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Roma Source

Sharing of Understanding Rights and Citizenship in Europe

The Limits of Inclusion?

Exploring the views of Roma and non Roma in six
European Union Member States

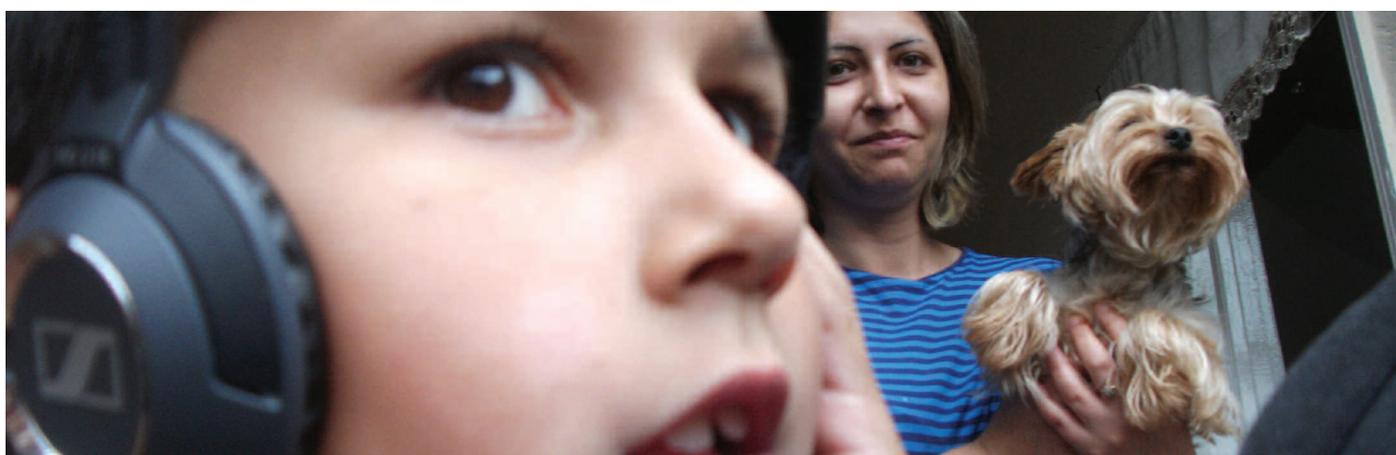
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University of Salford

March 2013



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Acknowledgements

Without the time, expertise and contributions of a number of individuals and organisations, this study could not have been completed. We would like to thank all who contributed in various ways to the production of this research and report.

First, those people who took the time, to talk with us in a full, detailed and patient manner; it is hoped that this report is able to accurately reflect their views and experiences.

Second, the partner organisations and agencies in Roma SOURCE which helped collate information and organise the fieldwork across the six Member States. The key organisations requiring acknowledgement are: Migration Yorkshire; the Regional Administration of Varna; Action Synergy SA; Maranatha Federation of Gypsy Associations; Regional Vice-Ministry for Family and Solidarity – Valencia; Municipality of Pescara; and, the Former State Fostered Children's Association.

Third, thanks are also due to all those individuals who played a major role in ensuring the research was undertaken in a professional manner, in particular: Margaret Blenkinsop, Cathy Presto, Shabbana Haque, Marta Cocco, Judit Kolozsi, Kostas Diamantis Balaskas, Natassa Balaska, José Luis Gil Hidalgo, Paula Llobet Vilarrasa, ForTeam Consult, Fondazione Romani Italia, Marissa and her colleague.

Fourth, a special thank you to all Roma and non Roma respondents who took part in the focus groups.

Fifth, we owe a great debt to the team at Migration Yorkshire for their support throughout this project; in particular David Brown, Peter Cresswell, John Donegan and Catherine Peart. Finally, we would like to thank Irene Troughton, Clair Millen and Victoria Morris at the University of Salford for their ongoing administrative support throughout this project.

Images were provided by Roma SOURCE, Ciara Leeming and Shutterstock.

This publication has been produced with the financial support of the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship programme of the European Commission. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.

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For more information about the work of the research team and partners please see www.romasource.eu

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Introduction

This final research report for the Roma SOURCE project presents an analysis of new qualitative data generated in 24 focus groups with members of both Roma and non Roma populations resident in the six Member States in which the Roma SOURCE partners are situated (i.e. Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom). It builds on the literature and policy review previously presented in an earlier interim report which combined contextual discussions on the general situation of Roma in Europe with more specific information (drawn from the 'country reports' compiled by Roma SOURCE project partners), about the particular circumstances of Roma populations in those six Member States (cf. Brown, Dwyer and Scullion, 2012). A key aim of the fieldwork which underpins this final report was to access, and make sense of, a range of views and opinions about the extent to which Roma and non Roma people believed they routinely led segregated or integrated lives. Allied to this, discussions in the focus groups also centred on the social inclusion/exclusion of Roma in relation to key areas of contemporary life, such as the paid labour market and social welfare systems. The report, therefore, offers important insights into the perceptions, experiences and expectations of both Roma and non Roma people in respect of these important issues that are grounded in the everyday lives and situations of European citizens and residents.

Background to the research

Roma SOURCE (Sharing of Understanding Rights and Citizenship in Europe) was a two year (2011-2013) project co-funded by the European Union's Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme. It aimed to combat and reduce discrimination through developing mutual understanding between Roma and mainstream communities, promoting equal rights and highlighting best practice. Migration Yorkshire (Leeds City Council) coordinated the project as the lead partner. The project involved eight organisations from six Member States:

- Regional Administration of Varna [Bulgaria]
- Action Synergy [Greece]
- Former State Fostered Children's Association [Hungary]
- Municipality of Pescara [Italy]
- Federacion Maranatha De Asociaciones Gitanes [Spain]
- Regional Vice-Ministry for Family and Solidarity – Valencia [Spain]
- Migration Yorkshire, Leeds City Council [United Kingdom]
- University of Salford [United Kingdom]

The University of Salford had a research role within the partnership; this role had two main elements. First, to document the situation of Roma within the six partner countries. Second, to work with the partners noted above to conduct exploratory empirical research with Roma and non Roma people in the partner countries. The overall aims of the research were to:

- Map and explore the experiences and needs of Roma communities in the six identified Member States and at the wider EU level.
- Explore the perceptions of majority populations in respect of Roma communities.
- Consider the extent to which Roma and majority communities in the six identified Member States lead integrated lives.
- Allow the perceptions, experiences and understandings of both Roma and majority populations to inform regional, national and EU policy.

In order to meet the key aims for the research, the following two methods were deployed:

- 1 The production of a rapid review of key materials relating to the integration and inclusion/exclusion of Roma across the EU, with particular reference to the six partner countries. (see Brown, Dwyer and Scullion, 2012).
- 2 Qualitative research, in the form of 24 focus groups, 12 with Roma respondents and 12 non Roma respondents, in specific locations in the above noted Member States.



A qualitative approach: focus groups with Roma and non Roma

In order to explore the everyday lives of Roma and non Roma, particularly the dynamic and complex nature of these lives, 24 focus groups were undertaken across the six Roma SOURCE partner countries.

Fieldwork sites and local context

The selection of fieldwork sites was driven by the location in which the project partners were active. The case study areas were not chosen to provide nationally representative samples, but to ensure that a wide range of local issues and circumstances were included. The intention of this research was to produce in-depth empirically grounded data in order to explore the everyday lives of people in their localities. Such places were primarily, relatively large European cities; however, the study did include a smaller village in one of the partner countries. Given the size of this fieldwork site and the need to protect the anonymity of the respondents, we refer to this site as the 'Village'. An outline of each of the fieldwork locations is offered below¹.

Country	Case Study Area
Bulgaria	Varna
Greece	Athens
Hungary	'Village' in the Northern Great Plain region
Italy	Pescara
Spain	Valencia
United Kingdom	Bradford

Greece - Athens

There are estimated to be around 265,000 Roma in Greece. Athens, the capital and largest city in Greece, is situated within the Attiki region of the country. Athens is a major world city hosting a range of important historical sites as well as having a significant presence in sectors such as finance, industry and tourism with a population which exceeds three million people. The estimated Roma population in the region of Attiki is 30,000. The Roma population in the area are typically described as 'Greek Roma' and 'non-Greek Roma' with the latter thought to primarily originate from the Balkans. Around half of the Roma population (mostly 'non-Greek') currently live in tents in camps – most of which are illegal – and experience poor accommodation conditions. The majority of Roma in Athens are thought to be involved in local markets or other outdoor trade or engaged in agricultural work.

Hungary - 'Village'

There are an estimated 650,000 Roma in Hungary and the country is one of the Decade of Roma Inclusion countries. The 'Village' is in the Northern Great Plain region of Hungary. The region is home to around 1.5 million people and has an estimated 140,000 Roma. The 'Village' has a total population of 3,600 with Roma forming around 28% of residents, most of whom are long-established in the area. The 'Village' hosts a number of facilities of particular relevance to the scope of this project including a care home for children and young people and a community group chaired by the President of the local Roma self-government. There are two schools in the village, both of which have mixed Roma and non Roma children, with a relatively high proportion of Roma students in both.

Italy - Pescara

There are an estimated 140,000 Roma in Italy. The city of Pescara is situated on the Adriatic coast within the Abruzzo region of Italy. It is estimated that there is around 2,000 Roma living in Pescara. Roma are typically thought of as belonging to two main groups: 'Italian Roma' and 'migrant Roma' (the latter are seen as arriving mainly from the Balkans and Central and Eastern Europe). However, within the Abruzzo region it is understood that Roma are primarily 'Italian Roma' and are a long settled community living in a number of areas within the region. Roma within Pescara are thought to be primarily employed as merchants, musicians and merry-go-round operators, although it is suggested that there is also a high level of unemployment amongst the Roma community. Within Pescara Roma tend to live in significant numbers in a handful of areas.

Spain - Valencia

There are an estimated 1 million Roma in Spain and the country is one of the Decade of Roma Inclusion countries. Following Andalusia, Valencia has the highest percentage population of Roma in Spain, with an estimated Roma population of 70,000. The majority of Roma in Spain (and Valencia) are 'Spanish Roma'; however, the last decade has seen an increasing number of Roma migrating from Central and Eastern Europe, particularly Romania (the project partners suggest there could be around 1,000 Romanian Roma living in the city of Valencia). Roma in Valencia are primarily concentrated in particular neighbourhoods or districts. This concentration is seen to relate to a programme of house building for Roma that took place during the 1960s and 1970s. One of the main sources of employment for Roma in Valencia are the street markets, where whole families will often work.

United Kingdom - Bradford

There is a lack of robust national and local level quantitative data in relation to the Roma resident in the UK and population estimates vary widely from 100,000 to one million. Although some Roma have lived in the UK for a number of years, the population has increased significantly since certain Central and Eastern European countries joined the EU in 2004 and 2007. Bradford is a city within the county of West Yorkshire, situated in the region of Yorkshire and the Humber. It is estimated that there are around 15,000 Roma in this region, although it is thought that this number is increasing. Bradford has a long history of immigration, particularly from South Asia (for example Pakistan, Bangladesh and India). Bradford is a former industrial city which is currently experiencing economic deprivation.

Method and sample

As highlighted above, in order to explore the everyday lives of Roma and non Roma and, particularly, the dynamic and complex nature of these lives, a series of focus groups were undertaken in the six Roma SOURCE partner Member States. Focus group research was felt to be a particularly useful method as it provides an environment where participants can engage in the telling and sharing of stories concerning their experiences in the area. Focus groups allow for the discussion of differences of opinion and experience within groups and facilitate a collective understanding of the particular norms and values that a specific group brings to the research (Morgan, 1988; Lewis, 2003). The classic strategy for dealing with diversity in focus group studies is to create "groups that maximise the similarity of participants within groups whilst emphasising differences between groups" (Morgan, 1988: 59). Therefore, ensuring homogeneity within particular groups according to nationality/ethnic identity and gender tends to increase the comfort of respondents and ensure effective discussion (Knodel, 1993). Furthermore, it was believed that focus groups were the most pragmatic method, given the challenges presented by undertaking multi-national research on contentious issues such as Roma and non Roma social relations.

The issues highlighted in this report are complex and the opinions represented diverse. The research therefore does not attempt to make definitive statements about the situation and views of all Roma or non Roma in each

partner country. Such claims lie beyond the remit of qualitative research and would ignore the very real differences of opinion that often exist within communities crudely categorised as Roma and non Roma for research purposes. Rather, this is exploratory research which aims to provide contextualised understandings of key issues and concerns of Roma and non Roma respondents in the six named Member States. This report, therefore, offers important grounded insights that are of wider relevance for all those interested in developing a deeper understanding about the contemporary situation of Roma and Roma non Roma community relations across the EU.

The organisation of the focus groups rested heavily on the assistance provided by the partners in the Roma SOURCE project within each Member State. With the exception of the UK, where the research team undertook the organisation and facilitation of the focus groups, each partner organisation identified a named link person(s), who possessed the appropriate linguistic and research skills, to recruit suitable respondents and convene and facilitate the required focus groups. The research team designed a number of research instruments, including an English language version of the semi structured question guide, participant information sheet and consent form, for common use across all focus groups. These were translated into the appropriate languages by the research partners prior to use. The link person(s) was then asked to convene a focus group for each of the following:

- 1 **Roma women**
- 2 **Non Roma women**
- 3 **Roma men**
- 4 **Non Roma men**

A total of 180 people participated across the 24 focus groups; 92 male and 88 female. As can be seen in Appendix 1, these focus groups included representatives from a minimum of 14 nationalities.

