

## The situation of the Roma in Europe: challenges and ways forward

### Editorial



By Miroslav Lacko, ENAR Board Member for Slovakia

Roma issues will be high on the Spanish Presidency of the EU's agenda, the high point being the 2nd EU Roma Summit on 8 April 2010. Spain is all the more well-placed to push this issue

forward at both EU and national levels, given the positive and impactful measures it has taken in recent years to encourage the social and labour market inclusion of its Roma population.

At the start of the EU Spanish Presidency's term and weeks ahead of the Roma Summit, ENAR is therefore happy to dedicate this edition of ENARgy to the situation of the Roma in Europe. It offers a by no means exhaustive sampling of a range of perspectives on this issue. It starts by outlining Roma civil society's assessment of EU actions in relation to the Roma and presenting the Spanish Presidency's priorities in this area. The articles in the newsletter also give an overview of the employment situation of the Roma, ways forward for addressing discrimination against Roma in education and housing, as well as the situation of Roma EU citizens moving to other EU member states. The problematic issue of racist violence targeted at the Roma is raised with a case-study from the Czech Republic. Finally, on a more positive note, two best practice examples of Roma inclusion from Spain and Hungary are featured.

Roma are the largest minority group in Europe, estimated at 7-9 million, and yet the most disadvantaged one. ENAR members have consistently highlighted the discrimination and exclusion suffered by Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities in essentially all areas of life. A Eurobarometer survey conducted in January 2007 found that 77% of Europeans believe that being a Roma is a disadvantage in their society. The survey also found that people were less comfortable having a Roma neighbour than a member of another ethnic minority.

In recent years the EU has done much to promote the inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities, including the establishment of a comprehensive anti-discrimination legal framework and the implementation of substantial funding measures. However

deep-seated problems remain for the Roma population, including abuse of their rights to education, housing, healthcare and employment as well as manifestations of anti-gypsism. The Roma have also increasingly become the target of organised racist violence, exacerbated by the economic crisis, in several European countries.

Despite EU efforts, there is to date no integrated and comprehensive EU policy specifically aimed at the Roma. Such a comprehensive and ambitious approach would secure real change in the lives of the ten million Roma in Europe. Concrete ways of tackling the problems faced by the Roma population in Europe could include: developing common European standards for Roma inclusion with the effective engagement of the institutions and member states of the EU; providing basic rights for quality education, adequate and affordable housing, effective health and social services; empowering Roma communities and ensuring the active participation of civil society in developing policies; and challenging extremist groups and inaccurate reporting in the media. A strong and holistic cooperation between all actors - from EU institutions and member states to local communities - is key to ensure the success of Roma-related policies, as are bottom-up approaches to address the real needs of Roma communities, as expressed by themselves.

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# A Roma civil society assessment of the EU Platform

Ivan Ivanov, Executive Director, European Roma Information Office



2nd meeting of the EU Platform for Roma inclusion, September 2009 - © European Commission

**This article provides a critical assessment of the EU Roma Platform for Roma inclusion and the EU Roma Summit, from a Roma civil society perspective. It also outlines some of the expectations of these civil society organisations in terms of EU Roma policies.**

The efforts of the European Roma Information Office (ERIO) and other advocacy organisations in the last five years to convince the European Commission that the Roma issue requires urgent action and that this action should be based on a European Strategy have achieved some progress. Indeed, we have convinced them that the Roma situation is alarming, referring to a number of research papers, reports and legal cases which illustrate the poverty and exclusion that Roma experience and the racism and discrimination which they are subjected to in their everyday life. Today, looking at Commission reports related to social inclusion and anti-discrimination, we often see Roma mentioned as one of the most disadvantaged groups. The Roma issue has been well articulated in the past years and is now on the political agenda of the EU. This issue has often been addressed in the speeches of previous

Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs Vladimír Špidla and other high level representatives of the European Commission. During EU level events, speakers representing the EU Presidencies often refer to the discrimination and social exclusion faced by Roma in their member states. Recognition has been gained and it is now up to decision makers at European and national level to translate rhetoric into practice, to make commitments and act.

The second focus of our efforts was to ensure that the EU adopts a European Roma strategy. This resulted in the creation of the European Platform for Roma inclusion at the beginning of 2009. Although for many stakeholders it still seems to be an abstract initiative, as Mr. Juan Carlos Mato, Director-General working for the Ministry of Social Affairs expressed himself recently during a meeting of Roma organisations with the Spanish EU Presidency, it could be considered as a step forward. Five years ago, at the beginning of the previous European Commission's mandate, it would have been almost impossible to ask for such a Platform. According to the Commission the EU Platform "...should provide for an open and

# Platform for Roma inclusion and EU Roma Summit (ERIO)

flexible environment which enables all key actors - EU institutions, member states, civil society and other international actors and initiatives - to exchange knowledge, experience and good practice, to make and renew commitments for initiatives as well as possibly monitor progress achieved...". The reason why activists consider the Platform as abstract is because they initially expected a structure to be created. However, it was clearly stated by the Commission that it is a process. With the Platform for Roma inclusion the Commission has neutralised all efforts towards a specific EU Roma Strategy.

The future work and further development of the Platform is based on the "10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion". These 10 Common Basic Principles are:

1. Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies;
2. Explicit but not exclusive targeting;
3. Intercultural approach;
4. Aiming for the mainstream;
5. Awareness of the gender dimension;
6. Transfer of evidence-based policies;
7. Use of Community instruments;
8. Involvement of regional and local authorities;
9. Involvement of civil society;
10. Active participation of the Roma.

These 10 Common Basic Principles are essentially a summary of several recommendations proposed so far to the EU institutions by ERIO and other players in the field, which should be considered as a legally non-binding declaration, referring to the principles in the Council conclusions. It is to be hoped that some member states where political will for change exists will manage to translate these very theoretical principles into practice.

The Platform meetings are decided upon and organised by the member state holding the EU Presidency. They bring together national governments, the EU, international organisations and Roma civil society representatives. According to the Commission, these meetings aim at stimulating cooperation and exchanges of experience on successful Roma inclusion policies and practices. Our concern is that all these meetings remain in the frame of the rhetoric and no real outcome can be seen. Each Presidency, during its six-month mandate, maintains the discussion with one or two Roma related events but after that Roma issues are taken off their priority list. Roma civil society organisations therefore put a lot of hope in the next three Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies of the EU. The Spanish Presidency is particularly promising as the Spanish government has shown an interest in contributing to the EU level Roma initiatives and

raising awareness of its own positive practices in relation to Roma integration.

**"RECOGNITION OF THE ROMA ISSUE HAS BEEN GAINED AND IT IS NOW UP TO DECISION MAKERS AT EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL LEVEL TO TRANSLATE RHETORIC INTO PRACTICE, TO MAKE COMMITMENTS AND ACT"**

In addition to these initiatives, further evidence of the recognition of Roma issues by the European Commission is the EU Roma Summit. The first Roma Summit was organised in September 2008 under the French EU Presidency,

where Commission President Barroso underlined that these events represent "a unique opportunity for getting the problems of the Roma higher on the agenda than ever before". The event gathered three Commissioners, including Vice-President Barrot (Justice and Home Affairs), Commissioner Špidla (Employment and Social Affairs) and Commissioner Jan Figel (Education, Training, Culture and Youth) and many other high level EU and member states representatives. However, apart from ceremonial speeches, there was no clear declaration of commitment. Roma participants who came initially with very high expectations were disappointed. They came to hear something more than presenting the Roma's problems, which Roma know very well. They came to hear more than vague demonstrations of political will by governmental officials in front of the EU institutions, instead of specific commitments for solution to these problems. Nevertheless, although not very productive, we should recognise that this event, which for first time gathered high level EU, governmental and civil society representatives, is one step further in the recognition of Roma rights at the European level.

