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# Rights, responsibilities and redress?

## Research on policy and practice for Roma inclusion in ten Member States

### Final report

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Hilary Turley

March 2015



With financial support from the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme of the European Union



University of  
**Salford**  
MANCHESTER

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*



With financial support from  
the Fundamental Rights  
and Citizenship Programme  
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Mutual Action Targeting  
Racism, Intolerance  
and Xenophobia

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For more information about the work of the research team and partners please see [www.romamatrix.eu](http://www.romamatrix.eu)

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Background and scope

Roma MATRIX (Mutual Action Targeting Racism, Intolerance and Xenophobia) was 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.”<sup>1</sup>

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.

Migration Yorkshire (Leeds City Council) has been the lead co-ordinating partner for Roma MATRIX. The project involved 20 organisations from ten European countries, representing a diverse range of agencies, and is one the largest cross-sectoral projects to focus on Roma inclusion across Europe, including non-government organisations (NGOs), Roma-led organisations, local government, universities and two private sector companies, as listed in Table 1 overleaf.

<sup>1</sup> 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>

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 have been 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 had a research role within the Roma MATRIX project. The overall objective of the research element has been 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.

**Table 1: Partner Organisations**

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

## A qualitative approach to policy analysis

### Fieldwork sites

Typically the fieldwork took place in two locations in the ten Roma MATRIX partner states. The first was generally the nation's capital as this was typically the location where national policy was designed and developed. In order to consider how policy played out on the ground, the choice of a second site for fieldwork centred on the identification of a 'local' area that fit a number of inclusion criteria such as being home to a sizeable population of people from a Roma background, being a major regional urban centre or a locality

that had some significance with regards to Roma inclusion policy or practice. In the majority of occasions the 'local' areas were often significant distances away from the capital; however in a minority of countries it was appropriate to undertake the 'local' level fieldwork within the broader region which accommodated the capital city.

Respondents were recruited via purposive non-random sampling with the assistance of individual country researchers who had an in-depth knowledge and understanding of individual country contexts. The country researchers were instrumental in facilitating access to respondents and used their existing contacts and networks to

arrange interviews across the two fieldwork sites in each country. Each researcher ensured that key actors were consulted alongside a diversity of views, experiences and approaches relevant to policy making and practice across the four key research areas.

The issues highlighted in this report are complex and the opinions represented diverse. The research therefore does not attempt to make definitive statements about the situation and views of policy actors in each partner country. Such claims lie beyond the remit of qualitative research and would ignore the very real differences of opinion that often exist. Rather, this is exploratory research which aims to provide contextualised understandings of key issues and concerns of various policy actors in the ten Member States. This report, therefore, offers important grounded insights that are of wider relevance for all those interested in developing a deeper understanding about the contemporary situation of policy delivery affecting Roma across the EU.

## Methods and sample

A semi-structured interview guide was developed by the research team as the most appropriate research method given that a clear list of topics needed to be covered during the conversation. Semi-structured interviews also accommodated the fact that several interviewees would be out in the field collecting data and there was a need to ensure that interviewees could provide reliable and comparable data. However the inclusion of open ended questions provided the researchers with scope to pursue issues in more depth and to gather rich data which enabled the team to understand the topics in new ways.

A total of 112 semi-structured interviews were conducted, 60 with national actors, three with regional level actors and 49 with local level actors. These interviews contained a total of 141 people as respondents often chose to be interviewed in a group setting. Across the sample people represented a variety of backgrounds and roles including: elected politicians, civil servants, NGO employees, Roma community organisation members and practitioners. A total of 39 respondents identified themselves as being of Roma heritage and 63 non Roma with the remainder unassigned.

Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was held in a range of settings from official ministry buildings in the capital city, Police headquarters and local municipality buildings to NGOs based in Roma settlements. Where necessary, interviews were conducted with an interpreter present to ensure that respondents were able to express their thoughts and opinions without language restriction.

We recognise that there are a number of complexities associated with using interpreters in research interviews which can threaten the validity of the data (see for example Edwards 1998; Kapborg and Bertero 2001). Translating from one language to another can mean that subtle differences in language are omitted and the particular meaning of a statement is lost or misinterpreted. Furthermore, it is essential that interpreters remain non-judgemental and objective in their role, particularly when working with marginalised communities as biased ideas may also influence the way in which the interpreter conveys information to the researcher (Kapborg and Bertero 2001).

The research team took a number of precautionary steps when using interpreters to address these issues. For example, in almost all cases, interpreters were sourced via independent, professional interpreting agencies that in many cases provided interpreters who had prior experience of working on research projects and of Roma issues specifically. This also ensured, a clear understanding and commitment to confidentiality and as far as possible, objectivity.

As part of recognised good practice, an initial meeting was held between the researchers and interpreter at the start of each fieldwork trip to provide the interpreter with detailed information about the project, to make them aware of their roles and responsibilities and to establish a way of working which enabled the interpreter to take a position which was neither too active nor too passive but enabled them to provide additional important information regarding the cultural context (Edwards 1998:200). An informal de-brief was conducted with interpreters at the end of each day, (as recommended by Baker et al 1991; Freed 1988) which allowed the researchers and interpreter to raise concerns that had arisen during interviews relating to the interpreters conduct or to clarify meaning in relation the language that was used.

Two researchers were also present in the majority of interviews. In such cases, this allowed one researcher to conduct the interviews, while the other was able to observe and document non-verbal communication, ensure consistency of approach and to assist with follow up questions to clarify or explore an issue further.

A sum of 20 Euros (or equivalent) was offered to people of Roma heritage who were community activists or representatives of community organisations, as a reimbursement of their time and as acknowledgement that much of their work is often low paid or unpaid. Similarly, representatives from local NGOs were offered 20 Euros as a thank you donation to the organisation.



Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were analysed using thematic code and retrieve techniques with QSR NVivo 10 software used to assist this process and to aid confidential storage and retrieval of data. An individual team member took a lead on particular core themes, and following initial analysis of these themes, analytical meetings were held by the research team to present this analysis to one another and seek feedback and comments. Themes were then further expanded and refined in an iterative process of continuous discussion, critique and collaboration.

Fieldwork took place between October 2013 and January 2015.

## Ethical issues

The research team took ethical issues extremely seriously and were guided by a number of principles, namely: respecting the dignity, rights, welfare and safety of research participants; ensuring informed consent and voluntary participation; protecting anonymity; and doing no harm. The study was subject to the procedures required by the Ethical Approval Panel of the College of Health and Social Care at the University of Salford, UK. Information about the Roma MATRIX project and the purpose of the research was widely distributed to potential respondents in the language of the country before interviews took place. Confidentiality and anonymity was maintained throughout the research process and informed consent was obtained from each respondent before an interview took place. All respondents were asked to provide a pseudonym which represented their role within the organisation or agency that they worked for without identifying them. This was essential for enabling respondents to speak openly and honestly and to discuss sensitive issues.

## Conventions used in this report

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

- We use the terms Roma and non Roma within this report. We appreciate that these terms may be disputed and appear homogenising but we have taken a pragmatic view. In terms of Roma these include individuals self-identifying as such in the countries within which the research took place. Such individuals often belonged to different sections of the Roma umbrella. It should be noted that the Roma respondents who took part in the research included policy actors involved in the development and implementation of policy in varied

organisations at local and national level alongside end users in receipt of services.

- ‘Quotes’ included from respondents are distinguished by being in italic type and usually inset. These were derived from audio recordings which have been subject to translation. Although we have attempted to ensure these are edited for clarity the cited data also reflects the characteristics of everyday conversation.
- Respondents have been given identifiers to protect their anonymity. Each is allocated a country prefix (e.g. BG – Bulgaria; CZ – Czech Republic; ES – Spain; GR – Greece; HG – Hungary; IT – Italy; PL – Poland; RO – Romania; SL – Slovakia; UK - United Kingdom) and a number which indicated the order in which they were interviewed. A brief description of their role is also provided together with the ‘level’ at which they work (i.e. nationally, regionally or locally). An indication of whether an interviewee was Roma or non Roma is also included. Where a respondent’s status was not known, ‘unassigned’ is used, while interviews which included both Roma and non Roma respondents are denoted by the term ‘mixed group.’

## About this report

This report is intended to assist the European Commission, civil society organisations, academics and a variety of key organisations and engaged individuals in furthering understanding of how policy impacts on the lives of Roma in countries across Europe. The background to this work together with a detailed policy review can be found in Brown et al. (2014).

This report presents the findings from the empirical research in a number of thematic areas. More specifically, Chapter 2 briefly outlines the policy context for this report. In Chapter 3 we consider issues relating to cross-community relations. Employment is the focus of Chapter 4, whilst Chapter 5 focuses on the reporting of anti-discrimination and issues relating to redress mechanisms. Chapter 6 looks at the issues associated with Roma children living in and leaving public care systems. Finally, Chapter 7 discusses a number of cross-cutting issues that permeate the findings across the four main themes, provides some conclusions arising from this research and presents some key recommendations.

# Chapter 2: Policy background

## Introduction

In July 2011, the Open Society Institute – Brussels published a brief review of recent EU policies and initiatives focused on Roma inclusion (Open Society Institute, 2011). Issued shortly after the Commission's landmark Framework Communication (European Commission, 2011) and its approval by the European Council (European Council, 2011), the assessment suggested that while a solid, shared policy foundation now existed across the Union, the critical task lay ahead to guarantee action on the ground. It posed the question: 'How can the EU move from an overall framework and approach to national level implementation?' (OSI, 2011:1). Almost four years on, one of the objectives of our research was to assess to what extent each of the ten Member States we visited had made progress operationalising the pledges made in their respective National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS). At the time of our visits, most countries had produced at least one iteration, and many were working on revised updates.

## National Roma Integration Strategies

The production of these strategies was a direct result of the adoption on 5 April 2011 of an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 (European Council, 2011) and its subsequent approval by member governments via the European Council (European Council, 2011). This effectively committed all Member States to the Framework's request for co-ordinated programme of action aligned to its four 'crucial' priorities for Roma integration; employment, housing, health and education. In the process, Member States were asked to consider 'how structural requirements (cooperation with civil society, with regional and local authorities, monitoring, anti-discrimination and establishment of a national contact point) as well as funding are addressed.' (European Commission, 2012: 4) The most significant European policy development in the last decade, the Framework aimed to help

Member States 'make a tangible difference to Roma people's lives.' (European Commission, 2011: 3) The Communication framed the programme as 'complementary to the existing EU legislation and policies in the areas of non-discrimination, fundamental rights, the free movement of persons, and the rights of the child.' (European Commission, 2011:14)

The Framework acknowledged that the EU had previously 'made several proposals for Member States to promote the social and economic integration of Roma', but admitted that despite the incorporation of anti-discrimination directives into national legal codes 'little has changed in the day to day situation of most Roma' and that 'strong and proportionate measures are still not yet in place.' (European Commission, 2011: 3) It did make reference to the fact that several countries had historically produced their own Roma strategies.

It is worth briefly noting that the Framework itself specifically states 'The achievement of these goals (on Roma integration) is important to help Member States reaching the overall targets of the Europe 2020 strategy' (European Commission, 2011: 4). Significantly, it explicitly indicates that: 'It is the EU's response to the current situation and does not replace Member States' primary responsibility in this regard' (European Commission, 2011: 3). The choice of the four areas and the end date was not arbitrarily chosen, but was related to broader EU policy objectives within the Europe 2020 strategy. Subtitled 'A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth', the latter document primarily focused on economic development. Roma are only mentioned directly once, as one of a number of groups 'at particular risk' of poverty and social exclusion under the broader European platform against poverty (European Commission, 2010a:19).

However, the Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies explicitly identifies the link between the documents when it asks states to ensure their NRIS 'fit into and contribute to the broader framework of the Europe 2020 strategy and should therefore be consistent with national reform programmes.' (European Commission, 2011:8 - emphasis in the original)

## Roma: under increasing focus

It is important to understand the context to this upsurge in policy and research. As Guy (2009) has pointed out, while reports on the situation of Roma had been produced since the 1990s, the range and depth of activity accelerated significantly after the expansion of the EU to include the central and European states commonly known as the A8 and A2, and in part was a response to the highly public, and discriminatory actions of western European governments, (particularly France and Italy), towards migrant Roma moving from the new member states (see also Rorke, 2013). In fact, as the OSI assessment also noted, the rapid agreement of Member States to endorse the Framework in the European Council and the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) in 2011 was 'particularly encouraging given the context of divisive discussions between Western and European states on who has responsibility for Roma policy and what competence the EU has in laying down a common agenda.' (OSI, 2011: 2) The landmark Roma summit (September 2008) occurred only 9 months after the A8 accession, and just 2 months after the so called 'nomad emergency' commenced in Italy. The Platform for Roma Inclusion was inaugurated in 2009, at which the 10 Basic Principles for Roma Inclusion were first presented (the 9th Platform took place in March 2015 in Brussels). This was followed by the Commission's Roma Task Force, formed in 2010 'to streamline, assess and benchmark the use (including the effectiveness) of EU funds by all Member States for Roma integration and identify underpinning deficiencies in the use of funds.' (European Commission, 2011: footnote 11) Over the same period, the EU's own Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) has built a significant body of survey data and recommendations on areas such as improving data collection and monitoring.

A plethora of policy documents emerged from other organisations within the same time-frame, such as The Council of Europe's Strasbourg Declaration (Council of Europe, 2010). The background to the Framework was thus a series of proposals, high profile meetings, reports and policy statements emerging over a relatively short period from 2008-11 after the expansion of the EU itself. The largest European transnational initiative

targeting Roma prior to that date - the Decade for Roma Inclusion - did not include the EU, beginning in 2005 when the nine nations involved were not Member States, although the Decade was subsequently cited by the EU as a model of co-ordination on strategic issues affecting Roma before the Framework was established (European Commission, 2011: 4).

## Monitoring progress towards integration of Roma populations

From that time onwards, a multitude of reports on various aspects of Roma inclusion have also appeared from supra-national bodies such as the World Bank, OSCE and UNDP, alongside others from national and multi-national NGOs such as European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) and European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC). In reality, the development of European policy on Roma inclusion has often been, and continues to be, a collaborative initiative. The FRA surveys of eleven Member States (FRA, 2012), for example, were a joint enterprise between the UNDP, World Bank and the Commission, while the Commission worked with the Open Society Foundations (OSF) to develop the template for the Civil Society Monitoring reports. The Commission itself is transparent about the fact that its annual assessments of NRIS utilise data from NGOs, as well as agencies such as the FRA and Member States' own progress reports. Furthermore, many 'external' policy assessments have been commissioned by the EC itself - in 2011, for example, it asked the European Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion to produce an overview of the social inclusion of Roma in each Member State to support the development of NRIS. Likewise, the report "Improving the tools for the social inclusion and non-discrimination of Roma in the EU" (European Commission, 2010b) was commissioned by the EU from two NGOs - the ERRC and Roma Education Fund. That said, many NGOs, as well as academics and activists, have not been afraid to criticise the EU for its approach to Roma inclusion (e.g. ERPC 2011, OSF 2013) even while engaging in the process of consultation with the Commission.

One year after the publication of the Framework, the Commission issued a Communication on National Roma Integration Strategies, dubbing them 'a first step in the implementation of the EU Framework.' (European Commission, 2012) This update reported that all Member States had now produced a strategy 'or a corresponding set of policy measures within their broader social inclusion policies.' Nevertheless, as the Commission itself recognised,

*EU funds (in particular the Structural Funds) could be a powerful tool to improve the socio-economic situation of disadvantaged groups, such as Roma, but too little of the €26.5 billion allocated to support Member States' efforts in the field of social inclusion for the 2007-2013 period benefits disadvantaged Roma communities.'* (European Commission, 2012: 3)

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The Commission has subsequently published annual progress reports by country, which are largely based on submissions provided by the states themselves. This forms part of the monitoring mechanism promised by the Framework. At the same time, coalitions of NGOs and academics in eight of the nations which participated in the Decade of Roma Inclusion have developed a parallel series of national assessments, entitled Civil Society Monitoring Reports. Usually highly detailed in their analyses, these reports explicitly,

*...present alternative information to Decade Progress Reports submitted by Participating Governments in the Decade of Roma Inclusion and to any reports submitted by State parties to the European Commission on implementation of their National Roma Integration Strategies. These reports are not meant to substitute for quantitative monitoring and evaluation by State authorities but to channel local knowledge into national and European policy processes and reflect on the real social impact of government measures. The civil society reports provide additional data to official ones, proxy data where there is not official data, or alternative interpretation of published data'. (Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation, 2013)*

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The evolution and adaptation of Roma policy at a European level represents the influence and views of a number of different authorities and participants, but also an ongoing process of dialogue between these stakeholders. Any discussion of policy should take into account this relationship.