When conducting research with excluded populations it is often the case that access to the most excluded individuals does not occur. This is largely because the most disadvantaged respondents mistrust or fear researchers from outside their immediate community, of whom they have limited knowledge and experience. Additionally, researchers often face difficulties in making contact with the most excluded individuals, who by very fact of their social isolation are often the most difficult to access. As previously noted, access to respondents in this study was facilitated by the partner organisations. The focus groups were therefore routinely made up of individuals who were members of relatively well established Roma and non Roma populations who had been resident in the focus group locations for a number of years and were consequently, to varying degrees, linked into informal communal networks and elements of more formal welfare provisions. It is worth noting at this juncture that many of the Roma respondents who took part in our focus groups could, therefore, be considered to be relatively privileged when compared to certain others within the wider diverse populations of Roma resident in Europe.

Each focus group was conducted in an appropriate language. Two members of the research team were routinely present at each focus group in order to observe and document relevant non-verbal communications, for quality assurance purposes and to ensure consistency of approach. In order to aid understanding of the discussions, simultaneous English language translation was also provided to the research team in each focus group. This enabled the research team to ask follow up questions for clarification purposes. The discussions were audio recorded then translated and transcribed verbatim into English. The focus groups were held in local community centres or other suitable venues that were accessible to both Roma and non Roma. Each respondent received € 20 (or equivalent) as a thank you and reimbursement for their time.

Analysis and ethical issues

The qualitative data generated in the focus groups were coded and thematically analysed by the research team using a QSR NVivo software package to aid storage and retrieval of data. An individual team member took a lead on particular core themes, and following initial analysis of these themes, analytical meetings were held by the research team to present this analysis to one another and seek feedback and comments. Themes were then further expanded and refined in an iterative process of continuous discussion, critique and collaboration.

The research team took ethical issues extremely seriously and were guided by a number of principles, namely: respecting the dignity, rights, welfare and safety of research participants; ensuring informed consent and voluntary participation; protecting anonymity; and doing no harm. The study was subject to the procedures required by the Ethical Approval Panel of the College of Health and Social Care at the University of Salford, UK

Outline of this report

This report is intended to assist the European Commission, civil society organisations, academics and a variety of key organisations and engaged individuals in furthering understanding of the lives of Roma and Roma / non Roma in countries across Europe. The background to this work can be found in Brown, Dwyer and Scullion (2012).

This report presents the findings from the empirical research in a number of thematic areas. More specifically, Chapter 2 focuses on issues around access to the paid labour market, while in Chapter 3 discussions illustrate a number of issues about contemporary community relations as raised by Roma and non Roma respondents. These range from mundane cordial interactions between neighbours on the one hand to incidents of extreme discord and racist violence on the other. In considering issues related to social welfare in Chapter 4, the extent to which poverty may negatively impact on Roma's access to healthcare, suitable housing and regular attendance at school are highlighted and explored. Chapter 5 adopts the lens of social exclusion to explore the contrasting understandings of poverty that are routinely articulated by Roma and non Roma respondents and the implications these have. Finally, Chapter 6 provides some conclusions arising from this research and presents some key findings and recommendations.

Conventions used in this report

Two conventions are followed in this report and these are worth elaborating to ensure clarity of understanding for the reader:

- We use the terms Roma and non Roma throughout the report. We appreciate that these terms may be disputed and appear homogenising but we have taken a pragmatic view. In terms of Roma these include individuals self-identifying as such in the countries within which the research took place. Within the UK this excludes indigenous Gypsies and Travellers. The term non Roma is used to describe those individuals who took part who were part of the local population who did not self identify as Roma themselves. It should be noted, as Appendix 1 shows, that for this research this was a diverse grouping, ethnically and culturally, of individuals.
- 'Quotes' included from respondents are distinguished by being in italic type and usually inset. These were derived from audio recordings which have been subject to translation. Although we have attempted to ensure these are edited for clarity the cited data also reflects the characteristics of everyday conversation.
- Where quotes are used we have attributed them to individuals who attended the focus groups but coded to ensure we protect the anonymity of those who participated. To appreciate the country of origin, 'ethnicity' and gender of those respondents the following key should be used:

- **UK** = United Kingdom
- **B** = Bulgaria
- **G** = Greece
- **H** = Hungary
- **S** = Spain
- **I** = Italy

- **NR** = Non Roma
- **R** = Roma
- **M** = Male
- **F** = Female

- e.g. **GNRF4** = respondent number 4 from the non Roma female focus group held in Greece. If no number is provided, this indicates that we are unable to attribute the quote to a specific individual due to respondents talking at the same time.



Two Paid work and unemployment

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Introduction

Paid employment levels for Roma vary across Member States but are routinely significantly lower than those of majority populations. For example, in 2005 only 38% of Roma adults surveyed in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia reported being in paid work and over two thirds stated that they had been refused work because they were Roma (rf. ERRRC, 2007). The issue of access to paid work was a key feature of the focus group discussions for both Roma and non Roma respondents. The discussions around employment had a number of dimensions including the limited types of employment in which Roma were often involved (from the perspective of Roma themselves and non Roma respondents); the perceived discrimination that Roma faced in relation to accessing and undertaking employment; and migration as a means of accessing employment opportunities. However, a number of respondents in the focus groups also acknowledged the broader issue of the global recession with reference to its impact on all communities, but more specifically potential uneven impact on Roma communities.

Sectors of employment: the 'limits of activity' and the prevalence of 'precarious employment among Roma

Roma focus group respondents made reference to undertaking a range of paid work activities, including working at local markets, trading, farming, food processing, cleaning, dressmaking, working at hotels/leisure resorts, etc. While the discussions highlighted diverse activities - which in some cases were dependent on the country or region in which people lived - a common feature across the different focus groups was that the opportunities available to Roma were often limited to 'precarious' or 'unstable' work, most of which was low skilled. This ranged from employment being seasonal - providing time limited opportunities - through to opportunities changing on a daily basis. In the focus groups in Bulgaria, for example, a number of Roma women reported working at local hotels and resorts during the summer season:

BRF7: ... in the summer I work all day long, morning until evening, in the winter I'm at home... during the summer I am busy all day and this is better for me, but in the winter it's harder, since, with my husband, we can't find a job.

Similarly, some of the Hungarian Roma respondents also referred to undertaking seasonal work related to farming. This was made additionally precarious due to a reliance on suitable weather conditions:

HRF2: ... for instance, when the sour cherry, peach or the apple season begins. That period is really good because we are paid daily ... But that lasts only about five months. And last year we couldn't work at all because everything was nipped by the frost. There was no fruit.

'You put up your stall and, of course, sometimes you can sell nothing, as well as, sometimes you can go out and sell a lot of things. ... I just earn a living for one day. Thus, what I mean is that things are getting worse...'

With regards to those who talked about employment opportunities changing on a daily basis, this often related to those who had to rely on working at the local markets or in 'street trade'. With the markets an ability to earn a living depended on how the market performed that day or if they were able to secure a stall or space to trade in the first place. The following discussion with Roma men in Spain illustrates the limitations of working at the markets:

SRM5: ... I work as a peddler in the markets.
Interviewer: Every day?
SRM5: From Monday to Saturday in the markets where I don't have a fixed place assigned...
Interviewer: ... Do you earn enough money?
SRM5: No, because there are days I come without pitching, because I have no fixed place...
SRM7: ... we all dedicate ourselves to the markets, and when we can't expose our goods there or anything else we try to earn a living as good as we can...
SRM2: ... You cannot consider it a job because it just gives us the food for a day.

These concerns were also reiterated by some of the Spanish Roma women who worked alongside their husbands at the markets:

SRF3: ... Along with my husband I sell things at my market stall. It is just like a store, but on the street. You put up your stall and, of course, sometimes you can sell nothing, as well as, sometimes you can go out and sell a lot of things. Nowadays I sell less than before, and sometimes I just earn a living for one day. Thus, what I mean is that things are getting worse...

The precarious nature of trading was also discussed in the Greek Roma focus groups, where it was apparent that the perceived 'illegitimacy' of that type of employment made it difficult for Roma communities:

Interviewer: What type of jobs are you doing when you find work?
GRM5: Carpets, at festivals, at street markets, bed sheets... Most types of jobs are being held on the street.
GRM8: At bazaars, by the roadside, etc. We have problems with local police. We try to get authorization but they don't give us...
Interviewer: What is needed to get the authorization?
GRM8: A cash register and space is needed. We don't have the financial ability to rent... we would like to have legal papers. We would like to have our own space where we can sell.

The Hungarian work programme

The existence of the Work Programme in Hungary is worth specific mention as a large number of Roma respondents in the focus groups were, in some way, engaged with this initiative. The Programme is explored in detail by Roma SOURCE (2012) but in essence the Programme aims to support unemployed people into the labour market by making the receipt of social assistance conditional on engagement in work. The work undertaken on the Programme is targeted at activities which will bring wider social and local benefit (as opposed to profit making) such as maintaining drainage channels, tending public spaces and other routine agricultural/horticultural work. The benefits paid to those engaged on the Programme are set at levels lower than the rates available for equivalent work in the mainstream market.

There were mixed views on the Work Programme in Hungary from both Roma and non Roma focus group respondents. With regards to the Roma respondents, while people had broadly positive views about the opportunities it provided in terms of paid employment, it was apparent that the wages were often unmanageably low. Furthermore, it was highlighted that when a revised version of the programme had been launched, not only had the 'wages' been reduced from the level paid in the previous programme, but conditions had been attached; namely, the withdrawal of social benefits for those who did not participate:

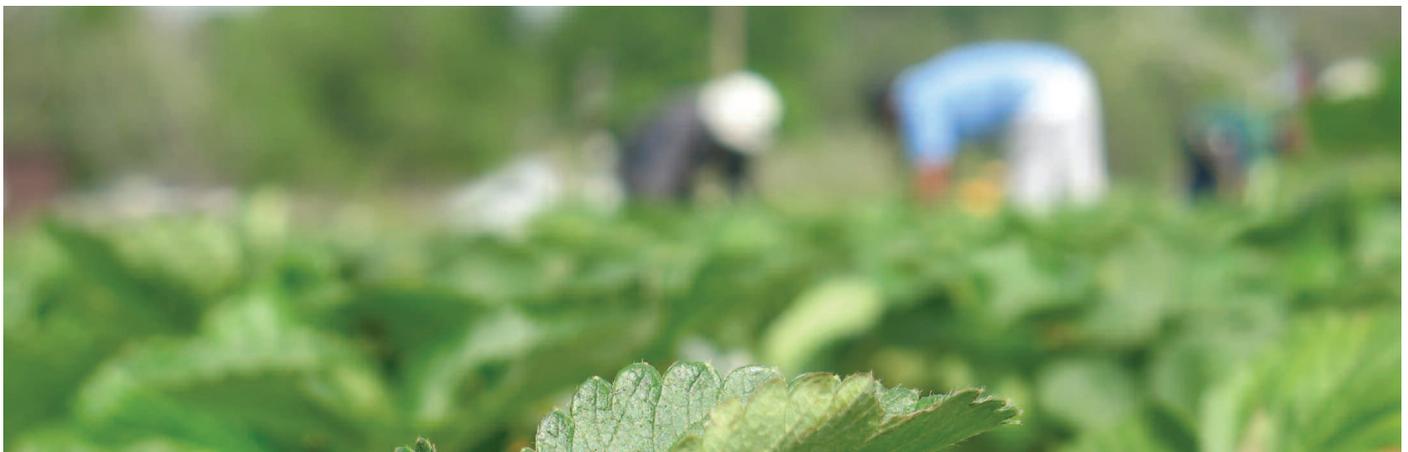
HRF1: I worked in the community work programme four years ago. It was a very good opportunity because you could work for two years if you wanted. For instance, I worked 22 months. Anyone could work and we got the minimum wages, which amounted to 60,000 Forints that time. However, the new community programme launched in 2012 lets people starve to death...Even the 60,000 Forints were too low two years ago and they have even reduced that amount. This is scandalous.

Interviewer: And what happens to those who refuse the community work programme?

HRF5: They lose the social benefit, which is also very low... there were people who wanted to work last year but were not selected, and they don't receive the social benefits now, although it wasn't their fault.

HRF3: Because the office should have asked them to come. The office didn't ask them, and now these people don't receive any money. I don't really understand it. They don't invite them but then they punish them and withdraw their money.

'They lose the social benefit, which is also very low... there were people who wanted to work last year but were not selected, and they don't receive the social benefits now, although it wasn't their fault.'



Respondents in the non Roma focus group, expressed what appeared to be primarily positive views on the Work Programme. These were largely from the perspective that Roma unemployment had previously been a key area of tension at a local level, particularly since unemployment had increased following the regime change in 1989. There was a perception that this tension had been alleviated by providing Roma with 'something to do':

HNRM4: ... *the unemployment came and they were the first not to get a job. They didn't have appropriate qualifications... They didn't know what to do with themselves. It was also reflected in the criminal statistics of the village, too, because the problems of these people did not only cover thefts but they also misbehaved for example just for fun... Walking along the village, even at night, late at night, at midnight, at 1 o'clock at night, I could see the people sit outside in front of the houses and they didn't know what to do with themselves. But when they got involved in the public service programme and had to go to work at 4am, they went to bed early. They became really tired during the day. Also, they had a safe and secure income source... though it was not so high as it could be expected. They started shopping, started to furnish their flats, get second-hand furniture and their life standard improved.*

HNRF5: ... *when the community work programme started, and the Roma people have made the village more beautiful and changed our lives visibly, then the opinion of those who were against the Roma the most sharply, mitigated.*

However, the temporary nature of the work programme was highlighted by one non Roma respondent who had more negative views on the issue:

HNRM1: *The community work programme... is only a temporary solution because it doesn't create jobs so it can't be maintained in the longer run. But the Gypsies don't make efforts to learn a trade in order to gain respect and honour.*



'when the community work programme started, and the Roma people have made the village more beautiful and changed our lives visibly, then the opinion of those who were against the Roma the most sharply, mitigated.'

.....

