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# ‘What’s working?’: Promoting the inclusion of Roma in and through education : Transnational policy review and research report

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What's Working

*promoting the integration of  
Roma in and through education*



**BHA** *for equality  
in health  
and social care*



# **‘What’s working?’: Promoting the inclusion of Roma in and through education**

**Transnational policy review and research report**

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The Salford Housing & Urban Studies Unit is a dedicated multi-disciplinary research and consultancy unit providing a range of services relating to housing and urban management to public and private sector clients. The Unit brings together researchers drawn from a range of disciplines including: social policy, housing management, urban geography, environmental management, psychology, social care and social work.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background to the research

The social exclusion faced by Roma communities is widely recognised and acknowledged across the European Union (EU). The importance of this issue comes at exactly the same time that the EU are prioritising the social inclusion and integration of Roma in strategies and funding programmes up to 2020. On 5th April 2011 European Union Member States adopted the 'EU Framework'. As part of this framework Member States were required to detail how they were to approach addressing some of the challenges of Roma inclusion by developing 'national Roma integration strategies'. It was stated that the national strategies must be a 'comprehensive approach to Roma integration', should allocate funding from national and European budgets, be strongly monitored and identify disadvantaged micro-regions or segregated neighbourhoods to target measures connecting with all policy areas, of which education is highlighted as a key policy area.

As part of this increasing focus on Roma communities the European Commission's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) commissioned a 'Policy Cooperation and Innovation Roma Multilateral project' through the Lifelong Learning Programme. The objective of the project is to support the creation of transnational cooperation projects to develop lifelong learning measures for Roma integration, joining up educational and other social measures such as health, employment and housing. Furthermore, the programme aims to raise participation and attainment levels of Roma students in education and VET (Vocational Education and Training).

This study represents the research component of a larger project funded as part of the above programme. The project was led by the BHA for Equality (BHA) in the United Kingdom (UK) in collaboration with Manchester City Council International New Arrivals, Travellers and Supplementary Schools Team in the UK, Fundación Secretariado Gitano in Spain and Pharos in the Netherlands. The project objectives were:

- To support the development of Roma communities
  - *Supporting individuals to make informed choices and understand the value of formal education*
  - *Supporting young people to develop as mediators and become role models for others*
- To support educational inclusion through raising awareness amongst professionals
  - *Accurate information-sharing regarding local Roma populations*
  - *Highlighting potential barriers to integration and identifying solutions*
  - *Recognition and understanding of specific experiences and strengths of Roma*
  - *Provision of practical guidance to support professionals to develop effective strategies for working with children, families and the wider Roma communities*

The project focused specifically on newly arriving Roma in the partner countries. This refers to Roma who have migrated to partner countries in more recent years – particularly following the accession of a number of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries – rather than focusing on long established or indigenous Roma populations.

## **1.2 Aims of the research**

In order to support the objectives of the wider project, the broad aims of this research were to explore and assess:

- Existing data on newly arriving Roma communities in the Netherlands, Spain and the UK, with a specific focus on demographic data and education indicators; and
- Perceptions of the barriers to Roma educational inclusion by key stakeholders in the Netherlands, Spain and the UK.

## **1.3 Research approach**

In order to address the aims outlined above, the research comprised of three main phases:

### ***Phase 1: A review of selected data relating to Roma communities in the partner countries (the Netherlands, Spain and the UK)***

This phase involved the identification and review of selected data in relation to Roma communities in the three partner countries. This included looking at data available at a national, regional and local level – if available – with a specific focus on the following:

- Number of newly arriving Roma
- Countries of origin of newly arriving Roma
- Demographic information about newly arriving Roma
- Education admissions
- Education attainment
- Other available education indicators

The difficulties in collecting data on Roma populations are widely recognised by practitioners, but also in the literature relating to Roma communities. While we have endeavoured to provide estimates – drawing upon a range of sources – we acknowledge that there are a number of caveats relating to this data, as well as a number of gaps. Issues around data collection are discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

### ***Phase 2: A review of policy in the partner countries***

In addition to reviewing selected data in the partner countries, the research also carried out a rapid review of policy in the three countries, with a primary – although not exclusive – focus on education policy. As before, this explored the national, regional and local level; however, it also aimed to identify some of the relevant European level policies.

### ***Phase 3: Consultation with key informants from research sites within the partner countries***

The secondary data and policy review was supported by qualitative interviews with key informants in each of the partner countries. With the agreement of partners, the following research sites were chosen to provide case studies:

- Amsterdam (The Netherlands)
- Madrid (Spain)
- Manchester (UK)

The choice of sites was based on these being the location of the lead organisation for each country (in the case of Madrid and Manchester) or being sites where there were suggested to be a relatively large group of newly arrived Roma (in the case of all three sites). The case study areas were not chosen to provide nationally representative samples, but to ensure that a range of local issues and circumstances were explored and delineated within the study.

