same caution applies to practices of **minority self-government** that exist in Hungary, for instance. In other countries, the public expression of collective identities, even through feasts and festivals (e.g., the celebration of the World day of the Gypsy/Roma people in April, 8th in Spain, where there is mu-

256 Ana Jiménez Adelantado, "Los españoles gitanos", (Gitanos: pensamiento y cultura, 1, 1999) 1-17.



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sic, demonstrations and ritual throwing of petals to a river) have to do with social claims for equal and anti-discriminatory treatment instead of cultural performances of traditions, which are mostly reserved to the private sphere (weddings, etc.).

One of the controversial debates in education has to do with the widespread belief that the absence of elements of **Romani culture taught at schools** is at the basis of the usually disproportionate failure and/or dropout rate among Roma children around adolescence throughout Europe, leading to civic disengagement from a common conception of expectations starting at school. Although there is no single evidence of this and, as we have seen, it would be difficult to identify even those elements of local Romani cultures to be taught, there are at least two key aspects that should be included, and are included in some schools in some countries (our examples are from Spain): in relation to **language**, it is very important to make the students realize the large number of loanwords that the local non-Romani languages have acquired; and in relation to **culture**, there is a considerable amount of work on intercultural education that has focused on the importance of including the Roma experience as part of the European history that all children and youth are taught in the regular curriculum. Minority students' empowerment would certainly benefit from these practices. The focus should therefore be made on social and historical elements. Focusing on cultural traditions, which can be easily stereotyped and exoticized, or can reflect patriarchal practices, easily lend themselves to cultural transformations and political appropriations that end up contributing to serious misunderstand-

ings of Roma cultural dynamics. This tokenistic approach should, therefore, be avoided.

Gender inequalities are one of the controversial arenas of debate on what should be considered acceptable differences between Roma cultures and **women's rights** achieved internationally. Certain controversial examples, such as the state financial support given by the Finnish state to Roma women who cannot afford traditional expensive skirts, are not at all widespread in the EU and are mostly practised in the Nordic countries. On the other hand, blatant contradictions can be found when countries that do support this kind of cultural practices do not acknowledge the positive legal implications of wide areas of Roma customary law. In several cases related to customary marriages in Italy, Portugal and Spain, these marriages have been acknowledged, and widowed Roma women have been successful in claiming pensions on behalf of their deceased husbands' life-long contributions to social security on the basis of customary Roma marriage.

Finally, **cultural mediation** with the participation of Roma mediators and counsellors in conflicts has proved to be effective in very many areas that imply contact and negotiation between Roma and non-Roma citizens or Roma citizens and state institutions, related or not to the law (family disputes, territorial customary laws in EU countries that acknowledge specific rights in this area, neighbourhood conflicts). Court cases accumulated in different Member States could be a basis for common EU advice regarding **traditions regulated by customary law and internal justice systems** and a specific report should be urgently commissioned to inform a common guide based on an accurate and comparative examination of court cases in EU Member States for officers and staff that are mostly working with the Roma – a diverse, fascinating, resisting people.

Sílvia Carrasco Pons is Professor of Social Anthropology at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology and Vice-Director of the Centre for the Study and Research on Migrations at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. She has published books and scientific papers in the areas of education, migration, minorities as well as on public policies on this issues, and has focused on trajectories of school achievement and their impact among the Roma in Spain.

Bálint-Ábel Bereményi is a lecturer at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology and a researcher at the Centre for the Study and Research on Migrations at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. He holds a PhD in Anthropology and is specialised in the relationship of different minorities with the education system. His doctoral thesis examined the educational strategies of Roma in Badalona, Spain and Bogotá, Colombia. Both are members of URBA-Rom.

Green initiatives

5.1 / One minute of silence – A need to recognize and remember the Roma genocide during WWII

Catherine Grèze

“A third of detainees at Auschwitz were Roma, but most Europeans do not know this.”

Jerzy Buzek, President of the European Parliament, on the 2nd of February, 2011

During the Second World War, both Roma and Jewish people, were oppressed for racial reasons by the Nazi regime. Several hundred thousand Roma were murdered in occupied Eastern Europe and in extermination camps. In 1982 Germany officially recognised the Roma genocide – also known as *Porrajmos* or Roma Holocaust²⁵⁷ – but unfortunately this is still not the case in other European countries. The ignorance of the majority of society concerning Roma history contributes greatly to the prejudice Roma people suffer from. It also represents an obstacle to their integration within the European Union.

A first commemoration in the European Parliament

Fully aware of the duty to remember this period of Roma history on a European as well as on a national level, together with Kinga Göncz (S&D), Cornelia Ernst (GUE/NGL), Livia Járóka (EPP) and Renate Weber (ALDE), we made an effort for creating an act of commemoration, which resulted in the President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek, proposing a remembrance day of the Roma genocide.



Thus, a few days after the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, on Wednesday the 2nd of February 2011, elected representatives of the European Parliament paid a first tribute to the victims of the genocide, holding a one minute silence in the hemicycle. It was an historic event, as no EU institution had earlier commemorated the Roma genocide. Also the German parliament held its first commemoration of the Roma genocide, calling a survivor to hold a speech in Romani.

To raise awareness on the plight of Roma during WWII, I also organised a public screening at the European Parliament in Brussels on the night before the commemoration of the movie *Freedom* from the famous French Roma film-maker Tony Gatlif. The movie, which is based on a true story, deals with the deportation of Roma during the Second World War.

A need for recognition, education and a fight against racism

More than a victory for the Roma, the commemoration was a great symbolic moment: a strong act of identity and a reminder that Roma are full European citizens. It was also an opportunity to show that the European Union does not deny history and its impact on its citizens. While this is

257 However, these names are not entirely harmonious.

an advance in building awareness on the common history of Roma communities and the rights of Roma citizens, we need to go further. Pushing for official recognition of this tragedy by states, as well as promoting education and the dissemination of information on the history and culture of Roma communities can be a beginning.

However, there is much to do as well to ensure that Roma enjoy their full rights as citizens. The fight against anti-Roma racism in everyday life needs to be continued – starting, for instance, with opposition to the special identity documents (*Livrets de circulation*) French Travellers are compelled to carry.

Catherine Grèze is a Member of the European Parliament from France.

For further information, please contact:

- Catherine Grèze at catherine.greze@europarl.europa.eu
- French Greens in the European Parliament at europeecologie.eu

5.2 / Why did they send us there? Recovering memories of the deportations to Transnistria

Pieter van Abshoven

In 1940, Romania, headed by Marshal Ion Antonescu and the Iron Guard, joined sides with Nazi Germany and the Axis countries. Antonescu decided to “cleanse” the country ethnically and transfer the Jewish and Roma minorities to the province of Transnistria, occupied with the help of the German army from the Soviet Union in 1941.

The deportations started in June 1942 and concerned those Roma considered a “problem”. They included nomadic Roma, who had to travel on foot or with wagons. The “dangerous and undesirable” sedentary Roma – recidivists, those with

criminal records, those with no means of subsistence and those without a definite occupation – as well as their families were deported by train in September. They were forced from their homes without personal or household belongings and were not given time to sell their possessions.²⁵⁸

Of a total Roma population of just over 200,000, 25,000 were deported.²⁵⁹ While there were plans for deporting 18,941 more Roma, the deportations were called off in October 1942, largely due to problems encountered by the military bureaucracy.²⁶⁰ Most Roma deportees were settled in villages in houses emptied of their original residents.²⁶¹ Due to the lack of food, firewood, clothing, dishes, medicine and medical assistance,²⁶² an estimated 11,000 deported Roma died.²⁶³

Denial and trivialization of the Holocaust

After the war fascist legislation was abrogated, and the old regime’s Roma policy was ended. However, during the trials of the war criminals the deported Roma were hardly mentioned, and when in 1948 the communist regime took over, this history fell into oblivion. The Roma continued to be treated as before the war: not as an ethnic minority, but as a marginalised social group. An attempt was made to sedentarize nomadic Roma and former restrictions on their freedom of movement were re-established.

Dealing with the history of the Holocaust was difficult: reactions ranged from outright denial to channelling guilt on others. A dominant approach was selective negationism: acknowledging the Holocaust, but denying the participation of one’s compatriots. Another typical response was an attempt to prove that other suffered equally or more than Jews and Roma, or that their position in Romania was better than in other countries. During the communist times, history textbooks depicted communists and Romanians in general as the main victims of Fascism and the main heroes liberating Romania from the Germans. The blame was put on non-Romanians. Negation-

258 Tuvia Friling, *et al.*, eds. Final Report: International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania (Iași: Polirom, 2004) 229.

Available on the Internet, also available in Romanian.

259 Ibid, 226.

260 Ibid, 230.

261 Ibid, 231.

262 Ibid, 232.

263 Ibid, 236.

ist attitudes in the political sphere remained rife in the early 2000s;²⁶⁴ and as recently as 2010.²⁶⁵

A new approach

Changes in the official attitude started in 1999, when the German government accepted to pay Roma victims of the Holocaust a small compensation after a lobby by active Roma organizations. In Romania, almost three thousand files were compiled²⁶⁶ – a great task considering the difficulty of reaching the victims, mostly living in rather isolated communities and inexperienced in submitting applications. Slightly less than half of the applications were accepted. Later also other funds paid compensation to Holocaust victims.

But that was not the only result: it was the first time in sixty years that these victims received attention for the ordeal they had gone through, and Romanians were confronted with their part of the history. Thousands of historically valuable testimonies were gathered.

In October 2003, President Ion Iliescu established the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, under the chairmanship of Elie Wiesel. The final report produced by the Commission has led to more research and it is also used in teaching material.²⁶⁷ Since 2004, Holocaust Remembrance days are organised. However, in a speech about the fate of the Jewish victims only one sentence was dedicated to the Roma: *“To these we must also add the over 12,000 citizens of Roma descent who died in Transnistria in similar circumstances.”*²⁶⁸

In 2006, a modification was made to Emergency Ordinance no. 31, which prohibits publicly denying the Holocaust and its consequences: in addition to the extermination of the Jews, it now also mentions that *“in the period of the Second World*



Minamie's Photo

*War, a portion of the Roma population was subjected to deportation and annihilation.”*²⁶⁹

How Greens can participate in memory recovery

There is a risk that remembering the horrors can awake in some an addiction to the role of the victim and a possibility to blame all problems on outsiders. Another potential problem is the monopolising by the government of activities like Remembrance Day for its own interest, instead of giving the people who have suffered the leading role in the ceremony.²⁷⁰ Greens should be alert to such behaviour by politicians in any kind of ceremony.

The recovery of historic memory is an important and a necessary step for the emancipation of the Roma as a people. Greens can and should participate in this endeavour by raising awareness of Roma history within their own ranks. Individual Greens can participate in activities and seek contact with Roma, or other minorities. And as a party Greens should be prepared to denounce cases of discrimination. Actions can also be very concrete: until recently textbooks presented the history of Romania only as the history of the

264 In 2002 Emergency Ordinance no. 31 was issued, which prohibits publicly denying the Holocaust and its consequences. Penalties ranging from fines to fifteen years in prison are stipulated for these offences. However, an amendment proposed in parliament defined the Holocaust as “the systematic massive extermination of the Jewish population in Europe, organized by the Nazi authorities during the Second World War.” Thus by definition there was no Holocaust in Romania, as the extermination was organized by Romanian authorities, not Nazi authorities. The definition was broadened to include allies and collaborators in 2006. Wiesel 2004: 359–61.

265 Viktoria Godik comments on the Facebook page of the European Union of Jewish Students www.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=389574965144&topic=14305

266 George Lacatus, “Câți bani au primit romii deportați în Transnistria”, *România Liberă*, 11.3.2011. www.romanalibera.ro/exclusiv-rl/documentar/video-cati-bani-au-primit-romii-deportati-in-transnistria-219151-pagina1.html#top_articol

267 For example, see Vasile Ionescu: *Deportări din România. Proiect educația copiilor romi în Europa*. www.romanikultura.ro/docs/Istorie/5.5_Romania_RO.pdf. For the important work of the Council of Europe in Romania, see www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/Source/FS2/5.5_romania_english.pdf An interesting visit is also www.opusidea.eu/trr/index.php

268 Friling 12.

269 Emergency Ordinance no. 31, 2002, www.dri.gov.ro/documents/oug%2031-2002.pdf

270 Huub van Baar: *Cultural policy and the governmentalization of Holocaust remembrance in Europe: Romani memory between denial and recognition* *International Journal of Cultural Policy* Vol. 17, Iss. 1, 2010.

Romanian nation, forgetting minorities. Examining the depiction in current schoolbooks of Roma, other minorities and former national enemies, as well as disputing the control the government has over their content, could be a worthwhile project for Greens in Romania and around Europe.

This project of recovery can also help non-Roma learn about the century long history of Roma slavery²⁷¹ and understand how Roma sometimes perceive them: as people who never can be trusted, and as people who really only wish to assimilate them and cut them off from their roots. Thus these projects are also a necessary step in normalizing the relationship and interaction between Roma and non-Roma. There is certainly a need for this also in other countries than Romania, in the East as well as in the West: despite my own country's reputation of being very tolerant, reality can be quite different.

Pieter van Abshoven is town council member for GroenLinks in Alphen aan den Rijn, Netherlands. He has lived and worked in Romania as management consultant for different NGOs.

For further information and reading, please contact:

- Pieter van Abshoven at www.pieter.vanabshoven.nl
- Council of Europe: Teaching Roma genocide www.opusidea.eu/trr/index.php

Austrian Sinti and Roma in a Nutshell

- Population: 20-30,000.
- Percentage of national population: 0,30%.
- Groups include Austrian Roma and Sinti, nearly 90% of whom were killed in the Holocaust. Survivors amounted about 5,000 in 1990.
- An estimated 20-30,000 Roma from the Balkans and Eastern Europe have arrived as so called "guest workers" since the late 1960s.
- Part of the Sinti and Roma population is semi-sedentary. Two halting sites exist in the country.

Sources:

- Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Forum data, www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/archive/documentation/strategies/statistiques_en.asp (26.5.2011)

- Verein Ketani: Durchreiseplatz Ketani Linz www.sinti-roma.at/lagerplatz.htm

5.3 / Roma as an ethnic minority – The process of recognition in Austria

Gerhard Baumgartner

When the Law on Ethnic Groups was passed in Austria in 1976 – recognising various autochthonous ethnic groups – the Roma and Sinti were not included. Although they fulfilled all relevant criteria, it was incorrectly assumed that as a traditionally migrating group they could not claim to be autochthonous to the territory of Austria.

This objection was dropped only after the Roma and Sinti associations, with the help of historians, proved that they had lived in permanent settlements in Burgenland for centuries. A further need for adequate counterparts to negotiate with the government was overcome after the foundation of a Roma association in Oberwart in 1989. However, despite repeated demands for inclusion of Roma and Sinti into this category – from several human rights groups, the Information Office of Austrian Ethnic Groups²⁷² and Green MP Tereziya Stosits – the state administration and successive governments would not budge.

The first Western state to recognise the Roma and Sinti

In 1991 recognition was suddenly initiated by the governing Social Democratic Party. Several factors were responsible for this change: the Austrian government was trying to repair its bruised image after the so called Waldheim affair,²⁷³ while also negotiating its integration into the EU; any symbolic gesture in the right direction was of help. In the preceding years Hungary and Romania had already recognised the Roma as ethnic minorities, setting a precedent for Austria, who wanted to salvage its image as a country supportive of minorities. Thirdly, the group of autochthonous Austrian Roma and Sinti was rather small – about 5,000 persons altogether – and one of the leading figures of the new Roma movement happened to be a Social Democratic party activist.