'But when they got involved in the public service programme and had to go to work at 4am, they went to bed early. They became really tired during the day. Also, they had a safe and secure income source ... though it was not so high as it could be expected. They started shopping, started to furnish their flats, get second-hand furniture and their life standard improved.'

.....

Non Roma perceptions' of 'Roma employment'

The focus groups with non Roma respondents highlighted that people had quite specific views, not only on the type of work that Roma were undertaking, but also the legality of such work. Indeed, there appeared to be a range of activities that Roma were perceived to be involved in. At one end of the spectrum people referred to Roma working in the markets, trading, etc; thus reiterating the types of employment that Roma themselves had talked about. At the other end of the spectrum, however, was the perception that Roma were involved in criminal activities of a serious nature (such as drugs and prostitution). In between these two extremes, non Roma respondents talked about Roma earning a living through 'begging' or through the 'scrap' or 'junk' industry, which covered anything from taking objects from bins to 'stealing' metal and other items to be sold on. What was apparent across the focus groups with non Roma respondents was that there were largely negative views in relation to the employment activities which Roma were perceived to undertake. The following are illustrative of the types of comments that were made:

SNRM1: *... they only dedicate themselves to fend or make money either as scrap merchants or as pedlars, while many of them dedicate themselves to robbing. Or whatever is scrap yard or stuff like that ... those who recycle, say: 'I'm not doing anything wrong, I'm not robbing anyone nor am I begging' but this behaviour greatly affects the society.*

GNRM3: *They steal metal because there are people that are buying it afterwards ... As the price of metals has gone up it is a very lucrative profession ... A second major category is that traders that are moving with their cars and they make a regional trade while moving. There are also those who have a delinquent way of living.*

It was apparent that some non Roma respondents believed that children were also often 'used' by parents to make a living through different types of activity. This included 'begging':

GNRM1: *In the negatives is the exploitation of children through beggary, they use the children as a 'display window' for being begging more effective.*

GNRF3: *Roma children came and begged for money in order to buy something to eat. I offered them bread. They said they didn't want bread. They wanted money. Their parents expect from them to bring money.*

However, the involvement of children was also perceived to be a feature of more serious criminal activities. For example, the UK non Roma male focus group suggested that some parents involved their children in prostitution:

UKNRM6: *I'm a taxi driver and I come across them every day. Like he says, they are all into prostitution and stuff like that, really...*

UKNRM5: *I've found Roma people they are getting their children to do like business with young girls, their parents are getting them into prostitution.*
Discrimination in relation to work

The limited opportunities available to Roma in relation to employment cannot be viewed in isolation, but often relate to wider issues around low levels of educational attainment and poverty (see Chapters 4 and 5). However, while it was acknowledged by both Roma and non Roma respondents that educational engagement is important for increasing opportunities, the focus groups highlighted a perception that underlying issues of discrimination were key to the difficulties Roma faced in accessing or progressing in employment. The following accounts are illustrative of a number of comments that were made across the Roma focus groups in relation to discrimination:

GRM1: *When others ask for a work [referring to non Roma], they find it, we don't.*

GRM2: *... The reason is racism coming from the residents, the government, from municipalities. They believe we are not good people. They believe we are bad, just because we are Gypsies.*

HRM2: *I had to move to Budapest to find a job and in several cases I was rejected only because I was a Roma. They said that there were Roma who drank, stole and cheated. I insisted that I was not like that, but I had to look for another place. There are Hungarians who give us opportunities... But in most places they didn't trust the Gypsies.*

IRM2: *They close the door in my face, 'We'll let you know', they all say, 'we'll let you know'. Then nothing... They don't trust the Roma, for them Roma means rip-off, steal, this is what they think when you go to ask for work.*

BRM4: *... and when we are looking for a job, and if there are ten vacant positions, they are for the Bulgarians. When they find out that you are of the Roma minority, there's no work. The education plays a role too, most of us have no serious education and that affects us too.*

The perception that employers were more likely to favour and hire non Roma workers was not just confined to respondents within the Roma focus groups. Discrimination was also acknowledged by some of the non Roma respondents. For example, in Bulgaria:

BNRF3: *... if we talk about simple work and there isn't any requirement for a lot of training and something, and Bulgarians and Gypsies apply, the employer will hire the Bulgarians. I am convinced in this.*

While it was clear that many Roma felt that discrimination stopped them from accessing employment in the first place, some respondents also referred to discrimination they had experienced while in employment. Discussions in the focus group with women in Bulgaria, for example, suggested that some respondents had been unable to progress within the workplace due to discriminatory practices. Although, on occasions, as the accounts below illustrate, non Roma individuals acted as advocates on behalf of their Roma colleagues; Roma were often denied work-based progression by ingrained discrimination:

BRF7: *they've hired me, as a cleaning lady, and I was okay with that, you know, even cleaning toilets is fine, it doesn't matter as long as it is a job... the first year I did that and I was the best... and the following year the head chef, who was there at the time told me 'I'll take you to work as a kitchen assistant. Submit your application'. I submitted my application and started as a kitchen assistant... but during one staff meeting, we gather, the boss gathers us and says who should do what and at some point the executive chef tuned around and said 'we are going to need one more cook' and we really needed one since there was a lot of work. The boss turned around towards me specifically, looked at me and said to the head chef 'if you promote the cleaning ladies to kitchen assistant, things won't turn out well'.*

BRF2: *... I had started as a cleaning lady, but I had a high school diploma in economics... when the boss, when he found out, you know, that I had some background in economics, there was an opening with computer literacy, and he wanted me to take some additional classes... but on every attempt of his, despite that he was the boss, there were deputies and others in charge saying 'we don't need her, do we? What is this nonsense? What kinds of crazy ideas are you coming up with?', to the boss and every time they stopped him. I just could not develop, you know, and show the other things I am capable of.*

The impact of the economic crisis

Discussions around the issue of access to employment also have to be considered within the context of the global recession. Roma respondents across the focus groups reflected on how opportunities for Roma communities, in particular, had changed as a result of the economic crisis. Some respondents indicated that, as Roma, securing employment had always been difficult but that the ongoing economic crisis had significantly increased the challenges they faced in finding work:

GRF7: ... *There has always been a problem but the recession has made things even more difficult. Seven or eight years ago it was better, now it's worse. Ten years ago we didn't have the same life, we were able to live.*

SRM7: *In this period, the situation is bad for everyone but for the Roma people much worse for two reasons, one is for the crisis that now there's no work and the other is being a Roma... The period is really difficult for everyone, right? But it's very difficult for us being Gypsies.*

IRF2: *In my opinion it is worse than before because today you non Roma with your studies, your work, your things, you find it very difficult to live, never mind about us. We are without studies, we are without work, how can we live?*

'There has always been a problem but the recession has made things even more difficult. Seven or eight years ago it was better, now it's worse. Ten years ago we didn't have the same life, we were able to live.'

.....

The uneven impact of the economic downturn on Roma was also acknowledged by some non Roma respondents:

BNRF3: *For Roma it's even worse... the situation is even worse. Roma in particular, I think they are here are at a disadvantage. In principle, there aren't any jobs, many go bankrupt. They previously worked mainly in construction... before the crisis, construction was very developed. And they worked in large numbers... But now there is no construction.*



In the focus groups in the UK Roma respondents routinely stated that accessing employment opportunities had underpinned their decisions to migrate following the expansion of the EU in 2004. However, a number of respondents, particularly in the focus group with Roma men had become unemployed in the recession and were now finding it increasingly difficult to access employment. The increased competition for the remaining available jobs was believed to have created discrimination, which had perhaps not originally existed, as the following discussion between Roma respondents in the group illustrates:

'Since 2002, 2003 here people seemed to get along much better but more recently the last 3 or 4 years it is getting worse. People don't seem to get along.'

.....

UKRM: ... now it is very difficult to find jobs because of the downturn, it's very difficult to get work.

UKRM: Since 2002, 2003 here people seemed to get along much better but more recently the last 3 or 4 years it is getting worse. People don't seem to get along.

Interviewer: So why do you think it has changed?

UKRM: what they are saying is now 'these Europeans they have taken all our jobs', they are starting to discriminate against us.

UKRM: So as there are fewer jobs available now people are beginning to resent you being here.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, one of the main aspirations mentioned across the focus groups was the desire to find stable and well paid employment. In Hungary Roma respondents spoke about the need for paid jobs to be created in order to address some of the problems Roma faced such as family arguments, mental health, local tensions and household poverty. Furthermore, the focus groups carried out in Greece, for example, highlighted that Roma wanted to be able to access what they referred to as 'legitimate' employment, with some respondents suggesting that the municipality should assist with this aspiration. This was apparent across the male and female groups:

GRF10: A legitimate business is what I would like for my son, my husband and me. But we don't have one. We would be very interested in that, yes. Very much!

GRF2: I want to my child to have a job in the municipality or at a store. And this should be a steady job. Not to go somewhere today and tomorrow be unemployed again...

GRF11: The municipality should help. Educational programs can help us find a job. They should give us opportunities to work in agricultural production as it was in the past.

'I've seen how they treat Gypsies abroad. They do not divide the way it's here in Bulgaria – Gypsies and Bulgarians, they are all one. I've even seen people working with Gypsies. They treat you better'

.....

Migration and employment

The literature suggests that a large proportion of the Roma population living in Central and Eastern Europe are without work and face substantial structural and cultural barriers when looking for paid employment (Hyde, 2006). Consequently, some Roma have made use of their rights to free movement to escape prejudice in their countries of origin and seek work in other European nations (Scullion and Pemberton, 2010). It was apparent from the focus groups that some Roma had travelled to other countries in order to find paid employment. This was particularly the case for the Roma respondents in the UK focus groups, with employment opportunities highlighted as one of the main reasons for migrating to the UK in the first place:

UKRM: *I came for work*

UKRM: *We all came for work*

UKRM: *Home there was no jobs and no money. Here we have jobs and money and a better life here...*

UKRM: *In Slovakia there are no jobs and in Poland the Roma don't get jobs, they are discriminated against. In Slovakia also there is no chance for the Roma to get jobs.*

As the discussion above illustrates, Roma firmly believed that migration often not only provided greater work opportunities but also reduced the discrimination they were likely to face within the paid labour market. Outside of their countries of origin they were more commonly identified by their nationality rather than their Roma ethnicity:

BRM7: *... I go abroad, I go to Europe, to Germany. People don't tell me 'You are Turkish or Roma'. They tell me 'You are Bulgarian'... I went to Germany to work.*

BRM1: *I've seen how they treat Gypsies abroad. They do not divide the way it's here in Bulgaria – Gypsies and Bulgarians, they are all one. I've even seen people working with Gypsies. They treat you better...*

Conclusions

This chapter has highlighted a range of key issues relating to access to paid work for the Roma respondents who took part in our focus groups. To summarise, it was apparent that Roma perceived discrimination as a key barrier to accessing employment. This manifested itself in segregation from more mainstream employment opportunities, with Roma primarily undertaking precarious, unstable and low skilled work. In addition to barriers when accessing employment, there was also an issue of being unable to progress via development opportunities once in employment. On the other hand, non Roma respondents focused on various apparent cultural and behavioural 'characteristics' of Roma communities as a key reason for their limited involvement in the labour market, with non Roma respondents often highlighting a prevalence of involvement in begging, scrap dealing or a spectrum of illegal activities. Regardless, it was clear that for many Roma respondents, a key aspiration was to find stable and better paid employment opportunities. However, the accounts generated illustrated the impact of the economic crisis, with the recession being perceived to have had a disproportionately negative impact on Roma communities, with some Roma referring to migration as a means of accessing better opportunities.

Three Community relations

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Introduction

Whilst much of the attention in seeking to understand the marginal position of Roma across Europe has focused on ongoing social exclusion and state/Roma interactions (see for example Amnesty International, 2011; CoE, 2011; EC, 2011; Brown, Dwyer and Scullion, 2012; Stewart, 2012), very little attention has been given to the more informal and everyday relations that exist between Roma and non Roma populations. Gaining insights into 'everyday encounters' (cf. Simonson, 2008, Cook, Dwyer and Waite, 2010) was a key aim of the focus groups convened with Roma and non Roma respondents. By including discussions about mundane interactions it was hoped that we would be able to explore the potentially, complex and diverse relationships that may exist between Roma and non Roma people who live alongside each other.

Three key themes emerged from the focus group discussions. The first theme – which underpinned many others – illustrates the spectrum of views about the nature of the relationships between people who are Roma and non Roma. The second theme focused on 'how' communities related to one another. The notion of 'living together but apart' was particularly striking and is an issue that has been characterised as communities living 'parallel lives' by previous work in the UK (Cantle, 2001). Finally, a set of interesting yet complex discussions were raised around the heterogeneity of Roma communities, focusing specifically on inter and intra community issues and tensions.

Communities relating to one another – a spectrum of views and encounters

A spectrum of views emerged when respondents talked about the relationships between Roma and non Roma. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these ranged from respondents who thought there were good relations between the different groups through to particularly negative views. In relation to the more positive views, some Roma respondents talked about being integrated (for example SRF2: *I feel totally integrated*), while others also talked positively about having friends who were non Roma. A number of people also reframed the question in the focus group discussions and sought to assert their awareness of the heterogeneity of the various communities and the very individual nature of friendships:

HRF6: *My best friend is Hungarian, we are friends from school. In my opinion, friendship depends on your personality and not your ethnicity. You can be Roma, non Roma or Chinese. And of course, I have already been to non Roma people's places, and they have also visited me.*

HNRM2: *I have both Roma and Hungarian friends. I don't make friend because they are Roma or Hungarians but because I like them.*

Although some non Roma across the focus groups talked about experiencing positive relations, it was far more common for Roma, particularly Roma women, to report having good relationships with non Roma than vice versa. However, it was not uncommon for many non Roma respondents to report ambivalent views with respect to Roma/non Roma relations:

INRF4: *I have never had a friendship with a Roma, I only know them, and I don't have any prejudices neither negative or positive and I think that in any situation you have to judge who is the person in front of you.*

These ambivalent views were often expressed by those who indicated they had experienced 'no problems' or a general lack of incidents with Roma. However, such framing did suggest that views may be open to change if any negative encounters incidents or problems with Roma were to arise.

