
Keeping the Distance or Taking the Chances

Roma and Travellers in Western Europe

Author:
Toon Machiels (Belgium)

Proofreading: Trevor Steele / István Ertl
Layout: Winfried Pucher
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Preface

The European Network against Racism (ENAR) has within its highly diverse membership black and ethnic minorities, support groups, church-based organisations, information centres, lobbying organisations, as well as organisations run by or working with Roma. It was in this latter group that the idea arose to analyse the situation of Roma in the context of racism and discrimination in Europe.

Almost everywhere the Roma are confronted with ongoing discrimination. Spread all over Europe, this group of people experience an everyday racism that cannot be accepted. The Travellers find themselves in a comparable situation. The specific background and socio-economical situation of both groups need to be looked at.

A former Board Member of ENAR from Belgium, Toon Machiels, spared no time or effort in order to publish this material. However, he could hardly have mastered his task without support from several other members of the ENAR network. They all deserve our heartfelt thanks for the help provided.

This brochure outlines some of the measures needed in order to investigate and to understand the situation of the Roma and also to be aware of how society as a whole reacts to the presence in its midst of this particular group.

Some concrete measures are suggested, but we should bear in mind that they might not be easy to implement successfully. It is often said that societies and states are measured by the way they treat their minorities. If we want to achieve equal treatment for all, than we have yet to prepare for a long and difficult road ahead – but there is no doubt this is the only way that leads to a society free of racism.

It is in this spirit that ENAR presents you with this publication. Let us never forget how much still needs to be done on the local, national and international level in order to improve the situation of the Roma.

Vera Egenberger
Director of ENAR

Justification of terms

This publication is about Travellers and “Gypsies”:

We will not use the word *Gypsy* since it has a negative connotation in almost every European language. When we refer to the ethnic groups commonly known as *Gypsies*, we will use the name *Roma*. We are fully aware of the incompleteness of this name since a lot of Sinti, Manouches, and others do not like to be called Roma. However, we are obliged to select one name in order to avoid inconvenient repetition of subgroups throughout this publication. Apart from that, most of the international organisations of Roma insist on using this name.

By *Travellers* we will indicate those groups who ethnically belong to the autochthonous populations, but by their way of life are very closely linked to the Roma groups.

To refer to the non-Roma or non-Traveller population we will use the word *settled*. Even though most Travellers and Roma are living in houses or other fixed dwellings, they should still be considered (and they consider themselves) as belonging to their own “nomadic” culture. Another reason is that the Romani words for non-Roma (like *gadgo*, *boffer*, etc.) have a negative connotation in almost every Romani language.

Why this publication?

A lot of board members of ENAR are involved in working with or for Roma/Travellers, directly or indirectly. In this way they encounter the special conditions of these groups, the different kinds of racism directed against them, and the problems of fighting against such racism and discrimination.

ENAR as the European Network Against Racism has a mission to support all kinds of struggle against racism at the grass-roots level and to lobby governments. Taking into account that tens of thousands of Roma fled to the west, and that the European Union within a short period has taken in people from several countries in which traditionally Roma are a considerable portion of the population, ENAR has taken up the challenge of publishing on this issue.

This paper aims not only to provide information about the Roma/Traveller communities and cultures in Europe, but even more to develop a vision on the specific nature of these groups, and hence of the policies to be implemented on behalf of and with the Roma/Traveller people.

Their specific nature can be understood only by taking into account the history of Roma/Travellers: a concatenation of rejection, persecution, and many attempts at genocide by the (higher) authorities of the settled society. On the other hand, Roma/Travellers had an economic or military value for the common people and for the lower authorities. It is in that particular way that the Roma nomadic culture was shaped in an ambiguous balance between attraction and rejection, between inward and outward-bound relations, that is still very much alive. This distance is maintained both by the settled society and by the Roma/Travellers. Most of the Roma/Traveller cultures are based on the deliberately cultivated differences between Roma/Traveller and settled people.

Thanks to Roma/Traveller organisations and human rights lobbies, new political convictions have formed on both national and international levels, and Roma/Travellers are also considered in the struggle against racism. At the World Conference Against Racism in Durban in 2001 and in its preparatory conferences, Roma/Travellers were always in the picture. In the national action plans the Roma/Travellers deserve a specific place because the core problem of building an efficient policy on behalf of and with the Roma/Traveller communities will remain: otherwise no policy will appear adequate to create rights and opportunities for the Roma/Travellers. The very fact that these rights and opportunities are proclaimed by the settled society makes them suspect. Hence the fight against anti-Roma/Travellers racism will have

to include one form or other of mediation, in which the settled society will have to take the initiative, not to prevent the Roma/Travellers from taking the lead, but just the opposite: to make it possible for Roma/Travellers leaders to come forward and speak for their people.

It certainly will be a long and difficult path, but what has been spoiled for over five centuries cannot be repaired in five years.

Let's hope it can be done in five generations.

1 Gypsies and Travellers

Historical background

Travelling populations existed at all times and on all continents. So the Travellers and Roma of today have a long history, even if they themselves are mostly unaware of it and very few historical records exist.

In the countries of the EU too travelling people are regularly mentioned throughout history. Very different groups were involved, from pious pilgrims to travelling merchants, from craftsmen or artists to deserters and criminal gangs.

Many of those we cannot include in the “Travelling people”, because they were “on the road” only temporarily, e.g., as pilgrims or soldiers. But already in the Middle Ages there must have been a certain common culture and feeling of solidarity amongst the “Travellers”. We can deduce this by the existence of a common secret language (*Argot, Bar-goens, Cant, Gammon, Rotwelsch...*). Vocabularies of those languages were recorded as early as the Middle Ages. These vocabularies contain enough similarities with the Travellers’ languages of today for us to conclude that generations of Travellers passed on their languages as family traditions till the present day.

Each Traveller community has a different history. In Belgium and the Netherlands, for example, we know from the memory of the oldest living Travellers that they are very often descended from settled people or immigrants from Germany. We have sufficient indications that because of the successive famines in the first half of the 18th century a lot of families had to leave their homes, all over Europe. A significant section of those settled people joined the existing nomadic groups of Travellers or Roma and adopted their culture. This exchange continues till today. Constantly some Travellers leave their community and begin a settled life, while settled people become nomadic by marriage, out of need or from conviction. Nowadays we cannot distinguish the Travellers from the settled by reference to the habitation. Most of the Travellers in Europe actually live in houses or residential trailers, but still remain fully members of the Traveller community. Travellers cannot be considered as Roma: they belong, from the ethnic point of view, to the autochthonous population. Their way of life is, however, very similar to that of the Roma.

The Roma started their journey to the West, according to most writers, about 1000 A.D. in the north of India. Just as everywhere else, there were travelling populations there. The reasons why some of them left their country are not

clear. It was a period of religious wars since Islam was entering India at that time. Another question that has never been solved is whether the Roma were high or low caste. The Indian background of the Gypsies has been generally accepted since Grellman and Rüdiger in Germany and Jacob Bryant in England established the similarities between Romani (the Roma language) and Sanskrit, an ancient Indian language.

The journey itself can roughly be followed thanks to sporadic mentions in ancient texts. The oldest known of these is from an anonymous monk on Mount Athos who wrote in *The Life of St George* about Athinganoi¹, untouchables, a name used in ancient Greece for a religious group in Turkey. That was in 1068. Gradually the Gypsies are mentioned in almost all European cities, going from east to west: Dubrovnik and Bulgaria, 1378; Corfu, 1386; Hildesheim (Germany), 1407; Bruges, 1421; England, 1430; Andalusia, 1462; Scotland, 1505.^{2,3}

Initially the “Egyptians”⁴ were welcomed with respect. They were led by a “duke” or “count” and their exotic appearance attracted a lot of curious people. They presented themselves as pilgrims from Egypt Minor, fulfilling a penitential journey of seven years ordered by the Pope. They even presented official documents. They received shelter, food, beer and sometimes money. After a few days they left again. To give a few impressions we cite some eyewitnesses from that period.

At Tournai, Belgium, someone wrote in 1422:

*Most of them lived from theft, especially the women ... They were exceptional horse drivers: horses seemed to be more beautiful and vigorous when handled by them rather than other drivers. When they bought something they paid in big currency, but they were so cunning in accepting the change that every seller would lose something....*⁵

Paris, 1427, *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris*.⁶

This author also wrote that he had heard about theft and palm reading, but I was there three or four times, but *I did not lose a penny, nor did I see any palm reading.* Anyhow, the archbishop of Paris organised a procession as a penitence for the sins of his parishioners who believed in the fortune telling of the Roma ladies.

Very soon the first repressive measures were taken to limit the Roma’s movements, to chase them, and finally to destroy them. The high number of state and church laws shows on the one hand that the top hierarchy was prepared to go to great lengths to suppress the nomadic people. On the other hand, the many rules also prove that the Roma/Travellers and the lower authorities were **creative enough** to counter or to negate the rules.

This was the first migration of Roma to Western Europe. We suppose that these first Egyptians must have been the forefathers of the Sinti/Manouche of today.

When slavery was abolished in Romania in 1860 a second migration started to the West. Many so-called Vlax Roma (their region of origin was known as Wallachia) found their way to all the countries of Europe. They had to survive as undocumented migrants for nearly a century, which reinforced the distinctions between Roma and settled people.

Migration of Roma to Western Europe never came to a complete stop. However, during the rule of communist regimes in central and eastern Europe a lot of refugees, among whom quite a few Roma, gained asylum in the West. After the fall of the Iron Curtain a third major migration got under way. Thousands from all groups of Roma came to the western European countries, trying to gain asylum. Even if only very few of them succeeded in receiving refugee status, they had the chance to stay for a lengthy period due to the complicated and time-consuming procedures caused by so many applications for asylum in such a short time. In one way or another these Roma managed to find a place in their new environment, and thanks to various kinds of regularisation many of them succeeded in getting the necessary documents for a permanent stay. Many others, however, chose to stay without documents, because they judged life in Western Europe as better than that they had come from, even with legal documents.

This is why the European Union has its own broad range of Roma/Traveller communities. It must be clear that these groups cannot be considered as one people. In fact, among themselves the Roma/Traveller groups and families recognise many kinds of differences, they have different connections, and they compete economically among themselves. When we know the historical background, that becomes comprehensible and a reality to be taken into account when developing a policy of social participation for and with Roma/Travellers.

¹ *Athinganoi* might have been the root of names like Zigeuner, Cigàn, Cigano, Tsigane.

² CLEBERT, J-P, *Les Tsiganes*, B. Arthaud, Paris, 1961.

³ FRAZER, Angus, *De Zigeuners*, Atlas-Amsterdam/Antwerpen, 1994.

⁴ This presumed Egyptian origin is considered to be the root of names like Gitan, Gitano, Gypsy.

⁵ VAN KAPPEN, O., *Geschiedenis der Zigeuners in Nederland*, Van Gorcum & Comp., Assen, 1965.

⁶ DE VAULT DE FOLETIER, *Les Tsiganes dans l'Ancienne France*, Société d'édition géographique et touristique, 1961.

2 Nomadic culture

1 Diversity

There is no such thing as “the Roma” or “the Traveller”. Every subgroup, clan, or even family has its own differences in sanitary regulations, in clothing, in language, head-dress, habitation, gender roles, religion, employment, music, dances, etc. Here however is not the right place to elaborate on all of these features in detail.

2 Common features of Roma/Traveller cultures

2.1 The gap

Throughout history the Roma/Travellers were constantly confronted with rejection. We only have to mention that Roma were brought as slaves to the region of the present Romania for more than four centuries; that they were put into concentration camps in Spain for about two decades in the 18th century; in the same period in Belgium, the Netherlands, and parts of Germany hunting Roma/Travellers was a popular sport among the “nobility” – there were even prices placed on the heads of victims. The extreme case was when the Roma/Travellers were subjected to the Nazi regime which, in a frighteningly efficient way, attempted to exterminate all Roma/Travellers in Europe. Several hundreds of thousands were killed and the survivors were traumatised for the next generations. Apart from those extreme kinds of persecution, the whole of history is filled with laws and regulations forbidding migration, use of Romani languages, etc. Trespassing was punished by all kinds of atrocities, such as deportation to colonies and forced labour on galleys.

Roma/Travellers have always succeeded in surviving in such precarious circumstances. They managed to do so because they had an economic value to the common people. Roma/Travellers transported several types of goods from one place to another, they brought entertainment with music, dances, circuses and the like. Providing all kinds of goods and services to the settled society was and still is the core of the economy of Roma/Travellers. However they had to hide constantly, so they could almost never integrate in the settled society, since the simple fact of being Roma/Travellers was often enough to have them put into prison or worse. The combination of these two phenomena was and still is the basis of their “nomadic” culture: the enormous gap between settled people and Roma/Travellers, a gap filled with distrust, fear and disapproval.

It is a strong and inward-looking cultural identity, of which the core principle is to be different from the *gadgo* (the non-Gipsy; depending on the region and/or subgroup, the settled person was also called *payo*, *boer*, *boffer*, *kaffer*...). This is the very reason why Roma are still among us today, without a written history, but safeguarding their values, languages, and their whole way of living.

This gap exists not only in the sphere of folklore. Suspicion and disapproval of the surrounding society, sometimes combined with a feeling of inferiority or even fear, make it very hard for Roma/Travellers to “integrate”. Their history has taught them that up till now “integration” has always resulted in even more rejection or persecution.

The majority society, for its part, cultivates its own distance from Roma/Travellers, mostly by individual or group racist attitudes, but also by discriminating against Roma/Travellers in public services (e.g., lack of action in prosecuting racist attacks against Roma/Travellers), and even by issuing laws or other rules against Roma/Travellers (such as prohibiting stopping sites).

This two-way gap is traditionally bridged only for economic reasons: Roma/Travellers need the majority to survive. But the majority no longer needs the Roma/Travellers in the modern economy.

