

## December 2016 newsletter

### INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to send you a special edition of the newsletter. Pleased, because some good news has come out of Parliament. One of Parliament's select committee – Women & Equalities – has announced they are conducting an inquiry: “tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities”. We would encourage everyone who is able to, to send in a statement. The MPs say they want to hear from Roma communities in the UK; let them hear what we have to say. There's more information below.

We carry as usual some European reports that people, groups and services might find useful; our own forthcoming training event, about working with Roma families and safeguarding; and a number of questions asked in Parliament this year by MPs and members of the Lords which include matters relevant to Roma communities in the UK.

And finally, a short piece about one of our new Roma Support Group workers – Assen Slavchev, one of the two new ‘campaigning and advocacy workers’ who started work in October.

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For more information about Roma Support Group, go to our website here and look at the [‘projects’ pages](#).

Contact us via:

[andy@romasupportgroup.org.uk](mailto:andy@romasupportgroup.org.uk)



## Women and Equalities select committee – inquiry

It isn't often that Roma Support Group is enthusiastic about something that emerges from Westminster or Whitehall. But the news two weeks ago that one of the parliamentary select committees is going to undertake an investigation, is very heartening. Select committees do not make policy. Select committees consist of MPs from all parties, and they have a role in checking out what the government is doing (or not doing) and how that might affect the people or the politics of this country.

The Women and Equalities select committee have launched an inquiry into what minimal commitments the government has made to improve the lives of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers; what progress has been made on these promises and how more generally, policies and practices within the influence of government could tackle the inequalities faced by these communities.

The select committee doesn't pull any punches. They say accurately and bluntly; "Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people are the most disadvantaged ethnic groups in the UK". They trace how this is so by what happens to GRT children in school, about people's poorer health, and about the hostility and harassment Gypsy, Roma and Travellers face on a daily basis. The chair of the select committee, Maria Miller MP says:

*"We have launched this inquiry to look at the effectiveness of policy making and what action the government can take to tackle these and other inequalities. The committee is particularly keen to hear directly from Gypsies, Roma and Travellers about their own experiences".*

The committee outlines nine questions that they would like people and organisations to comment on. They are listed below. About half of these questions are almost technical in nature - wanting to find out how effective the 28 commitments (listed below) the last coalition government made to tackle

inequalities have been. But then the committee want to know other things - like how similar or different are problems facing Gypsy communities, Travellers and Roma; are there any channels of communication between our communities and the government, national or local; what are the current big issues facing Roma communities; and within for example, Roma communities, are the problems that older people, women or gay and lesbian people experience being understood and acknowledged?

The committee wants information, ideas and initiatives. Let's be bold. Let's take this chance to set out what people within Roma communities, and organisations working in Roma communities, think. And what we'd like to see happen. Anyone can make a contribution. **The closing date is Friday 27 January.** There are rules about submitting evidence - but they are not oppressive. They should be followed. They are below. Most importantly, there's a limit of 3,000 words and it should be a Word document. It has to explain who it's from. It has to be submitted via the select committee website.

We would suggest that you focus on problems that face the Roma communities today. If exclusions of Roma children are a big problem in your city or town, try and explain why you think it's a problem; how it affects children and families; why it's wrong; and what you think could be done. The same for everything else - poor housing, getting work, uncertainty after Brexit....:

- What is the issue?
- Why is it a problem?
- How does it affect people?
- What should be done?

This is the scope of the inquiry:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/women-and-equalities-committee/inquiries/parliament-2015/inequalities-faced-by-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-communities-16-17/>

These are the terms of reference;

- effectiveness of government policy
- education
- health
- hostility and harassment

And here are nine points they want answers to:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/women-and-equalities-committee/news-parliament-2015/gypsy-roma-and-traveller-communities-inquiry-launch-16-17/>

This is how to submit evidence. It has to be done online via their website; in a word document; paragraphs numbered; with a maximum of 3,000 words. But read all the guidance here about sending information in.