The second Roma Summit will be organised in Cordoba by the Spanish EU Presidency on International Roma Day, on 8th of April this year. But Roma will not accept it if the second summit repeats the scenario of the first one. They come once again with expectations and call on the new European Commission to go beyond heartbreaking speeches and to make member states agree to concrete commitments. It is also expected that the Spanish Presidency will put forward short term and mid-term plans for Roma integration in Europe, which should make member states more organised and clearer in their actions towards Roma inclusion and equal treatment. The European Commission and the Spanish government also intend to encourage member states to find ways to use the EU Structural Funds in a more effective way so that Roma can see a change in their situation in the short term.

In this context, it is also the role of ERIO and other advocacy organisations to assist the European Commission, the European Parliament and EU Presidencies in upholding their promises and implementing their commitments. On the other hand, our role is also to criticise if everything remains in the field of talks and no progress is made.

# Political objectives of the Spanish Presidency of the EU in relation to the Roma

José Manuel Fresno, Independent Expert on Roma issues and Coordinator of the Roma Summit for the Spanish EU Presidency, Spain

The issue of the Roma has acquired political relevance on the European agenda in recent years. Between 2005 and 2009 several resolutions have been approved by the European Parliament insisting on the need for the European institutions and the member states to take measures in different areas to reduce disparities and support the full inclusion of the Roma community. These resolutions have insisted not only on the need to protect the human rights of the Roma and to fight against discrimination but also to take measures and actions, especially in the areas of housing, education, health and employment to overcome the barriers that today hinder Roma from accessing full citizenship. In particular, the need to support Roma women has been reiterated.

The European Council has also pointed out the need to take action given the extreme exclusion that many Roma communities face today. In its recommendations in December 2007 it emphasised its awareness “of the very specific situation faced by the Roma across the Union”, invited “member states and the Union to use all means to improve their inclusion” and invited “the Commission to examine existing policies and instruments and to report to the Council on progress achieved before the end of June 2008”.

The first European Roma Summit held in Brussels in September 2008 was a milestone in the work of the European Commission in this field. In the opening session the President of the Commission José Manuel Barroso insisted that the “inclusion of Roma is a joint responsibility of the European Union and the member states”. Following this event, the Council of Ministers reached agreement on several issues, among others the development of the Integrated Platform for Roma Inclusion: the aim was to make use of the integrated European platform for Roma inclusion for the exchange of good practice and experience between the member states and with those countries with a perspective of joining the EU, and in cooperation with all parties and international organisations concerned by Roma issues. The Council also agreed on applying the Common Basic Principles of the Integrated Platform: the Commission and member states, in close cooperation, and in accordance with their respective competences have to take into account the Common Basic Principles, where appropriate, when designing and implementing policies to promote the full inclusion of the Roma.

The Spanish Presidency of the EU intends to promote the Roma dossier by bringing focus to objectives at the political level and by endowing existing instruments with substance. For this purpose, it will work towards:



1st EU Roma Summit, September 2008 - © European Commission

1. Obtaining an agreement in the European Council in June 2010 that will establish a roadmap to provide substance to the Platform, by defining its axes/central points, by prioritising issues, by indicating a medium-term working plan on the one hand, and by defining the mechanism that will underpin the functioning of the Platform on the other.
2. Introducing, in a cross-sectoral manner, thematic agreements in the EU Councils.
3. Consolidating the European Commission’s transversal approach by securing a more active involvement of the different Directorates-General related to the fields and issues that are most relevant to Roma inclusion and development.
4. Reaching an agreement with the Trio of EU Presidencies on a working plan so that each Presidency achieves progress on a single issue (for example health, education, housing), addressed by the relevant corresponding Council.
5. Focusing on thematic priorities in order to establish concrete areas where progress can be achieved. In the field of education, priorities could be: early education and early school leaving; secondary education, professional training and access to employment; and desegregation. In the field of health, priority could be given to health inequalities. With regard to the EU Structural Funds, the focus could be to make proper use of the new article 7 that expands eligibility criteria to actions in the field of housing.

This working plan was presented for comments in February to Roma organisations and to the Informal Contact Group and will be the basis for the Second European Roma Summit to be held in Cordoba in April 2010. Following the upcoming Summit, a new meeting of the Platform will take place to advance on some of the conclusions reached by the Summit.

**“THE SPANISH PRESIDENCY OF THE EU INTENDS TO PROMOTE THE ROMA DOSSIER BY BRINGING FOCUS TO OBJECTIVES AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL AND BY ENDOWING EXISTING INSTRUMENTS WITH SUBSTANCE”**

# Racist violence targeted against the Roma: The Czech case

ENAR, in cooperation with Zřvůle prava o.s.

In the past three years, there has been a steady rise in activities and public gatherings of the extreme right, affiliated informal extremist groups and of a political party created in 2003 that serves as their base in the Czech Republic. Neo-Nazis have organised a number of demonstrations and even riots in Czech towns, primarily against the Roma population, but also against foreigners, labelled by NGOs as attempted pogroms. The Czech extreme right movement took on the tactics of similar groups abroad, including having a registered political party - the Workers' Party (Dělnická strana) - and convening events so that their supporters could attend them. Although the events of 2008 revealed their strengths and abilities, as well as the unpreparedness of state authorities for the situation, the subsequent activities of civil society and the state authorities calmed the activities of the extreme right.

## Racist incidents targeted at the Roma

Numerous anti-Roma incidents and marches have taken place in recent years and were visible especially in 2008 - greater in size and terrifying in the attempted violence. The Janov housing estate, in the north Bohemian town of Litvínov, where the majority of inhabitants are Roma, has been a particular target of extremist anti-Roma attacks. In October 2008, the Workers' Party began harassing the Roma living in the Janov housing estate. The party announced that it had received numerous complaints from local non-Roma residents about the behaviour of their "inadaptable" neighbours and that it would be sending its "Protection Corps" to "monitor" the situation. On 4 October 2008, members of the "Protection Corps" met with resistance from Roma residents, some carrying sticks, who came out to prevent this march and protect themselves. Police narrowly averted a direct clash between the two groups. On 20 October 2008, some 500 police officers including helicopter surveillance had to be called out to protect the Roma from a pogrom by the aggressive neo-Nazis who did not hesitate to engage in violence even against the police.

These incidents of racist violence by extremist groups culminated in riots in the town of Litvínov on 17 November 2008. Preceded by discussions on neo-Nazi internet forums of how to best arm themselves to battle the police, it eventually took some 1,000 police officers to protect the Janov housing estate from hundreds of neo-Nazis from the Czech Republic and abroad who tried to march on the local Roma immediately after a Workers' Party rally on the town square. After two hours of street fighting against radicals who threw paving stones and Molotov cocktails, set police cars on fire and destroyed journalists' video equipment, police succeeded in preventing the radicals from carrying out their pogrom.

## Response by the authorities

The government failed to provide an adequate immediate response to these rising incidents of racist violence against the Roma community, and was forced to reassess its approach to this issue. In May 2008, the Czech Interior Ministry issued its report on internal security and public order in the Czech Republic, comparing the situation in 2007 and 2006. The ministry said the situation in the area of extremism was "constant" and that there was no need for it to be perceived as a security threat. The subsequent events proved this assessment to be disappointingly inaccurate.

With respect to the riots in Litvínov, the police did not search vehicles for weapons in the immediate hours before the demonstration, although the protesters had discussed the possibilities of bringing weapons on their internet forums. Neither the police nor the town hall attempted to negotiate a different march route with the neo-Nazis so as to better protect the lives and property of the people in danger. Activists also criticised the fact that the police did not stop the

neo-Nazi march, which was obviously armed, immediately but waited until they were in the very centre of the densely inhabited housing estate to take action. In addition, none of the 12 people (out of 500 rioters) eventually charged with disorderly conduct were kept in custody; all

were released, and two months later charges were dropped against all but one of them.

Following these and other alarming events and with the issue of rising extremism on the front pages, the Czech police anti-extremism unit carried out a number of house searches and arrests among the extremist groups, one of which resulted in the arrest of tens of persons, among them high-ranking Workers' Party members. The Interior Ministry also approved a national strategy to combat extremism in 2008.

