



Introduction & Welcome

Roma refugees from the war in Ukraine are continuing to face disproportionate barriers in accessing humanitarian aid and safety. We therefore signpost to new donation pages included below, and those from the [March edition](#) of our newsletter.

In total, this month's newsletter will focus on:

- Roma Support Group's annual event with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma.
- The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill.
- United Nations Universal Periodic Review shadow report.
- International Roma Day.
- Updates on Ukraine.
- New donation pages.
- *Proud Roma* short film.

RSG and APPG for GTR annual event

At the end of March, Roma Support Group held its latest annual event with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma:

Roma communities in the UK: EU Settlement Scheme and post grace period situation

The event was hosted by the co-chair of the APPG, Martin Docherty-Hughes MP and featured an all-Roma panel.

The event focused on Roma experiences with the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) and the

UK immigration system since the end of the EUSS grace period, which occurred on 30 June 2021.

Call for further EUSS support

Prior to the event, Roma Support Group conducted a survey on the EUSS with its Roma clients and this data provided a comparison to [research](#) conducted by New Europeans and RSG at the end of 2020.

The data shows that:

- Roma are still over-represented in receiving pre-settled status (62% have pre-settled status compared to 41% for non-Roma).
- 71% of Roma surveyed said they cannot access their EUSS account by themselves (an increase from 61% in 2020).
- 75% do not know when and how to update their pre-settled status to settled status. If they do not do this they will lose their legal rights to live and work in the UK.
- 63% are not aware of their digital status, and 58% do not know how to prove their immigration status.

Whilst it has not yet been confirmed whether Home Office funding will be extended beyond September 2022, RSG has heard from organisations supporting Roma that their EUSS workload is still the same as it was before the 30 June deadline. Roma clients continue to need support with:

- Late applications, especially for children.
- Accessing an EUSS account and proving status.
- Cases where a person is still awaiting a decision on the outcome of their EUSS application.
- Applications for joining family members.
- Issues encountered at the UK border.

RSG's Policy & Campaigning Worker, Mihai Bica, believes that all of this supports the case for **a medium to long-term EUSS support service facilitated by local authorities**. EUSS immigration status has an impact on many other services, and it is essential that support is properly resourced to prevent widespread disruption. Support services could also provide opportunities for Roma to learn about digital status and the digital system in general, helping to overcome [digital exclusion](#) barriers that many Roma in the UK face.

Issues at the UK border

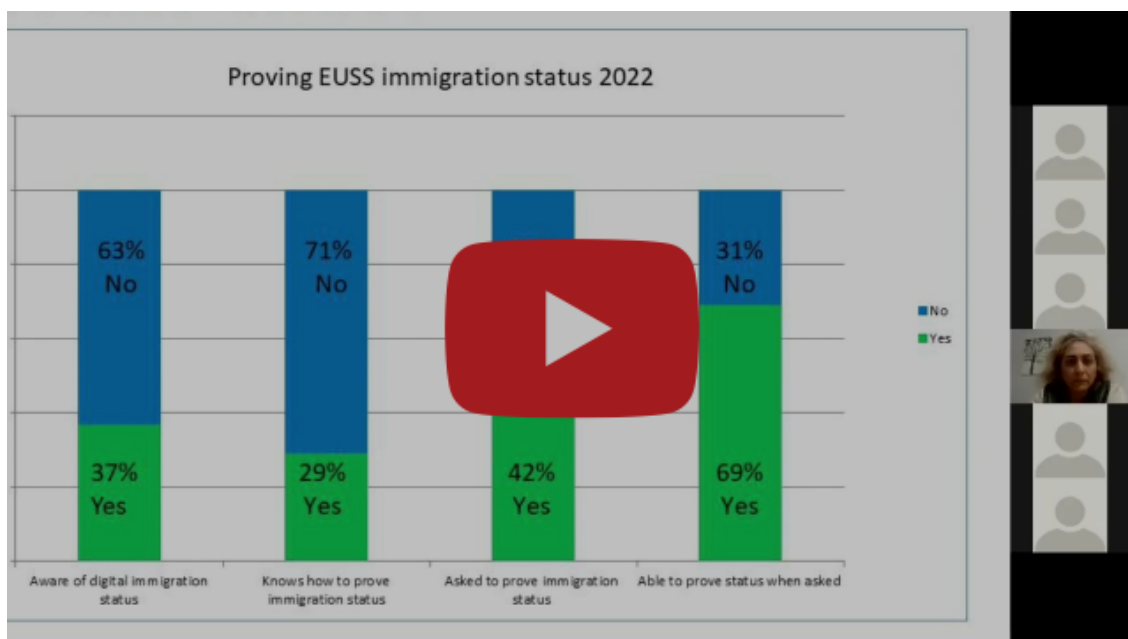
The first Roma councillor in the UK, Nicu Ion, spoke at the event about issues that Roma have experienced at the UK border since the end of the EUSS grace period.

