

Welcome from Roma Support Group

Welcome to the first edition. 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. As many of you will know, we run advice and advocacy sessions; education support programmes (including homework support) for children and families; support and engagement programme (including staff training and development); and an arts and culture programme. Recently, RSG has been able to develop its work with community engagement and development (again principally in London) and into policy and information provision. This e-bulletin is one manifestation of these recent developments.

Contact us via: andy@romasupportgroup.org.uk



February 2014 e-bulletin

Introduction

Since the autumn, the presence of Roma on the TV and in the papers has been inescapable. The young, blond, blue eyed Roma girl in Greece was evidence of typical gypsy behaviours taking place – and encouraged the Irish police to see demons where none existed. Then came the news that substantial numbers of Roma families are living in the UK, although why that constituted ‘news’ was not clear. Then came the screaming headlines that said that this Roma presence would create riots. And finally as the New Year beckoned, we had to withstand a further invasion from Romania and Bulgaria.

Is this all froth or is it indicative of a wider set of concerns? As Nick Robinson (the chief BBC political correspondent) said on R4’s Today programme on Wednesday 18 December:

"We know, sensitive subject though it is, that there is particular concerns in political levels about the Roma communities coming from those countries (Romania and Bulgaria) and the fact that there is certainly in central London a particular problem of Roma who are already here, the government is struggling to deport them, often after

they have committed crimes or have been involved with begging....so there is a particular worry about particular groups....but of course, there is an enormous dose of politics....."

Some have responded to these developments by, for example, organising events which have featured an examination of "Romophobia", both in the UK and in the rest of Europe (e.g. Kings College and Portsmouth University event, 20 Jan 2014). Others, particularly the Roma communities, have been inclined to avoid attracting attention. We have chosen in this e-bulletin to highlight one aspect of this media coverage, arising from comments supposedly made in Sheffield. For those who might have missed this, David Blunkett as the local MP had not for the first time, agreed to be interviewed on Radio Sheffield to discuss very local issues in the Page Hall district. An hour before he was interviewed, Radio Sheffield tweeted that he was prophesising riots happening due to local concern and opposition to Roma families living in the area. Within a matter of hours, the *Daily Telegraph* carried an article headed "**Roma migrants could cause riots in cities, warns Blunkett**". We have heard the interview and David Blunkett did not suggest this; but he did consistently say that "Roma culture needs to change".

We have reproduced the article David Blunkett wrote in the Guardian two weeks later. And we also provide two commentaries on what David Blunkett said and didn't say – one by Zoe James and one from Yaron Matras.

We also want to draw your attention to the latest copy of *Roma Rights* (the journal of the European Roma Rights Centre). We reproduce the foreword to this collection by Martin Kovats which centres around the variety of National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) that have been developed by 27 member states in response to the call from the European Commission. In December 2013, the European Union approved a resolution which codified NRISs, but which asserted that strategies were the main responsibility of member states... This continues to be a matter of concern for many Roma agencies, given the appalling record to date of many member states, and not just in East & Central Europe.

We also include the work of a Roma filmmaker/radio presenter/activist from Holland/Kosovo, and the work of a non-Roma photographer and video artist from the North of England. Orhan Galjus has made two 40 minute films called Broken Silence. These explore the reality of the Roma holocaust, the Porajmos, and its commemoration, via his own life story from Prizren to Amsterdam. The commentary is in English, with sub-titles where he interviews Roma in German, in Polish, in Albanian and in Romanes. His film is an urgent call for political engagement and action within the Roma communities and diasporas. Ciara Leeming is a woman photographer/activist based in Manchester. For the last four years, she has worked alongside Roma, and Roma communities and individuals, recording them and their thoughts, hopes and fears. It provides a distinctive and varied insight into the way in which Roma have settled and adapted to life in the UK. The website Roma Britain contains photos, short videos and interviews and written narrative.

Finally, we bring you news of events and meetings that are planned to happen.

We are pleased to hear what you think of this e-bulletin and would welcome suggestions and contributions in the future. It's a space for Roma and non-Roma; for those who are engaged in particular issues, and those who aren't so involved.

