

The September 2015 issue of the Roma Support Group newsletter is briefer than usual but still includes:

- An on-line survey from Buckingham University about access to welfare benefits for European and Roma migrants
- A workshop on Friday 2 October promoted by Equal Rights Trust and Clifton Learning Partnership (Rotherham) on Roma Rights and the Equalities Act
- The film Mulo: A modern Roma ghost story
- A call for evidence from the AIRE Centre about Operation Nexus
- Two articles from Europe; one about the Hungarian crisis and the links between the government's hostility towards refugees and the prevalence of anti-Roma racism in Hungary (thanks to *Open Democracy*). And another article which is a critical assessment of the recently ended Roma Decade in Central & East European countries (thanks to Open Society Foundations)
- News from Roma Support Group; four jobs are being advertised by RSG (three mental health advocacy jobs and a deputy office manager) and details about the Annual General Meeting on Tuesday 17 November at Woodgrange Park Community Centre



[September 2015 newsletter](#)

Welcome from Roma Support Group

Welcome to the July 2015 edition of the newsletter. We want to bring you information, reflections, arguments and discussion about the issues that face Roma communities in the UK. The Roma Support Group has developed over the last fifteen years into a major service agency working for and with Roma communities, mainly in London. We run advice and advocacy sessions; education support programmes (including homework support) for children and families; a Roma Support and Engagement Programme (including tailored staff training and development); and an arts and culture programme. Recently, RSG

has been able to develop its work on developing Roma advocacy and mediation, community engagement and development, and also in policy development and information provision. This e-bulletin is one manifestation of these recent developments.

Contact us via:

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ACCESS TO WELFARE BENEFITS FOR EUROPEAN MIGRANTS; BUCKINGHAM UNIVERSITY RESEARCH

Many of you will have seen last month the Roma Support Group report into the initial impact that cuts to, and changes in access for welfare benefits, are beginning to have on migrant Roma communities in the UK. It's available on our website here:

https://drive.google.com/a/romasupportgroup.org.uk/file/d/0B2lw1_Krq5gnOGRrb3dlamRocm8/view

We have been approached by two academics - with long-standing commitments to Gypsy, Traveller, Roma people - at Buckingham University who also want to explore the impact of welfare changes on Roma communities. This research project will aim to fill the gap in information about EU/EEA Roma migrants' experiences in claiming the income-based Jobseeker's Allowance and the Housing Benefit before and after the legal changes in 2014. According to Dr Egle Dagilyte:

"It is an important pilot study which will provide real-life evidence for those who make policies and laws on social justice, and will benefit the NGOs that advise migrants. There is currently a lot 'migrant scapegoating' in the popular press and in political debates, but sadly there is not enough evidence to support whether the EU free movement of people is more beneficial or damaging to the UK economy and the society..."

In the words of Prof Margaret Greenfields:

“As recognised in numerous EU policies, Roma are a particularly vulnerable migrant group measured across diverse domains including health, education, employment and experiences of racism and discrimination. Access to adequate income and good quality accommodation - availability of which is often dependent on receipt of Housing Benefit in high-cost areas - are critical to the health and wellbeing of new migrants, and ultimately pertain to social justice and community cohesion”.

The research will take place in May-October 2015, with the findings to be published in 2016. Egle and Margaret are particularly interested in Roma activists and community members, workers with the Roma communities and welfare rights advice staff completing this short survey which should take a maximum of 10 minutes:

<https://bucks.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/roma-and-welfare-benefits>

EQUAL RIGHTS TRUST: ROMA RIGHTS AND THE EQUALITY ACT – FRIDAY 2 OCTOBER 2015

The Equal Rights Trust under the banner of “Combating Discrimination and Advancing Roma Rights” is organising a workshop with the Clifton Learning Partnership in Rotherham for Roma activists and supporters on “using the Equality Act 2010”.

The workshop is the third in a series which have previously been held in London (with Roma Support Group) and in Derby (with Roma Community Care). The Equal Rights Trust says:

“The UK has a powerful legal framework to protect Roma individuals from discrimination and to promote equality. It provides mechanisms for community organisations to advance Roma rights and requires public authorities to consider the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality for Roma when making decisions.

This one-day workshop will provide information on the rights available to Roma under the Equality Act 2010, and the duties which public service providers have to ensure equal access to public services. During the workshop, participants

will be supported to identify problems in ensuring equal access to local services which will be presented at a second event – a half day forum later in October – where representatives of local public bodies will participate.”

Topics covered will include:

- Equality law and policy in the UK (focusing on the Equality Act 2010)
- Public sector equality duty
- Development of proposals for ensuring equal access to local services for presentation to public bodies

The workshop is free. It will be held this Friday 2 October at Eastwood Village Community Centre, Erskine Rd, Rotherham S65 1RF.

