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Roma Matrix
Interim Research Report

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November 2014

ROMA
MATRIX

Acknowledgements

Primarily, this report is an overview of the issues highlighted by the authors who were commissioned to write the 10 separate Member State reports (hereafter referred as the Country Reports). Initial thanks must therefore go to the individuals who compiled these Reports. In alphabetical order they are:

Chrisoula Arcoudis	Greece
Roxana Barbulescu	Spain
Barbara Giovanna Bello	Italy
Selma Muhič Dizdarevič	Czech Republic
Joanna Kostka	Poland
Angela Kóczé	Hungary
Jarmila Lajčáková	Slovak Republic
Maria-Carmen Pantea	Romania
Todor Todorov	Bulgaria
Hilary Turley	UK

We are greatly indebted to these researchers. Additionally, we would also like to thank the AIRE Centre and Dr Daniel Allen at the University of Salford for their contributions to the UK country report, and Dr Keleigh Coldron, freelance researcher and associate of SHUSU, for her support in producing this report and the Country Reports.

We are grateful to Migration Yorkshire (Leeds City Council) for their on-going leadership of the Roma MATRIX project and in particular would like to thank David Brown, Peter Cresswell, John Donegan and Catherine Peart for their support. Finally, thanks must go to Victoria Morris, Dr Graeme Sherriff and Julia Willis at the University of Salford for their advice and practical assistance with this project.

Images used in this report have been produced by partners on the Roma MATRIX project and we are grateful to them for allowing their use in this report.

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1. Introduction

Background and scope

Roma MATRIX (Mutual Action Targeting Racism, Intolerance and Xenophobia) is a two year project (2013-2015) co-funded by the European Union's Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme. The Programme is underpinned by four general objectives, two of which are of particular relevance to Roma MATRIX:-

■ "to promote the development of a European society based on respect for fundamental rights as recognised in Article 6(2) of the Treaty on European Union, including rights derived from citizenship of the Union;"

■ "to fight against racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism and to promote a better interfaith and intercultural understanding and improved tolerance throughout the European Union."[1]

Nevertheless, the remaining objectives, which stress the importance of strengthening civil society, encouraging an open, transparent and regular dialogue, as well as the role of building better relationships between legal, judicial and administrative authorities and the legal profession are, in their own way, as pertinent to the activities of Roma MATRIX.

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[1] Acts adopted under Title VI of the EU Treaty. Council Decision of 19 April 2007 establishing for the period 2007-2013 the specific programme 'Fundamental rights and citizenship' as part of the General programme 'Fundamental Rights and Justice'(2007/252/JHA) Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32007D0252&from=EN

Migration Yorkshire (Leeds City Council) is the lead co-ordinating partner for Roma MATRIX. The project involves 20 organisations from 10 European countries, representing a diverse range of agencies including non-government organisations (NGOs), Roma-led organisations, local government, universities and two private sector companies, as listed below.

Country	Partner organisations
Bulgaria	■ Association National Network of Health Mediators ■ Association of Young Psychologists in Bulgaria ■ Regional Administration of Varna
Czech Republic	■ IQ Roma Service, Civic Association
Greece	■ Action Synergy SA
Hungary	■ Former State Fostered Children's Association ■ Roma Civic Association ■ Wheel of Future Public Utility Foundation
Italy	■ Bologna Municipality ■ Emilia Romagna Region
Poland	■ Roma Cultural and Community Association
Romania	■ Roma Women Association in Romania
Slovakia	■ Society of Friends of Children from Children's Homes (Smile as a Gift)
Spain	■ Maranatha Federation of Gypsy Associations
United Kingdom	■ Glasgow City Council ■ Migration Yorkshire (Leeds City Council) – lead partner ■ Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council ■ Social Marketing Gateway Ltd ■ University of Salford ■ University of York

The four core themes that underpin the Roma MATRIX project are:

- Reporting and redress mechanisms for tackling anti-Gypsyism

- Roma children in the care system

- Employment

- Cross community relations and mediation.

Within these themes a diverse programme of activities is being undertaken which include developing networks, mentoring of people from Roma communities, organising workshops, capturing positive images, developing a public media campaign, etc. The Universities of Salford and York have a research role within the Roma MATRIX project. The overall objective of the research element is to investigate how the national strategies for Roma integration are being operationalised and delivered within the partner countries in respect of combating 'anti-Gypsyism'. Within this there are the following four specific objectives:

1. To map and explore existing policies and practice for combating anti-Gypsyism and promoting social inclusion in relation to the four core themes outlined above;

2. To consider the effectiveness of existing policies and procedures in combating anti-Gypsyism;

3. To investigate how existing policy and procedural frameworks are operationalised in practice on the ground; and

4. To explore how policies are experienced by organisations supporting and/or representing the interests of Roma.

As a concept, anti-Gypsyism has its roots in European campaigns challenging racism and intolerance, and promoting human rights,

themselves driven by pan-European organisations such as European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), and parent organisations such as the Council of Europe. This has implications for the present study because it assumes that these agendas are both widely understood, positively embraced and promoted by all states in the Union and Council. As the Country Reports indicate, however, this may not be the case when it comes to Roma. Nonetheless, the failure to progress the inclusion of Roma is in part a result of structural factors which hinder a more rapid programme of tackling the inequalities experienced by Roma. This is not to diminish the enormous impact of anti-Gypsy prejudice, but it is an important consideration when understanding the current situation.

Anti-Gypsyism has been discussed by several authors (see e.g. Nicolae, 2006; Kyuchukov, 2012), exploring both the terminology and the manifestation of this concept, which to some extent remains an imprecise one. Although it is overly simplistic to claim that prejudice and discrimination against Roma communities are purely products of the interaction between Roma and non Roma communities (as opposed to structural factors), many discourses on the nature of anti-Gypsyism continue to emphasise that a one sided, violent and oppressive relationship, fuelled by an exclusionary popular narrative, is central to its definition.

For the purposes of this report we draw on the work of Nicolae (2006: 1) who conceptualised Anti-Gypsyism in the following way:

> ***…anti-Gypsyism is a distinct type of racist ideology. It is, at the same time, similar, different, and intertwined with many other types of racism. Anti-Gypsyism itself is a complex social phenomenon which manifests itself through violence, hate speech, exploitation, and discrimination in its most visible form. Discourses and***

representations from the political, academic and civil society communities, segregation, dehumanization, stigmata as well as social aggression and socio-economic exclusion are other ways through which anti-Gypsyism is spread. Anti-Gypsyism is used to justify and perpetuate the exclusion and supposed inferiority of Roma and is based on historical persecution and negative stereotypes. Despite the fact that anti-Gypsyism fits academic descriptions of racism, until very recently the academy/academics in writings/ discussions/ analyses of racism have by and large ignored or simply paid cursory attention to the plight of the Roma, and have not made much effort to theorize/analyze the discrimination faced by Roma. Dehumanisation is pivotal to anti-Gypsyism. I understand dehumanisation as the process through which Roma are often seen as a subhuman group closer to the animal realm than the human realm. Even those rare cases of seemingly sympathetic portrayals of Roma seem to depict Roma as somehow not fully human, at best childlike. Roma are in the best cases described as freespirited, carefree, happy, and naturally graceful. All these characteristics are frequently used to describe animals.

About this interim report

This interim report provides essential context within which empirical work within the 10 Member States is being undertaken. It presents an overview of key issues raised by the authors' of the 10 separate Member State reports (hereafter referred to collectively as the Country Reports, or individually by the relevant Member State e.g. the UK Report). These can be viewed or downloaded via the Roma

MATRIX website.[2] The Country Reports authors' were chosen (following a tendering process), on the basis of their prior work and knowledge of issues related to Roma inclusion and policy in the 10 European Member States that are home to the Roma MATRIX partner organisations. The discussions presented in subsequent chapters of this interim report draw heavily on the insights contained within the individual Country Reports. It should be noted that these reports were produced during late 2013 – early 2014 and due to a dynamic policy environment within some Member States the context may have changed since their production. As such, this interim report should not be read as a definitive statement on the situation of Roma and associated policy in the ten Member States; rather it offers a consideration of the main concerns as outlined in the Country Reports in respect of five thematic areas:

Chapter 2 The policy landscape and Roma inclusion

Chapter 3 Reporting and redress mechanisms for combatting anti-Gypsyism

Chapter 4 Roma children in the care system

Chapter 5 Employment and Roma

Chapter 6 Roma and non Roma cross community relations and mediation

Concluding comments and a summary of the on-going fieldwork that will inform the final report and other outputs emerging from the research element are offered in Chapter 7

[2] See https://romaMATRIX.eu/research/phase-1-research

2. The policy landscape and Roma inclusion

Introduction

Addressing the entrenched exclusion of Europe's significant and diverse Roma population has been firmly on the European Union's (EU) agenda in recent years through initiatives such as the *EU Roma Strategy 2008* and the *Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015*. Similarly, the *Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies* adopted in 2011 represented an attempt to ensure that Member States put in place policies to monitor and reduce the inequalities between Roma and non Roma populations in four key areas of education, employment, health and housing. Unsurprisingly, the significance of the EU in shaping recent national and regional policy development on Roma related issues is, therefore, firmly acknowledged in all ten Country Reports. Individually, the authors of each Country Report also outline, in varying levels of detail, relevant equality and anti-discrimination legislation and policy initiatives in each partner Member State. In line with much EU policy there is a recognition from the European Commission that policy requirements aimed at enhancing Roma inclusion in Member States 'needs to be tailored to each national situation' (European Commission 2014: 2). Readers requiring more detailed discussions of arrangements in a particular Roma MATRIX partner state should refer directly to the relevant Country Report. The primary purpose of this chapter is to highlight key and recurrent policy themes contained within the 10 Country Reports. Subsequent sections deal with policy delivery and implementation, consultation, data and diversity issues.