The OSI's 2011 assessment concluded that 'a good set of policy recommendations for Member States to fight Roma exclusion' now existed. However, it cautioned that the successful implementation of national Roma integration strategies was dependent on 'strong action' by Member States, both in terms of political commitment and adequate resources – and advised the European Commission to respond clearly to any shortcomings (OSI, 2011:5). Three years on, the Commission itself concluded that 'progress, although still slow, is beginning to take shape in most Member States' before adding 'However, much more needs to be done to bring about change on a larger scale.' (European Commission, 2014:3)







# Chapter 3: Cross-community relations

## Introduction

A large amount of attention has been focused on seeking to understand the marginal position of Roma across Europe. For the most part this has been directed at documenting and exploring how Roma are experiencing particular initiatives or the application of various policies. In spite of a significant level of European and national resources being targeted at Roma inclusion, together with a great deal of time spent by policy makers and other actors developing and delivering projects to assist in the integration of Roma, very little attention has been given to exploring how such professionals are operating in this policy milieu. Developing an understanding of how national actors are conceptualising Roma inclusion policy, in respect of community relations, coupled with the perceived issues at the community/local level, were key objectives of the research.

## Everyday relations between communities

Evidence presented in the Roma MATRIX Interim Research Report (Brown et al, 2014) highlighted relations between Roma and non Roma communities across the partner states typically played out across a spectrum that ranged from indifferent ambivalence to overt hostility and violence with such findings routinely supported by the views of respondents in the interviews. Having said this, it was also apparent that meaningful social relations also existed between Roma and non Roma across the partner states, albeit it at an apparently low level,

*The relationships have been good with her parents. At first, he told them, I am Roma and I live in the camp site and everything. They were okay with this. They accepted it and they were happy about them. They were also happy that they wanted to have a life together and that she is pregnant. The only thing is that they are not really happy about the fact that she's living here [in a camp] with him. (IT8, Roma camp resident, Roma, Italy)*

With social relations often notably mundane,

*They are getting on perfectly fine. There isn't an issue with most neighbours because they are Travellers...No more than what neighbours should have. It's like any kind of estate you go into. (UK12, worker, national NGO, non Roma, United Kingdom)*

With respondents often describing 'normal' neighbourhood issues which unfortunately tended to be quickly essentialised as 'Roma problems',

*I have to say that we do not really have sort of big problems between the Roma and non Roma majority within the municipality... As an example, one street, where we have both Roma and non Roma people living, there are complaints that the Roma children are too noisy, playing football or they deliberately kick the balls into someone's garden and then they shout...we really do not have any sort of bigger major issues, so far (SK4, local elected official, non Roma, Slovakia)*

However, more typically respondents tended to characterise relations from the perspective of majority populations as begrudging tolerance, whilst Roma communities attitudes towards non Roma were characterised as lacking in trust. Occasionally there was mention of more hostile tensions and actions, such as intimidation or violence, but these were seemingly less often reported. However, it should be noted that a minority of other respondents reported that it would be inappropriate to articulate community

relations this simplistically and that often poor social relationships grounded at the neighbourhood level were the product of individual 'trouble makers',

*In all of the communities there are people who don't know how to behave...They are people who are sort of not contained in themselves and these people are creating problems in each community. Roma among the Slovaks and in each community there are people who don't know how to keep a hold on themselves, and they cause problems. But otherwise they are pretty good. They do not leave each other behind and we have people who get on well together with the other communities and help out in other communities (HG2, local official, Roma self-government, Roma, Hungary)*

There were few reports that relations between communities were improving noticeably. A significant minority of respondents reported that relations were now worse than they had been in the past, with some older people from Roma communities tending to report that previous regimes offered more favourable conditions,

*It was different in Bulgaria before; we used to live very well together. I never felt discriminated before I used to be a teacher. I was born in a worker's family and we were socially poor, but I never felt discriminated. Now corruption is terrible and discrimination - and mainly discrimination (BG10, worker, national NGO, Roma, Bulgaria)*

Similarly, for some working at a national level (see CZ2 below) the level of anti-Roma racism within certain districts across particular states (e.g. Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia) was substantial. It was typical for those operating at the level of central administration to perceive tensions to be more pronounced the smaller the locality, 'The smaller the city the worse the situation there about the relationship in Roma minority majority' (CZ2, civil servant, national government, non Roma, Czech Republic).

It was evident that such policy actors were struggling to constructively respond to these challenges. It was noted that some policy actors in more Central and Eastern States attributed the level of anti-Roma hostility to the inexperience of living in a multi-cultural society,

*Frankly, traditional hatred. People in the Czech Republic don't want to hear about it, but they don't want to hear that they are racists, but they are. So when talking to people outside I have to be polite, or from time to time I have to be polite, because of some, let's say, visible solutions, but lots of people are full of hate to Roma people. I mean, this is one of the worst situations in Europe, compared to other countries. There is a traditional hatred. We are not used to living in a multicultural society...We're not used to it (CZ2, civil servant, national government, non Roma, Czech Republic)*

This is questionable given the apparent length of time Roma have lived in the country. Whilst others were continuously surprised at how deep anti-Roma sentiments ran even through their own social circle amongst otherwise 'reasonable' and 'educated' people,

*... even people, my friends who are college graduates who are in all other aspects able to understand the complexity of issues, kind of like that leaves them when it comes to Roma and they tell me, 'What are you doing? You are helping the Gypsies', and this is also for me, it also bothers me that they can't even them, who should presumably be able to see the complexity of the issues, just like follow this road of discrimination. Because of this tension, people have a tendency to believe completely untrue things, but these things serve to make this conflict even worse. (CZ6, civil servant, local government, non Roma, Czech Republic)*

Whilst a small number of respondents in partner states reported the findings from surveys that evidenced diminishing hostility toward Roma this was against a continuing backdrop of broad negativity on the part of majority populations towards members of Roma communities. Spatial and cultural separation often provided the canvas upon which strained relationships were played out and the Interim Research Report detailed pessimism about the ability of current initiatives to promote inter-cultural understanding and improve relations between Roma and non Roma communities. Similarly, the presence of segregated 'Roma' areas or 'ghettos' were seen as one of the fundamental reasons that community polarisation had occurred and been maintained,

*The biggest issue that affects everything else is the issue of housing. We are talking about half or up to two-thirds of Roma who live either in these so-called ghettos, or are not integrated. Most of those who live in social ghettos live in so-called residential houses. So these are called residential hotels, not houses, residential hotels, sorry,*

*like dormitories (CZ1, senior manager, national NGO, non Roma, Czech Republic)*

*...this is a completely separated neighbourhood where almost 90 per cent of the residents are Roma (BG11, social worker, national NGO, non Roma, Bulgaria)*

*First of all, it is important to understand that in this district specifically it's the highest number of Roma district wise in the whole Czech Republic. I estimate it's 10 per cent...and with the number of people, the number of problems increase. People who see the Roma community then see, of course, with those numbers and these problems, things like their style of living, they are much louder, let's say, in general than Czechs, they do not keep their public space so much in order and they see these residential houses/dormitories that we spoke about or if they are allocated flats, that these flats get ruined after some time and so on, so this is what makes people angry (CZ6, civil servant, local government, non Roma, Czech Republic)*

It was the concept of trust that was repeatedly mentioned as the glue that either held positive relationships together or the absence of trust that created barriers to establishing meaningful relationships. As one Roma respondent, working in an NGO in the UK, commented; gaining trust was likely to take a significant amount of time largely as a result of the level of animosity people from Roma communities had been subjected to for centuries,

*To be honest, Roma people are very close. They do not want to talk to outsiders, if I can call them [non Roma] outsiders...Because we have been taught like this, "Don't mess with non Roma people. You cannot trust the non Roma people. They will not give you chance" So this is the experience of, I don't know how many, 600 years, and we are still getting issues. We will have them I think forever, maybe. This is not simple thing to be sorted with Roma community. (UK3A, senior representative, local NGO, Roma, United Kingdom)*

*Indeed, it was routinely commented there was an apparent ingrained lack of trust particularly in those from an older generation, My father, he has been here a long time, he is 64 and he's—the old Gypsy and he's saying, "why the hell you mixing with non Roma people?" (UK3A, senior representative, local NGO, Roma, United Kingdom)*

A minority of respondents spoke of the implementation of positive programmes within educational settings that facilitated a reduction in discriminatory practices in schools and improved

relations. For example, a Bulgarian respondent noted a decrease in segregated or 'special' Roma schools. Similarly, in Poland a respondent noted how policy that had increased Roma children's attendance at school had positively altered non Roma parent's perception of Roma. However, the potential for positive educational policy to stimulate wider improvements in cross-community relations should not be exaggerated. Widespread prejudice and the ongoing marginalisation of Roma were regularly reported as a significant feature of wider society,

*Nobody wants to give them work, and nobody wants to communicate with them. Nobody wants to interact with them. Unfortunately, numerous polls show that almost no one wants to have Roma as their neighbour. For example, a lady from [location], out of her eight children two of her sons went to school and they got this apprenticeship, degree and they still couldn't find a job, so she asked me, 'What is our motivation to educate our children when they will still be denied jobs because they are Roma?' (CZ1, senior manager, national NGO, non Roma, Czech Republic)*

On the whole people tended to note that there had not been improvements in cross-community relations and to a large extent relations between Roma and non Roma were deteriorating. In areas where there was a relatively 'new' Roma community, in the form of migrant Roma, there were some concerns that their relative initial invisibility had reduced and relations were seen as precarious. For instance, in the UK where it was noted by a handful of frontline workers that everyday anti-Roma racism was increasing attributed to a combination of the accession of EU states, growing domestic anti-EU rhetoric by political parties and the increase in numbers of Roma arriving to live in already deprived communities,

*After the EU quite a lot of people came. And now, things from the media and newspapers and the UKIP and things like that. You feel, you start feeling the discrimination of sometimes the racism as well, racism aspect from none Roma people towards Roma communities. It is hard at times for us. To be honest about two months, three months ago, I thought I would move to Canada (UK3A, senior representative, local NGO, Roma, United Kingdom)*

*Recent evidence has shown us from local and European elections that there is a growing issue of concern around immigration. There is an increasing intolerance towards migrants. There are community tensions. They are not wholesale. It tends to be if there are complaints coming in from the areas it tends to be from certain number of individuals, I think who generally make complaints about not wanting Roma kids roaming about on bikes to ice cream vans. How much of that is about children and how much of it's about Roma is difficult to tell. If you'd have asked me, up until probably definitely twelve months ago the vast majority of people in (name of town) I don't think would have known what you were talking about if you were talking about Roma. It's just EU migrants and Slovakian or whatever. The press has actually had a significant role in drawing attention to specific ethnicity and rev things up, without a doubt (UK1, manager, local government, non Roma, United Kingdom)*

## The implementation and effectiveness of cross-community relations policy

Across the partner states respondents routinely reported the presence of ineffective policy and practice in relation to the promotion of cross-community relations. Although a minority of policies was seen as successful, for the most part these involved delivering small scale events such as specific cultural festivals and/or local level grassroots work through sport and arts projects. Only one respondent asserted that their state's National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) was a positive force in addressing social inclusion and improving relations between Roma and non Roma,

*So on one hand she would say that programme is very effective - very effective - because it's sort of brought the Roma community into the mainstream public life mostly because of the pressure put on education and the introduction of Roma [teaching] assistants. (PL3, policy maker, national government, non Roma, Poland)*

The remainder asserted that the NRIS in their country, and other similar policy documents, were largely ineffective in promoting better relations between Roma and non Roma communities. Stated reasons for this included limited support for such policies on the part of key policymakers (e.g. 'No policy. No plans. No idea' (UK5, elected local Council leader, non Roma, United Kingdom), a lack of funding and support by senior leaders. Indeed, it was respondents at the local level in the UK who were most animated about the need for a

national approach to provide strategic direction and support for local level activities,

*I feel really positive that Roma feel that [name of place] is a good place to come...that makes me feel quite proud. On the other hand, it has an impact on the town...In such austere times where public services and our ability to respond, is being cut back and back. That is where the tension is. I think by having a strategy by having some national recognition [it] would give us the opportunity to request support for the impact on our local authority (UK1, manager, local government, non-Roma, United Kingdom)*

There was also a sense from those working in local frontline services that more senior, national level, policy actors were not suitably aware of the complexities of the everyday challenges faced by Roma communities,

*For many years now we have been issuing documents; plenty of them. Those documents were produced at governmental levels, and we have given our proposals as NGOs, but unfortunately all of these documents remain on paper only. We have this national council on ethnic and demographic issues working with the minorities, but on one hand those programmes are not provided with sufficient funding, and on the other hand it seems like those programmes are developed by people who are not really well-aware of the problems of the Roma. (BG9, worker, national NGO, non-Roma, Bulgaria)*

Local municipalities were also often being blamed by NGOs and Roma communities for not providing adequate responses through local policy making. However, as one national level NGO pointed out, such places were often ill equipped and lacking in knowledge and resources about how best to take the inclusion of Roma forward,

*...municipalities are not at all prepared to deal with these issues...People who work in municipal offices themselves, they have a lot of stereotypes in mind. Of course these are small towns and so many stereotypes are there... Also there is no really - this is something that we can see in both cases, of migrant Roma and Polish Roma, that if some issue arises, some problem, the municipality has no idea how to deal with it and feels completely helpless. (PL1, worker, national NGO, non Roma, Poland)*

In large part this was seemingly due to a lack of leadership within local municipalities amongst senior officers with politicians, local and national, also often providing little direction and support. On



the contrary such politicians openly espoused overt anti-Roma hostility for political gain,

*He systematically fuelled the prejudice and he was having a lot of votes in return...The present administration is not going down the same road but it's not even denying it or turning back or doing anything to change the situation. (IT6A, Director, national NGO, non Roma, Italy)*

There was very little evidence of politicians offering leadership on this issue, with the exception of the UK where a local elected politician had travelled to various Member States to better understand experiences of Roma within their home countries. This respondent reported using this experience, coupled with their influence to try and shape services to better support Roma communities in the local area in which he worked.

Following on from this, it was found that those with an anti-Roma agenda, such as Far Right parties, capitalised on this general malaise and sought to stir further tensions. In one example in the Czech Republic misleading information was routinely distributed in order to create and propagate the notion of people from Roma populations as fraudulent, particularly in relation to social welfare,

*There was a chain mail which said this Roma man...gets like 30, 000 crowns per month on social benefits, and then I get phone calls from people who say, 'Okay, so you see now what we were talking about, they get all these benefits', and, of course, then it is much harder to provide the correct information, so this increases this kind of conflict and the atmosphere of conflict in society and then that's what is abused by the ultra-Far Right parties. That's where we end up with demonstrations that are organised by neo-Nazis, but ordinary people participate in these demonstrations believing this heated and extreme argument. (CZ6, civil servant, local government, non Roma, Czech Republic)*

*The practice of Roma populations being used as a convenient scapegoat was all too common in locations where the Far Right were dominant and such movements were, more worryingly, noted as influential in embedding and maintaining indifference to anti-Roma attitudes in wider politics,*

*There are an increasing number of white people who blame Roma for everything that went or goes wrong in their life. This is then used, this process is used by the extremists who organise anti-Roma demonstrations and attempts at programmes. That in turn has consequences for policies of inclusion because they cannot get rooted, because nobody wants it. So the electorate, or the citizens, people, they, as a consequence of seeing Roma as the enemy, think only about how to isolate them, or in the best scenario for them to eliminate them, to remove them from the Czech Republic. (CZ1, senior manager, national NGO, non Roma, Czech Republic)*

It was often because such views played well in the 'news' that local level policy actors and practitioners often attributed a large component of responsibility for maintaining negative relations to the media.