2.2 Celebrating the moment

Living in a survival culture does not leave very much space for long-term planning. Experiencing a hard life, with manifold misfortunes, a lot of family members dying young, and having to hide also makes the past something to forget. The most important thing is how to manage today. This became a cultural specificity that can be found in almost every nomadic group. It has its consequences in all domains of life, e.g., the preference for self-employment, the problem in maintaining school attendance, and the lack of importance given to preventive health care.

This kind of attitude can often make welfare workers desperate. They can be tempted to “blame the victim” and give up their efforts to improve the life of the Roma/Travellers.

But an evolution can be created. We will elaborate on this further on.

2.3 Flexibility

Being economically dependent on a majority population that is mainly hostile demands a range of social and professional skills necessary for coping with every possible situation.

Professionally a Roma/Traveller has to know more than a few occupations. If today the scrap market collapses, the husband or the wife has to switch, for example, to second-hand car selling or playing music to fill the hungry mouths of the family.

Socially Roma/Travellers have to be very alert in detecting the interests of every possible client and in adapting their arguments to convince the non-Roma/Traveller to buy or to sell.

2.4 Egalitarian political structures

Gypsy kings or barons have to be considered as myths, sometimes created by the Roma/Travellers themselves. On the contrary, Roma/Traveller communities are not organised in a hierarchic way. The social structure is linked to the family ties. Some anthropologists talk about the *kumpagna* as the most common way of organisation: a flex-

ible and temporary union of individuals around a nucleus of a family but with outsiders in it as well. A *kumpagna* can be spread over several countries. It cannot be compared to a clan, since the membership of a *kumpagna* can vary in time or according to economic needs.

The way Roma/Travellers relate to each other is often a serious problem for the majority society. When an agreement has to be negotiated, e.g., the maintenance of a housing block or stopping area, the town mayor or the police are practically obliged to negotiate with every individual family to be sure that everybody will follow the rules.

Among the women we find a more pronounced hierarchy: at the top the grandmother, then the daughters and the daughters-in-law, then the grandchildren. Especially in women's affairs, like health, hygiene or education, this could play an important role.

3 Statistics: Roma per country⁷

The distribution of Roma over the map of Europe is extremely difficult to fix. In most cases people refer to the findings of Jean-Pierre Liégeois of the *Centre d'Etudes Tsiganes* in Paris.

These are as follows:

For the European Union

Estimate	minimum	/	maximum
Austria	15.000		20.000
Belgium	10.000		15.000
Denmark	2.500		4.500
Finland	5.000		8.000
France	200.000		300.000
Germany	85.000		120.000
Greece	140.000		200.000
Ireland	20.000		27.000
Italy	85.000		120.000
Luxemburg	200		500
Netherlands	30.000		40.000
Portugal	50.000		100.000
Spain	500.000		600.000
Sweden	15.000		20.000
United Kingdom	80.000		100.000
Total EU	1.237.700		1.675.000

For Central and Eastern Europe

Roma in Central and Eastern Europe (selected countries)⁸

Bulgaria	576.927 ⁹ 500.000 – 800.000 ¹⁰
Czech Republic	145.738 ¹¹ 150.000 – 300.000 ¹⁰
Hungary	400.000 ¹² 550.000 – 800.000 ¹⁰
Poland	15.000 – 60.000 ¹⁰
Romania	430.000 ¹³ 1.410.000 – 2.500.000 ¹⁰
Slovakia	253.943 ¹⁴ 458.000 – 520.000 ¹⁰

These two tables however might show rather old figures, since they do not take into account the migrations of the last decade¹⁵.

⁷ PEREZ MILANS Miguel: statistics based on data from European Roma Rights Center, Minority Rights Groups, Centre de Recherche Tsigane, Unicef. www.sapiens.ya.com/alomorfo

⁸ Table provided by Miguel Pérez.

⁹ Ministry of Interior, 1989 in Helsinki Watch Reports (HWR).

¹⁰ The minimum – maximum numbers can be found in various publications by Barany, 1995, 1998; Brearley, 1996; Bugajski, J, 1994; Druker, 1997; Havas et al, 1995; Helsinki Watch Reports, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1993, 1996; Liegeois, 1994; Liegeois and Gheorghe, 1995; OECD, 1993, White, Batt and Lewis, 1993.

¹¹ Local authority statistics in HWR.

¹² National census 1990, in HWR.

¹³ Official Government Statistics, 1989 in HWR.

¹⁴ Local Authority Statistics 1989, in Brealy 1996.

¹⁵ E.g. the Vlaams Minderheidencentrum estimates that the numbers for Belgium have doubled in the last ten years; Presencia Gitana estimates the number of Roma in Spain in 2000 at almost 1.000.000.

4 “The farmer cultivates the soil, the Roma cultivate the farmer”¹⁶

Roma economy in Central and Eastern Europe

Roma/Traveller culture can best be illustrated by the revival of the Roma/Traveller economy in Central and Eastern Europe in the post-war era.

A traditional nomadic economy can be characterised as

- providing goods, services and manual labour;
- with irregular intervals;
- to a population that
 - has sufficient spending means;
 - lives on a rather vast territory;
 - has a variable pattern of needs.

The Roma/Travellers add to this their own specific features:

- Roma/Travellers greatly prefer self-employed labour. They must feel free to organise their time and efforts in accordance with social and family obligations.
- They gain an individual or collective polyvalence, which is the only key to success in constantly changing environments.

The combination of this polyvalence with the necessary territorial mobility forces the Roma/Traveller economy to specialise in activities that

- do not require any big or sophisticated machinery;
- are based on the provision of easily transportable goods;
- require only a short but intensive input of labour;
- can be performed in the open-air.
- The main factor of economic success is a correct estimate of the chances of a given opportunity, and mastering a conglomerate of social relations to build up the necessary contacts in the majority society to apply the whole range of arguments to convince the non-Roma/Traveller.

To this end Roma/Travellers construct temporary companionships (*vortacia*), mainly between men of the same family who work together and share the profit of this work. It is a fundamentally egalitarian structure. Whatever the kind of labour, or the way of organising it, the main point is always marketing the products to the non-Roma/Traveller. Besides his selling skills every Roma/Traveller needs his share of “luck” in this process.

Before the establishment of communist regimes, the Roma

in Central and Eastern Europe were gradually made a part of the labouring class. They had to survive by providing manual labour in unstable seasonal employments. On top of that hardship came the Second World War, leaving the Roma as an impoverished social class with an inferior status.

The communists planned to solve this problem by an assimilation policy in the socialist new order. This created a huge proletarian working class but also trade unions, executive cadres, and intellectuals. Some Roma succeeded in building up a career in the administration or the party, but the vast majority of Roma got stuck in underpaid inferior jobs requiring only low qualifications.

The communist regimes began a brutal suppression of all traditions of the nomadic economy. Travelling was forbidden in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia from 1953, in Rumania in 1962. Poland developed a programme of sedentarisation in 1952 and started its full implementation in 1964. Compulsory education, military service, division of communities, reserved jobs for Roma in industries, and housing schemes. All of that was imposed on the Roma ostensibly to accelerate giving help to them. But in practice the Roma did not get special jobs, only inferior low-paid ones in such areas as construction of roads, buildings and railways, waste collection, or forestry. Because these schemes did not provide them with better training, the Roma were offered few opportunities for any social promotion, either during the communist epoch or after it.

In Yugoslavia in 1989 58% of the working Roma were unskilled labourers, 20 % were so-called semi-skilled. In Czechoslovakia in 1970 87% of the male Roma between 15 and 60 were working (compared with 91% of the total population). But 85% were working class (against only 57% of the total population). Statistics of 1980 do not show any improvement.

This can be explained by three observations.

The variety within the Roma populations

Some Roma were already on their way to integration and made a career in the administration, but they were never recognised as Roma. Other Roma groups remained obstinate and never abandoned their traditional economy on the fringe of the official one, reinforcing the family as a base of production and trade.

The lack of professional training

The fast growth of industries needed a quick employment of large numbers of unskilled labourers. All the Roma could get a job, and they lived in the illusion that their income was assured for ever. So they were not motivated to climb up the social ladder or to send their children to the schools of a system they continually mistrusted. The Roma lost

their traditional social structures and fell into a deep pit after the implosion of the heavy industries.

Hidden travel

Migration has never stopped completely. Even if the real nomadic life was very rare, important groups had to travel from one work place to another, or from the home town to the factory, to stay there for a week. Mobility from a poorer region to a richer one continued unabated. That kind of mobility gained a new dimension after the fall of the communist regimes, when Roma found their way to the west as asylum seekers.

The situation of Roma became catastrophic

The first massive unemployment was registered in Hungary in the middle of the 80's. It became worse as the deterioration of the industries proceeded. Recent figures show how bad it really is¹⁷.

Poverty by ethnicity, 1997, Bulgaria

Percent below poverty line
(2/3 of mean per capita consumption)

Bulgarians	31.7
Bulgarian Turks	40.0
Roma	84.3
Other	46.9
Average for Bulgaria	36

Poverty by ethnicity: 1995, 1997, Romania

Percent below poverty line
(60% of adult equivalent consumption)

	1995	1997
Romanian	24.5	29.7
Hungarian	22.8	28.4
Roma	76.4	78.8
Other	23.5	32.6
Average for Romania	25.3	30.8

Pre-school in Slovakia 1990 – 1997

	1990	1991	1997
Roma children	80%	60%	20%

Hungary

Unemployed
1998

Average	11%
Roma	34%

Regular income

1998	
Average	63 %
Roma	26 %

Secondary education

1995	
Average	62 %
Roma	9 %

Hungary: education 1971 – 1993

	1976	1993
Roma aged 20-29 who completed 8 years of primary school	21%	77%

New survival techniques

The Roma groups who best managed to preserve their traditional family ties and values were the first to regain their traditional economy based on mobility and trade in a self-employed family setting: retail kiosks, dress or food shops, construction companies. Some even start a carpentry business or a restaurant and employ non-Roma, sometimes even leaving the selling to the personnel.

Some groups restart a new way of travelling: repairing or selling from door to door, or they move from the towns to the rural areas hoping to find jobs as seasonal workers. Because of lack of investment capital they are not able to start their own farms. Some Roma travel from one region to another, from one country to another, e.g., musicians to Western Europe.

Almost everywhere collecting work has been taken up again: mushrooms, second-hand articles and antiques, medicinal herbs, old clothes.

More and more the Roma are establishing their place in the informal economy.

Participation of Roma in Hungary in the informal economy (1994)

Collecting (herbs, mushrooms, snails, firewood,)	23.20 %
Occasional jobs (agriculture, construction)	17.10 %
Manual harvest (after the mechanical harvest)	9.00 %
Recycling (of recoverable waste)	4.40 %
Illegal trade	2.40 %
Sale of handicraft (like baskets)	2.20 %
Services (music, transport)	1.60 %

This kind of economy is extremely unstable and often barely legal. Only a few Roma families succeed in setting up a more or less formal business, mostly trading companies, even on an international level.

The free market provides new opportunities to these people whose flexibility has not entirely been lost by the assimilation.

New mobility

In this context we can also understand more completely the new migration of Roma from the east to the west of Europe. Media and human rights organisations have tried to explain this migration as an escape from physical and cultural threats. Without minimising the seriousness of these threats, we have to take into account that this mobility is also a part of the renewed economic activity of the Roma. They do not remain passively suffering their inhuman living conditions. Lots of them leave, in search of a safe haven or a new El Dorado. In view of their miserable economic conditions it seems quite obvious that Roma come to countries where during the long procedure of seeking asylum a rather good living can be earned, at least for a time.

Roma competences for a new economy

If governments or NGOs intend to improve the economy of the Roma they will have to take into account several competences and impediments in the Roma cultures.

Because of their history Roma tend to:

- develop an enormous social pressure for levelling (cf. egalitarian culture), which can be a serious obstacle to emancipation;
- have a permanent feeling of inferiority towards the non-Roma;
- suffer in apathy, especially the most marginalized groups, and are then stigmatised as cadgers;
- cultivate their distance to the sedentary society hindering a better participation in the economy.

The big question is and will always be: how can self-employed labour, assimilation into society, and the maintenance of a strong collective identity be combined? Roma and Travellers resolve this by:

- permitting as few influences from the majority population as possible;
- cultivating group cohesion (where the individual is subordinated to the group);
- maintaining the link between the basic group (e.g., the nuclear family) and the reference group (e.g., Rumungre, Irish Travellers). The Roma communities who managed to safeguard their ancient family networks have a substantially better chance of taking up business again, not

only because of the solidarity within the family, but mainly because of the guaranteed flow of information. More than capital, it is this information flow throughout the clan that is basic for the Roma economy. That makes it possible to grasp every chance swiftly as soon as it occurs.

Not every Roma group has been equally influenced by the assimilation policies of the last century. Some Roma turned into proletariat or middle class and more or less lost their sense of ethnicity. Some escaped proletarianisation and maintained their traditional economy on the fringe of the official one. A third group was forced into a proletariat but kept its common feeling of ethnic identity. Special attention has to be given to the groups who escaped individualisation by investing their wages in parallel economic activities that fitted into the Roma economy as described above.

¹⁶ REYNIERS Alain, *Quelques jalons pour comprendre l'économie Tsigane*, in *Etudes Tsiganes* no. 12, 1998.

¹⁷ RINGOLD Dena, *Roma and the Transition in Central and Eastern Europe*, *The World Bank*, Washington, 2000.

5 Roma in the EU

It is important to point out that the position of Roma might not be much better in the European Union than it is in central and eastern Europe.

Of course we will not find massive and extreme poverty, since the Roma/Travellers have their share in the general affluence of the country. Nevertheless it is quite astonishing that Roma/Travellers have a life expectancy of about fifteen to twenty years below that of the sedentary people everywhere in Europe.

The main difference between East and West is without any doubt that in the Western European countries the Roma/Travellers were considered more than just a labour force. During the last decades we see that governments and NGOs have tried to establish policies to implement a compromise between the nomadic and the settled cultures. That this is a difficult exercise may be illustrated by the Roma/Traveller policies in Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Spain and Sweden.

