



Introduction and welcome

We make no apology for filling the newsletter with more news about Brexit. The launch of our Roma & Brexit project, more interviews carried out for 'On The Road', and the critical findings of the Parliamentary Home Affairs select committee who have been investigating the Settlement Scheme. But we've also identified a missed opportunity by this government - they have failed in their chance to prevent so many Roma (and other minority ethnic children/young people) being made vulnerable by school exclusion. We outline what the Timpson Review has said, and why we think it's a flawed report. We carry reports from around Europe about how elections impact on Roma, and how Roma are responding. We report on public health research conducted with Roma individuals and activists in Bradford. Finally, we are pleased to give space to one of our trustees who attended the Roma pavilion - FutuRoma - at the Venice Biennale!

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

Contact us via:

andy@romasupportgroup.org.uk

 [@The Roma Support Group](#)



[@RomaSupport](#)

News from Roma Support Group

Roma & Brexit

For over three years, we are sure you will have had long conversations with Roma friends, clients, service users about Brexit. At Roma Support Group, many of our clients believed even before the referendum vote in June 2016 that they would have to leave. And every month since then, we have had to listen to a whole range of fears and worries and concerns.

You might remember the *Roma and Brexit roundtable event* that took place last July in the Parliament (full report here).

<https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/APPG-Brexit-and-Roma-Report-1.pdf>

We are pleased that after that parliamentary meeting (attended by MPs, Roma representatives from around the country, lawyers, charities and activists), Roma Support Group has successfully received funding from JRCT to support a *Roma & Brexit project* for three years. We want to increase the chance of Roma people successfully applying for Settled Status.

We want to do this by:

Campaigning and communicating within the Roma communities to raise their awareness of the requirements of the Settled Status application process (EUSS)

Identifying good practice of Roma migrants accessing the application process

Monitoring and collecting information about both successful and unsuccessful Roma applicants

Feeding this information to all the Roma communities in the UK

Collaborating with other NGOs who have particular knowledge, skills and expertise that we can utilise and adapt for Roma beneficiaries

Providing information and feedback to parliamentary groups and individual MPs

Liaising with established contacts in the European Commission to provide feedback on the operation of EUSS as part of the Withdrawal Agreement, and the impact on Roma communities in the UK

Would you, your charity or group like to be involved?

If so, perfect! We would like to meet you, find out what are you doing about Brexit and develop a networking platform where we could share information or get answers for specific questions.

We want to share with you and your clients all the new information regarding Brexit and the EU Settlement Scheme. We would like to hear about any concerns or issues that arise and make sure we can bring them to the attention of MPs, parliamentarians and civil servants.

We want to find ways to support you help your Roma clients apply for the Settled Status.

For more information, get in touch with Mihai Bica:

mihai@romasupportgroup.org.uk

Jobs at Roma Support Group

Also connected with Brexit, we are advertising two jobs:

EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) Project Coordinator (21 hours per week)

We are seeking to appoint a motivated person to coordinate activities aiming to raise awareness about the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) amongst Roma migrants in London and to enable them to make EUSS applications.

(Funded as a consortium by the Home Office until 31 March 2020)

EUSS Roma Advocate (21 hours per week)

We are seeking to appoint a motivated person to deliver activities aiming to raise awareness about the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) amongst Roma migrants in London and to enable them to make EUSS applications.

(Funded as a consortium by the Home Office until 31 March 2020)

And another job:

Financial Inclusion Project Coordinator (21 hours per week)

We are seeking to appoint a motivated person to coordinate the Roma Financial Inclusion Project to enable Roma migrants in London to navigate post-Brexit migration/ benefit systems, exercise their welfare rights and enhance their confidence to manage their money.

(Funded by The Henry Smith Charity for 3 years)

The deadline for all applications is Monday 17 June 2019.

For more information, please visit our website here:

<http://rsg2016.weebly.com/jobs.html>

**Roma Support Group: part of GRT history month: Friday 14 June
City Hall, London, More London Riverside, London SE1 2AA**

Come and celebrate the rich culture and heritage of Gypsies, Roma, Traveller and Showmen communities in London.

Discussions, exhibits, music and dance which mark the 2019 Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month.

Join us on the 14 June in London's Living Room in City Hall. All welcome.