271 Viorel Achim. Țigăni în istoria României. Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1998.

272 A coordination office of recognised ethnic groups.

273 In the late 1980s the former secretary general of the UN and by then Austria's ruling president was exposed as a former officer in the German Wehrmacht and put on the official "watchlist" of the US government.

It took a full four years to manoeuvre the recognition process through the labyrinthine system of Austria's official and unofficial "checks and balances". The initial move was made by the Social Democrats. The party chapter of the 19th district of Vienna – the one in which their candidate had been active for decades – initiated a proposal to the local and later national party congress to recognise the Roma and Sinti as an ethnic group, a motion carried by the party congress with a large majority. On the 16th of March 1992 a petition was then handed over to the President of the Republic and all members of parliament by representatives of the minority, a parliamentary hearing was organised and finally the representatives of the coalition government introduced an official parliamentary motion.

The Green members of parliament who had unsuccessfully pushed for recognition for years and now wanted to join the motion were passed over by their fellow members of parliament from the coalition parties. The motion, supported by all parliamentary parties, was carried unanimously and on the 16th of December 1993 the Roma and Sinti were finally recognised as an the "Austrian ethnic group of Roma", the Sinti representatives having opted to abstain from any formalised representation in the last moment.

Austria thus became the first of the Western European democracies to officially recognise the Roma and Sinti as an ethnic group,²⁷⁴ but the new status did not encompass all the Roma and Sinti living in the country. As the Law on Ethnic Groups drew a sharp distinction between autochthonous minorities and so-called migrants, the Austrian administration aimed at keeping representatives of the latter well in the background of Roma politics. The ruling Social Democratic party made sure, that when the first Roma organisations were being set up, the autochthonous group was represented in a separate organisation.²⁷⁵

However, "the" crucial event in the history of Austrian Roma and Sinti in the 20th century happened two years later. On the 5th of February 1995, a bomb attack in the Roma settlement of Oberwart, in the eastern province of Burgenland killed four young men. The first politically moti-

vated murder since the end of World War II shook the foundations of the country. For the first time the Austrian political establishment came out in full force in defence of the Roma. In the following months and years the ethnic group and its sad history of persecution and annihilation became a major topic of public debate and school education and its representatives have become prominent public figures, better known to the general public than most members of parliament.

The need for recognition around Europe

Official recognition in Austria actually only means that the parliament votes to convoke a separate Ethnic Advisory Board for the Roma according to the provisions of the 1976 Law on Ethnic Groups. This advisory body does little more than make suggestions about the allocation of state funds to the different minority institutions but has no executive, legislative or procedural power at all, nor are its members in any way elected, but appointed by the Austrian chancellor. The role of the Board is thus comparable to that of a 19th century Imperial Advisor, whose advice the Emperor did not even dream of listening to.



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274 For a complete list of regulations and amendments to the 1976 Austrian Law on Ethnic Groups see the following link: www.ris.bka.gv.at/GeltendeFassung.wxe?Abfrage=Bundesnormen&Gesetzesnummer=10000602.

275 Led by the Social Democratic functionary Rudolf Sarközi, later to become the first and so far only head of the so called Ethnic Advisory Board with the Austrian chancellor.

A means of solving this problem would be the adaptation of the model of institutionalised chambers as legal representatives of recognised interest groups – which was developed around the turn of the last century for the representation of economic interest groups within the democratic system – to the question of ethnic rights in Austria. The budget of these chambers could be guaranteed by the state and administered by democratically elected representatives.

The Austrian recognition process illustrates that official recognition of the Roma as a minority was not caused by an “insight” for their needs, but rather by favourable circumstances. Minority rights were granted, when it seemed opportune, even advantageous, to do so – and they were granted in a way which looked good, but

had only very limited consequences for the traditional political system. This has been repeated in recognition processes in Eastern and Western Europe since. Official recognition by individual European states remains nevertheless the central issue for European Roma movements, especially as in European politics and policies there is no way to circumvent the national agencies in any of the relevant socioeconomic and political fields. Green support for these initiatives is thus welcome around Europe.²⁷⁶

Gerhard Baumgartner is a historian and journalist specializing in ethnic and religious minorities, as well as leader of the project “Name-Database of Austrian Holocaust Victims among the Roma and Sinti”.

276 Bibliography used in this article includes Gerhard Baumgartner, “6 X Österreich” – Geschichte und aktuelle Situation der Volksgruppen in Österreich, Klagenfurt/Celovec 1995; Gerhard Baumgartner und Florian Freund, Roma Politik in Österreich, in der EU und im übrigen Europa / Roma Policies in Austria, the European Union, and Beyond, Brüssel 2004; Gerhard Baumgartner und Florian Freund, Die Burgenland Roma 1945-2000. Eine Darstellung der Volksgruppe anhand qualitativer und quantitativer Daten, Forschungen aus dem Burgenland 88, Eisenstadt 2004.; Gerhard Baumgartner und Bernhard Perchinig: Minderheitenpolitik in Österreich nach 1945, in: Herbert Dachs et al (Hg.): Handbuch des politischen Systems Österreichs, 4. Auflage, Wien 2005, 546-560; Kulturverein Österreichischer Roma (ed): “Vom Rand in die Mitte – 20 Jahre Kulturverein Österreichischer Roma / From the Margins into the Centre – 20 Years Association of Austrian Roma”, Vienna 2011.

6. RACISM AND EXTREMIST AGGRESSION

Living in disrespect: discrimination against Roma and anti-Gypsy sentiments in contemporary Europe

Edit Szénássy

Anti-Gypsyism (also called anti-Tziganism) is a demeaning attitude toward Roma on the grounds of a presumed or actual shared feature amongst those thought to belong to this ethnic group. Similarly to anti-Semitism and other forms of racism, anti-Romanism is a way of venting frustrations on an easily recognizable target group, ranging from contempt to abuse, and exploiting deep-rooted historical stereotypes. Using the mechanism of anti-Gypsyism, Romanies are oftentimes alienated from their human characteristics, portrayed as a danger to self and society, regarded not as individuals but as an indiscriminate mass whose negative, anti-social behaviour directly follows from their inherited or cultivated immoral selves.

A history of anti-Gypsyism in Europe

In a number of significant ways, the Romani peoples have constituted a unique, albeit non-cohesive, ethnic group within (and outside of) Europe ever since their arrival to the continent in the Middle Ages. An examination of historical conjunctures between Roma and non-Roma in changing cultural contexts is vital in order to grasp the wider systemic exclusions of our current realities. Transnationally scattered, with no motherland to protect their rights, controlling few resources and endowed with little political power,²⁷⁷ and, to this day, occupying the bottom place in the social hierarchy in almost every country, much of their severe marginality stems from a series of historical exclusions fuelled by widespread social rejection.²⁷⁸

As a consequence of particular historical trajectories, individual Romani groups and communities have, even within the same geographical area, encountered racist and discriminatory practices in distinct ways. Yet in general, tolerance for this ethnic group was the exception rather than the rule. Even under Turkish rule in the Ottoman Empire, where they had a relatively better position compared to other states, Roma nevertheless suffered from profound societal contempt and prejudice.²⁷⁹

Historical evidence suggests that Roma were enslaved in Moldavia and Wallachia (principalities of Romania) from as early as the 14th century until 1864 when, due to Western pressure, the institution of slavery was fully abolished.²⁸⁰ A more tolerant attitude prevailed in 15-16th century Hungary where large numbers of Roma settled after having been expelled from and persecuted in the West, only to face overt persecution during the Habsburg era.²⁸¹ An example of these sentiments was a 1782 trial of an entire Romani community accused of cannibalism. After 41 Roma were tortured into confession and executed, the presumed victims of cannibalism were found unhurt.²⁸² The 19th century saw a slight improvement in the social acceptance of Roma in the region, though this was largely based on a mixture of romantic mystification and paternalism and was coupled with an increasing stratification within the ethnic group itself.

All over Europe, Roma were described as villains, savages, sorcerers, enemies of the Christian churches at best, and as thieves, vagabonds, sub-human and merciless murderers at worst. They were a "threat of disorder", embodiments of "the strange and different", something to be avoided, shunned, or overcome.²⁸³ Unprotected by the law, Roma could be punished, killed or expelled without any consequence to the perpetrator. In

277 Zoltan Barany, *The East European Gypsies: Regime Change, Marginality and Ethnopolitics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 2. For a detailed analysis on the political mobilization of Central European Roma see Peter Vermeersch, *The Romani Movement: Minority Politics and Ethnic Mobilization in Contemporary Central Europe*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2006.

278 Also see in general Ian F. Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome: An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution*. Ann Arbor: Karoma, 1987.

279 Zoltan Barany, 2002, p. 84.

280 Ibid, p. 85-6. Also see Nicolae Gheorge, "Roma-Gypsy in Eastern Europe," *Social Research* 58:4, 1991.

281 Ibid, 2002, p.86.

282 Cited in Ibid, 2002, p.87.

283 See Jean-Pierre Liegeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publications, 1994, p. 122.



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17th century Sweden, Roma were ordered to be banished or executed with no trial, while Norway ordered the incarceration of Roma and the confiscation of their possessions.²⁸⁴ Forced assimilation and the outlawing of nomadism were often-used anti-Gypsy measures as well. An infamous example is Maria Theresa's 1761 decree, according to which Roma were forcibly settled and prohibited from leaving their assigned villages. Its harsh assimilationist politics prevented Romanies from exhibiting cultural difference in any way, including speech, dress or occupation. As a "civilizing" measure, Romani children were forcibly taken from their families to be raised.²⁸⁵

It is uncertain how many Roma fell victim to the Roma Holocaust (also called *Porajmos*) during World War II. A possible reason for the striking lack of documentation on the number of executed Roma may lie in the fact that they were regarded as too marginal to mention and the idea of their extermination too void of controversies²⁸⁶ in Nazi Germany. Rough estimates range from 885,000²⁸⁷ to several millions of victims. Roma fared better under communist regimes, yet strong assimilationist measures meant that unlike other minorities in socialist Europe, they were not granted sufficient cultural rights. For instance, Bulgarian authorities denied the very existence of a Romani

minority in the country, and Czechoslovakia did not recognize the group as a nationality in censuses.²⁸⁸ In the Czech and Slovak lands a 1958 law mandated universal settlement and employment for all Romani groups.²⁸⁹

Racism against Roma in the Present – Hate Speech

Coupled with a rising national consciousness amongst non-Roma populations, anti-Roma sentiments, repressed by the communist regime, began to thrive after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Early on in the transitional period right wing political forces were quick to notice the popular support for anti-Gypsy rhetoric throughout East-Central Europe, fostering a climate of verbal and physical violence against Romanies. Especially in the immediate years following the regime change there was little use (and, undoubtedly, little awareness) of politically correct wordings, and thus national television broadcasted as local residents cheered in the Czech town of Ústí nad Labem, when in 1993 a 17-year-old beauty pageant proclaimed that she would like to see her city cleansed of the Gypsies.²⁹⁰

Hate speech and anti-Roma agitation in the media serves as a legitimisation for exclusion or insult on both the structural level and in everyday settings. The consequences of hate speech are all the graver when undignified language is used by high-standing officials, such as in the 2007 case of the Romanian president Traian Basescu, who addressed a Romani female journalist with the words "You pussy, don't you have anything to do today?" and, unaware of the recording in progress, privately remarked "How aggressive that stinky Gypsy was".²⁹¹ Exploiting stereotypes, using demeaning imagery and supposedly innocent jokes is an often deployed method to ridicule Roma indiscriminately, as a group. Recently, television footage captured Slovak MPs in the parliament handing around and giggling over a sheet of paper with an image of a Roma man who

284 See Ibid, p. 128

285 Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies*. Oxford: Blackwell Publications, 1995, p. 156-8.

286 Cited by Zoltan Barany, 2002, p. 103. For more on Nazi Germany's anti-Gypsy politics see Zoltan Barany, "Memory and Experience: Anti-Rom prejudice in Eastern Europe," Woodrow Wilson Center (Washington, DC), Occasional Paper No. 50 July 1998), pp. 7-12.

287 Henry R. Huttenbach, "The Romani Porajmos: The Nazi Genocide of Gypsies in Germany and Eastern Europe," in Crowe and Koltzi, eds., *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe*. Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1991, p. 45.

288 Zoltan Barany, 2002, p. 115.

289 Will Guy, "Ways of looking at Roms: The Case of Czechoslovakia," in Farham Rehfish, ed., *Gypsies, Tinkers, and Other Travellers*. London: Academic Press, 1975, p. 222.

290 Michael Stewart, *The Time to the Gypsies*. Westview Press, 1997, p. 2.

291 Henry Scicluna, "Anti-Romani Speech in Europe's public Space – The Mechanism of Hate Speech". European Roma Rights Centre, 21 Nov 2007, available at: <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2912>

reminiscences about the large amount of groceries that one could get in supermarkets with little money during state socialism. The joke proceeds by the man lamenting that this is not possible anymore, as shops are now equipped with video cameras.²⁹² Playing on the image of the Roma as predisposed to crime is frequently supplemented with other demeaning representations, namely that of Roma as mentally inferior or Roma as inherently violent. The European Roma Right Centre (ERRC) has documented a case when the mayor of the Romanian town Craiova proclaimed on television that “if you put [Roma] in the zoo and showed them to kids saying ‘look at the monkeys’, they wouldn’t see any difference”.²⁹³ Poverty and low social status were equated with a criminal disposition in another case documented by the ERRC, when after a visit to Romani camps around the city Achille Serra, the Prefect of Rome, subsequently alleged that presumably the women from the camp were “at the metro stealing purses and the men were sleeping because perhaps they worked all night robbing apartments”.²⁹⁴

Similarly, a 1997 print media survey in Hungary found that 62 percent of all articles dealing with Roma-related issues report a conflict of some kind, while 90 percent of these conflicts are portrayed as conflicts between Roma and non-Roma.²⁹⁵ The authors remark that the number of articles implying “Roma criminality” is on the rise. In the early 2000s, EU enlargement was preceded by an intensive anti-Roma campaign in the United Kingdom, peaking in 2004. Amid a general mistrust of the potential adverse effects of migration from the Eastern EU countries, suspicion of Roma flowing to Great Britain to abuse the social benefit system was a prominent topic. Opinion polls all over Europe assist in demonstrating similar anti-Gypsyist sentiments, showing predictably repugnant images of the coexistence of Roma and majority populations. Even in countries where there is limited or no contact with the Roma such as Luxembourg,

Malta and Denmark, between 15 and 30 percent of respondents declared that they do not wish to have Roma as their neighbours.²⁹⁶

Increasing education, visibility and awareness of the harmful effects of skewed representations of Roma in the media are central to the development of a more healthy self-consciousness of Roma and a friendlier perception of Romanies by majority populations. Encouraging examples of pro-Roma media initiatives are the weekly online newsletter of the European Roma Information Office (www.erionet.org) which collects and processes media coverage on Roma as well as current events and issues pertaining to their lives. Supported by the Council of Europe, the Dosta! campaign aims to deconstruct already existing stereotypes of Roma (www.dosta.org).