1 Roma/Travellers in Belgium¹⁸

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 Different groups

In Belgium four groups of Roma/Sinti/Travellers are distinguished.

Voyagers: descendants of the former occupational travellers. Ethnically they cannot be considered as Roma/Sinti, but they share the same culture. They now live in caravans or houses. Their first language is Dutch (in Flanders) and French (in Wallonia). They still use a lot of words of their own language, called *Bargoens*. Their number is estimated at 7,000. Their religion is mainly Catholic.

Manouches: the Sinti in Belgium (as in France, Switzerland, and parts of Germany) call themselves Manouche. Most probably they are descendants of the “Egyptians” that arrived in Belgium from 1421 onwards. Sometimes they also are called “the first migration”. The Manouches mainly live in caravans. Their first language is the Sinti *Romanes*, their second language is the one of the region where they live. They count about 1,500 souls. Some of the Manouches belong to the Catholic Church, some to a Christian “born again” movement.

Rom: the Roma in Belgium call themselves Rom. They arrived in the middle of the 19th century, and are also called the second migration. Their first language is *Vlax Romanes*,

their second language is French. In Flanders Manouche children start learning Dutch only if they go to school. Roms live semi-nomadically: they travel in summer and stay at private or public camping sites during winter. We count about 750 Roms. They all belong to a Christian “born again” movement.

Voyagers, Manouches and Roms have Belgian nationality.

Roma: a wide variety of eastern-European Roma are finding their way to Belgium, especially after the fall of the Iron Curtain. They are sometimes called the third migration. Their number is estimated to be 20,000. Most of these Roma have the nationality of their country of origin (if it still exists!) and only a few of them have legal documents to stay in the country.

Estimates in Wallonia might show another 5,000 to 10,000 Belgian and foreign Roma/Sinti/Travellers.

Apart from that about 200 to 300 families of EU Roma/Sinti/Travellers travel through or around the country, occupying unofficial stopping sites.

1.1.2 Living conditions

→ Lodging

In Flanders and Brussels only twenty-eight official camping sites are available for about 400 families. 400 others have their caravans on private sites, mostly not complying with urban regulations, so they live in the permanent threat of being chased away. The other Roma/Sinti/Travellers live in houses, the majority being forced to do so by the lack of camping sites. The Roma are living in houses, mainly in the cities, and they move a great deal.

→ Schooling

A survey of 1994 shows that 94.6 % of the Voyager children were registered in a school but only 80.3% attended school more than four days a week (20% stayed at home on Wednesday since there was no class in the afternoon). Absenteeism increased with the age of the children, causing big problems in secondary schools.

Of the Manouche children about 81% are registered in a school but only 67.8% attend secondary school. The same phenomenon here: the older the children, the less they attend school.

The biggest problem is among the Roms: only 18.8% of the children attend school. This low figure is also caused by the fact that no Rom is attending secondary school.

Among the Belgian Roma/Sinti/Travellers in Flanders not one is known to participate in higher education. Some Roma who immigrated from eastern Europe are now starting at

universities or other places of higher education.

The Roma are not one people, so we find big differences among them. However, everywhere the schools and other institutions complain about parents who prefer not to send their children to school. A rough estimate is that almost half of the children between six and eighteen go to school, with increasing absenteeism as they grow older.

→ *Employment*

The same survey revealed that 52.9% of the Roma/Sinti/Travellers live on social security, 26.7% were self-employed, 14.7% were employed (mostly in unskilled, temporary jobs). 5.7% had some other kind of income.

Here it must be mentioned that Roma/Sinti/Travellers in Belgium greatly prefer working for themselves. Persons who go and work for a boss have low esteem. Also the time schedule of employed people does not fit in with their social and family obligations. The 52.9% depending on social security mainly try to combine this income with informal revenue.

For the Roma who live in the country without legal documents only the informal labour market is available.

→ *Health*

A comparison was made in one province between the life expectancy of Travellers and that of the majority population. For the Traveller men the life expectancy was 54.8 and for the women 64.7 years. This is twenty years below the average for all men, and fourteen for women.

For the Roma no figures at all are available.

1.1.3. Policies

In Belgium only the Flemish region has adopted some policy towards Roma/Sinti/Travellers.

→ *Lodging*

In 28 municipalities a camping site has been installed, in almost every situation only after a long struggle. This policy started only in 1974. Up to now not even half the Roma/Sinti/Travellers live on a legal site. A new recent development is that the Flemish government is actively stimulating provinces and municipalities to install stopping and camping sites. The costs are subsidised up to 90% by the Flemish community. Nevertheless almost no new sites have become available. The budget of about one million euro is used for renovation of existing sites.

In Wallonia some illegal sites are tolerated. Only one could be regarded as more or less official. The same situation holds true in Brussels.

Stopping sites are not official in Belgium, so travelling

Roma/Sinti/Travellers are constantly being chased by the local authorities. Some groups however manage to negotiate and to receive permits for five to ten days.

→ *Social services*

Since 1977 a centre is being funded (as an NGO subsidised by the Flemish government): the Vlaams Centrum Woonwagengerwerk (Flemish centre for social work in caravans). Since 1999 this centre has been a part of the Vlaams Minderheidscentrum (Flemish Centre for Minorities), founded according to a law defining the Flemish minority policies. In this centre about 12 people are working specifically with Roma/Sinti/Travellers. This work can mainly be defined as community development. Most of the energy is dedicated to grassroots work and intercultural negotiation with and/or on behalf of groups of Roma/Sinti/Travellers.

Roma/Sinti/Travellers in Wallonia and Brussels have no specific service except for two people who mediate between local authorities and travelling Roma/Sinti/Travellers on stopping sites. They have to rely on the regular services or they call for the Flemish mediators.

→ *Education*

The regulations for other minorities do not apply for Roma/Sinti/Travellers, since the main criterion for defining target groups in education is the place of birth of the mother. Since almost all the Roma/Sinti/Traveller have been living in Belgium for a long time they were not considered as a target group for special educational measures. This will change in a new decree that is being drafted to come into force in the school year 2002-2003.

For the children of travelling Roms three schools are being provided with two extra teachers and extra running costs (e.g. for transport). This project started in 1995 and as a result almost half of the Rom children are attending basic school, even if in a very irregular way. These projects will be stopped as soon as the new decree comes into force (September 2002).

In Wallonia and Brussels too only a few schools have some specific interest in Roma/Sinti/Travellers.

In the fields of employment, health and culture no specific policy has been developed in the whole of Belgium.

→ *Roma*

The recently immigrating Roma are considered either as asylum seekers or illegal residents. For asylum seekers the usual provisions are available. After a time these Roma become illegal residents, and for these persons there is no policy at all except expulsion. Since expulsion on a large scale is not common, thousands of Roma are surviving on

charity and informal business. Within the Belgian law they have a right to urgent medical care and education.

1.2 Roma/Sinti/Travellers and community development

In the past the work for Roma/Sinti/Travellers was done by charitable organisations, mainly Catholic. From the beginning of the 1970's these local organisations were invited to unite in order to receive subsidies from the Government. This is how the *Vlaams Centrum Woonwagenwerk* was founded in 1977.

This organisation is the only professional one in Belgium. There is also a Catholic mission with three part-time Flemish priests and one French-speaking. The "born again" missions have only volunteers as pastors.

The community development with Roma/Sinti/Travellers (in this text we will talk about *Woonwagenwerk*) has always taken up the role of the intercultural negotiator. This is based on the traditional way in which Roma/Sinti/Travellers organised their non-commercial relations with the main society. For this purpose they had throughout history to rely on individual persons (nobility, clergy, inn keepers, teachers). These persons acted as ambassadors of the main society and took care of almost every question concerning Roma/Sinti/Travellers. This ancient way of elaborate intercultural mediation fits perfectly into the specific relations of Roma/Sinti/Travellers with the main society.

1.3 The *Woonwagenwerk* bases its activities on some fundamental observations

1.3.1 Respecting the typical culture of Roma/Sinti/Travellers

What can be understood by a "nomadic culture" has been described above. The fundamental gap between Roma/Sinti/Travellers and the settled society, the "here and now" attitude, the flexible and egalitarian social structure, must always be kept in mind in personal contacts, in analysis of problems, and in drawing up plans for solutions.

1.3.2 Fighting social vulnerability^{19,20}

The *Woonwagenwerk* always builds up its contacts proactively with the Roma/Sinti/Travellers. Experience shows that this is highly appreciated by the Roma/Sinti/Travellers and it is a solid way to start common actions.

1.3.3 Establishing personal relations

The workers of the *Woonwagenwerk* spend a major part of their time in visiting as many Roma/Sinti/Travellers as possible.

This serves several goals simultaneously:

- to provide an ombuds service to the families who have problems with one social institution or another;
- to coordinate family networks to facilitate group actions.

1.3.4 Balancing on the tightrope of multi-sided impartiality

A negotiator cannot afford to choose "which side he's on". He always finds himself between the conflicting parties. Professional mediation between Roma/Sinti/Travellers and the settled society fulfils a threefold function, comparable to a bridge: it has one pillar at each side plus a link between the two.

1.3.5 Stimulating the self-reliance of Roma/Sinti/Travellers

Stating the positions of Roma/Sinti/Travellers can be done effectively only by the Roma/Sinti/Travellers themselves. Therefore the *Woonwagenwerk* always tries to involve Roma/Sinti/Travellers spokespersons when in contact with authorities, social workers, etc. in the main society. These spokespersons have a right to be trained and prepared to make these contacts as effective as possible. The *Woonwagenwerk* takes care of this. Mainly because the training needs are so specific in every case, there is still no institutional training flexible enough to meet the needs of Roma/Sinti/Travellers.

This also means that *Woonwagenwerk* organises group meetings of Roma/Sinti/Travellers for specific policy discussions.

1.4 Some results

This way of working has shown some (limited) results.

1.4.1 In the field of basic needs

The twenty-eight official camping sites are all the result of a common struggle of Roma/Sinti/Travellers and *Woonwagenwerk*. The fact that the first site was created in 1974, and that about fifty more camping and/or stopping sites are still needed indicates that the struggle has been difficult and has not at all been won yet.

1.4.2 Social security services

Most of the Roma/Sinti/Travellers in Belgium have access to social services. A lot of juridical procedures were needed to achieve this goal. Even today there are public services that refuse to serve Roma/Sinti/Travellers properly. The arguments used to 'justify' this vary from "lack of time" to the alleged "parasitism" of Roma/Sinti/Travellers. Right up to the present juridical procedures are being initiated by *Woonwagenwerk* to ensure the rights of Roma/Sinti/Travellers.

1.4.3 In the field of participation

By submitting specific projects to official institutions *Woonwagenwerk* succeeded in:

- doubling the number of Belgian Roma children attending school. It took some three years of negotiating with the government and so far eight years of carrying out projects. These projects will be integrated in the regular support services to be set up in the school year 2002-2003;
- creating professional training sessions fully adapted to the Roma/Sinti/Travellers: in four years more than 150 took this opportunity. This succeeded only in one specific region where thanks to an efficient European partnership this opportunity could be offered. Mainstreaming the method will take further years of negotiating in the other regions of the country. One of the main obstacles are that mainstream training institutes work only for members of target groups who plan to work as employees. Till now Roma/Sinti/Travellers who want to be self-employed cannot be accepted in these schemes.

These projects have some specific features to meet the expectations of Roma/Sinti/Travellers:

- participation is on a voluntary basis;
- the financial costs for the Roma/Sinti/Travellers are extremely low;
- they provide a reception programme exclusively for Roma/Sinti/Travellers;
- they are organised on the premises of official institutions;
- they are very flexible.

1.5 Recent statistics²¹

Employment of Roma/Sinti/Travellers in Belgium, 2001

Employed informally	1.44 %
Employed formally	10.05 %
Self-employed informally	24.14 %
Self-employed formally	8.62 %
Unemployed	51.72 % (mainly women)
Other/unknown	4.03 %

Education of the adult (18+) Roma/Sinti/Travellers in Belgium, 2001

Secondary education	2.38 %
Technical school	4.46 %
Professional training	8.93 %
Primary school	23.81 %
Special school	1.49 %
	(i.e. for mentally disabled)
No education	45.83 %
Unknown	13.10 %

School participation of children (to age eighteen years) of Roma/Sinti/Travellers in Belgium, 2001

Secondary education	0.69 %
Technical school	3.09 %
Professional training	6.85 %
Primary school	35.39 %
Special school	6.18 %
	(i.e. for mentally disabled)
No education	45.36 %
	(incl. 5% of children between 0 and 3 years of age)
Unknown	2.41 %

2 Roma in Finland²² "Halfway after half a century"

2.1 A history of exclusion

As in most countries, the Roma were more or less protected by positive legislation only in the twentieth century. From their first appearance in 1540 till 1750 the Roma were deported or executed. The Evangelical Lutheran Church even denied them the services of the church. As early as 1637 a law was introduced which made it legal to kill any Roma in the kingdom. From 1750 to 1850, when Finland was a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire, in contrast to most other European countries, some effort was made to integrate Roma. After that the persecution escalated again, for example, vagrancy was prohibited. In 1901 the first law was passed protecting Roma and promoting assimilation. Children were taken from their families to be "educated" in homes, and it was forbidden to speak the Romani language in public.

2.2 A new policy

When Finland became independent in 1917 all ethnic groups became Finnish citizens, and the contribution of Roma in the Finnish forces during World War II had a strong influence in shaping the Finnish image of the Roma.

In 1956 the Finnish Government set up an Advisory Board on Gypsy Affairs. It was given permanent status in 1989 and its name was changed to Advisory Board on Romani Affairs. Its members are appointed every three years by the Government. Half of the eighteen members represents the Roma, the other half represents the government.

We can consider this Board as signalling the start of emancipation of Roma in Finland.

A number of factors had contributed to the weakening of the position of Romani culture:

- the lack of written material in the past;
- the generally negative attitude towards the language, as a result of which Romani was not used in public or taught in school;
- because of their dependence on the majority population for shelter during the cold winters the Roma did not make their contacts in Romani;
- the extended family has given way to the smaller nuclear family, reducing the interaction between the generations.