Contact us via:

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From Guardian (28 Nov 2013)

We need to talk about immigration, just not in this way

David Blunkett

David Cameron is seeking to outflank Ukip with the [announcement of restrictions of benefits for European Union migrant workers](#). He presented a highly misleading portrait of the entitlements available to new arrivals to Britain, which was then repeated uncritically by some sections of the media. This came as no surprise. My own experiences this month have left me shaken by the utter irrationality of both reporting and public debate on immigration.

Throughout my political life, I've not been a stranger to controversy. I have from time to time deployed the old chestnut of having been "taken out of context". But rarely have I found myself quoted when the words - in this case "riots"- attributed to me have not actually been said.

Not taken out of context, but not used. So it was on 11 November, when BBC Radio Sheffield put out a tweet that said: "MP David Blunkett fears race riots could hit Sheffield if some people living in the Page Hall area don't change their attitudes." Extraordinarily, not only was this not a quote from me but it went out before 7am, prior to my interview with the station, after 8am. (Radio Sheffield have since expressed their regret at the error.) And so, while I do not resile from anything I said, I certainly reject criticism for words that I didn't use.

For those who are unfamiliar with the situation in my constituency, let me explain. Over the last three or four years there has been an influx of Slovak Roma families into a tight-knit and highly deprived community in Sheffield. The neighbourhood is already a melting pot from around the world: there are longstanding residents of Pakistani origin, of Yemeni descent and, more recently, from Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Tensions have

arisen in the past, as they often do with rapid change, but Sheffield has a proud history as a [City of Sanctuary](#).

Which brings me to the question of how a 20-minute walkabout in the area concerned with a Radio Sheffield journalist could lead to a media flurry about the danger of riots. I talked about the need to avoid outsiders visiting an area with the express intention of inciting conflict, [as happened in Bradford](#). I should know, because I had to deal with the aftermath of those riots as incoming home secretary.

How many of those who commented on this story did so without accessing what was really said in that walkabout interview, or in the subsequent eight-minute live interview on the Monday morning? I did the walkabout to put the record straight; to get across the message that someone, somewhere, did understand that there were real challenges but that hate, short-term fixes, and culture clashes would solve nothing.

My mistake was believing that being on the record would lead to an honest and rational debate. Far from it. Headlines like "[Fear, loathing and prejudice in Blunkett's back yard](#)", "[Smirking Roma migrants boast: We get FIVE TIMES more cash in Benefits Britain](#)", and "[Roma in Sheffield: 'When it goes off, it will be like an atom bomb here'](#)". Even this respected newspaper fell into the trap. Not of the hysteria of the rightwing media, but the very opposite. The presumption that any honest appraisal is somehow, in the words of one of your columnists, tantamount to "racism", and by another, comparable with Enoch Powell.

Readers with some grasp of history might understand the offence this causes. Powell talked about [stopping people coming to our country and about "pickanninies"](#). The idea that anything in my interviews offers a political or moral equivalent is dangerous, childish and unworthy of high editorial standards. The subsequent furore has been risible but also distracting. The real question is how – not if – we deal with genuine challenges of helping locals through difficult times while working with new arrivals who want to learn how best to fit in without losing the best of their cultural heritage.

Contrary to David Cameron's tilting at windmills on the issue of benefits this week, there is no change in his pronouncements from what has existed since 2004. The issue then – and the issue from January in relation to Bulgaria and Romania – was not entitlement to benefits (we had already tightened the [habitual residence test](#)), but whether people were allowed to work legally. This whole area is now so muddled and bedevilled by myth and misunderstanding that it's hard to get across what some of us have been arguing, as I did in my interview: that we'd rather people work than draw down benefits!

Given that freedom of movement exists across Europe, a rational debate about tough conditionality and earned entitlement is needed to avoid further myths arising. On 24 October, in a parliamentary answer to me, the government confessed it had no idea how many eastern Europeans were drawing benefits. Pressure on services, including health and education, has been considerable.