Racism against Roma in the Present – Racially Motivated Violence

Allowing racist, populist discourse to flourish is tantamount to open support for violent articulations of anti-Gypsyism. Expressions of racial animosity in the media go hand in hand with hate crimes in the form of mob violence, arson attacks against life or property, or support of physical assault against Roma. Members of Roma communities all over Europe are particularly vulnerable to unequal treatment by the police, but are often subject to scapegoating in schools, hospitals or other public spaces, too. Instances of violence against this ethnic group have, however, transformed in nature throughout the last two decades. Remarkably, the ad hoc, impromptu mob violence against Roma of the 1990s has given place to carefully organized anti-Gypsy demonstrations, threats or other violent assaults, serving clearly identifiable political needs.²⁹⁷ It must be noted that first-hand experiences of racially motivated crimes or distress about the safety of one’s family are some of the main impetuses driving Romanies to migrate westwards.²⁹⁸ When deliberating

292 TV Noviny.sk, “KDH-áci sa priamo v parlamente zabávali rasistickým vtipom o Rómoch”. 28 March 2011, available at <http://tvnoviny.sk/sekcia/spravy/domace/kdh-aci-sa-priamo-v-parlamente-zabavali-rasistickym-vtipom-o-romoch.html>

293 See Henry Scicluna, 2007.

294 Ibid.

295 Minority and Human Rights Foundation, KEJA pamphlets 2, “Roma Representation in the Media”, 2007, pp. 7-8.

296 Cited in Valeriu Nicolae, “Towards a Definition of Anti-Gypsyism,” available at:

www.ergoentwork.org/media/userfiles/media/ergo/Towards%20a%20Definition%20of%20Anti-Gypsyism.pdf

297 Andrzej Mirga, “The Extreme Right and Roma and Sinti in Europe: A New Phase in the Use of Hate Speech and Violence?,” Roma Rights Journal, European Roma Rights Centre No. 1, 2009, p.6. According to the author, these political parties include, but are not limited to, the Bulgarian Ataka party and the Bulgarian National Union, in Romania the New Right party, in Slovakia the Slovak National Party, in Hungary the Jobbik party and its associated Hungarian Guard, in Italy the Northern League, and the Worker’s Party in the Czech Republic.

298 For the unlawful and degrading treatment of recent Romani migrants in France see ERRC, “Always Somewhere Else: Anti-Gypsyism in France” Country Report Series No. 15, November 2005.



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the relationship between migration and violence against Roma, a note is due concerning the plight of hundreds of thousands of Roma who became internally displaced people or fled to the West from the South-East European regions, as they were frequently caught between and assaulted by both Serbian, Croatian, Albanian and Bosnian military forces during the Balkan wars.²⁹⁹

In Central Europe the number of brutal, violent crimes against Roma rose sharply between 2008 and 2011.³⁰⁰ A sad inventory of these cases is the following: in Hungary 48 violent attacks against Roma, in the Czech Republic 19 attacks, and at least 10 attacks in Slovakia with a total number of 11 fatalities.³⁰¹ Within this time frame, in the Czech Republic alone the ERRC documented 16 serious casualties, the use of eight Molotov cocktails and one tear gas grenade, two attacks on Romani minors, six cases when Roma were beaten and one case when shots were fired at Roma.³⁰² An infamous case of merciless racial violence took place in 2009 in the Czech town of Vítkov, when Molotov cocktails were thrown into the house of a Romani family. The three people injured included the family's two-year-old daughter Natálka, who suffered serious burns and was in critical condition for many months to come. The case shocked the Czech public and the three per-

petrators received an exceptionally harsh prison sentence.³⁰³ Within the same period in Slovakia, 8 injuries were suffered by Roma as a consequence of racially motivated violence, two Roma were murdered, shots were fired in five cases and in at least one case Roma were attacked by a group.³⁰⁴ Another disturbing case involving the torture of a group of Romani children came to light in the spring of 2009, after the mobile phone recordings of police abuse were publicized. Recorded by the perpetrators themselves, the footages show policemen in the city of Košice ordering six Romani minors between 11 and 16 years of age to strip, kiss, and beat each other under the threat of further punishment, amid laughter and derogatory remarks.³⁰⁵ Yet in contemporary Europe the gravest documented attacks on Roma were committed in Hungary, which left dozens of Roma injured, claimed nine lives (including two children), saw 12 instances of Molotov cocktail and two cases of hand grenade use, and 12 cases of shots at Roma.³⁰⁶ Recent years have seen an unprecedented increase in extremist marches in Hungary, a leading example of which were those of the Hungarian Guard, which was banned in 2009. Wearing uniforms and with the support of local civilians, volunteer members of the Guard conducted regular marches in a number of Hungarian villages, thereby further escalating the tensions between Roma and non-Roma villagers.³⁰⁷ The serial murders of Roma started in November 2008 and continued until August 2009, until four suspects were arrested in September 2009.³⁰⁸ The scenario of the killings was similar in most cases: Roma were shot dead when escaping as a grenade or Molotov cocktail was thrown at their houses. Seven deaths resulted from these attacks, including the death of a 5-year-old Roma boy who, after their home was set on fire by an exploding Molotov cocktail, was shot together with his father as they were fleeing the building. Ineffective and insufficient police and governmental response to this exceptionally brutal series of killings came under heavy criticism by non-governmental organizations.

299 See United Nation Development Programme, "At Risk: Roma and the Displaced in Southeast Europe," Bratislava, 2006.

300 Based on Eurostat statistics of the 27 EU member states, Mirga notes the lack of evidence pointing to a correlation between the increase of hate crimes and the current economic crisis. See Mirga, 2009, p. 7.

301 European Roma Rights Centre, "Factsheet: Roma Rights Record," 8 April 2011, available at: <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3828>

302 European Roma Rights Centre, "Attacks against Roma in the Czech Republic: January 2008 – April 2011," 4 May 2011, p. 1.

303 For details of the affair see *Idnes.cz*, "yharstvi ve Vitkove", available at: <http://zpravy.idnes.cz/zharstvi-ve-vitkove-011-/krimi.aspx?o=0&klic=64086>

304 European Roma Rights Centre, "Attacks against Roma in Slovakia: January 2008 – December 2010," 8 February 2011, p. 1.

305 Sme, "Policia mucila romských chlapcov," available at: <http://www.sme.sk/c/4383566/policia-mucila-romskych-chlapcov.html>

306 European Roma Rights Centre, "Attacks against Roma in Hungary: January 2008 – July 2011," 11 July 2011, p. 1.

307 A similar paramilitary group patrolled the village Gyogyospata for 16 days in March 2011.

308 European Roma Rights Centre, "Imperfect Justice", 2002, p. 24. Although there is little doubt that these killings were racially motivated, there is no evidence of the perpetrators' relation to the Hungarian Guard. Currently, court hearings are in progress.

State response to violence against Romanies is often weak or contingent on international media attention.³⁰⁹ A large amount of race crimes, however, remain unreported by victims or unidentified by the police as racially motivated atrocities. Seldom collected and rarely publicly available in the form of statistical figures, a comprehensive monitoring on racially motivated violence against Roma is essential if the precise extent of this pressing problem is to be mapped. Accessible data is fragmentary, yet recently, cases of hate crime were reported by non-governmental organizations, for example, in Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden,³¹⁰ Slovenia,³¹¹ Turkey and Northern Ireland.³¹² Governments are reluctant not only to collect data on hate crimes, but also to implement programmes or activities in response to such incidents.³¹³ Suggestions to curb the incidence of violence against Roma include the further education of law enforcing officials to achieve an easier recognition of hate crimes, and support for a growing minority group membership in police forces.³¹⁴ Furthermore, it would be advisable for national courts to make a fuller use of the legal frameworks provided by the European Court of Human Rights concerning hate crimes and racist violence.³¹⁵ Amongst OSCE states, the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues within the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) serves as an active promoter of Roma rights and anti-discrimination measures.

Unequal before the Law

Of all high risk groups, Roma are emphasized as especially vulnerable to discrimination.³¹⁶ The impression of being discriminated against is a



frequent experience among Roma,³¹⁷ and translates into practice in a myriad ways. Unfortunately, this often includes legal measures that are identifiably discriminatory towards this ethnic group. Out of the ample international evidence of discrimination on racial/ethnic grounds, two case studies are introduced, which point to the im/possibilities of justice.

In Italy, accompanied by strengthening prejudice and xenophobia, explicitly discriminatory government policies³¹⁸ exacerbate the everyday lives of Roma. An estimated 140 000 Roma live in Italy, of whom 80 000 possess an Italian passport, the rest being recent migrants mostly from Romania.³¹⁹ The erroneous perception of Roma as nomads who prefer to live in camps, separated from the majority population lies at the core of a number of discriminatory policies.³²⁰ Preceded by an intensive media campaign with the active support of the Italian right wing, a set of repressive anti-Roma measures were taken, starting in 2007.³²¹ After a series of presumed or actual criminal activities of Romanian Roma, the Council of Minis-

309 Concerning state response to the recent upsurge of violence against Roma in the CEE region see "Imperfect Justice: A Report by the European Roma Rights Centre – Anti-Roma Violence and Impunity," March 2011.

310 See OSCE/ODIHR, "Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region – Incidents and Responses." Warsaw, 2009, pp.53-55, available at: www.osce.org/odhir/73636.

311 For Slovenia see European Roma Rights Centre, "Romani Community Relocated Following Death Threats in Slovenia," 18 May, 2007, available at: <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2787>.

312 European Roma Rights Centre, "Violence Against Roma," 8 April 2011, available at: <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3828>.

313 In 2009 the OSCE/ODIHR did not receive any official information from national governments on this issue. See OSCE/ODIHR, 2009, p. 55.

314 Ibid, p. 86. Also see ERRC, "Imperfect Justice", 2002, p. 31.

315 Andrzej Mirga, 2009, p. 9.

316 European Network Against Racism, "Racism in Europe: ENAR Shadow Report 2009-2010," Brussels, March 2011, p. 5.

317 See European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, "EU-MIDIS European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey 2009: Main Results Report," Vienna, 2009.

318 For a detailed account and analysis of these policies and their aftermath see the joint report of the European Roma Rights Centre, The Roma Center for Social Intervention and Studies, Roma Civic Alliance, The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, and The Open Society Institute, *Security a la Italia: Fingerprinting, Extreme Violence and Harassment of Roma in Italy*. Budapest: Fo-Szer Bt, 2008.

319 Henry Scicluna, "The Life and Death of Roma and Sinti in Italy: A Modern Tragedy," *Roma Rights Journal*, European Roma Rights Centre No. 2, 2008, p. 9.

320 Ibid, p. 10.

321 Henry Scicluna aptly describes this process as "the abandonment of rule of law, allegedly in defence of law and order". Ibid, p. 15.

ters endorsed an emergency decree, allowing for the expulsion of citizens of other European Union countries on the basis of fundamental rights to public safety.³²² This decree violated a number of international treaties and met with unanimous international disapproval.³²³ While the European Commission's reaction can be described as equivocal at best, the European Parliament set a radically different example by reasserting the importance of free movement within the EU,³²⁴ and the Council of Europe pledged for the rights of Roma.³²⁵ Yet this was of little effect when after the 2008 elections, Prime Minister Berlusconi publicly announced that a zero tolerance would be implemented toward Roma and criminals.³²⁶ The situation deteriorated when another decree was passed, commanding the monitoring of Romani camps as well as the identification and census of those living in camps, allowing for the expulsion of irregulars.³²⁷ In spite of international disapproval, public sentiments radicalized culminating in support for ethnic profiling by the police and the fingerprinting of all Roma, including minors.³²⁸ In spite of pressure by human rights organizations, the situation of Roma in Italy remains desperate.

Even in cases when discrimination is confirmed by a high level court decision, the implementation of these victories outside the court room is immensely difficult. Even victories at the European Court of Human Rights level can often remain no more than symbolic as in practice, many of the measures imposed by the judgment are too general and remain largely disregarded.³²⁹ For Czech Romani pupils this holds true in spite of the fact

that a 2010 Council of Europe High Level Meeting on Roma reminded all Member States to take the Court's decisions fully into account.³³⁰ A pivotal example of how injustice remains in spite of groundbreaking human rights victories on the judicial level is the case of *D.H. And Others vs. the Czech Republic*. In 1998 the ERRC started the litigation of the case of inferior education for Romani pupils in the country, where abundant evidence suggests that Romani children are channelled to special education facilities for the mentally disabled in disproportionate numbers.³³¹ Obviously, gaining inferior education in comparison to their peers hinders the chances of employment and opportunities for personal growth for these children. When the Constitutional Court failed to acknowledge discrimination on racial grounds, 18 Romani applicants from the Czech city of Ostrava filed a submission with the European Court of Human Rights claiming that they were subjected to psychological and emotional damage, as well as educational disadvantage as a result of their placement in these substandard schools. The decision of the Court came in 2007, holding the Czech Republic accountable for racial discrimination with regard to access to public education, being the very first decision of its kind.³³² A further significance of this victory was that the Court reminded that discriminatory/segregationist tendencies in the education of Romani children were prevalent in many other European states.³³³ While the case was still pending on court, as early as 2005 the Czech government took measures to transform its educational system by abolishing the institution of special schools, and, instead,

322 Directive 2004/38/EC concerns the right of free movement and residence of EU citizens within member states. See Ibid, p. 15.

323 It was strongly condemned by the European Council, The ERRC, the European Information Office, the Open Society Institute and accused by the latter three organizations of violating the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the spirit of Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nieuw Tunes Treaties and Directive 2004/38/EC. Cited in Ibid, p. 16.

324 Franco Frattini, the Commissioner for Justice and Civil Liberties was criticized for making demeaning remarks on the account of Roma. See Ibid, pp. 16-17.

325 Ibid, p. 18.

326 Ibid, p. 19. This may have fed anti-Roma sentiments and resulted in a series of arson attacks and pogroms on Roma camps throughout the country.

327 Ibid, p. 21.

328 Ibid, p. 23. As a result of international disapproval, Italy later announced that all its citizens were to be fingerprinted and their fingerprint put on their ID, starting in 2010. Also see Piero Colacicchi, "Ethnic Profiling and Discrimination against Roma in Italy: New Developments in a Deep-Rooted Tradition," *Roma Rights Journal*, European Roma Rights Centre No. 2, 2008, pp. 35-44.

329 Robert Kushen, "Implementing Judgements: Making Court Victories Stick," *Roma Rights Journal*, European Roma Rights Centre No.1, 2010, p. 5.

330 See paragraph 15 of the "Strasbourg Declaration on Roma," 20 October 2010. Cited in Amnesty International Public Statement, "Romani children continue to be trapped in separate and unequal education, despite judgments by the European Court of Human Rights," 15 November 2010, available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR01/029/2010/en/dd0701df-fc2f-4fe0-8dd4-2c906e8d6d17/eur010292010en.pdf>

331 In many of the special schools visited by the European Roma Rights Centre the ratio of Romani students was more than 80 percent. European Roma Rights Centre, *Persistent Segregation of Roma in the Czech Education System*, 2008, p. 25.

332 European Court of Human Rights, *D.H. And Others vs the Czech Republic*, paragraph 209. Cited in Lydia Gall and Robert Kushen, "What Happened to the Promise of *D.H.?*," *Roma Rights Journal*, European Roma Rights Centre No.1, 2010, p. 39.