<http://www.parliament.uk/get-involved/have-your-say/take-part-in-committee-inquiries/commons-witness-guide/>

Here are the oft-quoted 28 commitments that the previous government made in 2012 to address inequalities.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-inequalities-for-gypsies-and-travellers-progress-report>

And finally, in 2014, the last Coalition government claimed this progress in meeting these commitments.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2014-10-29/HL2504/>

MPs have said that they want to hear what Roma communities think - let them know.

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## **Training event: Working with East European Roma in Safeguarding Context: by Roma Support Group**

Thursday 12 January 2017

10 am - 4 pm

London, Amnesty International

### **Aim**

To enable participants to understand and put into practice the good practice when working with Roma communities in a safeguarding context.

### **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the session, participants will:

- Know the basic facts related to the Roma history, culture and customs relevant in a safeguarding context
- Understand the barriers to accessing services
- Identify taboos and culturally sensitive issues
- Understand Roma experience of authorities
- Understand key safeguarding concerns affecting Roma children and adults
- Develop practical tools for engagement
- Build networks with other professionals

### **How to book**

Fill in our booking form attached or visit our website:

<http://romasupportgroup.org.uk/?p=4011>

Or email us: [rsep@romasupportgroup.org.uk](mailto:rsep@romasupportgroup.org.uk)

Booking is essential.

Fees:

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

**If you have a question please contact:**

Gaba on 020 7511 8245 or Email: [rsep@romasupportgroup.org.uk](mailto:rsep@romasupportgroup.org.uk)

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## **Two recent reports from European agencies about different aspects of Roma inclusion.**

### **OSCE training for law enforcement staff working with Roma and Sinti**

Order a copy here.

<http://www.osce.org/odihr/280556>

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### **Fundamental Rights Agency: survey research of 8,000 Roma interviews in nine countries**

#### **Headline findings:**

Some 80% of Roma surveyed live below their country's at-risk-of-poverty threshold; every third Roma lives in housing without tap water; every third Roma child lives in a household where someone went to bed hungry at least once in the previous month; and 50 % of Roma between the ages of six and 24 do not attend school. This report underscores an unsettling but unavoidable reality: the European Union's largest ethnic minority continues to face intolerable discrimination and unequal access to vital services.

Highlighting persisting barriers to employment, education, housing and health services, this report also reveals that four out of 10 Roma surveyed felt discriminated against at least once in the past five years – yet only a fraction pursued the incident. While sobering, this report presents vital information that can serve as a unique resource for policymakers committed to ensuring that Roma are treated equally with respect to their fundamental rights.

The report is based on a survey that collected information on almost 34,000 persons living in Roma households in nine European Union (EU) Member States, derived from nearly 8,000 face-to-face interviews with Roma. It presents a selection of results from FRA's Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II), which surveyed around 26,000 people with immigrant or ethnic minority background living in the EU. The European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey is a major part of the agency's commitment to collecting and publishing data on groups not covered in

general population surveys. It is the third survey of the agency to focus on Roma.

See the full report here.

[http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings_en.pdf)

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### **Council of Europe recruitment**

The Council of Europe are recruiting for a Senior Programme Officer (Grade B5) in the Directorate General of Democracy (DG II). The post will be in the Support Team of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Roma Issues

Closing date: 15 December 2016

Further details here.

<https://www.coe-recruitment.com/JobDetails.aspx?vacancyID=1289&Lang=En>

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### **Parliamentary Questions**

MPs and members of the House of Lords can ask ministers of the Government questions about Government policies, and their impact. We list below the range of questions that have been asked on matters to do with Roma in the UK in 2016, and in one case, about the position of Roma people in Romania. We let you consider both the questions, and the answers given. On the theyworkforyou website, you can say whether you think the answers from ministers answer the question.

<https://www.theyworkforyou.com/written-answers-and-statements/>

Asked by [Baroness Whitaker](#)

Asked on: 18 January 2016

Home Office

Travellers

[HL5133](#)

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they consider the work undertaken by Thames Valley Police in their newly published review of good practice in policing local Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities to be innovative; and what plans they have to encourage other police forces to undertake a similar approach to policy and practice in their areas.

