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Brexit, EU Settlement Scheme and the Roma communities in the UK

Roma Support Group
June 2020

This report presents the impact of the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS) - a mechanism by which EU citizens residing in the UK can claim residency after Brexit - on Roma communities in the UK, including barriers and recommendations.

Roma Support Group (RSG)

The Roma Support Group is the first Roma-led charity organisation (Charity No. 1103782) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (Company Registration No. 04645981) in the UK. Since its founding in 1998, the organisation has assisted thousands of Roma families in accessing welfare, housing, education, health and employment, as well as empowering Roma communities through a wide range of cultural, advocacy and campaigning programmes.

During the last 22 years we have built a wealth of expertise on Roma issues and have become the leading experts in this field. We have a strong track-record of influencing public policy towards the Roma, at local, national and European levels. We work with local authorities across the UK, providing training and consultancy to enable them to respond effectively to the needs of their Roma residents.

For more information about the Roma Support Group, please see our website: www.romasupportgroup.org.uk

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- Community Works (Bradford)
- Darnall Wellbeing (Sheffield)
- New Europeans
- Settled
- St Edmunds Nursery School and Children Centre (Bradford)

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Executive Summary

This report presents the impact of the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS) - a mechanism by which EU citizens residing in the UK can claim residency after Brexit - on Roma communities in the UK, including barriers and recommendations. The information in this report has been collated and interpreted by the Roma Support Group (RSG) between June 2019 and February 2020, drawing on its extensive community-based work, including its Roma & Brexit Campaigning and Policy Project. Also, the information presented in this report reflects the experiences of other organisations supporting thousands of Roma through the EUSS process.

Overall, the evidence in this report suggests that the EUSS is a plausible system for granting UK residency, but that there are substantial barriers to Roma people gaining knowledge of and access to this system. Barriers take the form of: lack of access to trusted information sources; lack of access to technology, through which digital status can be accessed; and lack of valid IDs. There are further barriers for women, elderly people, children and rough sleepers, who do not possess evidence on their residency in the UK or valid IDs.

The report concludes that a considerable part of the community is still not aware of the EUSS process, or could not make an application yet. In addition, Roma groups need more support and resources to be able to meet the demand for EUSS support coming from their Roma clients. Another conclusion reflects the misinformation, lack of understanding and impracticality Roma experience around the digital status.

The RSG recommends that substantive support be given to Roma people needing to apply to the EUSS, in terms of practical support through the application process. Roma-led, community-based charities are best placed to provide this support, as trusted centres of care. The RSG recommends that these charities be better resourced and have their capacity developed in order to best deliver this mandate. Furthermore, the RSG makes recommendations to be considered by the Government in order to make the EUSS process more accessible for the Roma communities.

1. Background information

In 2016, the British public voted by a majority of 52% for the UK to leave the European Union in a public referendum known as the 'Brexit Referendum'.

In March 2017, the UK Government officially initiated the EU exit process by activating Article 50, stipulating that the UK will leave the EU by the 29th March 2019. This date was known as "Brexit Day." Due to disagreements at the political level, Brexit Day was delayed several times. Following the December 2019 General Election, the Government passed legislation stipulating for Brexit to occur on the 31st January 2020.

In order to secure the rights of EU citizens living in the UK after Brexit, the Government has developed a new immigration system designed to grant UK residency to all EU citizens living in the UK according to UK domestic law. The scheme is called the EU Settlement Scheme¹ (EUSS) and was officially launched on the 29th March 2019. The EUSS allows all EU citizens living in the UK by the 31st December 2020 to make applications under the scheme until the 30th June 2021.

2. Introduction

According to Salford University's research ('Migrant Roma in the UK', 2013)², there are at least 200,000 Roma people in Britain with the vast majority of them being EU citizens. As EU citizens, Roma migrants are amongst the groups acutely affected by the EUSS. Since the Referendum in 2016, the RSG has been campaigning to raise awareness about the challenges and difficulties that Roma communities face in the context of Brexit and the EUSS.

By January 2020, 3.1 million applications were made under the EUSS and 2.7 million have been granted temporary (Pre-Settled Status) or indefinite residence (Settled Status)³. It is very difficult to estimate how many Roma have applied to the EUSS so far and how many still need to apply.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families>

² https://www.salford.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1155666/Migrant_Roma_in_the_UK_final_report_October_2013.pdf

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/Government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/865367/eu-settlement-scheme-statistics-january-2020.pdf

Before the EUSS was officially launched, the Home Office ran a series of Private Beta (PB) tests between August 2018 and March 2019. Three tests assessed the scheme's functionality with different groups: NHS staff and university staff and students (known as PB1), vulnerable groups (PB2), and the general public (PB3).

