



Roma, Gypsies and Travellers: poverty, scapegoating and the cycle of deprivation

With a population of about 10 to 12 million people distributed over many countries, Roma and Irish Travellers in the UK, constitute one of Europe's largest ethnic minorities. Regardless of where they live, these groups are at greater risk of poverty and social exclusion than most Europeans.

A survey carried out for the European Commission revealed that one-quarter of Europeans would feel uncomfortable having a Roma neighbour. And in a recent poll, more than half of the Roma people questioned in a recent poll revealed that they had been discriminated against at least once in the previous year.

A Commission report from 2008 also backs-up the view that the Roma face deeply entrenched exclusion and discrimination while being exposed to high rates of poverty.

Discrimination in the jobs market, combined with their generally poor educational attainment and lack of skills, means that Gypsies suffer high rates of unemployment.

Roma women in particular are likely to find themselves discriminated against and exploited. They often have to take poorly paid jobs in the unregulated economy, which means they go without social benefits such as pensions and sick leave.

Lack of economic opportunity and low wages feeds into a cycle of deprivation for many Roma. Bad housing conditions and discrimination in the housing market also underpin Roma exclusion.¹

Poor health and inadequate access to health care services are also key issues that the Roma have to deal with. Research on health inequalities suggests that the life expectancy of the Roma is some 10 to 15 years lower than that of the majority population.

Action for the Roma. Stronger protections for Irish Traveller Communities.

An inaugural EU Roma Summit took place in Brussels in 2008, which was attended by more than 500 delegates. The second Summit took place in Cordoba, Spain on 8-9 April 2010, which also celebrated International Roma Day.

¹ Centre on Housing Rights & Evictions, The Decade of Roma Inclusion or Exclusion?, September 2010



An important outcome of the conclusions of the Council in December 2008 was the creation of the EU Platform for Roma inclusion. The platform includes active participation by Roma groups and will exchange good practice between Member States.

The platform has developed 10 Common Basic Principles to give orientation to the EU, Member States, candidate countries and potential candidates when they design and implement policies or projects to support Roma inclusion.

The second Roma summit will address a range of topics such as the use of EU instruments; gender equality and discrimination; how to get civil society more involved in Roma causes; and learning from policy successes and failures. Tackling health inequalities and improving the efficiency of EU instruments at local level are also on the agenda.

Highlighting the plight of the Roma is also a key thematic priority for the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

For further information

[EU and the Roma Homepage](#)

[EU Roma Summit Page](#)

[Commission Report on the Roma](#)

[European Network Against Racism – Roma Newsletter](#)