Answered by: [Lord Bates](#)

Answered on: 26 January 2016

Equality and diversity are important – people across all communities want the police to fight crime while having confidence that their needs will be understood and respected.

The Government are pleased that Thames Valley Police have undertaken this piece of work which was co-authored by one of the Executive Directors of the national Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Police Association.

The Government established the College of Police as the professional body for policing to set standards, establish an evidence base for policing and disseminate what works.

It remains a matter for forces how they deal with issues to do with Gypsy Roma and Traveller communities. However, we would expect the College of Policing to make an assessment of effective policing practice and share effective and innovative practice where they find it.

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Asked by [Kate Green](#) (Stretford and Urmston)

Asked on: 07 January 2016

Department for Education



## Pupil Exclusions: Travellers

[21520](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to address the disproportionate number of exclusions from school of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

Answered by: [Nick Gibb](#)

Answered on: 15 January 2016

The Government's approach is to develop opportunities for everyone. This includes measures to improve literacy and numeracy, and the quality of teaching; targeting resource through the pupil premium to ensure every young person, regardless of birth or background, has the opportunity to realise their full potential.

Inequality in relation to exclusion is a complex and longstanding issue. Many of the issues that underlie the inequalities seen in exclusion are inseparable from those that lead to other educational inequalities, including academic attainment. Removing the barriers to children engaging with education is fundamental to attendance, academic attainment, improving behaviour and reducing the need for exclusion.

Through the pupil premium, schools receive additional funding to help them support their disadvantaged pupils, and have flexibility over how they use this to improve the progress and attainment of those pupils. In the current financial year, 59% of Gypsy and Roma pupils and 72% of Traveller pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, compared with 28% of all pupils.

In 2012, the Government funded two local authorities (Cambridgeshire and Kent) to each appoint a Virtual Head Teacher to support schools in raising the attainment of GRT pupils, to increase awareness of the common issues faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and to help schools to overcome them.

The findings of these pilots are available

at <https://www.learntogether.org.uk/Resources/Documents/Cambs%20VHT%2>

[ODfE%20final%20report.doc](#) and [http://www.edukent.co.uk/images/uploads/misc\\_files/VHT\\_Kent\\_Final\\_report\\_GH.pdf](http://www.edukent.co.uk/images/uploads/misc_files/VHT_Kent_Final_report_GH.pdf).

The Department has also produced short case studies of schools that have been successful in improving the attendance and attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils. These are available at: [www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/gypsy-roma-and-traveller-pupils-supporting-access-to-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/gypsy-roma-and-traveller-pupils-supporting-access-to-education).

Schools have duties under the Equality Act 2010 not to discriminate against pupils, including in the exclusion process. These duties are considered as part of the inspection process and complaints processes exist to consider individual complaints.

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Asked by [Kate Green](#) (Stretford and Urmston)

Asked on: 07 January 2016

Department for Education

Education: Travellers

[21519](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she will re-establish the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Education Stakeholder Group; and if she will make a statement.

Answered by: [Nick Gibb](#)

Answered on: 14 January 2016

We are currently considering the Department's role in the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Education Stakeholder Group. Officials will be writing to members of the group in the spring.

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Asked by [Kate Green](#) (Stretford and Urmston)

Asked on: 27 April 2016

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Romania: Travellers

[35784](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with the Romanian government on the treatment of the Roma community in that country.

Answered by: [Mr David Lidington](#)

Answered on: 06 May 2016

We closely follow the treatment of the Roma Community in Romania. The UK condemns discrimination in all its forms and has on numerous occasions discussed this issue with the Romanian government. The UK was represented at the Romanian Government's Inter-Ministerial Committee responsible for monitoring the National Strategy for Roma Inclusion on 21 March. On 12 April the British Ambassador to Romania issued a public statement regarding discrimination against the Roma community, following acts of vandalism at the National Centre for Roma Culture's tent at the University Square. We continue to urge the Romanian government to take all necessary measures to ensure that all its citizens can fully enjoy their rights.