It was also noted that funding, from EU bodies and national programmes, which aimed to tackle social inclusion of Roma tended to be ineffective at the grassroots level. Programmes were often criticised for not making a difference 'on the ground' despite there being funds available for various activities,

*There is quite a big flow of money coming through to these projects. But then, they don't translate into anything useful or well done, because, for example this project here that he is mentioning is about the Roma culture as an umbrella...All the different shades of the Roma identity are not really explored. (IT7, Social Operator, national NGO, unassigned, Italy)*

*It feels like we as Roma community, Roma community we are late, we are too late. There is a like a delay in the integration process. This is of course with many factors. This is the one who don't want to open up and don't want change and also the fact that local administration isn't doing anything about it. This is what happens in Western Europe, everyone has got the money to change the situation as the same happened in France and in Spain, UK, but then nothing really happened. (IT8, Roma camp resident, Roma, Italy)*



*Of course, you can - we have for so many years programmes also funded by the EU to support Roma, but we can see that they are not as successful as we would like them to be. It's important to look also at other factors that maybe make these programmes unsuccessful, that maybe the perception didn't really change or hasn't really changed for years. (PL1, worker, national NGO, non Roma, Poland)*

## The 'problematic' Roma

It was apparent that trust also played a key role in how those in positions of authority within government, local and national, related to Roma 'representatives' and NGOs who claimed to represent the interests of Roma communities. Often people in authority were suspicious about the motives of such individuals and were wary about engaging,

*I must add to this that when I came into this position, a week of my time was devoted basically to various prominent Roma individuals visiting with or without announcing that they were going to come. But actually mainly from criminal sectors or groups. They came and offered their help, their assistance. Obviously, they would do the same to whoever comes after me. I will warn them against accepting the help of all these groups. I must add to this that this is not just typical of Roma groups, but is also typical of any criminal groups (HG8, local police officer, non Roma, Hungary)*

A common practice amongst senior policy actor respondents entailed expressing the view that poor life chances, dysfunctional social relations, poverty and social exclusion of Roma were rooted in the dysfunctional behaviour of Roma themselves. Such policy actors often emphasised examples based on the behaviour, lifestyle or culture of Roma to illustrate why they were partly to blame for their own exclusion,

*...[some] people when they see a Roma they automatically assume he's stupid, he's dirty, and you have to be aware of him. He says it is necessary to say that sometimes the reason for these prejudices is actually true, because some Roma do behave like that, you know, according to the prejudices, stereotypes. So he says Roma should work themselves on improvement of their own community and their position (CZ5, civil servant, local government, Roma, Czech Republic)*

*There are some unacceptable patterns that are characteristic or perceived as a characteristic for the Roma community, such as early marriages. There is a stereotype that they don't want to work, or there's this perception that they don't want to work...and the way of life it means they are noisy, there is a lot of... I think they are perceived as different people, yes? This is why they are not liked very much. (PL3, policy maker, national government, non Roma, Poland)*

*...it's not even a matter of just the people not working, but actually wilfully going against social rules and norms. It is quite deliberate on the part of these Roma. Just to give an example, if somebody would just take their speakers, the loud speakers and put them in their window at twelve o'clock at night and turn the volume up. It has no, he says, they don't understand what is the problem with this. This is just one very small slight example, but there can be a wide spectrum of this kind of behaviour that are typical of the small part of this community. This can be the size of this part of the community who behaves in this way changes from region to region. It can be just a few families in some places and can be a larger part of the community in others. This has been continuing for decades now. The majority of the population has completely at the end of its patience (HG8, local police officer, non Roma, Hungary)*

An added level of complexity associated with the challenge of improving cross-community relations through policy and practice was the heterogeneity of the Roma 'community',

*I see it as a very, very tense situation. I see it as a very tense situation but I wouldn't necessarily divide this, I wouldn't necessarily see it as a divide between Roma and non Roma communities, but more as within the Roma community as a very diverse, which has a very diverse life in itself. So those who, in the Roma community, who are closer to the European norms of living would be much—are just as much against those who do not accept these norms who would prefer to live not from work and not in a decent way (HG8, local police officer, non Roma, Hungary)*

*An issue that became apparent from interviews with respondents in various partner states was the additional layer of exclusion faced by migrant or foreign Roma. This was particularly the case in Spain, Poland and Greece and to a lesser extent the UK. Indigenous Roma (often not self-defining as such) were rarely reported as operating in the same social world as their migrant counterparts.*

*... what we've noticed is that the Spanish Roma population or Gitano's, they don't want to have relations or to be in relations with the other Roma populations that have come, either the Romanians or from other Roma population from other Eastern European countries. They are not interested in having a relationship with them. (ES1B, local municipal officer, non Roma, Spain)*

Furthermore, it was clear that policies aiming to address the social exclusion of Roma were largely ineffective when the target population was migrant Roma,

*And so much so and it's been so much work. And we haven't managed to solve this issue yet, that even NGOs that have a long tradition of working with the Spanish Roma population have refused to work with the other Roma population. And other problems especially with the Romanian's, Roma population... They settled anywhere within the city centre and maybe in a park. They stay there, for example, where there is a public park or not, public or private park and they do everything there, including their toilet and everything. That is why neighbours who live there don't like that (ES1A, local municipal officer, non Roma, Spain)*

*In terms of community based stuff, the Roma have settled predominantly in two or three central areas of [name of town] mainly within our most, within two of our most deprived areas. We had already got a hell of lot of poverty there. They have drastically increased the number of children that are living within a very small area. And that has brought tensions with the community in terms of children playing out on the streets. The associated noise. Sometimes you wonder how much that is about them being Roma and how much about them being children and you wonder in the context of general intolerance towards children. It's double discrimination, really, I feel. We get a lot of complaints from local residents about children being out on the street (UK1, manager, local government, non Roma, United Kingdom)*

## Strategies to improve cross-community relations

A common mechanism used across all the Roma MATRIX partner states to attempt to enhance community relations were Roma culture and/or arts based events (for example Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Poland). Whilst cultural activities/festivals which sought to enhance a wider awareness of Roma culture, were often cautiously welcomed by local level actors, they were also typically criticised for not improving community relations in any meaningful way,

*The past ten years many activities were funded by the EU. There were many activities within small communities where you have Roma festivals, some kinds of workshops, shows, exhibitions and so on. Of course, in these small communities you had all these cultural activities that were aimed at empowering these people and enforcing their integration. On the other hand when all these very, very small issues arise everything is forgotten, and we realise that actually the non Roma community still lives with the same stereotypes as they used to live with before. (PL1, worker, national NGO, non Roma, Poland)*

Local frontline workers rarely believed that such activities lead to tangible, long-term and sustainable improvements in community relations. As an alternative approach local level respondents in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, based on their experience, asserted that significant attention should be directed towards working intensively with members of majority communities and creating dialogue in order to directly tackle their prejudices.

*...we need to work with the majority. To the same extent [as working specifically with Roma communities] we need to work with the majority. Even if we were successful in making all Roma being able to live next to us, let's say, they would be not able to – we would not let them. The majority would not let them. (SK6, worker, national NGO, non Roma, Slovakia)*

The funding of open meetings to discuss local issues and to promote dialogue across communities, organisations and individuals although challenging, were reported as being effective in reducing tensions and ultimately promoting mutual understanding.

*It was open to the public and people who were either Roma or non Roma, so non Roma who are not involved in any of these institutions or agencies, ordinary people, could come and then what was going on was that they would have a specific problem...that they wanted to solve by this organised facilitated and supervised discussion...Although initially these series of discussions were focused on reducing tension between communities and understanding the reasons for these tensions, once these tensions were reduced then they could focus on the concrete issues of how to improve that city itself for everyone who lives in it, and then they could move on to maybe something more specific (CZ8B, worker, local NGO, non Roma, Czech Republic)*

Similarly, a method of working with key agencies, such as municipalities and the police, to ensure members of the community were 'visibly' embedded within organisations – as officers or members of the workforce – was seen to be valuable in a number of instances where this was successfully achieved. In the UK the Association of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Police Officers were seen as a recent but crucial step in this direction. An approach also found in our interviews with respondents in Hungary,

*Social inclusion strategy approaches this from two sides, one is basically, culture and that means to announce Roma culture for organisations programmes, so kind of indirectly in that inclusion and acceptance of one another. That is one thing and the other is, basically through law enforcement, which tries to include basically tries to include Roma youth in law enforcement and use them either as mediators or just having them within the police force. Thereby, increasing the acceptance of Roma, of the police force within the Roma community (HG13, official, central government, non Roma, Hungary)*

Although it should be noted that this was not without tension and there were instances in the interviews with respondents where it was reported that membership of the police by Roma was seen as a rejection of culture by certain quarters of the Roma community.

*Now, when we advertised that through our Facebook account, actually it was interesting because a lot of the negativity came from the Traveller community themselves saying, "They can't be cops. No self-respecting Traveller or Gypsy would be a cop" and this kind of stuff. (UK12, worker, national NGO, non Roma, United Kingdom)*

## Bringing about positive change in cross-community relations

As implied within the quote by CZ8B above in the call for open public meetings there appears an acknowledgement at a senior level within the Czech Republic that majority populations should take a more active role in social change and in the integration process as opposed to the more one-sided approach to inclusion where Roma are effectively assimilated.

*...we actually need the integration of non Roma as well into this issue, because this way we focus on what Roma should do, but we're not asking the question what the majority should do. (CZ5, civil servant, local government, Roma, Czech Republic)*

*So he starts with saying that one of the biggest problems of inclusion here in the*

*Czech Republic when it comes to Roma, it is one-sided, and it's often the conception and implementation without Roma, and although various parties have various perspectives and ideas about inclusion and integration, what is common for all of them is that they do not understand that inclusion is a two-sided process. One of the problems that is a direct consequence of this is that nobody's interested about either Roma opinion or their possibilities, you know, their real conditions. (CZ1, senior manager, national NGO, non Roma, Czech Republic)*

Where positive outcomes had been achieved in improving cross-community relations at the local level the role of particular committed individuals within key local or municipal organisations was routinely identified by respondents as crucial. The relationships with such individuals were often described by Roma and frontline workers in terms of being meaningful, respectful and constructive. That said such relationships were frequently also precarious as they were often built on specific time-limited projects or rested upon the attention, capacity and drive of specific engaged individuals. Respondents in Italy, Poland and Slovakia noted that any progress that had been made rapidly eroded as time contingent funding ended, influential individuals left organisations, a new political party took power, and/or policy changed track.

*But then...the relationship stopped. After a while, before the elections that we had last year, [name of politician] from the right wing party he was still the mayor. He came here, I mean, someone from the municipality came here before the elections to have a look around and to get some contact again and see how they were doing. And then the elections happened and the Democratic Party won the elections and after that no-one ever came to see us again. No one ever came back here and we felt really sorry about that because we feel abandoned. No-one is checking even this camp which is meant to be one of the equipped ones (IT8, Roma camp resident, Roma, Italy)*

Indeed, the decision whether or not to engage staff in Roma inclusion activities, or work closely with organisations who were attempting to promote positive social relations, was often discretionary within municipalities/public administrations and regularly rested on the endorsement or involvement of particular senior figures such as mayors and head of service.

On a minority of occasions it was noted that churches, acting as neutral brokers, could be vital, positive vehicles for change in a number of communities. This was largely attributed to it having a significant level of trust between

communities and between those in power and citizens.

*...we have a good relationship with the mayor here and with the city government...We have a meeting here in this office and the mayor visits sometimes on Sunday and we try to find out for example how Roma community find a job. We are trying to do, we are working together for Roma people (SK2, member, local church, Roma, Slovakia)*

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## Conclusion

Cross-community relations between Roma and non Roma were typically characterised as problematic and seen as inseparable from the widespread anti-Roma sentiment permeating society in general. Roma and non Roma consistency elucidated the notion of trust to explain the maintenance of poor cross-community relations. Although positive relations are undoubtedly in existence, examples appear infrequently. The capacity for these to lead to a broader flourishing of Roma-non/Roma relations was often not supported by meaningful policies and practices and was on occasions undermined, quite dramatically, by the actions and comments of senior figures in influential positions.

Respondents tended to be largely critical of unimaginative and stereotypical practices of trying to 'improve' social relations between Roma and non Roma by providing cultural festivals and showcasing Roma culture. These were seen to mark the Roma communities out as distinct in some way, increase their vulnerability. A number of respondents called for new and invigorated methods to build more sustainable social relations through developing mutual dialogue around common issues shared by Roma and non Roma.







# Chapter 4: Employment

## Introduction

It has been widely reported that many Roma across Europe face ongoing and entrenched exclusion. Recent years have seen significant policy activity and substantial financial resources allocated, at both European and Member State level, in attempts to improve the situation of Roma in relation to paid employment. Drawing directly on the experiences and accounts of policy actors operating at the national, regional and local levels within the 10 Roma MATRIX partner states this chapter considers key issues in respect of the effectiveness of existing policy and practice in promoting and sustaining paid work among Roma.

The issue of persistent anti-Roma sentiment among many employers and wider non Roma populations is highlighted as one of the foremost barriers that prevents many Roma from entering the world of work on an equal footing to their non Roma counterparts. Whilst the limited educational achievement of significant numbers of Roma young people is acknowledged as a substantial barrier that prevents many from entering the more highly skilled sectors of the paid labour market, the limitations of schemes that promote educational attainment and training in securing meaningful and sustained employment opportunities for Roma are noted.

Discussions also highlight the limitations within many training and employment programmes that are routinely made available to Roma. Whilst some examples of good practice are evident, much of the training on offer appears to typically steer Roma towards specific job opportunities. The shortcomings of policies that promote the community mediator role and the use of 'public works' schemes as suitable employment and training for Roma are also noted.