Previous literature acknowledges the oppression and discrimination that Roma routinely face at the hands of some members of the non Roma populations (see for example Sigona and Trehan, 2009; Stewart, 2012; Sigona and Vermeersch, 2012). Within our study evidence of negative social relations was provided by both Roma and non Roma, although more commonly, such views were expressed by non Roma respondents. In a number of the non Roma focus groups, respondents often offered generalised negative views about the culture and everyday behaviour of Roma being incompatible with the norms and practices of wider contemporary life. For example, Roma were described in terms of being criminals, violent, threatening, dirty and lazy:



SNRM3: *They're like wolves; they go protected in a pack, as a community. Don't they? Where one goes, the others follow it. Isn't that true?*

BNRF5: *Young people from their ethnic group, even if they want to develop, they stop them. I am absolutely opposed. I witnessed how two young men failed their future, their own parents failed them...*

UKNWF8: *It's negative, it's not positive at all. The experience we've had so far. They are not a very friendly lot. The ones I've had experience... They nick [steal] things and because they are very rowdy and rough and single parent mothers and the fathers don't tell them off. They don't discipline them or give them good manners.*

'They're like wolves; they go protected in a pack, as a community. Don't they?'

.....

When talking about problematic relations with the wider community, non Roma on the other hand, tended to cite specific incidents of harassment and racism and incidents of unwarranted aggression towards them. Roma often spoke of a general sense of unease when they encountered non Roma people in their everyday lives:

IRF3: *We're only three or four Roma families, but they hate us, they hate us, even if you are a good person, they always try to provoke you, to look for a fight, they phone the police, so as to make themselves look good and you bad, but they are racists, there are only a few people who you can count on, sociable people, some who come to the church, but there is always this distance, they look at you with indifference, because you are Roma.*

GRM3: *And when we go to play football, they kick us out as well. They call the local police and they kick us out. In football pitches, in cafeterias, in internet cafés. They are telling us to leave because the boss of the store doesn't want Roma costumers.*

At the most extreme end of the spectrum, problematic interactions were narrated as violent incidents between Roma and non Roma people. This was most strikingly expressed by Roma respondents in the focus groups conducted in Italy and Bulgaria. Here recent events involving a previous dispute and a subsequent murder at a football match (Italy) and the arrest of a prominent Roma community leader (Bulgaria) had promoted an atmosphere of fear which triggered numerous violent incidents and a breakdown in wider community relations. This was reported as resulting in an increase in the daily discrimination, harassment and violence experienced by members of the Roma community at the hands of racist members of the non Roma population:



IRF1: *[the events in May] they blame all of us for it and is not right, they wanted to wipe us out, they wanted to come to our houses and burn them... The mother of the non Roma kids attacked her, 'you Gypsy, all of you should be burnt at the stake.' She had to take the kids and run away, she had to escape because she was scared that something could happen to the children... I saw some cars stopping with young men inside, those that wanted to kills us.*

INRM2: *The problem... at the beginning of May was just the tip of the iceberg because this problem has been going on since the Roma came here. Since when they were inserted into the city Pescara because this minority was not inserted normally into the city...*

In Bulgaria, the arrest of an alleged known Roma 'gangster' paved the way for members of far right groups to create a significant amount of fear for the local Roma inhabitants. As one Roma male describes:

BRM3: *A lot of people had risen up, they were coming to the Roma neighbourhood, I asked 'why to the Roma neighbourhood?'. They said they were going on a peaceful procession... They came, they broke windows. People, who live here on one street, Bulgarians, Gypsies, Turks were like: 'Why are you coming here?... Why didn't we rise and fight?' But they were very young – 13, 14-year olds, the politics, on drugs, with beers in their hands. 'Let's kill the Gypsies'.*

A particular feature of the majority of the discussions with Roma and non Roma was the arms-length nature of their relationships. It was very rare to find respondents talking about close relationships between members of Roma and non Roma communities. Even where friendships existed, there was a sense that these were not fully engaging relationships. For example, one non Roma man recounted the limits he had experienced of friendships with Roma:

SNRM1: *Well, I had and I still have some Roma friends, I still consider it friendship, because they didn't anything bad to me, we get along well, but sometimes they leave me a bad taste, because when it's my birthday and we have the typical party with alcoholic drinks in the park, I ask them if they want to come, they can on condition that they bring a bottle but I've never been invited to any birthday party, and I have been five years knowing them... Only one of them invited me into his house, because it looks to be very good people, very humble family, his mother and he invited me to lunch and the like. But that's just one case of the thirty Gypsy friends I know who opened his door to me and let me in.*

A common issue for many non Roma, when talking about the limits of friendships with Roma, was the cultural context which was perceived to exert pressure on how relationships could be formed. This was particularly evident when discussing close personal relationships between men and women from different communities. Individuals engaged in such close relationships tended to report a need to maintain secrecy about their existence as such associations were often frowned upon by member of both their respective communities. Similarly, a Bulgaria Roma respondent talked about a platonic friendship she had with a non Roma child when she was younger and described how her friend had asked her to hide her real name, which would have indicated she was Roma, in order to prevent the displeasure of the friends seemingly bigoted grandmother:

BRF2: *I remember, this is something I realized afterwards, when I grew up. When we were visiting some fellow student's house, there was a girl who encouraged me to make up a fake name when I entered her house. I had a Turkish name and she used to say to me "To my grandma we are going to say that you are Lilly" for example. I wondered a lot, but Lilly, Lilly? I used to enter the house, we used to do our homework; but when I grew up I realized that her grandma did not want Gypsies to enter her house.*

The notion of hiding their ethnic identity, in order to maintain positive relations with the wider community, was also present in discussions with Roma who were relative newcomers to the UK. Here people spoke of describing themselves as 'Eastern European' or by reference to their Polish or Slovak nationality and enjoying cordial relations with others until their 'true' identity became apparent:

UKRF: *There is no discrimination until English people know that we are Gypsy, then you can see that they feel sick. Not all English people, but some of them are nice to you until they know you are Roma, when they know you are Roma they stop.*

An awareness of the precariousness of their social relationships with non Roma was something that many of the Roma respondents recognised. While many did not report direct discrimination, they perceived that they were sometimes being treated with caution or fear and, metaphorically speaking, kept at a distance:

IRM2: *... with my neighbours things are quite good, but they are always scared to talk to Roma, they always put a face on but they are scared to talk, but in general they are fine.*

HRF1: *We live in a place where everyone is Hungarian. To tell you the truth, we can feel discrimination. We have been living in that street for four or five years and I have never been to a Hungarian's house. But actually, no Hungarians have been to mine either. And if there were some trouble, they would withdraw and wouldn't help.*

Living apart together: the existence of 'parallel lives'

Across all the focus groups it was not uncommon for Roma and non Roma to talk about one another as if they occupied related but separate social worlds. This was partly described in terms of differences in culture and tradition, but mostly was discussed in relation to social spaces and interactions. It was far more likely for non Roma respondents to talk about living separate lives, with many reporting having only visual contact with Roma, as opposed to daily engagement of any sort:

UKNRM7: *I've not really had a problem with the Roma people, you see, as such. You come across them like in parks or if you are out shopping. Just do your own thing, don't you. Not really had any problems with them.*

When asked if they had Roma friends or if they ever visited Roma in their houses or vice versa, most non Roma said no, with some reporting actively avoiding everyday contact with Roma, "The truth is that we avoid having Roma friends" (GNRF4). In Hungary the fieldwork was conducted in a rural setting and Roma had been resettled into houses in the village decades earlier, following the closure of an encampment. Even in this situation, where Roma and non Roma had long shared the same physical space, and, broadly civil relations existed between the two communities, some non Roma respondents stated they had no intention of mixing with their Roma neighbours:

I have never been to Roma people, only in their yard. But I am not sure whether I would like to go to the house of all of them. I don't really want to make friends with them.'

.....

HNRM8: *I have never been to Roma people, only in their yard. But I am not sure whether I would like to go to the house of all of them. I don't really want to make friends with them.*

3 Community relations

The Limits of Inclusion? Exploring the views of Roma and non Roma in six European Union Member States

In other locations such separation was reported as being an accepted part of institutionalised practices within public welfare systems (see fuller discussions in chapter 5) such as hospitals and schools. One non Roma respondent in Bulgaria, for example, reported the way in which patients reportedly preferred separation:

BNRF4: *At our hospital they tend to be separated. Gypsies prefer to lie with other Gypsies in a room, even if by coincidence are mixed, they go and looking to talk with their Gypsies. The same goes for Bulgarians - and they prefer not to be mixed with them and try even if it's imposed by any of the circumstances to accommodate them together, they do everything possible to separate themselves.*

'Well, I don't intermingle, because simply in the circles where I have been, you see, you don't choose your friends like that – I'll have two Gypsies, five Turks and so and so many Bulgarians.'

.....

In spite of living in an area which was also home to a large number of Roma residents another Bulgarian non Roma respondent similarly spoke of a preference for not mixing with Roma based on a lack of common interests/activities or mutual social networks:

BNRM7: *Well, I don't intermingle, because simply in the circles where I have been, you see, you don't choose your friends like that – 'I'll have two Gypsies, five Turks and so and so many Bulgarians.' A man selects them according to the social environment where he lives, where he works and mingles. The interests they have. From this perspective, I don't have a common interest – I have neither worked, nor have I studied with Gypsies. For that reason, yes, for that reason I have no friends among them.*

Comments about why minority ethnic communities might not actively chose to interact with the wider majority are also worth highlighting here. One UK non Roma respondent, who was herself a second generation member of a migrant ethnic community now established in the UK, saw direct parallels in the newly arrived Roma community's reticence to mix with the reluctance of first generation members of her own community who chose to remain separate from the majority community in order to avoid racism and discrimination.

UKNRW7: *Our parent's generation, they were the same. They used to get the same stick from white communities or they don't mix and they still do it now. They [Roma] are doing the same, because they feel safe in their own communities. They are going to go to who they know... We look at them as an outsider and think they don't want to mix, but they feel safe. Plus they probably don't feel welcome. We don't understand their culture and everything.*



Community relations within 'the Roma' community

As noted in the introductory chapter of this report the use of labels 'Roma' and 'non Roma', whilst defensible for the purposes of this research, serves to obscure the diversity of communities that are included under such generic categories. Within the Roma focus groups (with the previous noted exception of the UK), respondents were members of long established Roma communities and, in common with non Roma respondents, also routinely citizens of the Member State in which the fieldwork took place. However, the recent expansion of the EU has also enabled significant populations of Roma from Central and Eastern European Accession 10 states to migrate to other Member States within the Union. Whereas previous discussions in this chapter focused on inter communal relations between Roma and non Roma this penultimate section offers a brief consideration of the views of our focus group respondents in relation to Roma groups who have more recently migrated, both internationally and internally, to new locations.

It has already been noted that Roma who had migrated to the UK had experienced a measure of hostility from some among the majority non Roma population. Non Roma respondents in Spain also spoke of 'new' Roma, predominantly from Romania, who had more recently arrived in their city. These newcomers were viewed as more impoverished than the 'indigenous' Spanish Roma and believed to live semi-nomadically in huts and caravans. In line with the general fear and resentment expressed by many non Roma respondents these new Roma were spoken of in a disparaging manner.

However, it was not just non Roma respondents who spoke disdainfully of more recently arrived migrant Roma. In Greece tensions between 'Greek Roma' and 'Albanian Roma' were apparent in focus group discussions. The latter group were generally characterised by Greek Roma respondents almost as 'murderers' and 'thieves' and a sense of injustice was expressed by Greek Roma respondents who believed the arrival of non-indigenous Roma, particularly those originating from the Balkans, had caused new problems that mistakenly being were being attributed to them:

GRF1: *Whatever Gypsies who are not Greek do, we are all being characterized. They say that the Gypsies are doing it. Is it fair that they blame us?*

An attempt to distance themselves from other Roma communities that were perceived to be problematic was also evident in discussions with members of the Bulgarian Roma women's focus group:

BRF4: *the Mushroom District... called the Mushroom District because houses there pop up every day. People who go there come from the inner part of Bulgaria... We are not like the outlaws in the Mushroom District. Our homes belong to our grandfathers, they are legal.*

'... called the Mushroom District because houses there pop up every day. People who go there come from the inner part of Bulgaria... Our homes belong to our grandfathers, they are legal.'

A further layer of complexity emerged in such discussions in Bulgaria when some non Roma respondents talked about differences between 'Turkish' Roma and 'Bulgarian' Roma, with the 'Turkish' Roma perceived as the highest achieving and thus more favoured group. 'Bulgarian' Roma, on the other hand were characterised as lazy and unable, or unwilling to make the most of opportunities to better themselves:

BNRM2: *It [the local authority] built nice houses for them, it gave them the opportunity to study and at the same time they received money for that. So our children would go to school with no free breakfast but the Gypsies had all these benefits and they didn't want to take advantage of them. While the Turks – they say the Turks are different. Of course, they are! Because their leaders say "Educate yourself". So I've got acquaintances who are doctors, who are mathematicians, physicists, and they are really good.*

3 Community relations

The Limits of Inclusion? Exploring the views of Roma and non Roma in six European Union Member States

Whereas previous discussions in this chapter focused on inter communal relations between Roma and non Roma this penultimate section has illustrated that intra communal tensions also exist within the Roma community. We highlight this issue here to emphasise that whilst all Roma are likely to have to face ongoing racism and discrimination on grounds of their shared ethnicity some are doubly disadvantaged because of their 'outsider' status and/or extreme socio-economic deprivation.