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Asked by [Rehman Chishti](#) (Gillingham and Rainham)

Asked on: 18 October 2016

Ministry of Justice

Secure Training Centres: Travellers

[49053](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what progress her Department has made on implementing the recommendation of the findings paper of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, People in prisons: Gypsies, Romany and

Travellers, published in February 2014, on recording the number of young people of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma background in secure training centres.

Answered by: [Dr Phillip Lee](#)

Answered on: 26 October 2016

The Youth Justice Board currently records the ethnicity of young people in Secure Training Centres (STC) using the 2001 Census categories.

The Youth Justice Board commissions HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) to carry out an annual survey, 'Children in Custody', to monitor Gypsy, Romany and Traveller children in youth offenders' institutions (YOIs) and secure training centres (STCs).

The YJB keep their data collection systems, including on ethnicity, under regular review.

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Asked by [Rehman Chishti](#) (Gillingham and Rainham)

Asked on: 18 October 2016

Ministry of Justice

Youth Custody: Travellers

[49052](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, how many Gypsy, Traveller and Roma young people were held in (a) secure training centres, (b) secure children's homes and (c) young offenders' institutions in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Answered by: [Dr Phillip Lee](#)

Answered on: 26 October 2016

The Youth Justice Board (YJB) and HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) publish an annual report on 'Children in Custody' that monitors the number of gypsy, traveller and Romany (GRT) children in youth offenders' institutions (YOIs) and secure training centres (STCs). The reports are available on the HMIP website.

The survey does not cover young people in Secure Children's Homes (SCH). This is because Ofsted are responsible for inspecting SCHs, not HMIP.

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Asked by [John Pugh](#) (Southport)

Asked on: 26 October 2016

Department for Education

Pupil Exclusions: Travellers

[50434](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma pupils were excluded from school in each local authority area in 2014-15.

Answered by: [Edward Timpson](#)

Answered on: 01 November 2016

The Department has not yet published exclusion information broken down by ethnic group at local authority level for the 2014 to 2015 academic year. It will be published in due course.

The information is available at national level in the 'Permanent and fixed-period exclusions in England: 2014 to 2015' National statistics release[1].

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/permanent-and-fixed-period-exclusions-in-england-2014-to-2015>

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Asked by [Baroness Hodgson of Abinger](#)

Asked on: 31 October 2016

Department for Education

Children in Care: Travellers

[HL2867](#)

To ask Her Majesty's Government how many Gypsy and Traveller children were taken into care in 2015 and how this compares with the general population.

Answered by: [Lord Nash](#)

Answered on: 09 November 2016

In the year ending 31 March 2016, 32,050 children started to be looked after, of which 210 had an ethnic origin of Gypsy/Roma or Traveller of Irish heritage.

The comparable figures for the year ending 31 March 2015, were 31,340 children starting to be looked after, of which 240 were of Gypsy/Roma or Traveller of Irish Heritage ethnic origin.

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Asked by [Kate Green](#) (Stretford and Urmston)

Asked on: 27 October 2016

Department for Education

Education: Travellers

[50729](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what terms of reference and objectives have been set for her Department's Gypsy, Roma and Traveller expert panel.

Answered by: [Nick Gibb](#)

Answered on: 04 November 2016

There are a number of factors that influence the educational attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, and it is important that the Department continues to maintain a frequent dialogue with key representatives and organisations from these communities. The Department is currently developing its plans and will provide further detail in due course.

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Asked by [Kate Green](#) (Stretford and Urmston)

Asked on: 27 October 2016

Department for Education

Education: Travellers

[50782](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 25 October 2016 to Question 49242, what organisations and community groups have been invited to provide expertise on the drivers for raising the educational attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.

Answered by: [Nick Gibb](#)

Answered on: 04 November 2016

There are a number of factors that influence the educational attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, and it is important that the Department continues to maintain a frequent dialogue with key representatives and organisations from these communities. The Department is currently developing its plans and will provide further detail in due course.

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Asked by [Kate Green](#) (Stretford and Urmston)

Asked on: 18 October 2016

Department for Education

Pupils: Bullying

[49241](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that racist bullying of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils is tackled effectively in schools.