The RSG was one of the organisations involved in the PB2 phase, supporting 69 clients out of whom 64 had their EUSS applications submitted. All applicants have been granted status with one applicant initially being granted the wrong status.

Our analysis based on this experience⁴ highlighted some concerns regarding how the EUSS would impact Roma communities, including difficulties in:

- Accessing the scheme due to its online-only availability;
- Making applications due to limited English and IT skills;
- Providing evidence due to limited IT skills;
- Managing any problems met during the application process;
- Making applications for Roma women who provide childcare and are unemployed.

Following the launch of the EUSS in March 2019, the Home Office announced funding availability for organisations to provide support to vulnerable EU citizens making EUSS applications. Consequently, the Government has awarded £9 million to 57 organisations across the UK to provide EUSS support to vulnerable groups. At least 10 out of the 57 organisations funded by the Home Office provide EUSS support to Roma community members. The RSG is one of the charities providing EUSS support under this programme as a partner in a consortium of organisations led by Crisis.⁵

Since June 2019, the RSG has started the Roma & Brexit Campaigning and Policy Project with funding secured from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Transition Advice Fund⁶ and Barrow Cadbury Trust. The project aims to oversee the progress of the EUSS for Roma communities in the UK by raising Roma migrants' awareness about the EUSS, supporting them to access it, supporting organisations working with Roma and conducting campaigning and policy work based on the evidence gathered.

This report intends to bring forward information on how the EUSS has been applied to the Roma community in the UK. It also presents information on specific issues of concern for the Roma community and provides recommendations for moving forward. Information collected and provided in this report is based on the RSG's direct engagement with

⁴ https://drive.google.com/file/d/1c_Yvx_S10Zc2UgE8z8Ql4chvscWBHRRS/view

⁵ <https://www.crisis.org.uk/>

⁶ <https://www.thinknpc.org/examples-of-our-work/initiatives-were-working-on/transition-advice-fund/>

approximately 2,600 Roma people and more than 30 charity organisations and local authorities on matters related to Brexit and the EUSS.

Out of the 30 organisations which the RSG has been networking with to provide EUSS support, 6 organisations, including the RSG, have reported that by the end of February 2020 they have informed over 7,000 Roma people about the EUSS and have supported more than 3,000 to make applications.

The data and estimates presented in this report are based on the experiences recorded by the RSG and its partners during EUSS Information Sessions and Application Workshops as well as one-to-one support provided to Roma community members across the UK.

Please note that because it is hard to produce exact statistical data on Roma community engagement with the EUSS, we will use the following categories of estimates based on our data collection and analysis:

Several Roma	- 10%–15% of people who were engaged;
Many Roma	- 15%–25% of people who were engaged;
Significant number of Roma people	- 25%–50% of people who were engaged;
Majority of the Roma community	- 50%–75% of people who were engaged;
Vast majority of the Roma community	- 75%–95% of people who were engaged.

All the information provided in this report reflects opinions of professionals delivering EUSS support to Roma communities across the UK.

3. Brexit, the EU Settlement Scheme and the Roma community in the UK

Since the Brexit Referendum, Roma people have expressed their concerns:

- **On their presence in the UK:**

"We're all holding our breath to see what's going to happen on the other side of Brexit. We're all very worried that many of our families won't be able to demonstrate that they have been resident in the UK."

Martin Burrell, chair of the Luton Roma Trust, July 2018.⁷

"So, when people ask what is going to happen with us after the Brexit, they are very worried that we will have to go back to our countries of origin, and that it is going to affect our children. Our children, if someone asks, 'where are you from', they do not say we are from Poland, from Romania. My children say, 'I am Scottish'. They are very proud, and they are very happy to be here because we found that Glasgow is our home, UK is our home. We don't have a country, so we are very happy to be here, and we don't want to be sent back to our country of origin."

Sonia Michalewicz – Friends of Romano Lav, July 2018.⁸

- **On securing their rights through the Permanent Residence (PR) system:**

"I give you one example about residency, my sister in law applied for residency and although she paid about £300 and they still did not give us residency for the children because they say that her children are not entitled. She will need to do an appeal and pay £80 again....It is very hard."

Martina Stipakova, Clifton Learning Partnership, July 2018.⁹

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/02/roma-communities-fear-deportation-in-post-brexit-britain>

⁸ <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Brexit-The-Impact-on-Roma-Communities-in-the-UK-Transcript.pdf>

- **On making applications to the EUSS:**

"All my family is here; all of my children and grandchildren live in the UK today. And so do I since 2009. I want to be near them in the future. Brexit scares me. I tried to apply [for settled status] but couldn't get through."