Conclusions

Whilst most literature has focused on interactions with the state, in seeking to understand the social position of Roma throughout Europe, very little attention has been paid to the everyday interactions that occur between members of Roma and non Roma communities. The focus groups offer evidence that relationships between Roma and non Roma are characterised by a diverse range of encounters. Some of which opened up spaces for more meaningful and positive relationships, others which suggest, at best, superficial tolerance and yet others which are illustrative of entrenched anti-Gypsy intolerance, discrimination and even violence. Relationships between communities are routinely framed by culturally laden discrimination which, on occasions, is reproduced and becomes institutionalised as part of accepted policy and practice. As this exchange in Italy demonstrates, the potential for more positive community relations to develop exists, if prejudice can be overcome, contacts initiated and new relationships based on trust established:

Interviewer: *In your opinion is it easy to make friends with a non Roma?*

IRF1: *No*

IRF3: *No*

Interviewer: *Why?*

IRF1: *Because they see you at first as a Gypsy, they don't trust you, then when they get to know you, when they meet you, they talk, there slowly begins a relation, they begin to trust you, but you need time.*

However, it needs to be recognised that this is likely to be a challenging and long-term process.



Four Social welfare

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Introduction

The problems faced by Roma in respect of accessing various social welfare services have been widely documented. In relation to health the Council of Europe highlights that in comparison to the wider non Roma population “life expectancy [for Roma] is in general 8-15 years lower and the mortality, infectious and chronic disease rates are much higher” (2011:9). Literature also makes reference to a range of issues, such as poverty, poor housing conditions and a lack of basic amenities and sanitation, as significant contributory factors to ill health among Roma populations across Europe. Additionally, various administrative barriers and discrimination have also been reported as impacting negatively on Roma’s access to welfare services. Further evidence also highlights that educationally many Roma lag behind their non Roma counterparts in terms of both routinely accessing education and attainment (Bartlett, Benini, and Gordon, 2011; Brown, Dwyer and Scullion, 2012; CoE, 2011; Briggermann, 2012).

Within the focus groups that inform this report respondents were given the opportunity to consider a range of welfare issues. This chapter provides an overview of significant concerns that emerged in discussion with Roma and non Roma respondents in relation to three areas of welfare namely; healthcare, housing and education.

Healthcare

Among Roma respondents issues related to the access and affordability of healthcare provisions dominated focus group discussions around health. The welfare systems of the six Member State represented in the Roma SOURCE partnership have each evolved in a particular historical, political and cultural context, so a diversity of healthcare provision underpinned by various principles governing access to particular services is to be expected (rf. Esping-Andersen (1990) for an early, influential account of differing 'worlds of welfare'). In locations where collectivized systems of healthcare were predominately organized around social insurance principles (where access to services is linked to an individual's prior record of contributions), many Roma spoke of being unable to access healthcare provisions. This was particularly the case among Greek Roma respondents who reported that because they owed money to the Internal Revenue System (IRS), or did not have the required contribution records, they were unable to routinely access healthcare.

GRF10: *When you owe money to the IRS and you cannot pay then you cannot have a health book. The government says that you first pay the money you owe and then you can get it.*

GRF6: *There is no free health for us. I have a health card. But if you owe the IRS you cannot update it. If you don't have money they tell us that we cannot get examined. Something must be done so we can live as humans as well. If we don't have money to pay them, they don't accept us.*

It was evident that in some cases this resulted in differential access to health services occurring *within* families.

GRF11: *I have [access to healthcare] because I'm sick but my kids do not, and if they want to go to the doctor they have to pay 100 Euros in the hospital. If there is a health problem we have to pay the public hospital. I visited the doctor with my child and they told me I have to pay 200 Euros. I still haven't paid ... I have 4 children, 3 boys, and they cannot get examined.*

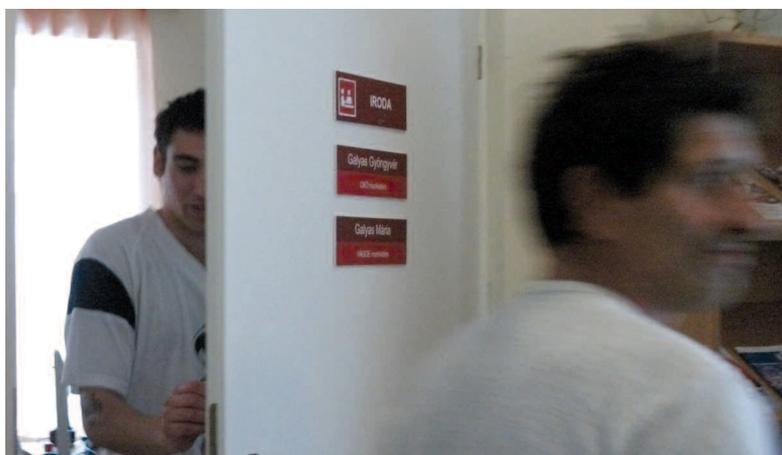
GRF8: *I have a health card, but this cannot cover my husband as well because we are not married.*

Others in Bulgaria, who lacked the required contributions, spoke of at best, reliance on either pharmacies or emergency hospital services and at worst, very basic self-medication practices:

BRM6: *When I have a problem I go to the pharmacy first... and ask for some medicine.*

BRM5: *I would go to emergency medical care for some medical service, because I haven't paid health insurance.*

BRM3: *I haven't paid my health insurance contributions too... but if they were paid, I would go to the GP ... How can I go? I haven't paid for 10 months now...*



BRM2: *Medical old wives' tales. You put a handkerchief with vinegar on your head to lower your temperature... when you have a sore throat you drink tea, instead of taking medicine.*

Even for those with health insurance, having to pay additional one off 'patient fees' to access particular services or tests (a requirement in some Member States), acted as a further barrier that prevented Roma from seeking appropriate treatment:

BRF4: *Do you know what's worse, if you have a health insurance and you are unable to pay the patient's fee, which is not negligible—2.50 leva... bear in mind that people hardly buy bread, so 2.50 sometimes is too much and you don't go to the doctor.*

BRF7: *I was sick recently... you must pay 10 leva to the general practitioner. He sent me over to a gynaecologist, where to I had to pay for the tests, so I did some of the tests and skipped others.*

SRF3: *For fillings you have to go to a private doctor [dentist] and spend a lot of money.*

GRF4: *I have a health book and at the hospital they tell me that I have to do more tests before I can get an operation. And my doctor said it was necessary to perform surgery. And I cannot get operated on because I don't have money to pay the extra tests needed before the operation. I have a health card!*

Those Roma who were unable to access contributory systems of healthcare had few alternatives other than to acquire debt in order to pay directly for basic medical services. The potentially negative impacts of this situation for Roma adults and children and wider public health are evident:

GRF6: *My son took his children to do vaccines. He borrowed money from other people for this... Whenever something occurs, if someone else has 5 Euros, he lends the money to another and pays back whenever possible.*

GRF8: *... If I am able to borrow money I take my children for examinations, otherwise I cannot. In the past, I took the children to the hospital for vaccines, now I don't.*

GRF4: *When the time comes for my children to make vaccines, necessarily I cut their milk and the food so I can keep that money for vaccines. Now, I have to do an operation. I borrowed 600 euros, for two MRIs. This is our life, life is difficult. What to do? These are our problems.*

'I was sick recently... you must pay 10 leva to the general practitioner. He sent me over to a gynaecologist, where to I had to pay for the tests, so I did some of the tests and skipped others.'

.....



'My son took his children to do vaccines. He borrowed money from other people for this... if someone else has 5 Euros, he lends the money to another and pays back whenever possible.'

.....

In direct contrast to Roma, non Roma respondents often spoke of Roma manipulating freely available, public health services in order to derive some kind of financial benefit or respite from the hardship of their everyday lives:

BNRF4: Everything is provided free of charge. The Free Health Insurance Fund covers their hospital stay. And no matter how bad are conditions at the hospital, they are better than conditions in their home. Therefore they tend to spend whole months in the hospitals. They make every effort to go to a hospital, because then other benefits follow.

It was even suggested by one Bulgarian non Roma respondent that families would purposefully make their children ill in order to access additional health and financial resources:

BNRF6: They make small children go to breathe fumes from cars, so when they go to the doctor to say that they are sick from asthma, to go to the Territorial Expert Medical Commission, and to get bonus in the family.

Perceptions, that Roma tried to fraudulently use and abuse public healthcare systems were also expressed in Greek and Spanish non Roma focus groups:

GNRM1: I have a paediatrician friend ... five different Roma mothers visit her using the same health insurance booklet or the same mother visits her with different babies.

SNRM1: They're Spanish because they have nationality, but even so they deny it saying 'I'm a Gypsy'... Maybe for that they say 'why do I have to contribute to the Government? Why do I have to contribute to the welfare?'... but when it comes to take medicines or when they get ill, they say 'take your health card and go to Emergency', that is they don't go to the doctor at all, they go directly to Emergency to receive prescriptions... just like they beg for money in the street... they go to the hospital, to the clinics, but they don't pay contributions, they have no interest in contributing to social spending. And that creates a social deterioration that I say it's not good.

'They're Spanish because they have nationality, but even so they deny it saying 'I'm a Gypsy'... Maybe for that they say 'why do I have to contribute to the Government? Why do I have to contribute to the welfare?'... but when it comes to take medicines or when they get ill, they say 'take your health card and go to Emergency','

.....



Housing

Issues related to accommodation were a key feature in the focus group discussions with both Roma and non Roma respondents and often played a central role in wider issues related to inclusion and community relations. Our findings support those from Phillips (2010) who asserts that Roma:

... suffer from a combination of neglect in terms of housing provision and control in terms of settlement. This is reflected in their housing circumstances, which are typically highly segregated, deprived and excluded from mainstream society (Phillips, 2010: 218).

However, this was only part of a complex picture illustrated by the respondents in our focus groups. The following section outlines the issues emerging from the discussions with a particular focus on three key areas: access to affordable housing; living conditions within housing and the residential inclusion of Roma populations.

Accessing affordable accommodation

A key feature of focus group discussions, among Roma respondents was a lack of affordable accommodation. Typically, Roma reported living in overcrowded conditions alongside other members of their extended family. Although living in multi-generational families is often seen as part of Roma culture, many respondents reported that their accommodation arrangements arose from an inability to afford their own separate accommodation:

HRM2: As long as there are no job opportunities, it's impossible. We can't afford it. I have been living in my mother-in-law's place for three years. There are three rooms, a kitchen, a hall and a bathroom. We can't buy our own house because my partner works in the community work programme and we can't get a loan.

A desire to access social housing in the future was often expressed by Roma respondents. However, while social housing was deemed preferable, dissatisfaction and a lack of transparency in allocation processes for social housing were also key features of discussions. For example, some Italian Roma respondents reported that an often prolonged period of relationship building with key stakeholders was required before social housing could be accessed, with some respondents alluding to corrupt practices:

IRM1: After a lot of attempts and having eight children I was finally given a council house, and after so much sacrifice I am fine but really to get this house I had to fight really hard because it's a very particular situation as you can never find anyone who will help you and you have to lick the backside of the politician whoever is in charge at that moment.

Non Roma respondents also reported engaging in a similar struggle to obtain social housing, potentially reflecting a general lack of this type of accommodation in many European states:

BNRM2: I think that the provision of social housing is impossible for a mortal. You have to have money or you have to have good friends. Otherwise it is impossible to get municipal housing.

There was also a perception from some non Roma respondents that Roma were being afforded preferential treatment by social housing providers:

UKNRF8: Six years ago, I became homeless... I asked the council to give me a shelter or a house and they wouldn't. They were so adamant. I stayed in what's it called, hostel for six months and still they had no available house and they wouldn't give me it. They were giving them to these Roma people and these asylum seekers... they said they took priority... I paid taxes and everything. I'm a British citizen and I have a right to have a house as well

SNRM4: They give these properties only to Gypsies and no one else

It was evident that owner occupation among Roma respondents was limited. In Hungary a small number of respondents had secured mortgages to purchase their homes, but were struggling to afford the repayments:

HRF4: We have a flat with a loan. This is our own house. We built it nearly thirty years ago. But we haven't been able to pay the instalments for ten years just the interest... We don't know what will happen. We will be evicted.

In Bulgaria, several Roma respondents reported inheriting their accommodation. Although this provided them with affordable accommodation it was often older, poor quality, housing.

Housing conditions

Poor housing conditions were a recurrent feature of discussions with Roma respondents. Some of the worst conditions were provided in the accounts of the Greek Roma who were living in camps and described conditions that were unsuitable for human habitation:

GRF11: We are three people and we live in a shack which consists of nylon and cloth... Inside it is cold, the shack has mice... When it rains we duck and then we sleep wearing the same clothes. You're at your own home and you are afraid. We get water from the neighbours.

However, similar living conditions were also evident for some respondents living in houses who frequently reported overcrowding and a lack of basic amenities such as running water:

GRF6: I have a house with one room where 6 people are sleeping. I have electricity, but I don't have water yet. I take the garden hose.

GRF5: I live in a small room, me and my two children. I have no water, I have to go to a neighbour and get water... It would be nicer if I also had a bath and a toilet. Our house does not have a toilet.

Houses in multiple occupation were a key feature of the accommodation arrangements among Roma respondents in the UK, most of whom were living in private rented accommodation. Private accommodation, while relatively easy to access, was often characterised by poor housing management, precarious tenancies and poorly maintained properties. For example, one Roma man stated: "the windows are falling out of my house and the landlord does not want to do anything". However, it was acknowledged by some UK respondents that this was an improvement on the housing conditions in their country of origin: "back home it's catastrophic!". A similar reflection was made in Italy where it was noted that although accommodation was sometimes poor, it was much more preferable to life in a Roma camp:

'We are three people and we live in a shack which consists of nylon and cloth... Inside it is cold, the shack has mice... When it rains we duck and then we sleep wearing the same clothes. You're at your own home and you are afraid.'