## Discrimination

Across all 10 Roma MATRIX partner states, respondents consistently reported that entrenched anti-Roma sentiments and endemic discriminatory practices among majority populations seriously undermined the effectiveness of policies and programmes intended to promote Roma inclusion in the workplace,

*No one says, 'I'm not employing you because you are a Gypsy'... There have been some court cases and nobody would take a risk now to do that directly... especially when they can tell by your appearance that you are a Roma. As the joke in Russia says: if you are a negro you will be identified as such immediately. So this joke goes for the Roma (BG8, official, national government, non Roma, Bulgaria)*

As noted above, the implementation of anti-discrimination policies appears to have had some impact. Respondents reported that examples of overt discrimination and open hostility on the part of employers were limited. That said, in many Roma MATRIX partner states the unintended effect of the implementation of equality and anti-discrimination policies appears to have helped create an environment whereby prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory practices have become less transparent rather than diminished or confronted. Evidence suggest racist, anti-Roma practices, which draw on a range of physical, cultural and geographic markers of difference to deny Roma applicants paid work remain commonplace,

*Hidden discrimination is widespread and I have suffered from it as well. In smaller towns and villages and municipalities, people know each other. When you apply for a job, even if your appearance does not show which ethnic group you belong to, when they look at your identity card and they see your address and that you live in the Roma neighbourhoods, you are immediately eliminated from the candidates list. Our district is at the top of Roma university graduates. However it is also at the top for young people with higher education who have left the country or are jobless (BG2, official, local government, unassigned, Bulgaria)*

*There was a vacancy for a job at the fish pond and [name]...he's not at all like me, he is blonde and blue eyed, fair complexion so you can't tell he is a Roma just by looking at him. But when he started filling in the documents they saw the address where he lived. They said 'Thank you, we will call you back' and they never did. There is no open straightforward discrimination, but when they see the address...there are lots of cases (BG5, worker, local NGO, unassigned, Bulgaria)*

*The main obstacle concerns the prejudice and not the skills of the individual. This is often tied to the reality of the Roma settlement that has a specific address that is usually well known for all of the bigger settlements. So individuals when they look for a job they don't say they are Roma or they are from that settlement. At the moment that they show their ID the address is there. So the employer knows that he is coming from a Roma settlement and that's it. That is the barrier, because most of the time the job seeking process just ends there (IT6A, Director, national NGO, non Roma, Italy)*

*Obviously my life in many situations would be completely different if I weren't Roma...First I ask if the job is available. They say it is, once I say I am [Roma surname] they say well it's not that free anymore and in the end it's not at all. Or sometimes when I send an email and maybe they can't recognise the name, when they see me again they change their mind. This is something that happens...They never reach the stage of discussing skills or qualifications. I am simply rejected on that basis immediately (CZ8A, worker, local NGO, non Roma, Czech Republic)*

The data above are taken from three countries but it needs to be emphasised that widespread anti-discrimination was frequently and routinely cited by a multitude of respondents at both national and local levels across all the Roma MATRIX partner states. For example, in Poland, PL1 (worker,

national NGO, non Roma, Poland) and PL3 (policy maker, national government, non-Roma, Poland) both stated unambiguously that the key reason Roma did not get work was because of prejudice within the wider population. PL3 (policy maker, national government, non Roma, Poland) noted that Roma were, '*the most disliked ethnic minority in Poland*' due to a widespread perception that Roma were workshy. Similar issues were highlighted by respondents, in Greece, Hungary Italy, Slovakia, Romania, Spain and the UK. The quotation below, spoken through an interpreter, offers a graphic illustration of the primacy and prevalence of anti Roma discrimination in structuring and maintaining the exclusion of many Roma from paid employment.,

*She tried to look for a job in a salon, but it was not meant to be. She said, while she was searching for a job she participated in a [name] summer camp and she was some kind of a leader there in the kitchen. She's had a lot of problems finding a job. She posted some announcements on the internet. For instance, they called her from [burger restaurant]. She went on Tuesday but unfortunately they hired on Monday, someone else. There was a problem in communication. At [name] supermarket the same. Of course there were other employers who did not answer to her calls. She mentioned that this did not happen because she is a Roma person. Because it was not meant to be (RO2, care leaver, Roma, Romania).*

RO2 is clearly willing to give prospective employers the benefit of the doubt in reaching their decisions not to offer her work. Unfortunately, the evidence offered by the majority of respondents interviewed suggests her confidence in receiving equal treatment may be misplaced. IT4's statement represents a perhaps more matter-of-fact reading of the wider, contemporary situation,

*To put it bluntly, the only chance Roma have to get a job is by hiding their identity. Those who cannot for visible reasons, put it this way using the Canadian terminology, they have no chance, period (IT4, elected representative, national government, non Roma, Italy)*

## Education and training

Respondents regularly highlighted early school exit and limited educational attainment as central to disproportionately high levels of unemployment among Roma communities. However as the data below illustrates, whilst such factors act as significant barriers to Roma employment, policies that singularly promote education and training will remain ineffective where widespread anti-Gypsyism prevails,

*I have heard myself that, 'What a 'decent' woman [I am], what a pity she's Gypsy' [laughs]. So you aren't alright even if you have studied and have great training, and then if you are poor and have fallen, you are really not right at all (HG9, activist, local NGO, Roma, Hungary)*

*My granddaughter; she is a lawyer. But no-one would employ her; she has been submitting documents and documents, applying for jobs and nobody will take her. I have three other grandchildren who have also graduated university and they are discriminated and they are unemployed (BG10, worker, national NGO, Roma, Bulgaria)*

*He quotes an example of a lady from Ostrava who, out of her eight children. Two of her sons went to school and they got this apprenticeship, degree, or something like that, and they still couldn't find a job, so she asked him, 'What is our motivation to educate our children when they will still be denied jobs because they are Roma?' (CZ1, senior manager, national NGO, non Roma, Czech Republic)*

A range of Roma focused employment and training programmes were evident. Responsibility for their delivery was routinely devolved to NGOs or local municipal actors in line with the differing national policy frameworks that operated in the Roma MATRIX partner states. Limited examples of success - *'It's difficult, but despite all the issue we succeeded, 19 or 20 employees up to now. The jobs are not very high. It is a start'* (RO4A\_\_B\_C, workers, national NGO, mixed group, Romania) and good training practices were noted. These included placements and internships with NGOs and municipal authorities in the UK and Italy, media training in the Czech Republic and a police scholarship scheme in Hungary. However, much on offer was viewed as ineffective and subject to wide ranging criticisms from a considerable number of respondents. Critics commonly noted a host of unambitious training programmes limited to manual work and/or relatively low skilled tasks stereotypically associated with Roma employment such as agricultural work, cleaning, waste management/recycling and basket weaving. As SK2 noted, *'We need masons, but we need higher education. We need doctors... teachers'* (SK2, member, local church, Roma, Slovakia). Elsewhere, ingrained prejudicial practices by employment office administrators were noted. For example, *'They see a Roma, a Gypsy person and then there is no job'* (PL12, Mother, Roma, Poland). Additionally, available training was criticised for serving providers' interests rather

than enhancing the employment opportunities of trainees,

*[What] was being offered to people continuously. Useless pieces of paper that cannot move you onto the labour market' (UK12, worker, national NGO, non Roma, United Kingdom)*

*They are introducing programmes which actually produce unemployed people and that is why we have this crisis. We don't have productivity, we don't train to find a job, we just train them. We use the money from Europe and all these national resources to organise programmes but we don't have any provisions for the future of the trainees (GR6, elected representative, local government, unassigned, Greece)*

*We had programmes for promoting employment before and new placements...Like apprenticeships, that was a failure. People would not hire Roma (GR1, civil servant, national government, non Roma, Greece)*

*There are a lot of projects and training that are being advertised in this field, but as I have told you, you know, I take a look and I see that it's only a theoretical project. If I see that I am just not interested, really, because these are useless. When you have all these trainings and projects that are theoretical, the implementing agencies are the only ones that benefit from it (SK4, local elected official, non Roma, Slovakia)*

## Working worlds

The generic term 'Roma' encompasses a diversity of experiences and, in spite of the dual barriers of widespread discrimination and limited educational opportunities noted above, many Roma are in paid work. Indeed, examples of Roma people successfully working and studying in a variety of roles across all sections of the paid labour market feature as part of the wider Roma MATRIX project (see <https://romamatrix.eu/>) and have been celebrated elsewhere in campaigns designed to challenge persistent negative stereotypes of Roma as disinterested in paid work (see Wyatt/FISP, 2005).

Whilst, it is clear that numerous individual Roma have been successful in progressing their varied careers - e.g. BG3, (local police officer, non Roma, Bulgaria) noted that a Roma person had become a high ranking police officer) - such cases continue to be exceptions within working worlds, that for many Roma, are characterised by low paid, low status employment. Discrimination does not end once Roma enter paid work and Roma are routinely *'left with the jobs that nobody else*

wants' (BG5, worker, local NGO, unassigned, Bulgaria). Many also face ongoing resentment in the workplace and systematic disadvantage in respect of any ensuing promotion and training opportunities ((ES2, official, national government, non Roma, Spain); issues which are neatly encapsulated in the account below,

*I wanted the job which I have right now. There were a couple of people who couldn't accept the fact... [they believed that I] would not be able to be as effective as a Roma person and that it should have been filled by somebody who is not Roma. I am perhaps better educated. I also should say about myself that I finished my high school when I was eighteen and I found a job as an administrator at a multi-national company and worked there. Even there, what I got from the non Roma was, 'Why is it that she got this job as a Roma? She probably can't even read, not to speak of handling a computer'. I had to work three times as hard, and I still feel that I have to work three times as hard at my current position for the people who are my colleagues to accept me (HG6, administrator, local government, Roma, Hungary)*

In many Roma MATRIX partner states Roma are consistently consigned to low paid and often what are effectively, ethnically segregated sectors of paid labour markets. The example taken from Romania, outlined below, typifies the situations in which many Roma people are employed. The company in question offers refuse collection and highway maintenance services to a range of public and private clients. Roma are absent from more highly skilled jobs within the company and work largely alongside other Roma employees,

*The big [employment] pool is Roma people. They earn very little, the minimum salary package, but they get some bonuses, night bonuses extra hours and things like this. Moreover the package is 100% legal, they pay contributions to the state, they are entitled to healthcare, and other services...In terms of workers without qualifications, the majority are Roma. There are [number] employees, both with qualifications and no qualifications. All the jobs which require some form of qualifications, such as driver, mechanic, or an accountant, there are very few Roma, and not because they do not want to hire them but because they do not apply for these positions, the only solution would be education (RO5A, employer, regional city, non Roma, Romania)*

Elsewhere respondents similarly highlighted that many Roma were commonly engaged in a variety of low status tasks. The informal collection of scrap metal or other goods was noted in several countries as typical 'Roma' work. Other sectors of employment cited by respondents from across the Roma MATRIX partner countries as routinely populated by and, suitable for, Roma were; agriculture, routine manufacturing, retail, arts and crafts, cleaning, care work and community mediation (see further discussions below). Regardless of the particular sector, work was frequently undertaken in segregated settings where Roma were employed to work alongside other Roma rather than with their non Roma counterparts. Data from the UK is illustrative of how practices of segregation, discrimination and disadvantage adapt over time and space but continue to structure the individual experiences of many Roma workers in new settings,

*There seems to be big concentrations of Roma who work at particular workplaces, where there may well be someone who is a Roma who is a supervisor...It seems to be universally agency work, universally casualised. You are called as and when you are required. They have no contact with the public. So whether it's in food distribution, catering and cleaning, linguistic skills are only needed to be able to understand instructions and specific requirements...[Roma have] got no contact with the public and therefore no need for linguistic competence (UK10, worker, national NGO, non Roma, United Kingdom)*

*I see that there are loads of Roma unemployed. I personally think that the reason might be that obviously most of the migrant workers work through employment agencies on temporary contracts. Most employment agencies are now staffed by Polish and Lithuanian employees. Obviously, those Polish and Lithuanian employees they also [are] against the gypsy, Roma...They only pick their own kind of countrymen, like Polish workers or Lithuanian. There is not a big kind of demand for Roma in place (UK8, representative, national NGO, Roma, United Kingdom)*

The presence of a significantly sized Roma community is a relatively new phenomenon in the UK with the majority of Roma now resident in the UK initially entering as labour migrants following expansion of the EU since 2004. Nonetheless, levels of integration into the wider UK labour market workplace appear limited. Whilst Roma workers share common insecurities with other



migrant workers from Central and Eastern European Member States, in respect of their terms and conditions, it would appear that they also face further compound employment disadvantages shaped by their Roma identity.

## Community mediators

The positive potential of training and employing Roma to become mediators to enhance the engagement of the Roma community with service providers and the wider non Roma population more generally was highlighted by respondents in eight Roma MATRIX partner states i.e. Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. Indeed, several respondents were responsible for initiating and/or had received funding to implement Roma mediator programmes in a variety of sectors including, healthcare, employment, education and law enforcement. Once trained, mediators are tasked with acting as a conduit between service providers and the Roma community. Arguably, they are also seen by some policymakers and actors as valuable role models who are able to demonstrate, through their work, the benefits of education, paid employment and interaction between Roma and non Roma people. BG8 (national civil servant, non Roma, Bulgaria), believed that whilst the actual number of mediator jobs created was limited, the introduction of mediator programmes had a profound and transformative effect on employment policies and had pushed policymakers to be more proactive in their attempts to improve employment opportunities among Roma and other marginalised groups. BG4 emphasised similar views and also pointed to mediators potentially enhancing the wider social inclusion of Roma,

*We are implementing a project [name], which focuses on the creation of the labour mediators. We've worked with vulnerable groups, not only Roma...We also have an especially appointed Roma mediator...This is a person who feels he is close to the problems of this group. He speaks their language as well. Basically, the role of this mediator is to go to the local communities and local neighbourhoods and to activate those people who are de facto unemployed, but who are not registered, because this will help them either find a job or the agency can help them improve their qualifications - especially if they have a low educational level. Also by registering, it will help them escape the closed community...We do not differentiate by the ethnic group or the self-identification of people by religion, ethnic group or origin. Our sole purpose is to help them find a job (BG4, labour mediation official, local government, non Roma, Bulgaria)*

Similar positive views were expressed elsewhere. In Slovakia, SK8 (SK8, official, national government, non Roma, Slovakia) detailed a scheme, instigated as part of the national action plan for the decade of Roma inclusion, which enabled the employment of teaching assistants to act as intermediaries between schools and the parents of Roma or other disadvantaged pupils. In Spain, ES8 likewise spoke of their mediator programme promoting more constructive cross community relations, rights awareness and gender equality across a range of fields,

*It's mainly women, but we have two men... We have hired seven women mediators. They work in five areas or axis as they call them; health, education/success at school, gender promotion and employment training, neighbourhood living together and equal treatment... We created this figure of the mediator. So we found a niche of employment for men and women who were leaders. We thought that they could work along and access these areas that we thought were fundamental. So that they could be their role model for the new generations. When we did the first mediators course I had to push them so that they would do it. At the third course, there was seventy people applying and we selected fifteen (ES8, senior worker, national NGO, unassigned, Spain)*

The capacity for policies that establish mediator training programmes to provide employment opportunities for some individual Roma, whilst simultaneously improving awareness and access to work and welfare support services among wider Roma communities, should not be ignored. Nonetheless, the limitations of such programmes were powerfully expressed by several respondents,

*The training, and about rights, things missing from my own basic education, I learnt through ROMED...I'm still in the process of learning...It's not that we don't have support from the Roma. [But] Roma mediators, or any mediators, are not recognised, it has no consequence when we're going outside of the camp...As a Roma mediator, it means nothing to them. It doesn't mean anything. So when I go to mediate for council reasons or any other public administrative issues, that doesn't count for anything so there's nothing official to give weight to that. In here [the Roma camp] it has some weighting, but outside it doesn't have anything (GR14, mediator, local NGO, Roma, Greece)*

In light of such criticisms the earlier description of the mediator role as 'niche employment' for Roma (see quotation from ES8 above), appears particularly pertinent. Beyond their immediate working environment it would seem that, in some circumstances, the role of the Roma mediator is not taken seriously by other more powerful policy actors. Such complaints may be indicative of the wider marginalisation of Roma inclusion policy more generally, especially in times of economic crisis. In Greece GR5 noted,

*Mediators were a very serious option of the Greek state. People from minorities have a bad relation with what we call structured state. So the mediator was invited to play a very important role. He would bring those people closer. Actually, he would talk to them about their rights, so they had better access to services for those people who he was representing. They never thought that this mediator would exclude them or was discriminating against them. But when the crisis started in our country, then everything was cut. There was a horizontal policy, actually, bulldozing everything (GR5, elected official, local government, non Roma, Greece)*

Allied to this, as the recession took hold and unemployment grew among the wider population the same respondent also noted that the criteria for employing Roma mediators became more stringent and required applicants to have formal qualifications. This approach favoured more highly educated non Roma candidates and simultaneously excluded the majority of Roma applicants. In many cases this policy shift saw non Roma candidates, who lacked both the language capabilities and trust required to effectively implement the role, employed at the expense of Roma. A similar complaint was also raised by a Slovakian respondent,

*A good example would be the teaching assistants...it was taken as a good idea that Roma teaching assistants should speak Roma language and they should come from Roma communities and of course, they were some, they didn't have to have exactly the right qualification but there was some leeway...And then the qualification issue surfaced (SK9, representative, national NGO, Roma, Slovakia)*

The respondent went on to detail how, as the state became involved in the rolling out and funding the teaching assistant programme it also formalised the recruitment processes and educational requirements, which inadvertently disadvantaged Roma. Both are examples of policy which initially allowed an element of positive discrimination to operate in respect of the recruitment to the specific role of Roma community mediator. For whatever reason, both schemes appear to have

contravened employment regulations designed, in principle, to promote meritocracy and formal equality of opportunity by ensuring the best qualified candidate is hired. Unfortunately, in practice, this approach appears to be working to further marginalise already disadvantaged Roma from successfully applying for work, even in the 'niche' occupation of Roma mediator.

