

In the May 2015 edition of the newsletter, we highlight:

- Two recent reports – one on the health and social care needs of the Roma (and Gypsy and Traveller) communities in the UK, and a second report on the experience of Roma (and Gypsy and Travellers) in and of the criminal justice system. Both these reports enjoy the title *Bridging the Gap* – the “gap” between academics and policy makers, and the gap between Roma, Gypsies and Travellers and the world.....
- The World Bank’s advice on policy and practice for Roma integration
- Is there any evidence that the exclusion, discrimination and violence against Roma people and communities in Central & Eastern European countries has subsided? We collate from reliable sources a snapshot of incidents, campaigns and events that describe both continuing structural injustice and also overt hostility towards Roma
- A forthcoming training event hosted by Roma Support Group – *Working with Roma in a safeguarding context*; and a forthcoming concert with our Roma youth orchestra...
- A new resource for cross-national exchange about Roma communities – the Smile project
- News from the National Roma Network
- A report of the recent Roma National Day event in Belfast
- And the latest invitation for funding projects on Roma integration from the European Commission



[May 2015 newsletter](#)

[Welcome from Roma Support Group](#)

Welcome to the ninth edition of the newsletter. We want to bring you information, reflections, arguments and discussion about the issues that face

Roma communities in the UK. The Roma Support Group has developed over the last fifteen years into a major service agency working for and with Roma communities, mainly in London. We run advice and advocacy sessions; education support programmes (including homework support) for children and families; a Roma Support and Engagement Programme (including tailored staff training and development); and an arts and culture programme. Recently, RSG has been able to develop its work on developing Roma advocacy and mediation, community engagement and development, and also in policy development and information provision. This e-bulletin is one manifestation of these recent developments.

Contact us via:

andy@romasupportgroup.org.uk

Recent publications: health and social care and Roma communities; and criminal justice and the Roma communities

There is a burning need for the growing expertise within Roma communities to be brought to the attention of both national and local politicians, and those who assist in making policy. This also applies to the experience and knowledge of the staff who work in public services that support and respond to the needs of migrant Roma communities. The recent publications by the Institute of Diversity Research, Inclusivity, Communities and Society (IDRICS) at Buckinghamshire University are surely a start in this process.

Late last year, IDRICS held two events, one on *“Gypsy, Traveller, Roma health and social work engagement”*, and a second one on *“Crime and Punishment: Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in the criminal justice system”*. The proceedings of these two events are now available, and both reports also include detailed recommendations that have emerged from the two workshops. Whilst there was participation from GRT charities and NGOs, it is clear that there is still much to do to hear and consider the voices from the newer, settled migrant Roma communities in the UK. Here is the link to the health and social workshop executive summary

<http://bucks.ac.uk/content/documents/Research/INSTAL/Bridging the Gap Health and Social Care Executive Summary.pdf>

And the full report of the days' proceedings:

<http://bucks.ac.uk/content/documents/Research/INSTAL/Bridging the Gap Health and Social Care Report.pdf>

Likewise, here is the link to the executive summary and recommendations of the workshop on the criminal justice system and Roma communities:

<http://bucks.ac.uk/content/documents/Research/INSTAL/Bridging the Gap between Academics and Policy Makers Criminal Justice Executive Summary .pdf>

And the full report of the day:

<http://bucks.ac.uk/content/documents/Research/INSTAL/Bridging the Gap Criminal Justice Report.pdf>

Roma communities in the UK and social workers: a research project

This has also been set up by Margaret Greenfields at IDRICS at Buckinghamshire University:

“We've just (yesterday) sent out the live link for our small pilot research project with Derby University and Manchester University about social workers' experiences of working with Roma families. This is the other side of the project which has held focus groups with Roma families who are in contact with Social Workers to find out about their experiences. If you have social work contacts/networks please can you encourage people to complete the survey?

Link here: <https://bucks.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/roma-and-social-workers-copy>

So far we've had a handful back already which seem to echo the calls from the community themselves re. a need for more and better translation services; resources for supporting families; training for social workers to understand cultural needs and support; and saying that social workers don't know who to

approach for advice. This research will also be presented as a policy guidance report. We are collecting data until the end of July 2015.”