.....

IRM5: Pescara has two sides, on the one side we haven't known the problems of the Roma camps... I insist that the situation in Pescara is positive in the that we have an acceptable life, to live in a Roma camp as happens elsewhere in the great majority of Italian cities, means to live with two kilogram rats, means to live with no light and water, no heating, so that's the two sides of the coin.

When discussing the living conditions of Roma, accounts by non Roma respondents tended to focus on the dilapidated condition of the Roma neighbourhoods and the impact this had on surrounding districts as well as the wider negative impression this created for visitors. Allied to this, common narratives among non Roma respondents focused on a predilection for squalor and the wanton destruction of good quality, social housing by Roma:

SNRF4: The City Council or the Government gave them some flat about thirty years ago to put them living in those apartments. Then it happened. These people destroyed the houses from the inside. But the Government... did it to promote integration... but of course there are people who can't integrate.

BNRM1: They live in extremely bad conditions. The bad thing is that even if we want to help them, they will not allow that.

Good neighbours? Residential integration and segregation

One of the key issues underpinning many of the discussions with both Roma and non Roma was where they lived. Indeed, the areas in which the fieldwork took place represented a spectrum of circumstances, ranging from locations that appeared to illustrate segregated housing such as in Bulgaria, Greece and Spain to those areas where it was more common to find mixed neighbourhoods such as Hungary and the UK.

Similar to the sorts of places described by Molnár et al. (2011), it was common in Bulgaria, Greece and Spain and - to a lesser extent - Italy for non Roma populations to talk about the local Roma or Gypsy 'ghetto', 'quarter' or 'neighbourhood'. For certain areas this was a single place within the locality, while for others this described a number of specific areas – typically on the outskirts of the town/city – which reportedly had high numbers of Roma. It was very rare for non Roma to be living in such neighbourhoods:

BNRF6: I live in a house... and I have no relationships with the Gypsies, because everywhere I'm surrounded by Bulgarians. However, further up the road maybe about 4-5 km from my house there's a whole village, [name of place] one part of a village there actually are only Gypsies.

For some Roma respondents, a key aspiration was to escape this segregated living:

BRM7: Everyone should go to live where Bulgarians live and mingle and not be separated [as] only Gypsies or Bulgarians.

Even in the more mixed neighbourhoods, integration between Roma and non Roma was limited. Non Roma tended to cite disturbances and the negative impact of a Roma presence on local house prices and schools. Although in mixed areas Roma and non Roma had long shared a geographical space and routinely lived in close proximity to each other, issues of untidiness and noise still pervaded the way in which many non Roma spoke about their Roma neighbours:

HNRM9: Who would like to live in a place where you have to listen to wedding music all day and all night? I am not talking about rubbish or bad smells but only the continuous noise. I can't and I don't want to tolerate this. Also, a lot of places lived by the Roma are full of rubbish. It is not a question of your material status.

Education

Two key issues featured strongly in relation to education: first, issues of non attendance and early exit of Roma children from compulsory schooling; and second, the extent to which educating Roma and non Roma pupils together was seen as a positive practice.

Non attendance and early exit

The issue of serial absence from school – particularly high school – and/or the unauthorised early exit of Roma teenagers from the educational system was a recurrent theme, and is also widely acknowledged in literature relating to Roma and education (see, for example, Brown, Dwyer and Scullion, 2012). Roma spoke directly of poverty and an inability to meet the costs associated with education as a significant factor in preventing their children from attending lessons:

GRF4: *Poverty is the reason we stop them from going to school... I would also like to send my children to school, but I won't, because of my financial problems, they will remain illiterate. All the other children at school will be able to buy at least a sandwich, or chips. Mine do not have the money to get them. I do not want my children and my grandchildren to be illiterate like me. The situation forces us to take such decisions. This gets me depressed because my children feel bad.*

BRM4: *Where should these people get money for textbooks, for example, and for other simple things? For example, this kid has 2 leva in his pocket, he sees the other kids buying a snack and wants one too. Such things, simple things. In the past there were school canteens where kids could go but nowadays there are not.*

Indeed, a number of Roma respondents reflected that the need to earn money had been a key factor in their own early exit from education. Roma respondents spoke of missed educational opportunities and were keen to stress that they valued schooling and wanted their own children to reap the future potential rewards of an education:

GRM5: *The main reason was the need for work, for survival... My parents told me that I've learned what I had to learn and then I should start working. I listened to them. But the truth is that I wanted to continue my education...*

GRM8: *I would like them [my children] to get more educated than me... School is very helpful when it comes to employability. When you have a degree, I believe it is easier to find a work at an office or something.*



SRF6: *I attended the high school and left after the first year... my parents had to go to the market and I had to help them staying at home... I stayed at home with my brothers...*

SRF3: *I wish I had continued studying to become a veterinarian, but I was forced to leave the school because of the money. It is just the economic condition that makes you stop studying and go to the markets.*

HRM4: *Children can only achieve in life if they learn.*

'Genes is another. They just do not like learning. Well I've been in classes with them... They are unwilling to learn... they are talented in music, in construction and believe that they don't need education and don't want [it].'

.....

In contrast to Roma who tended to highlight structural reasons for school absence, in particular poverty, there was a clear perception among non Roma respondents that Roma were disinterested in formal schooling or did not value education (see Chapter 5 for a fuller discussion on the differing structural and cultural/behavioural discourses respectively favoured by Roma and non Roma respondents in their discussions within focus groups):

GNRF2: *Roma consider it's bad to study. For them idiots read books. Children who want to study have to struggle even more.*

BNRM3: *Genes is another. They just do not like learning. Well I've been in classes with them... They are unwilling to learn... they are talented in music, in construction and believe that they don't need education and don't want [it].*

SNRM1: *Since their childhood all my [Roma] friends didn't go to school, the few that went, didn't take it seriously, because their parents, who I met personally, didn't ever inculcate in them the importance of going to school to improve themselves, to get to get a job and stuff like that.*

This apparent disregard for educational attainment led to the commonly expressed belief among non Roma respondents that many Roma parents actively prioritized the short-term financial gains of low paid, casual employment above and beyond the longer term potential benefits of a good education. Once again a consideration of wider discriminatory practices is missing, with Roma seen as responsible for their own exclusion due to an inherent tendency for delinquency and a chosen lack of engagement with education:

GNRM1: *Roma parents decide that their children will come to school only the first two years and then they will quit it in order to sell flowers...*

GNRM5: *... At an early age they earn a living and in that way they get experience and maturity much earlier than others. The negative is that they are unfortunately untrained which sets them apart in ghettos and prone to delinquency. These two characteristics are based on their abstention from education.*

'Since their childhood all my [Roma] friends didn't go to school, the few that went, didn't take it seriously, because their parents, who I met personally, didn't ever inculcate in them the importance of going to school to improve themselves, to get to get a job and stuff like that.'

.....

Discussions in the Roma focus groups highlighted that familial expectations were typically gendered, with young Roma men frequently expected to contribute from an early age by assisting their fathers at work, while Roma women spoke of having to assist or replace their mothers in providing informal, familial care to enable older family members to go to work. Once again, there were more negative views from some non Roma respondents in relation to the impact of gender, with a perception that Roma parents encouraged children to marry at an early age which had negative repercussions in relation to educational opportunities:

GNRF4: *My sister-in-law was a teacher in a village where Roma lived. She went every day from one house to the other to get the children to school. Until the next school year begins, when half the children are married.*

BNRM6: *They stop them and tell them "Enough!... aged 12 you should marry and have babies... enough for you."*

In Italy, non Roma respondents further emphasised the entrenched traditional gendered practices within some Roma families, referring to the example of daughters being kept away from school following the onset of menstruation. While such practices are less commonplace today, one Italian Roma respondent confirmed their own personal experience of this practice in her younger days.

The value of integrated schooling?

The second key issue in relation to education related to debates around segregated or integrated schooling. Many non Roma respondents recognised that – in principle – mixed schools were an appropriate way to promote broader integration between Roma and non Roma communities. However, this was combined with a view that a lack of ability among the Roma children could in some way inhibit their children's education:

GNRF3: *... I am afraid that the curriculum will lag due to some pupils' difficulty with adaptation. If the teacher wants to do his job well and mainly in the language lesson, he can't go on if ten children don't understand.*

The most positive experiences of schooling were relayed by Hungarian respondents who generally described both their own and their children's experiences of education as positive: "As my daughter says there is no discrimination" (HRM3). These positive views were also reiterated by non Roma respondents in Hungary, with school seen as important site that promoted routine interaction from an early age:

HNR7: *There were always Roma people around me. At primary school, I was sitting next to a Roma boy and he was my friend. We got on very well with each other not only at school but we often talked or hung together in our free time too.*

In the UK, Roma respondents appeared to be happy with the educational system. Indeed, discussions in the Roma women's focus group, in particular, suggested that their children enjoyed school and mixed well with non Roma classmates.

Discussions around segregated schooling were a particular concern among Bulgarian and Italian Roma respondents. In Bulgaria, for example, some Roma respondents were concerned that the de facto segregation inhibited the educational attainment of Roma children, particularly in relation to learning the Bulgarian language:

BRM2: *The biggest problem is the segregation in so called 'Roma classes'. As long as 20 kids from first grade speak only in Turkish and Romani and only one teacher talks to them in Bulgarian, there is no way these kids will understand this language. The Roma kids just have to be scattered, instead of being put in one class, and to communicate with more Bulgarians. Some of these kids' parents don't know Bulgarian, because they didn't go to school. As a result, the kids cannot speak the language at home and cannot learn it at school.*

IRM1: *To see your children separated from the others in the same classroom... it is really, upsetting.*

'My sister-in-law was a teacher in a village where Roma lived. She went every day from one house to the other to get the children to school. Until the next school year begins, when half the children are married.'

.....

While policies in the fieldwork countries did not officially sanction segregated education, separation often occurred for two reasons. First, because schools routinely reflect the populations of the areas in which they are situated, those located in areas where Roma communities predominate effectively become 'Roma schools'. Second, where schools serve localities with more mixed populations, streaming often concentrates Roma children in lower ability classes; a situation that may be exacerbated if children have not been attending on a regular basis.

Discrimination by welfare professionals?

Evidence of overt discrimination against Roma on the part of particular services or individuals responsible for the delivery of healthcare, housing or education service, did emerge in focus group discussions. However, many Roma declared themselves to be broadly satisfied with the treatment they received in their interactions with a variety of welfare professional. A minority of Roma respondents did describe particular incidences where they strongly believed that racism was a factor in either denying them access to appropriate support or receiving less favourable treatment because of their ethnicity:

SRM2: *When I was a child I went to the school... there were teachers who discriminated against us. There were so many teachers that used discrimination; we realized that there were a lot of differences... we asked them to explain better, we didn't receive any answer.*



IRF1: *If we go to the hospital or in a public place to ask for something they don't even take you into consideration.*

BRF3: *So, I won't forget, there was a case, there was one girl from [location]... she was having a baby... So the day before they took her downstairs, to deliver, and it was my turn... On the following day I went to give birth, and yet still she hasn't delivered. They left her there to suffer in pain and it was a matter of some 50 leva that she has to pay, while she—the mother—was crying in the back, you know behind the window all this for 50 leva, so that they attach her to a system, in order to deliver faster. And she was screaming in pain, that girl and they say to her: 'Hey shut up you gypsy, see how Bulgarians are not crying, are you the only one in pain? Do turn around and lie still' and she, the mother, came up with the 50 leva,.. there is huge discrimination.*

It is beyond the remit of this report to attempt to quantify the extent to which anti Roma discrimination shapes the personal behaviour of welfare professionals and wider institutional practices. However, as discussions elsewhere in this report document, and the data above graphically illustrates, racism remains an enduring backdrop of many Roma people's lives. It is not our intention to downplay the continued importance of racism and discrimination in blighting the lives of Roma across Europe, nonetheless, within the focus groups convened for this study, the majority of Roma respondents declared themselves to be broadly satisfied in their interactions with a variety of welfare professionals.

Conclusions

Three key themes emerge from the analysis of focus group discussions about welfare. The first is a strong perception among non Roma respondents that Roma receive preferential treatment to collectively provided public welfare services. Second, is a view that Roma rarely contribute to such welfare services and that, simultaneously, they seek to cynically manipulate public welfare to their own advantage at a cost to the wider majority population. Such sentiments, which often emerge from a combination of inherently racist attitudes and fears about competition for scarce welfare resources and services have a long history (rf. Burney, 1967; Banton, 1983). They are also a feature of more contemporary debates about European citizenship (Cook, Dwyer and Waite, 2012), and help to generate a hostile resentment of Roma among certain members of the wider non Roma population. Third, in direct contrast to their non Roma counterparts, Roma respondents consistently highlight the negative impact of poverty on their ability to access health, housing and educational services. The reasons underpinning the distinct difference in emphasis between Roman and non Roma communities are explored in more detail in the next Chapter.



Five The social inclusion/ exclusion of Roma

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Introduction

It is now widely acknowledged in both European Union policy statements and in wider literature that many Roma across Europe routinely face social exclusion in their daily lives (see e.g. Hyde, 2006; ERRC, 2007; EC, 2011). A newly published study across 11 Member States that draws on two surveys with 22,203 Roma and non Roma interviewees reports: an average of less than 30% of Roma surveyed were in paid employment; 45% of Roma respondents lived in accommodation lacking one or more basic amenities such as electricity, an indoor kitchen, toilet or bathroom; and that only 15% of young Roma adults who took part in the study (compared to over 70% of their non Roma counterparts) had completed upper secondary education (FRA, 2012). The contemporary situation of Roma in Europe is such that the European Commission has recently asserted that:

Roma – Europe’s largest minority of about 10 to 12 million people – are very often the victims of racism, discrimination and social exclusion and live in deep poverty lacking access to healthcare and decent housing. Many Roma women and children are victims of violence, exploitation and trafficking in human beings including within their own communities. Many Roma children are on the streets instead of going to school. Lagging education levels and discrimination in labour markets have led to high unemployment and inactivity rates or low quality, low skill and low paid jobs for Roma. This causes a loss of potential which renders the endeavour to secure growth even more difficult. Better integration of Roma is therefore both a moral and an economic imperative, which moreover will require a change of mindsets of the majority of the people as well as of members of the Roma communities (EC, 2012: 6).