2.30pm – 4.00pm

Informal drop in session where you can meet with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Organisations and learn more about the work they do and about the history and culture of their communities

5.00pm – 7.30pm

Renowned Ringmaster Chris Barltrop will introduce you to an array of amazing musicians, singers and performers and help us celebrate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month in style

For more information, click here.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/gypsy-roma-and-traveller-history-month-a-celebration-tickets-61994295607>

[Our YouTube channel, 'Roma News':](#)

[And On the Road radio: part of National Prison Radio](#)

On The Road is a podcast for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities which will also be broadcast in prisons across the UK on National Prison Radio.

Hosted by Terry (a Romany Gypsy and former prisoner) alongside NPR producer Nancy Prentice, the series will explore topics that affect GRT communities such as discrimination, housing, health and education. Each show will feature representatives of GRT organisations, activists and community members sharing their stories and experiences.

Listen here.

<https://directory.libsyn.com/shows/view/id/ontheroadradio>

Episode 20. Discusses the impact of Brexit on Gypsy Roma and Travellers, featuring our own Mihai Bica.

Listen from 10 mins 45 seconds. Lasts about 8 minutes

[The Timpson Review: why are so many Roma \(and Gypsy, Traveller and Black\) children excluded from schools?](#)

Well over a year ago, the government produced statistics which many of us have known for years. That some pupils of particular ethnic backgrounds are more likely to be excluded from school – both permanently and temporarily – than majority ethnic (white) pupils. Roma, and Gypsy and Irish Traveller

children and young people were the group that was most likely to be excluded. So the government asked an ex-Tory MP – Edward Timpson who was educated at Uppingham School in Rutland – to investigate and report back.

What the Review says:

Timpson said that it was true. But he also said that many other children/young people were likely to be excluded too; children in care, or from disadvantaged/poor backgrounds, children with special educational needs, pupils that have moved schools frequently and have higher absenteeism. And he concluded that if you controlled for these other factors, Roma (and Gypsy) pupils were not significantly more likely to be permanently excluded than white pupils. He says,

...the approximate chances of permanent exclusion for Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller children compared with their White British peers – once controls are applied for poverty, SEN, absence and other factors – drops from 5.2 to 0.8

What that means is that Roma and Gypsy pupils are *less likely* to be excluded than white pupils! He accepts though that for temporary exclusion, Roma/Gypsy pupils are more likely to experience exclusion. As are Black and Black Caribbean/White pupils.

However, Timpson makes 30 recommendations; one of them relates directly to the over-representation of some pupils – Roma/Gypsy among them – in exclusions by school. It suggests that the government should create a fund which would, amongst other things, develop ‘best practice’ in schools for, *creating inclusive environments, especially for children from ethnic groups with higher rates of exclusion*

Read it here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/799979/Timpson_review_of_school_exclusion.pdf

What the government have said in response:

The Minister for Education says in reply,

The analysis for your review has found that, when comparing children from ethnic minorities in aggregate with White British children, there is no substantial difference in exclusions rates.

He does then say that for some minority ethnic groups, exclusion rates are *less* than for white pupils. But he does say that,

You also found that, when other factors about their background are taken into account, children from some groups (such as Black Caribbean children) are more likely to be excluded than White British children.

Roma children? They are not mentioned at all in the government response.

The government does not accept the recommendation about considering additional funding about 'best practice' for pupils more likely to be at risk of exclusion (as above).

But they say that,

To help reduce ethnic disparities in school exclusions, it is particularly important that local leaders should track patterns of exclusions by ethnicity, including assessing whether pupils of a particular background are more likely to be excluded.

Read it here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/800676/Timpson_review_of_school_exclusion_government_response.pdf

What we think:

The Timpson review is a wasted opportunity. Rather than confront the evidence that poor children, children with special educational needs, children who often move schools, children in care AND Roma children are more likely to be excluded, Timpson and the government appear to accept that as a fact.

We are not convinced that Timpson either talked to many Roma children who had been excluded, or their parents. Or noted the evidence that was submitted. Or when research was submitted that did not represent Roma, Gypsy & Traveller and Black and Mixed-Race parents of young people, Timpson did not attempt to find out more.

Unless the government leads on seriously tackling the underlying causes of Roma (and others) school exclusions, we'll be reading this kind of thing in Ofsted reports (10086819) for more years to come:

The rapid improvement in behaviour demonstrates the success of leaders' strategies to win the compliance of pupils to the school's expectations.

However, behaviour still requires much improvement. A few pupils occasionally show a lack of respect for each other and staff. A few ignore requests to moderate their conduct. As a result, in the current year, permanent and fixed-term exclusions are high. Most pupils who have been excluded are of Slovakian Roma heritage (secondary academy, Yorkshire, March 2019).