## 'Activating' Roma through public works

One further aspect of employment and training made available to Roma in certain locations requires comment. The use of 'public works' that link receipt of social assistance benefit to work activity in local communities was a significant feature of the training/employment made available to Roma in Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia. These publicly subsidised training and job schemes were routinely financed by national funds with administration and delivery devolved down to the level of local authorities or individual Mayors. This in effect turns the local state into the employer of last resort and arguably also helps conceal true levels of unemployment among Roma populations. The work and training on offer within such public works schemes was often very limited in its scope and value. Given the lack of wider employment opportunities, some respondents viewed such schemes positively. However, others saw these locally implemented schemes, which regularly employed an overwhelmingly Roma workforce, as further maintaining the status quo by cementing both Roma's dependency on public welfare and the ability of local Mayors to exercise control over them,

*It's a great tool to political power...Some of them [Mayors] are using that as a tool for disciplining some for the better. They say that, if you don't send your children to the school you don't get activation work (SK6, worker, national NGO, non Roma, Slovakia)*

*I don't really see any initiatives that would lead the Roma back to the primary job market, because obviously the public works is just a dead end (HG12, worker, national NGO, unassigned, Hungary)*

*I'm currently employed in the municipal company [name] which is the garbage collection and removal company and I am responsible for the socially vulnerable group of people who are required to work 14 days every month to be able to receive social allowances...Those that I'm in charge of, and my other colleagues are in charge of, you can say 90 per cent are Roma. This month I have 22 people, 20 of them are Roma (BG5, worker, local NGO, unassigned, Bulgaria)*

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The work and training on offer within such public works schemes was often viewed as being very limited in its scope and long-term value. Beyond this criticism, the wider appropriateness of employment schemes which make continued receipt of basic social assistance benefits contingent on the often non-negotiable performance of specified public works needs to be considered.

## Conclusion

Entrenched and endemic anti-Roma discrimination and prejudicial practices within majority non Roma populations continue to be the most significant barrier inhibiting Roma's inclusion in the paid labour market. Early school exit and the limited educational attainment of many Roma negatively impact on many Roma employment opportunities and policies to promote and sustain education achievement should be strongly supported. However, it is clear that any such policies will remain ineffective whilst widespread anti-Gypsyism prevails. Criticisms of the effectiveness of existing policies and programmes designed to improve the participation and experiences of Roma in the paid labour market need to acknowledge the often challenging contemporary social and economic situations in which they are operationalised. In order to fully develop the existing talents and skills within the Roma community, future policies focused on enhancing their work opportunities must ensure the availability of a wider range of programmes that look beyond the low skilled or manual training that currently dominates provision. Whilst some examples of good policy and practice are evident, many existing programmes designed to overcome Roma social exclusion in the workplace are limited in their reach, ambition and success.

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# Chapter 5: Reporting and redress mechanisms

## Introduction

While all EU member states have translated EU anti-discrimination directives into national law since 2000, there is official recognition that anti-Gypsyism has proved particularly resistant to legal sanctions. As a consequence, appraising the effectiveness of policies and mechanisms in providing reliable, trusted and reasonably accessible reporting routes for Roma whose rights have been breached is critical to understanding why this is the case. Satisfactory reporting is an essential component to monitoring both the forms and extent of discrimination, at local, national and at European level.

An indispensable precursor to effective reporting is ensuring widespread and comprehensive awareness of such mechanisms, but equally progress is reliant on a serious commitment at all levels of government; to operationalise training, and resources (both human and financial) but also to provide vocal political and civic leadership and support for the agenda. This research indicates that the lack of these basic foundations was preventing Roma from coming forward to report discrimination in the first place. In part this was because they had little faith they would be taken seriously – or worse that reporting would have negative repercussions and lead to further harm. Just as detrimental was evidence that the very agencies and officials charged with operationalising reporting and redress mechanisms were hostile to the agenda, or worse were perpetrators of discrimination themselves.

The chapter does not consider the nature, or extent of discrimination experienced by Roma, or whether the situation is improving or deteriorating, all which has been amply documented elsewhere (FRA 2009, 2011, 2012, European Commission 2012). Rather, our interviews aimed to capture the knowledge and experiences of national and local officials, NGO workers and Roma citizens themselves and their attempts to implement and utilise reporting and redress mechanisms, and any

barriers they have found. Where relevant, evidence is supported by data from the Roma Matrix Country Reports (2014), which were commissioned as part of the evidence base for the project.

A subordinate objective was to understand how concepts such as discrimination, human rights and redress were understood across the Roma MATRIX partner states. The concept of redress used is inclusive, encompassing both legal (such as the court system) and non-legal options, such as mediation. Interviewees included police officers, lawyers, elected politicians and civil servants as well as representatives of national equality and regulatory bodies. These respondents were complemented by NGO workers, many of whom were Roma citizens.

## Reporting

Respondents in all countries highlighted that a variety of reporting mechanisms were available through formal routes such as police, third parties such as NGOs, or via purpose made reporting systems which did not require face to face contact with services. Interviewees in Hungary, Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Italy and the UK all stated that reporting could be done directly to the relevant national agencies with responsibility for equality or anti-discrimination. In Greece, Spain, Italy, the Czech Republic and the UK, for example, there were dedicated phone lines for citizens to call, alongside internet / email based reporting systems or the option to walk into reporting centres.

Reporting directly to the police was often highlighted as an initial option but was usually seen as ineffective and problematic. A local elected official in Greece commented that 'more specifically, in (name of municipality), the relation between Roma and police, well, is non-existent.' (GR5, local elected representative, non Roma, Greece) and a national government official in Italy described how Roma had 'a very difficult relationship with the Police Forces' (IT9, official, national government, non Roma, Italy). This relationship was often characterised as a lack of

trust, a factor explored in more depth below. However there were examples of pro-active approaches to ameliorate this situation. A Spanish interviewee noted,

*We have been working since 2010 on a platform which is to make police aware of how to protect victims of discrimination. So in this platform there were representatives of social services, as well as organisations which provide direct services to the victims. For example, next week we are having a two day training with the chiefs of police who work in the municipal police in (name of large city) (ES3B, senior worker, national NGO, unassigned, Spain)*

This bore comparison with other programmes in Greece and Italy aimed at training police. Similarly, a respondent based in a Polish NGO described a project in 2013 to train those officials at the State Prosecutor's Office who had a dedicated focus on racist/xenophobic incidents. Training for police on human rights and racially motivated violence was also noted in Slovakia (Lajčáková J. (2014) pg.14). A UK based researcher stated that, while Roma were much less likely to report racial discrimination, generally,

*...I found it was being treated seriously by the police. You are going to get instances of course where it's not. Overall, they would put the right mechanisms in place if someone said that they thought there was a racial motivation as part of the crime itself (UK9, worker, national NGO, non Roma, United Kingdom)*

Another UK based NGO worker added: 'I think they (the police) are doing a great job. The police here are really working with us as an organisation (UK7, community development worker, local NGO, Roma, United Kingdom).' This view was supported by a British police officer,

*I have to say that obviously, I work in the police and I know that there is hate crime reporting system is absolutely brilliant and works very well. That is my personal opinion and I've seen it work and lots of people have reported and not only Roma but lots of people that reported hate crime. Actually, got their justice and the perpetrator was taken to court and it had been taken very seriously'. (UK8, representative, national NGO, Roma, United Kingdom)*

The interviewee did add, however, that under-reporting was a chronic problem because of the reluctance of Roma to report.

In several Roma MATRIX partner states, nationwide networks had been established to facilitate reporting. A local authority official in rural Bulgaria (BG2) explained that where complaints of discriminatory behaviour were received the usual procedure was to refer the person to the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, which operated 18 regional offices across the country. The Hungarian Equal Treatment Authority had recently opened offices in every county in the country. In Spain, the Network of Centres for Discrimination operated 19 dedicated offices across the country, in addition to 73 other contact points in the offices of partner agencies, where individuals could report suspected discrimination. An Italian respondent noted several municipalities had 'anti-discrimination focal point offices, places where you can report' (IT4, elected representative, national government, non Roma, Italy). Several respondents in the UK referred to the system of third party hate crime reporting systems, (which relies on a partnership between police and community based organisations) and online systems such as the police owned 'True Vision' software. While opinions varied on how effective this was, from 'useless' to 'brilliant', the evidence suggested that positive outcomes were far more likely with intensive support from NGOs than if individuals took complaints forward themselves, whether formally or informally. This was echoed in Spain, where a government official stated that,

*I know that the number of Roma people asking for assistance is very high. Especially because the main NGO commissioned for providing this job is (name of Roma focused organisation) so any case of discrimination that they come along in their current or day to day work, they make him or her go to this system, to this network of centres. (ES2, official, national government, non Roma, Spain)*

However, examples of dedicated initiatives aimed at encouraging Roma themselves to report more were uncommon. In the UK, one NGO had funded a racial justice project which ran training sessions for community members to become community advocates, part of which involved how to make complaints of discrimination. (UK12, worker, national NGO, non Roma, United Kingdom)

This research suggests the development of the civil society / NGO sector was a critical factor in the reporting process for three reasons. Firstly, for many NGOs involved in legal representation and/or human rights advocacy, Roma constituted the overwhelming proportion of their clients. Secondly, in most countries, NGOs were either formally tasked with managing the practical delivery of anti-discrimination (including reporting and recording of discriminatory incidents) or were

informally recognised as fulfilling this role. As the quote above illustrates, the Spanish government had commissioned a national NGO to manage its Network of Centres for Discrimination, and they in turn had contracted another six NGOs to help provide the service. Finally, in many places NGOs were trusted more than the official authorities to handle the data in the first place.

In Italy, one respondent commented that 'there is a very vivid NGO environment which helps' before adding that the development of human rights legal support was 'more developed than you might think. There is at least three types of associations who are quite active and very good'. (IT4, elected representative, national government, non Roma, Italy). The role of NGOs in reporting was acknowledged by government officials in Bulgaria (BG6), the UK (UK11A\_B), the Czech Republic (CZ2 and CZ6) and in Poland,

*If the complaints do come in, they are made on behalf of NGOs that represent Roma communities, and these can be Roma-led NGOs but also non-Roma, just generic NGOs that work for human rights. (PL4, official, national government, non Roma, Poland)*

*As far as practice is concerned, what we can do, if discrimination cases happen, is we would turn to NGOs or they would turn to the social workers of the district in municipalities and then also NGOs have these special phone lines where you can complain about discrimination. (CZ6, civil servant, local government, non Roma, Czech Republic)*

When asked to explain what processes were available for Roma wishing to report discrimination, a police official in rural Hungary explained that 'there are a number of Roma organisations that also take up the case, the cause of the Roma discrimination'. (HG8, local police officer, non Roma, Hungary)

*These examples demonstrate the importance of partnership between governmental agencies and NGOs. (see below). A reliance on mediators to facilitate reporting was identified in several countries, but such work was not necessarily part of the mediator's official job role (often the posts were focused on employment, education or health). As a Bulgarian respondent stated,*

*My impression is that these programmes are both very successful because more and more people turn to them not only on health issues or employment issues; they talk to them about anything. So these people actually consult, provide advice not only on*

*health and employment issues. They provide all sorts of information about the rights and obligations of the Roma people. Because Roma people don't know how to defend their rights, they get advice, how to resolve an issue in a legal way. (BG2, official, local government, unassigned, Bulgaria)*

A similar picture was observable in Greece. When asked about how Roma could find out about their rights when it came to discrimination a senior government official described how the workers at the network of social medical centres were the critical intermediary,

*Now, as far as the Roma are concerned, there are what we call mediators.... The mediators translate all this to the Roma people....In the medical centres that we have in different areas in Greece... we have Roma mediators who explain all this to them. (GR15A, official, national government, non Roma, Greece)*

Civil society organisations often acted as de facto agents of reporting through such roles, although it is important to note that state officials also fulfilled this role, even where this was outside their formal remit. In many instances these mediators were themselves Roma, having been appointed as part of employment or inclusion programmes, which partly explains their popularity in reporting as 'trusted' figures.

The effectiveness of 'outsourcing' reporting to NGOs was to some extent related to the resources available to the national agency. The reduction in state funding to the latter could impact severely on NGOs themselves and evidence suggests it poses a serious risk of reduced reporting and redress. As a UK representative commented,

*We used to fund organisations to carry out some of this work for us. When we can take it strategically, we can send them on to another organisation that could assist, basically, yes. We are no longer funding them (sic) organisations and some of them organisations are no longer around like, law centres, CABs basically, yes. CABs tend to still, you know, still be there. But a lot of the law centres are no longer around. (UK11A, equality representative, national agency, non Roma, United Kingdom)*

*Similarly, a Greek interviewee spoke about the reduction in the number of investigations that had occurred since the beginning of severe austerity measures from 2010 onwards,*

*...in the old days, when we had more money, we had a lot of cases or significant cases in the countryside..... We were co-ordinating things and we were doing something like an open public day for every sort of case that wants to be reported. (GR10, central government official, non Roma, Greece)*

However other factors acted as deterrents. For many respondents, low literacy & low awareness were crucial factors inhibiting more complainants from coming forward. In practical terms, literacy requirements acted as a significant barrier to those wishing to report discrimination. A Bulgarian municipal official stated that he could only act if he received an official letter by email or post (BG2), but there was evidence that getting to this stage this could be problematic. As both Czech and Greek respondents commented,

*they can sometimes help these people (Roma) like, for example, to read some official documents and interpret what they really mean, what they should next and so on.... (CZ6, civil servant, local government, non Roma, Czech Republic)*

*If we have administrative cases where people believe that they have suffered discrimination, they can go to the Ombudsman, but in order even to go there you have to be able to write down the facts. (GR7, legal representative, local municipality, unassigned, Greece)*

*As this quote implies, a preliminary challenge for many Roma was to know what to do and where to go. Two separate Polish interviewees (one NGO, one government) explained,*

*...the biggest problem is that ...The Roma people don't understand the procedures.....and they simply cannot navigate the system of bureaucracy. So, this sort of stops them from even trying to. (PL8, leader, local NGO, Roma, Poland)*

*So specifically in Roma communities, what the office observes is that there is a very low awareness of their own rights as citizens and also a very limited knowledge about places where they can seek assistance. In general, it's very, very low. (PL4, official, national government, non Roma, Poland)*

*A senior Italian government official described the network of municipal focal points as not particularly effective because,*

*...there is very little awareness of their existence, but still, they exist.... Then there is a national agency which is also serving as a reporting authority that you can theoretically report to them, but it's too hard and people don't know. (IT4, elected representative, national government, non Roma, Italy)*

This was similar to the Czech Republic where an interviewee stated,

*In the vast majority of cases no discrimination would be reported, even if it happened and that it often happens they are not even aware of it. (CZ8A, worker, local NGO, non Roma, Czech Republic)*

A Hungarian respondent noted that while theoretically Roma could go to the Ombudsman or the Equal Treatment Authority to report or record discrimination, in practice 'they don't have the appropriate knowledge or information themselves to be able to do so.' (HG14A, lawyer, national NGO, Roma, Hungary). This was confirmed by a Polish NGO worker,

*Of course very often they don't know that they can report something, but also even if they knew it would be difficult for them because they feel or the state makes them feel that they are illegal, so of course their access to justice, let's say very broadly, and to security is very, very limited of course. (PL1, worker, national NGO, non Roma, Poland)*

Often this was affirmed by individual Roma respondents. A Polish Roma woman complained,

*First she doesn't even know where to go, there's nowhere, where would she go? She doesn't know why but she would definitely not talk to these kind of official channels. (PL13, community member, local municipality, Roma, Poland)*

As the last but one quote implies, while ostensible structures for reporting were in place, respondents indicated that it was often the officials charged with handling complaints that obstructed Roma. A Polish interviewee described how Roma people were usually treated with disrespect and deliberate frustration by officials who pretended not to understand them (PL8). Similarly one Slovak Roma commented,



*The main point was that, you can go to the police and they will receive you, but it doesn't go well for them. They have to receive you. They have to listen to what you are saying. It doesn't go further. (SK2A, member, local church, Roma, Slovakia)*

In several states, this was authenticated when officials based at reporting sites indicated negative views of Roma. After stating that he could say with certainty that the police he commanded 'would not only not dare but do not also want to, they wouldn't dare to indulge in any kind of discrimination' a Hungarian police officer remarked,

*There are specific types of crime which they (Roma) commit. It mainly comes from their way of life and their habits and their customs or their culture. (HG8, local police officer, non Roma, Hungary)*

Likewise a Greek representative explained that 'we need to say here that delinquency is in the nature of Roma'. (GR5, elected official, local government, non Roma, Greece). Clearly such opinions influence the prospect of improved reporting even if adequate structures exist.