Policy delivery

In line with EU requirements the Country reports detail how eight of the 10 countries in the Roma MATRIX partnership have produced National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS). The two noted exceptions are the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom (UK). The Czech Republic Country Report notes the Commission has accepted the *Conception of Roma Integration 2010-2013* (adopted in 2009) in lieu of a NRIS which (at the time of writing) is currently being finalised. As the relevant Country Report details the UK government did not submit a formal NRIS, stating instead that the disadvantages facing Roma in the UK, and responses to combatting them were already being addressed under existing equality and anti-discrimination legislation and strategies designed to tackle the exclusion of Gypsy and Traveller communities. In a similar vein several other Country Reports note that the preferred approach of many European governments is to incorporate national initiatives to promote Roma inclusion within wider prevailing policy frameworks. For example, the Bulgaria Report states that the NRIS is subsumed under a more general strategy to challenge the social exclusion of poor citizens and/or disadvantaged minority ethnic groups. In the Czech Republic Roma inclusion strategies fall under more general human rights based policies designed to tackle more

widespread social exclusion. Similarly, in Hungary, Romania and Greece national action plans for Roma integration reiterate the principles and priorities of more generic national social inclusion strategies focused on alleviating the disadvantages faced by a range of marginalised groups, of which Roma are but one such group. Likewise, the Poland Country Report highlights that, at the level of national policy, Roma inclusion issues are covered under general anti-discrimination policy and legislation protecting rights of national and ethnic minorities (rf. to appropriate Country Reports for further details). Several Country Reports stress the limitations of reliance on this universal approach to tackling the disadvantaged situation of Roma. The common concerns of many Country Report authors' about the adoption of this more generic policy approach (as opposed to more particularistic targeted response) are summarised in the Hungary Country report:

'One of the fundamental problems is that the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy does not address just the Roma, but a wider – and rather vague – target group: people living in deep poverty, children living in poverty and the Roma. The Action Plan which is an operationalization of the strategy does not indicate a specific budget line for Roma targeted intervention. Also the mainstream policy framework which involves the Roma target group too does not indicate what portion will be spent on Roma therefore really hard to detect the exact amount of money which was spent on Roma integration'.

The Slovakia Country Report emphasises that although Roma have formal equality under national law and have been recognised as an ethnic minority since 1991, this has not been enough to make a significant difference in reducing the inequalities that continue to exist between Roma and non Roma

members of the Slovak population. This critique is echoed in the UK Country Report which stresses that protection under the law is insufficient in protecting Roma from disadvantage and discrimination (rf. Craig, 2011). It is noteworthy that in some countries Roma are not yet actively recognised as a minority in law. The Italy Report also notes this where attempts to challenge this situation are ongoing.

The authors of the Country Reports draw attention to more targeted initiatives (that operate alongside wider national equality and anti-discrimination legislation), which are aimed at specifically addressing the needs of Roma populations (see e.g. Spain and Greece Country Reports). Many such strategies are delivered at regional or local level dependent upon the differing institutional and administrative arrangements prevailing across the 10 Roma MATRIX partner countries. Whilst not in itself inherently problematic, the delivery of more localised strategies clearly leads to variable provision within Member States. The Spain Report notes that the prevailing system of regional, devolved competency for delivering Roma inclusion has led to uneven policy development and a situation in which 'some regions have shown a greater determination than others to put efforts and resources into programmes for Roma inclusion'; a pattern that is repeated elsewhere. The Czech Republic report also states that whilst policy at local authority level often exists (in the form of local plans to promote Roma inclusion), certain local authorities have been criticised for failing to implement them effectively. A similar point is made in the Poland Country Report which highlights how, due to the particular regional/local administrative arrangements prevailing in different Member States, concurrent responsibilities for similar policy areas may occur. This can lead to unhelpful conflicts in approach at different levels and also uncertainty about where responsibility for the delivery of Roma inclusion strategies and services ultimately sits (see UK Country Report also). In spite of these difficulties a

number of Country Reports (e.g. the Romania and Italy Country Reports) draw attention to tangible examples of good practice that can be found in certain municipalities where mayors and/or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have taken a lead in driving forward local Roma inclusion initiatives.

Contextual and implementation issues

The Country Reports detail a number of common issues that negatively impact upon the effective implementation of Roma inclusion policy across Member States. The prevailing economic, social and political environment(s) into which the Roma inclusion strategies were launched is a significant factor. The financial crisis that has engulfed many European nations has seen severe and ongoing cuts in public expenditure. The Spain Report details some improvement in the situation of Roma since the 1980s (following the development of the Spanish welfare state and Roma targeted initiatives and resources), but notes the disproportionate negative impact that recent cuts in social spending have on disadvantaged groups such as Roma. The Greece, Italy and Poland Country Reports all feature similar discussions (cf. also Taylor-Gooby (2012) in the UK context). The Hungary Report implies that, following cutbacks in national expenditure, EU funds are now used to replace rather than augment funding for social inclusion strategies and that much of this policy is now effectively reliant on EU money for its continued implementation.

Allied to economic issues the prevailing political climate within the individual states that make up the Roma MATRIX partnership is also seen as a factor of some significance. Changes in the political orientation of national governments following general elections may lead to a marginalisation of policy that seeks to address the situation of Roma. For example, the Czech Republic Country Report states that Roma inclusion appears to have been side-lined following a recent change in government and a change in focus that has prioritised other issues and the necessity of cuts in public expenditure (see discussion above) above and beyond the promotion of Roma integration. The volatility of the political climate in Italy, where several changes in government have occurred in a short period of time, is also cited in the Italy Report as a factor that has diminished the effective implementation of Roma integration policy. The reluctance of the UK government to present a coherent national Roma inclusion strategy to the Commission which includes specific measurable targets and funding allocation in respect of Roma may also be significant in marginalising the particular issues of Roma at level of national policy discussions (see UK Country Report).

The endorsement of political parties with more overtly nationalistic and right wing agendas by a significant proportion of the European electorate also needs to be taken into account. The Italy Report highlights an issue with wider resonance for all Roma MATRIX partner nations when noting the influence of a populist, right wing, Eurosceptic discourse that draws on hostility to minority ethnic communities and ongoing cutbacks in welfare state provision to blame marginalised people, including Roma, for society's ills. Elsewhere Hoggett, Wilkinson and Beedell (2013) have noted the appeal of a 'popular politics of resentment' and how it may inform the development of exclusionary rather than inclusive policy discourses. For example, the general lack of strong support from non Roma populations for interventions aimed at tackling the social exclusion of Roma (as noted in the Poland Report but part of the bigger picture across Europe), is perhaps, indicative of, at best, popular and political indifference to the well documented marginalisation that many Roma face. As the Romania Country Report makes clear, a wider lack of political will by national governments to challenge the status quo is perhaps to be expected, given that the endorsement of enhanced Roma integration

carries with it real political risk (OSF, 2013) for governing parties who may be reliant on an electorate who an indifferent or hostile to progressive policies. As noted in the Slovak Report it may well be the case that policy and strategies to tackle Roma exclusion have been established in response to EU requirements rather than an overt desire of national governments to drive policy forward. In any case, the endemic anti-Roma prejudice within the wider population and social distance between Roma and non Roma populations that is noted in many of the Country Reports are likely to act as formidable barriers to any meaningful attempt to tackle the social exclusion of Roma even when the political will to implement positive change is present.