The response on the whole has been magnificent. People have pulled together, but social cohesion remains on a knife-edge. In Sheffield, we need support from the community and

for the community. We need integration with no loss of heritage, and a clear appreciation of what is and is not acceptable. This is not about benevolent indulgence but achievement of genuine equality in support and contribution. To succeed we need central government to be proactive in supporting hard-pressed local agencies and to have mechanisms to allow drawing down on [European cohesion funding](#) from next year.

If any good can come out of what has been a disgraceful episode of misreporting followed by a deeply depressing failure to salvage any sensible debate from it, it must be that government lift their collective heads out of the sand and listen to the modest demands of those who have been engaged on this vital issue for so long, including a restoration of the migration impact fund cut in June 2010.

But one final thought in what has been, for me, a nightmare experience. Namely, that those who condemn others from a very safe distance might examine their own conscience. As I've discovered over the last 45 years working in Sheffield, it is a great deal easier to do nothing except condemn the actions of others than to get stuck in, and by so doing connect with that all-too-messy business of political action. Action, Mr Cameron, not political posturing.

David Blunkett is the Labour MP for Sheffield Brightside & Hillsborough.

From International Network for Hate Studies blog (12 Dec 2013)

Challenging hatred towards Gypsies, Travellers and Roma: A missed opportunity

Zoe James

In recent weeks in the UK, the ex-Home Secretary and current Member of Parliament, David Blunkett, has voiced his concerns regarding the integration of Roma communities in to his constituency in northern England. He has even insinuated that riots may ensue due to the community tensions that he suggests have been enflamed by the failure of Roma '*to adhere to our standards, and to our way of behaving*' ([BBC, 2013](#)), which he relates specifically to Roma communities failure to deal with their rubbish appropriately and their tendency to commune on the streets to socialise. Subsequently a raft of stories have emerged in the news media, on social networks, blogs and discussion lists that denigrate Roma communities as dirty, noisy and work-shy. Added to this has come a moral panic regarding the opening of EU borders to Romanian (and Bulgarian) citizens, who are commonly misunderstood to be Roma people, that has resulted in the British Prime Minister announcing welfare limitations for new migrants to the UK. And so, Roma people find themselves as subject to public fears and criticisms that are legitimised by political rhetoric that augments community tensions, rather than resolves them. Roma are placed in a hateful position, wherein the likelihood of crimes being committed against them on the basis of bigotry increases and their trust in the system to protect them diminishes.

This is familiar territory for those of us who have spent many years researching the prejudice experienced by Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe ([James, 2014](#)). The stigmatisation of these communities has occurred for centuries throughout Europe and is generally understood as due to the failure of sedentary society to accept and live alongside nomadic communities. The identity of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma has remained bound to their traditional nomadism despite the fact that it has become increasingly difficult for communities to travel, often because their ability to do so has been limited by state policies of integration and excessive policing of their movement ([James, 2013](#)).

The lack of public empathy towards Gypsies, Travellers and Roma is augmented by the increasing distance between 'us' and 'them' that is partly due to the void of public knowledge of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities. This is exacerbated by their cultural reticence to speak of bad times or to trust and talk to people in authority. An excellent example of the irony of the stigma attached to Gypsies, Travellers and Roma is the key tool used to attack them: the notion of them as 'dirty'. The association of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma with dirt and pollution suggests that they are tainted in some way and therefore dangerous, as opposed to being clean, unpolluted, pure and thus safe. In reality one of the most binding aspects of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities is their cultural requirement to follow strict rules of hygiene, based on their historic nomadic lifestyles. These rules dictate how they live, work and socialise and they inform moral codes of behaviour. It is all very well for David Blunkett, the ill-informed news media or the general public to perceive the homes of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma as dirty or lacking in rubbish management externally, but the reality is that the rules of hygiene in such communities require cleanliness inside the home, not necessarily externally to it. Further, research has shown that fly-tipping near Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities' is common and highly problematic ([Southern and James, 2006](#)). Add to this the problems that Gypsies, Travellers and Roma have in accessing sufficient rubbish removal services from local authorities and it can be seen that the construction of their communities as dirty is a false premise.

