



Research Report



Model United Nations Alfrink 2016

Forum: Council of Europe
Issue: Protection of Roma Children in Europe
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Introduction

The Roma people are a group of people who have been a part of the European civilisation for hundreds of years, as they have migrated for the Indian subcontinent. They are recognized as Europe's largest minority group and also its most disadvantaged, as they often face a lot of prejudice due to their former nomadic lifestyle. Many of the Roma children are widely affected by poverty in all European countries. As the most significant Roma populations are to be found in central and eastern European states, the Roma make up between 7-10 per cent of the total population in these countries. Poverty rates among Roma are four times higher than for the non-Romani households in the same countries. The children suffer from this the most as no education for them can be afforded and they do not live in adequate living conditions.

According to UNDP survey data, between 70% and 90% of the Roma live in conditions of severe deprivation. Not only do the children live under severe poverty conditions, Romani children are also more likely to be at risk of trafficking. Especially women and children are trafficked for various purposes, including sexual exploitation, labour disproportionately, organ trafficking, illegal adoption and begging. Due to many of these factors and the living conditions of the Romani children, action must be taken, as these conditions do not adhere to the human rights.

Definition of Key Terms

Roma people

Roma people, or Romani people, are a traditionally nomadic ethnic group living mostly in Europe and America. They originate from the north-western regions of the Indian subcontinent. Among the English speaking people, the Romani are widely known by the exonym 'Gypsies'. However, according to the Romani themselves as well as academics who study them, the word is often negatively connoted by linking the word to illegality and irregularity. Other exonyms used are Ashkali and Sinti.

Nomads

Romani people are nomads; these are people who do not have a permanent abode, but move about from place to place. This is usually done seasonally, following a traditional route or circuit according to the state of the food supply or pasturage.



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General Overview

Roma children all over the world face all the same barriers that prevent other disadvantaged children from gaining a good education. They often live in deprived and dilapidated communities in which poverty rates are four times as high as the national average. Due to the poverty in such communities, parents are not able to buy their children appropriate clothes or school equipment. This may deter Roma parents from sending their children to school. Another reason for parents not to send their children to school, is to prevent their children from being discriminated and being socially excluded. In some schools Roma children are segregated from the mainstream student body, and schools attended by large numbers of Roma children are typically in worse condition than other institutions.

When looking at the society in a wider perspective, even many of the wealthiest figures are uneducated. This is very common in the Roma community, as many parents do not see the value of good education, since they would rather have their children at home in order to assist in supporting the family financially. School advocates from the Roma community are the only and most vital link between the Roma families and the educational system. However, this role is often difficult to fill, as candidates often lack qualification, and due to budget cuts no job offers are available.

Even though education is the biggest factor that holds the Roma children back from attaining a successful future, there is another custom that interferes with the children's education. Early marriage and childbirth, which especially affects girls, is the main reason that withstands girls from attending school. In some cases, girls are also kept at the house in order to take care of their younger siblings.

The Council of Europe began involving with the Roma in 1969 by approving their first official text on the 'situation of Gypsies and other Travellers in Europe'. The first seminar organised for teachers who work with Roma children was organised in 1983. In 1993 the Roma community was officially declared a European minority.

The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers adopted the Recommendation on the education of Roma children in Europe. The project Education of Roma children began in 2002 with the aim to practically implement the official text. The main aspects discussed in this recommendation are: the recognition of the Roma community as a minority, the training for teachers and other Roma education staff, development and distribution of teaching material, language teaching, studies on Roma history and culture and involvement of families.

With the aim to practically implement the official text, the project Education of Roma children began in 2002. A series of approaches are used in order to obtain successful results, such as co-ordination, analysis and evaluation, information and training. The idea is to stimulate national initiatives, so new ideas and methods can be designed and implemented.



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Timeline of Events

1969	<i>Involvement of the Council of Europe starts by adopting the first official text on the 'situation of Gypsies and other Travellers in Europe'.</i>
1983	<i>The Council organised the first training seminar for teachers who work with Roma children</i>
1993	<i>Roma population is declared a minority</i>
2000	<i>United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination described 'the place of the Roma communities among those most disadvantaged and most subject to discrimination in the contemporary world.'</i>

Major Parties Involved

Romania

Many Romani children are from Romania. The situations here are often worse than those in western countries where the Romani live.

Eastern and Central Europe

Much trafficking finds place in this area where young girls cannot obtain an education due to either early marriage, or sex trafficking.

United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

The convention on the Elimination of All Racial Discrimination was adopted by the General Assembly on 21 December 1965. By the Convention, States condemn racial discrimination and undertake to pursue by all appropriate means a policy to eliminate racial discrimination.

European Roma Grassroot Organisation (ERGO)

This organisation unites the Roma and pro-Roma organisations that empower Roma in Europe to achieve their citizen rights.



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Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

One major organisation which has helped the Romani community so far is the ERGO organisation. The European Roma Grassroot Organisation unites the Roma and pro-Roma organisations that empower Roma in Europe to achieve their citizen rights. It also gives them a voice against the anti-Gypsism. They help to create favourable conditions for their follows in order to influence the European, national and local political agendas concerning the Roma.

Even though ERGO has taken some action to prevent any children from missing the much-needed education, no further action that has resulted in a clear distinction between the previous situation concerning the Roma children has been taken.

Possible Solutions

- Form small communities within a small group of people in which the Roma children feel comfortable, so they will easily attend the school there. This way, the children still attend school and are bound to have a better future.
- By aiding the overall Roma communities that find themselves in severe economical and financial situations, the amount of children who actually have to stay home in order to financially support the family will be reduced.
- By helping the Roma communities to integrate with society more, the people will not face discrimination as much. This is because they will have been integrated and thus, know more about society itself.



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Useful Documents

<http://www.unicef.org/romania/children.html>

Bibliography

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