Stan, Roma community member, January 2019.¹⁰

- **On hate crime triggered by Brexit:**

Last year, my cousin was speaking to her daughter in our language while she was waiting for the tube and a woman attacked her. She said: 'You have no place in this country' and punched her in the face. I hear so many stories like this from my family and friends and it makes me sad. I no longer speak on the phone in my own language when I get on the bus. I don't know why these people don't like us. Maybe it's not even because we're Roma, but because we're European. I believe that this is happening because of Brexit.¹¹

Anonymous, March 2019

3.1 Roma Support Group's experience of the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS)

Based on the RSG's experience of supporting Roma people with their EUSS applications under PB2, we have identified that:

- All applicants knew about the EUSS from RSG staff;
- Only 3% of Roma were able to submit an application completely independently;

⁹ <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Brexit-The-Impact-on-Roma-Communities-in-the-UK-Transcript.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://twitter.com/RomaSupport/status/1085948677900914688>

¹¹ <https://metro.co.uk/2019/03/15/brexit-has-made-me-afraid-of-speaking-my-native-language-in-the-uk-8892060/>

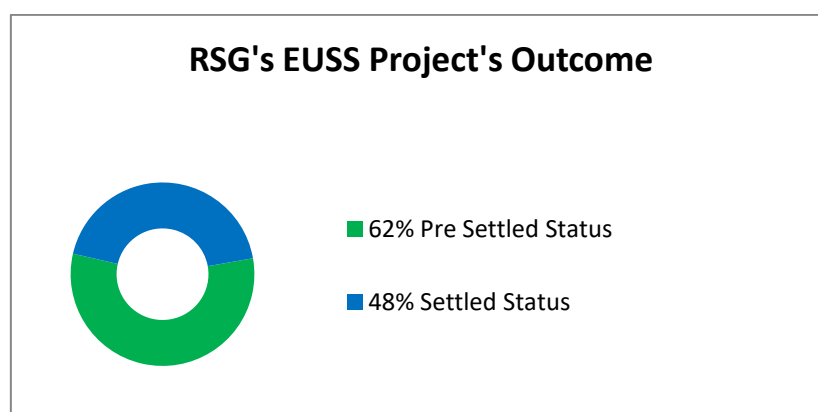
- Approximately 30% of applicants were required to provide further evidence (mostly women, the elderly and people receiving health-related benefits);
- All applicants were granted status with one out of 64 people initially granted the wrong status.

This suggested that the vast majority of the Roma community need language and IT support in order to make applications; a significant number of Roma people require additional support and time to submit applications; and that the EUSS would be a suitable means of securing residency for the Roma community as long as appropriate support is in place. Due to their barriers, many Roma community members find it difficult to access mainstream information outlets and, therefore, cannot access information about the EUSS.

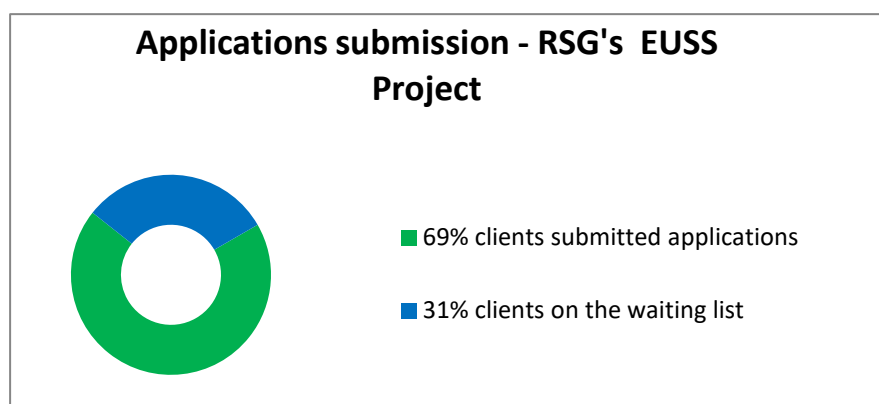
Since June 2019, our Roma & Brexit Campaigning and Policy project has been gathering evidence of awareness and progress with the EUSS among Roma community members. It has worked with 30 organisations providing EUSS support to Roma across the UK and closely collaborated with our EUSS project offering support to Roma in London through the Home Office-funded programme.

As a result of this work, the RSG has engaged in total with approximately 2,600 Roma adults and children from London, Ipswich, Doncaster, Leeds and Oldham. The RSG has also facilitated EUSS support, helping more than 1,000 people to submit applications.

According to the data collected by the RSG's EUSS team by the end of February 2020, 62% of clients supported through our EUSS project were granted Pre-Settled Status and 48% were granted Settled Status.