The issue of hostile and overtly negative ideas about the Roma being embedded in prevailing policy discourse is also evidenced. Both the Poland and Slovakia Country Reports note that Roma integration is often viewed as one dimensional and based on demands that Roma assimilate into mainstream societies whilst policy fails to address the negative discriminatory attitudes and practices of the wider non Roma population. For example, the Slovak Country Report points to the adoption of the "Roma Reform - the Right Way"/"Rómska Reforma - Správna Cesta" (OGPRC, 2013) policy which centres on the need to, "re-educate the so-called impolite or unadaptable Roma [with] reform based on enforcement of a desired behaviour under the threat of mostly financial sanctions as set out in the newly adopted welfare legislation". The Italy Report similarly argues that much previous policy has problematized the Roma presence and been underpinned by a security driven agenda that assumed Roma were 'nomads' outside mainstream society. This state of affairs has only relatively recently started to change as more progressive voices (e.g. certain academics, Roma organisations and NGOs) have pushed for change.

Given the context into which the NRIS have been launched the Country Reports detail a range of challenges will need to be addressed if the diverse Roma inclusion strategies under discussion are to progress more positively. As the Bulgarian Country Report notes the development of national action plans are a positive development but major implementation problems continue to exist. Most notably the 'low legal status' of many strategies leave them vulnerable to repeal by changes in government and a lack of sufficient additional state funds and inadequate administrative infrastructures, particularly at a local level inhibit improvements on the ground. Furthermore, the diverse and often complex institutional arrangements that may variously involve myriad national, regional and local actors can, (see e.g. Romania and Poland Reports), lead to a lack of clarity about who is ultimately responsible for the effective funding and delivery of policy to improve the lives of Roma. Where this occurs well intentioned strategies may struggle to achieve their aims. The common concerns of many of the Country Reports authors' about the effectiveness of current Roma inclusion policy are succinctly summarised in the Greek Report which notes that, 'despite initiatives taken at national level over the past years, there remains a gap between the standards aspired to in policies and the situation prevailing in practice for Roma communities'.

Limited consultation

The European Commission (2011) has been clear in its expectation that open dialogue and genuine partnership between governments, Roma communities and NGOs should inform NRIS and be embedded in policy development. However, limited and inadequate mechanisms for consultation with Roma organisations and representatives was a strong and recurrent feature across all the Country Reports. The UK Report pointed to a stark lack of consultation in drawing up relevant policy and resultant heavy criticism from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller organisations enraged by their exclusion (see Ryder, et al., 2012). Elsewhere superficiality in

consultation processes with Roma were noted as the norm (rf. reports for Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania), practice that is, perhaps symptomatic of a tendency by policy makers to see Roma as 'needy recipients' rather than policy actors in their own right (rf. Greece Country Report).

Where (routinely limited) dialogue did occur, it was often viewed as problematic. Concerns about policy capture by certain well placed Roma organisations which are able to influence government agendas whilst other less favoured grassroots organisations and NGOs remain side-lined featured in the Hungarian Report. More positively this report also noted some success for 'experienced NGOs' in actively shaping and implementing regional or local strategies and interventions, but it also noted with two important caveats. First, is the necessary existence of such NGOs, and the point that in underdeveloped regions there may well be no appropriate NGOs to consult. Second, is the possibility of established NGOs *mis*representing the voice of Roma communities in any consultation process. The linked problem of NGOs and Roma organisations potentially lacking democratic practices and failing to represent the diversity of voices and needs within the Roma population (e.g. women and young people) was also noted in the Romanian Report. In Spain, a mechanism that offers Roma access to policy makers, the State Council for Representatives of Roma, is in place but this too has not been immune from criticisms that it enables well placed 'community leaders and representatives' privileged influence on the allocation of Roma specific funding at the expense of other less well placed Roma communities and groups (see Spain Country Report).

A lack of data

The Country Reports contain evidence to strongly support the assertion that Roma face systematic discrimination and disadvantage in relation to accessing rights and services across all the 10

partner countries of Roma MATRIX. However, they all simultaneously note that a lack of reliable and robust data on the size and situation of Roma populations is problematic. The Poland Report highlights the non availability of adequate poverty data on relative and absolute poverty rates of Roma in Poland and notes that this promotes a reliance on opinion rather than hard facts within the policy process. Likewise an, 'institutional disinclination in collecting data on ethnicity' (rf. the Romania Country Report) is seen as limiting attempts to draft appropriate social inclusion strategies that can be systematically monitored in terms of outcomes and progression towards agreed targets (see e.g. Czech Republic, Greece, UK Country Reports). Whilst, the collection of ethnically segregated large scale data would enable more overt and systematic insights into the socio-economic disadvantages that Roma face, a note of caution needs to be injected into this important ongoing debate. Such data has been used to exclude, negatively categorise and control ethnic minority population in the past. More recently in Italy, the fingerprinting and photographing of those of Roma heritage living in settlements/camps under the 'Nomad Emergency Decree' of 2008 has been roundly criticised as ethnically discriminatory and divisive by human rights activists and the Italian judiciary (see Italy Country report for further discussions).

Diversity within Roma populations

Many of the country reports include statements which highlight the diverse populations that are variously and routinely referred to as 'Gypsy' and 'Roma' communities. We have previously noted elsewhere the heterogeneity of Roma experiences both within particular Member States and across Europe more generally (Brown, Dwyer and Scullion, 2012) and as such do not reiterate such issues here. However two important issues emerge from the Country Reports. First, is a view that gender issues and in particular the specific disadvantages

faced by Roma women are not adequately addressed within many NRIS (see e.g. the Bulgaria and Greece Country Reports). Second, and similarly, many internationally mobile migrant Roma who are resident in EU Member States of which they are not formal citizens often face formidable barriers and are doubly disadvantaged when trying to seek work and /or access welfare support (rf. e.g. Italy, Poland, Spain and UK Country reports).

Summary

With respect to the policy backdrop of Roma inclusion, the following key points should be noted:

- Despite much policy activity at European, national, regional and local level there has been limited progress in addressing the inequalities that exist between Roma and non Roma populations across Europe.

- EU level policy and the commitment of the European Commission have been significant in driving Roma inclusion/integration policy forward in recent years. However, ongoing public expenditure cuts, entrenched anti-Roma sentiment within some sections of the European electorate and a lack of political will on the part of certain national administrations are inhibiting progress in achieving tangible improvements in the lives of Roma.

- Strategies to tackle the inequalities and discrimination of Roma are routinely incorporated into existing national policies which attempt to address social exclusion more broadly.

- National, regional and local variation in interpretation, implementation and support for Roma inclusion policy is evident within, and across, the partner countries of Roma MATRIX.

- Complex institutional arrangements can produce a lack of clarity and overlap in respect of responsibility for the delivery of Roma inclusion strategy. Consequently, well intentioned policy initiatives may lose some of their positive potential and impact.

- There is an urgent need to build effective and wide reaching consultation with a diverse range of Roma community members, organisations and NGOs into the policy process.

- The lack of robust and reliable national data on the size, composition and disadvantages faced by Roma populations needs to be addressed in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

3. Reporting and redress mechanisms in respect of anti-Gypsyism

Introduction

The EU has consistently reported overt and more indirect discrimination against Roma and advocated more robust systems of recording and prosecuting such practices (Tobler, 2005).

A range of reports have catalogued the persistent, often severe nature of prejudice and discrimination directed at Roma across the EU, and the frequent lack of adequate investigation or sanction against perpetrators. There has also been scrutiny of the efficacy of the various monitoring, investigatory and prosecution mechanisms intended to combat discriminatory activity against Roma across the EU. These have primarily focused on official structures (e.g. police, judiciary), and less has been produced on what may be termed 'informal' modes of redress, such as restorative justice.

This chapter summarises the findings of the Country Reports on the extent to which Member States have provided adequate and effective systems to enable Roma to successfully report and challenge instances of discrimination, and seek some form of redress. In particular, it examines the commitment of administrations to record and publish data on the phenomenon, as well as the levels of development of strategies and concrete programmes to advance the agenda.

The impact of anti-discrimination legislation

The Country Reports indicate that enactment of anti-discrimination laws in Member States (often over a decade ago) has, in large part, not improved the opportunities or outcomes for reporting and redress for Roma. In the first instance, this is a direct consequence of weak implementation of such legislation. For example, in Romania a European Commission assessment in 2013 found weak implementation of the anti-discrimination legislation enacted seven years previously (in 2006). The assessment noted the lack of any evidence of hate crime data collection, despite the inclusion of specific reference to such offences in Romanian Law 324/2006. Similarly, until 2011 there was an 'absence of data on racist violence or discrimination on grounds of race or ethnic origin', as noted in the Greece Country Report, while the Country Report for Poland notes that Poland has 'no up to date official statistics on hate crime.'