Five key informants were consulted in each research site. These were selected with the assistance of the lead organisation in each partner country. In order to gather a range of perspectives and viewpoints we aimed to include participants who represented the following service areas/sectors: schools; voluntary and community sector; health; and local authority inclusion departments. It should be noted, however, that it was not always possible to locate an individual from each sector. Furthermore, the stakeholders that were consulted were not chosen to provide representative or definitive views on Roma within each case study area. Rather, this was exploratory research which aimed to highlight some of the key issues arising based on the experiences of selected stakeholders drawing on their work with Roma families.

The University research team (Scullion and Brown) convened and conducted the interviews in Manchester, UK, while the interviews in Spain and the Netherlands were carried out by experienced research associates with the relevant language skills (Spanish and Dutch).

The interviews focused on exploring the following issues:

- Perceptions of barriers to accessing education for newly arriving Roma
- Views on existing secondary data
- Perception of barriers to data collection and how this impacts on service delivery
- Practicalities of providing services to Roma communities
- The key issues for newly arriving Roma communities
- The solutions to better inclusion in education (or other services)
- Views on national and local policy in relation to education of Roma

The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and translated into English (where required). These interviews are drawn upon throughout this report and quotes are presented from key informants to illustrate particular points. In order to respect the anonymity of the key informants the identities of the individuals are protected.

## 1.4 Structure of this report

This report provides an overview of the findings of the primary and secondary research carried out as outlined above.

- **Chapter 2** provides a brief introduction to selected European policy, with a specific focus on education.
- **Chapter 3** provides an overview of the findings of the primary and secondary research in relation to the Netherlands.
- **Chapter 4** provides an overview of the findings of the primary and secondary research in relation to Spain.
- **Chapter 5** provides an overview of the findings of the primary and secondary research in relation to the United Kingdom (UK).
- **Chapter 6** provides concluding comments drawing on the findings across the three case study areas.

## 2. European policy overview

### 2.1 Introduction

Over the last few years, the institutions of the EU have openly recognised the extent to which Roma remain a disadvantaged and marginalised minority in Europe and have become involved in a number of initiatives to improve the lives of Roma (Bartlett, Benini and Gordon, 2011; McGarry, 2011). According to the Open Society (2011: 1), there has been ‘major progress in the development of a common EU approach to increasing Roma inclusion and improving socio-economic conditions in Roma communities’. Such progress is arguably embodied within measures such as the establishment of the ‘Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015’, the creation of an ‘Integrated Platform for Roma Inclusion’, and an amendment of Article 7(2) of Regulation 1080/2006/EC on the European Regional Development Fund 10 which extends eligibility for financial support for housing interventions to help marginalised communities to the rural settings in which many Roma live (Brown, Dwyer and Scullion, 2012). Protection of Roma is provided by EU Race Equality Directive (2000/43) and Employment Equality Directive (2000/79), together with Conventions on Human Rights, Fundamental Rights and on the Protection of National Minorities (Craig, 2011: 19). However, with specific reference to the Race Equality Directive, concerns have been expressed as to whether it is robust enough to address the specific challenges faced by Roma communities (see, for example, Poole and Adamson, 2008: 33).

In 2011 the European Commission outlined a commitment to promoting the social and economic inclusion of Roma with the publication of their *‘EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020’*. This document suggested that there had been limited progress in improving the situation of Roma in the past decade and highlighted a need for targeted policies, specifically around ensuring equal access to employment, education, healthcare and housing (European Commission, 2011). Consequently, Member States were asked to produce a ‘comprehensive strategy for Roma inclusion...This could mean preparing a completely new strategy or adapting an existing one’ (ibid: 6). The EU framework emphasises the importance of recognising the complexity of issues faced by Roma, viewing the four core areas (employment, education, healthcare and housing) as interrelated. The national strategies are expected to be linked to overall social inclusion policies within Member States to ensure mainstreaming of Roma inclusion rather than separation. Furthermore, it is suggested that regional and local authorities have a key role to play once national strategies are developed, as they will be responsible for implementation on the ground.

By March 2012, all Member States had presented a National Roma Integration Strategy or a set of policy measures in light of the EU Framework. These strategies varied depending on the size of the Roma population and the challenges that Member States felt they needed to address (European Commission, 2012: 6).

