



Introduction and welcome

Now we have entered a second period of lockdown in the UK and cases across Europe are on the rise, we wish for the safety and wellbeing of all of our readers during this time.

This month's newsletter will focus on:

- The announcement of our 2020 Annual General Meeting
 - An update on the #DeniedMyBackup campaign
 - An article from VICE on the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) and Roma
 - A September 2020 Report on the EUSS from the University of Oxford's Migration Observatory
 - An article from Community Care on *how structural racism faced by Roma families in the child protection system can be tackled*
 - The UK's adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition
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Announcing our 2020 Annual General Meeting



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Dear All,

Roma Support Group (RSG) is pleased to invite you to 22nd Annual General Meeting

Date: Thursday 19th November 2020
Time: 17.30 – 19.00
Venue: Online platform to be confirmed

RSVP to info@romasupportgroup.org.uk by Thursday 12th November 2020

Please note, we will email access link and further details to registered participants only.





Artwork by Robert Czibi

RSG is hosting its AGM via Zoom on 19th November 2020 from 17.30 – 19.00.

The draft agenda includes updates from our projects, a presentation on the achievements of children in the community and an address from the Chair.

If you would like to attend, RSVP to info@romasupportgroup.org.uk by Thursday 12th November 2020.

If you would like to become a member of RSG, please fill out the [Annual Membership Application Form](#). This will entitle you to vote at the AGM.

EU Settlement Scheme

#DeniedMyBackup campaign

On 19th October, the House of Commons **rejected** the Lords amendment to the Immigration Bill to provide EU citizens with physical documented proof of their EUSS status.

This means the UK Government has missed a key opportunity to protect vulnerable

EU citizens by providing a physical backup to digital-only proof of status. RSG remains concerned that with the "hostile environment" still in place, many in the Roma community with low digital skills will struggle to prove their immigration status to landlords, employers and jobcentres when the system changes overnight from 1st July 2021.

Stephen Timms MP referred to Roma Support Group and our report on the impact of digital-only status during his speech in the Commons.



the3million has published a [newsletter](#) in response to the Commons vote, including a statement reflecting on the #DeniedMyBackup campaign and the following commitment:

We vow to continue the #DeniedMyBackup campaign and reach out to MPs and the Government until common sense prevails

RSG shares the3million's sentiment that the campaign has been a valuable experience for our organisation. We were able to generate publicity on the issue of digital-only status by establishing links with media organisations and politicians. We helped to shape the debate and bring the experiences of Roma EU citizens to the floor of Parliament. **The knowledge we have gained and the relationships we have established has put us in a strong position to exert our influence and launch future campaigns.**

As the3million makes clear, the #DeniedMyBackup campaign is not over:

'The government can change its policy any time it wants to, it does not need an act of parliament to allow for physical documents. We have enormous willpower and we have the arguments - we must keep making the case.'

We would like to thank everyone who has supported the campaign so far. We urge our readers to be vocal on this issue and to continue contributing to the campaign on the3million's [website](#).

Keep an eye on our newsletter and Twitter feed [@RomaSupport](#) for further news on the campaign.

VICE article

RSG has contributed to an [article](#) from VICE focusing on difficulties that EU citizens in the UK are facing in securing their futures. It reveals how **many EU citizens, including Roma, are still unaware of the EUSS:**

'A recent report from Oxford University's Migration Observatory notes that "100 percent coverage of the eligible EU citizen population within a period of a couple of years is not likely." They cite other UK government programmes – such as child benefits or tax credits – where between 5 percent and 14 percent of people don't apply, even though it is

in their interests to do so.'

*'Even if just 5 percent of people fail to apply by the final deadline – June 2021 – **the numbers of EU citizens who become undocumented and fall foul of the hostile environment would be in the hundreds of thousands.**'*

In the article, we continue our appeal for physical documented proof of EUSS status and identify the dangers of digital-only status.

September 2020 report on the EUSS from the University of Oxford's Migration Observatory

Oxford University's Migration Observatory have published an updated [report](#) on the EUSS. Barriers that Roma EU citizens are facing are covered extensively in the report and it draws on RSG's EUSS [report](#) from June 2020. Barriers that the Migration Observatory have covered include:

- A lack of IT skills and access to technology in the Roma community affecting use of digital status.
- 85% of Roma applicants during Home Office beta testing did not have sufficient English reading and writing skills to navigate the EUSS process and only 3% (2 out of 69) Roma people could submit an application without the assistance of a caseworker.
- Roma applicants struggled to provide documents proving their residence in the UK for the last 5 years since many of them worked in the informal sector and had no stable housing.
- Many Roma do not have valid IDs required for the process and applying for new passports for themselves and their children can be difficult and lengthy.