Leaving aside debates about the size of the Roma population and the issue of trafficking, both of which lie beyond the remit of this reportⁱⁱⁱ, an understanding of the causes and impact of social exclusion and poverty faced by Roma, as highlighted by the Commission, are a central focus of this report. As Hills et al note, poverty is an important constituent element of the broader concept of social exclusion which considers debates beyond material resources and financial inequalities to consider how issues such as “discrimination, chronic ill health, geographical location or cultural identification” (2002: 6) can exclude individuals and groups from effective membership and participation in wider society. A comprehensive review of multi dimensional disadvantage, undertaken by academics for the UK government defines social exclusion as:

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A complex and multi-dimensional process. It involves the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas (Levitas et al., 2007: 9).

Significantly, although Levitas and her colleagues note that the attribution of causality in social science is a highly problematic task, they state that overwhelming evidence exists to strongly suggest poverty is a “major risk factor in almost all domains of exclusion” (2007: 9) that they explored. It is certainly the case that poverty, alongside differing opinions as to why it might occur, have featured strongly in the narratives of both Roma and non Roma respondents in the preceding chapters of this report. However, other factors that are not directly related to poverty, such as racism and discrimination – which have also featured in the previous chapters - need to be considered when addressing the social exclusion of Roma. Racisms (see Husband, 1987), that use individual, physical^{iv} and/or collective cultural differences between communities to legitimise discriminatory practices are also important issues that need to be considered in relation to the ongoing exclusion of Roma. The concept of institutional racism, which emerged from the Macpherson Enquiry in the UK following the murder of the Black teenager Stephan Lawrence in 1993 and concerns about the Metropolitan Police Force’s subsequent investigations, has resonance when considering the factors underpinning the ongoing exclusion of Roma in many places across Europe. The Macpherson Report defined institutional racism as:

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin which can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people (1999: 28)

Institutional racism moves beyond overt individual bigotry to consider ‘accepted’ policies and practices that are embedded within established institutions and how they may discriminate against minority ethnic citizens. This broadening of focus asks public authorities and majority populations to reassess often long established beliefs and conventions, which may, unintentionally, lead to negative outcomes for minority ethnic groups. It may help counter the assimilatory tendencies of certain policymakers and members of the public who see integration as a one way process which demands unequivocal change from minority ethnic communities so that they fit in with the majority (Phillips, 2010). This type of approach has been heavily criticised by some for perpetuating the denial of Roma rights and the “active participation and diversity of [their] Romani culture” (FRI, 2013: 6).



Experiences of poverty among Roma communities and its impact on everyday life

In spite of the caveat noted in Chapter 1 (which highlights that the most disadvantaged Roma were not routinely recruited as respondents in the study), there is strong evidence across the focus groups conducted with Roma – some of which has been noted in previous chapters - of lives routinely blighted by poverty. For example, poverty and its daily impact is a powerfully expressed and recurrent theme in discussions with Greek Roma women who spoke of living 'miserable lives':

GRF11: *We live in a shack which consists of nylon and cloth. This is where we live during winter, during summer. During winter we live a very difficult life. Nylon, you know? 3 people and all three are sick. I have a pacemaker, my husband has gone through a stroke, my daughter is 25 years old and crippled in bed. My kids are married and looking for work and cannot find any. One has 5 children, the other 4 children and cannot earn a minimum daily wage. There comes a time when my grandchildren will be at an age to go to school. 1, 2, 3 weeks, when they have no shoes, we will stop them from school against their will. We are looking to find work and both men and women do not find.*

GRF8: *I have 5 children, I stay at home and the man goes to work. He goes and does nothing. He wants to buy milk and he can't. The children some days don't eat. I get depressed when they don't have something to eat. One day they eat, one day they don't. It was always difficult for us; we cannot have anything for comfort. I live here in [location]. I rent a house.*

Poverty was also described as an ever present feature of the lives of Roma respondents in Hungary, Bulgaria and Spain. As noted in Chapter 2, for many Roma poverty was a direct consequence of longstanding unemployment and a continuing lack of opportunities within the paid labour market. However, poverty is not confined to unemployed people and many who are engaged in low paid, low status employment often find themselves among the ranks of the working poor (Toynbee, 2003). It was evident that numerous Roma respondents who were in work were finding it increasingly difficult to provide for their families. Furthermore, Chapter 2 has described how opportunities to work had diminished in the ongoing recession and subsequently competition for work had intensified. Respondents spoke of surviving 'day to day' (SRM2) by undertaking low paid and often casual or 'precarious/unstable' work:

HRM8: *What we can buy is the food and the clothes for the child. But it's very hard because we don't have anything.*

HMR3: *I agree. Last week I got the wages for four days, and that's 8,000 forints. And we tried to calculate how we can make ends meet. But we can't. I don't mind work. I do work but I would like decent wages... This will result in stealing and breaking into houses. There are no jobs. People are poor.*

Discussions that related to the multiple impacts of poverty in different spheres of everyday life were a common feature in many of the focus groups with Roma. As Chapter 4 discussed in relation to housing, many Roma described living in cramped, overcrowded conditions where basic necessities were often nonexistent or unaffordable. In Spain Roma women respondents spoke of three married couples and their families sleeping in one house with some people sleeping in the dining room out of necessity. In Bulgaria respondents spoke of sparse lives characterised by overcrowded living conditions with discussions focused on the struggle to meet heating costs in the winter:

BRM5: *It's very hard. Especially if you have pupils [children of school age] in my case it's very hard, because I have two pupils and they do not have the necessary conveniences to prepare for school. You live in one room. You just have to be there, cook there, the kids study there and what not.*

BRM2: *There are four of us in one room in the winter and we use firewood and coal for heating.*

BRM6: Shoes, slippers [general laughter] for room heating... We have, for example, one room each family, you know, we have one, two, three, four rooms with one hallway. And there are 12 of us.

Although we were able to access some respondents who lived in camps, within the majority of focus groups Roma respondents regularly recognised that significant numbers within the diverse Roma communities resident in Europe were in a worse position than themselves. For example, the Greek Roma men spoke of 30-40% of the Roma population living in camps without electricity or water, “in a different situation in comparison to our lives”. Similarly, the Bulgarian Roma respondents who spoke of poor housing conditions and fuel poverty, also recognised that other, more recently arrived Roma groups, often lived in abject poverty in camps on the edge of town in the so called ‘Mushroom District’.

A more detailed analysis of the detrimental effects that poverty frequently has in relation to healthcare, housing and education was offered in Chapter 5; however, this section reiterates how poverty plays an important role in structuring the actions of many Roma as they try to meet their basic welfare needs.

A different view? Competing understandings of the causes of poverty and social exclusion

The extent to which poverty exists within Roma communities was widely acknowledged by members of the non Roma focus groups and on some occasions non Roma respondents offered opinions that stressed the ongoing structural disadvantages faced by Roma. For example, Bulgarian non Roma spoke of the “great misery” (BNRF3) that poverty brought to the lives many Roma and, as noted in Chapter 2, there was also a more general acceptance that whilst the on-going economic downturn effected all people, its impact was particularly felt by marginalised groups such as Roma. However, although a variety of understandings were present, many non Roma respondents strongly expressed the belief that the refusal of Roma to recognise, challenge and change their own communities’ ‘problematic’ behaviour was the primary cause of the ongoing social exclusion and marginalisation endured by Roma. In contrast to Roma respondents, who routinely identified the importance of discrimination and material/structural inequalities as underpinning their on-going social exclusion, non Roma respondents consistently blamed Roma - and what respondents in majority populations considered to be flawed cultural preferences and choices - for their disadvantaged situation and continuing segregation from mainstream society:

SNRF7: I agree with my colleagues. They don’t want to improve, they don’t want a good job, and they don’t want to study. But want the Government to give them [benefits]. So the Government gives them everything they want, but still they do not learn. You give them home; you give them all, but... they are not going to accept it, because they will continue to live the same way... that’s it.

SNRF6: They’ll die the same way they were born.



BNRF4: *My impression is that many of them do not work. Particularly women – they rely on social benefits, when they give birth to the child they always say that the father is unknown, although it is known to have one so they are registered as single mothers and they take advantage of such benefits.*

HNRM9: *Although you are poor you don't have to live with so much rubbish around you.*

HNRF5: *What I personally feel and what maybe incenses the people who are against the Roma or don't understand them or don't keep contact with them is that they get everything free and they don't work. This shocks the society. If we consider in detail why they don't work and why they live on benefits except for the programs – I feel this in my environment and read it on Internet forums: Why is it that they have fun all day and their lives are really different from those of the Hungarians? This goes back to their roots: how easily and lightly they live – I am saying this in quotation marks – and maybe this is what we hear most often: "Roma families have so many children so that they can get more family benefits and social benefits. Another thing that is questionable is their attitude to work".*

Widespread resentment of Roma by members of non Roma populations was based on a number of factors. Antipathy arose because Roma were viewed as actively choosing to be different whilst simultaneously refusing to enact the changes required which would enable them to integrate into the mainstream. The most extreme and deterministic view expressed, suggested that Roma were somehow intrinsically different from other human beings: "Well our Gypsy will always be our Gypsy... I think that mentality and genetics definitely determines the behaviour of the Gypsies (HNRM1)", and, therefore, unable to change their behaviour even if they wanted to. More commonly, as the previous data illustrates, many non Roma respondents viewed Roma as dysfunctional members of society who refused to accept responsibility for themselves or their families.

Strong resentment also arose because Roma were seen as making claims on public welfare resources without any attendant willingness to make a contribution to wider society via paid work or other socially valued activities. Roma women were portrayed as purposefully "giving birth to babies for benefits" (BNRF1) and Roma men portrayed as idle, workshy individuals who would rather live on state handouts than find paid work.

Alongside this – and as discussed in Chapter 2 – Roma were consistently characterised by many non Roma respondents as preferring to engage in criminal or anti-social activities in preference to seeking paid work. As previously highlighted, non Roma respondents made reference to a spectrum of activities that Roma were involved in, including taking goods from charitable recycling banks, stealing metal goods to sell on as scrap, street begging, petty theft or more serious criminal behaviour such as prostituting their own children:

SNRM6: *They clearly isolate themselves from the rest [of the society] whether they are Latinos, Spanish, or black... That is they use every difference to avoid living with the rest of the society, and when they get older their main goal is to start a family and that's it... fend for themselves or make money either as scrap merchants or as pedlars while many of them dedicate themselves to robbing.*

'Last week I got the wages for four days, and that's 8,000 forints. And we tried to calculate how we can make ends meet. But we can't. I don't mind work. I do work but I would like decent wages... This will result in stealing and breaking into houses. There are no jobs. People are poor.'

.....

5 The social inclusion/exclusion of Roma

The Limits of Inclusion? Exploring the views of Roma and non Roma in six European Union Member States

UKNRM6: To them it's just a way of earning money... Because there isn't jobs, they are out there making money that way, because to them it's not an embarrassment. I've seen fathers—I've been in my taxi and a father dropping their daughter off at somebody's house. I know what they have gone for. I've picked them up, 'Where you going? Take us to...'—ended up in a car park and another car has pulled up and she's gone out and jumped into that car. I know what's happened. I can take you to ten brothels now.

An analysis of the focus group discussions shows a clear disjuncture between the narratives used by Roma and non Roma respondents to explain the continuing social exclusion faced by many Roma. In short, Roma emphasise structural factors such as material inequality, discrimination and racism and offer accounts that recount the negative impact that these issues continue to have on their daily lives. In contrast non Roma respondents regularly view the poverty and social exclusion of Roma as being rooted in the dysfunctional behaviour of Roma themselves.

In many ways such views mirror those of longstanding advocates of behavioural 'underclass' theory, whereby membership of a welfare dependant 'underclass' is not defined by reference to a disadvantaged financial condition but in terms of common deviant patterns of behaviour (i.e. a disproportionate number of illegitimate children, a high incidence of (violent) criminal activity and a lack of employment in able-bodied males), that violate respectable norms of mainstream society. Such views, which were originally outlined by right wing thinkers (see e.g. Murray, 1984, 1996), are now, to varying degrees, integrated into mainstream political and popular debates across Europe. We should therefore not be too surprised, even if such ideas have been heavily criticised (Baguley and Mann, 1992), to find them voiced by those who are hostile or fearful of Roma and who wish to legitimise or make sense of the situation without addressing the entrenched inequalities in income and opportunities that continue to exist between the Roma and non Roma communities.

'My impression is that many of them do not work. Particularly women – they rely on social benefits, when they give birth to the child they always say that the father is unknown, although it is known to have one so they are registered as single mothers and they take advantage of such benefits.'

.....



Conclusion: the limits of inclusion?