By the end of February 2020, 31% of Roma, who requested our EUSS team's support, were on the waiting list as they could not submit their applications due to a lack of valid IDs, evidence documents and/ or other circumstances that made their cases complex.



3.2 What have we learned from Roma people?

A. Brexit/EUSS awareness	B. Attending EUSS sessions	C. Making EUSS applications	D. EUSS applications	E. Understanding Digital Status	F. Using Digital Status
Vast majority knew about Brexit but did not know how to apply for EUSS	Trust-based relationship with EUSS session provider crucial to participation	Great interest in applying for the EUSS however multiple problems prevent many to apply	Many people not able to apply due to issues with ID documents	Difficult concept to understand, anxiety related to lack of physical proof of status	Misunderstanding and confusion amongst the Roma and frontline workers; Risk of adverse decisions

A. Awareness of Brexit and the EU Settlement Scheme

- The vast majority of people, whom we have engaged with, knew about Brexit but very few were aware of more specific information, such as a timeline and changes made during the process. A lack of clarity about Brexit before the 31st January 2020 made people disengaged and confused about the process.

- Many Roma people, whom we met during our sessions, have heard about the EUSS but none of them have acquired this information through the Home Office communication outlets via radio, adverts, social media, etc. The majority of people have learned about the EUSS through news from their countries of origin, through their friends and relatives, and through their places of work. However, the vast majority of people knew only that such a scheme exists but had no further details.
- Limited English, low literacy, a limited and closed network of friends/colleagues/relatives, using social media for a social purpose rather than to acquire information, and long working hours, constitute barriers for many Roma community members to access information on the EUSS.

B. Attending EUSS events/sessions

- The vast majority of Roma people, who attended the EUSS information sessions/workshops, had a trust-based relationship with a respected community representative (Roma or non-Roma) who facilitated these sessions. The most effective communication methods for ensuring Roma attendance at these sessions were word-of-mouth and WhatsApp Messenger.

Charities reported that EUSS sessions/workshops facilitated by a respected community representative, Roma or non-Roma, have been attended by an average of 40 people, the vast majority of them being Roma. The most efficient way to engage Roma was through the Roma churches.

The most successful events were those during which practical one-to-one support was offered in addition to providing information. Investing time and resources in building relations with local charities/organisations or Roma representatives was a key factor to ensure successful engagement.

C. Making EUSS applications

- The vast majority of Roma people engaged by the RSG and/or other Roma/non-Roma organisations expressed their interest to make EUSS applications.
- The majority of Roma attending EUSS information sessions decided to make their application on the same day if one-to-one support was available.
- Approximately 20% of Roma attendees could not make their applications due to a lack of valid IDs and/ or difficulties in obtaining IDs, especially for their children.

Case study

Slovak Roma living in northern England reported difficulties in obtaining passports, especially for their children born in the UK. The waiting times for appointments at the Slovak Embassy (SE) is approximately 3 to 4 months. The SE operates only in London and due to financial and time restrictions, many Roma are not able to obtain their passports in the UK. Some Slovak Roma have already travelled to Slovakia to apply for passports for their children and many are still planning to do so.

- Due to a lack of clarity on criminality and suitability criteria, many people are reluctant to submit their EUSS applications even though they have nothing to be concerned about. Sharing examples of people, who have successfully applied for the EUSS would help others with similar backgrounds to make the decision to apply. Furthermore, a system should be put in place to obtain police records more easily to avoid unnecessary work for all parties involved.
- Some people, who have decided to apply, were informed that their applications cannot be confirmed and will receive an update in six months' time. This puts additional pressure on EUSS support services as clients return to seek Home Office updates. There are also people who are not even aware that they have criminal records.

Case study

N and his wife V have very limited knowledge of English. N is illiterate and V has limited command of reading and writing in the language of her country of origin. Because their mother tongue is Romanes (language of Roma people), they have limited command of the language spoken in their country of origin. They made their EUSS applications together in January 2020, with support from a local charity. Two weeks later, V was granted Pre-Settled Status and N received an email informing him that due to his existing police records, his application was put on hold and an update will be issued in six months' time. N recalls going to the police station after he had an argument with his wife in public a year before, but he was never informed that he was issued with a criminal record. He is now worried because his application is still pending.

- Many people (e.g. older people and women providing childcare), who might be eligible for the EUSS and have not yet applied, believe that this system is only for those who are currently employed and that those who do not work or receive benefits will be refused.

- Rough sleeping Roma and people working in cash-in-hand employment, i.e. casual workers waiting to be picked up for work at large retail sites such as B&Q, believe that the EUSS is just a way for the government to identify them so that they can be deported. Many rough sleeping people do not trust outreach workers employed by homelessness charities and local authorities, and therefore, some of them perceive free EUSS support as suspicious.