Each applicant received a compensation of 4,000EUR.

333 Ibid, p.40.

renaming them as practical school that are now recategorized into mainstream primary education.³³⁴ Although this permitted access to secondary education for those who completed this type of school, the actual effect of this amendment was nothing but symbolic – only the name of the schools were changed. The proportion of Romani pupils, the low level of education, and decreased career chances after the completion of practical schools remained identical to the situation before the court case.³³⁵ This major breakthrough in the field of human rights law thus holds little promise of a fairer future for Romani children. The ERRC, the Roma Education Fund and the Open Society Institute continue to fight for the implementation of the Court's decision.

Edit Szénássy is a PhD candidate of socio-cultural anthropology at Charles University Prague, Czech Republic. Her research interests include the anthropology of Roma, gender, and medical anthropology. She conducted a number of qualitative researches among Roma, including a long-term fieldwork research on the intersection of population politics and the reproductive decision-making of Romani women in a poor Slovakian Romani settlement.

Green initiatives

6.1 / Building defences against the “brown sludge” – Progressive responses to anti-Roma extremism in Hungary Kristóf Szombati

My country, Hungary, made international headlines in 2010 when the reservoir of the Ajkai Timföldgyár alumina plant collapsed, freeing about a million cubic meters of liquid waste from red mud lakes and flooding the village of Kolontár and the town of Devecser. The tragedy condensed into one powerful symbol the deepening gloom of a society gripped by recession, social polarization and the near-ubiquitous feeling that its citizens are victims of forces beyond their grasp. Tellingly,

one day before the incident Hungarians had for the first time elected representatives of a xenophobic hard-right party (Jobbik) into the councils of all 19 counties. The far right, which had vowed to throw cold water on the nation's internal and external enemies and restore Hungarians' sense of pride, became the second largest political force in the country's North-eastern periphery. While the red wave caused several injuries and deaths and polluted a large area, the less visible “brown sludge” presents a grave danger to the whole society's health.

In the village of Gyöngyöspata – where Jobbik organised a demonstration “in defence of Magyars” on 6 March 2011 and activists of paramilitary organizations patrolled the streets to prevent “Gypsy criminals” from stealing and harassing “innocent people” – the intervention of far-right forces led to the breakdown of interethnic relations and paved the way for the success of Jobbik's candidate who was elected to the post of mayor at the elections of 17 July 2011. The most dangerous aspect of this dramatic turn is that citizens of Gyöngyöspata (and other places “visited” by extremist groups) tend to perceive members of Jobbik and the Civil Guard Association for a Better Future³³⁶ as well-intentioned people fighting for respectable goals – such as the restoration of order and morality – with the help of unorthodox, at times questionable, means. This benign (mis)reading of far-right politics – the causes of which I do not have space to examine here³³⁷ – prompts members of the ethnic majority and local politicians to remain passive in cases when the rights of minority groups are threatened. This, in turn, may lead to the outright oppression or dispossession of these groups if and when the authorities responsible for the protection of personal, political and social rights fail to act swiftly and decisively. The Gyöngyöspata case³³⁸ has demonstrated the plausibility of such a negative chain reaction.

What can Greens do?

What can territorially unrooted progressive political forces endowed with meagre human and financial resources do to mitigate the damages caused by the “brown sludge” and prevent its continued

334 Ibid, p. 40. For a detailed analysis of the Czech educational system, the case of D.H and Other vs. the Czech Republic and the aftermath of the Court decision see Amnesty International, *Nedokonceny ukol: Romsti zaci v Ceske Republice stale celi prekazkam ve vzdelani*. Amnesty International Publications, 2010.

335 An identical elementary school system with identical “changes” to the system of special schools is in effect in Slovakia.

336 The civil guard was formed in April 2010 by members of the Hungarian Guard which was dissolved by Budapest's Court of Appeal on 2 July 2009. Attila László, head of the association, had previously been the Hungarian Guard's captain in Békés County.

337 But see my analysis written for the Heinrich Böll Foundation (before the local election): www.boell.cz/web/52-989.html

338 For an overview of the case see the Athena Institute's summary: www.athenainstitute.eu/en/infocus/read/8



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Far right “Maghiar Guard” marches in a Roma village, Hungary, April 2011

spread? What can their members do in the absence of established allies on the ground and in the presence of an efficient propaganda machine which has more or less successfully discredited them (as unpatriotic liberals oblivious to the “needs of the people”)? Before I attempt to answer, I would like to call my readers’ attention to the fact that this question refers to the context of Central and Eastern Europe where the dual process of de-democratization and the dismantling of the welfare state is far more advanced than in the EU’s core – leaving the forces in question little leverage over events and sparse space for manoeuvring.

Based on my personal experience in Hungary, I will suggest two strategies. I am not arguing that these are the only goals that can or should be pursued, but I do believe that they are critical elements of the system of defences which we should strive to erect to stop the spread of fascism on the European periphery. I find it important to note that although the Greens have been experimenting with both, it is too early to judge just how efficient they are in practice.

The first strategy involves the launching of place-based initiatives which prove the far-right “experientially” wrong and, thereby, unworthy of support. The Igrici project (see my other piece in this volume) is a case in point: The 40-70 Roma employed by the agricultural cooperative demonstrate every single day that those who called Gypsies lazy and unreliable were wrong. Igrici is, of course, but one example of localities where the reconfiguration of social relationships has left the far-right with little fodder to feed on. These local initiatives are, how-

ever, largely invisible to the wider public. This calls for more efficient media work and projects focused on the dissemination of knowledge on such groundbreaking initiatives. In this regard I believe that it would be especially important for us, progressives, to engage in community-building and reconciliation initiatives in the villages and towns where the far-right has staged marches or demonstrations³³⁹ (and which remain in the media spotlight).

A need for broad alliances

Creating a critical mass of local laboratories is important for strengthening the credentials of progressive politics. However, activists engaged in this kind of effort must also strive to work together on the edifice of a common political project which has the potential to secure the backing of wide constituencies. This is the second strategy I am advocating, an effort of collaborative thinking and alliance-building – something alternative movements in Central and Eastern Europe have been rather bad at (mainly because they have been focused on strengthening their own political identity). In Hungary for example, the two most potent social movements – Greens and Roma rights groups – have, despite overlapping concerns, largely neglected one another. LMP, Hungary’s Green party, has nevertheless done a lot (but still far from enough) to broaden the base of progressive forces by featuring the “Roma question” among the key issues of its political agenda. The Greens were the only political force to publicly confront both Jobbik and the governing parties on issues such as the activity of hate groups, unjust social cuts, and counterproductive employment policies. Central and Eastern European progressives must continue in this stride by collaborating more closely with groups and constituencies which have tended to fall outside their field of vision. Whether or not they will be able to forge viable and durable political alliances remains the key political question of these troublesome times.

Kristóf Szombati of the EcoPolis Foundation is co-founder of the Hungarian Green party LMP (“Lehet Más a Politika”) and former mentor of Igrici’s First Roma Cooperative.

For further information, please contact:

Kristóf Szombati, at
szombati.kristof@okopoliszalapitvany.hu

³³⁹ Here, I find worthwhile to note that a number of organizations (including my own) are currently involved in such a long-term project in Gyöngyöspata.

Czech Roma in a Nutshell

- Population size: minimum 150,000, maximum 250,000.
- Percentage of population: 1,96 %.
- Groups: Czech Roma, Slovak Roma, Vlach Roma.
- Languages: Czech.
- Czech Roma are not nomadic.
- 27% of Romani children attend schools for children with special needs; 65% of these Romani pupils finish school with the lowest standard of qualification.
- It is estimated that 44% of working age Roma participate in the labour market (70% of Czech population); however, this is the largest number in regional comparison.
- Cases of coercive sterilization of Roma women have been reported as recently as 2007.
- Since 2008, at least 19 violent attacks against Roma have been documented.
- In parts of the country, up to 70% of victims of human trafficking are Roma.
- In 2006 60,000–80,000 Roma were estimated to live in “localities experiencing or at risk of social exclusion”, currently the estimate is 100,000.

Sources:

- *Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Forum data*, www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/archive/documentation/strategies/statistiques_en.asp (26.5.2011)
- *ERRC: Attacks against Roma in the Czech Republic: January 2008–April 2011* errc.org/cms/upload/file/attacks-list-in-czech-republic.pdf (27.5.2011)
- *ERRC and People in Need: Breaking the silence. Trafficking in Roma communities. March 2011.* errc.org/cms/upload/file/breaking-the-silence-19-march-2011.pdf (27.5.2011)
- *ERRC: Factsheet: Roma Rights Record 2011.* errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3828 (27.5.2011)
- *Ministry of Human Rights (MHR) (2009) Concept of Romani Integration for the period 2010–2013.* www.vlada.cz/cz/ppov/zalezitosti-romske-komuniti/dokumenty/koncepcie-romske-integrace-na-obdobi-20102013-71187/ (26.5.2011)
- *Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2006) Národní akční plán k transformaci a sjednocení systému péče o ohrožené děti na období 2009 až 2011* www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/7440/NAP.pdf (26.5.2011)

- *World Bank (2008) Czech Republic: Improving employment chances of Roma. Report No. 46120 CZ Human Development Sector Unit – Europe and Central Asia* siteresources.worldbank.org/ECAEXT/Resources/258598-1224622402506/CZ_Roma_Employment_Full_Report.pdf (26.5.2011)

6.2 / Greens blocking anti-Roma marches

František Nejedlý, Green Party, Czech Republic

According to a number of international organizations, including the Council of Europe and Transparency International, despite some positive advances in the fight against racism, not enough has been done enough in protecting the Roma minority from discrimination in the Czech Republic.

Between 2007 and 2009, the Czech Green Party held the posts of Minister of Education and Minister of Human Rights and National Minorities, and thus played a crucial role in the process of Roma integration, in the fight against discrimination and in the fight against the Neo-Nazi movement. However, after only one year of a new centre-right government with new priorities, a massive deconstruction of anti-discrimination policies and an increase in the activities of Neo-Nazi and related groups has been visible. The reactions of the judicial system and the police to racially motivated violence have been incoherent and an increasing number of politicians are trying to use anti-Roma feelings for their own political profit.

Intimidation marches and peaceful blockades

During the first half of 2011, already four major Neo-Nazi demonstrations and protest marches have taken place. They were organised by the new extreme-right political body, the *Worker's Party of Social Justice* and the Neo-Nazi movement *National Resistance* (Narodní odpor). Usually connected to racially motivated acts of violence, the marches have been held in areas predominantly populated by Roma, with the aim of frightening and intimidating Roma inhabitants. Although in many cases the breach of law from the side of Neo-Nazis has been obvious, the approach of both the police and the public authorities



Green MEPs Ulrike Lunacek and Ska Keller demonstrating against far right marches in a Roma village, Hungary, April 2011

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has been quite benevolent towards them, as none of these activities have been suspended.

Czech Greens therefore decided to stand up against the Neo-Nazis by organizing anti-demonstrations and peaceful blockades. The first attempt was during a Neo-Nazi march in the city of Nový Bydžov, which is heavily populated by Roma. Greens, Roma and other civil society activists did not succeed in forming a peaceful blockade, as they were scattered by the police.

A victory for civil society in Brno

Following Nový Bydžov, Neo-Nazis planned marches in Krupka in April and Brno in May. In Brno, the second largest city of the Czech Republic, the situation brought about exemplary civil initiatives and good cooperation between local Roma representatives and the Greens. In order to create a civic alliance as broad as possible, the Greens helped to establish a non party-affiliated initiative, *Brno Blocks*, which became a non-partisan civic platform for the anti-Nazi protests. The obvious reason for establishing this was that political affiliation in these activities may have been an obstacle for many to participate.

The Greens attempted to prevent the march by writing an open letter to the Minister of Interior, providing evidence of links between the organizers of the march and National Resistance, a banned Neo-Nazi movement. Although the answer to the letter was negative, it helped create a stronger public movement. The movement was galvanised after a religious blockade against a Neo-Nazi march was smashed by riot police in the city of Krupka in April.

On the day of the Neo-Nazi march in Brno, some 1400 citizens – among them many Roma, Greens and other activists – succeeded in forming an effective blockade. The Neo-Nazis were forced to change their route, which would have crossed through an area strongly populated by Roma. This event has been seen widely both as a moral and factual victory of the civil society.

A new generation is awakening

If there is anything positive about recent developments, it is the rise of a more confident civil society against hate crimes and the Neo-Nazi movement in the Czech Republic. It has also become clear, that only the close cooperation of various civil society actors can create a strong presence in the public space. Certainly, Neo-Nazi protest marches will continue to take place in the future, but we know that the civil society, which the Greens are a part of, is making a difference. One would dare to say that a new generation of Czech society is awakening.

František Nejedlý is a political analyst and a member of Green Party of the Czech Republic. He serves as a Secretary to the General Manager of the party.

For more information, please contact:

- František Nejedlý, frantisek.nejedly@zeleni.cz
- Brno blockade non-partisan initiative brnoblokuje.cz

Swedish Roma in a Nutshell

- Population: 35,000-50,000.
- Percentage of population: 0,46%.
- Groups include Swedish Travellers (resande) (20,000), Finnish Kaalee Roma (3,200), Swedish Kalderash Roma (2,500), non-nordic Roma arriving since the 1960s (15,000), including Iovari-speaking Polish Roma, Kalderash, Romungro and Curari Roma, also Erli and Gurbeti Roma from Kosovo and Yugoslavia since the 1990s (5,000).
- Twenty variants of Romani are spoken in Sweden.
- Roma have the status of national minority.
- The Swedish Roma have been sedentary since the 1960s.
- 80 percent of adult Roma are estimated to be unemployed.
- A majority of Roma children do not complete primary school, very few continue to secondary school and even fewer reach university level.

■ Roma life expectancy is judged to be clearly below average. Living standards are lower than average.

■ Children do not have full access to education in their mother tongue as stipulated in law.

■ 450-500 Swedish Roma were victims of a state policy of forced sterilizations between 1934-1975.

■ In 2010 Sweden expelled 50 Roma to Romania.

Sources:

- Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Forum data, www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/archive/documentation/strategies/statistiques_en.asp (26.5.2011)
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- European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds: Facts by Country: Sweden www.euromanet.eu/facts/se/index.html (5.9.2011)
- The Swedish Government's Human Rights Website: the Roma www.humanrights.gov.se/extra/pod/?module_instance=2&action=pod_show&id=56 (5.9.2011)

6.3 / A Green fight on discrimination

Alf Karlsson

Since the 1950s, Swedish policy towards Roma and Travellers has focused on housing, education and social inclusion, i.e. establishment on the labour market. A recent public report³⁴⁰ shows that discrimination against Roma and Travellers continues to be common in these areas, especially regarding the right to residence. In later years, attention has also been paid to linguistic rights³⁴¹ as well as cultural and other rights the Roma people are entitled to as a group. The Swedish debate is focused on the fact that very few Roma have completed upper secondary school, and that the level of unemployment is significantly higher

than among non-Roma persons. There has also been concern that awareness of the Roma situation is very low.