## Response by civil society

Czech civil society has increasingly tried to organise itself to respond to right-wing extremist violence. The Roma community itself, as well as human rights and other NGOs, have taken different concerted actions to tackle incidents of racist violence. Roma activists and their supporters organised peaceful public demonstrations against neo-Nazism in the towns of Rokycany and Litvínov, as well as two larger demonstrations against racism in Prague in the aftermath of the Litvínov attacks. In addition, NGOs responded to rising neo-Nazi activities, in particular the November 2008 riot in Litvínov, by demanding that the Czech Interior Minister Ivan Langer ban the extremist Workers' Party and launching a petition to achieve this ban. Finally on 24 November, a motion was submitted to the Supreme Administrative Court by the ministry.

*(Continues on page 16)*

**"NUMEROUS ANTI-ROMA INCIDENTS AND MARCHES HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN RECENT YEARS AND WERE VISIBLE ESPECIALLY IN 2008 - GREATER IN SIZE AND TERRIFYING IN THE ATTEMPTED VIOLENCE"**

# Territorial segregation of the Roma as access to the labour market

Andor Urmos, Directorate-General for Regional Policy, European Commission

**This article gives an overview of the employment situation of the Roma in Eastern Europe, and Hungary in particular, both in terms of the problems faced by the Roma in this field and of possible solutions.**

The difficult access of the Roma to the labour market is usually explained by low levels of education, a lack of appropriate skills and labour market discrimination. All of these factors are extremely important, but we should not forget territorial deprivation and segregation of Roma people as well. Based on the figures provided by several Hungarian authors (e.g. Kemeny, Kertesi), the extremely low level of labour market integration of the Roma is caused by three major factors: lack of skills, labour market discrimination and territorial deprivation. These three factors are equally important in the Roma's access to the labour market. The third factor, territorial deprivation, means that Roma are overrepresented in those territories where there are very few labour market opportunities. These territories are depressed regions, micro-regions and segregated Roma settlements.

As the regional differences have been growing in many Eastern European countries in the past 10 to 15 years, labour markets have simultaneously also experienced significant problems. Hungary in particular has been split roughly into two parts: the developed parts, especially the Central Hungary Region, where all the economic indicators are close to the European average (this region is a competitive region), and the highly underdeveloped regions, where all the economic figures have not changed or have become worse since the transition from communism. One third of Roma in Hungary are living in depressed regions. They are highly overrepresented in small villages and in micro-regions, where the level of infrastructure is well below the national average. The distance between the regional centres of Central Hungary and the Northern Hungary Region is about 200 kilometres, but labour market figures show bigger differences (see figure).

If one compares the number of registered vacant jobs and the unemployment rate, one can immediately see that people living in Northern Hungary face 5,5 times higher unemployment rates and almost 3 times less vacant jobs, compared to the Central Hungary region. Again, we are talking of 200 kilometres, which

<sup>1</sup> Former Head of Department of Roma Integration, Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, Hungary, 2002-2009.

could be slightly more than the daily commute of some Western European or Northern American employees.

This situation requires urgent steps to enhance labour

market mobility. All of the unemployed people - especially Roma - who are living in these depressed regions will never find jobs in their region, so they should therefore be mobilised to move to other, more developed regions, with more favourable labour market opportunities. When we talk about mobility of employees, we should not forget other family members as well. Roma employees in particular complain about the lack of social support, which is the most important barrier to moving to other regions to seek a job. For this reason, labour market mobility programmes should have a comprehensive approach, containing human resource elements (skills training, vocational training, etc.), social services elements (access to social care and healthcare facilities for all members of the family), and educational elements (access to public education for children).

Many Eastern European countries face difficult problems of segregation of the Roma, both in the educational system and in housing. Not only in the depressed regions, but even in the developed regions, there is a significant difference in employment figures between segregated and non-segregated neighbourhoods. Segregation means that people are directly or non-directly forced to live in a particular area, they belong to the same social/ethnic group, and they face highly depressed

infrastructural (housing, water supply, sewage, roads, etc.) conditions. They do not wish to live in these areas, and if they had the possibility, they would move. At the same time, the only social support which they receive is through their local networks (relatives mostly) in

these segregated neighbourhoods. It sometimes happens that Roma say that do not want to leave their neighbourhood and that they like it, but people tend to forget the fear that they face because they are living without any social support (this is similar to the way afro-Americans consider ghettos, see in: Kenneth B. Clarke, "Dark Ghetto"). Mobilisation from segregated neighbourhoods means better access to the labour market, to

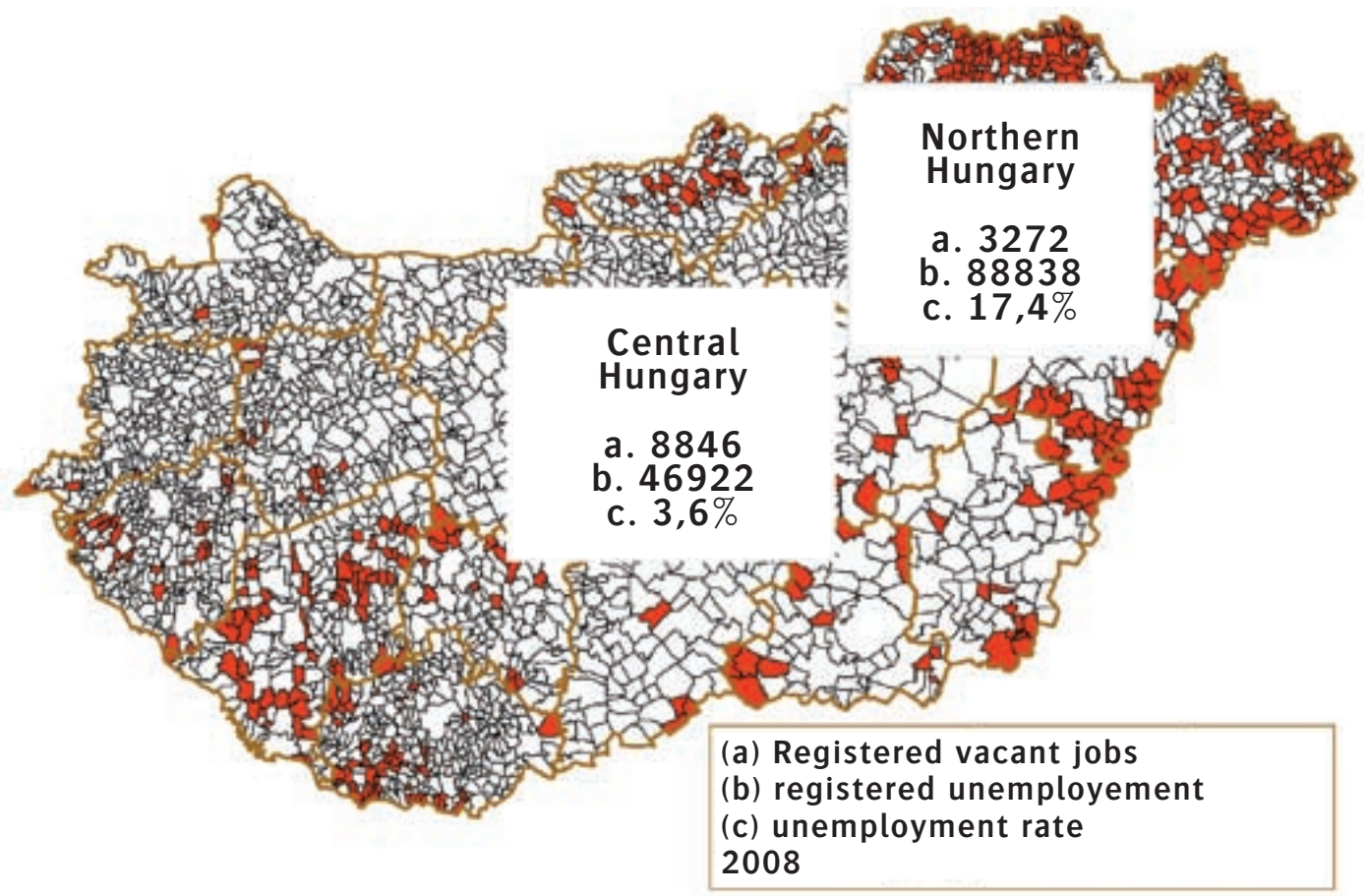


Roma slum settlement under the biggest Belgrade bridge Gazela in Serbia - © Michal Kowalski/Babel Images

**"THE EXTREMELY LOW LEVEL OF LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF THE ROMA IS CAUSED BY THREE MAJOR FACTORS: LACK OF SKILLS, LABOUR MARKET DISCRIMINATION AND TERRITORIAL DEPRIVATION"**

# one of the major barriers to their

mission<sup>1</sup>



social care, healthcare and other facilities whilst at the same time getting rid of the stigma which is reinforced by living in segregated neighbourhoods.