Despite the plethora of television programmes recently that claim to inform the public about Gypsies, Travellers and Roma lives, they have simply functioned to perpetuate existent stereotypes, particularly by exoticising aspects of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma cultures. Again, the distance between 'them' and 'us' is exacerbated by these programmes which suggest that their cultural goals are exceptional. To return to David Blunkett's critique of Roma communities for congregating in their streets to talk and socialise, it seems particularly odd that in these times when the British middle classes rue the loss of 'neighbourliness' and 'community' they concomitantly question Roma communities who are simply partaking in community living, sharing their lives in a public and transparent fashion. Indeed, the ties of family are another unifying cultural signifier of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities that Britons lament the loss of in their own communities. Perhaps then, David Blunkett should have highlighted the similarities between the communities in his constituency and challenged local services to resolve waste management problems. He could have taken this opportunity to inform the public about the Roma community from a positive perspective, instead of calling for their assimilation. He could have gone some way to fill the void of public knowledge about Gypsies, Travellers and Roma and in doing so could have reduced public fears, built community ties and challenged bigotry and prejudice.

Gypsies, Travellers and Roma are the largest minority in Europe, but they experience a disproportionately high number of hate crimes as well as prejudice and discrimination from local, regional, national and supra-national bodies, agencies and organisations that is increasingly referred to as 'anti-Gypsyism' or 'Romaphobia'. The [EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020](#) has begun the process of monitoring hate towards Gypsies, Travellers and Roma throughout Europe and lobbies for change from the top of states down, as do minority rights organisations from the bottom of states up. However, it is within states that change is slow to take place and it is in the power of politicians, such as David Blunkett to shift the discourse surrounding Gypsies, Travellers and Roma to an informed discussion that will have a positive impact that challenges hate, rather than augments it.

Zoë James is an Associate Professor (Senior Lecturer) at Plymouth University. Her key research interests lie in policing issues, particularly relating to public order policing, plurality in policing and managing diversity. Zoë worked for the Home Office Research and Statistics Directorate in the 1990s where she worked on a broad range of research studies on criminal justice issues. Subsequently Zoë completed her PhD at the University of Surrey on the policing of New Travellers. Zoë joined the University of Plymouth in 1999. Since then she has gone on to research further issues relating to policing, particularly focusing on Gypsies and Travellers, including projects funded by the British Academy, local authorities, the Home Office and Department for Communities and Local Government. Zoë is currently Deputy Head of Plymouth Law School and Associate Head of School for Teaching and Learning in Criminology.

From Politics.co.uk (18 Nov 2013)

Comment: The Roma are hardworking people who don't deserve to be slandered by David Blunkett

Yaron Matras

Throughout history, riots against ethnic minorities were triggered as a result of a public figure pointing a finger at a population group and warning of riots. When David Blunkett warns of riots against Roma we should all be concerned that somebody might take him by his word and venture out and attack their Romani neighbours. If Blunkett's prediction were to become true, who will be held responsible for triggering ethnic tensions?

Both Blunkett and Nick Clegg blame tensions on 'Roma behaviour'. Clegg has described their behaviour as "offensive and intimidating". It is unacceptable to generalise about the behaviour of people on the basis of their ethnicity. It is not correct to do so by any measure of liberal, democratic or labour-movement values. It is also factually inaccurate. Roma migrants are by and large enterprising people who have taken an inconvenient path full of risks in order to move their families into new locations and secure a better future for their children. They seek work in a range of sectors. Those who moved to the UK from Slovakia,

Poland, and the Czech Republic have had the right to take on employment in the UK since 2004.

For those who came from Romania, work opportunities have so far been limited to self-employment. Most of them are small business entrepreneurs. Some engage in gardening, decorating, or cleaning; others make due with selling newspapers or washing windows. Their children go to school, and some go on to college and even university. In January, full EU membership will allow Roma from Romania to seek work as employees. Their children who will be graduating from school in the next couple of years will have more choices open to them. However, new migrants who want to take advantage of the change in the status of Romanian citizens will only be able to settle in the UK if they can find work. This means finding a UK employer who would prefer to hire new arrivals rather than people who are already in the country. It is therefore very unlikely that the change in legislation will lead to a large wave of new migrants. Those Roma who wanted to move to the UK are already here.