Roma in textbooks

Since 2002, the Swedish Greens have focused on the need to raise awareness among the majority population on the history and diverse languages of the Roma by including these themes in history text books and education. Despite raising this issue a number of times as part of our cooperation with the former socialist government, we were not able to gain specific funding; but a former employee of the party has since worked on a project which produced textbooks. In parliament, Greens have stressed the need for campaigns to enlighten the Swedish public on the Roma situation and the need to increase awareness among Swedish officials on the situation of Roma/Travellers in their respective areas of responsibility. Several propositions have been made yearly, but they have unfortunately failed to gain the support of a majority.

Greens have also aimed at increasing the level of education among Roma persons, emphasizing the need to find out why so few Roma men and women get an education and consequently find employment. The Greens have also demanded the Swedish state to recognise the atrocities it



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³⁴⁰ The Rights of Roma People in Sweden – a Strategy for the Roma people in Sweden (SOU 2010:55), report by The Swedish delegation for Roma Issues (2010), The Rights of Roma People, Discrimination, means of satisfaction and how the law can contribute to an improvement of the conditions of Roma in Sweden, report by the Ombudsman against discrimination (2011).

³⁴¹ Romani Chib was declared an official national minority language in 2000.

has committed against Roma individuals, as until the 1960s, Roma men and women in Sweden were forcibly sterilized. The state also failed to provide education and support Roma victims of crimes, while landlords evicted Roma illegally. In January 2011 the government decided to commission a green book focusing on these atrocities.

Fighting illegal discrimination

With the adoption of the present regulation on anti-discrimination in 2003, following the implementation of EU-directive 2000/43/ a legal tool was created to fight discrimination on ethnical grounds. The parliament decided that public as well as private sector employers had to take direct action to minimize and reduce discrimination based upon ethnicity. Authorities under the government had to take direct action to increase the employment of persons of ethnic minority background. Also action against all discrimination in education became mandatory in 2006. This has unfortunately been changed following the change of government in 2006.

In cooperation with the socialist government, Greens introduced several means of combating illegal discrimination³⁴² including the creation, since 2002 of 19 local non-profit agencies around the country to offer help to individuals who feel discriminated against or who want to know more about their rights, another Green priority area. An evaluation in 2009 stated that the agencies play an important role in increasing awareness about illegal discrimination and in fighting illegal discrimination.³⁴³ However, state funding has dropped during the last years, due to what we believe is the lack of interest of the present government in this area.

We have also stressed the need to simplify trials concerning illegal discrimination: the burden of proof in the law should be adjusted and rules on costs of litigation should be changed. Furthermore, it is important to raise awareness among Roma men and women about their right to education, housing and shopping without discrimination. We also need to make legislation on the freedom of speech coherent with a real protection of minorities.

Governmental inaction

A Delegation for Roma Issues was established in 2006 and tasked with researching the situation of Roma and Travellers in Sweden and suggesting means to improve it. Its final report of July 2010,³⁴⁴ assessed that the goals of empowering Roma and Travellers, repairing their trust towards Swedish society and closing the welfare gap between them and other groups could be reached within 20 years. Suggestions issued by the Delegation have been met with inaction by the current government, who also rejected a suggestion by Green MPs in December 2010, to include the situation of Roma and Travellers in Sweden as a topic of cooperation between the party and the government.

Despite setbacks, improving the situation of Roma and Travellers in Sweden remains an extremely important issue for Swedish Greens. We continue to fight against illegal discrimination of Roma and Travellers as part of our fight against all illegal discrimination.

Alf Karlsson, LL.M., is political advisor to the Swedish Green Party.

³⁴² Illegal discrimination occurs, when a person/company/authority is prohibited to make decisions or take actions due to ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation religion, age or disability. Discrimination can be legal in certain cases, when a person is treated more favourably due minority ethnic background, gender, etc. For example, employers are allowed to discriminate between job-seekers as regards gender in certain cases.

³⁴³ Utvärdering av lokalt antidiskrimineringsverksamhet, Rapport till Integrations- och jämställdhetsdepartementet, Ramböll, 2009.

³⁴⁴ See footnote 341.

7. MIGRATION

Roma and mobility in the European Union

Peter Vermeersch

As numerous reports now point out, large groups of Roma in today's Europe are mired in a situation of exclusion, poverty and segregation, and their chances for socio-economic mobility continue to be depressingly low. Some of them, however, mainly Roma from Central and Eastern Europe, have tried to escape the vicious circle by resorting to the newly available opportunities for residential mobility in the EU and have moved to what they hope are more welcoming places. Although traditionally most Roma in the region live in sedentary and highly immobile communities, those who have become citizens of the EU have recently gained new entitlements to freedom of movement and residence across the EU, and some of them have indeed made use of them. This has resulted in new challenges, for the societies where the newcomers are arriving as well as for their countries of origin, but also for the Roma themselves.

Important for Roma migrants, as for all citizens moving across internal EU borders, is article 6 of the EU's Free Movement Directive (Council Directive 2004/38/EC, which entered into force in April 2006). Through this piece of legislation any EU citizen with valid travel documents has the right of residence in another member state for up to three months. If they want to stay longer they need, according to article 7 of the same directive, "sufficient resources for themselves and their family members not to become a burden on the social assistance system of the host Member State during their period of residence and have comprehensive sickness insurance cover in the host Member State."

Even though the number of Roma who actually make use of this possibility is lower than is generally assumed, it is not surprising that some Roma have chosen this option: mobility within the EU seems a potential way of resolving the problems they face at home. They anticipate easier

access to the labour market and, in general, hope to meet a less hostile environment. Yet, in practice, many have arrived in circumstances that are only marginally better, and it has proven difficult for them to gather the sufficient resources or the health insurance needed to cover a longer stay. To be sure, like other migrating citizens from the new EU Member States, some of the Roma who have moved, or who have chosen to go back and forth across EU territory, have indeed increased their chances for integrating into the labour market, albeit often through irregular and temporary positions. But in many cases they encounter new situations of abuse; they may fall prey to trafficking agents or get stuck in schemes set up by malicious private landlords on a precarious housing market and, for that reason, lose most of the money they could earn along the way. On top of that they are often perceived as "a burden on the social assistance system", even if they actively try to avoid being one. Although there are great examples of citizens' support for these newcomers,³⁴⁵ the Roma have in a lot of cases not encountered much popular leniency. They may also find themselves faced with local authorities and local institutions (schools, social service providers, employment offices) that are ill-equipped, if not unwilling, to foster their social inclusion. Moreover, national politicians and mainstream media in the receiving member states have mostly regarded the east-west mobility of Roma within the EU as a threat to their own fragile labour markets and social security systems, not as what it arguably could also be, (if appropriate policy attention would be given to the matter): an opportunity to resolve some of the structural problems in those markets. Even if the Roma in question are young, inventive, active and willing to seek a job, they are seldom seen as a potential resource.

In some cases, notably in Italy and in France, the government responded by introducing targeted expulsion and migration control strategies. In the summer and fall of 2010, in particular, it was the French case that reached international headlines. Responding to riots after a police shooting in July 2010, President Nicolas Sarkozy called an emergency ministerial meeting at which it was

³⁴⁵ See, e.g., the "school mediators" introduced by Foyer, a Brussels-based non-profit organization that seeks to foster social cohesion and the social participation of ethnic minorities in the city, see www.foyer.be

decided to shut down a large number of irregular Roma dwellings and single out Bulgarian and Romanian Roma for an expulsion campaign that would bring them back to their countries of origin, even if only on a temporary basis. The 2010 crackdown was highly conspicuous because of its emphasis on security, its focus on foreigners (which from the perspective of the Roma in question must have seemed odd: the initial incidents did not involve Bulgarian or Romanian Roma but Gens du Voyage, who are French citizens and cannot be expelled)³⁴⁶ and its overtones of ethnic discrimination. But the fact is that it was not a policy that came out of the blue. France had been sending Romanian and Bulgarian citizens back home even before 2010. In 2009, the French government already deported about 9,000 Roma to Romania and Bulgaria, and other Western European countries (Italy, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and the United Kingdom) have for a number of years also pursued targeted return campaigns.³⁴⁷ Mobility may not have yet become the Roma's preferred escape route from marginality, but expulsion has clearly become the preferred policy response to those Roma who do resort to it.

How should one assess Roma mobility across EU territory, and how should one interpret the policy responses aimed at controlling that mobility? What is the significance of recent developments? I take the events as a starting point for a brief reflection on four important aspects of Roma mobility that are too often ignored in current debates about the issue. These aspects are **(1)** the heterogeneity of the phenomenon of Roma mobility; **(2)** the variety of policy responses that this mobility requires (and, by extension, the policies that have been pursued but have proven to be useless or detrimental); **(3)** the crucial role of authorities on the local level in the field of social inclusion, even in the countries of destination; and **(4)** the opportunities but also limits (and even risks) of EU action in this field.

Let me discuss these four aspects in turn.

1. Roma mobility is not a homogenous phenomenon

It is important to distinguish between various forms of Roma mobility. All too often the term Roma mobility is used to lump together a variety of phenomena which in fact have quite different characteristics, involve different people from different backgrounds, and are driven by different political and social factors. Debates about Roma mobility among the general public, in the media, but also among policymakers and activists, would benefit from some sort of increased effort at conceptual clarification. One way to increase the level of sophistication would be to make clear which legal status groups the discussion is exactly meant to address.

For example, there should be a clear distinction made between itinerant groups such as the Gens du Voyage – who are national citizens of the countries in which they travel and usually migrate across a limited number of national borders as part of their usual travel routes – and those national Roma citizens who do not live in caravans and do not have (or do not seek) an itinerant lifestyle. In turn, these two groups are not to be confused with another, third, category: those Roma who are citizens of an EU member state (mostly in Central and Eastern Europe) and make use of the opportunities for free movement within the EU to go to another EU Member State with a plan to live there for a longer stretch of time. A fourth category comprises those individuals who come from outside the EU: they are third-country nationals; they may be asylum-seekers or recognised refugees.

All these categories relate in complex ways to the term “Roma”. Although most of them are seen as Roma by others, the people in question do not always use that term to refer to themselves. This is hardly surprising. The term Roma was introduced as a programmatic overarching label, meant to eclipse a series of terms that were burdened with negative or overly romantic connotations (Gypsies or Tsiganes). But for that very reason it was not immediately recognised by all those it was meant to refer to. The usage of the

³⁴⁶ The term Gens du Voyages is an umbrella term for groups of French citizens who have a (semi-)itinerant lifestyle. It covers a variety of group identifications (such as Manouches, Gitans, and Sintil). French authorities also refer to these groups as “minorités ethniques non-sédentarisées”.

³⁴⁷ Huub van Baar, “Expulsion Fever in Europe. The Case of the Roma”, *Nationalities Blog*, nationalities.wordpress.com/2010/09/26/huub-van-baar-expulsion-fever-in-europe-the-case-of-the-roma/

term Roma is closely connected with the process of interest representation;³⁴⁸ the term needs to be seen in the context of a political project of representing, defending and speaking in the name of all those groups with myriad self-designations that were previously widely associated with other but mostly pejorative overarching labels.³⁴⁹

For the remainder of this article I will focus in particular on the third category of “Roma”: those who have moved within the EU in the context of the Free Movement Directive. This mobility is, in turn, a highly complex phenomenon. It encompasses various dimensions in need of critical reflection. One dimension is the size of the movement. It is currently difficult to make an informed estimate of the total number of people involved in this form of mobility. There are no official data on the number of EU citizens exercising their right to free movement disaggregated by ethnic origin, and even the data by nationality (which can be collected from municipal registration data or work insurance registration figures) do not provide a full picture of the extent of Roma labour mobility from east to west, since a lot of that mobility is short-term and circulatory, or takes place in unregistered form. Precisely because the numbers are unspecified, a lot of myths about Roma mobility can thrive, and the phenomenon is likely to be exaggerated. Arguably this is related to the high visibility, the internal cohesion and the severe poverty of the Roma communities in question.

The example of the Belgian city of Ghent is instructive. Official figures show an increase of about 3,500 labour-seeking citizens from Bulgaria and Romania over the last three years, of whom most are assumed to be Roma. This is a relatively small number compared to the presence of other communities of migrants in this city. Their presence, however, was highly noticed as these Roma live concentrated in particular neighbourhoods in rather detrimental circumstances and seem to find almost no access to the regular job market and are thus often met in the streets during regu-



Camp of Roma migrants, Italy

lar working hours. On the level of the municipality extra policy initiatives have been taken to address these groups (partly on the basis of assistance through “mediators” and partly through attempts to control and stem further immigration). This extra policy attention was accompanied by rather extensive media attention and public debate, but it did not always lead to sober analysis: news headlines as well as politicians commenting on this case repeatedly spoke of a “rush”, an “influx”, or even “a plague”.

Similar developments can be observed in other European countries. In March 2011 the Netherlands counted about 125,000 working (but not all registered) labour immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe of which the bulk (108,000) were Polish.³⁵⁰ While the number of Roma from Bulgaria and Romania are only a tiny portion of that number, they are consistently talked about as if they are a vast group that will “overrun” the West. The metaphors are highly problematic: rather than offering a more or less realistic idea of the size of current Roma mobility, which may then be the basis of a clear-headed discussion and based on acceptable policies, they construct an illusory image which, in turn, can easily be exploited for political purposes.

348 Peter Vermeersch (2007), *The Romani Movement: Minority Politics and Ethnic Mobilization in Contemporary Central Europe*. Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books.

349 Nicolae Gheorghe and Thomas Acton, both academics who have been strongly involved in the international activism for the Roma, were hinting exactly at this aspect when they noted the following: “Not all those politically defined as Roma call themselves by this name; and some of those who do not, such as the German Sinte [sic], outraged by what they perceive as claims of superior authenticity by Vlach Roma, even repudiate the appellation Roma. The unity of ethnic struggles is always illusory; but to the participants the task of creating, strengthening and maintaining that unity often seems the prime task.” (Gheorghe, Nicolae and Thomas Acton. (2001), “Citizens of the World and Nowhere: Minority, Ethnic and Human Rights for Roma during the Last Hurrah of the Nation State.” In: *Between Past and Future: The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. Will Guy. Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, p. 58.)

350 Official data are available on www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/arbeid-sociale-zekerheid/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2011/2011-3423-wm.htm



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When considering the perspective of the moving Roma themselves, another dimension comes into view. According to recent data gathered by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) on the basis of a survey among Roma who move across EU borders to Finland, France, Italy, Spain and the UK, many of those Roma face difficulties at border crossing and experience barriers when they seek registration, try to access national health systems, public housing, and other forms of social assistance.³⁵¹ Such new barriers may not only obstruct an already difficult process of job-seeking, it is not likely to persuade the Roma in question to gain greater trust in their host societies. The situation of marginalization as they know from their home societies is thus likely to be reproduced in the host countries, which is a lose-lose situation – for the Roma *and* for the host societies.

2. Policy responses need to be diversified

To date responses to Roma mobility have focused heavily on security and control.³⁵² Such policies are usually driven by a limited analysis of Roma mobility and may not have much impact on the larger question that lurks underneath the phenomenon of Roma mobility; these larger issues are linked to their social exclusion in the host as well as in the home countries.

The argument in defence of a policy of expulsion and control is usually that it is meant to address,

and indeed successfully addresses, some of the issues that undeniably have come with increased Roma mobility: an upsurge in the number of illegal dwellings, a rise in the number of criminal offenses, and an increasing number of complaints from neighbourhoods where Roma are settling. Such has, for example, been the reasoning used to legitimize the French expulsion campaign. The purpose of the campaign, so Sarkozy claimed, was to increase security by reducing crime rates, discourage illegal migration and even push ‘sending’ countries such as Romania and Bulgaria to step up their efforts to integrate their own Roma populations. But even on all these points expulsion policies seem to miss the mark.