It would be inappropriate to conclude this chapter without stating that many Roma and non Roma respondents outlined, on occasions throughout discussions, more positive and inclusive accounts of their lives alongside each other. Many spoke of ongoing civil, if largely separate, relationships within their immediate neighbourhoods. For example:

UKNRM7: *I've never really had any problems with them. I do come across them every day. You just mind your own business, don't you.*

SRM8: *I get along with everyone who is not Roma, inside and outside the neighbourhood, we usually stay with friends, play football, play sports and stuff and we usually get along, both Roma and non Roma.*

HNRM2: *I have both Roma and Hungarian friends. I don't make friend because they are Roma or Hungarians but because I like them.*

At times, there was also some mutual recognition of the common concerns faced by both Roma and non Roma people alike and some of the focus groups discussions offered an opportunity for personal reflection and a recognition and rethinking of their own xenophobic views:

UKNRF7: *When you mentioned the word, Roma, straight away in my mind, I'm thinking in my mind Travellers, Gypsies and thieves. I know I shouldn't do that. I know they are not like that. I think that needs to be eradicated as well.*

GNRF5: *Personally I accept diversity and I have experienced it. Now I realize that when I hear the word Roma a negative image comes to my mind. I try to think myself living at their own area and I think that as they can't become integrated so can't I. I differ from persons of my own generation who have grown up in Greece. I am more open to other cultures. Negative? You should be careful not to be robbed.*

In spite of such statements, however, as the final comment from GNRF5 illustrates, integration between non Roma and Roma communities remains restricted in many locations and the limitations of inclusion of Roma into important spheres of social life forms an important part of analysis and discussions presented in previous chapters. Finally, it is also interesting to report that when non Roma respondents spoke of what they considered to be the positive aspects of Roma culture they routinely highlighted widely held stereotypical views about Roma having a freedom of spirit/'take each day as it comes' approach to life and also their love of, and inherent talents, for music and dance. Although these views were generally offered with good intentions, they may also serve to perpetuate the "negative prejudices of Folklorism which produces discrimination" (FRI, 2013: 6) and as such, serve as an indication of more mundane and widely held attitudes that will have to be confronted if the ongoing social exclusion of Roma is to be challenged across Europe.

Six Conclusions, key findings and recommendations

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Introduction

This report has sought to explore the views and experiences of Roma and non Roma across six selected EU Member States with a focus on two broad areas. First the extent to which Roma continue to experience social exclusion in key areas of everyday life. Second, the degree to which Roma and non Roma communities lead segregated or integrated lives. As highlighted in the introduction, we recognise that while we refer to 'Roma' and 'non Roma' communities, these are by no means homogenous groups and the views represented in this report are diverse. This research does not attempt to make definitive statements about the situation and views of all Roma or non Roma in each partner country. Rather it highlights a number of key concerns and perceptions, in respect of these two broad issues, that emerged in the focus groups convened with both Roma and non Roma people.

Whilst it might be convenient to think of the social inclusion of Roma as something to be tackled by acculturation and education, the picture is far more complex. This report has focused on how social inclusion and exclusion are understood and experienced by respondents in relation to a number of key thematic areas. It offers important insights into the perceptions and experiences of both Roma and non Roma that are grounded in the everyday lives of people and their particular socio-economic context. The following provides a brief summary of the key issues emerging from the research.

Key findings

Unemployment

Entrenched prejudice, discrimination and a lack of education - both academic and vocational - condemns many Roma to long term unemployment. Our data reiterates the findings of many previous studies and provides strong evidence that Roma face significant barriers when attempting to access labour market opportunities.

Paid work

Where Roma feature within the labour market their position is characterised by precarious, unstable, low paid and low skilled work. This research suggests that there is sometimes a tendency, by employers or key gatekeepers, to suppress opportunities which might allow people to progress. This situation can be self-perpetuating as Roma can become increasingly associated with particular sectors and areas of work, which can lower their aspirations and expectations. From the perspective of non Roma communities, Roma are often viewed as engaged in a spectrum of activities, ranging from market trading through to criminal activities.

Community relations

Relationships between Roma and non Roma are characterised by a diverse range of everyday encounters. These encompass civil, routine associations between neighbours from different communities at one end of the spectrum, alongside a sometimes begrudging toleration of others as the norm, through to violent racist incidents at the other extreme. Although there were reports of voluntaristic, positive relations between Roma and non Roma founded on trust and reciprocation within local neighbourhoods, in many instances Roma and non Roma continue to lead separate, parallel lives.

Social welfare

A strong perception exists among non Roma respondents that Roma receive preferential treatment to collectively provided public welfare services. Linked to this, many non Roma also believe that Roma rarely contribute to such welfare services but are happy to manipulate the services on offer for their own financial benefit. Such views help to foster a deep seated resentment from certain members of the non Roma population. On the other hand, Roma, consistently highlight poverty as impacting negatively on their ability to effectively engage with health, housing and educational services.

Social exclusion

The focus group discussions shows a clear dichotomy between the narratives used by Roma and non Roma respondents to explain the continuing social exclusion faced by many Roma communities. Roma primarily emphasise structural factors such as poverty, discrimination and racism and describe the negative impact that these issues have on their daily lives. On the other hand non Roma respondents regularly view the poverty and social exclusion of Roma as being rooted in the dysfunctional behaviour or culture of Roma themselves. These contrasting views permeated discussions across all the thematic areas identified in this report.



Recommendations

In keeping with the spirit of this project our recommendations are targeted at the macro level of policy making and the micro level of community based settings:

At the level of **policy makers**, there is a need to:

- Prioritise anti poverty initiatives, given the negative ongoing impact of poverty which reverberates throughout the lives of Roma.
- Directly confront the entrenched anti Roma sentiments that pervade large sections of non Roma populations across Europe.
- Ensure principles of equality are embedded within all service areas and examine the potential impact new policies may have on Roma populations.
- Pursue targeted policies to enhance the entry of Roma into paid work. This requires that opportunities are made available for Roma within more highly skilled, better paid sectors of the labour market.
- Ensure Roma are facilitated to engage with education at all levels. This requires specific policies for Roma, to encourage engagement. Additionally schools need to ensure that experiences of education are positive, equal and fuel aspirations.
- Develop strategies to ensure that the views and concerns of non Roma and Roma communities inform policy and practice.

For those working in **community based settings**, there is a need to:

- Ensure each local authority/municipality identifies a lead officer to co-ordinate and mainstream key issues pertaining to Roma inclusion.
- Develop initiatives that encourage mixing between Roma and non Roma. Initiatives based on skills, health, faith, food etc. can offer opportunities to build meaningful relationships within mutually supportive environments.
- Invest in leadership through the development of Roma 'community champions' to help bridge the existing gaps between Roma and key service providers.
- Ensure the delivery of local policies is subject to equality impact assessments to examine their effects on Roma.
- Address the poor housing conditions which blight the lives of many Roma.
- Prioritise approaches that support co-developed solutions which allow for greater residential inclusion whilst avoiding forced relocation and social engineering.
- Engage in robust efforts to dispel the persistent myths and commonly held beliefs about Roma.
- Ensure that organisations develop their existing consultation and engagement strategies and tailor these, in an appropriate manner, to include Roma communities.

Such activities should be performed in partnership with both Roma and non Roma community members. This is likely to ensure the development of meaningful and sustainable change within communities. The on-going social exclusion experienced by many Roma communities is expensive in both financial and social terms. The maintenance of the status quo is not a viable option.

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Appendices

Appendix 1	Table A1: Key characteristics of the sample	59
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Appendices

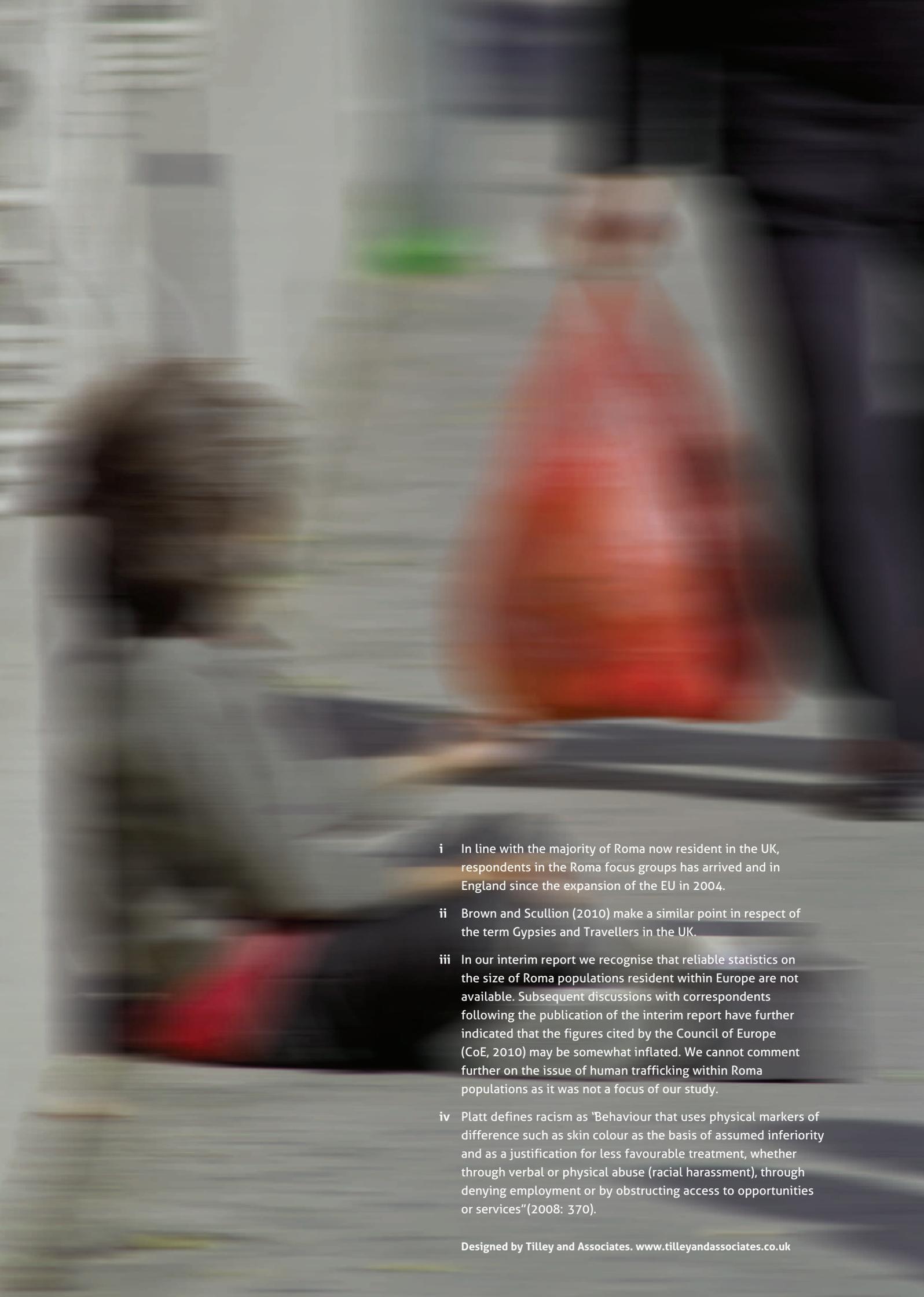
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Appendix 1

Table A1: Key characteristics of the sample

Focus group	Location	Number of respondents	Gender	Nationality	Roma or Non Roma
FG1	Bradford, England	11	Male	1 Czech 4 Polish 6 Slovak	Roma
FG2	Bradford, England	10	Female	4 Slovak 3 Polish 3 unknown	Roma
FG3	Bradford, England	8	Male	British (1 British White, 7 British Asian)	Non Roma
FG4	Bradford, England	8	Female	British (2 British White, 6 British Asian)	Non Roma
FG5	Varna, Bulgaria	7	Male	7 Bulgarian	Roma
FG6	Varna, Bulgaria	7	Female	7 Bulgarian	Roma
FG7	Varna, Bulgaria	7	Male	7 Bulgarian	Non Roma
FG8	Varna, Bulgaria	7	Female	7 Bulgarian	Non Roma
FG9	Athens, Greece	8	Male	8 Greek	Roma
FG10	Athens, Greece	11	Female	11 Greek	Roma
FG11	Athens, Greece	6	Male	6 Greek	Non Roma
FG12	Athens, Greece	5	Female	3 Greek 1 Bulgarian 1 Unknown	Non Roma
FG13	Village, Hungary	8	Male	8 Hungarian	Roma
FG14	Village, Hungary	8	Female	8 Hungarian	Roma
FG15	Village, Hungary	9	Male	9 Hungarian	Non Roma
FG16	Village, Hungary	8	Female	7 Hungarian 1 Polish	Non Roma
FG17	Valencia, Spain	6	Male	1 Spanish 1 unknown 3 Columbian 1 Paraguayan	Non Roma
FG18	Valencia, Spain	6	Female	2 Spanish 2 Columbian 1 Bulgarian 1 Paraguayan 1 Unknown	Non Roma
FG19	Valencia, Spain	9	Male	Spanish	Roma
FG20	Valencia, Spain	6	Female	Spanish	Roma
FG21	Pescara, Italy	7	Male	6 Italian 1 German	Non Roma
FG22	Pescara, Italy	7	Female	7 Italian	Non Roma
FG23	Pescara, Italy	6	Male	6 Italian	Roma
FG24	Pescara, Italy	5	Female	5 Italian	Roma
Totals	24 FG	180 (92 M /88 F)		14 (inc. unknown)	



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- i In line with the majority of Roma now resident in the UK, respondents in the Roma focus groups has arrived and in England since the expansion of the EU in 2004.
 - ii Brown and Scullion (2010) make a similar point in respect of the term Gypsies and Travellers in the UK.
 - iii In our interim report we recognise that reliable statistics on the size of Roma populations resident within Europe are not available. Subsequent discussions with correspondents following the publication of the interim report have further indicated that the figures cited by the Council of Europe (CoE, 2010) may be somewhat inflated. We cannot comment further on the issue of human trafficking within Roma populations as it was not a focus of our study.
 - iv Platt defines racism as "Behaviour that uses physical markers of difference such as skin colour as the basis of assumed inferiority and as a justification for less favourable treatment, whether through verbal or physical abuse (racial harassment), through denying employment or by obstructing access to opportunities or services"(2008: 370).

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