2.2.1 Education

The *Romani Education Unit* is an operationally independent unit of the *National Board of Education*. It is funded out of adult education allocations specially earmarked for Romani education. It is responsible for:

- developing and implementing the education of the Roma at the national level;
- furthering Romani language and culture;
- educating and informing the general public.

Its achievements include the national Romani curriculum for comprehensive schools in 1992 (and its updated version in 1995) and the national Romani curriculum for upper secondary schools in 1998. In 1997 the Ministry of Education approved the Unit's recommendation of the introduction of two new vocational qualifications: a diploma in Romani Cultural Instruction and a special diploma in Romani Cultural Instruction.

The Research Institute for the Languages of Finland now has a Romani Language Board for conducting research into the Romani language and developing and setting norms for the language.

The development of the written language as such did not begin until the end of the 1960s: textbooks, a dictionary, a grammar book, and a songbook were produced.

The training courses for teachers of Romani, the production of Romani teaching material, and the introduction of Romani as a subject in schools in 1989 have all helped to breathe new life into the language. It also enhanced the motivation for children to attend school, and for parents to send their children to school more regularly.

Since 1999 a school's official language of instruction may be Finnish, Swedish, Sami, Romani, or sign language. Children can currently get mother tongue instruction in Romani at school for two hours a week. Efforts have been made to recruit and train members of the Roma community, and the stipulations on formal qualifications have been relaxed in order to recruit more Roma teachers.

The educational goals of day care now include supporting

the language and culture of Roma children.

The result of the school reforms has been a noticeable increase in the number of Roma children attending school. Teachers of Romani serve as a link between the majority population and the Roma.

2.2.2 Housing

Until the 1960's the living conditions of Roma were very poor. The first step taken at the beginning of the 1970's was an allocation in the government budget for the acquisition of homes for the Roma. Between 1975 and 1981 the living conditions were improved by a special government housing loan facility. That led to decent housing for 80% of the Roma.

2.2.3 Employment

For almost twenty years the employment authorities have worked in cooperation with the Roma community to provide vocational training for adult Roma. The most popular fields of training are: social welfare and healthcare, teacher training for teachers of Romani, training for youth instruction, information technology and music. Roma find it easier to participate when there are other members of their own community studying alongside them.

2.2.4 Constitution

The general change in attitude was reflected in the reform of constitutional rights in 1995. The constitution condemns all forms of discrimination. Another important reform was the right of the Sami and Roma to maintain and develop their own language and culture.

Two treaties of the Council of Europe (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and Convention for the Protection of National Minorities) ratified by Finland in 1998 strengthened the legal position of Sami and Roma culture and language.

2.3 Participation and organisational activities

There are five national Romani organisations.

Romano Missio, founded in 1906. A Christian organisation providing social and child welfare services, a children's home and two foster homes, summer camps and church services in Romani. It publishes a magazine five times a year, mainly in Finnish but containing some material in Romani.

Finnish Free Romani Mission, founded in 1964. It arranges various religious events, youth camps and seminars. It publishes a magazine four times a year, mainly in Finnish but containing some material in Romani.

Finnish Romani Society, founded in 1967. It concentrates on pursuing such questions as discrimination and human rights through political channels and the press.

Association of Romani Contact Persons, founded in 1993. Each contact person serves as a link between the local government and the local Roma community in the areas of housing, employment, and education. It organises events to inform the public on Romani culture.

Gypsies' Future, founded 1996. It provides support for Roma children brought up or still living in institutions or foster families.

Finland founded the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, linked to the Ministry of Social Affairs, and it focuses its work on:

- increasing participation by the Roma;
- strengthening the relevant statutory framework and fundamental rights;
- ensuring that Romani language and culture are taken into account in day care centres and in schools;
- improving the educational level of the Roma;
- disseminating information on social and healthcare issues and special features of Romani culture;
- in the area of housing, providing information for the provincial state offices and local authorities to help develop cooperation between the Roma, housing officials, and local authorities;
- clarifying the priorities of the policy on Roma and strengthening the position of the Roma;
- developing international cooperation in questions which touch the Roma.

On the suggestion of the Advisory Board, provincial advisory boards were set up on an experimental basis in 1996. They work together with provincial and local authorities, disseminating accurate information and promoting tolerance. In this way they help to increase cultural pluralism and the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity at the local level.

2.4 The current situation

Finland's Roma enjoy the same rights and are subject to the same duties as all other Finns. There are an estimated 10,000 Finnish Roma living in Finland and around 3,000 living in Sweden. Most of them belong to the Lutheran Church, but some are members of other nonconformist Christian denominations.

There are Roma communities in every part of Finland, but the majority live in the cities of the south in permanent houses. Migration occurs only during the holiday season.

A survey in 1996 revealed that most Roma were living in government subsidised rented housing, while one out of three was in urgent need of somewhere to live. The ethnic prejudices and the weaker economic position make it very difficult for Roma to find accommodation on the private housing market.

Roma are on average worse off both economically and socially than other Finns. The radical restructuring of the economy and society since the Second World War has undermined the traditional Romani means of livelihood. This is one of the reasons for the high rates of unemployment and social exclusion.

The Roma have traditionally been suspicious of education, as the schools have been used to assimilate them. The Roma still continue to experience more problems at school than other children. Roma parents are still unaware of how the school system works and how they should support and motivate their children. Inadequate mastery of both their own Romani language and the mainstream Finnish lead in the end to social exclusion. This causes greater difficulties in going on to further education or vocational training and finding a decent job later.

Discrimination is still reflected in the health of elderly and middle-aged Roma. The incidence of sickness is higher among Roma. The family normally takes care of sick and disabled, as there is a reluctance to put them in an institution.

2.5 Some features of Finnish Roma culture²³

The improving relations between Roma and non-Roma in Finland does not affect the strength of the Roma culture.

→ *Dress*

The women have special daily clothing consisting of a long skirt of about twelve metres of black velvet worn with a special blouse. They also wear a lot of jewellery, mostly gold. The men have to cover their upper bodies at all times. They have to wear more than just a shirt, often a pullover, a jacket and tie. Mostly they wear a suit, under which they must have a pullover or a waistcoat.

→ *Elderly people*

Much more respect is shown to elders and parents than to other people among the Roma: nobody sits on their bed, usually nobody touches them at all. If they are living in a house with many floors, nobody can live above them. Young people cannot go and live there, especially women. You never say "you" to older people or your parents.

→ *Hygiene*

The Finnish Roma never shake hands with each other. The elders' and children's laundry as well as items used for food-making are washed separately. Food or anything related to the dining table cannot be put on the floor or on a chair. Food-related items should be placed only on a table or some other place which is clean, and this has to be carried by hand all the way home. If a cup falls onto the floor, you never use it again. If something is unclean, you cannot make it clean by washing.

→ *Taboos*

Weddings and the birth of babies are marked by taboos in Finland. Nobody from the elderly group attends the weddings, and nobody talks about the birth of a baby. The parents of a newborn cannot show themselves or the baby till one to three months after the birth.

You can never mention anything about the parts of the body, from the neck right down to the knees. Any words said about these things are considered "shameful."

2.6 Further plans

The position of the Roma has undoubtedly improved over the past few decades due to the combined efforts of the public authorities and the Roma themselves. The majority population has learned to understand Romani customs and respect the culture.

As a follow-up to the continuing efforts over almost fifty years to integrate the Roma in Finland, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health published in 1999 Policy Strategies on Roma. It is based on a survey by two independent reporters. They found the following issues relevant to the further development of the policy on Roma in Finland.

- Instruction in the Romani language must be made available for day care and preschool education all the way through adult education.
- The job description of the language teacher should as far as possible include the tasks of remedial teacher and welfare officer.
- Government grants for municipalities must be earmarked for Romani education.
- The Roma should establish a central organisation of their own, and the social policy on the Roma must be tailored to allow their participation, which requires giving adequate resources to support the existing forms of cooperation.
- Local working groups for joint planning with Roma and political decision-makers should be set up.
- Municipalities with only a small Roma population should appoint a Roma contact person to convey information in both directions.

- The provincial advisory board should be given a regular status.
- The Advisory Board on Roma Affairs needs additional resources and should be transferred from Social Affairs to the Ministry of Education.

Finland gives an example of how a national government can succeed in improving the position of Roma, coming out of a centuries-old situation of extreme exclusion. This has been achieved by a steady policy during more than half a century of cultural promotion and setting up specific programmes adapted to the minorities, including the Roma.

In all these programmes we find these essential features applied successfully:

- the crucial role of Roma and non-Roma mediators;
- the earmarking of grants and budgets;
- the promotion of the culture (language, family ties);
- the promotion of Roma participation on all levels.

That a lot remains to be done is shown by the still existing racism against Roma, the dependence of Roma on public housing schemes, the persisting problems in participation in (higher) education, in decent employment and health care. Nevertheless, a peaceful co-existence is being built up in Finland.

3 Travellers: The Irish situation²⁴

Introduction

The racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including violence experienced by Roma/Gypsies/Sinti/Travellers, were recognised with deep concern by the governments at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban in 2001. The conference also reiterated the need to develop effective policies and implementation mechanisms for full achievement of equality. Roma, Gypsies/Sinti and Travellers are in a unique position in Europe in that they are particularly disadvantaged, subjected to discrimination and denied redress. The situation of Irish Travellers, culturally part of the world-wide diaspora which is outlined in this short report, bears testimony to these discriminations. The report has a particular focus on the triple discrimination experienced by Irish Traveller women, but also examines significant policy and legal documents relating to Irish Travellers: the development of Traveller NGOs, a brief qualitative review of developments to date accompanied by a more specific account of recent developments and the case of Traveller women.

3.1 Policy and Law

3.1.1 Official concern about Travellers in modern Ireland is expressed in government reports

→ *The Government Commission on the Condition of Itinerants, 1963.*

This report identified Travellers ('itinerants') as a destitute subsection of the Irish population. The solution was to house and educate Travellers, give them health services and promote their employment – to absorb them into the 'normal' settled population. The Commission called on hostile settled people to be more "Christian".

→ *The Government Review Body Report, 1983*

This Report identified Travellers as having a distinct identity. The concept of 'integration' replaced that of 'absorption', and the Report recommended stopping site accommodation for Travellers who wanted to continue to travel. Provision of adequate and appropriate accommodation was identified as the key to ending Travellers' socio-economic poverty, marginalisation, and poor health and educational status. However, the ultimate aim remained settlement within the majority society. Settled people's anti-Traveller discrimination was challenged, but institutional discrimination was not identified.

→ *The Government Task Force Report, 1996, and the Task Force Monitoring Body Report, 2000*

These reports assert the cultural distinctiveness of Travellers, and this concept informs the discussion and recommendations regarding social policies. Institutional discrimination is addressed. The key factor in Travellers' experience of racism and exclusion is once more identified as accommodation. Local authorities were obliged to prepare accommodation plans in consultation with Travellers. Report 2000 endorses the Task Force recommendations and its call for substantial commitment to combat institutional as well as interpersonal racism.

3.1.2 Laws

A number of legal instruments specifically prohibit discrimination, including discrimination against Travellers:

- The Housing Act, 1988;
- The Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act, 1991;
- The Unfair Dismissals Act, 1993;
- The Equal Status Act, 2000;

The Irish Government has also ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

All the Acts have weaknesses and require the reinforcement of a body of laws that target specific issues affecting Travellers. The most recent Act (Equal Status) prohibits discrimination on nine grounds, including the ground of Traveller identity, and the 'race' ground (this ground in-

cludes nationality or ethnic status). Listing Travellers separately ensured that they cannot be overlooked (as they might be if they were included under the heading 'ethnic'), and they are included whether or not their claim to ethnic status is recognised. However, the separate naming could be taken to imply acceptance that they are not an ethnic group.

3.2 Traveller Organisations

There was little consultation with Travellers in the preparation of the 1963 Report. After its publication, 'Itinerant' Settlement Committees were formed in many localities, which later changed their names to Committees for Travellers, and together the *National Council for Travellers*. Travellers became increasingly vocal and active in these bodies. The National Council was disbanded in 1987.

In the 1980s, an all-Traveller organisation, Minceir Misli was formed. It has been succeeded by the *Irish Traveller Movement (ITM)*. The *National Traveller Women's Forum (NTWF)* was established. ITM and NTWF have active involvement with local Traveller groups.

In the 1980s the *Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group* was formed (the DTEDG, now named 'Pavee Point'). It was a partnership between Travellers and settled people promoting Traveller human rights and empowerment, and acting as a national resource for Traveller initiatives.

In 1988, the *National Traveller Women's Forum* was founded to promote the interests of Traveller women and in 1990, when the National Council disbanded, the *Irish Traveller Movement* was established. These national groups adopted significantly different approaches to the concerns of Travellers focussing on anti-racism, anti-sexism, identity and rights.

Representatives of Traveller organisations and Traveller support groups are now included in statutory bodies established to address social issues, and particularly in those established to develop Traveller-targeted policy and provision.

Travellers were by far the largest minority ethnic group until Ireland's role changed from sending to receiving migrants in the 1990's. These include small but growing numbers of Roma. Travellers and Roma are now two of the most discriminated against minorities in Ireland. Through Pavee Point, Irish Travellers are providing Roma leaders with the facilities and a base from which to address their situation in Ireland.

3.3 Travellers' experience: history and the present

Travellers, an indigenous ethnic minority in Ireland, were first mentioned in historical records in the 12th century. Their nomadism was suited to and shaped by commercial opportunities for migrant metal workers, seasonal labourers, dealers in farm horses and donkeys, traders in small goods, and travelling entertainers. The settled population needed Travellers' services, but they treated Travellers with hostility and suspicion. A law prohibiting travelling in order to trade was passed in the 16th century.