Consider security. Selecting the Roma for a highly publicised expulsion campaign is not a particularly effective way of preventing crime. Rather, it criminalises the Roma: they are collectively being held responsible for one-off events not related to their collective position as immigrants. An expulsion campaign that is based on an assumed link between criminal offenses and Roma mobility constructs associations between otherwise disparate groups and events, and makes every Roma guilty by association. That is not likely to increase feelings of security; it rather increases insecurity.

Can such a campaign, then, perhaps discourage illegal immigration? Most likely not. The Eastern European Roma will come back to Western Europe to seek jobs – just as other citizens from the new Member States have travelled back and forth across the EU for the same reason. The current free movement opportunities within the EU are meant to offer citizens possibilities for socio-economic mobility beyond the borders of the nation-state, and Roma clearly need exactly that. It is not unreasonable to expect illegal Roma mobility to decrease when access to the labour market at home as well as in the country of destination will increase. Expulsion has the opposite effect. For those Roma who had modestly begun integrating into the labour market a crackdown does not provide any incentives to try to turn irregular jobs into stable and official businesses. Such a policy may rather encourage Roma to resort to something they know well: survival on the margins.

³⁵¹ EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), [2009], “The situation of Roma EU citizens moving to and settling in other EU Member States”, fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Roma_Movement_Comparative-final_en.pdf

³⁵² This was even the case before EU enlargement. For a useful overview of trends in the 1990s see, Eva Sobotka [2003], *Romani migration in the 1990s: Perspectives on dynamic, interpretation and policy*, *Romani Studies*, 13(2), 79–121.

Might an expulsion policy impel eastern European countries, then, to take the plight of their Roma populations more seriously? It is doubtful. More realistic options are rather to be found in more intense cooperation in the already existing international policy networks aimed at improving the situation of the Roma, such as the initiatives set up by the EU, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

The issue of migration of Roma cannot be dealt with in isolation from a discussion on social inclusion, and yet precisely this happens too often. Policies that focus merely on security and control and not on social inclusion might aggravate the defeatism among Roma, which again may push them into occupations in the margins, such as begging. This needs not to be the case. Data from the survey among Roma migrants conducted by FRA, for example, suggests that “many of those involved in begging would rather be employed, as begging is regarded as “deviant” behaviour in most destination countries and is sometimes and in some forms unlawful. During the research, public and official responses to the presence of Roma often focused negatively on this aspect of Roma activity, while paying less attention to the barriers to accessing formal employment, such as the low levels of education and skills due to historic discrimination or lack of language skills.”³⁵³

3. The local level should analyze what is needed – and needs to construct methods for lasting implementation

In the countries of destination as well as in home countries there is a need for better social inclusion policies. In some cases strategies to increase the efforts are already in place, and in others such strategies are in the making in the context of the current European Commission’s EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (IP11/400, MEMO/11/216) (April 2011). Most of the real impact, however, should be achieved at the local level. Although the marginalization of the Roma in the countries of destination may look similar to that in the home country, different

measures and ideas might be used to interfere with the dynamic that leads to this marginalization. For this reason, local authorities should exchange information about their policy approaches, and should, in doing so, go beyond merely keeping a tally of best practices. Rather than looking for projects that can be artificially and formulaically replicated, local authorities will need to start from local circumstances and look for customised responses: to see what works there (and perhaps not in any other place) and to do more in that particular place where it works (and go to other places with an open and creative mind).

In addition, Roma inclusion strategies may now find the financial and symbolic support of the EU, but they also need the active involvement of local majority populations. The views of “the community as a whole” will have to be taken into account not only in the context of the evaluation of the impact of measures, but also in a context of planning those measures. Deliberative processes, such as collaborative planning (“intervision” meetings during which Roma and non-Roma inhabitants have a chance to legitimize each other’s contribution to municipal plans), might be useful. In the UK, for example, some municipalities have experimented with collaborative planning meetings on housing sites to foster contact between various groups of citizens, including Travellers and Roma.³⁵⁴ To be sure, the Roma should remain the focus of the policy response, yet the results of the policy responses will be more sustainable when they are constructed on the basis of a meaningful input from all parts of a local community, including both Roma and other groups. An important aspect of the challenge is of discursive nature: there is a need to find a language of social policy and human rights protection that promotes the image of policy initiatives as beneficial for the Roma and non-Roma alike. There is an urgent need to go from lose-lose to win-win policies, so that the full support of the local governing elites and local majority populations can be garnered. Without such a support even the most promising initiatives on paper may not lead to lasting positive results on the ground.

353 EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), (2009), “The situation of Roma EU citizens moving to and settling in other EU Member States”, fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Roma_Movement_Comparative-final_en.pdf, p. 7.

354 Examples of such techniques in the field of housing policy might be found in a conference recent report ‘Improving Access to Housing for Roma: Good Local Practices, Funding and Legislation’ (2011) prepared by the Czech Presidency of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, the Open Society Fund Prague and the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat, available at fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/conference-report-roma-housing-feb2011.pdf

4. Final note: what role for the EU?

If the most meaningful policy responses to Roma mobility are to be implemented at the local level, what role should European institutions play in this matter? The French crackdown policy in 2010 highlighted one possible role, that of monitor. Where Member States are in breach of issues of equality and citizens' rights, specific actions can be undertaken by European institutions to address this. They can step in and scrutinize particular government policies, persuade national policymakers to change course or bring them to court. For example, Italy's fingerprinting initiative, which targeted Roma living in "nomad camps", was condemned by the European Parliament.³⁵⁵ In the case of France, the expulsion policy was strongly condemned by a European Parliament resolution as well as criticised by the European Commission.³⁵⁶ European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Viviane Reding first threatened to bring France before the European Court of Justice for violating anti-discrimination laws but later, after the Commission had received the assurance from France that it did not single out Roma, refrained from pursuing an infringement procedure.³⁵⁷

But the European Commission can do more than simply oversee Member State behaviour, and it seems from recent developments that it indeed *wants* to do more than that. Since 2010 the European Commission's long term ambitions to introduce new policies for the Roma on a Europe-wide scale further gained momentum. Through initiatives such as the Roma Task Force, the European Commission tried to strengthen the EU's impact on the social inclusion of the Roma. This is clearly the role with which the European Commission is most at ease. The topic of Roma inclusion was already given particular attention in the context of the *2010 EU Year of Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion*. Moreover, the Europe 2020 goals emphasizing growth, employment, social inclusion and sustainability have been seen as a window of opportunity for garnering unprecedented political support for the development of better policies towards the Roma. EU initiatives on Roma now are clearly based on the idea that a breakthrough can be reached by

making the issue a clear and identifiable part of the EU's larger agenda to achieve sustainable economic growth and robust socio-economic integration. The European Commission sees it as its task to encourage national policymakers to make use of European money available for poverty reduction, social cohesion promotion and the advancement of economic prosperity to address the particular problems facing the Roma, including those who do not live in their home countries.

This represents a kind of "Europeanization" of Roma policy. The European Commission's goal is not so much to promote the status of the Roma as a transnational minority or construct specific European policies targeted at the Roma; but it wants to foster Europe-wide policy reviews and networking among national governments, and it wants to press those governments into devising and implementing better social policies using the available EU funding mechanisms.

This newfound role, however, brings along certain risks. **First**, the Europeanization of Roma policy might have a negative impact on the way in which Roma mobility is perceived. It might give domestic politicians an opportunity to evade their own country's responsibility for their own Roma citizens who they can portray as belonging more to "Europe" than to the national community. These politicians might support the EU's concern for the Roma merely because they can rhetorically exploit it: they can use it as a legitimization of the argument that national states are not responsible for policies on Roma, only European institutions. Seeing the issue of Roma mobility purely in European terms might thus carry the danger of reinforcing the idea that the Roma belong everywhere and nowhere. The European Commission will have to handle the topic of Roma mobility with care and look for strategies that may avoid such a political recuperation.

Second, European initiatives might provide ammunition for ethnic mobilisation and reinforce the boundaries between certain Roma communities and other population groups. If European support is not monitored well, it might easily be interpreted as support uniquely for the Roma – be they immigrants or national citizens – rather

355 European Parliament Resolution, P6_TA(2008)0361.

356 European Parliament Resolution P7_TA-PROV(2010)0312.

357 For more details, see, e.g., van Baar, Huub (2011), "Europe's Romaphobia: problematization, securitization, nomadization", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29(2): 203-212.

than for “whole societies”. The effects of such re-interpretation may trickle down to the local level. This brings me back to my argument about the implications of how EU support is talked about. It is of the utmost importance that policy initiatives that help the Roma are framed in a way that encourages other social groups to accept the Roma as equal partners and co-citizens. The narrative that should accompany these initiatives is one that highlights the advantages of these policies for the whole population, not only the Roma. If not, the Roma will continue to be portrayed as a burden on the national economy, both in their home countries and in their countries of destination, and not as how they rather should be seen as: people who deserve economic support and may, in turn, become key contributors to Europe’s future.

Peter Vermeersch is professor of political science at the University of Leuven in Belgium. He has published widely on nationalism, ethnic conflict and minorities.

Kosovar Roma in a Nutshell

- Population: 40,000.
- Percentage of national population: 1,9%.
- Groups include mainly Serbian and Romani-speaking Roma and Albanian-speaking Ashkali and Egyptians.
- Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians are twice as likely as other ethnic groups to be amongst the 15 per cent who live in extreme poverty: each individual lives on less than € 0.71 per day.
- Approximately 20% of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian population do not have civil status registration of births, marriages or deaths.
- Roma children have been largely excluded from the educational system and face considerable obstacles to integration.
- The agreement between Germany and Kosovo alone will affect 12,000 Roma, Ashkali, and Kosovo Egyptians.
- 80 percent of persons forcibly returned to Kosovo are unable to return to their place of origin, as most homes have been destroyed or occupied.

Sources:

- *CIA World Factbook: Kosovo*
www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/kv.html#People (7.9.2011)

HRW 2009 : Kosovo: Poisoned by Lead
www.hrw.org/node/83938/section/5 (7.9.2011)

- *Amnesty International 2010: Not welcome Anywhere: Stop the forced return of Roma to Kosovo*

www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR70/011/2010/en/f4d99ef1-725a-462f-81f3-e413083a4228/eur700112010en.pdf (8.9.2011)

- See UNDP Kosovo, *Human Development Reports*, www.ks.undp.org/?cid=2,142
- *Kosovo Foundation for Open Society – KFOS (SOROS), The Position of Roma, Ashkali And Egyptian Communities In Kosovo, 2009 p. 21*, www.kfosweb.info/pdf/The%20Position%20of%20RAE%20Communities%20in%20Kosovo%20Baseline%20Survey_ENG.pdf

Green initiatives

7.1 / End expulsions of Roma to Kosovo

Ska Keller

While Roma in EU Member States face discrimination in multiple areas of life, the EU is nevertheless an important destination for Roma fleeing from intolerance, poverty and conflict. One of their main areas of origin is ex-Yugoslavia, especially Kosovo.

Forced to flee

Not only did the Roma of Kosovo – a minority already initially living in a precarious situation – experience the hardship of war and political instability. They were also accused of being Serbian collaborators, which forced many to flee from their home towns during and after the war. Numerous refugees ended up in UN camps, where many still live in unbearable situations. Others ended up seeking refuge in other countries. Of the ca. 200,000 Roma, and related groups of Ashkali and Egyptians in pre-war Kosovo, only 38,000 remain today.

The new Kosovar state does not provide any sort of protection – a justice system or police protection, when necessary – for the Roma and other minorities. Unemployment rates of Roma are extremely high. Many Roma drop out of schools due mainly to language problems and the associated costs of education, such as schoolbooks and the cost of travel. Most Roma live in deep poverty.



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This is the situation that EU governments are currently sending Roma back to. Many of the Roma who applied for protection in the EU during and after the Kosovo war only received temporary permits on humanitarian grounds. As part of its quest for more and better relationships with EU member states, Kosovo has signed a number of bilateral readmission agreements in the last years, among others with France in Germany. About 50,000 Roma have already been returned to Kosovo since the end of the war in 1999, and more are about to follow.

Unwelcome returnees

The reasoning states give for sending Roma back is that the war in Kosovo is over. They do not take into account the precarious situation, discrimination and lack of opportunities that affect Roma even more severely than other groups in a poor and still instable country. Families who have lived for several years in the EU are sent back to a life without perspective. Children who have gone to school in their host countries and forgotten their mother tongues are expelled to a country they no longer remember or have never even seen before.

Roma returned from EU Member States do not receive any state support in Kosovo. Very often they face difficulties when applying for identity cards. Those who do not have Yugoslav or Serbian identity papers are not issued Kosovar identification. This leaves the returned Roma stateless, without any social or political rights. Property remains an issue as well: houses or land left behind during the war can often not be regained.

Halt the deportations!

It is clear that Kosovo is currently not a country in which Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians can live unharmed or with any hope for a better future. The European Parliament, numerous NGOs, as well as UN secretary general Ban Ki Moon and the Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner Thomas Hammarberg have called for a halt of the deportations to Kosovo.

EU governments should issue an immediate moratorium on these deportations. They should also assist Kosovo in inclusion efforts and push the Kosovar government to take its own strategy on Roma inclusion seriously. Kosovo must take decisive steps to curb discrimination against Roma and to improve the situations of poverty Roma live in.

While EU governments cannot force Kosovo to take action – governments can do their share and stop the deportations, which currently make them complicit in one of the biggest human rights disasters in Europe.

Ska Keller is a Green Member of the European Parliament from Germany.

For further information, please contact:

- Ska Keller at franziska.keller@europarl.europa.eu
- German Greens in the European Parliament at www.gruene-europa.de

Finnish Roma in a Nutshell

- Population: 10,000-12,000.
- Percentage of population: 0,21%.
- Groups: Finnish Roma (kaleet), speaking mostly Finnish and Swedish.
- One third of Finnish Roma speak good Finnish Romani, but children do not learn it as a mother tongue.

■ Finnish Roma have been sedentary since the 1960s.

■ According to estimates based on surveys in 2003 and 2008, about 20% of Finnish Roma adults are unemployed. Central problems in finding employment are low education levels, little professional training and lack of work experience.

■ According to a survey conducted in 2004, 50% of Romani pupils received some form of special education (compared to 20% of others). Only 2% attended preschool education. Nearly one fifth of Romani pupils drop out of compulsory education.

■ An approximate 200 migrant Roma from Romania and Bulgaria have spent periods of some months in Finland since 2008.

Sources:

- Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Forum data, www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/archive/documentation/strategies/statistiques_en.asp (26.5.2011)
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7.2 / Fight racism everywhere – also in your own backyard

Emma Kari

After Romania and Bulgaria joined to the European Union in 2007 many poor Roma started to use their right for the free movement in search of better living. To the streets of Helsinki they arrived in 2008. Suddenly there were imploring old ladies begging on many street corners in the centre of the city. Young mothers with their newborns in their arms were selling roses in front of shops. And men who clearly didn't have a clue about music were playing the accordion at many metro station entrances.