See here for our detailed commentary on the Timpson report.

[\(attached doc file - until I put it on mailchimp!\)](#)

Addressing obesity in Roma communities: a community readiness approach

An academic study, with some useful insights (by Shahid Islam and others)

The authors describe the purpose of the research:

Participation in community programmes by the Roma community is low, whilst this community presents with high risk of poor health and low levels of wellbeing. To improve rates of participation in programmes, compatibility must be achieved between implementation efforts and levels of readiness in the community. The Community Readiness Model (CRM) is a widely used toolkit which provides an indication of how prepared and willing a community is to take action on specific issues. The purpose of this paper is to present findings from a CRM assessment for the Eastern European Roma community in Bradford, UK, on issues related to nutrition and obesity.

The six key workers/organisers/mentors/volunteers (of whom four were Roma). It looks at how a public health approach might work, and might need to be developed, when working with Roma. Some quotes from participants – both Roma and non-Roma:

You know, 7 or 8 years ago when I started it was a problem, you know, because the Roma children used to bring all sorts to school [...] this is how it works, first we had trouble, kids were bringing all sorts of sugary things and other things to school for their packed lunch but now it's much better, improved 80% or 90% improved.

About three years ago we tried to do "cook and eat" in the formal way that Public Health do them, so we tried to bring (Roma) families into the centre where there was cooking facilities and it was a nightmare. Because as soon as you brought them into here, you'd get mum, dad, and grandmas and granddads and all the extended family would come and all the children and it

was just bedlam. So, we went back to Public Health and said, you know “we’ve tried it, we’ve really tried to deliver the cook and eat in the way that you designed them, it’s not working, please can we redesign them?” And that’s when we went into the families’ homes and that just works so much better because it’s contained.

It is lack of trust, to any kind of services. I think it’s because they were isolated in their own countries as well, even if they send their own children in Slovakia and Czech to the mainstream school, those children were subject of discrimination because of their skin colour, so it’s something from the generation-to-generation I think in the minds, so they prefer to keep on the side, rather than being the part of the community, and general community I think.

Reflecting the different experiences of the migration from the Indian sub-continent to Bradford in the 1960s and the Roma migration of the last ten years, one respondent said:

I know how difficult that was, you know, and we haven’t learnt anything from that, you know. We’re doing the same thing again; we’re trying to make a community conform to what we know is right without helping them along that journey of change from where they were. You know, we’re trying to get them to jump from zero to five and just jump.

Read the full report here:

<https://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/full/10.1108/IJHRH-06-2018-0038>

FutuRoma – Venice Biennale

FutuRoma is a powerful project that brings together the diverse contributions of members of Roma communities within Europe throughout history and today. It is curated by Daniel Baker and promoted by the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC). This revolutionary exhibition brings together fourteen innovative Romani contemporary artists from eight countries across Europe (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Sweden, United Kingdom).

FutuRoma presents a major milestone in European history, as it marks only the third time that there has ever been a Roma pavilion at Biennale Arte. The project is a chance to glimpse a future where Roma truly belong, taking us

beyond time and place, which points to a radical and progressive vision of Roma to come. This demonstration is bringing hidden Roma masterpieces to a variety of audiences, highlighting the contributions of Roma as citizens, and as integral parts of the European cultural landscape. A Roma arts manifestation that is reflecting and influencing Roma culture through its narrative, and through its cultural expression. The works are rooted in the method and traditions of the Roma diaspora, but at the same time, it places the viewer in a time-space dimension informed by the past but projected on to the future, enriching the here and now as the place for an alternative vision of the Roma identity.

Daniel Baker, the curator writes that,

“As Roma, we are too often told that we have no future—that we remain relics of the past. FutuRoma draws together visions of our future to present an alternative perspective informed by all that came before and the promise of all that can be, placing us firmly in the here and now”

On behalf of Roma Support Group, as a Hungarian Roma artist from London, I felt truly honoured and privileged to be invited to the private viewing of this prestigious event and witnessing a revolutionary phenomenon. The exhibition fits perfectly into the Venice art festival’s atmosphere and enhances its diversity with a brilliant location overlooking the lagoon.

I managed to talk to two of the exhibited artists from Hungary and asked them about what it feels like being part of the Roma pavilion. Beyond their enjoyment, they said they felt strange in this environment - being uprooted from their usual everyday life. Indeed, some of the traditional elements embedded in a minimalist concept which is divergent from the usual representation of Roma, but presenting a new perspective of ourselves. This imaginative artistic oasis owns the naturalness of our people and also it is pointing to a possible vision of Roma to come.