The extra barriers faced by migrant Roma communities were observed by several interviewees. A Spanish government official noted that it was more challenging to work with migrant Roma than indigenous Gitanos, partly because the situation was far more complicated for the former (ES2). A UK worker and an Italian official both mentioned that language could form an initial barrier,

*But, with reporting stuff it's really tough for Roma people to pick the phone up with no English. (UK3A, senior representative, local NGO, Roma, United Kingdom)*

*Of course, lawyers who speak Italian and sometimes in most cases they don't speak Italian very well. (IT9, official, national government, non Roma, Italy)*

Nevertheless, this could also apply to Roma whose main language was Romani. As one Slovak Roma interviewee commented,

*The trouble with Roma people, many Roma people they hardly speak Slovak. (SK2B, member, local church, Roma, Slovakia)*

This was also reported in Poland. Conversely, a contributory factor was also the unwillingness of Roma themselves to involve outside agencies in matters. A Spanish government official indicated that the traditional method of solving issues was through a form of internal mediation by bringing

such matters to community elders, while a Polish Roma woman stated,

*Actually in the Romani tradition one of the things is not to cooperate with the police. So, police is not a place where you have a small, minor dispute and you call the police or to complain. (PL13, community member, local municipality, Roma, Poland)*

One factor behind this reluctance noted by interviewees (e.g. PL4) was that the tenuous and often informal nature of employment, accommodation, and even irregularities in status (especially for migrant Roma) deterred Roma from coming forward lest the authorities start investigations into other areas of their lives. However, there was caution that the solution lay simply in ensuring better awareness. Several respondents (including Roma) highlighted that discrimination was so long standing and prevalent that it had been normalised by Roma to the extent there was little value seen in reporting incidents,

*If it is everyday discrimination, this is considered even by themselves as granted and nobody pays attention to it. (GR9, official, central government, non Roma, Greece)*

While a UK respondent commented,

*They won't report it... They say it's normal. They say, I don't care, you know. As I say, in my eight year service I've never seen or heard of Roma person reporting hate crime. (UK8, representative, national NGO, Roma, United Kingdom)*

As the quotes indicate, such fatalism was overtly linked to the attitudes of the majority population, and their historical conduct towards Roma. The views of some public officials simply reflected these attitudes, and a chronic mistrust by Roma of authorities' ability to handle complaints of discrimination is hardly surprising. This was encapsulated by a Polish interviewee who commented,

*....what I can say is that from our perspective one of the most important problems is that Roma people don't report very often the anti-Roma incidents. They don't have trust in the police, the prosecutors, and we know that the Roma are discriminated the most often and they are attacked the most often. (PL2, Member, national NGO, non Roma, Poland)*

The issue of trust (or lack of it) was also highlighted in Slovakia (SK5) and the UK (UK8).

One measure of the effectiveness of policy is the numbers of reports actually being received. While the Spanish government official quoted above was

aware of many Roma seeking assistance, this was not replicated across other Roma Matrix partner states. The British based respondent (UK8) quoted above could not recollect a single case in eight years' service, while his Hungarian counterpart based in a rural micro-region stated that 'complaints are very, very few.' (HG8, local police officer, non Roma, Hungary) This was echoed in Poland by a senior government official who remarked: 'They almost never get complaints from individual Roma or Roma families'. (PL4, official, national government, non Roma, Poland)

As noted above, however, there was a regular stream of reports coming through particular channels, primarily via NGOs, whether they were formally tasked with reporting or not. But generally, perceptions of how effective the outcome would be hindered reporting in the first place.

*Very many people never actually lodge a complaint because they can see the end as not being effective. (HG11, senior official, Roma self-government, Roma, Hungary)*

*...even if the people know where to go and know who to contact, there is general disbelief that any sort of intervention, any sort of action, will actually result in a positive way for the person. (PL4, official, national government, non Roma, Poland)*

## Redress

All countries visited had some identifiable mechanism(s) by which individuals could seek redress if they felt they had suffered discrimination. These ranged from mediation to full court cases and appeal to state regulatory agencies. In most Member States, the national equality body could pursue cases on behalf of individuals, and there were NGOs who could support Roma citizen to seek redress, although the level of development of the rights based NGO sector as a whole often determined their collective ability to have an impact. There were several reports of NGOs working with the national equality body or bringing cases to their attention for further advancement. It is also important to add that Roma led organisations play a leading role in this agenda.

National agencies were key players, but there was a notable disparity in the powers available to such bodies across different Member States, with some restricted to matters pertaining to public services only, not the private sphere, or to civil / administrative, not criminal cases. An interviewee from a Polish national rights agency outlined how it 'only deals with public issues where the case of discrimination is from a public site' (PL4). In Bulgaria, The Commission for Protection Against

Discrimination is restricted to administrative violations, and criminal matters must be referred to the Prosecutor's Office (Todorov, T., 2014). This was something acknowledged as an issue by government officials in Greece, Italy, and Poland.

It was also clear that, whether new or well established, in many Member States' national equality bodies had experienced reductions in their budgets, sometimes dramatically. An official in the UK remarked that they received significant numbers of complaints from Roma, and anti-Gypsy discrimination was described 'massive' and 'never ending', but explained,

*we used to do a lot of first instance cases in the County Court, but obviously our funding has gone, basically, so we can't take as many. (UK11B, equality representative, national agency, non Roma, United Kingdom)*

There was a palpable sense from interviews of a division between 'flagship cases' and a much wider everyday problem where redress was not being achieved, and that this had been exacerbated by funding cuts. The Polish government rights agency, for example, had only brought one Roma case to court in the last 3 years, despite being aware of many more,

*So what the office actually specializes in is in cases that can set a precedent, so they operate in strategic litigations and these are usually a smaller number of cases of course, so the capacity issue is not so stretched. (PL4, official, national government, non Roma, Poland)*

But this focus on landmark cases was not just restricted to state organs. As a representative of a Spanish national NGO indicated,

*We don't have funds to represent many persons who have been discriminated against, but we do choose emblematic cases. (ES3A, senior worker, national NGO, unassigned, Spain)*

When it came to effective redress, therefore, financial resources played as big a part as they did in reporting. Related to this was the ability of organisations to provide some form of legal aid. (see cost of redress below). A Hungarian respondent described the legal aid service as very slow and bureaucratic. The Polish national rights agency could represent people in court but couldn't provide legal aid. Significant restrictions and reductions in legal aid were highlighted in the UK, Spain (ES2) and Slovakia (SK5). The positive role of regulatory / adjudicatory agencies when it came to seeking some form of resolution was highlighted in several states. Officials at a Greek government department

highlighted that if someone felt they had been treated unfairly, 'this is mainly the job of the Ombudsman, but if they don't do something and we know about it, we send a letter to the Ombudsman to take a position' (GR15A, official, national government, non Roma, Greece) and the Office of the Ombudsman was also commended as being effective by a Roma representative (GR7). A Czech respondent outlined a significant case regarding the rights of care leavers, noting that:

*...he went into court, got some legal help from the ombudsman and there was a court decision, a breakthrough that actually decided in his favour (CZ3A\_B\_C\_D, workers, national NGO, mixed group, Czech Republic)*

The Matrix Country Reports had previously confirmed this – the Bulgarian Ombudsman undertook 'serious efforts', concentrating overwhelmingly on Roma and had been involved in several high profile cases (Todorov T., 2014:17). In both the Czech Republic and Slovakia, the respective Ombudswoman/Public Defender of Rights were praised for their determination to pursue the agenda of Roma inclusion - although in both countries interviewees mentioned that they had very limited resources and their efforts had at times been undermined by other governmental officials. One interviewee described how, after publicly condemning police action against Roma, the Public Defender of Rights 'was almost blacklisted... she is now enemy, the minister of interior is on very bad relations with her' (SK10, civil society representative, national NGO, Roma, Slovakia). Nevertheless, this effectiveness was often attributed to the determination of specific individuals, rather than the intrinsic power of the office itself. Three separate Czech interviewees praised the Ombudswoman there, while the Slovak Public Defender of Human Rights, who was described as very devoted to the Roma issue but 'before that, nobody knew that we had such a position and that we had such office' (SK6, worker, national NGO, non Roma, Slovakia). In Italy, a senior official (IT9, official, national government, non Roma, Italy) noted that a deteriorating situation in the city of Rome had been ameliorated by the actions of a specific city councillor who had launched a plan to improve the social inclusion of Roma in the municipality. Similarly, a Spanish interviewee related the case of police misconduct against a Roma woman which was resolved because the state prosecutor in Barcelona 'specialised in racial crimes, race crimes, so we were lucky to have him implying this was the exception and not the norm.' (ES3A, senior worker, national NGO, unassigned, Spain).

In many ways, the activity of the offices of the respective Ombudsman (or similar institutions of appeal) represented a failure of normal routes for redress as it usually became involved when parties felt complaints had not been resolved elsewhere. On the whole, the judicial process was largely seen as an ineffective route to redress. While the option of using the formal court system was specified in all countries, common responses indicated that this option took far too long, was prohibitively expensive, and required expertise that was beyond an individual to manage. Added to which, belief in the judicial process itself was not always strong,

*For many people there is quite a low trust of people in courts in Slovakia, actually. So, people here in Slovakia basically are not used to fighting for their rights.' (SK5, policy officer, national NGO, unassigned, Slovakia)*

This touches on the culture of the judicial system. In Italy, an interviewee reported that the real issue lay in the cultural attitudes of lawyers and judges and their understanding of human rights,

*The question is of more of the cultural adequateness (sic) and preparation of judges starting from university, which is where I come from and when you train the lawyers to be, there is a lot more attention on Roman law than on Human Rights, which is ...at least a little problematic. They just don't think about this, they are not trained for that. Nothing at all in the process of education of judges, nor of continuing training of judges, nothing. You may find judges who are, for some reason, more open and sensitive than others—they are people and citizens after all. (IT4, elected representative, national government, non Roma, Italy)*

Another respondent in the Czech Republic believed that awareness raising and training on discrimination and anti-discrimination matters was essential because,

*...people here are reluctant to turn to the courts when they know that the judges don't see this as a big deal, or that it's not part of their agenda. (CZ8A, worker, local NGO, non Roma, Czech Republic)*

A lawyer in Greece verified this sentiment:

*We have too few convictions. Usually, judges are in favour of the policemen. The main question that the judges usually ask is what is the reason for him to do that against him? If you have any reason for the policeman [to discriminate]... (GR7, legal representative, local municipality, unassigned, Greece)*

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This goes to the heart of any attempt to develop a common approach to anti-discriminatory practice. As a Slovak interviewee suggested,

*We do organised training for judges in discrimination legislation, funded by the (name of European think tank) and proved to be helpful. I think the judges should be educated more and more in this regard. (SK5, policy officer, national NGO, unassigned, Slovakia)*

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Similar training for prosecutors was identified in Poland (PL2). Unsurprisingly, respondents reported that the establishment of case law in relation to discrimination against Roma has been slow to build. As the last quote indicates, the existing legal framework existed but was not being implemented well enough.

Evidence also highlighted a different issue – that even with an adequate legal framework, and sufficient reporting opportunities, actually proving discrimination was often hard. As a Greek lawyer pointed out:

*Practically, it's difficult to substantiate discrimination... Even though the law provides that the proof should be given by the perpetrator, the perpetrator should prove that he hasn't done that, so in practice judges usually ask you, I mean the victims, to persuade them. (GR7, legal representative, local municipality, unassigned, Greece)*

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In the Czech Republic, Hungary and Bulgaria, 'reverse burden of proof' had been introduced to put the onus on the accused to demonstrate they had not been guilty of discrimination but this did not appear to have improved matters, even in particularly egregious cases of discrimination such as that highlighted in the Czech Republic where a baseball bat marked 'For Gypsies' was placed in a bar. After describing this mechanism, an interviewee in the Czech Republic concluded,

*...still this is very hard to prove, and so it's not that vastly used, not only by Roma. (CZ5, civil servant, local government, Roma, Czech Republic)*

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The problem was recognised even at the highest levels. A Polish government official explained that it often came down to legal argument:

*The major issue is that the office (National Equality agency) thinks it's discrimination but the other party thinks it's not discrimination, so there is no common agreement that yes, this case is a case of discrimination.... So these are usually the 50 per cent of cases that are not being resolved... It's just that there is no agreement as to whether it was really a case of discrimination or not. (PL4, official, national government, non Roma, Poland)*

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The cost of judicial redress was another barrier identified in several countries,

*...it is very rare that they turn to courts. You must be a bit fanatic about that because it is expensive. (CZ7, worker, national NGO, unassigned, Czech Republic)*

*...we had this conviction because an organisation found the money to support the case. (GR7, legal representative, local municipality, unassigned, Greece)*

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In addition, the length of time needed for such processes acted as a bar to successful redress. As NGO representatives in the UK and Hungary commented,

*It's a long process. Sometimes families, particularly the nomadic ones will have moved on. (UK12, worker, national NGO, non - Roma, United Kingdom)*

*I know from our clients and have experience that it is very slow, very bureaucratic, and it is really prohibitively difficult to start stuff and so there are a lot of people who would just turn around and leave. (HG12, worker, national NGO, unassigned, Hungary)*

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As the above section illustrates, having the structures in place did not guarantee effective outcomes.



## Mediation and other non-judicial options for redress

Mediation as a form of redress or justice was a recurring feature. In Greece, a representative from a key regulatory body acknowledged that 'In the main, their role is that of mediators, not in taking cases to court' (GR10, central government official, non Roma, Greece). Interestingly, the Office of the Ombudsman had previously developed a project where officials undertook role play session with Roma groups in different locations across Greece, in which Roma groups would bring a case, representatives from a municipality would try to answer and the Ombudsman would mediate. An interviewee from the Polish national equality agency also identified mediation as a core function, as did their Spanish counterpart. When asked what kind of assistance that the Network of Centres for Discrimination could offer, a national government official highlighted:

*an intermediation service in case you are discriminated, for instance, in a restaurant they talk to the owner of the restaurant to explain to him or her the consequences of the discrimination case. Normally, they try to find like a solution. (ES2, official, national government, non Roma, Spain)*

This was confirmed by interview with a leading NGO,

*Our objective is not for the person to go to court, as such. Our objective is that the person who has been the object of discrimination sees their rights redressed. Not economically, not necessarily. Sometimes what they want is a moral or psychological redress of their rights. What we want is that the person who has committed the discrimination sees that he has committed an illegal act and also that act has consequences, not only for the person who has been discriminated against, but to that person's whole environment. (ES3B, senior worker, national NGO, unassigned, Spain)*

Compensation was mentioned infrequently. A Polish interviewee noted that the collective sum for all anti-discrimination rulings was 1200 zlotys, equivalent to 300 euros. (PL4B). In the UK, representatives from the statutory national equality body outlined that it cost more to pursue a case through court than you would receive in compensation. However, they did outline how they used more persuasive 'soft' tools to achieve recognition that a wrong had been done. These included highlighting cases through the press, meeting businesses, writing to elected officials, bodies like the NHS or advertisers, demanding an apology or a retraction. A Greek government official stated that they had written to the Council

for Radio and Television 'to take measures for the TV agencies' (GR15A) as the latter could impose penalties under Article 23 of the code of Conduct (Kodikas Deontologhias) prohibiting the transmission of racist or xenophobic communications.

Interestingly, simply reporting an incident could act as some sort of satisfactory outcome. As a UK interviewee related that,

*They just want us to know about it to vent their anger. There is [sic] so many complaints and don't come back to us again.... (UK11B, equality representative, national agency, non Roma, United Kingdom)*

Similarly in Slovakia, a survey of Roma in 2012 pointed out that over a third who felt discriminated against had talked to the person responsible – a higher percentage than those who approached the police (cited in Lajčáková, 2014: 3).