But for further details, contact thiona.philips@equalrightstrust.org

MULO: A MODERN ROMA GHOST STORY

Many Roma families and communities have put down strong roots across the UK; but not all have been so fortunate. In recent years, especially in London, some Roma have had to live more informally due to the crippling high rents, sporadic work and the need to save money for relatives and family. This is the backdrop for a new and exciting film....

A message from Nick Cooke, a film maker and script writer:

We are making a unique non-profit short film in the UK film this winter, which will highlight one aspect of the Roma experience here in London.

It is a fictional narrative, which is trying to create a cultural bridge between the local community and the transient Roma community here in London.

It explores not only their social circumstances but cultural superstitions and traditions. We have been working extensively with both charities and the local community and our aim is to keep an accurate authenticity in our portrayal.

We have a wonderful young UK Roma actor (Bobi Rostas) in the lead, who we met through the Roma Support group. It will be a great opportunity for him to be able to work here in London.

We are crowd funding for the project entitled Muló and the reason I am contacting you is we need as much support as possible to spread the word. Here is a link, you can watch the pitch video which includes the trailer.

<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/mulo-a-modern-roma-ghost-story#/story>

It will be an important film for the UK and even mainland Europe, where as you know, the portrayal of the Roma is often prejudice and stereotypical.

AIRE Centre – call for evidence about Operation Nexus

Many of you will be aware of the ongoing police operation – Operation Nexus - conducted jointly with UK Visas and Immigration (formerly UK Border Agency), running immigration checks on people arrested and brought into police custody. At a Roma Refugee & Migrant Forum in London last year, one of the Operation Nexus police representatives speaking about the operation initially suggested that it was solely focused on ‘high harm’ crimes; it became apparent though that people selling flowers without a license might come within the scope of having their status checked. The evidence produced by the Metropolitan Police suggests that about half of those people arrested and checked under Nexus were EU nationals; our own anecdotal evidence at RSG suggests that a number of Roma people legitimately in the UK exercising their EU treaty rights might also have been caught up in Operation Nexus.

Therefore, we are supporting our friends and colleagues at the AIRE Centre who are inviting agencies and individuals to respond to their ‘call for evidence’ on Operation Nexus. Please see the link here; responses are welcomed until Monday 12 October 2015.

http://www.airecentre.org/data/files/The_AIRE_Centre_Call_for_Evidence_on_Operation_Nexus.pdf

ARTICLES ABOUT EUROPE

Hungary, refugees and Roma

The Visegrád Group countries that have turned their back on the refugees seeking protection and safety in Europe have, as many Roma know to their cost, always had an issue with difference and diversity. Many Roma communities in the UK are here because of the state-sanctioned prejudice and discrimination that is institutionalised in the Central & Eastern Europe. It isn't just the actions and statements of Viktor Orbán in Hungary. Nevertheless, we are pleased to carry a link to a recent article in *Open Democracy* by Annabel Tremlett and Vera Messing entitled *Hungary's future: anti-immigration, anti-multiculturalism and anti-Roma?*

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/annabel-tremlett/hungary%27s-future-antiimmigration-antimulticulturalism-and-antiro>

Why Europe's "Roma Decade" Didn't Lead to Inclusion; by Zeljko Jovanovic

Readers of this newsletter will need no reminders that we have been continual critics of the UK government's failure to take the opportunity provided by the European Commission's lead and develop a national Roma integration strategy. It is a timely reminder though to assess the effectiveness of the ten years of the '*decade of Roma inclusion*', opened in 2005 and supported by nearly all the Central and Eastern European states (apart from Poland but including Spain), the World Bank, the EC and Open Society Foundations (OSF) and many other international agencies. See the link here to the article from OSF about the progress, or absence of progress:

<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/why-europe-s-roma-decade-didn-t-lead-inclusion>

ROMA SUPPORT GROUP NEWS

JOBS

Roma Support Group is pleased to advertise three positions (four jobs). One post is for a deputy manager at RSG, for four days (28 hours) per week. The other posts are fixed term for three years to develop and provide a mental health advocacy service for Roma women and men. One post is to co-ordinate

the project for three days (21 hours) per week; the other two posts are for mental health advocates, working one day (7 hours) per week.

The closing date for the deputy manager is 19 October 2015. Details are available here:

http://romasupportgroup.org.uk/?page_id=91

The closing date for the mental health co-ordinator (one post) and advocacy workers (two posts) is 12 October 2015. Details are available here:

http://romasupportgroup.org.uk/?page_id=91

ROMA SUPPORT GROUP AGM

Tuesday 17 November from 5pm – 8.30pm

Woodgrange Park Community Centre; Bluebell Avenue, Manor Park, London, E12 6UJ (just off High Street North, Manor Park)

Speakers; training on housing issues; theatre; music; karate demonstration; refreshments

All welcome