Exhibition Site: Zattere, Dorsoduro 417, 30123 Venezia

Public Dates: 11 May – 24 November 2019

For more information, see here:

<http://myartguides.com/collateral-events/futuroma/>

Robert Czibi

May 2019

Europe, elections and Roma

As we said in our last issue, the potency of anti-Gypsyism and the targeting of Roma reaches a crescendo when elections are held. Throughout Europe, the far-right/hard-right populists banged the drum, hoping that this would cement the affiliation of those who are easy prey for populists – those who have little themselves and equally those whose lives never intersect with Roma.

Below we carry reports from across Europe - when occasionally Roma women, men and young people get to offer *their* thoughts on elections, politics and their hopes and dreams

11 April 2019

The hidden constituency: Will Roma voters decide next month's European elections?

A survey across four countries about how the Roma are portrayed and castigated.

<https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/world/roma-eu-elections-european-parliament-france-italy-bulgaria-hungary>

2 May

Bulgaria – Stolipinovo: Euro News visit and interviews

A video report (3 minutes 30 seconds long) from two journalists who go to Stolipinovo – a large Roma settlement on the outskirts of Plovdiv – and interview a Roma metal worker, a Roma teacher and a Roma student.

<https://www.euronews.com/2019/05/01/road-trip-europe-day-33-stolipinovo-roma-people-in-bulgaria-talk-about-discrimination>

10 May

Unprecedented police action against Roma Travellers community in Belgium

A huge police action took place in Belgium in the morning of 7 May resulting in a massive arrest of Belgian Roma Travellers accused of trafficking of illegally obtained vehicles. The last action of this kind took place during the Second World War when 351 Roma Travellers from Belgium were transported to

Auschwitz Birkenau. Today we see again a targeted action of the federal police towards the entire Roma Travellers community in Belgium.

<http://ergonetnetwork.org/2019/05/police-action-against-roma-travellers-community-in-belgium/>

23 May

No voice, no future? Roma ignored as Europe goes to polls

A report and interview with Roma woman activist from a settlement just outside of Cluj-Napoca in Romania; and commentary from Soraya Post, one of the handful of MEPs of Roma origin who sit in the European Parliament.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/23/no-voice-no-future-roma-ignored-as-europe-goes-to-polls>

24 May

The Romanian Roma couple in Italy contesting key local elections

And finally, a Roma couple who have had enough of being 'the other' and the subject of abuse and discrimination, and are standing as candidates outside of Bari in Southern Italy.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/romanian-roma-couple-italy-contesting-european-elections-190523202230279.html>

14 May

Amnesty International: Defend the Roma in Naples – action by 25 June

Finally, a call to action. Please read this link and consider writing to the President of the Council of Ministers in Rome, Italy about the treatment of Roma in Campania....

Around 500 Roma people, including around 150 children, pregnant women and older people have been left homeless after being forcibly evicted by the authorities from their settlement in municipality of Giugliano in Campania, in southern Italy, on 10 May. The Roma families have been made homeless and

are living in inhuman conditions as the authorities have failed to provide them with alternative housing.

See the text of a 'model letter' and more information. Write before 25 June if possible!

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR3003542019ENGLISH.pdf>

And finally.....

Just as we were going to publish, we hear the news that the MPs on the House of Commons Home Affairs select committee have published the outcome of their inquiry into the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS). Their report is available here.

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmhaff/1945/194502.htm>

The MPs recommend that:

- EU citizens legally resident in the UK before Brexit should have their rights protected and entitlement to remain enshrined in law.
- The Settlement Scheme should operate as a means for EU citizens to obtain formal, physical confirmation of their status, not just as a digital system.
- The granting of legal rights and the Settlement Scheme should operate in the same way if the UK leaves the EU with or without a deal.
- Improvements must be made to the application process which has been blighted by technical issues.
- The Scheme must identify ways of supporting children and vulnerable individuals to apply.
- The Government must clarify its intentions towards those who fail to apply.

The chairperson of the Home Affairs committee, Yvette Cooper, said:

"The Government's current plans for the EU Settlement Scheme show they are not learning the lessons from the Windrush scandal. The problems faced by the Windrush generation showed how easily individuals can fall through gaps in

the system through no fault of their own and how easily lives can be destroyed if the Government gets this wrong.

Views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily suggest that they are in accordance with the trustees of the Roma Support Group.

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Barrow Cadbury Trust.**