Case study

On the 24th January 2020 a group of 14 rough sleeping Roma, whom the RSG has been engaged with for over 8 months, came to our office seeking support. Eight of them had been working for the last 3 months and several showed their payslips to prove it. They told us that they were informed by their recruitment agencies that there was no more work available for them. They also reported that on the 23rd January 2020, a homelessness service's outreach worker and police officers informed them that if by the end of January 2020, they did not have "documents", they "will have to leave the country". On the next day, 11 of them successfully made applications to the EUSS.

D. EUSS applications

- During the last year, the RSG has delivered 21 EUSS info sessions and met many Roma people who had no valid IDs and were unable to submit their EUSS applications. We also observed that many Roma children born in the UK had no valid passport and/ or national ID, which was confirmed by other organisations providing EUSS support to Roma in the UK.
- Many Roma (especially Romanian Roma) have only national IDs, which, by EUSS regulations, are required to be sent to the Home Office to be verified. It is hard to determine how many people have sent their national IDs to the Home Office as most people feel reluctant to send away the only ID document in their possession.
- Approx. 25%–30% of Roma applicants have been asked to provide further evidence to prove their residence. The majority of people in this category are represented by elder Roma people and women providing childcare, although in many cases the mothers will be named on child benefit or tax credit awards.

Many organisations providing EUSS support to Roma communities across the UK, confirmed that that some of their clients, who are eligible for Settled Status, choose to apply for Pre-Settled Status once they realise that there are no records of their residency in the UK. One organisation confirmed that approximately 90% of the

Roma women they supported, applied for Pre-Settled Status despite living in the UK for more than 5 years.

- EUSS applications made on behalf of children have also encountered difficulties for two main reasons: (i) Many Roma believe that children born in the UK do not have to apply; (ii) Many children do not have valid ID documents and their parents plan to travel to their country of origin to obtain passports and make their EUSS applications on their return to the UK.

Case study

S attended one of the EUSS workshops facilitated by the RSG and requested support to make an EUSS application. S arrived in the UK in 1998 seeking asylum. She is a mother of six children and four of them were born in the UK. She had no ID documents at the time of her arrival to the UK but her partner, P had a valid passport. They were granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) but S's name was not included in the ILR letter.

A while ago, S obtained her birth certificate and later on she and P got married. They continue to live together, but S still does not have an ID and all their children have only birth certificates.

Because S does not have a valid ID, the family cannot obtain ID documents for their children, as their embassy requires both parents to have valid IDs when applying for their children's IDs. S has contacted authorities in her country of origin regarding her ID but was unsuccessful in obtaining it. Because she does not possess any ID, she cannot travel to her country of origin. Two of her children are now adults and they face the same situation. They also tried to apply for British passports but were unsuccessful.

E. Understanding Digital Status

- Even when provided with information relating to digital status and instructions on how to access the online EUSS account, the vast majority of Roma people still choose to have screenshots of their confirmation letters on their mobile phones or even have the confirmation letters printed.

"Digital status" is a difficult concept to understand for many Roma community members. Many NGOs report that their Roma clients, who applied for the EUSS on their own or with other third-party support, had difficulties accessing their status because they lost access to the phone number or email address connected to the account, or did not have contact with the person who initially supported them.

- According to our findings, the vast majority of Roma people require support to access and manage their online EUSS account and would benefit from having physical evidence of their status.

Case study

V has lived in the UK since 2007. When he made his EUSS application he was granted the wrong status despite providing the necessary evidence. With support from a local charity, V contacted the Settlement Resolution Centre (SRC) who were able to identify the error. V was sent a letter confirming his correct status. He has never accessed his digital status because he was not aware that it existed nor did he possess the skills to access it. After 8 months, V's friend informed him about the online account and helped him to access his digital status. It was only then that V discovered his digital status was displaying an incorrect status that was different to the status his confirmation letter confirmed. V returned to the local charity who contacted the SRC. Today, both the confirmation letter and V's digital status are displaying the correct status that he is entitled to.

- Although people feel a sense of relief once their applications have been fully submitted, many continue to be anxious as they are not aware whether or not they have received an update email from the Home Office, whether they are expected to provide further evidence, and/or whether they were granted EUSS status.

Case study

A family received support to submit their EUSS applications. They were provided with translated follow-up instructions, including information on how to check their emails. After submitting their applications, the father approached the organisation which supported him, to report that despite being provided with instructions, they still cannot check if any emails were sent by the Home Office. The advice worker was able to check and identify that all family members, apart from the mother, were granted Settled Status. The mother was requested to provide additional evidence as she was missing information for two years of her 5 years residency. Because she was unable to produce more evidence, she decided to apply for Pre-Settled Status instead. Although a Home Office case worker has been assigned to this case, the family is very anxious whether they will be able to communicate due to their limited knowledge of English.