These barriers have resulted in many Roma receiving pre-settled status despite being eligible for settled status.

Community Care article

Mary Marvel and Dada Felja from Law for Life have written an [article](#) for Community Care on *how structural racism faced by Roma families in the child protection system can be tackled*.

During their project between 2017 and 2020, Law for Life investigated **the disproportionate increase of Gypsy/Roma families in England facing child protection investigations compared to the size of the Gypsy/Roma child population**. Their aims were to look for *'ways to address these problems and improve access to justice for Roma families.'*

Existing research showed that *'historical disadvantages, linguistic barriers, and the fact that Roma families have predominantly negative experiences with public services and so are reluctant to engage'* contributed to the increase in social work involvement.

Law for Life's investigation uncovered three main findings:

1. **Local authorities often didn't provide adequate interpreting services leading to misunderstandings, including incorrect assumptions about the intellectual capacities of Roma parents.**
2. **Roma parents often lacked knowledge about what was expected of them, both in terms of parental responsibilities and in engaging with child protection investigations, and that this had an impact on the outcomes of care proceedings.**

3. *Children's services and courts work with Roma families in ways that many Roma parents do not understand.*

In the course of their investigation, Law for Life worked with three Roma organisations: Roma Support Group (London), Roma Community Care (Derby) and Clifton Learning Partnership (Rotherham).

Working with these organisations and other stakeholders, Law for Life produced a multimedia toolkit consisting of an information guide, a short film narrated by Roma in their own language, Romanes, and community training for Roma champions.

The [independent evaluation of the project](#) found:

'the toolkit made a significant contribution to building capacity within Roma communities to engage more knowledgeably and confidently in child protection investigations. The evaluation also noted that there are indications that this helped some Roma families to keep their children in cases where they may otherwise have been removed into local authority care.'

Law for Life's project provides a model for best practice when working with Roma communities. We would like to echo Law for Life's call for children's services and professionals working with Roma families in a safeguarding context to use the resources that they have produced. These can be found on Law for Life's Advicenow [website](#).

IHRA's working definition adopted by the UK

On 8th October, the UK, along with 33 other member countries of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance **adopted** the IHRA's non-legally binding working definition of antigypsyism/anti-Roma discrimination.

The contents of the definition can be viewed **[here](#)**.

The IRHA have acknowledged that **the adoption of a working definition became all the more pressing during the COVID-19 pandemic, given the rise in anti-Roma sentiment that resulted.**

The IHRA have stated that the working definition can be used to *'help educate and sensitize politicians, media, civil society and human rights organizations to the existence of antigypsyism/anti-Roma discrimination,'* but is also a tool for anyone who wishes to use it.

We hope that the IHRA's work can influence governments across Europe to enshrine the definition in law.

And Finally...

World Day of Romani Language: 5th November

Since 2015, UNESCO has **marked** the 5th November *'to promote the preservation of Romani language and culture, improve the well-being of Romani people, and recognize the importance of all languages, whose diversity is a source of strength for all societies to share.'*

Anyone interested to learn more about the language can watch this introductory lesson

facilitated by Mihaela Zătreanu with support from European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture:



RECOGNITION OF ROMANI IN EUROPE

Council of Europe granted Romani language international recognition

- Resolution 125 (1981) called on member states to recognize Roma as ethnic minorities and offer them respect and support for own language and culture
- Recommendation of the Council of Cultural Co-operation in 1983
- Resolution 89/ 1989 – CM – consideration for the history, culture and language of Gypsies and Travellers
- In 1992 in the European Charter for Minority and National Languages, Romani was mentioned as an example of a non-territorial language
- Rec. 1203/1993 – In 1993, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution for the study of Romanes and a translation bureau
- Res. 2000/4 – In February 2000 the Committee of Ministers adopted a resolution in which the member states "opportunities to learn in the mother tongue should be provided to Roma/Gypsy children"
- In 2008 – Curriculum Framework for Romani

BARVALIPE ROMA ONLINE UNIVERSITY | ROMA CULTURAL HISTORY INITIATIVE

ROMA CULTURAL HISTORY INITIATIVE

sikljarimaske thaj lila vash o prindžjarde historjako, kulturako

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

We would be grateful if our subscribers could help us to reach out to more people by using the "Forward" button below to share the newsletter in their networks.

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

We gratefully acknowledge the support provided by the Barrow Cadbury Trust.

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