In certain states there is an absence of explicit reference to reporting and redress in key strategic documents. For example, Bulgaria's NRIS contains no discussion of reporting mechanisms in place now, or for any planned for the future, relying on general statements of enhancing the protection of citizens in vulnerable social conditions or from ethnic minorities. The Country Report for Greece notes that 'Greek Roma victims of discrimination, who resort to litigation in the European Courts of

Human Rights to seek equal treatment and compensation do so because anti-discrimination legislation in Greece does not provide for sanctions or awards'. The EU sponsored civil society monitoring report for Hungary (2013) highlighted the fact that the Equal Treatment Act (2003) included exemptions around education, sale of goods and use of services, all core areas where discrimination remains a potent problem. Similarly, it was noted that Italy was publicly criticised by the European Parliament in 2008 for passing legislative instruments in response to what was termed the 'Nomad Emergency', which it judged to be in direct contravention of Council Directive 2000/43/EC and relevant Treaty Articles. It is perhaps significant that despite this ruling, the actions were not halted and data collected on Roma has still not been deleted.

This weak implementation also stems from the ineffectiveness of the relevant national lead agency for equality body. Such poor oversight is often a result of poor resources, limited powers or a lack of political commitment (or a combination of all three factors). For example, in Greece the Country Report notes that, neither the Committee for Equal Treatment or the Ombudsman have the powers to annul decisions or impose sanctions against those public bodies in breach of anti-discrimination legislation, and no agency appears to 'provide general information or legal advice to victims of racial discrimination'. The Bulgarian Commission for Protection against Discrimination is limited to cases of 'administrative violations' and not the criminal law. The Slovak National Human Rights Centre (SNHRC) was criticised by the Council of Europe, the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) and UN Committees (Council for Human Rights and National Minorities 2012) for its ineffectiveness – so much so that the NRIS included an action to transform the Centre 'into a functioning equality body.' Recent reductions to bodies with oversight of the agenda is also occurring. In Hungary, the office of Parliamentary Commissioner for the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities was abolished in

2012, along with the four Ombudsmen, with a revamped system having far fewer powers and resources. The respective agency for the UK, the Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is scheduled to have its budget cut from £62 million to £26.8 million over the period 2010-15.[3] These examples indicate such action is far from a series of isolated events, and may reflect an attempt to 'roll back' equality measures across the Union.

The failure of many state administrations to take ownership of the issue of reporting and redress is also key. NGOs are often 'sub contracted' by governments to organise initiatives directed at Roma which are aimed at improving awareness of rights and reporting (e.g. rf. Poland, Spain Country Reports), but it is often questionable whether the respective governments take the issue seriously, especially as NGOs often remain responsible for data monitoring, or even whole strategies. In Hungary, the Country Report notes that the national Roma self-government is regarded as the body responsible for delivering on the NRIS, but it is not clear whether the organisation has undergone the kind of capacity building, or has received the funding that is necessary to manage this effectively. There is clear evidence of a reduced political commitment in the last five to six years, and reduced funding in many Member States.

Structural factors

Structural factors are critical in explaining the lack of progress. The lack of adequate administrative structures to manage large scale reporting mechanisms and monitoring is evident, and even in those states with (relatively) significant resources the infrastructure does not have depth or sophistication. This is certainly the case in poorer rural areas, which often have limited contact/ties to the central administration.

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[3] For information please see
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/86430/Comprehensive_Budget_Review_of_the_EHRC_.pdf

The Country Reports indicate that chronically low levels of literacy, particularly among women (rf. Bulgaria Country Report), lack of Romani speaking officials, and long term dependence on (often the) same state institutions which have initiated, sanctioned or condoned the discrimination (rf. Romania Country Report) are major contributory factors to low levels of reporting and poor success rates of prosecutions. It is not surprising, therefore, that in general very low levels of awareness exist among Roma of how to challenge discrimination (see Bulgaria Country Report) or that in Greece '86% (of Roma) were unaware that discrimination is illegal and 94% were unable to name organisations or state bodies that might be able to assist them'.

However, the Country Reports indicate that in many instances institutions of government themselves are often responsible for discrimination towards Roma. In the Czech Republic, the Country Report notes that one third of Roma who had reported discrimination or violence had negative experiences of the authorities, with either a direct refusal to investigate or an inconclusive outcome one way or the other. In Poland most reported hate crimes and hate speech 'are not taken seriously by Polish law enforcement agencies'. Other examples of official prejudice in the criminal justice system are noted in the reports for Italy, Hungary and Slovakia.

Evidence suggests low levels of prosecutions have been initiated and few have led to convictions being obtained. In Hungary no more than 4 prosecutions a year were brought since 2009 for 'incitement against a community' and a maximum of 28 (in 2011) for 'violence against a member of a community'. Country Reports for both the Czech Republic and Poland suggests a lack of specialist lawyers able to represent victims is critical as are the financial costs and difficulties finding legal help. Enforcement post prosecution is invariably not occurring, even where cases have become 'high profile'. In the Greece Country Report it was noted that in 2013 the Greek Ombudsman reported that, although 281 incidents

of racist violence were recorded between January 2012 and April 2013, 'the Prosecution Office was not able to deal with any of the related offences' and 'the FRA (2013a: 19) found no evidence of systematic efforts to tackle racism, discrimination and intolerance by the relevant authorities'.

Conversely, it is frequently specific individuals within government (both local and national) who are responsible for pushing change. Primarily, these are national 'institutions of appeal' such as Ombudsmen or Public Defender of Rights. In the Czech Republic, the Office of the Ombudsman has been active in publicising and challenging anti-Roma discrimination, despite only being established in 2009. Equally, in neighbouring Slovakia, the Public Defender of Rights recommended improvements to police procedures to ensure independent investigation of human rights violations. Likewise in Spain it was the Public Prosecutors Office who initiated a seminar on hate crime and discrimination in 2011, and not criminal justice agencies. Nevertheless, certain regulatory bodies (particularly Ombudsmen) do appear to be acting as effective representatives. For example, in the Czech Republic the authority of the Ombudsman has been extended to include the power to provide legal analysis. Other seemingly strong bodies include the Commissioner for Civil Rights – office of the Ombudsman (Poland), and the Ombudsman office in Bulgaria.

Physical and social distance is often a key factor in determining where increased discrimination exists and in reducing the possibilities for better opportunities for reporting (see e.g. Romania Country Report). In particular, the location of settlements on the edge of towns and villages away from transport connections or administrative buildings mitigates against better access. It is also the case that the further from oversight by agencies charged with scrutiny, the less likely anything will come to light. The resources and time needed to reach a reporting or redress site may be a major disincentive for Roma citizens many of whom need

to maximise their earnings during the day. This is magnified for those who live far from the 'institutions of appeal', invariably based in the capital city. In this regard, it was indicative that in January 2014 the Chair of the Slovakian Parliament proposed transferring the office of the Public Defender of Rights to the city of Kosice to be near to the 'unadaptable population'.

There was evidence in Spain and the UK of the application of non–judicial methods of redress. In Spain, where Roma constituted 46% of all group victims applying to the national Network of Centres assisting victims of discrimination, an established protocol exists, including a number of different pathways for redress. Non legal options comprised dialogue between victim and perpetrator, psychological counselling and mediation. However, as the country report notes, only 12% of victims received redress of one kind or another, attributing this low success rate partly to the lack of visibility of the Network, and perhaps crucially, its lack of prerogatives to continue cases to court and represents victims there.

The rise of far-right movements and political organisations and associated political discourse has seen a growth in anti-Roma statements and activities in Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary for instance, but extremely few examples of challenge or redress by Roma, or on behalf of Roma, where the respective anti-discrimination laws are broken. For example, it is noted in the Hungary Country Report that inciting hatred against members of an ethnic or racial community through speech is a criminal offence, yet between 2009 and mid 2013 only six prosecutions had been brought. In part this may be because the views promulgated are shared by large proportion of the population (see e.g. Country Reports for Bulgaria and Italy).

It was also noted that in a number of countries, confidence in the efficacy of anti-discrimination measures is undermined by discriminatory statements by senior public figures which imply that this would be resisted and/or ineffective. For example In Italy, statements by major political figures such as Matteo Salvini, Giancarlo Gentilini and Roberto Castelli have highlighted powerful anti-Gypsy attitudes, echoing other highly prejudicial statements made by party leaders or ministers in Slovakia (Marion Kotleba), Romania (András György Király), Hungary (Gabor Vona) in recent years.

Summary

The following key points should be noted:

- The enactment of anti-discrimination laws in Member States (largely as a result of EC directive 2000/43), and the relatively recent production of Roma Integration Strategies in EU Member States has, in large part, not ameliorated the discrimination faced by Roma in the majority of countries within the scope of MATRIX. Levels of discrimination have not diminished, nor have anti-Gypsy sentiment.

- It is apparent that a major shift in tackling discrimination through adequate reporting and redresses mechanisms has not occurred, and the situation may even be regressing. The Country Reports indicate very low levels of reporting, and even lower rates of prosecution.

- One of the emerging findings of the Country Reports is that what is understood as 'redress' varies from country to country, and is not necessarily a judicial process.