Currently, many Travellers want to continue travelling, but many others do not, often because settled society prevents them from travelling with dignity. But whether they choose a travelling or settled lifestyle, the nomadic tradition remains an important element in Travellers' identity formation and social relations. Nomadism and settled society's hostility to it have shaped Traveller-settled relations, and Travellers' internal traditions, such as their allegiance to networking with the dispersed units of their extended families. Outcomes of unequal Traveller-settled power relations are evident in statistical data on the Traveller population, their access to social services, and their socio-economic situation.

→ Statistical data²⁵

There are about 4,905 'households'²⁶ of Travellers in the Republic of Ireland, with an estimated population of 27,000 persons (5.5 persons per 'household'). Travellers comprise less than 1% of the total Irish population of three and a half million.

About 40% of Travellers are under ten years old; well over 50% are under fifteen years old.

Only 5% of Travellers are aged fifty years and older.

Current data on Travellers' health, education and socio-economic status are not disaggregated from national data on need and provision. Only estimates can be made.

→ Health status

In 1963 Travellers' life expectancy was 30 years; their infant mortality rate was seven times the national rate. Things have improved, but the age structure of the Traveller population still reflects a high infant mortality rate (in 1987 it was 18.1 per thousand, almost three times the national average), and an average life expectancy that is roughly twelve years lower than the national norms for men and women. Accidental death rates for Travellers, particularly those living on illegal sites, are significantly higher than the national rate. Traveller infants have a high rate of hospitalisation in their first year of life. Poor accommodation is a significant cause of poor health status.

→ Accommodation

Traditionally, Travellers lived in wagons and tents, often in appalling conditions. However, archival records (such as the work of photographer Eleanor Wiltshire) show that some Travellers achieved a dignified nomadic lifestyle in the 1950's. Concerned government and voluntary bodies did not notice that, hence they did not investigate how the Travellers achieved it.

Currently, about 25% of Traveller 'households' live in illegal (often roadside) campsites. About 270 families live in Local Authority temporary stopping sites. Travellers attest that conditions on these sites are often worse than on illegal sites. Most Travellers live in houses – either in Traveller-targeted group schemes, or in Local Authority housing estates. Local authorities have consulted with Travellers and prepared accommodation plans. However, 'transient' Travellers' needs have not been appropriately addressed, implementation of plans has been minimal, and the accommodation deficit is growing.

→ Work and employment

Travellers' economic roles have changed profoundly. Formerly, farmers needed the services of travelling tinsmiths, blacksmiths, dealers in farm horses and donkeys, and suppliers of household items. As these needs faded, Travellers found other economic niches, such as scrap collecting and trading in second-hand goods.

Currently, there are restricted opportunities for independent enterprise or paid employment suited to Travellers, so the unemployment rate is high, and there is little scope for self-employment among them. This issue is also linked to Travellers' limited education opportunities (see below). Training programmes in Traveller-targeted centres have not resulted in significant employment (see below). Anti-Traveller racism in the workplace is also a significant factor. Many Travellers report being refused employment because of their ethnic identity, though the Equal Status Act (2000) means that employers cannot openly state this.

→ Social and recreational activities

Traditionally, Travellers socialised among themselves. They occasionally went to the few public houses that would admit them. Today, Travellers seek their right of entry to all public social amenities. The Equal Status Act (2000) outlawed exclusion from these amenities on the grounds of Traveller identity, but many Travellers still report exclusion on grounds that seem to thinly mask anti-Traveller racism. For instance, publicans often 'ask' Travellers to leave on the basis of vague and undefined 'dress codes'; hotels claim they do not have space for event bookings, or they charge prohibitive rates.

→ Formal and further education, and community-based initiatives

Placement

Until the 1960s formal education was virtually closed to Travellers, and very few were literate. Separate primary school classes were set up for Traveller children, to prepare them for absorption or integration in the 'ordinary' classes. Currently pre-school provision is available to only a minority of Traveller children (there is no national pre-school service in Ireland), but this area is expanding.

Since 1980 Traveller pupils are integrated into ordinary classes, both at primary level (for age four to twelve years) and secondary level. Currently, almost all primary age children are enrolled in school but though a growing number go on to second level, a maximum of only 20% of Travellers aged twelve to fifteen years are currently enrolled. Currently there are twenty Travellers attending tertiary-level universities and colleges: most have followed alternative access routes, and are enrolled in diploma programmes.

Pre-employment training provision for Travellers was developed in the 1970's and 1980's under the aegis of FAS (the national training authority). Now these centres are under the Department of Education and Science, which demands a broader concept of further education. Further education opportunities also include community-based projects and courses. These are varied, and organised locally. Some key initiatives will be discussed below in 'The Case of Irish Traveller Women.'

Performance

Attainment levels of a substantial number of Traveller pupils even at primary level are below the norm for their age, and a variety of measures are required to address the settled traditions in the education system. Very few will complete secondary level and sit for the Leaving Certificate Examination. This impedes access to degree courses, and there is not yet a significant number of Travellers with professional qualifications. 'Second chance' education opportunities are particularly important because so many Travellers still do not derive full benefit from the school system.

Power

Few Travellers are involved in school management, parents' committees, or other facets of formal education planning and delivery, or as teachers and educators. Traveller organisations have produced materials for use in teaching and group work on racism and diversity.

→ Discrimination, conflict, and the law

Discrimination remains a daily occurrence for many Travellers. In a recent independent survey of over 500 Travellers, the following frequencies of discrimination were reported:

Pubs	71%
Discos/clubs	40%
Gardaí (=police)	38%
Shop Owners	37%
Local Authorities	33%
Dept of Social Welfare	26%
Schools	25%
Employers	15%
Hospitals	13%
Courts	13%
Cinemas	12%
Settled work colleagues	11%
Banks & financial institutions	7%
Tax authorities	5%
Church organisations	3%

Most discrimination occurs in public venues or institutions. This erodes Travellers' rights of access to amenities and services. It also impacts on how they are perceived and how they can live in their neighbourhood.

Traveller-settled conflict, and Traveller-Traveller conflict are often cited as factors in anti-Traveller feeling. A number of Traveller groups have initiated mediation programmes to address these issues, and they are proving useful. Poor relations with the Gardaí mean that Travellers do not readily turn to them for protection or for help in resolving conflicts. Traveller organisations are involved in delivering training for Gardaí on ethnically sensitive policing, and Traveller organisations are working to build an understanding of the law and its procedures among Travellers. Travellers have brought a number of incidents to the attention of the Equality Authority.

3.3.2 The case of Irish Traveller Women

Irish Traveller women face discrimination both as Travellers and as women. Gender impact statements should be incorporated into all social policy targeting Travellers. A pre-requisite for this is the collection of data on issues affecting Traveller women. Some indicators are suggested below.

For Traveller women, accommodation was and is a key issue. Poor living conditions affect their health, and settled society has always ensured that nomadic living conditions were and are very poor. This has implications for women both as individuals and as child bearers. Poor conditions also damage the health of their family members, for whom

they are usually the key carers. Traveller women often express particular concern over the risks and exposure that accompany the nomadic lifestyle; but that lifestyle has been historically restricted and distorted by the majority society. Harassment by the majority continues for many Travellers even when they opt for permanent housing and try to 'settle'. Their accommodation is often poor in both the physical and social sense. In such conditions women must invest huge resources of energy and time in providing a decent environment for the family.

Traveller women should also have the right to resources to manage their reproductive lives. These resources include culturally appropriate childcare facilities: many Traveller women do not have access to these. These restrictions have implications both for women and for young girls, who are often heavily involved in home-making: they must curtail their involvement in formal education, further education, and access to career opportunities, in order to meet their family childcare responsibilities. They also impede women in supporting their children in their education.

Violence against Traveller women (and their children) includes state and inter-ethnic violence. For instance, when women and children must face the physical impact of evictions, often carried out at times when the men are likely to be absent. Women can also be subjected to public verbal and physical abuse from (often male) personnel when being ejected from social venues.

In any society, domestic violence is an issue for the whole community but it has specific importance for women who, with their children, are targets of the most severe violence. Traveller women who experience violence, and those who support them, require culturally respectful resources so that they can address the issue. They must be confident that their work will not be straitjacketed by stereotypical ideas of Traveller culture, or co-opted to promote these.

Some women's groups have developed economic projects such as community laundry services, and small business projects. Most of the twenty Travellers pursuing third level studies are women. The NTWF and allied Traveller women's groups are working to promote women's control over their lives and the development of their potential. The Pavee Point Domestic Violence Project is an initiative in which Travellers are addressing issues of internal oppression. Growing numbers of Traveller women are taking diploma courses in childcare and in primary health care. These courses have positive outcomes for the participants and for their community, to which they give back their developed skills and knowledge. Supply falls far short of demand and need.

In sum, Traveller women are meeting the challenges and

opportunities that are made available to them, and women are in the majority among Travellers involved in personal and community development initiatives. Ideally, all women should be free and resourced to develop to their full potential, both as individuals and as community members. And for fully effective community development, relevant challenges and opportunities for men should be developed also.

3.4 Key issues

3.4.1 Local authorities

There are two key issues: provision of adequate and appropriate accommodation, and development and implementation of anti-discriminatory, culturally affirmative policy and practice.

Local Authorities should be obliged:

- to review their accommodation plans, to ensure their adequacy and cultural appropriateness;
- to implement them within a specified time;
- to report annually to the Government Traveller Accommodation Unit on their implementation.

Local and national Traveller organisations should be involved in these processes.

3.4.2 Racism

Currently racism against all ethnic minorities, particularly Travellers and Roma, is intensifying. The media play positive and negative roles. Traveller organisations should be involved in developing, delivering, and monitoring progress in combating racism.

Specifically, there is a need:

- to put in place a body of law that will strengthen the power of the equality legislation;
- to develop comprehensive anti-racist, inclusive initiatives in the education and training sectors, and in all public service sectors;
- to ensure equality in all social services, access to amenities, and employment procedures;
- to promote anti-racism and to welcome diversity among the settled majority;
- to develop and implement an anti-racist, pro-diversity code of practice in the media;
- to promote public education and disseminate information.

- Further education opportunities for women should be put on a firm footing, and well resourced.
- Resources are required to enable Traveller women to develop initiatives for income generation.
- Women involved in courses and projects to improve their own and their family's life chances should not be penalised by loss of medical cards or other social welfare entitlements.
- Outcomes should be documented and evaluated in order to promote effective practice.

3.5 Roma

There are many Roma, Gypsies and other Travellers among the migrants, refugees and asylum seekers who cross European national boundaries. With this increasing movement, there is an increasing need for solidarity among Roma, Gypsies, and other Travellers.

3.6 Specific points about each of the areas noted in this report:

- To enable proper identification of Travellers' health status and needs, the health authorities should collect disaggregated data.
- Accommodation plans should be scrutinised for their cultural sensitivity, and their implementation should be enforced.
- The Equality Authority and other bodies should ensure the application of equality legislation in the work place.
- Appropriate self-employment opportunities should be identified, and training provided.
- A Task Force is required within the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment to promote implementation of the 1996 Task Force recommendations on employment and income generation.
- The management of social amenities should be brought into line with equality legislation.
- Poor accommodation and discrimination, two key underlying causes of poor education performance, should be addressed.
- The Department of Education and Science should produce a Traveller Education Strategy, designed to promote Travellers' full and effective participation in the education provided.
- Traveller organisations should be involved in all stages of devising and implementing this strategy.
- Education for all should include teaching on human rights and anti-racism, and promote respect for diversity.

- Ethnically sensitive policing should be promoted, and Traveller organisations should be involved in developing principles and practices to this end.
- Legislation should be amended to take account of the EU Racism Directive.
- The procedure for dealing with complaints about discrimination should be overhauled to improve its effectiveness and its accessibility to complainants who may not have advanced literacy skills.
- Some phrases in the *Equal Status Act 2000* (such as references to 'reasonable persons') offer possible camouflaged for racist strategies. This needs to be addressed.

4 Roma in Spain²⁷

4.1 Historical overview

The presence of Roma was mentioned for the first time in 1417.

→ *1499, March 4*: banning of every person who does not have a fixed domicile and a known occupation. Roma started hiding all over the country. In the following centuries more than 250 laws and ordinances were promulgated against them.

→ *1749, July 30*: general roundup of Gypsies ordered by King Ferdinand VI and approved by the Catholic Church. The 10,000 to 12,000 Roma of Spain were all put into concentration camps.

→ *1766*: liberation of the Roma by King Charles III. Before that nearly a full generation of Roma had known nothing but prison life.

→ *1783, September 19*: law issued by King Charles III stating Roma were "de jure equal to other citizens but de facto unequal".

→ *1933*: Law on vagrants and criminals, condemning once again the Roma.

→ *1941*: Castilian was declared the only official language in Spain. Romani was labelled a slang of delinquents.

→ *1942*: The *Guardia Civil* (police) was ordered to put the Roma under surveillance and suppression. This meant, for example, that people without a fixed domicile were to be treated as suspected criminals, and that travelling people could be forced to leave a place after just three days. The ambiguity of this measure was obvious: prohibiting travelling people from settling anywhere meant that they were forced to keep on travelling.

Databases were set up on as many Roma as possible (also on political opposition and homosexuals) in order to con-

trol these groups. Those records are still available today.

→ *1978, December 6*: New democracy. At last all citizens of Spain, the Roma included, were declared equal in the new constitution.

Many regional languages were recognised, but not Romani since “it has no territorial link”.

→ *1986*: For the first time Spain had a section of the budget earmarked “to finance national and international programmes of social action and to implement the National Plan for the Development of Gypsies”. That plan had already been presented by a human rights NGO (*Asociación Nacional Presencia Gitana*) in 1976. But that policy was short-lived. Successive governments introduced various policies, which means that till today there has not been a stable long-term policy for the emancipation of Roma.

4.2 The current situation in Spain

About 900,000 to one million people in Spain can be considered Roma (Gitano). They suffer from strong racist attitudes against them. Not less than 74% of the respondents of an enquiry declared they did not want a Roma as a neighbour.

About half of the Roma population in Spain is under sixteen. Only 5% are over sixty-five. This means that life expectancy, as elsewhere in Europe, is far below the average.

While the average demographic growth in Spain is stabilising, the Roma population increases 5% every year, doubling its number every fifteen years.