He receives phone calls in the night from Roma people who are detained at the border when trying to re-enter the UK. He has been told, contrary to Home Office guidance, that

UK border officials are telling people with EUSS certificate of application share codes that they cannot travel. **He has heard of families being separated and believes that Roma people from Romania are being racially profiled.**

One of the panellists, immigration solicitor, Denisa Gannon, has also heard increased complaints and fear about the UK border from Roma clients. She too believes that Roma are being racially profiled. She believes that the family reunion process is poorly designed and separates families unnecessarily. She suggests that the Home Office should consider Article 8 of the European Court of Human Rights when making application refusals and that they should scrap the requirement of medical or financial dependency.

See the recording of the event below for the full details. A report from the event will follow soon.



Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

Later this week, The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill will Receive Royal Assent and pass into law.

Our colleague, Mihai Bica, has [told the BBC](#) that it is '*a good initiative to protect our youth,*' but has expressed concern '*about how it will be applied in practice.*' He believes that the government must run an educational campaign aimed at raising awareness of the new rules.

Roma Support Group has detailed its concerns about the way the law could be applied in the [January 2022 edition](#) of our newsletter.

United Nations Universal Periodic Review shadow report

Friends, Families and Travellers, Roma Support Group, GATE Herts and Minority Rights Group International have submitted a [shadow report](#) to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group and UN member states. The UPR was established when the UN Human Rights Council was created in 2006 and assesses the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States over four-and-a-half year cycles. The current cycle comes to an end in 2022.

The shadow report produced by the coalition of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) organisations discusses the human rights inequalities experienced by GRT people in the UK. In its summary, it states:

'Despite its UPR commitments to improve human rights situations and to overcome challenges to the enjoyment of human rights, the United Kingdom remains a state in which Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people experience stark inequalities. We consider the Government to be failing to deliver on 2017 Third Cycle UPR recommendations, instead introducing measures that are insufficient to enact meaningful change, and bringing in hostile legislation which will actively deteriorate the enjoyment of human rights for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.'

The report discusses and provides recommendations on the following areas:

- Health inequalities and access to healthcare.
- Protection against hate crime and hate speech.
- The role of the media in fuelling hate speech and crime against Gypsies, Roma and Travellers.
- Education inequalities and access.
- Equal access to the European Union Settlement Scheme and impact on Roma people.

The report draws attention to the Government's June 2019 announcement of a **National Strategy to address the inequalities experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities**:

'To date, no visible progress has been made on the strategy, with no published plan or strategy outlining any aims, actions, lines of accountability or timelines.'

International Roma Day, 8 April

International Roma Day 2022 marked 51 years since the founding of the First World Romani Congress.

[Proud Roma Free Europe](#) have compiled an overview of different [events](#) that took place across Europe to mark the anniversary.

Solidarity with Roma in Ukraine was the main focus of this year's events.

Messages from the United Nations

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, released a video message stating that Roma fleeing persecution and conflict in Ukraine '*have the same rights and must be extended the same solidarity as other refugees.*'



The UN's Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Fernand de Varennes also issued a [statement](#) calling on the UN and its Member States, international and regional organisations to grant undocumented Roma '*equal protection and safety when seeking refuge inside and outside of the country, regardless of their legal status.*'

Milan flash mob

Italian Roma organisation, [Movimento Kethane](#), organised a [flash mob](#) in Milan's Piazza della Scala. With collaboration from different orchestral groups and the participation of students from two schools, 300 people gathered for musical performances, dancing and street art.