## 2.2 The integration of Roma in education

'Education is one of the most essential elements in the EU Framework' (Open Society, 2011: 4). There is a specific goal set by the European Commission to ensure that 'all Roma children complete at least primary school and have access to quality education' (European Commission, 2011). However, while the focus on primary education is important, the Open Society (2011: 4) argue that 'the goal lacks ambition', stating that 'If the EU achieves universal primary education completion for all Roma children by 2020, it will still leave them five years behind the developing nations'. The Open Society (2011) also suggest that the EU Framework has 'missed an opportunity' to focus on segregation in schools and the placement of Roma children in 'special' schools, as well as the issue of increasing attainment at secondary and tertiary levels.

More recently, the Council of Europe introduced the idea of focusing on the training of Roma mediators to 'tackle the inequalities Roma face in terms of access to employment, health care services and quality education' (Kyuchukov, 2012: 375). This is not a new approach, particularly in relation to education, having been the focus of a report written in 2006 by the Council of Europe (but also a feature of an approach in Spain in the 1980s – see Chapter 4). The most recent programme is called ROMED and started in 2011 in 15 countries<sup>1</sup> (ibid: 375 -376). ROMED focuses on 'real and effective intercultural mediation' (i.e. mediators have knowledge of cultural codes of community and institution, are impartial, focus on improving communication and cooperation, and stimulate both parties to get involved in change process) (ibid: 376). A training curriculum has been drawn up and a group of trainers identified. National and local authorities – working with Roma organisations – are responsible for identifying and selecting the mediators to be trained.

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<sup>1</sup> Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and Ukraine.

### 3. The Netherlands

#### 3.1 Review of selected data

Statistics about the resident population in the Netherlands are primarily based on nationality/country of birth rather than ethnicity. Indeed, ethnic registration is forbidden by the Data Protection Act (*Wet Bescherming Persoonsgegevens*) due to concerns that it could lead to stigmatization of particular groups (van der Welle and Blommesteijn, 2011). Consequently, there is currently no systematic data collection on the number of Roma in the Netherlands, and estimates of the population appear to vary significantly. For example, van der Welle and Blommesteijn (2011) suggest that there are between 4,000 and 6,000 Roma and Sinti currently living in the Netherlands, while van der Veen *et al.* (2012) highlight that estimates range from 3,000 to 40,000 Roma.

It is suggested that Sinti have been resident in the Netherlands for centuries. With regards to Roma, four groups are identified, which can be distinguished according to when they arrived (i.e. 1900, 1960s, 1970s, and 'new' Roma). As with many other EU countries, new Roma incorporates those who arrived following accession, but also asylum seekers and refugees (van der Welle and Blommesteijn, 2011: 2).

It is suggested that the more recent arrivals have primarily – although not exclusively – settled in larger towns. It is also thought that the flow of new Roma has primarily been from Bulgaria and Romania and that this migration is increasing (Jorna, 2012). Unfortunately, there is currently no accurate data on the number and nationalities of new Roma, with a suggestion that there could be 2,000 at the very minimum (although it is acknowledged that the figure could be double) (Jorna, 2012).

There is even less certainty regarding the number of households from Roma populations living within Amsterdam (the research case study area). van der Veen *et al.* (2012) used an estimate based on data from 2007 to state that there were around 400 individuals from Roma backgrounds living in the municipality.

#### 3.2 Review of selected policy

##### Inclusion and race equality

In 2011, a review of national policies around the social inclusion of Roma was carried out on behalf of the European Commission. In the Netherlands, this review was undertaken by van der Welle and Blommesteijn (2011). They concluded that a national policy programme for the integration of Roma does not currently exist in the Netherlands as the government favours general rather than 'target group' policies (ibid: 1). Individual local authorities are responsible for addressing issues in relation to Roma and Sinti at a local level. However, it is suggested that the current approach focuses on the *problems created by* Roma and Sinti (e.g. criminality, unemployment, welfare dependency) rather than the *issues Roma communities face* (e.g. discrimination, etc.). The '*Policy measures in the Netherlands for the social inclusion of Roma*' – produced as part of the national strategies referred to in Chapter 2 – shows that the government is particularly concerned about issues of 'crime and socially

unacceptable behaviour', as well as child protection issues (Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, 2011). There are no specific policies against the discrimination of Roma; rather it is suggested that the general anti-discrimination policies in the Netherlands should be applicable to Roma, as with all communities.