Roma have lived amongst different nations for many centuries. Their culture has absorbed influences from many others and they are quick to learn other people's languages and customs. What the Roma lack is a land of their own and a state that can protect them. This has meant that Roma have always been vulnerable and that their culture has always been misrepresented. The baseless suspicions of child abduction raised against Roma families in Greece and Ireland just a few weeks ago are a perfect example.

Roma have been accused of stealing children since the Middle Ages. But such accusations tell us more about our images of fictional 'Gypsies' than about the behaviour of the Roma. In films, songs, and poems, Roma are depicted as 'free' and 'spiritual'. British people frequent Romani fortune-tellers in Blackpool and Scarborough because they actually believe that Romani people have supernatural powers. It's not the Gypsies, but their clients who are superstitious. Yet when it comes to accepting Roma as neighbours, society views them with suspicion. Because they have no country of their own, they are seen as rootless. Because they are self-employed, they are regarded as workshy. Because they socialise by having outdoor conversations with friends and family relations (rather than getting drunk in the pub or chanting slogans on football grounds) people accuse them of intimidating others.

The problem is not the behaviour of the Roma. The problem is the way in which Roma are perceived by others. Fantasies of 'Gypsies' are so powerful that they lead law enforcement officers to carry out medieval-style witch-hunts for alleged child kidnapping. And they lead politicians to lose any sense of fairness and political correctness and make accusations in a way that would be hard to imagine in connection with any other population group.

The reality on the ground proves that when prejudice is overcome and local agencies reach out to Roma, then the barriers disappear and give way to successful integration and inclusion. In Manchester, local schools, council agencies, voluntary organisations and the Romani Project at the University of Manchester have been working together for several years now to support Roma in a variety of areas.

We have helped teachers, police officers and social workers understand Roma culture and the Roma's expectations and needs. We have trained Roma mediators and they now work

to support schools and other agencies. As a result, Roma receive appropriate support and take an active part in neighbourhood initiatives. Their children are successful at school and are developing an interest in a variety of career paths. Some have graduated from college, others are successful youth workers, and some have even won prizes for community volunteering work.

Earlier this year, Manchester City Council published its [Roma Strategy Document](#)

In the document, Manchester City Council reports how the main obstacle to Roma integration has been the perception of Roma by outsiders. Roma have been accused of not sending their children to school, yet the council reports that in Manchester school attendance rates of Roma children are now "outstripping the attendance rates of non-Roma children". They have been accused of dumping rubbish in the street, yet the council clearly states that Roma families observe the same neighbourhood standards as their neighbours "particularly with regard to waste management". Roma have been accused of criminality and child trafficking, yet the council and police have found no evidence of any such activities and the authorities even say that looking into these accusations has distracted them from more important work and has "delayed the integration process".

In Manchester, [we take an active interest in our Roma neighbours](#). Students at the University of Manchester learn about Roma culture and take part in projects to support young Roma's literacy and IT skills. The university holds special visit days for schoolchildren of Roma background at which they can engage with audio-visual learning materials in the Romani language.

The University is also employing two Roma outreach workers who support the Roma community as part of a project funded by the EU, in partnership with Manchester City Council. The project is a European model for active engagement with Roma migrants. It shows how building bridges can prevent tensions and how the social inclusion of Roma depends in the first instance on society's willingness to accept and integrate them.

Some humility is called for. Brits have colonised the world and imposed their own culture on numerous other nations. They nearly obliterated the cultures and languages of dozens of peoples in North America, Australia and New Zealand.

Roma, by contrast, have no such ambitions. They are not here to destroy or even to challenge British culture. Roma are citizens of Europe. Since they have no country of their own, some even consider them to be "the true Europeans". What we need is tolerance and understanding, not scapegoating or scaremongering. Instead of criticising Roma behaviour, David Blunkett and Nick Clegg should call for a change in attitudes toward the Roma. We in Manchester are always happy to help.