Labour market and vocational training initiatives aiming to improve access to the labour market by marginalised communities, particularly by the Roma, are widely used in Eastern European countries. Many of these programmes are financed by European funds. Hungary has in recent years introduced a completely new approach. It has allocated a special EU budget for the most disadvantaged 33 micro-regions. This initiative focuses on labour market integration, providing a wide range of tools - vocational training, adult training, wage subsidisation, establishing social cooperatives, etc. The initiative is unique, as the allocated budget means 33 most disadvantaged micro-regions do not compete with other

**“MOBILISATION FROM SEGREGATED NEIGHBOURHOODS MEANS BETTER ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET, TO SOCIAL CARE, HEALTHCARE AND OTHER FACILITIES WHILST AT THE SAME TIME GETTING RID OF THE STIGMA WHICH IS REINFORCED BY LIVING IN SEGREGATED NEIGHBOURHOODS”**

micro-regions with regard to accession to funds. The programme is generally successful, but labour market mobilisation, of the Roma in particular, should be enhanced in the future, as the problem of lack of jobs in the depressed regions remains despite these measures.

The labour market integration of the Roma who are living in segregated neighbourhoods requires urgent interventions, not just to involve them in vocational training and other labour market programmes - de-segregation interventions are also extremely important. If we do not take these problems seriously, we will reinforce the isolation of Roma and other people who live in segregated areas. In addition to the problem of affordable social welfare systems in many Eastern European countries, the lack of effective labour market integration of unemployed and segregated people could lead to strong dysfunction and collapse.

# Key issues and approaches in Roma education<sup>1</sup>

Mihai Surdu, Roma Education Fund, Hungary

This article addresses the issues faced by Roma in the field of education and the ways forward in terms of tackling these issues, including desegregation policies

One of the pitfalls in reviewing the main issues related to the education of Roma is to separate the access issues from the quality of education. In fact, the two dimensions - access and quality of education - are to a great extent intertwined and only seeing them in combination can we understand the challenges faced by Roma in the field of education.

A large body of empirical research shows that the main issues related to access to education are:

- an extremely low participation in preschool education;
- a high share of Roma never enrolled in the education system;
- a very low transition to higher secondary education diminishing drastically at tertiary level;
- and consistently high drop-out rates, especially in lower secondary education.

As a result of low access to education, the total number of years spent in the education system is on average about half the national averages in the countries of the Decade of Roma Inclusion<sup>2</sup>. One important element to mention is the fact that the non-enrolment and the drop-out rates are much higher in segregated educational settings which provide much poorer quality education, and which shows that quality matters.

The low quality of education that many Roma receive in the countries of the Decade is a consequence of the educational segregation that they face. Research shows that the quality of education is lower in segregated classes or schools in one or more of the following aspects: the design of lower curricular standards, the poor human and material resources allocated and the low expectations of teachers. Segregation through disproportionate placement of Roma children in special education is documented in the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Hungary, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovakia among the Decade countries. The deliberate placement in separate classes in mainstream schools is a form of segregation encountered in all the Decade countries (in some countries, such as Hungary, segregation also occurs in remedial and catch up classes for Roma; while in other countries such as Slovakia, separate classes in mainstream schools offer the curriculum found in special schools).

**“THE MISPLACEMENT OF ROMA IN SPECIAL EDUCATION REMAINS ONE OF THE MAIN BARRIERS TO ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ROMA IN MANY OF THE ROMA DECADE COUNTRIES”**

1 This article is based in part on a presentation for the 2nd meeting of the EU Platform for Roma Inclusion in Brussels, on 28 September 2009.  
2 The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 is a political commitment by European governments to improve the socio-economic status and social inclusion of Roma. The Decade is an international initiative that brings together governments, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations, as well as Romani civil society, to accelerate progress toward improving the welfare of Roma. The twelve countries taking part in the Decade are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Spain.



© Roma Education Fund

Segregation of Roma pupils in majority Roma “neighbouring schools” is more commonly found in Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary. Other country-specific types of segregation include: in social-pedagogical/correctional boarding schools in Bulgaria; placement of school age Roma children in adult education schools in Serbia; home schooling of Roma children as “private pupils” in Hungary.

A new study published by the Roma Education Fund (REF) in 2009 shows worrying data on the educational segregation of Roma in Slovakia: 60 percent of children in special education in Slovakia in the 2008-2009 school year were Roma. The situation of the young generation is even worse when compared with that of their parents, where 15.3% of Roma mothers and 9.9% of Roma fathers attended a special school. Between 20 and 30% of Roma children tested and placed in special education are

not fluent in the language of testing and school instruction. The learning opportunities of Roma children misdiagnosed in special schools are very much reduced because the curriculum for pupils with mild mental disability covers only approximately 60 percent of the curriculum taught

in mainstream schools. In the reduced special school curriculum, for example, there is no foreign language tuition. Pupils who complete their education in segregated special schools cannot get well paid jobs because, even if they obtain their diplomas, they lack the required skills. Through school segregation and especially segregation in special schools, the education systems in the region are reproducing a social structure in which many Roma are kept at the lower end in unskilled occupations.

The misplacement of Roma in special education remains one of the main barriers to access to quality education for Roma in many of the Roma Decade countries. A structural constraint pertaining to education systems relates to the insufficient number of places and the low quality of early childhood education and care in most of the post communist countries in the region. On the parental side the main constraint relates to the burden of incidental costs incurred by their children’s regular and full participation in school activities.



At the policy level, the main issue is the very loose connection between the assumed goals in different policy documents and the local-level implementation of these measures. Decentralisation of education systems jeopardises the implementation of targeted educational policies on Roma and especially desegregation policies. In Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania, the progress on integration of Roma pupils in mainstream classes and schools is slow and uneven. While Hungary and Romania are more advanced at the policy level, for example, by having financial integration mechanisms for schools (Hungary) and legislation against educational segregation (Romania), at the concrete grassroots level integration of Roma in Bulgaria is the most advanced. Started more than ten years ago in the city of Vidin, desegregation in Bulgaria is now reaching a contingent of more than 3,000 Roma pupils who have been integrated into mainstream schools. In Hungary the school year 2010-2011 brings some encouraging signs with regard to the use of the financial integration mechanism: of the 3000 municipalities which have schools, 557 applied for the integration<sup>3</sup> incentive, which means a total of 96 schools and 85,110 students.

Other policy issues relating to the education of Roma can be summarised as follows:

- Only a very small number of Roma pupils study Romanes except in Romania, where almost 10% of enrolled Roma pupils study Romanes.
- Information about Roma minority history and culture and the contribution of this ethnic group to the national heritage is missing from the mainstream school curriculum.
- There are very few persons employed as Roma Teaching Assistants/Mediators.
- In pre-service teacher training, courses dealing with tolerance, diversity, multicultural education, and anti-bias training are missing from the curricula. Most of the teachers do not have pedagogical experience with Roma pupils, neither in their pre-service training nor in practice.
- In in-service teacher training, the impact of the programmes developed in various projects on changing classroom pedagogy has not been systematically evaluated.