Answered by: [Caroline Dinéage](#)

Answered on: 25 October 2016

Bullying, for whatever reason, is absolutely unacceptable and should not be tolerated in our schools.

All schools are required by law to have a behaviour policy with measures to tackle bullying among pupils. Schools are free to develop their own anti-bullying strategies but they are held clearly to account for their effectiveness through Ofsted.

The government continues to make tackling all forms of bullying a priority. In September 2016, the Department for Education and the Government Equalities Office announced £4.4m of funding for 10 projects to tackle bullying, this includes a project led by the Anne Frank Trust which encourages young people to think about the importance of tackling prejudice, discrimination and bullying.

The department has produced good practice case studies for schools working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils, which are available at: [www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/gypsy-roma-and-traveller-pupils-supporting-access-to-education](http://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/gypsy-roma-and-traveller-pupils-supporting-access-to-education), and is currently considering the drivers for raising the educational attainment of GRT pupils, drawing on expertise from these communities.

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Asked by [Baroness Hodgson of Abinger](#)

Asked on: 31 October 2016

Department for Education

Schools: Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month

[HL2864](#)

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they intend to take to encourage schools to promote Gypsy Roma Traveller History month in June 2017.

Answered by: [Lord Nash](#)

Answered on: 09 November 2016



Schools have a crucial role to play in celebrating the history and culture of all their pupils, fostering inclusion and reaching out to the communities they serve. The Government is keen to support and encourage all schools to fulfil this important role. The Department for Education is currently considering the drivers for raising the educational attainment of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils, drawing on expertise from these communities, and will consider GRT History Month in that context.

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Asked by [Kate Green](#) (Stretford and Urmston)

Asked on: 11 November 2016

Department for Communities and Local Government

Travellers

[52675](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the Institute for Public Research report on Roma communities and Brexit: integrating and empowering Roma communities in the UK, published on 24 October 2016.

Answered by: [Mr Marcus Jones](#)

Answered on: 18 November 2016

The Government has noted the conclusions of the report by the Institute for Public Policy Research report on Roma communities. The UK does have a strong legal framework which protects all individuals, including Roma, from racial and other forms of discrimination and hate crime, and will continue to do so after the United Kingdom leaves the European Union.

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Asked by [Kate Green](#) (Stretford and Urmston)

Asked on: 08 November 2016

Department for Communities and Local Government

Travellers: EU Grants and Loans

[52441](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, how many programmes aimed at increasing the Roma involvement, including Gypsies and Travellers, in the labour market have been funded under the 2014 to 2020 European Structural Investment Funds programme in England as part of the Building Better Opportunities initiative.

Answered by: [Andrew Percy](#)

Answered on: 18 November 2016

Under the 2014 - 20 European Structural and Investment Funds there are no programmes specifically aimed at increasing the Roma, Gypsy and Traveller involvement in the labour market, but the European Social Fund will be capturing the number of Roma, Gypsy and Traveller beneficiaries for the 2014 - 20 Programme but the figures are likely to be released in 2017. The European Regional Development Fund does not capture these figures.

Roma, Gypsy and Traveller groups and local authorities can seek to access European Structural and Investment Funds through their Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

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Asked by [Kate Green](#) (Stretford and Urmston)

Asked on: 08 November 2016

Department for Communities and Local Government

Travellers: EU Grants and Loans

[52440](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, how many Gypsy, Traveller and Roma (GTR) people have been beneficiaries of European Structural Funds (ESIF) and European Development Funds (ERDF) programmes supported by 2014 to 2020 ESIF funding in England; and what

proportion of ESF and ERDF beneficiaries under 2014 to 2020 ESIF programmes are GTR.

Answered by: [Andrew Percy](#)

Answered on: 18 November 2016

Under the 2014 - 20 European Structural and Investment Funds there are no programmes specifically aimed at increasing the Roma, Gypsy and Traveller involvement in the labour market, but the European Social Fund will be capturing the number of Roma, Gypsy and Traveller beneficiaries for the 2014 - 20 Programme but the figures are likely to be released in 2017. The European Regional Development Fund does not capture these figures.