The plot to get rid of the Roma

The number of migrant Roma in Helsinki has never been great, it has fluctuated between a couple of dozen and a few hundred. Nevertheless relatively well-off people in Helsinki were not used to seeing poverty on such a scale. The first reaction was uneasiness and concern for these people. However, this concern was quite quickly followed by allegations of human trafficking, crime and increasing racism towards the Roma. And of course, eventually the main feeling was discontent with the EU.

Local politicians were baffled. How should a small northern capital deal with this European phenomenon? Everyone seemed to have one thing in common: they all claimed to want to improve the situation of East European Roma. The only contradiction was that the majority of politicians seemed to think that best way to improve their condition was to get rid of them. "They should be helped in their home countries," they said.

No stone was left unturned when conservative politicians, the head of the city administration and the Minister of the Interior focused on finding ways to make the Roma leave the streets of Helsinki. A bill was presented in the Finnish parliament to ban begging and "low-quality musical performances". Temporary dwellings were torn down by the City's Safety Unit with help of the police and the Roma were driven to the streets. Young Finnish squatters, who since 2007 accommodated homeless Roma migrants, were harassed by the officials in every possible way: random inspections were imposed on squats by the city officials. These were followed by sanctions, and in the end the City Major ordered evictions.

The only political party loudly protesting against these actions were the Greens, who demanded a more humane approach, and argued that the proposed legislation banning begging was discriminatory and aimed at only one ethnic group. The Greens considered this to be a violation of human rights and persecution of an oppressed minority.

Empty talk on human rights

To silence the criticism, Helsinki Social Services Department and the Helsinki Deaconess Institute launched a project called Rom po drom between 2008–2010. The project aimed to "find out the motivation of the Roma for coming to Finland,



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methods of making a living and their chances of returning to their own country". The aim was thus not to help the poor Roma, but to collect information about them and make them leave as soon as possible.

A high-level working group was also set up by the City Mayor to tackle the problem. Despite the demand of the Greens, it consisted only of civil servants and police. The group was chaired by the Helsinki Social Services Department's Roma expert and its goal was set by the Mayor: to make the Roma leave for their own good. Helsinki officials and the other political parties argued that the only way to really improve the situation of the Roma is to handle the issue on a European level.

But empty talk about human rights and calling the EU to fight for these people does not help the old lady begging on the street in Helsinki: Roma are discriminated against everywhere they go. Moreover, only a few of us would be now talking about the human rights of the Roma if they had stayed in their home countries. These people are struggling against repression by moving. They have raised the issue of human rights in the European Union and it is because of them that we cannot ignore it.

Green achievements in Helsinki

The main goal of the policy of the Greens in Helsinki has been to find ways to improve the situation of the Roma migrants. The Greens have demanded that the city acknowledge the discriminated position of the Eastern European Roma and restrain from pressuring the Roma to leave the country.

Small improvements have been achieved due to the Greens' constant criticism of the actions of the city of Helsinki. The city has provided accommodation during the coldest months for the most vulnerable migrant Roma, such as the elderly and families with children. A centre dedicated to homeless Roma migrants was opened in May 2011. It offers the possibility to shower and wash laundry as well as providing assistance to find jobs.

The eviction of the squat accommodating migrant Roma in Helsinki that was ordered by the City Major was overturned due to opposition of the Greens, the Left Alliance and the Social Democratic Party.³⁵⁸ The biggest victory was achieved when the bill to ban begging was defeated after it was found discriminative and racist by the Green minister of justice.

This is far from being adequate, but it is an important shift from politics based on a total evasion of responsibility. The demand to battle the discrimination of Roma in Romania and Bulgaria on a European level cannot be just a way to avoid the problem. There are thousands of Roma around Europe without access to basic health care, safe housing or education. These are basic rights that we have to provide for all Roma no matter where they live.

We have to oppose evictions and discrimination against Roma in our home country as well as in Romania. While we fight racism on a European level, we cannot forget to fight the same battle in our own cities.

Emma Kari is a Green City Councillor in the City of Helsinki and Chairperson of the Youth Affairs Committee.

³⁵⁸ Unfortunately however, the squat was finally evicted due to demolition plans in August 2011.

Belgian Roma and Travelling groups in a Nutshell

- Population: 20-40,000.
- Percentage of national population: 0,29%.
- Groups: traditional travelling groups include Manouches and Yénische, numbering about 15,000, as well as Roma who have arrived in the 2000s from Eastern Europe, numbering about 25,000.
- Travelling groups are mostly semi-sedentary, living a settled life in caravans. Many have difficulties registering their domicile and thus receiving social benefits.
- Legal stopping sites are rare: only 31 exist in the country. Travelling groups live under the threat of eviction, without basic services.

Sources:

- Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Forum data, www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/archive/documentation/strategies/statistiques_en.asp (26.5.2011)
- CentreAvec 2009: *Les Gens du Voyage en Communauté française de Belgique: Réalités et perspectives*

7.3 / Roma: problem or mirror of our societies?

Elias Hemelsoet

A changing society: the arrival of fellow European citizens

During the last few years, Roma immigrants coming from Bulgaria, Slovakia and to a smaller extent Romania have arrived in the city of Ghent. This changing social context has brought about quite a bit of political discussion, in which accounts of miserable humanitarian situations alternate with striking statements.

The arrival of about 3,000 newcomers a year to a total population of 250,000 is said to have put pressure on the quality of life of the city. Opinions differ to a large extent, but on one thing there seems to be societal agreement: the growing presence of Roma in our cities brings along problems for which solutions are required. The predominant discourse relates to social problems, such as exhortative rents, discrimination, organised networks of informal work, sexual exploitation of women and various kinds of criminality

against Roma people. Moreover, the capacity of the welfare state is said to reach its boundaries when large groups of people migrate, as locals in Ghent see it, only to benefit from an easily accessible social security system.

I agree that the rapidly increasing immigration of East-European citizens does not go without problems which need to be tackled. However, tackling social problems is not synonymous with tackling a particular group of people. There is a danger of “criminalizing” or “victimizing” Roma people. This should be avoided. The question that remains is terms in which these problems can then appropriately be defined.

The Ghent policy towards Roma people: tackling a problem

In its policy paper *Intra-European migration and the city of Ghent* (2010), local policymakers of the ruling socialist and liberal parties developed a two-track policy to deal with the situation. In this policy, criticised by Greens, the focus is on “pull factors” that make people come to the city. On the one hand, support is offered through integration policy. On the other hand, all forms of (semi-)illegal practices are repressively and firmly combated. In practice, there seems to be a lot more emphasis laid on repression than on supportive initiatives. It is questionable to what extent Roma will benefit from this policy, as it defines social problems that are seen as directly related to the Roma in terms of a “Roma problem”. Thus the policy directly links Roma to criminal activities and poverty.

The aims are realised through four lines of action, all of which target Roma “explicitly but not exclusively”. A Permanent Consultation Committee has been formed to improve communication between different services. City officials also point out problems to higher policy levels. A central information point has been installed, as well as Roma mediators to provide general information on immigration topics. Since the issuing of the policy paper, squats that are mainly occupied by Roma have been cleared. Although the city services have not published statistics on the number of clearings, it is known that many families have been evicted from the squats they had been living in for several years without being offered any support to find a new home. Many of them proceed to live on the streets in search of a new living home, without any perspective for a better future.



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A Green answer: a look in the mirror

For some reason, Roma are seen by the people of Ghent in a different way than other migrants. It may be time to have a look in the mirror and ask why this is so. Many donate money to charity organisations to combat global injustice, but supporting Roma coming to our cities seems to be a different thing. Fighting poverty is fine, as long as it does not come to our backyard. However, is this not what a genuinely social policy and attitude should be all about: engage with people who are less well off?

Apart from the vital work being done by charity organisations in Ghent, there is a task here for Greens to defend the rights of Roma on a political level. Fighting the victimization and criminalization of Roma migrants is a first step to do so: Roma are citizens of Ghent just like other people and while on a micro level of everyday work, initiatives like Roma mediators can be beneficial, in general Roma require no particular target group oriented policy. Implicit forms of discrimination through policy measures that affect Roma in particular – such as the initiative to clear the squats of the city – should be protested against. They legitimise or even initiate rather than combat discrimination against Roma in the public sphere. Moreover, Greens should defend the basic rights for all citizens of the city, including Roma and irregular migrants.

And that is what Greens in Ghent have actually done. To mention but some of the many initiatives, Greens have supported actions protesting squat clearings and fought the absence of a “winter plan” that would provide sleeping places for homeless people. Greens have actively defended the right to urgent medical care for irregular

migrants and sent out a plea for a “Hospitable Ghent” (Gastvrij Gent) for all. A next step could be to let Roma migrants have the responsibility they deserve: to speak up for themselves.

The arrival of Roma migrants changes our societal context profoundly. When we start looking at these people in a different way, they may serve as a mirror that forces us to face ourselves and the way we seek to improve the world around us. Could that not be an opportunity rather than a problem?

Elias Hemelsoet works as a Ph.D. researcher at the Department of Foundations of Education at the Ghent University. His research area is the right to education for Roma people and irregular migrants.

For further information, please contact:

- Elias Hemelsoet, at elias.hemelsoet@ugent.be
- Greens in Ghent: www.groengent.be, www.elkedecruynaere.be

7.4 / Green contributions to Roma inclusion in Germany

Melanie Zagrean

The past years have seen higher political attention for the issue of Roma inclusion in Germany and in Berlin. The shift in thinking has on the one hand been the result of increased media attention for Roma inclusion issues as a result of growing migration into Germany. On the other hand, it is due to a stronger involvement by politicians, particularly by Green politicians, requesting a change in thinking, more support for inclusion and equality of treatment of Sinti and Roma in Berlin, Germany and Europe.

German Green calls for Roma inclusion

The policy of Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, has always been one of anti-discrimination, and inclusion of migrants in society. From an opposition position, the policy has often been expressed in the form of requests for equal treatment and for the dedication of sufficient public assistance to address immediate basic needs, to enable inclusion, dialogue and awareness raising. Initiatives have been formulated by Greens of all political levels, most notably the federal and state (Berlin) levels, but frequently also at borough level. The current Green Election

Program for the *Land* (state) of Berlin expresses support for societal engagement against the discrimination of Sinti and Roma.³⁵⁹

This March, Green Members of the *Bundestag* called for the application of equal rights and non-discrimination for Sinti and Roma in Germany and the EU.³⁶⁰ Green MP Memet Kilic has stressed that serious governmental efforts are essential: there is a need for a change of paradigm in the education system and more flexible structures to accommodate needs of children, including those of migrant families (based on a system for children of inland shipmen), and for there to be effort put into winning the trust of parents. Kilic has also called for a national action plan against racism, discrimination and deep-seated prejudice, including a sensitisation of the media and administrative agencies. There is a need to change penal law as regards racially motivated crimes, and an acknowledgment of the severity these crimes including the creation of special statistics.

Recent federal government plans to repatriate former refugees, including 12,000 Roma, Ashkali and Kosovo Egyptians, from Ex-Yugoslavia and Kosovo have sparked a wave of protest. Alongside NGOs, public statements have been issued by the leadership of the Federal German Green Party and by Green Party Members of the Federal Parliament (*Bundestag*).³⁶¹ The protests seem to have halted the process, nurturing hopes for the repatriation efforts to be discarded.

Sinti and Roma migrants in Berlin

Berlin is an attractive destination for people of all ages, creeds and ethnicities. The Roma community in Berlin is highly heterogenic. It includes Sinti and Roma communities that have been residing in Germany for hundreds of years, Roma migrants from all European countries, and Roma refugees from non-EU countries. Regardless of their background and degree of inclusion into society, the majority of Roma still face varying degrees of racism and discrimination in their daily lives. Many newly arrived Roma families, particularly from the new EU Member States, frequently

face other hardships as well. Some reside in precarious conditions and lack knowledge of where to turn for help in case of problems with accommodation, health issue, work exploitation related issues, etc. They are in particular need for advice as regards their rights and opportunities for building a livelihood in Europe.

Although some support and advice structures exist, partly as a result of Green initiatives and calls, discovering these structures – such as the German Union Association's advice on working rights, and medical associations providing basic and emergency medical care – tend to require knowledge and research of the host country in order to be discovered. They are also severely underfunded. Similarly, efforts related to awareness raising in society, to provide forums for dialogue, to provide further education and training for public authorities are either non-existent or scarce and underfunded.

Following conflicts around several camping Roma families in a public park in Berlin in 2009, the Green section of the Berlin Parliament protested on behalf of the families.³⁶² The Berlin borough parliament of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg called for the creation of a point of contact and advice for Sinti and Roma in Berlin, conceived with the help of Dzoni Sichelschmidt, activist and speaker of Roma communities. This initiative was inspired by the Frankfurt example created by the Amt für Multikulturelle Angelegenheiten, conceived in 1989 by Daniel Cohn Bendit.

The Berlin Senate took up the initiative by the Integration Commissioner Günter Piening (Greens) and Dr. Robin Schneider, and dedicated € 30,000 for the creation of points of contact and advice for Roma families, as well as for conflict intervention and awareness-raising. Points of contact give advice on questions of residence, work, health, education, racial discrimination, dealing with authorities, interpretation, and sensitisation of authorities. The two main NGOs working with Roma communities, Amaro Drom e.V. and Südosteuropa Kultur e.V. jointly received the commission for carrying out the tasks.

359 "Wir unterstützen das gesellschaftliche Engagement gegen die Diskriminierung von Roma und Sinti (Antiziganismus), um die humanitäre und menschenrechtliche Situation der Roma in Berlin, im Bund und in ganz Europa zu verbessern." (Seite 12, Wahlprogramm).

360 DR17/5191 dipbt.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/17/051/1705191.pdf

361 As well as by German Green MEP Ska Keller in this publication.

362 Canan Bayram, Speaker for Integration and Migration of the Green Fraction of the Berlin Parliament, Press Statement www.gruene-fraktion-berlin.de/cms/presse/dok/287/287777.senat_ist_in_der_pflicht.html



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However, although many individual successes have been achieved, the work is underfinanced. Hamze Bytyci from Amaro Drom e.V. has called for regular financing in order to provide the necessary services for an increasing community of Roma migrants in Berlin. The current funding of the NGO merely covers nine hours of consultation in Bulgarian and nine hours in Romanian. The rest of the week the work is covered by volunteers. Furthermore, financing will run out by the end of this year. The office of the Commissioner for Integration and Migration will submit its funding requirements after elections in September 2011.

The Green speaker for migration and integration in the Berlin parliament, Canan Bayram, has requested an overview from the Berlin Senate on the current situation and the adequacy of financing now and in the future.³⁶³ During this year's Delegates Conference of the Berlin Green Party, a resolution was adopted that called for a further development of the central point of contact for Roma families. This should regard both human resources and the advice they offer to Roma: for example, there is need for medical advice and a mother tongue based day care centre for children (based on the successful "Schaworalle" pilot project in Frankfurt).³⁶⁴ Also, the resolution calls for a dedication of central public grounds furnished with adequate sanitary facilities allow-

ing camping in mobile homes or tents for travellers.³⁶⁵ Finally the resolution requests support for societal engagement against anti-ziganism.³⁶⁶

On the level of the Berlin boroughs, the Youth welfare offices as well as authorities responsible for education, migration and integration play an important role in the area of child welfare and education. The Green Councillor for Youth in the Berlin borough of Neukölln, Gabi Vonnekold, speaks of the importance of reaching the families of Roma children via social workers, street workers, and associate teachers. In many cases these efforts have helped address and mediate in some of the most imminent problems related to neighbourhood conflicts. The number of Roma children enrolled in schools in the borough of Neukölln has increased and programmes such as 'Hilfen zur Erziehung' (Help for Education)³⁶⁷ which provide attachment figures for children have achieved some successes in individual cases.³⁶⁸ Also, working groups and networks have been created and expert conferences have been organised. However, these fragile successes are endangered by insufficient financing³⁶⁹ which prevents sustainable achievements in this field.