For more information, contact:

Dr Margaret Greenfields

Professor of Social Policy & Community Engagement

Director: Institute for Diversity Research, Inclusivity, Communities and Society (IDRICS)

Faculty of Society & Health

Buckinghamshire New University

http://bucks.ac.uk/research/research_institutes/idrics/

http://bucks.ac.uk/whoswho/profile/margaret_greenfields

Resources

Although the audience for this World Bank and European Commission report is primarily in the nation states of Central & Eastern Europe, there are a number of obvious continuities for agencies working with migrant Roma communities in the UK. The authors say by way of introduction that:

This handbook provides practical advice to local authorities and civil society organizations that prepare and implement interventions to improve the living conditions of Roma, using European, national, or local funds. It should be treated as a non-binding reference source. It suggests hands-on, practical approaches, techniques, and tools for executing interventions and enhancing their quality. It also provides ideas for broadening the range of interventions considered and is meant to inspire further innovations.

The authors suggest some key guiding points for all interventions. These include:

- Targeting the poor and most marginalised Roma populations
- Projects have to be entirely relevant to local circumstances
- The outcomes have to ensure that barriers and obstacles to the use of public services by Roma communities are removed

- The improvements can't end when the funding ends
- Without Roma people's involvement in the projects, the chances of success are massively reduced

Improving things at a local level: World Bank & European Commission

Here's the link:

http://coe-romact.org/sites/default/files/pictures/Handbook_LocalLevel_interactive_A4_singles_March20_c.pdf

Roma Smile project

Roma Smile project has been set up as a trans-national project working with primary school age children, with collaborators in Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria and in the UK (Manchester). See this link for a brief introduction to the project outline and the philosophy that drives the approach – developing a sense of collective community based on the concept of “*pro-sociality*”:

<http://www.romasmile.com/about-smile>

See here for a number of short videos made by different collaborators in Roma Smile:

<https://www.youtube.com/user/SMILEproject14/videos>

And finally, see here for Manchester report about the work of the project:

http://www.romasmile.com/downloads/SMILE_NationalReportUK_EN.pdf

National Roma Network

David Brown from Migration Yorkshire writes:

The National Roma Network (NRN) is developing and changing and we are looking for people to be in key roles. The changes were discussed and agreed at the last NRN meeting in March. These changes aim to widen membership,

increase Roma participation, improve best practice sharing and provide a clearer national approach to Roma inclusion.

The main elements of the future National Roma Network are:

- National Roma Network Forum will replace the current NRN meetings. This will take the form of larger events to enable wider participation to all who wish to attend (rather than a narrow membership) and focusing on particular themes. The first Forum will be July and will be held three times per year.
- A NRN Working Group will be created and meet in between each meeting to take forward issues collectively from previous meetings and plan for the NRN Forums. The first Working Group will be late May and will be held three times per year.
- There will be a more active electronic network with regular email updates and information
- Joint Charring between Local Authorities and Voluntary Community Sector
- Increase participation of Roma communities and individuals in both groups
- Meetings spread more across UK, rather than all in Leeds
- Mapping of organisations and activities working on Roma inclusion, and map development of Roma community organisations - starting in a few weeks.

For more information, contact david2brown@migrationyorkshire.org.uk

Roma Rights in Central & Eastern Europe

There are three factors that drive Roma migration from Central & East Europe: first, the search for better more secure employment to combat the poverty in many Roma villages and settlements; secondly, the hope of a better education for their children; and lastly, to escape the discrimination and violence that many Roma families have had to face. Amnesty International (AI) has recently revived their international campaign about Roma rights, and a succession of

campaigns, reports and blogs illustrates the continuing injustices that Roma experience. Nowhere is this more crucial than in the way that local and regional state authorities.