Up to 95% of the Spanish Roma live sedentarily but mostly in unsatisfactory conditions. They occupy 95% of the bidonvilles around the bigger cities. 80% of these “houses” are smaller than 50 m², while the average Roma family counts 5.4 people. Public services are scarcely provided in these areas, so they become unhygienic and deteriorate, reinforcing once more the prejudices against Roma.

70% of the adults do not have a school education. 60% of the children of compulsory school age do not attend classes. Only 300 Roma students are known in higher education in Spain. This seems almost ‘normal’ in a system where one teacher out of five admits to being racist.

4.3 Some sinister events in recent years

In 2000 the local authority of Madrid locked up dozens of Roma, and only Roma, families in the municipal “depot”, the biggest, most dangerous, and least controlled jail in

Spain. Spanish justice authorities have been building a case against those people since 1994, and Spain keeps them in jail despite condemnations by the Spanish and the European ombudsman, the Human Rights Commission of the US Senate, UNESCO, OSCE, the European Parliament, the Sub-Committee on Human Rights of UNO, and the Council of Europe.

On the occasion of the installation of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia in Vienna, *Presencia Gitana* introduced a complaint against institutional racism in Spain in the so-called *Valdemingómez* case. The city administration of Madrid refuses to dismantle slums and provide decent housing for *Cañada Real Galiana* in spite of the condemnation of the site by the state prosecutor.

5 Roma in Sweden

5.1. Historical overview

Father Olaus Petri would never have guessed that he was writing himself into history when he noted in his *Tänkebok (Book of Thoughts)* that in Stockholm in 1512 “on the day of the archangel Saint Michael the *Tatra* arrived in the city. It is said they come from Egypt Minor...” That was the first mention of Roma in Swedish history. The party was led by Count Antonius with his Countess. They carried a letter of recommendation from the Scottish king.²⁸

→ As early as *1525* a bishop in Strängäs got orders from the king to make sure that all Roma were driven away. In *1560* another bishop forbade all priests to engage with Roma. They were not to baptise the children nor to bury the dead. This ban was shortly afterwards extended to apply to medical treatment as well.²⁹

→ In *1637* a general law on the Roma was issued: all male Roma should be hanged, and women and children should be driven out of the country. Roma were deported to Karelia (a Nordic province in Finland, at that time a part of the Swedish empire) in the 1660’s. That was an attempt to repopulate the province, because it had been abandoned by the Finns because of the extremely harsh living conditions.

→ Already in *1675* a new law was issued: Roma had to enrol in the army, which gave them the right to be registered in a Swedish city. Even during the 18th century almost every Roma man between eighteen and twenty-five was or had been in the army. Army veterans got civil rights.

→ A law of *1804* stated that Roma should be sent to the same public workplaces as other vagabonds.

→ 1914: Roma immigration was prohibited outright. This prohibition ceased only in 1954.

→ 1921: In Sweden the world's first institute of racial biology was formed. Its director Herman Lundborg considered the Roma to be a threat to the Swedish race.

→ 1934: The sterilisation law was issued, making it possible to sterilise persons on account of their social situation. This law was sharpened in 1941 and not overturned until as late as 1975.

From the 1930's there are accounts, written by Johan Dimitri Taikon, of an attempt at a dialogue between Roma and the Swedish authorities. He tried to get the authorities to admit Roma children to education, and probably it was that initiative that resulted in the setting up of a temporary school for Roma children in Stockholm. In the 1960's Katarina Taikon became a new spokesperson for the Roma. She especially criticised the authorities' paternalistic attitude towards the Roma.³⁰

A milestone in Swedish Roma policy was the first report based on interviews with Swedish Roma, published in 1956. It recognised that Roma in the past had been subject to severe racial discrimination. The report suggested schooling, accommodation and employment as ways to improve the situation of the Roma.

A law against racial agitation was passed in 1970. In 1976 an integration policy was set up, co-ordinated by the Immigration Board. A discrimination ombudsman was installed and a number of socio-political measures were taken aimed directly at protecting Roma. "Although some projects were successful, too little respect for Roma culture and for the views of the Roma themselves caused most projects to fail. Both the Roma and the Swedish authorities doubted the Roma's ability to integrate in Swedish society. In the middle of the 80's the state authorities cancelled the special measures in favour of Roma."³¹

Since 1996 the Swedish government has been co-operating, through a government-appointed working group, with the Romernas Riksförbund (Roma National Congress). This union is a national umbrella organisation with twenty to thirty affiliated associations, and virtually all Roma communities are involved in the work. The Roma National Congress has identified the following areas as being of pressing importance:

- the education of young people and adults;
- cultural efforts to preserve and strengthen the language;
- collaboration between Roma organisations and central and local government authorities.

1999, December 2: the Swedish Parliament adopted *Romani Chib*³² as an official minority language.

This means that pupils who speak *Romani Chib* as their mother tongue are entitled to mother tongue instruction at school, even if the number of pupils is less than five. But relatively few pupils receive mother-tongue instruction in *Romani Chib*. Public subsidies for the press include special rules on the allocation of funds to newspapers that address minorities in their own languages. Universities offer education and research on minority languages, except on *Romani Chib*³³.

5.2. Actual numbers

Roma population in Sweden is estimated at 15,000 to 20,000 people. Travellers were counted for the last time in 1944 and they numbered 8,000 then³⁴. A. Bengtsson states they are 5,000 to 10,000 and the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communication estimated the number of Travellers at 20,000 in 2001³⁵.

The Roma who descended from the first arrivals belong to the Sinti group and are called *Kale*³⁶ and are considered as 'Finnish Roma', 3,000 people. Another Kale group are the Finnish Roma who were once deported to Finland but returned in the second half of the 20th century: 3,200 people.

The Roma who arrived in the second half of the 19th century (after the abolition of slavery in Romania) are of the Kalderash group and are called "Swedish Roma". They count about 2,500 people.

The vast majority of the Roma in Sweden arrived in the second half of the 20th century, coming from Eastern Europe as refugees. They are considered "non-Nordic Roma".

Most of the Roma in Sweden live in metropolitan Stockholm, Göteborg, and Malmö or surrounding areas.

5.3. The current situation³⁷

Sweden has ratified almost every international convention on the protection of the rights of minorities and against discrimination in various areas. But the discrimination ombudswoman (DO) has dealt with very few cases concerning Roma so far. The reasons for this are probably, according to the DO's office, that few Roma are aware that they can use the DO as an avenue for complaints, and that many Roma lack confidence in the authorities. Their shared problems resulting from prejudice and ethnic and racial hatred and violence have resulted in a loyalty towards the group and opposition to non-Roma. They consider themselves first of all an ethnic and linguistic

minority, and only secondly a part of the society of the majority.

Today, although their material well-being is often looked after, the situation of the Roma in Sweden is characterised by a low level of education, considerable unemployment, dependence on social welfare, insufficient accommodation, bad health, and a general lack of participation in society. There have been reports of widespread criminality and drug abuse.

Traditionally Roma have supported themselves by running their own enterprises. Thus many lack the experience of being employed. Most of the few Roma who are employed participate in various kinds of job-creation measures.

In most forms of health care Roma are underrepresented, but in youth psychiatry they seem to be overrepresented. The personnel within institutions are not always prepared for the encounter with minority cultures. Since Roma relatives are required to visit their ill or dying family members, and the personnel is not used to a big number of visitors, cultural clashes often arise.

As a result of past experience it is not unusual for Finnish Roma to travel to Finland to seek help when they are ill. There the personnel receive information on Roma, and Roma experience that they understand and treat Roma better.

Many Roma of today have grown up travelling in caravans or living in tents, or in very poor houses. It was not until a campaign to assimilate the Roma during the 1960's that most Roma in Sweden became sedentary. But Roma are often refused when they want to rent a house, and many choose to live close to their relatives. So many of them end up in segregated areas.

Although the situation of Roma in Swedish schools has improved during the last ten years, it is a well-known fact that the situation is still very grave. Roma children experience much greater problems in adjusting to school than do children of the majority. Many end up lacking the education that is needed to get a job and to be fully able to take part in society. Not more than 1% of the Roma children in Stockholm leave school with complete grades. From the town of Uppsala there is information that not one single Roma has completed compulsory schooling. This is due to several reasons:

- parents may regard the school as a threat to their culture;
- education is a right but only on the school's terms;
- parents might fear that their children are suffering from racism;
- as Roma often live in overcrowded conditions it is difficult for children to do their homework;

- rules of purity might impede parents and children;
- as the role of the individual teacher is crucial, and many teachers lack the pedagogical abilities to relate to Roma, motivation and results of pupils diminish.

In spite of all this there are no resources earmarked to support Roma in education. Even though Sweden has ratified international conventions to combat discrimination, providing of education is a municipal responsibility, while it is the state that is responsible for safeguarding human rights.

The Roma greatly desire places for themselves, with Roma personnel, where they can house their cultural and leisure activities. The wish for a national Roma cultural centre has been widely expressed.

In general Roma lack traditions of organising themselves to form lobbying groups. Policies have to a great extent been formed for, and not with, the Roma.

5.4 The role of "Gypsy experts"³⁸

A reason for the lack of involvement of Roma in Swedish policy-making might be the role of the people who were regarded as "Gypsy experts" by the Swedish authorities.

Dr. Montesino thoroughly analysed the work and lives of the best known scientists who were recognised as the "Gypsy experts" in their time. Despite a deep commitment of these experts to help the Roma, they always remained representatives of the non-Roma society. This had the result that in one way or another they regarded the Roma culture as inferior to that of the majority people.

One important characteristic of the "Gypsy expert" is that he lives "close to" or "with" the Roma. Almost automatically that proximity to the object of his study, that access to a world into which no one else can enter, gives him credibility and expert status.

It was such an expert, for example, who advised Norwegian authorities in the 1850's to create workhouses for adult Roma and institutions or foster care to re-educate the children, an option that very much influenced Swedish policies then and later.

Another expert proposed the setting up of a reservation for "pure-bred Gypsies", but not for Travellers: "Society should be able to afford an anomaly such as the one Gypsies constitute." It may very well have been over-estimation of non-Roma "Gypsy experts" that prevented the authorities from paying attention to the Roma themselves, or from providing support to Roma to organise so they could formulate and defend their interests.

Conclusion

To promote their emancipation the Roma should be entitled to

- earmarked resources;
- continuing and long term measures;
- a national steering committee consisting of representatives of authorities and Roma.

At the same time as Roma must receive an education to meet the demands of the settled society, settled society must educate itself to meet the demands of Roma.³⁹

¹⁸ This study is mainly based on experiences in Brussels and the Flemish (northern) part of Belgium.

¹⁹ Developed at the University of Leuven by Prof. Walgrave et al.

²⁰ We'll go into this in detail in chapter 5, "Policies".

²¹ Based on a limited survey of 175 families (627 persons) of Belgian Roma/Sinti/ Travellers.

²² Data provided by the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs of Finland.

²³ Information provided by Helge VALAMA, Roma member of the Advisory Board on Roma Affairs in Finland.

²⁴ By: Máirín Kenny and Anastasia Crickley (Pavee Point, National Traveller Women's Forum).

²⁵ Figures from the Local Authorities' count of Travellers for the year 2000. These Authorities are responsible for providing public authority accommodation (= 'social housing') in their Local Areas. This accommodation includes houses, apartments, rooms, halting sites, mobile homes, caravans.

²⁶ 'Households' include family or other social groupings who live in caravans or tents.

²⁷ Information provided by Manuel Martín Ramirez, president of Asociación Nacional Presencia Gitana: *La communauté gitane face à l'Espagne de l'an 2000*.

²⁸ BENGTTSSON Anders, *Roma in Sweden, the Right to Education*, graduate thesis, Stockholm, 1999. <http://www.student.lu.se/~jur91abn>

²⁹ BENGTTSSON A., *ibid*.

³⁰ MONTESINO Norma (norma.montesino@soch.lu.se), *The Gypsy Question and the Gypsy Expert in Sweden*, 2001. Romani Studies. Series 5, Volume 11, Number 1.

³¹ BENGTTSSON, *ibid*.

³² Chib = "language" in Romani.

³³ MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT AND COMMUNICATION, Swedish Report on the Council of Europe Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, Stockholm, 2001.

³⁴ MINISTRY OF CULTURE, factsheet December 1999.

³⁵ MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY...*ibid*.

³⁶ LAHELMA Antti and OLOFSSON Johan, *Gypsies in Sweden*, at the Patrin Web journal, <http://www.geocities.com/Paris/5121/sweden.htm>

³⁷ BENGTTSSON, *op. cit*.

³⁸ MONTESINO *op.cit*.

³⁹ BENGTTSSON, *op.cit*.

6 Towards a policy to develop chances for Roma emancipation

1 A theoretical background

To develop an effective emancipation policy with Roma we first have to understand the underlying mechanisms of marginalisation that shape the history of a people like Roma/Travellers. Two theories can be cited that will shed some light on this matter.

1.1 Social vulnerability

This theory was developed at the University of Leuven (Belgium)⁴⁰.

It explains how minority groups, whether ethnically different or not, are marginalized on account of their cultural specificities. The theory detected two laws which determine the chances of individuals to participate or not in society.

The first law states that the more social relations a person builds up, the bigger the chances are that he will be successful in participation. This rule also works the other way round: the fewer social relations, the bigger the chances of marginalisation.

The second law: once a person has been hurt, there is a significant increase in the chances that this person will be socially damaged more often and more severely in the future.

This theory has been tested for at least thirty years in very different environments and social groupings. It is especially helpful in determining which areas of life should be specially tackled to prevent the continuation of social vulnerability: they are schooling and culture.

It is at school that relatively young children start getting acquainted with each other, irrespective of such things as ethnic background. It is there that they can experience that working, playing and living together are possible whatever prejudices might exist in the surrounding society. This also shows the paramount responsibility of teachers, especially in the preschool and primary school.

We cannot stress enough the importance of relating with minorities as a core subject in the training of teachers.