Yaron Matras is professor of Linguistics at the University of Manchester, and editor of the journal *Romani Studies*. He has worked closely with the Open Society Institute's Roma programmes, is a founding member of the European Academic Network on Romani Studies, and has led several large-scale research projects on Romani language and culture, including an international research consortium on

Romani migrations. He is the author of over a dozen books and numerous chapters and articles on Romani language and culture, and speaks the Romani language fluently. He is also the author of '[I met lucky people: The story of the Romani Gypsies](#)', to appear with Penguin Press in February 2014.

EUROPEAN ROMA RIGHTS CENTRE

ROMA RIGHTS: JOURNAL OF THE ERRC, 2013

NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES – WHAT NEXT?

<http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/roma-rights-1-2013-national-roma-integration-strategies.pdf>

Foreword

Dr Martin Kovats¹

There was a certain inevitability about the arrival of the EU's Roma integration framework in 2011. Since the eastward enlargement of the Union took place, pressure had been mounting from Roma organisations and activists for an EU Roma policy. More practically, the fact that so many Roma people had become EU citizens brought into the Union the politics of Roma in accession states. The struggle against poverty and discrimination and for cultural recognition and ethnic status is now an integral part of Europe's politics. European integration has helped to add a further dimension to the politics of Roma: migration within the EU. Following the Italian 'Nomad Emergency', the destruction of camps in France meant that Roma would inevitably become an item on the EU's agenda. At the same time, the Framework follows the familiar approach of requiring Member States to set out their commitments on Roma in writing.

The Framework has been criticised for its 'weakness' and accused of being unlikely to have much effect. However, it will certainly be influential. It requires all 28 EU states to produce strategies to guide national and local policy and practice. Targeted attention and resources aim to make a 'tangible difference' to the lives of disadvantaged Roma people. What will certainly happen is that Roma will be subjected to broader and more detailed examination, monitoring and evaluation than ever before. Far more information will be produced and made public about Roma – about how many of them there are, where they live, what they want or need, how much money is being spent on them and so on. More information means more perspectives and opinions. The Roma discourse is growing.

The essays in this series exemplify the diversity of the Roma discourse. All of them discuss the EU Roma framework, but from different perspectives – national, thematic or institutional. Joanna Kostka examines the Polish national strategy and questions what has been learned from previous Roma integration initiatives. Thomas Acton, Andrew Ryder and Iulius Rostas call for greater support to be given for grass roots Roma involvement in

projects and programmes, while Eniko Vincze argues the need for greater consideration to be given to the role of Roma women. Belén Sánchez-Rubio and Carolina Fernández Díez provide an overview of the European Roma Policy Coalition's assessment of national Roma strategies, while the relationship between the Roma Decade and the EU's Roma framework is discussed by Aleksandra Bojadjieva. Bernard Rorke critically analyses the overall approach of the Framework and questions how much progress can be made without more effective action to counter discriminatory attitudes and practices, while the importance of placing the struggle against discrimination at the heart of Roma initiatives is emphasised by Dezideriu Gergely.

To a greater or lesser extent, each of the essays touches upon two themes which are emerging as focal points for assessment of Roma policies as a whole and the EU framework in particular. First, there is the domination of the social policy paradigm mobilised to tackle manifestations of inequality, poverty, segregation and other social or economic 'problems'. While acknowledging the need for effective interventions, this way of framing the issues also appears to place the primary responsibility for 'integration' on disadvantaged Roma people themselves. While personal choice can never be entirely disregarded, systemic and structural factors also need to be properly taken into account if policy goals, no matter how vaguely defined, are to be met. This requires the Roma discourse to be understood in relation to wider political, economic, social and cultural contexts and trends, enabling Roma people, identity and policy to be seen as an integral part of contemporary local, national and European politics and society.

The other important theme addressed by these essays is the relatively limited role Roma people have played in the development of policy initiatives nominally designed to help them. How Roma people and their representatives can assert their interests in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of 'Roma policy' is an essential challenge for nascent Roma activism. How Roma respond to this challenge depends not only on what opportunities for engagement are provided by elites, but also on the quality and coherence of Roma interest representation, political relationships and ideological perspectives.