## Education

In 2006, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) published a report reviewing the situation of Roma and Travellers in public education across Member States. The report suggested that attempts had been made to address education issues in relation to Roma and Sinti by establishing separate educational facilities or referring them to special education programmes (EUMC, 2006: 56). The report refers to research carried out in 2003, which suggested that 15% of Roma and Sinti were enrolled in primary special education, compared to the national average of 5% and 6% of other 'cultural minorities'. It was suggested that there would be fewer referrals to special education if schools had a better understanding of the cultural norms and characteristics of Roma and Sinti communities. The report indicated, however, that there had been a move away from focusing on segregated education. Indeed, it is highlighted that 'the Dutch policy on educational disadvantage aims at offering every student an equal range of classes without specially adapted teaching programmes for certain student groups' (ibid: 82).

In 1998 a Municipal Policy for Educational Disadvantage (Gemeentelijk Onderwijsachterstandenbeleid or GOA policy) was launched. This policy outlined a number of activities including: reaching target group children for pre-school and supplementary education; supporting the scholastic career; tackling the problem of school dropout; and mastering the Dutch language (ibid: 82). The EUMC report highlights that the children of Roma and Sinti, caravan dwellers and ex-caravan dwellers were given a weighting of 1.7 in the Municipal Education Disadvantage Policy, with more funding available for schools with children who receive a higher weighting. The report offers comparison weightings for a Dutch child with parents who have had little education (given a weighting of 1.25) and a child from a minority ethnic background (given a weighting of 1.9) (ibid: 82).

In almost all municipalities, it is suggested that Roma pupils go to primary school without serious absenteeism. However, there is a more diverse picture for secondary school attendance, with research suggesting varying degrees of absenteeism in different municipalities (van der Veen *et al.* 2012).

The review of national policies by van der Welle and Blommesteijn (2011) makes comparisons between the education of new Roma and those that are more long settled, with new Roma perceived to be 'doing better'. For example, it is suggested that new Roma have usually been educated in their country of origin, with some having higher education (Rodrigues and Matelski, 2004 cited in van der Welle and Blommesteijn, 2011).

The review highlights that in 2010, the Ministry of Housing, Neighbourhoods and Integration and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science provided 600,000 Euros to address school attendance issues in relation to Roma communities in Roma municipalities, focusing specifically on enforcing the Compulsory Education Law (ibid: 7). However, there is variation in how projects have operated at a local level, with some recognising the need to focus on issues facing Roma communities (e.g. poverty). Nonetheless, the approach appears to be

that of providing ‘conditional’ support (i.e. financial assistance in return for school attendance). Overall, it is suggested that many of these projects have been unsuccessful in engaging with Roma (ibid: 8).

### 3.3 Consultation with key stakeholders

#### Overview of key informants and their work with Roma communities

A total of five key informants were consulted who had experience of working with Roma communities. Although we attempted to consult with a range of people from the various sectors this was not possible due to an apparent lack of awareness from a number of the stakeholders we approached in relation to new Roma populations. However, this may also be indicative of the difficulty in finding the ‘correct’ officer within particular organisations (e.g. the local authority) who felt they could contribute in a meaningful way to the research. The table below provides an overview of the key informants who took part in the research and their broad area(s) of work. As highlighted in Chapter 1, the stakeholders were not chosen to provide representative or definitive views on Roma. Rather, the aim was to explore some of the key issues arising based on the experiences of selected stakeholders.

Netherlands (N) Key Informant (KI)	Sector	Summary of work with Roma
N KI 1	Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service aimed at assisting undocumented migrants with access to health care, including Roma</li> </ul>
N KI 2	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service aimed at recently arrived migrant children, including Roma</li> <li>• Provide support in schools, particularly around language acquisition</li> </ul>
N KI 3	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific project aimed at encouraging regular school attendance amongst Roma children</li> </ul>
N KI 4	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service aimed at ensuring school attendance of all children, including Roma</li> </ul>
N KI 5	Various sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National organisation providing support to a range of communities</li> <li>• Runs a specific project with Roma</li> <li>• Areas of work vary depending on the needs of the families they are working with</li> </ul>

#### Views on data on Roma communities

The literature referred to above provided an overview of some of the data that was available in relation to the size of the new Roma communities. The respondents were asked to reflect on the estimated population size provided by this data and whether or not they felt it was accurate; all of the key informants indicated that they did not know with any certainty as to whether this was accurate or not. However, some respondents, based on a degree of personal experience, felt that an estimate of 2,000 new Roma across the Netherlands was very low:

*"In The Hague, they did research...it was revealed by the research that there are around 85,000 undocumented people in the Netherlands. But that includes lots of Somalians, etc. from all countries of the world, and they also tried to count amongst the Roma...and it concerns far greater numbers than I would ever have expected." (N KI 1)*

*"I think that in total it would be many more. And the most difficult part of it is that there are large families that have come to live here and new people come every year, so it's very difficult to estimate how many there are. I really do think that there are more though." (N KI 3)*