The promotion of Roma/Traveller culture makes a solid base for the fight against discrimination. It is however rather complicated to define what this culture might be, and how it can be promoted. Let's compare, for example, Finland and Belgium. The recognition of the *Romani language* and the teaching of it has been a great contribution to the acceptance of the Roma people, to the motivation of the parents to send their children to school, and to making pupils appreciate schooling better. The Belgian Roma and Manouches are strongly opposed to the use of their Romani in the teaching process. They demand that their languages remain secret, hence cannot be written down. Since there are no Roma or Manouche teachers the language cannot even be taught orally. On the other hand the caravan has an important place in cultural identity. It is used in didactic situations in the Roma project schools. But Roma who immigrated from eastern and central Europe greatly prefer to have their language(s) recognised in school as the language(s) of instruction.

- The settled society should consult the different Roma/Traveller communities in a confidential way in order to obtain the right advice from the right institution or authority.
- The same mechanism plays a similar role in the admission of Roma/Travellers to the labour market, to health care, to courts of justice, etc.

1.2 Structuration theory

A second theory can explain why the relations between Roma/Travellers and the settled society have turned out to be so problematic. It is the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens combined with the theory of the risk society by Beck as they have been employed by Khonraad⁴¹. Giddens explains how people must be considered responsible, self-reflective persons who do what they do because they have needs (mostly unconscious) and intentions. Societies are built up with social structures and institutions (like religion, labour laws, and a health care system) which reflect these needs and intentions. These institutions are reproduced by the everyday practice of the citizens, but they also control these citizens at the same time. In this way these institutions do have positive intentions for (a majority of) the people, but on the other hand they have negative consequences for some others. These processes are complicated because of the unconscious way they are accomplished.

Throughout history society and its institutions have constantly tried to gain full control over Roma/Travellers, who for their part continuously had to escape from that control. This centuries-long process resulted in the present situation of a deep gap between Roma/Travellers and settled

society. Khonraad et al. observe these processes not only with Roma/Travellers: in the risk society, analysed by Beck, more and more groups tend to leave mainstream society, trying to find an identity in their own sub- or anti-cultures.

Khonraad illustrates this with a case study of the Dutch policy towards the Roma/Travellers in the Netherlands.

The history of Roma/Travellers in the Netherlands can be compared with the one in Belgium⁴². In 1918 the Dutch government enacted the law on mobile habitation. This law intended to improve the hygienic conditions of the thousands of people living in wagons and on boats. What was intended (by the majority) as a means to social promotion was carried out as a top-down interference with the way of living of a large minority. It was the start of a modern cat-and-mouse game between these two.

The authorities did not succeed in controlling the Travellers and decided in the 1960's to put an end to migration by establishing big regional camps. In each camp 300 to 500 wagons were forced to concentrate. On these sites a complete parallel society was organised with its own schools, churches, shops, social services, health care etc. Within only ten years those camps turned into ghettos where the underworld gained ever-growing influence and sometimes took over entire camps, changing them into no-go areas.

To control this escalation the government decided in 1975 to deconcentrate the camps into smaller units of about five to ten households that could voluntarily leave the big camps. Lot of them did, hoping to escape the enormous social control of the big camps. Lots of families were forced to leave for the smaller sites. But no improvement in the relations between Travellers and the authorities occurred. What had happened in the big camps was simply transferred to the smaller ones.

Completely discouraged, the authorities decided to "cancel the problem" and to put an end to all welfare work that up to then had tried to mediate between the Travellers and the population, leaving the management of the sites to private companies and police forces.

Sad to say, criminality has become a paramount feature of the Traveller communities in the Netherlands, and there are only very weak signs of a new dialogue being started up.

Conclusion

The settled society and the Rom/Traveller communities live

together in an indivisible reciprocal relation to each other. This relation may be predominantly bad for the time being, but some starting points can already be found in the theoretical framework as presented above.

- There still exists a relationship between the two communities.
- Mediation can improve the quality of this relationship.
- Equal chances and rights have to be created and made enforceable.
- Schooling and culture seem to be the best places to start on integration.

2 A new dialogue

In international fora the importance of equal rights is omnipresent. It is thanks to the lobbying of Roma/Traveller organisations and human rights groups that Roma/Travellers are being recognised as a people that deserves special interest. Every NGO and network should continue this lobbying. Without Roma/Traveller rights no dialogue can take place at all. However, this reinforcement of Roma/Traveller rights is only one side of the coin. Forgetting the other might cause discouragement, leading to a new neglect of Roma/Travellers in the future.

Indeed since the distance between most of the Roma/Traveller communities and the settled people is so great, the mere creation of chances and rights does not suffice to improve the living conditions of the Roma/Travellers.

Even in countries and places where certain provisions have been made in a dialogue with the Roma/Travellers and adapted to their lifestyle, their participation in it often remains very precarious. Only a resolute and well-considered mediation offers the chance of a promising development.

Fortunately this idea of mediation has become a feature in the same fora.

2.1 United Nations

In its resolution on "Human Rights Problems and Protection of Roma"⁴³ the United Nations propose the strengthening of Roma rights, but also the necessity of mediation to ensure the participation of Roma in these rights and opportunities.

31... The key element in the effective improvement and protection of the human rights of the Roma is the establishment of trust among all the parties, viz. the Roma, the mainstream communities and Government...

32. ... It is incumbent ... upon those who have the edge and the power to bring about social and economic reforms to

cater for the needs of the Roma and to reinforce their dignity. The following should be borne in mind:

(a) ... establishing and maintaining strong lines of communication between all parties through newly established independent agencies dedicated to the promotion and protection of the human rights of the Roma and consisting of persons of good will and repute from all ethnic backgrounds, including Roma;

(b) Issues relating to the Roma ought to be discussed with the Roma ... Discussions should be proactive and the Roma should not be made to feel...as if one side is granting privileges and that it is a "take it or leave it" situation...

33. ... It is important to check hate speech and racial discrimination in all its forms from mainstream populations and particularly from chauvinistic politicians. Specifically designed provisions in municipal laws to combat racism, including provisions in the administrative, criminal and civil laws, which have sufficiently sharp teeth, have become a real necessity.

34. ...education opens up one's mind ... by stimulating interest in cultural pluralism.

35. The new paradigm is perhaps to be found in "interculturalism", which allows an individual to be open and receptive to the simultaneous influences of several cultures... Interculturalism goes a step further than tolerance. It implies openness and receptiveness to cultures other than one's own ...

37. School is the ideal medium to promote interculturalism and empowerment must necessarily come through education.

38. Establishing trust is not a one-way street and there is grave need for reciprocity from the Roma. There is urgent need for the Roma to be perceived as paying particular attention to and showing respect for the laws and customs of the country they may find themselves living in, albeit in transit, when those laws and practices are in conformity with the provisions and principles of international human rights law.

2.2 Council of Europe⁴⁴

In its resolution "Towards a Tolerant Europe, the Contribution of Roma (Gypsies)" the Council of Europe tries to keep a balance between equal rights and mediation.

7. iii. ... supporting meetings between professionals and voluntary workers, Roma (Gypsies) and all other interested parties ...

v. ... setting up centres at national level for mediation ... between the authorities and Roma (Gypsy) communities with the collaboration of recognised and qualified mediators;

vi. ... implementing a global action programme for Roma (Gypsies) by drawing up a Solidarity Covenant between Roma (Gypsies) and local and regional authorities, if

possible with the participation of national authorities and European institutions;

vii. ... offering Roma (Gypsy) communities the possibility of electing or appointing their representatives democratically, in particular by setting up consultative committees of Roma (Gypsies) or minorities as a whole;

viii.... encouraging associations representing Roma (Gypsies) so that they will organise themselves and enter into reciprocal co-operation and co-ordination agreements;

8. The work of the Network (of local authorities, my note) will focus on the following

- the "human rights, citizenship and democracy" approach, which can be applied to all minorities and which should be aimed at "inter-community integration".

On this basis, the work of the Network will seek to promote the following 11 activities:

i. Fostering a sense of responsibility among Roma (Gypsy) communities and encouraging representation in local and regional authorities ...

ii. Appointing a local mediator with appropriate training: such a mediator should preferably be from the Roma (Gypsy) community...

v. Training local government and police staff in dealings and contacts with Roma (Gypsy) minorities;

viii. Setting up programmes on community relations between Roma (Gypsy) communities and majority populations and between Roma (Gypsy) communities and other minorities.

2.3 European Union

The European Union, in its competence of enacting resolutions with budgetary consequences, did this about Roma/ Travellers and education in 1989⁴⁵.

→ Gypsies and Travellers currently form a population group of over one million persons in the Community and their culture and language have formed part of the Community's cultural and linguistic heritage for over 500 years.

→ schooling, in particular by providing the means of adapting to a changing environment and achieving personal and professional autonomy, is a key factor in the cultural, social and economic future of Gypsy and Traveller communities...

→ promotion of social-mindedness among the population:

- appointment of trained staff to carry out coordination tasks,

- the encouragement of liaison groups bringing together parents, teachers, representatives of local authorities and school administrations...

3 From theory to practice

In their policies towards minorities the authorities tend to follow a certain common sense about “integration”. This intuitive conviction contains two main errors which make the policies that come out of it rather ineffective⁴⁶:

- minorities are considered as homogeneous groups;
- minorities are evaluated as being backward and dependent, and as a consequence only the proposals of the majority are considered relevant as a policy base.

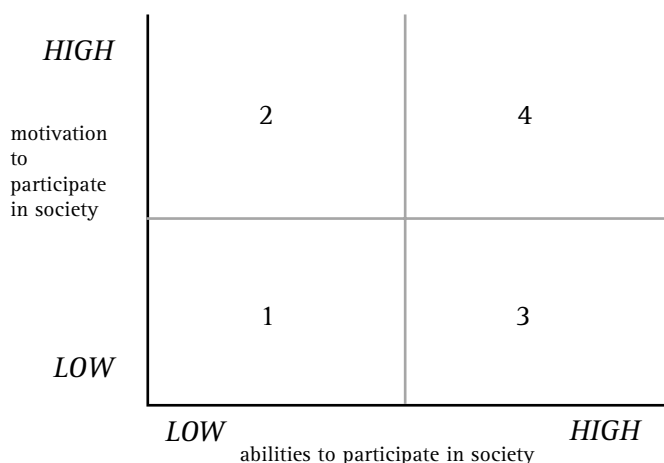
3.1 Diversity in and among the communities of Roma/Travellers

In the context of “integration” (or should we speak rather of peaceful coexistence?) and combating racism there are two major axes to consider which influence fundamentally all efforts in these fields.

The first axis I would call the opportunities of groups and persons to participate in society. These opportunities can be influenced by the society itself, e.g., by granting sufficient rights to minorities. The opportunities can also be influenced by the person himself and his living conditions: handicaps, poverty, fear, loyalty to the peer group, the double discrimination of women.

The second axis is the motivation to participate in society. In every layer of society, majority or minority group, there is a broad range of individuals and ways of relating to society and its institutions.

Figure: Motivation to participate in society in relation to opportunities



As already stated above (and we will enter into that later), the main survival tool that Roma/Travellers developed through their history is “keeping at a distance” from the majority population. This means that most of them are very reluctant to make effective use of all the chances that might be provided. Let’s take education as an example. School gives only an indication of long-term results. In the traditional survival culture of Roma/Travellers the immediate result is crucial in the motivation to do something or not. One of the immediate results of school is often that children take over some customs of the majority people. In the eyes of the parents this might turn the school into a suspected institution instead of a means for promotion.

So mostly it takes several generations to improve the school participation of Roma/Traveller children. We must remember that a society cannot repair in five years what has been spoiled for five centuries.

This means that most of the Roma/Travellers can be situated in quadrants 1 and 3 of the above graph. The majority society has to remain aware of this and should keep on organising a well-considered system of sustained mediation, combined with the creation of opportunities.

- It is crucial that everybody, whether a politician or grassroots worker, remains constantly aware of the “integration trap” that is permanently present. Success (e.g., in improving the social participation) with people in quadrant 4, or even 2, can (and will) be thwarted if the groups in quadrants 1 and 3 are being neglected. Opponents of a multicultural society will always try to exaggerate problems with some subgroups within minorities, in order to degrade the image of the whole group, and of all minorities.
- Fighting racism against Roma/Travellers is twice as hard as in the case of many other minorities. Almost all migrants, refugees, or persons without documents in one way or another feel much the same way as the settled society. However different they may be, there is a (more or less) common belief in
 - the importance of education;
 - having a decent profitable job;
 - smooth social relations.

As a result many minority people try to fit in with these beliefs. Even if they might not always succeed or are hindered in their efforts by lack of rights and opportunities, they mostly belong to quadrants 2 and 4. They remain oriented toward participation. As soon as some opportunities and rights are guaranteed (like admission to education and the labour market), a growing number of these minorities can be presented as examples of participation preserving respect for cultural differences.

In the argumentation against racism these evolutions can

be put forward as a forecast of continuing improvement, even if it takes time.

Of course even in the case of the non-Roma minorities a lot of mistakes are being made. They are kept in a state of almost constant social vulnerability so that only too few of them succeed in “making it” in the surrounding society. That causes a serious danger of “dropping out” for individuals or sub-groups who lose their orientation to participation, and turn from society or even against it.

Experience shows that most of the migrating minorities keep on trying to improve their participation in education, in the labour market, and in their social relations, even if slowly and in the face of discrimination.

In the case of Roma/Travellers this spontaneous process has not taken place. They were manoeuvred onto the fringes of society and they developed a way of surviving there. When a society starts organising adapted opportunities, like a school, stopping sites or a housing scheme, it cannot be automatically assumed that the Roma/Travellers want to participate in it the way society anticipated.

Every provision made for them remains, in the eyes of the Roma/Travellers, an element of the settled society. The confidence of the Roma/Travellers to participate in an educational system, to manage a site or an adapted housing scheme, has to be built up gradually and constantly. We must take into account that the transfer of confidence from one provision to another is not automatic either. Successful participation in a primary school does not guarantee at all a transfer to secondary school. A further input of confidence-building remains necessary.