Other Green initiatives, such as those by Wolfgang Lenk in Berlin Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, have inspired the creation of the Intercultural Weeks, dedicated to informing the population about the history, culture and lives of Sinti and Roma in Berlin. Also, joint endeavours by politicians and NGOs in the same borough have led to a focus on historical aspects of Sinti and Roma life in Berlin and commemorating the losses incurred by Nazi crimes, such as the murder of Johann Trollmann.³⁷⁰

In order to address the financing issue, Canan Bayram³⁷¹ and Barbara Lochbihler (MEP) have recently offered an introductory session on devising

363 Endlich Anlaufstelle für Roma - aber richtig ausstatten! Kleine Anfrage Nr. 16/14492 vom 08.06.2010. www.parlament-berlin.de:8080/starweb/adis/citat/VT/16/KlAnfr/ka16-14492.pdf

364 www.frankfurt.de/sixcms/media.php/738/Publ_20_Jahre_AmkA.pdf

In 1996 the association Roma e.V initiated Schaworalle together with the Agency for multicultural Affairs. It was institutionalized as a daycare center in 1999. In 2006 it won the Theodor-Heuss Medall 2006 for being the first federal pilot project of its kind, fostering the fight against lack of education and societal marginalization. www.schaworalle.de

365 The Berlin Senate has recently dedicated funds for the installation of facilities for the Sinti and Roma community in Drei Linden.

366 gruene-berlin.de/sites/default/files/benutzer/alexander.klose/schutz_fuer_die_roma.pdf

367 More details about this program can be found here: www.berlin.de/sen/jugend/jugendhilfeleistungen/hilfen_zur_erziehung/

368 Despite successes of the program at integrating children and their families into a social network and a neighbourhood, not all children achieve a positive outcome and remain torn between different worlds, educational patterns, loyalties, etc. To enhance results, additional parallel efforts may be required, such as social work with families to address violence in child upbringing, education for girls, etc..

369 For instance, no funds are dedicated for preventive measures beyond the 'Help for Education' program. Gabi Vonnekold also speaks of the need to prevent pecking orders between migrant communities, that threaten to hit Roma particularly hard. Also, there are very limited funds available for the hiring of specialists.

370 Johann Trollmann was a German boxer of the Sinti and Roma minority, German Champion in cruiserweight, who was murdered by the Nazis in 1944. Sculpture 9841 [his prisoner ID number] was installed in Viktoria Park in Berlin in remembrance and a program of lectures, walks and screenings accompanied the event.

www.germanroadraces.de/274-0-15282-skulptur-9841-erinnert-an-ermordeten-boxer-trollmann.html

371 Speaker for Migration and Integration for the Green Party in the Berlin Parliament.

projects and applying for EU funding.³⁷² Representatives of NGOs of all humanitarian fields have attended, and so have I. The idea is to consider involving partners on an international scale and initiating projects with EU funding. It is hoped that the adoption of the EU Framework for national strategies for Roma integration will give an impulse for activities and provide financing for projects such as a Roma cultural centre for families in Berlin-Wedding.³⁷³

Join the round table in Berlin

Beyond addressing immediate and basic needs, securing financing, a better advice structure, better awareness raising, and more differentiated public campaigns, it is necessary to build a platform for exchange and concerted action in Berlin. My hope is to be able to initiate a Berlin-wide working group or round table structure for interested individuals,³⁷⁴ politicians, NGOs, and governmental agencies. Such a group would convene regularly, exchange best practice approaches and address issues that require resolutions, map needs and potentials, inform legislation, and commission evaluations which are chronically missing. It should also source for international partners, to enable exchange on an international level and carry out joint projects.³⁷⁵

Melanie Zagrean is a political scientist, researcher and trend consultant, who has conducted research on issues of society, democracy and participation. She volunteers for Amaro Drom, a Berlin-based NGO supporting Roma migrants. Ms. Zagrean is an active member of Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen Berlin.

For further information on projects and Green politicians active on Roma issues in Germany, please contact:

- Melanie Zagrean at melanie.zagrean@googlemail.com
- Bündnis 90 / Die Grünen – Berlin gruene-berlin.de
- NGO Amaro Drom, headed by Hamze Bytyci at www.amarodrom.de

- NGO Südosteuropa Kultur, headed by Bosiljka Schedlich and Michael Kraft at www.suedost-ev.de
- RAA (Regionale Arbeitsstellen für Bildung, Integration und Demokratie) e.V. – (Regional Job Positions for Education, Integration and Democracy) www.raa-berlin.de

German Sinti and Roma in a Nutshell

- Population: 70-140,000.
- Percentage of national population: 0,13%.
- Around 70,000 German nationals, while up to 50,000 have arrived since the 1990s from the Balkans and live in the country with temporary permits.
- The vast majority are sedentary.
- 13% of Sinti and Roma in Germany have never gone to school. Only 2.3% hold a higher secondary education degree (vs. 24.4% for the overall population). 44% are reported not to hold any education degree.
- The unemployment rate among Roma communities is well over 50%, with estimates ranging from 60 to 90 percent.

Sources:

- Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Forum data, www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/archive/documentation/strategies/statistiques_en.asp [26.5.2011]
- ERRC: Factsheet: Roma Rights Record 2011. errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3828 [27.5.2011]
- European Commission: Roma and Sinti – Securing employment and livelihood through self-organisation ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal_consolidated/data/document/employability/DE%20_Roma%20and%20Sinti%20Employment%20through%20Self-organisation.pdf
- Report: "Erinnerung, Verantwortung, und Zukunft" www.stiftung-evz.de/w/files/roma/2011_strauss_studie_sinti_bildung.pdf

³⁷² www.barbara-lochbihler.de/eu-foerderprogramme/index.html

³⁷³ Conceived by Südosteuropa Kultur e.V. and Bettina Jarasch; currently Member of the Board of the Green Party of Berlin.

³⁷⁴ A notable private initiative is the cultural venue in the Berlin borough of Neukölln, Rroma Aether Club, run by two Roma brothers from Serbia, who with their variety of cultural events such as theatre, readings, concerts, and exhibitions both with and without Roma specific cultural content have played a positive role in the community for many years. One of the owners speaks with pride about the respect and interest he witnesses from the venue's guests. Former refugees themselves, the brothers had worked as mediators before opening the venue and have since gained a good reputation and respect for their work in the cultural field. A shattering turn of fate has it, that one of the brothers is facing imminent expulsion to Serbia – a plan resembling a slap in the face instead of a thank you for the work carried out over many years in Germany.

³⁷⁵ The author would like to thank all those contributing with advice and links to source material, and to several individuals for granting interviews, among them Memet Kilic, Bettina Jarasch, Gabi Vonnekold, Wolfgang Lenk, Dr. Robin Schneider, Hamze Bytyci, Anna Schmitt, Christian Altfuldisch.

7.5 / Integration for Roma migrants in a Green suburb of Paris

Claude Reznik

Montreuil is a town of 105,000 inhabitants on the eastern outskirts of Paris. For the past several decades, Montreuil, like many industrial towns in the area, has been a place where immigrant populations driven from their homelands by poverty or abuse have found refuge. The population of Montreuil is a mosaic of peoples made up by more than seventy nationalities: inhabitants arrived at the beginning of the twentieth century from Central Europe and Italy, as well as most recently from Spain, Portugal, North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and ex-Yugoslavia countries.

In the late 90s, a group of approximately 15 Roma families from the region of Arad in Romania settled on Montreuil territory. They tried to survive, but faced significant difficulties. The town council at the time forced them to move from squat to squat, from slum to slum and from field to field: blue dye was even poured into the Town Hall fountain to prevent the Roma from washing.

A dignified reception of the Roma

After the town council elections in March 2008, in which Dominique Voynet's³⁷⁶ Green party gained a majority, new policies on the reception and integration of these populations were instantly considered. These were rapidly interrupted by a dramatic event: the old printing works, where 340 migrant Roma had found refuge, was destroyed in an accidental fire. Fortunately the incident led to no loss of life.

This emergency led to the installation of caravans for the Roma to live in, on two plots of land belonging to the town council. The caravans were initially offered by the Abbé Pierre Foundation³⁷⁷ and thereafter purchased. For the first months, the city council entrusted the organisation "Rues et Cités" with the social monitoring of the Roma families. It was decided from the outset that the council would not initiate any sort of pre-selec-

tion of the families participating in the project – as had been done elsewhere in similar circumstances (*i.e.* including only a small number of families close to being integrated into the community).

A plan to support the Roma

In order to start the Roma families on a path of living in normal housing circumstances, a specific plan³⁷⁸ called *MOUS Roms* was established in late 2008 for the social monitoring of the Roma families. From then on, the administration and follow-up of the sixty-one families (188 individuals) living on one of the terrains was entrusted to the association ALJ 93.³⁷⁹ The association "Cit   Myriam"³⁸⁰ ensured the administration of the second plot, while the association "Rue et Cit  s" took charge of the social monitoring of the thirty-five families living (145 individuals) on this terrain.

The project is funded equally by the state and the town. In practice, the administration (property management) is funded in part by a state plan for the accommodation of vulnerable families. Residents are requested to pay one Euro per family per day by way of their commitment to the project. The remaining part is funded by the town. The town, with the support of the region of Ile de France, funded the installation and continues to fund the use of electricity, water, gas, a sanitary system, offices as well as meeting and training rooms.

Successes of the Montreuil project

The integration of the Roma families is monitored using four indicators: schooling, access to rights and health; access to employment and vocational training and access to accommodation.

In France, school is compulsory from the age of 6 to 16 years. 74 Roma children have been enrolled in the town schools, with access to the canteen. Having a roof over their heads – even temporarily – a fixed address, good health and good hygiene have allowed for regular attendance at school. Also the parents have understood the necessity and value of education. Some families are now

376 High profile personality of the French Green party, founder and ex-national secretary of the Green party and elected Senator and Mayor of Montreuil.

377 www.fondation-abbe-pierre.fr

378 The MOUS are a type of project particularly used for the supervision of deteriorated housing and centres for immigrant workers. This is the most important MOUS concerning migrant Roma in France, reaching 371 individuals.

379 www.alj93.fr/ALJ-93.html

380 www.acsc.asso.fr/Cite-Myriam

asking to register their younger children (3 to 6 years) in kindergarten.

Access to rights and health has improved, as the majority of the families have learned, and no longer hesitate to contact administrative services, such as the town health centres or the local social action centres (CCAS). The CCAS centres provide assistance in acquiring medical help from the state, such as free access to maternity centres and care for serious diseases.

As for access to accommodation, the town of Montreuil has launched the construction of modular accommodation on four different sites throughout the city, to replace the two plots of land currently in use. The construction work will be finished by the end of 2011. Two other sites for auto-construction are under consideration. The accommodation is designated for people living in all kinds of precarious situations – primarily, a majority of migrant Roma families – before they can access social or any other type of housing. Only one Roma family so far has left emergency shelters for permanent accommodation.

The accommodation is intended to be openly part of the town – thus breaking away from the practice of makeshift camps on the edge of our cities or on the side of the highways. They will be part of the urban environment and families will be monitored so that successful integration may be achieved. The financing is complex, combining city, state and regional sources. It is fortunate that the EU has agreed to the FEDER funding this type of operation.

Transitory measures mean uncertainty for Roma families

However, as France applies the transitory measures of integration to the EU for citizens from Romania and Bulgaria, the Roma families of Montreuil find themselves in the situation of being considered European sub-citizens with a ban on employment after residing legally in the country for more than three months. They are reduced to begging, scavenging and collecting old metal for survival. Police controls are frequent, especially in Paris, and Roma are frequently made scapegoats for ensuring that expulsion quotas of foreigners are upheld.

There are some specific jobs that can be offered to citizens of these countries, on the condition



that an employer signs an employment offer and pays the sum of € 900. However, the administrative formalities take more than six months to be processed. If annulling the transitory measures involving Romanians and Bulgarians is not possible, the town council of Montreuil expects the French state to give priority to the applications for work possibilities of the Roma migrants. The application of at least one adult per family should be handled in a reasonable time, in order for this person to obtain employment and a residence permit valid for the rest of the family. Only twenty-seven of the 96 Roma families of Montreuil have received these permits. In this regard, the *MOUS* has partially failed in its mission.

Towards successful integration

The projects in Montreuil aim to participate in finding a lasting solution to a serious issue in metropolitan Paris and in many other European cities. Such ambitious projects are of course experimental and innovative and finding EU funding for such projects will be vital for their future success. In Montreuil, the Green team in charge of the city felt it was imperative to make efforts to integrate our Roma inhabitants – a people who are eager to raise their children, to work and to live in dignity. This is happening today.

Claude Reznik is Deputy Mayor of Montreuil, in charge of migrant populations and international cooperation.

For further information, please contact:
Green in Montreuil eelv-montreuil.fr

8. RESOURCES

European Committee on Romani Emancipation

www.eu-romani.org

European Roma Grassroots Organization Network

www.ergonetwork.org

European Roma Policy Coalition

webhost.ppt.eu/romapolicy

Roma National Congress

romanationalcongress.webs.com

European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF)

www.ertf.org

European Roma Information Office

erionet.org

International Roma Women Network

www.advocacy.net.org/page/irwn

European Roma Rights Center (ERRC)

www.errc.org

Project on Ethnic Relations (PER)

www.per-usa.org

Open Society Institute (OSI)

www.soros.org

Amnesty International

www.amnesty.org

Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF)

www.holocausttaskforce.org

Human Rights Watch

www.hrw.org



The political questions around Roma are diverse and complicated: we are dealing with questions of minorities, poverty, racism, of continued divisions between Eastern and Western Europe and of safeguarding core EU freedoms such as the freedom of movement. This book is a first step by the Green European Foundation, with the support of its counterpart in Finland – the Green Cultural and Educational Centre “Visio” – to map the various problems Roma communities in Europe are facing and to showcase several initiatives that have successfully tackled the causes and effects of these problems.

The book deals with questions related to Roma inclusion from a local, national and European perspective. In doing so, it identifies six key areas that need policy making attention: living conditions, housing and health; employment; education; culture and language; racism and extremist aggression; and migration. For each of these topics, several initiatives that make concrete steps towards greater inclusion are presented. When showcasing those good practices, we also point to those who have implemented them, in the hope to network these initiatives.

If multiplied, small steps in a good direction as those indicated in this publication could ultimately lead to a sustainable solution to the current precarious situation of the European Roma. We hope you can take inspiration from these examples into your work!



**GREEN EUROPEAN
FOUNDATION**

1 Rue du Fort Elisabeth, 1463 Luxembourg

Brussels office:

T +32 (2) 234 65 70 F +32 (2) 234 65 79

info@gef.eu www.gef.eu