- To varying degrees, many administrations at different (national, regional and local) levels do not see discrimination against Roma as a particularly significant issue, making reporting and redress for any such discrimination a low priority in an often challenging political environment.

- In other countries, a lack of resources means that activities in this field receive little or no support or are outsourced to NGOs (see e.g. Romania, Poland) but also that those administrative bodies charged with oversight and inspection of this agenda are circumscribed in their ability to monitor improvement and to sanction enforcement.

- There is evidence of systematic and continued efforts to provide adequate access to reporting mechanisms, in countries such as Spain, Bulgaria and the UK, but these are vulnerable to shifts in political and popular attitude, as well as cuts in funding.

- In some Member states concepts of anti-discrimination are less than a generation old, particularly in central and eastern Europe.

4. Roma children and public care

Introduction

The 10 Country Reports discuss the varied policy arrangements that are in place across the Members States that are partners in the Roma MATRIX Project in respect of matters relating to publicly cared for children. Readers requiring more detail on these matters should refer to relevant sections in the appropriate report. A reading across all of the Reports highlights three significant, recurrent themes. First, a consistent discussion of the over-representation of Roma children within wider populations of publicly cared for children. Second, a notable shift in recent years towards the deinstitutionalisation of public care for children. Third, variable developments across the partner countries of Roma MATRIX in general policy, which aims to support young people leaving public care as they enter adulthood, simultaneously accompanied by a noted lack of specific policies to support the particular needs of young Roma people.

The over-representation of Roma children in public care settings

Clear statements that Roma children disproportionately feature within populations of publicly cared for children are apparent across the majority of Country Reports. For example, the Bulgaria Report states more than half of 'institutionalised children are Roma, abandoned for social and health reasons'. The Czech Republic Report cites an ERRC (2011) report which highlights that young Roma Children below three years of age (an estimated 3% of the wider population of that age group), make up 30% of such children living in institutionalised care within the Czech Republic. It further notes variable estimates from NGOs that between 30% and 60% of older children in institutional care in the Czech Republic system are from a Roma background. Similarly, estimates on the over-representation of Roma children in institutional care (between 70% and 95%) are also highlighted in the Slovakia Country Report and significant over-representations of Roma children within national systems and institutions of public care are also reported in several other Reports most notably the Bulgaria, Romania, Spain and UK Country Reports.

The over-representation of Roma children within pubic care should be viewed as a pressing issue for all of the Member States with the Roma MATRIX partnership, however, as many of the authors of the Country Reports note, definitive factual statements about the numbers of Roma children within public care systems are difficult (if not impossible) to make due to a lack of ethnically segregated data. In the absence of such data many Country Reports draw heavily on the ERRC (2011) report, alongside other partial (e.g. regional) statistics and smaller scale research reports undertaken by academics and NGOs working in the field (see e.g. Czech Republic Country Report). This noting of a common reliance on the singular findings of the ERRC report within

several of the Country Reports is not intended as a criticism of their authors but rather is indicative of the paucity of systematic, national, ethnically segregated data sets on publicly cared for children across Europe. The UK is the singular exception to this case as figures on the numbers of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children have been recorded since 2009 (rf. UK Country Report for further details). Additionally, it should be noted that many figures on the numbers of Roma children in public care cited in the Country Reports, regardless of their country of origin, are likely to be underestimations due to children and young people's reluctance to self-declare as being of Roma heritage (rf. e.g. Czech Republic and Romania Country Reports).

Echoing wider and previously discussed concerns about the lack of available national data sets on Roma populations (see e.g. Chapter 2) many Member States appear reluctant or unable to collect data on the ethnicity of children within public care. Reasons for this are varied. The Poland Report notes 'Data is not desegregated by ethnicity, hence it is not possible to assess how many children and young adults belonging to Roma or any other minorities are placed or live in state care or foster care' (cf. Greece and Czech Republic Country Reports for similar statements). Elsewhere the collection of sensitive data such as ethnic origin is prohibited (e.g. as is the case under the Italian Personal Data Protection Code), whereas the Romania Report notes a 'strong institutional disinclination' against such data, even though it can be legally collected, provided it is anonymised.

Leaving aside concerns related to numbers and statistics, several Country Reports offer insights into the reasons why a higher proportion of Roma, compared to non Roma children, find themselves in public care systems. Drawing on the work of Kukova (2011), the Bulgaria Report notes the following six issues:

'(1) the lack of a constant and sufficient family income; (2) low educational levels of the parents; (3) parental migration in search of employment; (4) unfavourable housing conditions; (5) absence of community-based services for Roma children and families tailored to their specific needs; and (6) a lack of effective prevention mechanisms for pregnancies and abandonment among Roma women'.

The wider significance of these six issues is their clear link to the poverty and wider social exclusion that many Roma face in their daily lives. Indeed, poverty and its effects (e.g. inadequate housing/homelessness, the giving up of one's children to public carers due to an inability to adequately financially provide for them), appears to be a key driver underpinning the wider prevalence of Roma children within public care systems. Several Country Reports suggest that Roma children are taken into public care more often than their non Roma peers due to 'the financial situation of the family' (Hungary Country Report), even when policy expressly states that children should not be removed from their families as is the case in Hungary, Italy and Spain, because of material reasons (rf. Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy and Spain Country Reports)

Recent policy activity and a shift towards deinstitutionalisation?

As the Hungary Report notes, in relation to publicly cared for children, policy and institutional arrangements within many Central and Eastern European (CEE) states have undergone relatively rapid and significant change in recent years. Reflecting this, the Country Reports point to significant recent legislative activity in the Roma MATRIX partner countries. The most noteworthy reported common shift is a preference for the

deinstitutionalisation of public care systems both within and beyond the CEE states. Underpinning this approach is a broad commitment that vulnerable children should remain with, and be supported within their families, in the majority of circumstances and that separation from the family and the placing of a child in public care should only occur when it is clearly in the best interests of the child. Allied to this is a preference for publicly cared for children to be looked after in smaller community-based or familial settings (e.g. small scale children's homes or placement with appropriate foster carers or adoptive parents) rather than, as was often previously the case, being housed in large scale 'orphanages' or residential institutions. Recent endorsement (i.e. through the development of various laws and actions plans in the last five years), of deinstitutionalisation as the preferred policy approach moving forward is outlined in the Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Poland and Slovakia, Country Reports. Developing and embedding deinstitutionalisation in countries where this approach was previously not the norm is not unproblematic and several of the Country Reports note that there is still some distance to be travelled before familial and community based care becomes firmly established. For example, the Italy Report states that roughly 50% of publicly cared for children remain in residential care institutions. The Greece Country Report also cites a UNCRC (2012) report that notes relatively large numbers of children continue to be housed in institutional settings and seeks clarification from the Greek government about its strategy and timeframe for the closure of large care homes and the expansion of family-centred care as a viable alternative. In a similar vein, the Poland Report notes that a comprehensive national strategy for the deinstitutionalisation of public care is still to be enacted. Nonetheless, in spite of such reservations the greater attention of policymakers to issues related to children in public care (an area that arguably suffered from neglect in the past in some nations that make up the Roma MATRIX partnership), should be viewed as a positive

development. As the Bulgaria Country Report notes, 'policies related to children and young people - and those that promote deinstitutionalisation in particular - offer a very real opportunity to improve the actual situation of vulnerable groups, such as Roma, in society' (Dimitrov, Grigorova and Decheva, 2013); a point that has wider resonance for all Roma children in public care beyond confines of Bulgaria.

Policies to support young people leaving public care

Within the constituent countries of the Roma MATRIX partnership an important divide vis a vis the existence of established national policies to support young people leaving public care as they enter adulthood is apparent. In Greece, Italy and Spain the relevant Country Reports all note a lack of formal policy to support individuals in making the transition from public cared for children to independent young adults. Arrangements in these nations appear to rely heavily on variable ad hoc support provided by some local authorities and /or NGOs. The Greece Report notes the general 'absence of an official national policy for the provision of aftercare to young people living in institutional care' and variable practice across different institutions and individual situations, but with some scope for allowing those who are aged 18 to remain in publicly provided accommodation until they complete their studies and/or are able to earn a living a live independently. National policy frameworks to address the needs of young adult care leavers are also lacking in Italy and Spain where similar arrangements for an extended stay in public care institutions (for up to a few months in Spain and potentially up to the age of 21 in Italy) are noted (rf. Italy and Spain Country Reports). Given that more general policy aimed at supporting the transitions of publicly cared for young people are non-existent the lack of distinct service provision for young Roma people leaving care is hardly unexpected. There is limited discussion of policy in

this area in the Bulgaria and the Czech Republic Country Reports.