By the time the EU framework comes to an end in 2020 not all Roma people in the EU will enjoy equality of opportunity, decent living conditions or social and material security; nor will prejudice and discrimination have been eliminated. Rather than being the 'solution', the Framework is part of a process of social and political change that offers the opportunity to create better, fairer societies. Each of these essays discusses the importance of local and national contexts in terms of good laws, policies and practices.

For both legal and political reasons the EU's role is that of a motivator and supporter of good national and local actions. The EU is not a government or a service provider, and its laws have to be adopted and applied by national authorities. The EU framework is a mechanism to enable national authorities to take appropriate action to improve the living conditions and life chances of their own citizens or of residents for whom they have legal and political responsibility. States should also ensure that their own laws are enforced and that Roma people are not discriminated against, either directly or indirectly. Politically, the Framework recognises that the power to meaningfully change the circumstances of disadvantaged Roma people lies within the states and societies where they live. Arguments

about anti-racism and social cohesion have to be won in the communities and institutions which are part of Roma people's lives and on which many depend for services and support.

The EU Roma Framework shows just how important Roma issues have become in European political agendas. It will ensure that more resources are directed towards Roma and that more initiatives will be taken. The emerging international public debate about Roma is a unique opportunity for European states and societies to learn about Roma, to talk about Roma and to find ways to transcend the negative legacies of the past and establish non-discriminating, equal opportunity societies where Roma people can prosper. There can be many ways to achieve this goal, but as these essays show, it is crucial to win the argument not only at the European institutional level, but in each separate European society.

Dr Martin Kovats has been studying the Roma political phenomenon for twenty years. He has held research fellowships at the University of Birmingham and Corvinus University and taught at the University of London. Since 2010 he has been a special advisor to the EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

Film

Broken Silence, by Orhan Galjus (Parts 1 and 2)

The Vimeo logo is displayed in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font.

Someone shared this with you: <http://vimeo.com/63719522>



Broken Silence Part I

<http://vimeo.com/63719522>

About this video

"Broken Silence is a gripping documentary whose protagonist, a Roma radio-reporter, tries to understand what happened to the Sinti and Roma during the Second World War. He draws hope and inspiration from a speech in the German Bundestag of Zoni Weiss, a Sinto from the Netherlands. But he also fears that history repeats itself in contemporary Europe. Because all around Sinti and Roma are discriminated, excluded from mainstream society - even

persecuted. How do the 12 million European Sinti and Roma respond to that? What do they know about their own history? Why don't they speak and teach about it? He wants to treat these important and urgent affairs in his broadcasts. With his friend, a non-Roma filmmaker he travels to Germany and Poland, where he speaks to survivors, eyewitnesses and others. He attends commemorations of the massacre of Sinti and Roma. He visits the dreadful camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau. Here he discovers the essential differences between his people and 'Gadje' (the 'others') and calls for a positive, non-violent change."



vimeo

Someone shared this with you: <http://vimeo.com/63692450>



Broken Silence Part II

<http://vimeo.com/63692450>

About this video

"Broken Silence is a gripping documentary whose protagonist, a Roma radio-reporter, tries to understand what happened to the Sinti and Roma during the Second World War. He draws hope and inspiration from a speech in the German Bundestag of Zoni Weiss, a Sinto from the Netherlands. But he also fears that history repeats itself in contemporary Europe. Because all around Sinti and Roma are discriminated, excluded from mainstream society - even persecuted. How do the 12 million European Sinti and Roma respond to that? What do they know about their own history? Why don't they speak

and teach about it? He wants to treat these important and urgent affairs in his broadcasts. With his friend, a non-Roma filmmaker he travels to Germany and Poland, where he speaks to survivors, eyewitnesses and others. He attends commemorations of the massacre of Sinti and Roma. He visits the dreadful camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau. Here he discovers the essential differences between his people and 'Gadje' (the 'others') and calls for a positive, non-violent change."