There are several approaches for overcoming the educational issues for which the Roma Education Fund is advocating and using in the projects of the foundation. The main approach developed and advocated by REF is the prevention of Roma segregation in special schools by increasing Roma enrolment in quality Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services for at least one year of enrolment in pre-school. The free of charge compulsory pre-school classes are a good practice in some of the Decade countries. A complementary measure from outside the education sphere is the increase in employment of Roma women, which should result in an increased demand for ECEC services.

<sup>3</sup> The integration incentive is received by the school maintainers who commit to having no more 25% multiple disadvantaged children in a classroom or in a school in a given locality, therefore ensuring heterogeneity based on social status.

Several other measures should be taken to address the issues relating to Roma access to quality education:

- A serious reform of the special education systems in the region should aim to abolish testing systems and to integrate Roma pupils into the mainstream school system with the appropriate educational support. The reform should aim to restructure the existing systems of psycho-pedagogy by reorienting the excess of psycho-pedagogues as support teachers.
- Empirical data on the enrolment and participation of Roma in education and especially early education is scarce and outdated in many cases. More research is needed to update and to inform about Roma participation in preschool education. Understanding from an unbiased rational choice perspective the reason of low participation in education is a prerequisite for sustainable policy changes.
- The structure of financial incentives for special education provides higher allocations for special classes and schools, which in turn creates a demand for special education. There are perverse incentives for Romani parents enrolling children in special schools: free meals, textbooks, and a safer environment for children. These incentives should be made available in mainstream schools in order to offer a real choice. In the case of poor Roma, changing the existing structure of perverse economic incentives from exclusion incentives to integration incentives could make the difference between educational and social failure and success.
- Bilingual kindergartens with Romanes language use should be further explored in order to overcome language barriers.
- Scholarships for tertiary level Roma students (5,000 scholarships granted by REF in 7 years) and secondary school pupils are an efficient means of improving the education profile of the Roma community.
- Carefully designed and implemented affirmative action policies targeting the enrolment of Roma in secondary and tertiary education could be an effective means of reducing the gap between Roma and non-Roma. In addition, affirmative action policies could be corroborated with conditional cash transfer benefits for secondary education in order to improve efficiency.
- Last but not least the ministries of education in the region need to be at the forefront of a possible and desired social change aiming to lead to a positive Roma identity through quality education, thus enabling the next generations of Roma to fulfil their potential to participate as active and productive citizens.



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# Will Roma ever achieve equal and adequate housing?

Tara Bedard, Programmes Director, European Roma Rights Centre

**This article provides an assessment of the respect of Roma's housing rights across Europe and proposes measures for change, which need to be backed by strong political will to make them work.**

An informal survey of the work of the Roma rights machinery over the past 10 years shows an notable focus on housing rights issues; this is well justified. At the end of 2009, the European Union Agency of Fundamental Rights (FRA) launched the results of a pan-EU study on the housing situation of Roma and Travellers. After years of attention to and work in this area, FRA still found that "It is clear from this report that large numbers of Roma and Travellers in the EU do not enjoy equal treatment in [respect of housing], living in substandard conditions which fall far below even the minimum criteria of adequate housing."<sup>1</sup> Within the same study, an analysis of EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU MIDIS) statistical data revealed that 11% of Roma respondents reported having experienced discrimination in access to housing in the past 12 months; 70% of those individuals reported having experienced housing discrimination more than once.

Since 1996, the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC)<sup>2</sup> has documented housing rights violations across Europe for its own awareness raising, advocacy and litigation purposes; it was also involved in the implementation of the FRA study of Roma housing, together with Pavee Point Travellers Centre. The ERRC has filed a series of collective complaints under the European Social Charter which resulted in findings of systemic housing rights violations against Greece, Italy and Bulgaria,<sup>3</sup> and it has won several legal cases related to housing rights violations, including three pogrom cases won before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in which the homes of Romani families were burned to the ground in the early 1990s.<sup>4</sup> Many other Romani and non-Romani organisations have engaged in similar work with equally good results.

Admittedly, there have also been important law and policy level developments. To name but a few examples, within the Decade of Roma Inclusion housing is one of four priority areas and participating governments have devised action plans to tackle the housing problems of Roma. In Hungary the government has conditioned the allocation of structural funds



Bulldozers prepare to destroy Romani houses in Istanbul's Sulukule neighbourhood, which was one of the oldest Romani communities in Europe - © Hacer Foggo

for housing projects on non-discrimination and desegregation planning<sup>5</sup> and it is also implementing its Housing and Social Integration Programme which aims to eliminate segregation in the country. Some countries, like France, have legally mandated the provision of halting sites by local authorities to meet the needs of Travellers.<sup>6</sup>

However, in spite of what are surely steps forward we still have to ask ourselves what positive and practical change has resulted from these efforts? Have Romani communities around Europe experienced systematic improvement in their housing? The answer is that this level of change is not visible. In some aspects things even seem to be moving backwards.

Looking only at the countries in which the ERRC has achieved legal victories the picture is bleak. Already in 2010 in Italy, where in 2005 the ERRC won a collective complaint resulting in a unanimous finding that the forced eviction of Roma amounted to a violation of the European Social Charter, the ERRC has followed media and NGOs reports of at least 17 forced evictions of Roma affecting hundreds of women, children and men in Milan alone. In September 2009 in Burgas, Bulgaria, where in 2006 the ERRC won a similar complaint, around 160 Romani women, children and men were forcibly evicted and left homeless.<sup>7</sup> Several years after the ECtHR judgments in Romania's Moldovan pogrom case, in which the government undertook to implement measures aimed at improving living conditions and interethnic relations in the aggrieved communities, the affected village has yet to see significant

1 European Union Agency of Fundamental Rights, October 2009. Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers in the European Union, available at: [http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/ROMA-Housing-Comparative-Report\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/ROMA-Housing-Comparative-Report_en.pdf).

2 See: [www.errc.org](http://www.errc.org).

3 European Roma Rights Centre v. Greece, Complaint 15/2004, [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Complaints/CC15Merits\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Complaints/CC15Merits_en.pdf); European Roma Rights Centre v. Italy, Complaint 27/2004, [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Complaints/CC27Merits\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Complaints/CC27Merits_en.pdf); European Roma Rights Centre v. Italy, Complaint 27/2004, [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Complaints/CC27Merits\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/socialcharter/Complaints/CC27Merits_en.pdf).

4 Moldovan and Others v. Romania, Gergely v. Romania, Kalanyos and Others v. Romania.

5 See Hungary's Regional Operational Programme 2007-2013.

6 French Law no. 2000-614 of 5 July 2000 concerning the reception and housing of Travellers, known as the Besson Law.

7 See: <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=3054>.

# ate housing?

improvement. In a most unsavoury development, anti-Romani pogroms appear to be gaining in popularity again: 19 years after the anti-Romani pogroms which lead to the ECtHR victories a new anti-Romani pogrom took place in July 2009 in San Martin, Romania, forcing at least 50 Roma to flee their homes.<sup>8</sup> In 2010 in the Selendi district of Manisa, Turkey, more than 1,000 non-Romani villagers attacked the local Romani neighbourhood, burning the homes of some 100 Roma to the ground and causing a number of families to flee for their safety.<sup>9</sup>

A reasonable question then seems to be: will anything actually lead to the change so desperately needed and what is that something? In considering the available evidence the answer to this question does not sound new. However a fresh and committed effort backed by strong political will from the highest levels of government is needed to make it work.

Government actors first and foremost need to stop transferring existing problems to other locations and exacerbating circumstances through the policy and practice of recurrent forced evictions in the absence of viable and sustainable housing solutions for the persons affected. A legal ban on segregation enforced with effective and dissuasive sanctions would be important to ensuring that no new segregated housing is built for Roma, as tends to be the case with housing development programmes targeting this group.