F. Using Digital Status

- The RSG and other organisations working with Roma across the UK confirmed that there is a lot of misunderstanding regarding the use of digital EUSS status not only amongst the Roma community but also amongst frontline workers, employers or landlords.
- Having physical proof of one's EUSS status will decrease confusion shared by many people. It will also act as a reasonable safeguarding measure by protecting vulnerable people from encountering adverse decisions relating to their status.

Case studies

NHS – S is a mother of two who has been living in the UK since 2018. With support from a local charity, she made her EUSS application and has been granted Pre-Settled Status. A few months later, S reported that she had a hospital appointment and she was asked to provide proof of her status. S approached the charity and requested to have her confirmation letter printed because she struggled to access her email.

STUDENT FINANCE – K applied for Settled Status with support from a local charity. When applying for Student Finance he was asked to provide proof of his status for the application to be accepted. In February 2020, K approached the charity requesting to have his EUSS confirmation letter printed. Unfortunately, K's Settled Status application is still pending and therefore the charity was not able to assist with his request.

JOB CENTRE – W was granted Settled Status. He made an application for Universal Credit but encountered difficulties. He reported to a local charity which had supported his EUSS application that he failed the Habitual Residence Test despite providing the printed Home Office confirmation letter that he had received. The Job Centre adviser informed him that the letter is not a valid document and that they will contact the Home Office directly to confirm his status.

3.3 What have we learnt from other organisations?

A. Roma-led organisations	B. Roma-supporting organisations (with previous experience)	C. Roma-supporting organisations (with no previous experience)	D. Schools	E. Local Authorities (LAs)
Lack of designated funding; Lack of fundraising skills, capacity and support needed to apply for funding available	Roma employees, trust-based relationship built over the years leading to high demand for support with EUSS; Issues with capacity and resources	Difficulties in outreaching Roma communities; Limited effective engagement with local Roma communities	Issues with communication between schools and Roma parents	Limited response and engagement with LAs; Limited support for Roma residents

Since June 2019, the Roma & Brexit Campaigning and Policy project has engaged with over 30 different organisations from across the UK, providing or aiming to provide EUSS support to Roma communities. These have included several Home Office-funded organisations and eight local authorities.

Brexit has raised concerns about Roma communities amongst many organisations that have never worked with Roma before. Their interest in supporting Roma communities has exceeded our expectations and benefitted thousands of Roma people from all across the UK. Our EUSS work was greatly enhanced by our collaboration with these agencies.

The administrative delays related to the Home Office-funded EUSS programme meant that many charities could not begin their support activities until July–August 2019. Although their activities were run at full operational level around September–October 2019, the Home Office’s lack of clarity regarding the funding continuity for this programme beyond the end of March 2020, limited its operational scope.

A. Roma-led organisations

Although we have identified five other Roma-led organisations providing EUSS support in the UK, only the RSG has received designated funding to carry out this work. The other four Roma-led organisations are not funded to provide EUSS support, responding as best they can to the increased demand for this support from their clients. We are also aware of

several Roma activists/professionals and groups of Roma activists, who support their Roma clients with EUSS applications.

A lack of capacity, limited fundraising skills and a lack of support prevent these organisations from applying for funding, which limits the support they can provide to their Roma communities.

While not engaged as partners in fundraising bids, some Roma-led organisations were asked to provide help to other NGOs, which are funded to offer EUSS support to Roma communities. Although Roma-led organisations can rely on other grant-funded NGOs to provide this support, this does not sufficiently meet the needs and demand from their community members.

Case study

M is a Roma activist representing a local Roma-led group. Due to limited resources and skills, his group could not apply for EUSS funding. He reported that the EUSS support provided to their clients comes from another grant-funded organisation. Due to limited resources, the organisation providing support can only see four Roma clients every week. This means that the EUSS support service is heavily oversubscribed and fully booked for several months ahead.

A trust-based relationship between Roma-led organisations and their communities generates an overwhelming demand for EUSS support from their Roma clients. Due to their limited capacity, these organisations have not always been able deliver outreach services to all groups of Roma migrants (i.e. rough sleepers). As such outreach work requires additional time and manpower, agencies who plan to engage with these vulnerable groups of Roma people, should adequately resource Roma-led organisations to enable them to do it.

B. Roma-supporting organisations (with previous engagement with the Roma community)

There are several organisations that have historically worked with their local Roma communities. Some of them have developed services to provide EUSS support to their Roma clients, understanding that that no other organisation would be able to provide it.