In contrast, the different policies and strategies that are in place to support the transitions of public care leavers in in Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and the UK are detailed to varying degrees in the appropriate Country Reports. within these Member States various public agencies have legally defined responsibilities and duties to offer support to public care leavers in relation to housing, employment, education and financial matters etc., through the development of personalised support plans (in the case of Poland Romania Slovakia, and the UK). There is also provision within regulations to enable young people, aged 18 years plus, who have left public care to continue to access this support for extended periods should they wish to do so. For example, in Hungary general entitlement to such support exist up to the age of 24 and 25 for those continuing to pursue their studies at colleges and universities. Significantly, as noted above, where policies to support care leavers in their transition into adult life and wider society do exist (i.e. in Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and the UK), the relevant Country Reports note an almost complete absence of specific strategies to address the particular additional needs that young Roma people leaving public care may face. As the Slovakia and Romania Reports both note, policy in this area appears to be 'ethnically blind towards the particular vulnerabilities' (Slovakia Country Report) of Roma children leaving care. This is perhaps a surprising oversight given the significant overrepresentation of Roma within the wider populations of publicly cared for children in many Roma MATRIX partner countries as discussed in the opening section of this chapter. This omission is especially important if, as reported by certain NGOs, young Roma men and women who have been in, or recently left public care, are especially susceptible to trafficking for the purposes of sexual and or labour exploitation (see the Bulgaria and Romania Country Reports for further discussions). Against

this backdrop there may well be a good case for the development of more nuanced and Roma specific care leaver support strategies in the future. Although much research shows that *all* young adults leaving the public care system face significantly more difficulties and are at greater risk of social exclusion when making the transition to adulthood than their contemporaries in the wider population (see e.g. Stein, 2006 with regards to the UK) young Roma people may be further disadvantaged due to their particular ethnicity and the endemic and entrenched discrimination that many Roma people continue to face across the European Union.

Summary

- Whilst the limited available evidence reasonably suggests that Roma children are overrepresented within the wider population of children in public care there is a pressing need for more robust and systematic national level data on the numbers of publicly cared for Roma children.

- The move towards the deinstitutionalisation of public care systems that is apparent in many EU nations is a positive step in the right direction.

- The apparent lack of national policies and strategies to support young adults leaving public care in approximately half of the partner countries of the Roma MATRIX project urgently needs to be addressed.

- Given the over-representation of Roma children within public care systems across Europe, and the widespread discrimination that Roma continue to face in many settings, there may well be a good case for the development of Roma specific care leaver support strategies in the future.

5. Employment and Roma

Introduction

Employment has been identified as one of the four key areas (alongside education, health and housing) central to the EU Framework for National Roma Integration, with a specific aim to 'close the employment gap between Roma and non-Roma' (European Commission, 2014: 5). While some Member States have initiated projects aimed at addressing exclusion from the labour market, there is a recognition that, to date, the anticipated impact has not yet been attained (European Commission, 2014). Low levels of educational attainment among Roma have often been seen as a barrier to their accessing employment; however, it is now acknowledged that improvements in education have not necessarily translated into improved employment prospects for this group. This suggests that the employment situation of Roma is more complicated, involving a complex interplay of structural and cultural factors. This chapter provides an overview of the information provided in the 10 Country Reports in relation to employment. It focuses specifically on the levels and types of Roma employment, perceived barriers to employment that Roma face and also considers some of the policies and strategies that have been implemented across the 10 partner countries of the Roma MATRIX project to promote the formal employment of Roma.

Levels and types of employment

As repeatedly stated throughout this report, it is widely recognised that available data in relation to Roma communities can be problematic (Clark, 1998; Brown, Martin and Scullion, 2014); however, it is evident from the Country Reports that 'formal' employment rates are lower amongst Roma than non Roma. Cited statistics on levels of Roma unemployment, suggest a significant national variation with anywhere between 27% (Greece Country Report) and 90% of Roma being unemployed (rf. Italy and Slovakia Country Reports). Some Country Reports also highlighted higher unemployment rates amongst younger Roma; for example, the Czech Republic Country Report, notes that around 61% of Roma aged 15-24 were unemployed. However, the complexity of the situation is clear from the reports, with data suggesting that Greece, for example, has a high proportion of children (aged seven to 15) working outside the home. Information provided in the Italy Report also noted differences between Italian (indigenous) Roma and migrant Roma, with migrant Roma more likely to be unemployed.

Unemployment does not necessarily equate to economic inactivity and across the Country Reports Roma employment was perceived to be characterised by involvement in the informal economy. The Romania Report, for example, noted an estimated 65% of Roma were undertaking

informal employment. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was variation across the countries in terms of specific jobs that Roma were undertaking, with reference to trade, agriculture, manufacturing, cleaning (for women), recycling, asbestos clearing, washing windscreens to name but a few (see individual Country Reports for country specific details). Evidence from Spain suggested that many Roma were often working in highly competitive sectors due to the number of migrant workers who were undertaking similar types of employment. There were also regional differences within countries in terms of the types of work that Roma were undertaking. For example, the Bulgaria Report noted differences between rural and urban areas in relation to the type of work that Roma were undertaking (i.e. agriculture in rural areas; manufacturing, construction, etc. in urban areas). Despite the differences *across* and *within* the countries, it was apparent that there was a common pattern of insecure, low paid, and low skilled or unskilled work, often on a self-employed basis. The economic crisis had made the employment situation of Roma even more precarious (Brown, Dwyer and Scullion, 2013), with suggestions of increasing unemployment rates but also increased activity within the informal economy.

Gender was also a feature of discussions around economic activity, with reports of higher levels of unemployment amongst Roma women, particularly young women (see Romania Country Report) and the view that gender barriers were more pronounced within the Roma community (see Slovakia Country Report). While gender barriers can be attributed to traditional gender roles which impact on all women, not just Roma (for example, child care, etc.), it was clear that the situation for Roma women in respect of work was variable. For example, the Greek Report highlighted that Roma women are often the main income earner within the household, undertaking a number of jobs within the informal economy to support their family (and also other families in some cases).

Barriers to employment

The data and research cited within the Country Reports highlights that structural and cultural factors may negatively impact on the ability of Roma to both access and progress within the labour market. Some such factors are influential across the partner countries of Roma MATRIX, while others are more country, or region, specific (rf. separate Country Reports for details). Perhaps unsurprisingly, discrimination is a pervasive issue. For example, the Hungary report it was suggests that Roma are 10 times more likely to face discrimination when trying to access the labour market than non Roma. Furthermore, a survey of Roma in Bulgaria (Dimitrov, Grigorova and Decheva, 2013) highlighted that 20% of respondents were not looking for work as felt that they did not have a realistic chance of finding employment. They attributed the inability to access employment to discrimination but also lack of education (rf. Bulgaria Report).

While the need to increase Roma engagement with formal education and increase educational attainment have been widely recognised (European Commission, 2011; Scullion and Brown, 2012), discussions within certain Country Reports suggest a more complex situation and other issues that need to be addressed in order to increase employment levels. The Slovakia Country Report, for example, suggests that increasing secondary education amongst Roma does not necessarily increase employment rates in the same way that it may for non Roma. For Roma communities, as noted above, the issue of discrimination is central, but aspirations within the Roma community may also play a role. However, additional factors linked to segregation also act as barriers to employment in certain locations. The Italy and Slovakia Reports, both point to the residential segregation of Roma in particular areas of towns or cities negatively impacting on their ability to access the labour market. The Hungary Report highlighted, the role of regional segregation, and noted that many Roma resided in the least

developed or most disadvantaged regions of the country; areas which are characterised by high unemployment, and poor access to services and transport which subsequently had an adverse effect on the ability of Roma to enter and sustain employment.

While the focus of the Country Reports was primarily on structural factors, reference was made to discourses that focused on the culture of Roma as creating barriers to employment. For example, the Czech Republic Country Report makes reference to particular research that suggests that long term unemployment is an ordinary part of community life for many Roma. The Polish Country Report makes reference to overlapping individual, cultural and structural barriers, with different attitudes towards paid employment being highlighted as a cultural barrier. However, it is acknowledged that the reluctance of Roma to officially register their employment or business is often a result of legislation which is not favourable for those operating small scale ventures or small scale trading.

Policies and strategies in relation to employment

The pressing need for all Member States to address the entrenched ongoing exclusion of many Roma from the paid labour market was acknowledged across all the Country Reports. Broadly speaking, two contrasting approaches featured within the Country Reports: targeted schemes, focused specifically on improving Roma employment (see e.g. Bulgaria, Greece, Spain); or more universal, mainstream approaches aimed at the wider generic population of long term unemployed people, including unemployed Roma (see e.g. Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia).