Elements that might play a part in these difficulties can be:

- sending young children to school can be tempting because they can learn how to read and write, and the mothers can be free during a part of the day while the children are in good custody;
- when the children grow older they could be sent to secondary school, but boys become capable of being involved in the family's economy and girls can start to help the mother in the housework;
- cultural barriers exist as well: some Roma/Traveller groups oppose the teaching of biology as a subject in secondary school, because the elders fear that their children might get a crush on some non-Roma/Traveller person.

In the course of history the distance kept growing instead of lessening, placing current European societies before the challenge of finding new ways to set up a sustainable dialogue between Roma/Travellers and settled people, in order to pave the way for a peaceful coexistence, even if the

road is very long.

To the Roma/Travellers *o lungo drom*, the long road, is not unfamiliar at all.

3.2 A new dialogue

A dialogue between societies has to be set up through people. Taking into account the almost continuous rejection the Roma/Travellers have experienced, it is crucial that the more powerful partner in the dialogue takes the first step. Setting up a dialogue, if it does not come about spontaneously, has to be initiated by representatives of the settled society. It can be regarded as reaching out a hand and trying to make up for the mistakes and abuses of the past. Most of the Roma/Travellers are highly appreciative of settled people who commit themselves to them⁴⁷, maybe because it happens so rarely, maybe because they themselves already have a tradition of handling their non-commercial contacts with the settled society through a limited number of individuals. In any case, a pro-active move from the settled society is most welcome and a perfect base to build confidence.

3.2.1 Face to face

Where groups are confronted with mutual distrust and disapproval, the only way to reconstruct is through individuals. In this process just having contact is not at all sufficient. The relations have to lead to empathy and understanding, so there is a long way to go. Since this way is meant to lead to intercultural dialogue, it is enlightening to make a comparison with a bridge. The only difference is that a real bridge is static, waiting for traffic to pass. The mediator is a pro-active bridge; he reaches out, even when there is no traffic.

A bridge has two pillars, one in each culture: the settled one and the nomadic one, and it has the link between these two.

A pillar in the settled society

- The mediator is a part of the settled society. Whether he is a volunteer or a professional, he represents, in the perception of the Roma/Travellers, the settled society. We strongly plead for the appointment of several professional mediators to be engaged by the settled society and to be selected and trained for that purpose. It is not an easy job, and making mistakes can even reinforce some prejudices that are alive among Roma/Travellers.
- The mediator uses his knowledge about the institutions to adapt them for Roma/Travellers and make Roma/Travellers able and motivated to participate in them (again). The best way of doing this is to set up mutual projects, since only in working together does discursive and practical knowledge come fully into play.

A pillar in the societies of Roma/Travellers: the mediator

- He pro-actively reaches out to the Roma/Travellers by taking up some useful role. This can be as a social worker, a priest, a teacher, etc., whatever could be considered by the Roma/Travellers as relevant to their personal situation.
- Professional mediators in the Roma/Traveller communities will be confronted with a multitude of questions and problems. It will be impossible to solve them all. It is not even advisable, since there is always a danger of setting up a parallel service apart from the regular ones. Therefore it is best for a mediator to take the role of an ombuds service: it collects problems, it analyses them, contacts the responsible official institution, and negotiates a solution. Throughout the problem-solving process he follows up in order to prevent possible setbacks.
- By providing this ombuds service he kills three birds with one stone:
 - he proves his usefulness;
 - he establishes a very tangible contact between Roma/Travellers and settled society;
 - he provides a holistic approach which is the traditional expectation of Roma/Travellers.
- In a confidential relationship gradually more people develop enough trust to talk about their personal affairs, sometimes even subjects they do not talk about to their next of kin.
- It is in this way, and in this way only, that the settled mediator starts to learn about the discursive and practical knowledge of Roma/Travellers. It is only in joint action that the practical knowledge in particular can be discovered.

Linking the two

- Informing both cultures about each other, including “translation” of points of view. To explain the interests of two cultures that are so different, the mediator has to train himself to preserve respecting “multi-sided impartiality”. This means that he will never choose a side. He keeps on trying to explain the point of view of both parties, sometimes giving his advice.
- Sometimes he will have to choose a side (e.g. when a group is being expelled from a site), but which side he chooses and to what degree depends very much on the preceding circumstances. No strict rule can be put forward in this matter.
- However, no matter what might have happened, a mediator always has to keep his links to both parties. And this can become a real burden, because on both sides a mediator can encounter a series of frustrations. That is why professional mediators are indispensable between settled society and Roma/Travellers.
- Initiating individual participation trails with Roma/Travellers who are most in need of personal assistance (see

figure above: quadrant 1 or 2).

- He reinforces the spokespersons of the Roma/Travellers.

Roma/Traveller and their representatives

In Western culture participation is mainly organised by bringing together (officially) appointed representatives of different groups who take a decision after some consultative process. For a lot of non-Western cultures, including Roma/Travellers, this model does not work.

- They are not organised internally in a way that mandated negotiators can decide on behalf of a whole group. It is the group itself that has to take the decision.
- In fact when a process of negotiation is going on, the groups are represented by a few individuals, but these representatives are usually not the same persons at every meeting. It even happens quite often that not even one representative shows up, and that the intercultural mediator is the only spokesperson available. For the group concerned it is not much of a problem, since anyway decisions have to be made by the group as a whole.
- The representatives of Roma/Travellers are almost always volunteers while their counterparts mainly are well-paid professionals.
- The Roma/Travellers representatives are experts in their own domains, but they can easily be beaten by a flood of information over which they do not have sufficient control.

If the settled society, with its range of social provisions, seriously wants to stimulate the participation of Roma/Travellers, it has to take into account these elements.

This will mean that:

- Professional mediators from the Roma/Traveller communities have to be appointed and trained to participate in the policy processes of the settled society.
- Authorities in the settled society must get used to the custom that an agreement with some individual Roma/Traveller is not necessarily valid for the group concerned. Through the informal circuits these agreements have to be evaluated and amended. After this phase a common agreement is possible. It is obvious that a close personal contact between the settled people and Roma/Travellers plays a paramount role in these matters.
- The fact that no fixed representatives are available is not a big problem for Roma/Travellers. But in the drafting of laws it has to be taken into account.
- The Roma/Traveller volunteers who participate in councils or similar bodies do not place importance on their personal interest (they are there to speak on behalf of their group). They do not demand pay. In this way a change of representatives does not cause practical problems.
- The voluntary representatives of Roma/Travellers should

be provided with training and support. To make this more acceptable it must be available on a consultative basis. Since there are so many informal spokespersons, and so often for only temporary ad hoc interest groups, there is no point in providing only long-term training programmes. These will be attended by only “the happy few” of the Roma/Travellers, which could create an elite cut off from their roots.

Things that can go wrong in the intercultural dialogue

→ *What one group thinks about the other*

Intercultural mediation and negotiation has to concentrate on needs and behaviour only. This rule is all too often violated by questioning the other side’s convictions or values. This creates a very negative atmosphere, making an effective negotiation almost impossible. A person or a group deserve respect because of their convictions and values.

Discussing needs and deeds is objective, it does not threaten the identity of an individual or group. Translating convictions to needs is a very useful way of getting groups back together after an emotional discussion.

→ *How groups talk about themselves*

Here we need to introduce the important difference between “discursive” and “practical” knowledge:

- discursive is knowledge that is conscious, about which people can communicate (e.g. in a survey);
- practical knowledge is imbedded in everyday life and is reproduced without question (e.g. the way people handle money, interpersonal behaviour, dress codes).

Both forms of knowledge are equally important to receive a complete picture of a community.

To become aware of practical knowledge, mediators have to be present in the everyday life of both communities concerned. Without a thorough comprehension of both kinds of knowledge a negotiation cannot succeed, since it does not take into account what really happens in both communities.

→ *How groups talk to each other*

Roma/Travellers and settled communities do not have a lot of spontaneous cordial relations. In fact, some hostility is almost always present. When members of both communities meet, this often confuses the dialogue.

Members even avoid each other; contacts are mostly established only when there is a very direct tangible need.

On top of that, the members seldom have an official mandate, so they cannot speak for the entire community. And the prejudices remain constantly there: if a member of a

community acts in accordance with prejudices, his behaviour will be considered as “typical”; if he shows an attitude that corrects the prejudices, his behaviour can be considered as an exception.

Conclusion:

Organising the dialogue requires a sufficient number of professionally well-trained intercultural negotiators from both communities.

3.2.2 Group to group

Based on the work of mediators, the authorities have a responsibility to develop a policy aimed at enhancing respect for the Roma/Traveller culture. As already stated above, the cultures of Roma, Sinti, Travellers and the various subgroups might vary greatly. It is therefore crucial that policy be based on the expertise of the intercultural mediators. They know about the discursive and practical knowledge of the communities and can translate this into policy advice.

As explained in 6.1.1 social vulnerability is based on disregard for the values, customs, and traditions of minorities. On the part of the settled authorities a deliberate attempt must be made to introduce the Roma/Traveller culture in social institutions. This process should start in the sectors of child care and education. It is there that young Roma/Travellers have their first contacts with settled society. If the settled community succeeds in building up positive empathic contacts, it is likely that this can make a base for further social promotion.

These contacts are being established by nurses, teachers, psychologists, and social workers. Their role appears to be crucial. Therefore the training of these professionals should contain more about minorities and social vulnerability, not only as a subject in the theoretical class, but mainly as a topic in practical probation periods. Establishing empathic relation to children of minorities should be the main attitude of these professionals.

Another important element is how these persons relate to the parents of the children they have in their custody.

Parents of Roma/Travellers mainly do not seek to meet teachers or directors in a school. But if the teacher takes a step towards the parents, e.g., by visiting them at home or on the caravan site, it is a serious step forward in establishing a positive link between Roma/Travellers and school. In the job description of teachers this item should be integrated. Teachers, nurses, and every other member of the team, in the perception of Roma/Travellers, are ambassadors of the settled society. Society should take care that

these ambassadors can fulfil their mission properly.

As soon as possible, professional Roma/Traveller teachers or educators should be involved in day care, kindergarten and primary schools.

In other social institutions it is important to appoint one or more staff members who function as anchorpersons for Roma/Travellers. It is the expectation of Roma/Travellers that a familiar face should be present in these institutions. This person can build up knowledge about the culture, the way of negotiating, about the family networks of Roma/Travellers. He can take up the mediation in his institution (like housing board, refugee centre, hospital, social service, labour provision). Many Roma/Travellers do appreciate special attention to their group, and this can be a strong basis for smoother intercultural interactions between the Roma/Travellers and the institution.

Above all, the rights of Roma/Travellers must be guaranteed. There is no use in appointing a negotiator when Roma/Travellers' human rights are being violated.

Conclusion

The guarantee of minority rights and the struggle against racism are the two cornerstones of the promotion of any ethnic minority, and they will remain the top issues for ENAR when lobbying on the European as well as on the national level. But it is clear that special attention has to be paid to the situation and the specific needs of the Roma/Travellers in the EU.

The present publication sheds light on some of the problems encountered by the Roma/Travellers and suggests ways of thinking and acting to counteract the racism and the exclusion suffered by these communities.

ENAR will incorporate this particular dimension of the fight against all forms of racism in its campaigns in a more systematic way.

One of the points this publication is trying to make is that the legal framework for the protection of minorities and the fight against discrimination have proved to be both ineffective and inadequate. While campaigning for an effective transposition on the national level of the directive on equal treatment of people irrespective of race or ethnic origin, ENAR encourages its members to see to it that steps taken on the national level reflect the situation the Roma/Travellers actually live in.

Fighting against racism by way of legislation is necessary, but by no means sufficient.

One of the core problems is that sedentary society has no knowledge of, or even interest in, the difficulties and needs of the Roma/Travellers. Their culture, their way of life and their values remain largely unknown. Without the knowledge required, it is difficult to define the steps to be taken or to develop effective policies. This is why it is imperative to earmark funds for setting up long-term research programs.

Research should be done to assess the effects and results of actions and policies developed in European countries. Assessing existing practices and policies would make it possible to plan actions better suited to the communities' needs.

We also noted the lack of dialogue between the majority community and the Roma/Travellers. There will be no progress if the two sides do not engage in constant and constructive dialogue, something that requires that mediators both from the minorities and from the sedentary society be trained, and that the minorities themselves participate. Only respect and openness can achieve that.

Soon the EU will have to take in new countries with a great number of people from the Roma/Travellers community. Their inclusion could strengthen anti-minority feelings in European society. It is all the more important that European institutions, governments and concerned NGOs deal seriously with these problems and that firm policies be carried out.

“The strength of a democracy is measured by its policy towards Roma.”

Václav Havel

⁴⁰ VETTENBURG N. & WALGRAVE L., *School en probleemgedrag. Kansen en risico's*. KULeuven, Onderzoeksgroep Jeugdcriminologie, 1988.

⁴¹ KHONRAAD Sjaak, op.cit.

⁴² See previous chapter.

⁴³ UNITED NATIONS, *Human Rights Problems and Protection of Roma*, Commission of Human Rights, Sub-Committee on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Prevention of Discrimination against and the Protection of Minorities, Geneva, 2000, document E/CN.4/Sub.2/2000/28.

⁴⁴ COUNCIL OF EUROPE, *The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, Towards a Tolerant Europe: the Contribution of Roma (Gypsies)*, Resolution 16, 1995.

⁴⁵ EUROPEAN UNION, *On School Provision for Gypsy and Traveller Children*, Resolution of the Council and the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council of 22 May 1989 doc nr 489Y0621(02) Official Journal C 153 , 21/06/1989 p. 0003 – 0004.

⁴⁶ KHONRAAD Sjaak en TROMP Coyan, *Honderd jaar woonwagengebeid. Een voorbeeld voor algemeen minderhedenbeleid?* Tijdschrift voor arbeid en participatie, jrg 23 nr 2, Jan van Arkel, Utrecht 2001.

⁴⁷ On Roma/Traveller mediators: see below.