Roma, Gypsy and Traveller groups and local authorities can seek to access European Structural and Investment Funds through their Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

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Asked by [Kate Green](#) (Stretford and Urmston)

Asked on: 08 November 2016

Department for Communities and Local Government

Travellers

[52211](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what steps he plans to take to facilitate the submission of applications by local authorities with significant Roma populations to secure (a) European Structural and Investment Funds set aside for the period 2014 to 2020 and (b) Government funding for the support of Roma populations.

Answered by: [Andrew Percy](#)

Answered on: 18 November 2016

Under the 2014 - 20 European Structural and Investment Funds there are no programmes specifically aimed at increasing the Roma, Gypsy and Traveller

involvement in the labour market, but the European Social Fund will be capturing the number of Roma, Gypsy and Traveller beneficiaries for the 2014 - 20 Programme but the figures are likely to be released in 2017. The European Regional Development Fund does not capture these figures.

Roma, Gypsy and Traveller groups and local authorities can seek to access European Structural and Investment Funds through their Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

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Asked by [Kate Green](#) (Stretford and Urmston)

Asked on: 22 November 2016

Department for Communities and Local Government

Travellers

[54254](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2016 to Question 52441, if he will issue supplementary guidance to local enterprise partnerships on focussing programmes at local level on ensuring greater Roma participation.

Answered by: [Andrew Percy](#)

Answered on: 30 November 2016

It is for local areas to decide on how best to engage their population and meet local needs.

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Asked by [Kate Green](#) (Stretford and Urmston)

Asked on: 25 November 2016

Department for Communities and Local Government

Travellers: EU grants and loans

[54951](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, pursuant to the Answer of 18 November 2016 to Question 52441, if he will take steps to promote the use of EU structural funds to support greater Roma involvement in the labour market.

Answered by: [Andrew Percy](#)

Answered on: 05 December 2016

No. Roma, Gypsy and Traveller groups and local authorities can engage in European Structural and Investment Funds through their Local Enterprise Partnership.

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Asked by [Kate Green](#) (Stretford and Urmston)

Asked on: 22 November 2016

Department for Communities and Local Government

Travellers: EU Action

[54213](#)

To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the conclusions of the 2011 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.

Answered by: [Mr Marcus Jones](#)

Answered on: 30 November 2016

The Government is committed to creating a fair society in which all people, of whatever ethnic origin or background, are able to participate fully in society and realise their full potential. The United Kingdom has a strong and well-established legal framework, which protects all individuals, including Roma, against discrimination and hate crime. The UK is taking forward Roma integration through wider social inclusion policies, which is fully in line with our

commitments under the 2011 EU Council Conclusions on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020.

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### **Assen Slavchev, Campaigning and advocacy worker**

I was born in Lom, northwestern part of Bulgaria; this region has the highest concentration of Roma population in the country. I have got MA degree in economics of trade.

I have over than 15 years experience in Roma community development in Bulgaria. We implemented educational, income generation, health, advocacy and capacity building programmes for Roma. As a direct result of our work, 95% of Roma pupils finished secondary school (year 10); 117 became university students (for the whole history of my own we had 5 people University degrees); 9 police officers; 7 out of 29 councillors; 2 deputy mayors, the chairman of the local council; 2 mandates; and over 20 Roma businesses were set up. Our organisation became the main and equal partner of local and national statutory bodies regarding Roma minority inclusion.

Since 2010 I have been working voluntary for different UK organisations. I am member of different state and local commissions dealing with Gypsy Roma Traveller issues.

In June 2015, I started to work for Luton Roma Trust as Roma community champion and since this October, I have joined the team of Roma Support Group as Roma Campaigning and Advocacy Worker.

During all those years I - and not only me - realised that Roma people are the most vulnerable minority group, which needs systematic help to get out off the trap where they are. As Roma myself I take it as a cause and a duty to work, help and fight for our right to be treated equally with everybody else in our world.

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