## Promotion of rights

A more intractable problem emerging from the evidence from many of the countries was that concepts of anti-discrimination and human rights were not rooted in the population at large. A respondent in the Czech Republic commented,

*...the problem is that there is not really quite a good concept in society about what discrimination is, nor are there discussions about it. He says even the courts are not really able to make a difference between discrimination and inappropriate behaviour... (CZ5, civil servant, local government, Roma, Czech Republic)*

Likewise in Poland an NGO worker highlighted that:

*I think the Roma rights issue - it was not in public discourse in Poland. Roma issues were rather perceived as something like - as social assistance or charity work, not as a human rights issue. So we wanted to change this discourse and to show these people as people who also have the same rights as everybody else and so on... (PL1, worker, national NGO, non Roma, Poland)*

This was not purely a matter of Eastern vs. Western European values, either. A Greek lawyer lamented that:

*In Greece we don't have cases where we talk a lot about the violation of human rights. (GR7, legal representative, local municipality, unassigned, Greece)*

## Conclusion

Chronic under reporting of discrimination by Roma was recognised by interviewees from all backgrounds and across Member States. Perhaps just as significantly, there was a good understanding of the reasons why. As noted above, a lack of trust was an important factor, as was the cost, the slim chances of justice and possible repercussions. More basic factors contributed – the need to put food on the table took priority over addressing what for many was an everyday occurrence, or the sheer distance to a reporting site made it practically difficult. Officials, NGO workers and Roma themselves acknowledged that not reporting was often a more rational response than pursuing a matter, especially where there was dependence on the perpetrator in other areas such as welfare or employment. This indicates that strategies, indicators and mechanisms per se will not on their own guarantee success.

Interviews with state officials at local and national levels showed that, in many countries, a reliance on NGOs to collect and supply reports on the one hand and to pursue redress on the other was accepted as a fact of life. The role of NGOs as reporting centres has undoubtedly contributed to their expertise in the area. To some extent this is cause and effect. Many workers, both from the public or NGO sector, indicated that Roma would contact NGOs first rather than the police or other public authority. This often reflected a lack of state resources and expertise in the area, with budgets declining due to austerity measures - but in many instances even before this point there had been an unwillingness to resource and pursue the anti-discrimination agenda, something only exacerbated by financial belt tightening over the last five years. An inadequate understanding of anti-discrimination in the official criminal justice system was also a key obstacle, and this, when combined with scarce resources and hostile attitudes from state employees, politicians and the population at large, has left the pursuit of redress largely in the hands of NGOs (often idealistically committed volunteers).

However, in some Roma MATRIX partner states civil society organisations were accepted by national governments as partners, especially where significant power was devolved to autonomous or decentralised regions (as in Spain, and to some extent, Italy). In addition, there was evidence that some countries were making progress. The reference by Spanish government officials to high numbers of Roma people asking for assistance almost certainly reflects the extensive experience in collating data of the main NGO partner, and lead agency in the Network of Centres for Discrimination, The Foundation

Secretario Gitano (FSG). But there was also indication that the state was taking steps to establishing a detailed research base with the Spanish government developing a Map of Discrimination in Spain, following on from a study of secondary sources of discrimination in Spain and the publication of the first data compilation of hate crimes in the country. (ES2) Progress was also observable in Poland which was helped by the production of unique resources such as the comprehensive 'Brown Book', mapping hate crimes and hate speech across the country.

Significantly, interviewees from both the NGO sector and central government in Poland felt the situation had improved over the last decade with Roma accepted more by society in general, a view supported by evidence from the 'Office for surveying public opinion'. (PL3) In addition more discrimination was being reported by Roma - even accepting the worst interpretation (that actual discrimination was increasing) – entails recognition that Roma are more aware of their rights and more willing to approach organisations outside their community.

Overall, however, there was pessimism about the prospects for improved reporting and redress. It is clear that while popular prejudices against Roma are not seen as unacceptable it will struggle to advance – after all, judges, police officers and other officials involved in enforcing anti-discrimination are part of wider society, and there appears to be little political will to change this.

# Chapter 6: Children in the public care system

## Introduction

It has been noted that children from Roma communities across Europe face ongoing and entrenched marginalisation when in contact with the public care system (ERRC et al 2011). Although to a certain extent this mirrors the experiences of non Roma children in the care system, the issues for Roma appear, in some cases, acute. When compared to other areas, such as those identified by the NRISs, this appears an under-appreciated aspect of Roma inclusion policy. Drawing directly on the experiences and accounts of policy actors operating at the national, regional and local levels within the ten Roma MATRIX partner states this chapter considers key issues in respect of the effectiveness of existing policy and practice when addressing the issues pertaining to Roma children in the care system.

## Roma in the care system

As noted in the Roma MATRIX Interim Research Report, the general absence of ethnically sensitive data on publicly cared for children across Europe makes definitive statements about the numbers of Roma children in public care difficult. Nevertheless, the limited available evidence suggests that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children are significantly over-represented within public care systems across Europe (see Brown et al, 2014). The reasons for this are complex and varied, however, respondents clearly associated the high numbers of Roma children removed from their families directly with the poverty many Roma face. In many of the ten Roma MATRIX partner states relatively recent policy developments have sought to end the removal of children from their families for reasons of material deprivation. Despite this, multiple, complex and interlinking problems associated with poverty, such as neglect, and higher rates of injury and abandonment, were also identified as triggers for children to be taken into care,

*What I can say about the community here is that they live in extreme poverty, which is one of the main risks and one of the main prerequisites for children to end up in public care. (BG11, social worker, national NGO, non Roma, Bulgaria)*

Public care systems vary significantly across EU member states and range from ad hoc to comprehensive. However in all ten partner states, the policies governing child protection and the care system are broadly speaking, universalist in nature and therefore do not specifically identify or focus on the needs of particular ethnic groups. It was therefore very challenging to ascertain accurate information or informed experiences about how Roma in particular fare in the care system. In Romania for example, a number of respondents working in the care system were reluctant or unable to comment on the experiences of Roma children and young people specifically, because policy within their country prohibits them from identifying individuals by their ethnicity. In comparison, in Spain and Poland, the research team found little awareness of Roma children in public care. In Spain this was due in part to a lack of coherent policy on the issue more broadly, whilst in Poland this could be attributed to the fact that institutional care is less than common than foster care (Kostka, 2014). In both these countries respondents suggested that Roma children who encountered problems within their immediate families were most likely to be cared for within extended family networks and largely without intervention from the authorities as the following two quotes illustrate,

*In the Roma population the culture is very protective of the child. If there is any problem it is solved within the population. We don't get to know. There is always an extensive network of family network in case the children needs any extra care. I think it must be like that, although I don't have hard data (ES1A, local municipal officer, non Roma, Spain)*

*If anything, it's a reverse, so if a child stays within the family, it's always there's always somebody, a mother's cousin, sister, somebody who adopts the child, like as a support family. In some isolated cases, when kids are put to their orphanage, there are cases of children simply running away or families doing everything to get the child out. So, contacting social workers, asking for documents to speed up the process. It works the same with the elderly, that the elderly persons are not good in care homes, so they stay with the family. So, no matter how poor and how dysfunctional, it's still family. (PL8, leader, local NGO, Roma, Poland)*

## Perceptions of attitudes and practice towards Roma children

In cases where serious abuse and neglect are taking place, it is necessary to remove children from their families. One young Roma care leaver for example spoke very positively about the care she had received from a local NGO after being taken into care as a result of her mother's serious alcohol dependency issues,

*...they sent her to school for education. Second of all they gave her everything that she was missing that is, clothes, shoes, on a daily basis. Then they helped her to become a lady, young lady. Then they made it possible for her to get back in touch with her three little sisters, because they were brought back here. She said that they helped her to grow up. (RO2, care leaver, Roma, Romania)*

However, some respondents raised concerns that the poverty experienced by many Roma has been translated into pathological, professional discourses that universally classify material deprivation and poor housing conditions as being synonymous with Roma 'culture' which often lead to professional judgements which attribute this to the mistreatment and neglect of their children. Some claimed that these attitudes are prevalent at all levels, from practitioners working directly with Roma children and families to more senior officials tasked with making decisions about the ability of Roma families to care appropriately for their children. Indeed, certain respondents were highly critical of policy and practice and spoke of state

sponsored 'child abduction' and cultural 'genocide' where,

*Prejudice is not only on the streets... but it's also in the heads of judges to social system and the courts. So, the kids, the Roma kids must be saved from the camps. We are the ones who put them in the camps. So, again, the same circle (IT10, senior representative, national NGO, unassigned, Italy)*

Insufficient recourse for Roma families to challenge the authorities when their children were taken away from them, underpinned by a lack of sufficient knowledge with regards to their rights and a lack of credibility in the eyes of the authorities was seen to further exacerbate this problem. Alternatively, some respondents also highlighted how cultural relativism and essentialist notions of Roma culture embedded in the attitudes of the authorities meant that they chose not to act when some form of intervention was appropriate and necessary, as a local elected politician explained,

*For example, I have been in one which there was a case of a fourteen year old Roma girl who had dropped out of school because she got married. So, many people in that conference were saying well then there is nothing else to do because culturally the Roma people get married earlier. (SK4, local elected official, non Roma, Slovakia)*

## Social care training

Overall, respondents' perceptions of social care workers and their practice in relation to Roma children in the care system ranged from 'racist and prejudiced' to 'capable and objective' but the culturally insensitive practice highlighted by some was in part attributed to a lack of training for social workers and care workers with little opportunity to learn about Roma culture and to develop culturally competent practice,

*I can say that in Hungary there is training in Romanology. It was also present in the training of educators or pedagogical training that people were trained for a long time in Hungary, teachers are taught to appreciate multicultural tendencies and to be able to deal with them, but such trainings are not typical of the social work. (HG9, activist, local NGO, Roma, Hungary)*

Another respondent raised the point that support workers employed in institutional care setting were often uneducated and rarely had sufficient or appropriate training, meaning that the quality of care was often extremely poor,



*Since most of these institutions are placed in peripheral areas just like the socially excluded areas are, where it's really high unemployment, there is also because of that real lack of skilled labour. So, the carers which usually get the work in these institutions are not skilled enough, uneducated and because of that, the quality of care usually really bad. Now, since they have to get their education, even if they get employed, they start to work on themselves. They learn skill and use skills and go to universities to learn how to take care of the children better but still it's quite forced, all of it. (CZ3A\_B\_C\_D, workers, national NGO, mixed group, Czech Republic)*

What seemed clear from the interviews with respondents was that funding to meet the basic statutory obligations outlined in national policy, rarely effectively met the complex needs of children living in care. Statutory social workers were often tasked with administrative duties and were therefore restricted in their ability to carry out preventative work with children and their families, had high case-loads and were poorly paid. This was seen to be particularly prevalent in more rural areas where service provision generally was notably poor or entirely lacking. As such an additional level of spatial exclusion was faced by Roma communities.

## Isolation from support networks and culture

The process by which Roma children and young people become isolated from their communities and culture whilst in care was also an issue of concern raised predominantly by respondents working for NGOs. At its most extreme, this was viewed as the explicit, forced assimilation of Roma children and young people into non Roma culture, whilst for others it reflected insensitive practice in which an understanding of the cultural needs of Roma children was just not considered. The respondents who discussed this issue highlighted that there are often significant complexities surrounding family re-unification. In Italy for example, one respondent stated there was no clear policy or plan for supporting children to return to their families and that children were unlikely to be supported to have contact with their family and community at all outside of official spaces,

*The fact that a child in care comes back to his own community is virtually none existent and it almost never happens...Technically there is no, there is not a clear path for the children. The thing is, when you are a parent and you lose a child let's say to state care you don't know where he is. Where he or she is placed. You haven't got a chance to see him or her before about six months. When you will see him or her in court or still in front of other people social assistants and judges. And then the parent is being assessed for another six months. It often occurs that the parent doesn't spend any kind of time with the child for a year or even more. By that time, the relation is already quite broken, so it's hard to get back. (IT10, senior representative, national NGO, unassigned, Italy)*

In contrast, a Roma activist in Hungary stated that although policy and practice aimed to return children to their families wherever possible, this was difficult to achieve if the basic needs of the child could not be met by the family due to continued and serious levels of deprivation,

*Multiply set back, disadvantaged children, and that in such cases they provide food and certain amenities ...but if a child is actually removed from their family it is very hard to get them back into the family again. It is a problem. So the problem is a very complex one and most of the organisations who are working to help children are working to keep the children in their family rather than to.... how they could be removed from their families. I am myself working in child welfare looking after children and I am also often thinking about what will be the best solution, what is the best for the child. (HG9, activist, local NGO, Roma, Hungary)*

## De-institutionalisation: the gap between policy and practice

The de-institutionalisation of public care systems and the emergence of more preventative, family focused support and foster care where appropriate, was a common feature of respondents' discussions (for example Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Italy, Spain). A number of practitioners spoke about the importance of building long-term, positive relationships with Roma families in order to prevent children from being taken into care. Such relationships were also seen as necessary in order to provide continued support to families even after children had been placed in care, with a view to helping family members maintain contact where appropriate, improve their situation and regain care of their children. Other good practice

identified by respondents included the building of smaller accommodation schemes, and an NGO established by both Roma and non Roma adults, who had previously experienced public care in childhood, which undertook workshops with cared for children and was becoming involved in policy development at the national level. The development of 'personalisation' policies in which foster carers and looked after children are given some control over the money provided by the state for their care were also seen as beneficial,

*We are also now reallocating part of the funding for example to the foster families in order to stimulate the environment where, for example, in the credited foster families, the children are also taking part in the decision making as to what the money would be used for and what would be purchased and what types of clothes, what food and so on, so that, really, they are as close to the regular family environment as possible. (SK3, local care provider, children's care Home, non Roma, Slovakia)*

Despite the presence of examples of good practice, the process of de-institutionalisation of the public care system was viewed by a number of respondents as ineffective. This was due to a lack of commitment from both local and national governments, the inconsistent allocation of resources across regions within the same state and a lack of trained professionals to effectively implement the transition. In the Czech Republic for example, one respondent stated that institutional care is still the norm and that significant resources continue to be channelled into large children's homes by local and national government,

*Only now the paid foster care is introduced. Because of this philosophy that institutional care is good, they are very heavily subsidised by national government, by local government, and even by companies, so in terms of material needs the children do not suffer in these institutions. That all abruptly ends once they leave, and then they get no help. (CZ1, senior manager, national NGO, non Roma, Czech Republic)*

There was also concern that in practice, the policy of de-institutionalisation did little to address some of the underlying issues of poverty, segregation, marginalisation and social exclusion experienced by many Roma communities. A social worker working for an NGO based in a Roma community in Bulgaria highlighted a situation in which the municipality had begun to build small scale, family sized care units in the community but had not committed any resources to preventative work with Roma families in the same area,

*The simple truth is rent here costs less so the municipality has probably provided it. So the philosophy of the DI as put on paper doesn't work in practice at all, or at least not the way it was intended to. So another related issue is, yes, we have started closing down those homes. We have started building up family homes or family-type homes, but we haven't changed the legislation. Or we haven't produced the measures that will help families so that children will not go into the institutions to start with. (BG11, social worker, national NGO, non Roma, Bulgaria)*

Furthermore, in Greece, despite a policy commitment to providing foster care and adoption in place of institutions there was evidence of a worrying lack of appropriate provision for children who are at risk or who have been abandoned. As a family support worker from a local NGO explained,

*So, we have to do all this process and they take them to the hospital and they stay, sometimes, for a month or two months or even more, at the hospital, till they find a place for the child. The hospital, there are like children for very long and in the hospital is not the place for the child to stay there, because they don't have places like shelters for the children. So, it's a big problem. So, usually, a lot of times, if you don't put the pressure to them, they let them go. The easy way is to send them back to the family, without investigating. (GR2, family support worker, local NGO, non Roma, Greece)*

Even in cases where foster care was available, respondents noted that it was inadequate in meeting the needs of Roma children when they were mostly placed in unfamiliar cultural settings,

*The foster home solution doesn't work very well for Roma kids, because what happens is that they are placed from one extreme to the other. They live maybe in quite a deprived situation and then all of a sudden, overnight, they are in another house, in another place, in another situation and they feel like they want to take them away from what they are. (IT7, Social Operator, national NGO, unassigned, Italy)*

Programmes to recruit Roma foster carers, for example in Hungary, were viewed to have had some success but remain small scale and limited in their reach. In most cases the possibility of placing Roma children and young people with Roma carers was at best seen to be a distant ideal and at worst was not even considered part of recognised practice.