*"2,000? So few?...Well, according to the figures that I've seen in the research that I've read there were 400 just in Zuid-Oost [a South East district of Amsterdam] and I questioned that as well because I couldn't find them, but I think that I can count up to 200 in Zuid-Oost, so 2,000 in the whole of the Netherlands seems very very low to me." (N KI 4)*

The respondents were also unable to provide estimates on the number of Roma children living in the Netherlands and/or Amsterdam beyond the number of children/families that they were actively working with. As one respondent highlighted:

*"...that's also very difficult...it isn't registered, you know, all the numbers that we have are just numbers of people who we know are Roma." (N KI 4)*

There were three key issues raised in relation to the difficulty of collecting data from Roma communities. Firstly, the mobility of Roma communities was an issue:

*"...it changes a lot, right? It's a very dynamic group in that sense, they move countries regularly and that makes it difficult to keep an overview for education." (N KI 2)*

*"...what we see with the Roma is that it's an elusive community, not all Roma that we see in the Netherlands are permanently settled here so it's difficult to give exact figures." (N KI 5)*

This mobility also related to internal movement, particularly between different addresses:

*"...they come into the system when they register their children at nursery school, it's then they surface and you get information on families, but...people are registered at addresses where they no longer live, but they are still registered as living there, children live with different families, which makes it very difficult to get information." (N KI 3)*

Secondly, one respondent highlighted that a number of Roma were often undocumented migrants so were not registered for a residence permit, medical services, tax or benefits. While estimates of unregistered Roma had been made, it was still unknown how many were new Roma:

*"I know that amongst the Roma, that there are 7,000 Roma who aren't registered, so you don't find them in the statistics anywhere [referring to Roma population as a whole, not just new Roma]...[They] come without documentation and go everywhere without documentation and that's why I think that it's not possible to make a statement about it, but since we're talking about Roma since 2004, well we're almost 10 years further on now, so it could be that there are a lot more, I would think." (N KI 1)*

Finally, a broader issue was highlighted relating to the fact that data on ethnicity is not 'allowed' to be collected; so the data that is available just relates to nationality:

*"As far as I know it's not allowed to register on ethnicity. So in the registration it says that a parent comes from Romania or Bulgaria, but there are lots of people who come from Eastern Europe at the moment and they're of course not all Roma." (N KI 2)*

One respondent highlighted that attempts to register/count people 'frightens' some Roma. They related this fear back to the Holocaust, indicating that registering ethnicity has been a sensitive issue since World War Two.

Interestingly, one respondent indicated that caution was needed when using data, particularly if it was being used as a basis for the provision of services. While they recognised that having background information about the children/families you were working with was often helpful when looking at the support required, there was also a danger of stereotyping communities on that basis:

*"...if there are problems then you can sometimes be more effective if you know that they have this background and can be more active...As long as it doesn't lead to people thinking "Oh, they're Roma, leave them be, we can't help them anyway" as that is of course the other side of knowing background information about people...you then don't act because you think, well we're not going to be able to solve it anyway." (N KI 3)*

On the other hand, another respondent highlighted that data was vital for resource allocation purposes:

*"...the local authority gives money for certain things, for certain activities and then you really have to know how many people you're talking about, it makes a difference whether you're talking about 3 people or 300!...So it's very difficult to persuade the local authorities with the vague numbers that we have that they have to put the effort in. It has, however, been decided in Amsterdam to put more effort in with the Roma." (N KI 4)*

### **Views on policy relating to Roma children**

The respondents highlighted that there was no specific policy relating to Roma children, with contemporary social policy in the Netherlands moving away from focusing on specific groups. It was stated by one respondent that policy dictates that *all* children should be treated equally.

One respondent did make reference to a previous 'special policy' focusing specifically on Roma communities. This focus related to the framework of 'Wiedergutmachung' [reparations] in recognition of the persecution experienced during World War Two. Money was allocated for working with Roma communities through this framework and included projects around education. It was suggested, however, that Roma were not necessarily fully involved in the management of the money or decisions about how the money should have been spent. This respondent, therefore, highlighted the importance of including Roma within the decision making process:

*"This money was managed and part of it was supposed to be invested in projects, amongst these projects were educational projects...but what you see is that all sorts of 'civilians', unfortunately, have gathered in groups in order to manage it and that they [the Roma] have gotten less and less to say over what happens...Lots of money gets given to local government, to people who gain something from it themselves, which is very sad, because you could definitely have achieved much more with that money...they have the best intentions but what they are doing is not always working in the best interests of the Roma themselves. That also doesn't increase the trust of Roma. In the future it's very important that Roma themselves are involved in plans regarding themselves." (N KI 2)*