On Roma National day, Amnesty carried a blog about the appalling, so-called educational provision for Roma children in Greece, Czech Republic, Slovakia and France. See the blog here:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/news/2015/04/the-stunted-education-of-romani-children-in-europe/> **(article 8 April 2015)**

Amnesty International – Czech schools (22 April 2015)

In 2007, the Czech Republic was found by the European Court for Human Rights found that the disproportionate placement of Romani children in special schools for children with learning disabilities violated their rights not to be discriminated against in their access to education. This AI report explores how Roma children have been discriminated against in three ways in primary education in Czech Republic; their over-representation in so-called “practical schools”; their segregation within mainstream schools; and other forms of differential treatment by Romani pupils in mainstream schools. It further reports on the initial weak response of the Czech government and Ministry of Education to the ECHR judgement and also on a new ‘action plan’ that has been recently launched. See the full report:

“Must try harder: ethnic discrimination against Romani children in Czech schools”

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur71/1353/2015/en/>

Amnesty International – Slovakia schools (4 September 2013)

Similarly, in Slovakia, a regional court ruling in Presov ruled in 2012 that it was unlawful to segregate Romani students in their own schools, or in their own classes in mainstream schools. But what has happened subsequently? This recent report identifies the rise of the “container (as in shipping) school” in parts of Eastern Slovakia, which are becoming synonymous with Roma schools. See the full report:

“Unfilled promises: failing to end segregation of Roma pupils in Slovakia”

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR72/001/2013/en/>

Progress?

What progress has been made since then? The following report from Amnesty written in March suggests that little progress has been made:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/blogs/2015/03/slovakia-segregation-of-roma-schoolchildren-worsens/> (blog 13 March 2015)

Amnesty has reported this spring on two major attacks on Roma settlement – one in Belgrade in Serbia, and another campaign against the ‘numbered streets’ in Hungary. See here for report of the forcible evictions in Serbia (8 April 2015)

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/news/2015/04/serbia-forcibly-evicted-roma-still-awaiting-resettlement-despite-eu-millions/>

In Miskolc, the third largest city in Hungary, the city authorities are about to clear a whole Roma neighbourhood. The explanations as to why are many and varied – to create space for a larger stadium; to build a car park; to “eradicate thieves and drug dealers”? There has been no consultation. But one thing is certain; no residents are entitled to compensation unless they buy property outside the city and stay away for five years. See this Amnesty report from last summer:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/articles/blogs/2014/08/numbered-streets-the-hungarian-neighbourhood-where-everybody-could-be-left-homeless/>
(Article 21 Aug 2014)

See also this American PBS report from last September (including an embedded video report interviewing local women, the deputy mayor and Roma community leaders – 8.33 minutes long) about Miskolc:

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/producers-notebook-hungarians-believe-criminality-roma-blood/>

We also provide the latest Amnesty report which asks for protest letters to be sent to the Miskolc mayor to oppose the evictions by 22nd May:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur27/1428/2015/en/> (blog 10 April 2015)

Lastly, we provide an illustration of the character of policing of Roma settlements, this occasion in Slovakia at the village of Vrbnica. This was drawn to our attention by a Roma man now living in Sheffield. See here for a report of the raid from 7 April.

<http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20056808/roma-allege-police-brutality-in-eastern-slovak-village.html>

Here see here for the protest against the raid led by the local Roma community:

<http://www.romea.cz/en/news/slovakia-300-roma-protest-police-intervention-in-vrbnica>

Events & training

RSG training: Working with Roma in Safeguarding Context, 1st July 2015

<http://romasupportgroup.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Working-with-Roma-in-safeguarding-context-RSG-July-2015-Flyer.pdf>

Why this training? Why now?

A wide range of practitioners are dealing with an increasing number of safeguarding cases which involve East European Roma families. The often complex family cases involve: homelessness, child poverty, neglect, children out of education, substance misuse etc. This training can make a real difference to your engagement with Roma families. Better understanding promotes confidence and better decisions. This is further augmented by having relevant case studies and practical engagement tools to hand.

Who should attend?

Children's services including adoption and fostering teams, Adult social services, Family intervention and support services, Sure Start/Children's Centres, Schools, Education welfare services, Social housing, Community health services including safeguarding leads, Mental health services,

Community police , Youth services including Youth Offending Services,
Probation services and voluntary organisations

Feedback from a previous participant:

“The trainers had a really good insight into the practical issues that Roma communities face in accessing services and solutions to effective partnership working, a must for any public organisation who wishes to reach out to under-served communities.” (Equality and Diversity Manager, Southend Hospital)

Where?

UK Centre for Carnival Arts
3 St Mary’s Road
Luton
Bedfordshire
LU1 3JA

How do I book?

Fill in our booking form here and email it to us.