Embedding desegregation and equality targets, and prioritising Roma related programmes, as horizontal conditions for accessing housing related funding through EU and governmental sources, will move countries towards integrating long segregated and isolated communities. A review of financing at the local government level is also necessary to ensure that the matched funding required by these bodies does not pose a barrier to applying for and implementing housing programmes.

Regular data collection for the development of effective, evidence-based policies is essential, and the governments of Europe that oppose data collection based on mistaken interpretations of data protection laws should look to their more

progressive counterparts in the United Kingdom, for example, for advice on how to make this task a reality.

There is a striking lack of evaluation in much of the programming that has been implemented to date. Real assessment of results is needed, taking account of both the non-discrimination elements of housing programmes and elements concerned with the overall improvement of housing conditions in existing communities. It is not enough to merely improve housing conditions when segregation and discrimination in access to mainstream housing remains largely unaddressed.

A formal, mandated partnership between national and local implementing agencies (including local authorities, Romani and non-Romani organisations and other actors) by assigning liaisons/mentors in the design and implementation of housing projects can help to bridge the current gap in law and policy implementation and to build local capacities for complex project realisation. The presence of external actors can also play an important role in negotiating local opposition and other potential problems that can arise and act as a barrier to integration and programme implementation.

A community planning approach should be adopted in all housing projects, involving both Romani beneficiaries as well as local non-Roma. Inclusion programming benefits everyone and all stakeholders should be involved to foster support for

this. The inclusion of non-Roma experiencing similar levels of exclusion and poverty as the Roma targeted by projects also works to increase the project buy-in of local non-Roma who can be a major barrier to programme execution.

Finally, housing projects should be developed as a distinct component of larger multi-sectoral programmes which also address the exclusion of Roma from equal education, employment and health care. Too often have the housing conditions of beneficiaries been improved through targeted programming, only for those persons to later face forced eviction or over-indebtedness because their unemployment and poverty were not addressed.

**“HOUSING PROJECTS SHOULD BE DEVELOPED AS A DISTINCT COMPONENT OF LARGER MULTI-SECTORAL PROGRAMMES WHICH ALSO ADDRESS THE EXCLUSION OF ROMA FROM EQUAL EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND HEALTH CARE”**

<sup>8</sup> For more information, see the documentary video by Romani Criss, available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qU3Q5X6qMT0&feature=related>.

<sup>9</sup> From ERRC documentation conducted in January 2010.

# FRA action on Roma and freedom of movement

Eva Sobotka, Human Rights and Networking Coordinator, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

## Joint Action of FRA, OSCE and the Council of Europe on Roma freedom of movement and migration

Addressing the human rights situation of the Roma and Travellers in the EU has been a long term priority for the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Within its mandate, the Agency's specific activities on Roma have consisted of evidence based advice to key stakeholders, research and data collection, networking, empowerment of Romani women networks and awareness raising targeting young people. The Agency has worked closely with the Council of Europe, the OSCE's High Commissioner on National Minorities and ODIHR's Contact Point on Roma and Sinti Issues, and has consulted widely with Roma focused human rights civil society organisations.

Following a number of violent attacks against Roma, migrants and asylum seekers, which led the Agency to publish an Incident report on violent attacks against Roma in Italy in 2008<sup>2</sup>, FRA, in partnership with the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, initiated a Joint action on freedom of movement and migration of Roma. While making use of their mandates in complementary ways, each organisation has drawn attention of their respective member states to the human rights violations of Roma in a context of either migration or freedom of movement. The Joint Action partners held a joint conference on freedom of movement and migration in November 2009 and have issued joint press releases alerting to the human rights violation of Roma in a migration and freedom of movement context.<sup>3</sup> The objective of the joint conference was to discuss in more detail the findings of studies and field visits with relevant actors such as policy makers, civil society organisations and migration experts, as well as the human rights challenges, strategies and possible actors in the area: (1) reasons for movement, different status of migrating individuals and level of protection or barriers in accessing rights; (2) access to employment; (3) access to education; (4) access to health care and housing; and (5) access to justice.

As a contribution to the Joint action, FRA commissioned comparative research on the Roma and freedom of movement in the EU to the European Roma Rights Centre, a Budapest based human rights advocacy organisation. This report on "The situation of Roma EU citizens moving to and settling in other EU member states", released in November 2009, highlights the case of the Roma and their particular challenges in exercising the right to freedom of movement, but also challenges which Roma face before leaving their member state. Based on the evidence of its report, FRA advises the EU and its member states to adopt targeted policies promoting social cohesion to ensure that all citizens can exercise their right to freedom of movement effectively.

1 For more information, contact Eva Sobotka: [eva.sobotka@fra.europa.eu](mailto:eva.sobotka@fra.europa.eu) or check out FRA's website [www.fra.europa.eu](http://www.fra.europa.eu).

2 FRA, Incident report on violent attacks against Roma in Italy, available at: [www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Incid-Report-Italy-08\\_en.pdf](http://www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Incid-Report-Italy-08_en.pdf)

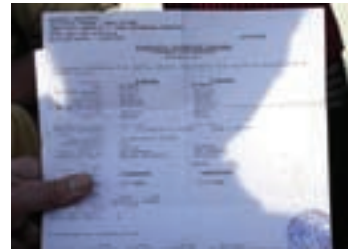
3 Joint press releases are available at: [www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/press/2009-releases/mr-091109\\_en.htm](http://www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/press/2009-releases/mr-091109_en.htm) and [www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/press/2009-releases/mr-080409\\_en.htm](http://www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/press/2009-releases/mr-080409_en.htm).

## Freedom of movement and Roma

EU citizens have the right to move and live anywhere in the European Union, provided that they meet certain conditions. This is an important right to achieve European integration and is included in the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights.

This right is enshrined in Article 18

of the Treaty establishing the European Community, and is implemented in more detail by Directive 2004/38/EC, the so called "Free Movement Directive". It should be noted from the outset that this right is not absolute: "EU citizens have a right of residence in the host member state, if they are economically active there. Students and economically inactive EU citizens must have sufficient resources for themselves and their family, as well as comprehensive sickness insurance cover so as not to become a burden on the social assistance system of the host member state during their residence."<sup>4</sup> However, FRA research shows that many Roma EU citizens settling in another member state in search of better conditions continue to experience racism, discrimination and exclusion.



A Roma living in the Votanicos area of Athens, where evictions are threatened, shows her residency permit - © OSCE/Jennifer Mitchell

## Research methodology and findings of the comparative report "The situation of Roma EU citizens moving to and settling in other EU member states"<sup>5</sup>

The research consisted of desk research and field research in five destination countries: France, Finland, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. The research team interviewed some 165 Roma EU citizens across the five research member states, 37 representatives of local authorities and 49 NGO representatives. The researchers interviewed Roma and local authorities on motivation for movement to another country, type of movement; financial support of families/others in country of origin; experiences with and expectations from local authorities in country of origin and destination; experiences with border/visa officials; experiences with and expectations from Romani organisations; experiences regarding employment, housing, health care, education and social support in country of origin and destination; experiences of criminal victimisation by members of both majority and minority population groups and of involvement in deviant behaviour.

### Strong push factors

Research shows that poverty and racism are the main factors "pushing" Roma to leave their countries of origin, with poverty being the dominating factor mentioned by Roma respondents. A defining aspect of the experience of poverty in countries of origin is unemployment, but segregation and a feeling of "not belonging" are also key push factors. Factors "pulling" Roma to certain destination countries include their assumed prospects for finding work and improved living standards.

4 Commission's Guidelines for better transposition of the Directive, COM (2009) 313/4, p. 8, available at <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2009:0313:FIN:EN:PDF>.

5 FRA, "The situation of Roma EU citizens moving to and settling in other EU member states", 2009, pp. 6-7.

# Movement in the EU

## European Union Fundamental Rights Agency<sup>1</sup>

### Experiences in crossing Schengen borders

Respondents described their experiences with border/visa officials in destination countries broadly in positive terms. However, Roma respondents were more likely to experience problems, including demands for bribes by corrupt officials when leaving and returning to their own countries. The respondents were aware of their general right to move, but less aware of the specific, and often complex, array of rights and obligations concerning the establishment of residence for EU citizens in another member state.