The majority of these organisations employ Roma staff and report an increased demand for EUSS support. Their success is as a result of trust-based relationships, which they have established over the years with Roma communities, supporting hundreds of families each year.

With very few Roma-led organisations able to provide EUSS support, Roma-supporting organisations are critical in providing help to Roma communities across the UK. Providing this support puts pressure on their capacity and resources, hence further funding and support are essential to maximise the number of Roma adults and children engaging with the requirements of the EUSS process to enable them to exercise their right to permanent residence in the UK.

C. Roma-supporting organisations (with little or no previous engagement with the Roma community)

We have also seen increased interest to support Roma communities from several Home Office-funded organisations, who have limited or no previous engagement with Roma communities and none employ Roma staff. In many cases, their support was facilitated by Roma activists and professionals from Roma-led organisations, who - with very few exceptions - have not been resourced to do it.

Some organisations reported having difficulties to outreach Roma communities, particularly in areas without Roma-led organisational infrastructure. Examples include Birmingham and Southend-on-Sea, where despite large Roma communities, no effective engagement has been established with local Roma residents.

It is very encouraging to see more organisations stepping in to offer support for Roma communities, making an enormous difference to the lives of thousands of Roma families across the UK. However, we would like to emphasise the need to adequately resource local Roma-led organisations and Roma activists, to enable them to carry out their essential work and successfully engage Roma communities.

Examples of positive engagement:

New Europeans¹² - Since the Brexit Referendum (2016), New Europeans have engaged with Roma communities in London, providing information regarding the Brexit process, rights of EU citizens after Brexit, Permanent Residence process and the EU Settlement Scheme. They have ensured that information is accessible to the community, provided interpreters, and facilitated appropriate EUSS support for hundreds of Roma people including complex cases.

Settled¹³ was set up in 2019 with the purpose of supporting vulnerable EU citizens in the UK to successfully register for and navigate the EU Settlement Scheme. Recognising the vulnerabilities of the Roma community, Settled has developed a specific strategy to engage with Roma. This has included targeted communication on their website,¹⁴ delivering outreach services for Roma communities, and recruiting volunteers who speak languages accessible to the Roma community, including Romanes. Settled has informed and has

¹² <https://neweuropeans.net/>

¹³ <https://settled.org.uk/en/>

¹⁴ <https://settled.org.uk/en/my-circumstances/roma-settled-status-information/>

provided outreach services to over 1,000 Roma people and supported several hundred Roma to make EUSS applications.

D. Schools

To provide EUSS support to as many Roma community members as possible during the past 12 months, the RSG has emailed over 400 schools in London, including those, which - according to Department for Education's data - have Gypsy/Roma pupils on their roll. Despite these efforts, only four EUSS Information sessions were delivered in schools to a total of 6 attendees. The schools informed parents about these events solely through email.

Together with our partners we have also engaged with 11 other schools who had a track record of positive engagement with EU parents, and/ or employed Roma staff. These schools have been proactive in directly contacting Roma and EU parents through emails, letters and text messages. Consequently, EUSS information sessions held at these schools were attended by over 350 people.

Case study

S is a teacher of English as an Additional Language (EAL) in a school with a significant number of EU pupils, including Roma. S had previous involvement with a local charity providing support to the Roma community. S and the charity agreed to hold an EUSS information session for EU pupils and their parents. On the day of the information session, eleven EU parents attended. Six parents made their applications with support from a charity adviser and three other participants realised that their applications were incomplete.

S, who attended the session, commented: *"Thanks very much for this session. I was not aware of EUSS process and its requirements. This is very serious and it is now clear to me that this is something we have to put more efforts into. I am concerned there are many who still don't know about it and many who got it wrong."*

Apart from the schools, which actively support their EU parents and children, school staff are largely unaware of the EUSS process or have a very limited understanding of this issue. Additionally, the communication methods used to publicise EUSS support in schools have not often resulted in effective collaboration because very few schools across the UK employ Roma staff. All Roma staff working in schools whom we spoke to reported huge demand for EUSS support from both Roma families and from charities aiming to work with Roma. NGOs reported that the most successful EUSS information events held in schools which they attended were organised in collaboration with Roma staff working in schools.

E. Local Authorities

During last year, the Roma & Brexit Campaigning and Policy project has directly engaged with eight Local Authorities (LA) with only one LA investing in the delivery of EUSS support to benefit local Roma families. We have also worked with six other LAs, helping them to prepare their action plans for supporting Roma residents, which have not materialised so far. We have also made several attempts to engage with one particular LA with a large number of Roma residents, but so far our proposals have been disregarded.