Funding to support Roma and employment initiatives within Member States often came from European sources, particularly when initiatives were

specifically targeted at Roma. While many of the Country Reports provided examples of the various approaches and schemes that had been adopted in their respective countries with the aim of enhancing Roma employment, authors also noted a disconnect between the frameworks and strategies put in place in and their actual impact on the ground. For example, the Spain Country Report noted that while employment formed part of the inclusion framework, there was no guidance on how it should be implemented on the ground. A number of more specific criticisms were also raised in relation to many current approaches to improving Roma's employment opportunities.

One important critique related to the lack of involvement of Roma in the consultation, development and implementation of employment programmes and other initiatives (see e.g. Greece and UK Country Reports). Indeed, some of the good practice examples that were referred to were those programmes where Roma were involved as mediators (rf. Bulgaria, Italy and Romania Country Reports). In Bulgaria, for example, it was suggested that there had been measurable positive impacts in linking Roma to training and the paid labour market through a mixed programme of adult education, subsidised job creation but also the training of Roma mediators. However, it is recognised that mediators require appropriate training and support in order for this approach to be successful (see following chapter for more detailed discussion on this).

The use of subsidised job creation schemes to boost Roma employment levels was also outlined in several other Member States (e.g. the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia Country Reports). These were often public works programmes created to address long term unemployment among socially excluded communities more generally; however, Roma were often a significant presence within them. In Hungary and Slovakia, these public works programmes appeared to be the main, or in the case of Hungary, the only, programmes available to

unemployed Roma. The Hungary Country Report estimated that around 53,000 Roma had been working in the public works scheme since its inception in 2012 but also raised concerns about the high levels of conditionality (whereby an individual's right to claim basic social welfare is linked to involvement in a specified work programme). It was noted that in Hungary refusal to take part in, or dismissal from the scheme, resulted in the loss of social welfare for up to a two year period. The Country Report for Hungary further argued that this conditional approach did not enable people to enter the mainstream labour market; rather it appeared to trap people in an 'employment-benefits cycle'. Furthermore, the Slovak Country Report criticised the 'racialised' nature of such programmes, and the disproportionate involvement of Roma on some such schemes, which in turn may lead to further concentration of Roma within particular low skilled sectors of the labour market. Across Europe, access to many unemployment benefits has become increasingly conditional on recipients accepting compulsory work or training opportunities (see Lødemel and Trickey, 2001). Concerns that linking basic rights to welfare to activity in the paid labour market can potentially exacerbate the social exclusion of those who are not in paid employment or training have a wider resonance (Dwyer, 2004).

Concerns were also raised about the ability of mainstream approaches to sufficiently include Roma communities. While it is recognised that many countries do not wish to adopt targeted initiatives, with a move towards mainstreaming Roma inclusion within broader inclusion approaches, the discrimination that Roma often faced was seen as a key barrier to accessing mainstream programmes Furthermore, it was suggested that mainstream approaches and systems were not always appropriate for Roma communities. For example, the Country Report for Poland highlighted that the systems in employment offices were complex and there was a lack of dissemination of information to Roma, while the Romanian Country Report stated

that support focused on to writing CVs was not relevant to many Roma who were not familiar with this formal approach to employment. The Romanian Report also highlighted three potential reasons why Roma attendance on training programmes was often low. First, they were viewed as offering little realistic prospect of future employment, given the wider economic situation and ongoing discrimination. Second, they required a long term investment when Roma often need to respond to short term needs (e.g. income). Third, Roma often did not meet the entry requirement to attend particular educational courses.

A final key criticism highlighted in the Poland, Romania and Spain Country Reports) related to a perceived 'gender neutral' approach underpinning much policy aimed at tackling the exclusion of Roma from the paid labour market that was out of step with policy operating in other spheres. For example, the Country Report for Spain highlighted the development of gender specific policies aimed at improving the situation of Roma women in relation to health and education. While there were positive examples of initiatives that focused on Roma women (see also Italy Country Report), on the whole it was felt that some of the targets that had been set as part of National Roma Integration Strategies did not differentiate between men and women. They therefore did not take into account gendered experiences in relation to employment and the complex situation of many Roma women, as highlighted previously.

Summary

In relation to employment and Roma, the Country Reports highlight a number of key issues, including:

■ Lower levels of engagement with formal employment, particularly amongst young Roma. However, this does not equate to economic inactivity as informal employment is common for Roma.

- The economic crisis disproportionately impacts on Roma, with employment policy seen as least likely to reach Roma during times of austerity.

- Discrimination remains a pervasive issue for Roma in relation to formal employment.

- The targets of National Roma Integration Strategies were seen as modest in relation to employment, with particular concerns around their gender neutrality.

- There is a need to recognise how employment links with other inclusion issues for Roma e.g. education, health, etc and develop initiatives/projects that can respond to this complexity. Mainstream approaches are not always appropriate.

There is a need for central and local accountability in relation to the initiatives/projects that are developed. At present very little evaluation appears to take place, with some evaluations showing limited success for projects.

6. Roma and non Roma cross community relations and mediation

Introduction

Whilst attention in seeking to understand the marginal position of Roma across Europe has focused on social exclusion and state-Roma interactions little attention has been given to exploring how good relations have been fostered between Roma and non Roma populations. Similarly, the rise of mediation across Member States as a strategy for reducing inequalities and 'bridging' communities has been a significant focus for EU and local level bodies. This chapter provides an overview of the information provided in the 10 Country Reports in relation to cross-community relations and mediation. It focuses how Roma and non Roma relations are framed within the Member States, how positive relations between communities have been promoted, and the role of community mediation in addressing social relation issues.

Framing of Roma and non Roma relations

Across all Country Reports authors were clear that positive interactions between Roma and non Roma communities were routinely negative, with a significant level of anti-Roma sentiment within certain Member States detailed within a number of Country Reports. There were few instances of cross-community relations being framed in a positive light. For example, the Romania Country Report noted the presence of a long history of ethnic conflict in Romania, albeit not involving Roma non

Roma conflict exclusively. The Italy Country Report stated that the public discourse towards Roma in Italy had more recently become characterised by an intensification of anti-Roma sentiment from both politicians and the media (see Sigona, 2008a; 2008b). Similarly, the Slovakia Country Report also noted the role played by senior officials in strengthening anti-Roma sentiments by framing Roma as posing physical, demographic and economic threats to the country (Lajčáková, 2012). The Slovakia Country Report further highlighted a call for the allocation of police resources according to a 'map of Roma criminality' (Lajčáková, 2011). Furthermore, the absence of senior mainstream political leadership campaigning against anti-Roma sentiments was a notable feature across all the Country Reports.

Surveys of public attitudes in both the Czech Republic and Slovakia cited in the Czech Republic and Slovakia Country Reports highlighted the prevalent negative sentiment towards members of Roma communities from non Roma respondents. Although the reliability of these surveys have been questioned, not least for conceptualising 'Roma' as an homogenous group, there were some more encouraging findings. For example, it was suggested that non Roma who have more contact with Roma appear less likely to report negative views towards Roma communities (see Czech Republic Country Report).

However, this wider public discourse was often noted to be reflected within the way in which relations were played out at the neighbourhood level and between Roma and non Roma populations. It was commonly noted in the Country Reports that some localities within Member States have seen increasing residential segregation between Roma and non Roma communities (see e.g. Slovakia and Romania Country Reports). To some extent this referred to the way in which Roma communities were concentrated in particular areas within a single neighbourhood, as is often the case for recently arrived Roma in the UK, (rf. UK Country Report) or were almost the entire population in certain villages. In a minority of situations physical walls had been built between communities (see e.g. Slovakia Country Report. Similarly, the issue of segregated camps or 'ghettos' exclusively populated by Roma was also noted in the Italy Country Report.

Promoting cross-community relations

The lack of an established policy or framework for fostering community relations embedded with the NRIS is noted in several Country Reports (see e.g. Country Reports for Italy, Czech Republic, Spain). Where policies for the promotion of cross community relations existed, Roma were usually included under more general equality provisions rather than through specific targeted legislation. For example, the UK Country Report notes that the duty to promote positive Roma and non Roma community relations falls under a general requirement that all public authorities 'foster good relations' between people as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. A similar 'mainstreaming' approach was described within the Greece and Bulgaria Country Reports, for example.

Positive actions undertaken over a number of years to improve cross community relations featured in a number Country Reports (e.g. Italy and Romania Country Reports) with the Bulgaria Country Report specifically noting the impact of the Decade for Roma Inclusion in this regard. The Country Report for Poland highlights the presence of The Plenipotentiary for National and Ethnic Minorities which mediates between public officials and all national and ethnic minorities. However, the effectiveness of this organisation was described as variable dependent upon both the local leadership and context in which policy was operationalised.