### Access to employment

According to the respondents life experiences of Roma in destination EU member states vary significantly depending to a large extent on the support they receive. Some member states and local authorities are very supportive in promoting access to the labour market and facilitating the specific needs of Roma; others appear keen to remove them and dissuade others from coming. As might be expected, experiences regarding employment opportunities, as well as access to housing, health care, education and social welfare also vary widely. Employment crucially affects all other areas of social life: If Roma can secure employment in the formal economy they are more likely to access other services, in particular decent housing. This is not a simple progression and many barriers to inclusion and equality remain - including widespread anti-Roma racism and discrimination - but in this context EU citizenship offers a serious prospect for a process of inclusion. On the other hand, those unable to secure employment in the formal economy encounter a series of barriers and therefore cannot always meet the requirements to exercise the right of residence in other member states.

### Registration of residence

The research indicates that many Roma EU citizens were not able to register their residence in the destination country, where required, due to the complexity of the procedures as well as the incorrect application of the requirements of the Free Movement Directive by the national authorities. This has a “domino effect” on their enjoyment of key civil, political, economic and social rights, for example the right to vote in local and European elections, accessing national health systems, public housing, etc.

### Work in the informal economy

Roma respondents provided very little information on the issues of trafficking and criminality among Roma, but non-Roma respondents associated Roma from other member states with trafficking and petty crime. The widespread evidence of involvement in begging and informal economic activity raises profound questions. First, to what extent Roma actually want to be engaged in such activities or resort to them to survive and, second, how should authorities react, especially when these activities represent the only obvious means of subsistence. Respondents suggested 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 unlawful. 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 low levels of education and skills due to historic discrimination or lack of language skills.

### Policies and measures

The findings of the research show little evidence of any specific strategy or measures developed by public authorities in receiving countries to integrate Roma EU citizens from other member states, reflecting a general lack of policies and measures raising awareness and promoting free movement and residence, as foreseen by Article 34 of the Free Movement Directive. There is also a tendency to develop a more general “Roma response” covering Roma nationals, Roma citizens of other EU countries and Roma third country nationals. The latter approach can be positive or negative depending on the context. For example, the integration of support for Roma EU citizens into a progressive and well-developed policy for national Roma in Spain is a useful model. In contrast, policy in Italy tends to lump all Roma and Sinti together - national citizens, EU citizens and third country nationals - in a way that often undermines citizenship rights and may infringe fundamental rights.

### Marginalisation and stereotypes

Roma from other member states are often stereotyped as causing problems and rarely positively welcomed. There is some evidence to suggest that their experience of settling in a new country has led to immiseration rather than opportunity. This is, of course, a relative and subjective concept, but the research suggests that some Roma from other member states may find themselves even more marginalised than they were in their country of origin.

### Economic crisis

The impact of the economic crisis was noted by many respondents, as the precarious economic and employment situation of many Roma make them vulnerable to economic downturns. While for some Roma the economic crisis and rising unemployment in their home countries has acted as a push factor leading them to seek employment opportunities elsewhere, some of those residing in other member states reported that rising unemployment may lead them to return. In some cases populist calls for “national jobs for national citizens” in some of the destination countries might reflect rising xenophobia and racism based on the notion that migrant populations are “taking our jobs and resources”.

### Conclusion

The case of Roma EU citizens settling in other EU member states raises questions in terms of wider debates on anti-discrimination and integration and the meaning of EU citizenship and associated rights as a broad concept. Roma are exercising their right to freedom of movement and residence in the context of significant push and pull factors. The research evidence shows that this movement is likely to continue.

*(Continues on page 16)*

# Roma integration: Two best practice examples

## The ACCEDER programme in Spain: Promoting Roma employment

Belén Sánchez-Rubio, Director of International Programmes, Fundación Secretariado Gitano

In 2000, the Roma youth community had poor opportunities in their traditional jobs, the Spanish economy's growth was 4% annually and the former unemployment rates in the labour market were drastically reduced by creating a high number of low-skilled jobs in the construction and services sectors. The ACCEDER programme was the answer of the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) to this situation. It started with a previous 2-year pilot experience developed in the city of Madrid that was later spread across Spain with the support of the EU Structural Funds under the "Multi-regional Operational Programme Fight Against Discrimination (ESF and ERDF)" for the period 2000-2006 and continues today under the new programming period 2007-2013. The objective was and still is to support Roma youth in their access to normalised employment as an alternative to self-employment or family business. The assumptions were:

- It would create momentum to offer many young Roma people the opportunity to enter the labour market with the aim of closing the circle of normalisation (living among others, going to the same schools, having the same social benefits and working with others).
- The project proposal would facilitate mutual understanding and perceptions between Roma and non-Roma, thus reducing prejudices and stereotypes.
- Launching a national-wide programme would not only enable to entire country to benefit from it, but would also allow the articulation and strengthening of Roma policies, the creation of synergies, scale economies and, therefore, complement bottom-up with top-down approaches.
- The programme would provide know-how, better understanding of the Roma phenomenon, information and data, working tools and skilled workers - Roma and non-Roma - specialised in this area.

In terms of fields of action, the ACCEDER programme has from the very beginning two complementary levels: (1) a grassroots approach with 48 teams currently working across Spain, mostly in the biggest cities, and providing integrated insertion "pathways" (guidance, training and labour insertion, search for employment, etc); and (2) a policy approach



Beneficiary of the ACCEDER programme

complementary to the other: awareness-raising, campaigning, research, creation of working tools, data collection, influencing policies, etc.

The ACCEDER programme works according to the principles inherent to FSG's culture: an intercultural approach involving Roma and non Roma at all levels of the organisation (board, workers, volunteers and beneficiaries); a

culture of partnership (the project involves around 200 effective partners from different levels of public administrations, the business sector and civil society); and a combination of mainstream and targeted approaches as a means for effective normalisation. Some of the key methodological elements of the programme include:

- An individualised approach: design of "Individual Employment Pathways";
- An integration approach, working with the surrounding environment (family and community);
- A multidimensional approach specially focusing on the intermediary role of the programme between Roma job seekers and enterprises.

In terms of results the ACCEDER programme has been able to go beyond the objectives foreseen in 2000. During the course of the Programme (and up until now) more than 50,000 people have been direct beneficiaries (approximately 70% of these were Roma); more than 33,800 work contracts have been signed and 10,900 people have taken part in training activities. There has been a gender balance between women (53%) and men (47%). The most visible product was the creation of a labour market integration scheme which has managed to standardise a basic action methodology, define a series of working tools and identify skills in a multi-disciplinary team. The result was a product tested in daily action and validated by the Roma population, which was satisfied with process quality and results achieved.

**"THE ACCEDER PROGRAMME TACKLES THE ROMA ISSUE WITH A TOP DOWN-BOTTOM UP APPROACH"**

This project has been recognised in Spain and in the European Union as an example of good practice, and has received several awards and prizes, both for being a relevant experience in Spain and for having the

potential to be transferable to other contexts:

- In terms of policies, the ACCEDER programme has been able to articulate a national Roma employment policy based on the Structural Funds and to use Structural Funds as a springboard for Roma labour market inclusion. Other relevant policy elements include the combination of the grassroots and policy levels (national dimension for local actions), mobilising all local and national resources, creating synergies, long-term planning, an integrated approach, etc.
- The ACCEDER programme tackles the Roma issue in a particular manner: a top down-bottom up approach, a solid coordination and management system, individualised integration pathways with a community approach, tailored but not segregated services and a win-win approach for companies, among others.
- Concerning the strategies and tactics: a global strategy adapted to the local situations and circumstances, flexibility and adaptation to the individual situations, the creation of working tools and monitoring systems, data collection, and visibility, transparency and accountability as criteria for action.