## Service providers: a mixed economy

Service delivery routinely varied across the partner countries but was generally delivered at the local level and was part of a broader trend towards de-centralisation. A range of models were in place across partner states. Statutory care services could be delivered by the local authority in isolation, or they could be delivered via a combination of the local authority and NGOs or as part of a broader trend across Europe delivered by private agents such as foundations or religious institutions which were contracted by the state to help meet statutory obligations (Pantea 2014).

A lack of funding and the inconsistent allocation of resources within states were consistently highlighted as a significant barrier to policy implementation and good practice,

*I could say that in this sense, the micro region [name of region] is actually much better provided for than many other micro regions, because in [name of region] we have one person working every day of the week for the families here, but even that is not enough. I could point out other micro regions that are much worse off. It is one of the qualities or characteristics that is kind of ghetto-isation of certain regions that they are lacking in kinds of services and provisions. It's typical of these regions that they suffer a lack and they are also lacking professionals to work with such services. (HG9, activist, local NGO, Roma, Hungary)*

Furthermore, there was also evidence that the absence of systems to systematically monitor and evaluate service provision meant that good practice was often dependent on the ethos and the leadership of individuals within particular institutions. There were also examples, for instance in Italy where commitment to service provision was subject to change depending on the priorities of local, elected officials,

*So, the children centre she is working in is no longer active, they had to shut down in 2008 when Roma basically switched from a left centre local government to the right wing government, which is still in place with a different name. At the time, the council, the right wing in the new council wouldn't finance the centre and the project so after a few months with no pay they had to shut down. They had to close. (IT1 A\_B, local government consultants, non Roma, Italy)*

The work carried out by NGOs working with children and young people in care, whether Roma or non Roma, was generally presented by NGO workers themselves as being more flexible than state provision. Workers stated that they were able to engage in more preventative strategies with children and their families as compared to statutory workers, had lower caseloads and expressed a strong commitment to their work. However, their reach was also, in some cases seen to be limited due to the fact that their work was often project based, and therefore short term and reliant on attracting further continuation funding,

*Definitely, the state is in charge. It has the biggest slice of the pie, because they have the budget for all these centres. And the NGOs or the charities, they try to help, but they depend on funding and donations and projects and if they have no funding they cannot help... We have this practice of outsourcing but there is no Roma NGO, which receives a budget or money from the state... the most common practice is these NGOs receive, for instance, temporary budget, but only based on a project. Because there is competition between these NGOs. (RO8, local elected representative, Roma, Romania)*

## Leaving care: policy and practice

The process by which children and young people leave the public care system and make the transition to adulthood varies significantly across the ten partner states. Echoing the information contained in the country reports (see Brown et al, 2014), this ranged from national policies explicitly designed to support young people in their transition to adulthood in countries such as Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and Romania, Bulgaria and the UK to a lack of formal policies in Spain, Italy and Greece in which support for young people has evolved in an ad hoc manner. Similar to public care provision, leaving care services were delivered at the local level via the state, NGOs and in some cases private agencies. In Romania and Bulgaria for example, respondents described a situation in which basic leaving care support is provided by statutory social workers with additional support provided by NGOs, whose activities in this area rely on funding from the municipality in recognition of their ability to provide additional support via non statutory means.

Across the ten partner states, there are no leaving care policies which formally address the experiences of Roma young people. Nevertheless, a number of respondents acknowledged that Roma young people face particular challenges in addition to those experienced by all children and young people leaving care and that these

difficulties are, at least in part, shaped by their ethnic identity and their resulting experiences of discrimination, poverty and social exclusion,

*Roma children are very often, more often leave the children home at the age of 18 in comparison with white people and other groups. That is why they are very often more unemployed in relation to other people...if they find a job which is very job for temporary time and it's not full time. They are underpaid. It's not the custom to find a job after they leave the care. Maybe some of them are homeless or live in unstable living conditions. (SK11, researcher, national government, non Roma, Slovakia)*

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Leaving care provision and the process by which young people are prepared for this eventuality also varied substantially across partner states, ranging from the development of detailed plans that consider education, employment and social support up until the age of 26 (if in full time education) in countries such as the UK, to a complete lack of policy around leaving care in countries such as Spain and Greece. In Slovakia, Romania and Czech Republic respondents drew attention to the existence of 'halfway houses' - semi-independent accommodation in which young people are supported to develop the life skills needed for their transition to adulthood in a safe environment. Other forms of support consisted of help in finding accommodation and employment and one off payments to young people when they left state institutions.

Despite evidence of the implementation of leaving care policies, broadly speaking, both practitioners and young Roma people who had experienced the care system suggested that policy implementation was, in most cases, far from effective and that there was often a significant gap between national policy and its effective implementation at the local level. 'Halfway houses' or semi-independent accommodation for instance, were highlighted to have limited reach due to a lack of awareness of their existence amongst young people in care and insufficient resources and commitment to provision at the local level.

Even for young people who had received some kind of leaving care support, this was often inadequate in counteracting the dependency many had developed whilst living in institutions and preparing them for the multitude of challenges they faced when attempting to make the transition to living in mainstream society. Indicative of the experiences of a number of the young care leavers the research team spoke to, a young Roma care leaver from Czech Republic stated,

*Even if you get to this training apartment or house, I don't think you get prepared enough. It's like when I left, when I really left the institution and started to live in Prague, I was suffering for, I don't know, one and a half years. It was really hard because I had no fricking clue how to plan my finances, how to, I don't know, register at the labour office or stuff like that. I had no fricking clue and although I know there is internet and all that stuff, it was all so complicated and that I was like suffering from real depression for at least one year and a half. When I was talking to my other friends who also, at that time, left the children's home, they felt the same way. (CZ3A\_B\_C\_D, workers, national NGO, mixed group, Czech Republic)*

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Overwhelming feelings of isolation and loneliness and feeling unable to cope could be attributed to any young care leaver making the transition to adulthood. However the experiences of Roma young people leaving care illustrated an additional complexity in relation to their identity and sense of belonging,

*Often when they leave institutional care and he comes into touch with them, they are lost, not only in terms of all this stuff, like employment or housing, but in terms of their identity. They are looking for their roots. They're trying to create these roots that they don't have. (CZ5, civil servant, local government, Roma, Czech Republic)*

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Respondents gave a number of examples of Roma care leavers who had suffered as a result of disconnection from their community, culture and ethnic identity. As the President of a national NGO in Italy stated:

*What happens is that when they come out of the system or the foster homes, is that they get into very confused and very painful state of mind, because they don't feel that they belong to their community, but they don't feel that they belong to Italian communities and they feel rejected like no-one wants it and they can start facing some very sad stories. (IT10, senior representative, national NGO, unassigned, Italy)*

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In another case, a practitioner based in the UK spoke of how a young person's expectations about re-connecting to their English Gypsy heritage through making connection with their family had also proved problematic and required significant support and guidance from the NGO worker,



*There was one person we put in contact with the family and it's hard because you need, you have to have somebody to mediate, because you can see that the person that has grown up in care, they've almost got like a story book idea of what gypsy people are in their mind. In a way, it might be that it's that that's kept them going. And you see true life out there isn't a story book. (UK13, worker, national NGO, United Kingdom)*

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There was no evidence of policy or practice in any of the Roma MATRIX partner states which explicitly addressed the complexity of identity issues and which gave scope to explore this in depth with young Roma preparing to leave care. Furthermore although there were examples of young Roma who had benefited from living in care institutions and had gone on to succeed in education and employment, a number of respondents noted that Roma care leavers were more likely than their non Roma counterparts to return to situations of poverty and social exclusion. One respondent suggested that Roma children living in institutions were protected from the prejudice and discrimination that was so prevalent in the outside world and that confronting such prejudice alongside the complexities associated with their identity remained a huge obstacle for them,

*They usually don't know what... They're going to be discriminated against, and there is an absence of work, with their identity... questions that will arise once they leave the care... They have real problems with their identity because they don't know [have] a clue like who they are... They have one more problem that they are Roma but the children, in general, just don't know who they are or what they should do. (CZ3A\_B\_C\_D, workers, national NGO, mixed group, Czech Republic)*

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## Conclusion

Research across the ten partner countries within Roma MATRIX suggests that there is still limited knowledge and understanding of the experiences of Roma children and young people in the care system. A lack of coherent policy and practice regarding all children in care in some countries stands as a significant barrier to providing appropriate support. In other countries there is a clear discrepancy between the policy surrounding child protection and public care policy and how it is implemented at the local level. Establishing appropriate and culturally sensitive policies for all publicly cared for children is clearly a work in progress in many Roma MATRIX partner states. Its full and effective implementation will ultimately be reliant on the allocation of appropriate resources and the political will to ensure that new and potentially transformative legislation and policy becomes firmly embedded in practice,

*There are many formal rules which are written in the code of Social and Legal Protection, but it is, in many cases, only formal activity with little benefit for these children. I can find some good practices, but mainly I think that it is only formal activity without any real benefit for these children (SK11, researcher, national government, non Roma, Slovakia).*

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The lack of Roma specific policies and practice in the public care system across Europe also raises some interesting questions as to whether such policies can, in practice, effectively address the diverse needs of Roma children in care, or whether the process of developing culturally sensitive policies and culturally competent practice without singling out particular ethnic groups might be better at achieving inclusion for diverse Roma populations as well as children and young people from other ethnic groups.



# Chapter 7: Conclusions and recommendations

Chapters 3 - 6 of this report offer an analysis of respondents' data in relation to the four particular policy areas that are the focus of the wider Roma MATRIX project. However, a number of recurrent issues appear to cross cut all of the fields under exploration and influence the effectiveness of policy and programmes attempting to deliver Roma inclusion. Given that this report has detailed the widespread discrimination and prejudice that Roma face across all aspects of their lives, it is clear economic disadvantage is not the sole cause of their continuing exclusion. Nonetheless, the endemic poverty that continues to blight many Roma lives is a priority issue that urgently needs to be addressed by policymakers. On too many occasions when undertaking this research (and in previous fieldwork for the Roma SOURCE project – see Brown, Dwyer and Scullion, 2013), team members have visited long established Roma camps where conditions of absolute poverty are evident. Dwellings unfit for human habitation made of scrap wood and plastic sheeting with compacted dirt floors and lacking basic amenities such as access to water, sewerage and fuel should not be a part of any European citizen's life at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century but they continue to exist.

There is a clear and urgent need for policymakers to find ways to work with the Roma who live in such conditions in order to ensure the provision of adequate accommodation and services.

Whilst it is recognised that many Roma do not live in camps it is also apparent that residential segregation remains a key issue. Significant numbers of Roma continue to lead what are effectively segregated lives in 'Roma neighbourhoods' separate from non Roma majority populations who are often indifferent to the poverty Roma often face. Regardless of the specific national, urban or rural locations in which Roma live, *'poverty plays a massive part in most Roma issues'* (UK2, policy officer, local NGO, non Roma, United Kingdom) and remains an influential factor in the substandard living conditions, limited educational attainment and high numbers of Roma children in public care that continue to feature prominently in many Roma communities. Although discrimination, poverty and segregation are common concerns for many Roma, interviews with respondents have further highlighted the diversity of identities and degrees of disadvantage subsumed under the term 'Roma'. A consideration of the variable impact of migration on the lives of different Roma illustrates this issue. Certain respondents reported tangible benefits for those Roma who had chosen to exercise their rights as EU citizens and relocated within the European Union, post enlargement, in order to take up paid work elsewhere.

The situation was very different for other 'migrant' Roma, many of whom had actually been resident for years or even decades in a host state without any citizenship or residency documentation. Lacking any official papers, such Roma routinely lived in illegal settlements, were unable to access formal paid work or welfare services and were regularly forced to beg for a living. These particular Roma were often extremely unpopular with established legally resident Roma and non Roma citizens alike.



The marginalisation of Roma is multifaceted. Although there is now a stated commitment within the varied national, regional and local policies and processes operationalised across the Roma MATRIX partner states to enhance the social inclusion of Roma, it is appropriate to conclude this short discussion of cross cutting issues with quotations from two elected local officials,

*When you suggest to these agencies, institutions, representatives, some things that will improve the conditions of the life of the whole community, they just take your suggestions, put them in a drawer and they're forgotten. (GR6, elected representative, local government, unassigned, Greece)*

*Basically, I do take part in the meetings, mainly the meetings with the NGOs focusing on the solving of the Roma issue. However, I have to tell you that I am more and more of the opinion that very often these meetings are only happening for the meeting's sake, so that someone can tick something off. They have no effect whatsoever. (SK4, local elected official, non Roma, Slovakia)*

There is clearly some distance to travel before policies on Roma inclusion become translated into effective practice.

## Key findings

The key findings arising from this research are :

- Entrenched poverty that continues to be a routine feature of everyday life for many, severely limits the ability of people from Roma communities to mobilise and effectively influence policy. This problem is particularly acute for the most disadvantaged and marginalised Roma communities including many 'migrant' Roma populations, who routinely lead segregated lives often in deprived living conditions and who all too often lack official residency and citizenship papers.
- Certain policymakers and NGOs at European and national level have been effective in putting the issues faced by Roma on the agenda and advocating for the advancement of rights for Roma. However, issues about the effective and meaningful representation of Roma as policy actors with equal status remain. Roma respondents who had become active in the implementation and provision of policy often spoke of their continued marginalisation within policy processes.
- Whilst formal policies and procedures for the reporting and redress of anti-Roma discrimination routinely exist as part of wider equality legislation and rules within MATRIX partner states, their effectiveness is variable and implementation is inadequate. Taken together the above noted factors combine to seriously limit the effectiveness of Roma inclusion policy and the extent to which Roma are able to effectively exercise their rights and responsibilities as full and equal European citizens.
- In spite of multi-level policy developments in recent years, many people within Roma communities remain systematically excluded and oppressed within Europe.
- Current policy goals and statements aimed at increasing the social inclusion of Roma are a necessary prerequisite to stimulating positive change, but all too often the implementation of existing policy is weak and ineffectual.
- Both Roma and non Roma respondents highlighted the presence of persistent and pervasive anti-Roma discrimination and racism as a common facet of everyday life. This inhibits the effective implementation of policy at national, regional and local levels.



## Recommendations

Recommendations are targeted at the macro level of policy making and implementation:

1. When working with Roma communities directly, precedence should be given to policies and programmes that attempt to rapidly reduce the deep seated poverty that continues to blight the lives of many Roma.
2. For the social inclusion of Roma to become a future reality, policymakers at all levels will need to focus more attention on combatting the enduring anti-Roma discrimination and racism that remains prevalent within wider society.
3. In order to avoid National Roma Integration Strategies becoming redundant, more work is needed to reconcile the direction of national policy priorities with national, regional and local level initiatives.
4. Publicly funded Roma inclusion programmes and initiatives should be subject to mandatory independent process and impact evaluations.
5. Awareness raising initiatives should be compulsory for those involved in Roma inclusion policy at the level of strategic decision making within statutory and commissioning agencies. These should be delivered, where possible, by appropriately qualified Roma facilitators.
6. Although cultural festivals are important components in highlighting and celebrating Roma culture, on their own they are not sufficient to underpin sustainable improvements in community relations. In order to more effectively overcome prejudice and enhance more sustainable social relations and inter-cultural dialogue, policy makers are advised to also invest in initiatives that bring together policy makers and Roma and non Roma people around common concerns and issues.
7. Whilst it is important to recognise that limited educational attainment remains a significant factor in limiting the types of work available for some Roma, future employment and training programmes need to expand their scope and ambition in recognition of the existing talents, skills and potential of members of Roma communities.
8. The implementation of existing reporting and redress mechanisms in respect of anti-Gypsyism need to be reinvigorated if they are to have a meaningful and wide reaching effect. The financial compensation awarded to those individuals who successfully prove discrimination should be increased significantly in order to deter such discriminatory practices in the future.
9. Given the over-representation of Roma children in public care systems in Europe, the development of culturally sensitive policies to meet the particular needs of Roma children living in care, and young Roma adults when leaving public care should be prioritised.

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