## **The engagement of Roma in education**

### ***Views on key barriers to engagement***

This section highlights views on some of the issues that respondents felt impacted on overall engagement (or lack of) in relation to education. The interviews highlighted two key underlying issues. Firstly, one of the biggest perceived barriers related to the fact that parents were seen as the gatekeepers to education and it was them, rather than the children, who were reluctant to engage or did not place value on the importance of education:

*"...with the Roma group it's the lack of understanding of the value of going to school, of education in general, which is very different from other groups...but the parents don't help children engage in education, they have to do it themselves and the children themselves, well, children want to learn." (N KI 3)*

In some cases, however, this reluctance was seen to come from a fear that education may have a negative influence on children:

*"It happens quite often that we have Roma from this group in the class, but then you see that if they aren't under pressure from their parents that they sometimes just don't attend and it's very difficult to keep them at school and if we're talking about girls then it has a lot to do with their sense of honour, pride...We actually then thought that it's a good format if you can let them see exactly what you are as a school and to be pretty flexible about how you deal with the issue and to say, well let's let the parents come with their children for the first period and if they then think, well it's safe enough, then they will go away again at a certain point...of course it's understandable because of the culture of these people, they're afraid that education will influence their children in a bad way." (N KI 2)*

As can be seen, this particular respondent tailored their approach to working with Roma families by allowing parents to observe how children were taught and treated within schools.

The respondents reiterated commonly acknowledged issues around differences between primary and secondary attendance. On the whole, there were relatively positive accounts about primary school attendance. Concerns about the negative influence of school were perceived to be directed primarily at secondary education and often related to issues of culture and gender:

*"I think it's a bit easier for small children, because they want to play, they want to do nice things, but as soon as they turn twelve or so then it's slightly different, you can play a role economically, so the boys they can start earning money, and for girls the pride, feeling of honour becomes important, so do you go to school with 'civilians' who you don't really trust and your parents can't keep an eye on you?" (N KI 3)*

One respondent reflected on the issue of secondary education within the schools that they worked:

*"...the primary school is not the problem anymore. Most children now go there...But the secondary schools are still a problem. We haven't yet been able to congratulate any Roma on getting a VMBO or a MBO diploma [secondary vocational education certificates]." (N KI 4)*

Secondly, some respondents talked about the underlying issue of the 'social position' of Roma and the impact this has:

*"...if you want to do something for this target group then you have to look at an improvement of the whole situation, regarding living conditions, at economic independence...It isn't the case that if you build a school, or you ensure that accommodation is provided that the issues of the Roma change, because we see a structural racial discrimination against the Roma." (N KI 5)*

*"I think that education is the last problem, actually. The Roma that I see, from them I get the idea that they stand at the complete bottom of the ladder of society and they have very few perspectives, and I can, from their point of view, understand the reasons why they say 'why should I go to school, that won't change anything for us'." (N KI 4)*

This issue was thought to be compounded for Roma who were undocumented and therefore did not have access to the same opportunities as the wider population in terms of post-education employment:

*"...they don't have the BSN number [citizens service number] and then the children become more and more aware of their situation, they realise that they won't be allowed to work later without documentation. Once they turn eighteen these children aren't allowed to do anything anymore, even though they have qualifications...It's said about a lot of Roma children, 'oh well they don't go to school, they're bad students' or 'you can't help them' and then you meet children who really try their*

*best, who do well at school and then at some point realise that they can't do anything else, that they're not allowed to do anything and that is really serious...I know twelve year olds who should be going to secondary school who say 'yes, but my brother and sister they aren't allowed to do anything, why should I go to school? Why shouldn't I just stay at home?'. " (N KI 4)*

### **Views on differences in support required by Roma**

There was a view that working with new Roma was different to working with other migrant communities and that different approaches were required. Firstly, one respondent highlighted the need to focus on building up trust. They related this back to the history of discrimination that Roma had faced, and described the difference they had experienced in working with Roma compared to another community:

*"...they have been sent away for centuries, have been hunted down, and the stigma attached to these people is really very great. There's a really negative stigma, much more negative than every other ethnicity, culturally, as well as in the media, they are really a very different group. That has consequences, so the negative image, has consequences for how people act when they come into contact with the outside world. For example they are likely to be more closed...they mistrust everyone who is not Roma...if you want to work with Roma, if you want to seriously get going, whatever the problem is, you have to first of all work on gaining their trust...it wouldn't be as much the case with other ethnicities...you offer a service to a Somalian, for example, in order that they can be admitted to hospital, for example, but with the Roma it has to go much further than that, they must first open up to you, there has to be trust." (N KI 1)*

While this respondent highlighted the importance of establishing trust, they also emphasised the implications for individual workers. More specifically, they suggested that situations can arise where communities can become reliant on particular workers.