For more information: [www.gitanos.org](http://www.gitanos.org)

# Examples from Spain and Hungary

## The Bódvalenke Fresco Village project in Hungary

Eszter Pásztor, "Freszkófalú" Project Manager



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A centre of art unique in Europe is in the making in this tiny, poverty-ridden, 85% Roma inhabited village in the north of Hungary: a tremendous open-air exhibition of European Roma painting. Initially the project consisted of Hungarian Roma painters producing murals on walls: so far nine monumental works have been completed. As of spring, we are looking forward to receiving Roma painters from other European countries as well - if you are interested, please contact us!

The Fresco painting project has several interrelated objectives:

- The most deprived community in Europe exposed to the worst prejudices are the Roma. In Bódvalenke we wish to create something to be proud of by all the Roma, something that will trigger the appreciation of the majority society. Based on the works created so far, this objective will be met in full.
- Closely related to the previous objective, Bódvalenke can be an instrument in fighting prejudices partly through the murals as works of art worthy of appreciation and partly through the fact that the fresco village is a genuine tourist attraction (already). By visiting a Roma village, making contact with the locals, their culture and their customs, the attitudes of many may change.
- We wish to raise awareness - even for ourselves - of the fact that Hungary is able to offer solutions other than those of the radical right to fight problems caused by poverty.
- This project is also an attempt to achieve the social integration of the Roma with a different approach to those used hitherto. There have been frequent attempts at settling Roma families in parts of settlements where inhabitants were non-Roma. The project instead aims to take the non-Roma to the Roma - partly through the members of the project team and their volunteer assistants and partly through the tourists visiting them. Experience so far demonstrates that in this way a genuinely meaningful dialogue develops for both parties, contributing greatly to mutual learning

**"THE PROJECT AIMS TO TAKE THE NON-ROMA TO THE ROMA - PARTLY THROUGH THE MEMBERS OF THE PROJECT TEAM AND PARTLY THROUGH THE TOURISTS VISITING THEM"**

and understanding and through this, to peaceful living together.

- The project has also roused the interest of the academic world. For instance, in cooperation with the University of Applied Arts and the Association of Hungarian Fashion Designers, designers are working on creating their own models inspired by Roma folk costumes, to be presented to the public at a major fashion show - with the models to be sewn by our sewing plant. The University of Fine Arts intends to launch a multi-annual project to study the interaction of minority/majority art and design, using Bódvalenke as a point of departure. Many groups of students from a number of universities visited the project, and several of them returned as volunteers. Several students chose Bódvalenke as the subject matter of their thesis.
- From the viewpoint of the village itself, however, fresco painting is only a framework. We are trying to combat dire poverty and multiple deprivation: the subprojects cover everything from health through to education, job creation and finding solutions to problems of energy poverty. In order to make the project sustainable, however, we need to invest an additional EUR 300,000 (which we have not yet managed to raise): we want to create the necessary tourist infrastructure; to set up a small sewing plant and a mushroom drying and packaging plant, and to train local Roma employees to install "Climatic house" technology.

If we receive the necessary support:

- A unique community work of art comes into being, which is both a tourist attraction and the self-expression and presentation of the culture of a unique community;
- We will be able to provide sustainable jobs for virtually the entire working-age population of the village;
- A small local market will be launched (household farming);
- The living conditions in the village will be transformed, there will be substantial improvement in the quality of life and health condition of the villagers;
- There will be substantial improvement in the attitude of the young to education and thereby in their life prospects;
- An example of good practice is developed, which may have an impact on other settlements as well;
- A confident, proud and industrious community comes into being.

We regard this project as a pilot project and are working on spreading its methods in as wide a circle as possible. That is why we regard the continuation of the programme, its further development and its communication as our priority tasks. If you want to know more, come and visit us in person or virtually at [www.bodvalenke.eu](http://www.bodvalenke.eu).

(Continued from page 5)

However, it was rejected in March 2009 due to lack of evidence. Although the main organiser of the petition, NGO Zřvůle práva, provided good legal evidence against the Workers' Party in the petition, the ministry compiled its own proposal, lacking some of the most significant facts. Pressed by disappointed calls from the civil society, the ministry filed yet another motion. The Supreme Administrative Court finally decided to dissolve the Workers' Party in February 2010.

### Future prospects

Experts believe that despite the quick rise of the Workers' Party in the past year, its supporters are currently facing deep disputes. According to their assessment, one of the issues keeping the ultra-right supporters together currently is the economic crisis. Just before the European Parliament elections of last year, the party enjoyed its largest open support ever, eventually scoring 25,368 votes (1.07% of total votes cast). It also aims to run in the upcoming national parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic, due in May 2010. Despite the recent dissolution of the party, its leader Vandas told the press he will still manage to run. The Workers' Party has a history of cooperation with another similar political association, the Democratic Party of Social Justice. Experts therefore believe that these two groups will merge.

Since the second half of 2009, the activities of the extreme right are seen as calmer, possibly due to the efforts by both civil society and the state.

(Continued from page 13)

Push factors in countries of origin involve a combination of poverty and racism. Unemployment is a defining aspect of the experience of poverty in sending countries. Pull factors include aspirations for improved living standards - particularly the prospect of finding employment in both formal and informal economies. The research identified negative responses to the arrival of Roma EU citizens, and policies and practices that can impact negatively on Roma exercising freedom of movement, even when this is unintended. The experience of Roma EU citizens that have moved to another member state varied widely across the various destination countries ranging from those that were wholly positive to those that involved profound immiseration. The exclusion of many Roma EU citizens in the society of their member state of origin and in their host member state creates insurmountable barriers to formal employment and the ability to prove "sufficient resources", which has a domino effect on their ability to register, and, as a consequence, to access key civil and political, economic and social rights. This raises profound questions about the effectiveness of inclusion policies. However, the field research also detected some positive practices.<sup>1</sup>

In 2010, the Agency will engage with relevant actors with a view to helping to improve the human rights situation of Roma and Travellers in the EU and provide relevant policy makers and other actors with evidence based advice, resulting both from FRA's research and conclusions and recommendations of the joint conference.

<sup>1</sup> For more information, see: [http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/ROMA-Movement-Positive-Initiatives\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/ROMA-Movement-Positive-Initiatives_en.pdf).

## Announcements

- ENAR adopted its 6th General Policy Paper "Migration and Diversity: A Rights-Based Approach to Migration" in December 2009. It is available at [www.enar-eu.org/Page\\_Generale.asp?DocID=15287&langue=EN](http://www.enar-eu.org/Page_Generale.asp?DocID=15287&langue=EN)
- ENAR issued its Memorandum to the Spanish, Belgian and Hungarian Trio of Presidencies of the EU, available at [www.enar-eu.org/Page\\_Generale.asp?DocID=15290&langue=EN](http://www.enar-eu.org/Page_Generale.asp?DocID=15290&langue=EN)
- ENAR issued a policy response to the European Commission's consultation on the future "EU2020" Strategy and its messages for the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. They are both available at [www.enar-eu.org/Page\\_Generale.asp?DocID=15288&langue=EN](http://www.enar-eu.org/Page_Generale.asp?DocID=15288&langue=EN)
- ENAR published a fact sheet on racist violence and support to victims, available at [www.enar-eu.org/Page\\_Generale.asp?DocID=15289&langue=EN](http://www.enar-eu.org/Page_Generale.asp?DocID=15289&langue=EN)
- The next edition of ENARgy will be published in May 2010. Information on previous editions is available at [www.enar-eu.org/Page.asp?DocID=15292&langue=EN](http://www.enar-eu.org/Page.asp?DocID=15292&langue=EN)

## ENAR

### european network against racism



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ENAR is a network of European NGOs working to combat racism in all EU member states. Its establishment was a major outcome of the 1997 European Year Against Racism. ENAR aims to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, to promote equality of treatment between EU citizens and third country nationals, and to link local/regional/national initiatives with European initiatives. ENAR's vision is of a world free from racism.



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