Case study

Sheffield is one of the cities in the UK with a high number of Roma residents. Over the years, Sheffield Council has looked for ways of engagement with the Roma community. Understanding barriers and inequalities experienced by some communities, the Council has decided to provide funding to a local charity to deliver EUSS support to all vulnerable EU residents living in Sheffield. The Council and the local charity ensured that appropriate support was put in place to facilitate Roma access and hundreds of Roma have already been supported. Many more can be expected to benefit from this programme as the Council decided that their funding will continue.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on our analysis of information collated from our own and other organisations' direct work with thousands of Roma migrants supporting them through the EUSS process, we have listed below a list of main concerns, conclusions and recommendations.

Concerns	Conclusions
Lack of valid IDs	10–15% of all Roma, whom we have engaged with, including children, did not have valid IDs. Due to long waiting times for appointments at embassies and children's school times, many people wait until the summer holiday to travel to their country of origin and obtain new IDs. (Note: COVID-19 might affect this option.)
Lack of HMRC and DWP records	15–25% of Roma women and elderly Roma, whom we have engaged with, applied for Pre-Settled Status despite having lived in the UK for more than 5 years. This is due to the difficulties that they face in providing the relevant documents needed.
Children not making applications	15–25% of Roma children, whom we have engaged with, did not have any IDs and their parents were not aware that they have to apply to the EUSS. Many Roma children are entitled to British citizenship but are also not applying for it due to a lack of information and the

	financial means to pay the fees.
People with criminal records not making applications	People with criminal records are holding back from applying to the EUSS because the Home Office guidance on criminality and suitability criteria is not clear.
Rough sleepers not making applications	75–95% of rough sleeping Roma people possess only their national ID and are reluctant to make applications when they are told that they have to send their IDs to the Home Office for verification. Some also believe that the Government will use their information to deport them.
Digital Status	Evidence shows that Digital Status does not work in practice. Roma people find it very difficult to access and professionals/frontline workers working for public services are not instructed on how to use it.
Limited support for Roma-led organisations	Organisations are making great efforts to provide support to their Roma communities across the UK. However, in some places, support is limited or non-existent. In many cases, the existing support heavily relies on the voluntary work of Roma individuals or on the unfunded work of overstretched Roma charities.

Recommendations	
1.	<p>Need for further support for Roma communities</p> <p>The EUSS process has enabled more effective engagement between NGOs, Roma communities and public services across the UK. Roma-led/Roma-supporting organisations report that there is high demand for EUSS support from Roma community members and these organisations have significant waiting lists.</p> <p>We recommend that all stakeholders continue making efforts to support Roma communities through the EUSS process.</p>
2.	<p>Digital Status</p> <p>Roma people experience enormous difficulty in accessing and using their Digital Status because they are not adequately equipped to access it. Continuing to rely on Digital Status as of January 2021 will put additional pressure on the third sector and public services in their efforts to address these difficulties.</p> <p>We recommend that the Government reconsiders its position on Digital Status and issue physical evidence of EUSS status.</p>
3.	Paper Application Forms

	<p>So far, only 5% of Roma clients supported by the RSG have been referred for additional support when their cases were particularly complex. We expect that more complex cases will arise as we approach the EUSS deadline in June 2021.</p> <p>We recommend that the Government considers providing guidance to the Home Office EUSS workers to make the paper application forms more accessible, which would allow applicants to prove their identity and submit evidence using an alternative way.</p>
4.	<p>Status Update Reminders</p> <p>According to our data, 50–75% of Roma people have been granted Pre-Settled Status.</p> <p>We recommend that the Government sends out reminders before the Pre-Settled status expires and allows applicants enough time to update their status.</p>
5.	<p>Obtaining passports</p> <p>NGOs across the UK report that many Roma do not have valid IDs and that applying for new (or first) passports for children can be a difficult and lengthy process. Slovak Roma seem to be most affected by this issue, waiting approximately four months for their appointments at the Slovak Embassy.</p> <p>We recommend that the Government and EU Embassies facilitate better access for Roma community members to obtain new passports or alternative ID's.</p>
6.	<p>Targeted advertising</p> <p>Many NGOs observed limited understanding about the EUSS process and requirements amongst schools and employers. Some self-employed EU nationals lost their jobs before Brexit Day due to confusion regarding the EUSS amongst their sub-contractors.</p> <p>We recommend that the Government takes necessary steps to advise schools, employers and sub-contractors about the EUSS and supports them to provide the most accurate information to their students, employees and sub-contractors, who are affected by the scheme.</p>
7.	<p>Criminality and suitability</p> <p>A system should be put in place to obtain police records more easily and more quickly to avoid unnecessary work for all parties involved.</p>



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Address: P.O. Box 23610, London E7 0XB
E-mail: info@romasupportgroup.org.uk