Secondly, it was felt that the work and approach with Roma was more intensive and required more of an investment than with other communities. Again, this was related back to issues that were raised above around the perceived lack of value placed on education by some Roma families. In order to address these issues, one respondent suggested that a greater level of multi-agency/joint working was required with Roma communities:

*"...the communication between the different social services must be much better coordinated than is necessary with other groups and the specific problem with the Roma group is the lack of understanding of the value of going to school...With other groups, they come to the Netherlands expressly because they want their children to be educated in the Dutch education system and you don't see that with Roma. So you have to invest more. Actually it's more of an intensification of approach, in our opinion, than a special approach. You have to accept that you have to invest more and for a longer period of time in order to achieve the same result." (N KI 3)*

On the other hand, another respondent was critical of multi-agency approaches due to perceived lack of cooperation between some agencies, but also the view that having a number of different agencies involved could sometimes create problems for families.

They talked about the work of their organisation, which focused on what they referred to as a 'system' or 'network' approach, whereby they would take an individual family and aim to address all the different issues that the family was facing:

*"It's an offer for families, an integrated offer, so where there are specific problems with that family, so it could be that there are problems with the law, it could be that there are problems with the school, with children that don't go to school, it could be that there are problems of domestic violence, of unemployment, and our approach is to look at the problem as a whole and that means that the problem is always approached as a whole. You could also see it as a sort of system or network approach in an attempt to get all members of a family back on the rails...[it's] a better solution and also in order to be able to work more efficiently...the problems that Roma experience are often dealt with by many different organisations and there's very little cooperation or very little structure in it. We've said that that is not practical and sometimes it even creates more of a problem for the families if one person does this and the other does that and it could be that they are working against each other or that it gets drawn out...[If you have] one organisation, which has an overview over all problem areas and can approach all of these different areas, you can prevent a fragmentation of the problem and you have much greater capability in order to approach it." (N KI5)*

There was also a debate by some respondents as to whether separate services should be provided for Roma. One respondent talked about a previous project that had provided 'special classes' for Roma children. However, there was a view that a concentration of Roma in schools/classes reinforced the gendered norms that were perceived to be prevalent within the Roma community:

*"I don't think that a high concentration of Roma pupils promotes integration, the social control plays a big role then, from the boys over the girls, for example, and especially at secondary level, so it is therefore better for Roma girls to not be in education with Roma boys." (N KI 4)*

### ***Changes in approaches to working with Roma over time***

Finally, respondents were asked to reflect on any changes that had occurred over time in the way they worked with Roma communities. Two respondents provided comments on this issue, both of whom made reference to having to be 'stricter' in their approach towards families. This related to moving away from different – and perhaps 'softer' approaches – to engagement in education, to a greater focus on getting families to understand the compulsory nature of education and the processes that have to be adhered to within the Netherlands:

*"...it's got stricter. No, overall it's become stricter...You have to treat them as any other...so actually you're strict with appointments, which you make...you try to get close to them in normal contact." (N KI 3)*

*"My predecessor was much more into negotiating with the Roma and to get them to go to school in that way. I started, above all, by getting talking to people and I've begun more and more to move on to just saying 'these are the rules in the*

*Netherlands, you stick to those' ...So, from that point of view it has changed a lot with me...At the beginning I wanted to adapt to the Roma and stimulate them to go to school in that way. The change that I've made is that at some point I said 'No...I have to enforce the compulsory education law and that is the same for everyone'." (N KI 4)*

### Other issues highlighted in the interviews

While the interviews focused primarily on engagement with education, a number of additional issues were raised which are also important to highlight as they provide additional insights into the complexity of the barriers facing Roma communities and those providing support to them. These issues are summarised in the table that follows.