Prices:

- Commercial sector: £170
- Public and Charity sector: £130
- Small charities (maximum 5 paid staff): £100
- Students: £80

Further information

If you have a question please contact

- Dada on 020 7511 6508 or Gaba on 020 7511 8245
- or email rsep@romasupportgroup.org.uk
- or this link

National Roma Day in Belfast

Roma National day on 8 April was celebrated throughout the UK. Here we report, with video, on the event in Belfast organised by the Romanian Roma Community Association and hosted by the local community association, LORAG (South Belfast). The video features interviews with Roma women and men activists (Ancuta and Nicolae Nicola) in Belfast, as well as performances on the day, and speeches and interviews with the local community managers and activists, and the Belfast NHS trust chief executive (7.22 minutes):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVOZTP5SVes>

This is accompanying article from Integrate NI:

<http://integrateni.com/why-roma-provide-an-opportunity-for-northern-ireland/>

International Roma Festival 24th April 2015

On 24th April in Enfield, London took a place the International Roma Festival. The event started with Roma anthem “gelem, gelem”. Performers from Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Russia and Poland presented an amazing performance of Roma music. Each country presented different type of music, starting with very traditional and finishing with modern. Moreover organisers invited ambassadors of Poland and Czech Republic to demonstrate how their communities get along outside borders of their countries.

The festival became very popular as this was already the second event. The organiser intends to establish this festival as a regular annual event. Next year it is planned to be in a much bigger venue allowing more people to come. This year there were over 300 people attending.

Members of the Roma community described this event as “something what our community need”. It enables them to realize how important the music is for Roma community. Even abroad people, no matter what their age, country of origin or dialect, all were celebrating this important day.

The playlist included:

- Jan Bendig

- Chorus Mato a Vladko
- Pere Kiss
- Vasko Ray
- Gejza Band
- Rusko Chavo
- Gipsy Stars
- Sampania Leicester
- Dususinho Marian Herak
- Pieta Patricio
- Jan Lendel

For more information, see the website: www.gypsyboss.webs.com

Contact the organiser, Adrian Michael “Jimmy Boss” at:

jimmy25uk@googlemail.com

“Just play and sing live”

A collaboration between the Roma Support Group and the Newham Academy of Music (funded by the Arts Council)

Newham Music Festival of Music and Performing Arts 2015

Morning concert on 7th July 2015 at the Troxy, 490 Commercial Road, London E1 0HX featuring the Bridging Sounds Roma youth orchestra.

For more information, contact Tania@romasupportgroup.org.uk

For more information about the **Bridging Sounds Roma Youth Orchestra**, see <http://www.newham-music.org.uk/#!bridging-sounds-roma-youth-orchestra/c1cp8>

Funding for Roma projects: funding call from European Commission

The European Commission has called for applications for projects designed to support activities to promote Roma integration or to tackle discrimination and/or promote equality. Roma integration is further defined as “aiming to support the implementation of national Roma inclusion strategies or

integrated sets of policy measures and the Council Recommendation on Roma integration". This refers to the policy adopted in December 2013 by the European Commission, as here: [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224\(01\)&from=en](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013H1224(01)&from=en)

The budget available is €3,450,000; the minimum allocation for a grant application is €75,000. Applications have to be submitted by 12 noon, Tuesday 7th July 2015.

The following activities will be considered for funding:

- data collection and surveys;
- conducting scientific research or other scientific activities in the field of anti-discrimination;
- monitoring the implementation of non-discrimination legislation;
- training of professionals;
- mutual learning, exchange of good practices, cooperation, including identifying best practices which may be transferable to other participating countries;
- dissemination and awareness raising activities (including at local level), such as seminars, conferences, campaigns or social media and press activities.

The following types of activities will not be funded:

- individual sponsorships/scholarships for participation in workshops, seminars, conferences, congresses, training courses etc.;
- activities supporting individual political parties;
- provision of financial support to third parties;
- legal actions before national or international courts regardless of their grounds or objectives.

This link provides you with all the information for applicants:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants1/calls/just_2014_rdis_ag_disc_en.htm

This link provides you more detailed information about the application process:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants1/files/2014_rdis_ag_disc/just_2014_rdis_ag_disc_call.pdf

Views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily suggest that they are in accordance with the trustees of the Roma Support Group