GOSSIPS art exhibition

The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERAC) hosted the artwork of three young female Roma artists.

Two of the artists, Dariya Kanti, and Luna De Rosa were the winners of a public competition. The third, Nataliia Tomenko is a Ukrainian Roma activist who fled from Kremenchuk, Ukraine and is currently living and working in Vienna.

To read more about the three artists and to see examples of their work, click [here](#).

Nataliia Tomenko made a speech at the opening of the exhibition, discussing the impact of the war on her family, the contributions of Roma to the war effort and the importance of her activism in her absence from Ukraine:



Nataliia is also providing weekly reports on the situation of Roma in Ukraine which can be found on the ERAC [Facebook page](#).

Updates on Ukraine

An [article](#) published in Polish newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, describes the situation of Ukrainian Roma refugees in Poland. Roma activist and assistant professor at the University of Warsaw, Joana Talewicz, is chair of Polish civil society organisation Towards

Dialogue. Since the invasion of Ukraine, it has shifted its activities to assisting Roma refugees. Talewicz shares experiences from her role:

Roma are denied the same access to humanitarian aid as their non-Roma counterparts. Talewicz has received numerous reports of Roma being pushed away from places at the Polish border where refugees can get clothing or something to eat. The belief amongst volunteers is that 'Roma would sell these clothes like pans or rugs.'

Roma are also refused accommodation and segregation is widespread. Talewicz described several dozen Roma women and children camping at the door of a refugee centre near Warsaw who were refused entry. In a private house given to refugees near Warsaw, Roma women with children were informed that white Ukrainians demanded separate washing machines because they were disgusted to wash with Roma women.

Talewicz fears that the exclusion from mainstream services that Roma are experiencing will lead to the formation of ghettos, continuing a trend across Europe that has been taking place for decades.

Talewicz spoke recently in an [interview](#) with CNN focusing on the experiences of Roma refugee families she is working with.

The Independent [reported](#) last week that **some Roma refugees are even returning to Ukraine due to poor treatment in their host countries.**

The [European Roma Rights Centre](#) (ERRC) are monitoring the situation across Europe and are receiving numerous [reports](#) from different countries that reflect the treatment of Roma refugees in Poland.

Advocacy and Policy Manager at ERRC, Bernard Rorke, recently spoke on this situation at an Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe meeting:



New donation pages

Human rights fund for Ukrainian Roma

ERRC are [collecting donations](#) to support their efforts to prevent the discrimination and rejection of Roma refugees in Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova.

The activities of ERRC consist of:

- Sending human rights monitors to border crossings, train stations, and refugee reception centres to monitor potential human rights abuses of Roma.
- Supporting initiatives which provide humanitarian aid and legal advice to Roma, inside and outside of Ukraine.
- Making sure that human rights abuses are documented and publicised so that these violations are not forgotten, and hopefully one day can be brought to justice.

Hot Meals in Ukraine

Given the difficulties that Roma are experiencing in accessing humanitarian aid, [ERGO Network](#) and [Roma Women Fund Chiricli](#) have launched a new campaign: [Hot meals in Ukraine](#).

Access to the meals are open to anyone in Ukraine in need but the organisers are ensuring that Roma (and other minorities) are aware of when and where the meals are handed out.

The cost of providing one hot meal is €4.

Proud Roma short film

Earlier this year, award-winning Romani-Spanish director, Pablo Vega, released a short film which took inspiration from Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*. Not known to many, Chaplin had Romani heritage.

The messages of Vega's film resonate with the current context of the war in Ukraine:

'We have never started a war. Yet we have suffered and seen hundreds and thousands of our sisters, brothers and children die in wars started by others.'

'On 8 April 1971, we have told the world: enough. We demand respect. That the whole world should know who we are, our real name and our flag that connects heaven and earth.'

'We call on our non-Roma sisters and brothers to fight alongside us as we fought alongside them, shoulder to shoulder, for a Europe liberated from hate.'



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

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