Photography

Roma Britain by Ciara Leeming

Over the last four years, Ciara Leeming has developed a wide portfolio of photographs, photo films and narratives which chart the variety of Roma living in the UK today. Her subjects are mainly based in the north, and include the lived experiences of women and men, both in the countries of origin and as they have settled in this country.

See Ciara's work at:

<http://theromaproject.com/>

Ciara says:

This is the blog of an independent documentary project about Roma migration and integration into British society by photographer and writer Ciara Leeming.

The work has developed out of a series of written stories published in 2010-11 by the *Big Issue in the North*, the *Guardian* and the *Times Educational Supplement*, and a collaborative book project, *Elvira and Me*.

My interest in Roma was initially sparked by living in a neighbourhood which has become home to significant numbers since Romania joined the European Union in 2007. The work does however also fit with my previous projects on indigenous Traveller communities.

Roma Britain is open-ended and will develop organically. Eventually I hope it will bring together a series of smaller projects which are participatory in nature, and use photography,

words and audio to challenge some of the common stereotypes of Roma. This website is where I will share research and thoughts about my process, as well as the work itself.

Funding from Arts Council England and a Homelands Commission from Side Gallery in Newcastle is allowing me to expand this work. Support for the Elvira project came from the Lipman-Miliband Trust and the Big Issue in the North Trust.

Please forgive the use of ugly copyright marks on some of the images on this site – this is down to repeated unauthorised use of my work to illustrate sensationalist or negative stories about Roma

Disclaimer: I am neither trying to speak for Roma people nor looking to replace old stereotypes with new ones. This project is merely a collection of vignettes featuring individuals who happen to be of Romani heritage and represents no one and nothing other than the people who have collaborated with me on the stories.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Thursday 13th February at 4pm – 6pm:

“ROMA MIGRANTS: A CHALLENGE OR AN OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR CITIES?”

- Rt Hon David Blunkett, MP
- Dr Michael Stewart (University College London)
- Carol Powell, Principal, Gorton Mount Primary Academy
- Fay Selvan, Chief Executive, The Big Life Company
- Professor Yaron Matras, University of Manchester
- Dr Nissa Finney, University of Manchester
- Ramona Constantin, Romani Community Outreach Worker

Organised by Romani project, University of Manchester. Also launch of the book *'I met lucky people': The Story of the Romani Gypsies* (Penguin Press/Allen Lane), by Yaron Matras

Enquiries: romani@manchester.ac.uk, ☎ 0161 275 5999

Main Lecture Theatre: Samuel Alexander Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL

Tuesday 25th February from 2pm – 4pm:

ROMA REFUGEE AND MIGRANT FORUM: an inter agency and Roma/voluntary regular meeting to consider issues and initiatives for the benefit of Roma communities in London.

Organised by Roma Support Group

Enquiries: Przemek@romasupportgroup@org.uk ☎ 0207 511 0800

Stratford

Thursday 27th March from 6pm – 8pm

UKREN (UK Race and Europe Network) 'Question Time' type event to discuss political parties and race equality, re Euro elections in May 2014.

Organised by UKREN.

Enquiries: alan@ukren.org ☎ 0207 336 9412

June 2014

Gypsy Traveller Roma History Month at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London - Call for contributions

At the launch event on June 1st we hope to enjoy a special performance which will celebrate the richness Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities bring to the UK. Through poetry and personal verse, song, dance, art and film you will share in the communities many and varied academic and artistic achievements. At the moment we have nothing but a beautiful space at the V&A. Are you, or do you know anyone who may be, interested in being involved in this launch event? We are on the lookout for films, exhibitions, singers, poets, rappers, dancers, artists, designers... in fact anything that would contribute to this celebration. We are also looking for a steering group of about 6-10 community members to bring together the event and promotion of it. There is sadly no funding attached to this – it is being done on goodwill. However we can endorse you as a group or individual wanting to be involved and deciding to fundraise yourself with reference to this showcase activity at the V&A. Please do let me know if this is something that you would like to be involved in or know more about - either the launch event or in the steering and promotion of it?

Phil Regan: Creative working with Westway Development Trust and V&A Museum

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