More recent attempts to improve relations between Roma and non Roma communities feature in a number of NRIS and were noted in the Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Greece Country Reports. However, variability in focus across Member States was noted. For example, in Bulgaria initiatives centred on improving the relations between Roma and non Roma by encouraging people to be active participants in cultural life. Indeed, the focus upon providing opportunities and fora for sharing Romani culture was a key aspect of how a number of Member States hoped to promote positive community relations (see Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Spain, Poland Country Reports); an approach that has been criticised as potentially limiting (see e.g. Poland Country Report; Brown, et al. 2013). The Slovakia Country Report noted a number of NRIS specified activities aimed at counterbalancing negative discourses such as mediation, reconciliation councils and the creation of an Action Plan but the report also noted limited or slow implementation of these activities to date. Where activities were in place they were targeted in areas that had previously experienced cross-community challenges as opposed to being developed more widely (e.g. see Hungary Country Report's reference to 'ethnic conflicts'). Other wider activities which sought to examine anti-Roma sentiment and challenge it were noted as a feature of some other Member States but are rare (see Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania Country Reports for noted exceptions). Such activities often result in unique 'one-off' events and text based publications (such as conferences,

seminars, guides, leaflets etc.). The target of such activities were commonly either members of the Roma community (who would commonly have an opportunity to demonstrate a component of their culture), or non Roma for whom information about Roma and the disadvantages they faced was directed). However, Country Reports also noted that NGOs in Poland, Czech Republic and the UK had undertaken well regarded cultural sensitivity training for public officials which were seen to have had a positive impact in particular localities. Few examples of initiatives where the focus had been both work across Roma and non Roma communities were reported. An innovative exception was noted found in Hungary where a blood donation policy ('*We are of one blood – you and me*') aimed to challenge racism and promote interaction between Roma and non Roma communities.

There were very few examples of activities to support positive community relations delivered at the national level (the UK Gypsy, Roma, Traveller History Month appeared an exception although it receives no governmental endorsement or funding). Initiatives adopted and delivered at the local level, within particular municipalities and specific areas, were far more common (see e.g. Italy and UK Country Reports). However, the provision of activities to encourage positive community relations was reported as not being sufficient to stimulate lasting interactions between Roma and non Roma. It was indicated that on occasions events tended to be devised and/or organised by officials within municipalities as opposed to members of Roma communities. This arguably adds to the disempowerment of Roma within their communities and a lack of control about 'how' they are being represented (see examples within the Poland Country Report). Notable exceptions to this approach featured in several Country Reports. The Bulgaria Country Report cited a number of theatre performances and television programmes which were organised by Roma in 2010 and the UK Report noted the positive contribution of the annual Gypsy,

Roma Traveller History Month. The involvement of NGOs in such events was generally seen as a positive and an important aspect in helping to help ensure their longer term impact (rf. Italy and Spain County Reports). Where these were successful these often, particularly in the case of Italy, had a long history of engagement within the areas in which they were being delivered.

Mediation

Across all the Country Reports the use of mediators was cited as one of the key strategies used to foster positive community relations and help engage Roma communities with services. Although there was variability across how embedded this approach was and the thematic areas in which mediation was used. The Country Report for Spain was highly supportive about the role of mediation and outcomes from it were seen as very positive in addressing inequalities for Roma communities. The Italy Report noted that mediation was widely used in a variety of settings including substance misuse awareness and access to education, training and work. Similarly the role of health mediators in Bulgaria was reported as a fundamental component of state funded healthcare provision. The Italy Report noted the importance of recruiting mediators from within the Roma population and cited an early programme on which the majority of mediators had been non Roma in origin which appeared to limit the engagement of Roma on such programmes. This approach had been rectified but is nonetheless illustrative of a wider necessity to meaningfully involve Roma in the implementation of policy and practice.

The Country Reports note that the mediation approach was routinely adopted in two main areas: ensuring children's access to education and addressing disparities in healthcare provision. There were some isolated wider cross-community relations applications but these are limited (for notable

exceptions see Spain, Romania, Italy, Czech Republic Country Reports).

It was evident that mediation was gaining momentum across Member States and this approach was seen as a key way of working towards addressing inequality and bridging communities in the future. The previous and current European Union ROMED initiative was noted within many Country Reports as one of the key initiatives present within Member States focussed at helping Roma communities' link with statutory organisations (specifically noted in Italy, Hungary, UK, Bulgaria, Slovakia Country Reports). However, there were some real concerns across Country Reports about how mediation was often supported by the commissioning body or relevant public authority in the Member States. For example, it was common to note that mediators were not always given the necessary support structure in their work, the remuneration was often at very low (to non-existent) levels (see in particular Bulgaria Report), and they often had high workloads containing complex cases (e.g. Romania Country Report). These factors often combine to impact on recruitment of mediators, the effectiveness of their work and indicate that despite its successes mediation as a tool is not yet valued by service commissioners to the same level as those working in frontline roles. More specifically, a number of administrative issues in Bulgaria have meant that there is an annual issue of co-ordination between government departments and institutions which adds precariousness to the health mediator role. It is clear for this approach to become more meaningful such concerns should be addressed and those people who are interested in taking a more participatory role in their communities should be facilitated to do so (the concerns with regards to the failings of mediation by FRI are noted as contained in the Spain Country Report). As the Country Report on Slovakia details there are dangers that mediation programmes such as ROMED can create false expectations of Roma communities that can never be met.

Summary

In respect of Roma and non Roma cross community relations the Country Reports highlight a number of key issues including:

- Limited existing cross-community relationships between Roma and non Roma, with spatial and cultural separation between the two communities often the norm.

- There appears a tendency for the majority of activities aimed at promoting cross community integration to be one off events, or initiatives, which celebrate aspects of Roma culture or tradition rather than confront more systemic issues of intolerance and inequality.

- There is pessimism within Country Reports about the ability of current initiatives within Member States to promote inter-cultural understanding and improve cross-community relations between Roma and non Roma.

- There is a need to increase both the pace at which the initiatives set out in NRIS to promote cross-community relations are implemented and the funding available to support them.

- Mediation has emerged as a popular approach to addressing some of the complexities associated with community level Roma inclusion. The success of mediation relies on the appropriate level of planning, remuneration and support.

7. Concluding comments

This interim report has drawn upon 10 Country Reports produced across the countries from which partner organisations to the Roma MATRIX project are based. This chapter offers some brief concluding comments based on this material and outlines the next steps for the research element of the Roma MATRIX project.

Across the broad range of issues central to the Roma MATRIX project it is largely evident that despite much policy activity at European, national, regional and local levels there has been limited progress towards addressing the inequalities that exist for Roma populations across Europe. Although there has been increased and significant attention placed on Roma inclusion in recent years, ongoing reductions in public expenditure, entrenched anti-Roma sentiment and lack of political leadership are inhibiting achieving sufficient progress towards improvements in the lives and life-chances of Roma communities. Although positive activities are a feature in a number of countries these are too often unique occurrences, which occur at a local level and not diffused within wider policy and practice delivery. Moreover, it is apparent that many national governments, and public agencies, do not see Roma exclusion as a particularly significant issue which is seemingly evident in their approach to allocating resources, enforcing legislation and challenging the dominant discourse around Roma communities.

Roma are often left out of the process of developing policy and implementing activities, or at best are included in initiatives which seek to celebrate aspects of Roma culture or tradition rather than confront more systemic issues of intolerance and inequality. Although many states have adopted a mainstreaming approach to addressing inequalities more widely, the complex issues experienced by Roma communities may require tailored responses. There is palpable pessimism by the authors of the Country Reports about the ability of current initiatives within Member States to promote inter-cultural understanding and improve cross-community relations between Roma and non Roma.

Much of the hindrance for progressing with Roma inclusion is attributed to the lack of robust and reliable national data on the size, composition and disadvantages faced by Roma populations. Such data could not only illustrate the nature of the population affected, but also understand the distance travelled by Roma when projects and programmes have been delivered in order to address their exclusion. Furthermore, there is an urgent need to ensure that central and/or local level accountability is embedded in relation to the initiatives and projects that are developed. At present very little quality evaluation appears to take place, with some evaluations showing limited success for projects.

Next steps

This interim report has presented a summary of the Country Reports produced for the 10 Roma MATRIX partner countries. The final research report produced by the University of Salford and University of York research team will integrate the findings from these reports with the empirical work that is currently being undertaken in each partner country. More specifically, the research team are carrying out semi-structured interviews with key informants in each country, including representatives from national governments, local authorities, NGOs, law enforcement/judicial agencies, social workers, and Roma community representatives and advocates. There are around 12 people being consulted in each country (a total of around 120 respondents). The research team is being supported by a team of 10 country researchers. The data being generated will help answer our research aim and objectives and help understand how governments (national, regional and local) and other key agencies are conceptualising policies and initiatives to increase Roma inclusion and how such initiatives are impacting Roma communities on the ground.

We welcome the views of partners and stakeholders on the content of this interim report and every effort will be made to incorporate these into the final report which will be produced in March 2015.

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