Issue	Example(s)
Lack of legal documents/legal status	<i>"...illegality or not having all the right papers and all the problems that go with that like health, difficulties to make money, their position in the society, discrimination" (N KI 2)</i>
Health needs/stress relating to undocumented status	<i>"In such an insecure situation, really very insecure, it's got much stricter in the Netherlands...the situation, the pressure, has only increased, which means living with more and more fear. I don't know if you know what fear does to people, if they have to live with it for a long time then it has very negative effects on their health." (N KI 1)</i>  <i>"...undocumented people, this means that because they couldn't get health insurance, even if they did have the money to do that, but if you don't have documentation then you can't get health insurance and you have a problem, as an adult, so after the age of eighteen to go to the dentist, you have, simply, no access to the hospital, you'd be turned away." (N KI 1)</i>
Lack of flexibility in terms of system/bureaucracy	<i>"...the world of civil servants, the rules mentality of the Dutch, well I mentioned civil servants but that can be government or also semi-government, right? There is a certain type of person who works in that area...they sit in a knot of rules and laws...so from their own heart they want to stick to the rules, that's something that the Roma have a lot of difficulty with. But I also saw that that also created other issues, which stood in the way of finding a solution. You have to be flexible but you have to also be creative." (N KI 1)</i>  <i>"They end up in a very organised society and I have the feeling that they're not all used to that. They very quickly end up known by the compulsory education services, by the police, basically they are known by everyone because they don't behave in accordance with the norms of the society." (N KI 4)</i>
Media and political discourse	<i>"The political willingness was missing because the media and the stigma was so negative about Roma and that is really extreme, really especially extreme, I've experienced that all and as the situation in France began, that Roma were thrown out of the country, that went through the whole of Europe, also in the Netherlands, and the media came to us and said 'Ah, how is it actually with the Roma here?' ...but the Roma themselves hadn't been asked about their opinion at all, and it was all very negative and discriminatory." (N KI 1)</i>
The need for Roma involvement in decision making	<i>"...it's often been said that the Roma don't want to help themselves, they're against everything, they don't cooperate...but I saw the opposite situation...not wanting to talk [to], not wanting to listen to Roma that is a massive obstacle for them." (N KI 1)</i>

	<p><i>“In the future it’s very important that Roma themselves are involved in plans regarding themselves.” (N KI 2)</i></p>
<p>The need for greater European-level intervention</p>	<p><i>“...if you want to provide a good standard of living for Roma and also adequate care then it’s very important to work on legislation at a European level... At the moment what happens is that all countries in Europe say, right we’ll do that and at the end of the day it’s not fulfilled in places like the Czech Republic or Hungary. You see that citizens [of different European countries] don’t have the same rights, not always. I would really like to advocate that there should be real integral cooperation within Europe concerning specific aid for Roma.” (N KI 5)</i></p>

## 4. Spain

### 4.1 Review of selected data

Although there is no official data available, the Roma community in Spain is estimated to be between 650,000 and 750,000 people (Rodríguez Cabrero, 2011). The Roma population is thought to be concentrated across the large and medium sized cities in Spain, with around 9% living in Madrid (ibid: 5). However, it is recognised that there are gaps in quantitative data on the size of the Roma population, particularly in relation to newly arriving Central and Eastern European (CEE) Roma. Estimates of the new Roma population vary from 30,000 - 40,000 CEE Roma (mainly from Bulgaria and Romania) (Rodríguez Cabrero, 2011) to 88,272 'foreign born' Roma (aged 16 and over) (Fundación Secretariado Gitano, 2011: 214).

Recent research carried out with involvement of the Fundación Secretariado Gitano provides a range of demographic and other relevant data on the migrant Roma population in Spain, focusing specifically on Bulgarian and Romanian Roma (see Fundación Secretariado Gitano, 2011). The research was carried out across twelve cities where there were known migrant Roma populations. It included a total of 361 households or 1,404 individuals. The sample was weighted to the proportion of Bulgarian and Romanian nationals living in Spain. While recognising the limitations of the research, it does provide important information, including comparisons with the Spanish Roma population and the Spanish majority population. The following outlines selected demographic data and characteristics emerging from the survey:

- The Bulgarian and Romanian Roma population is younger than the native born Roma population and Spanish population in general – the average age of migrant Roma is 25.04 (compared to 28.13 in the Spanish Roma population and 40.53 in the Spanish population).
- The sample suggests a larger proportion of men than women.
- The sample suggests a larger proportion of people are married or co-habiting than amongst the Spanish Roma population.
- There is a higher percentage of children (30.2% - compared to 26.3% in the Spanish Roma population and 14.7% in the Spanish population).
- The average number of children is similar to that of Spanish Roma (2.42 and 2.67 respectively); however, there is a difference between Bulgarian and Romanian Roma, with Bulgarian Roma having fewer children (1.84 and 2.56 respectively).
- 67.4% of the migrant Roma population report that they have good or very good health (compared to 75.7% of the Spanish Roma population). Again there are differences between Romanian and Bulgarian Roma, with Bulgarian Roma less likely to report disabilities or health problems.
- With regards to labour market activity, 34.4% of the active population are unemployed (this figure is 36.4% for Spanish Roma). The report also highlights that, similar to Spanish Roma, there is greater 'precariousness' in the working conditions of migrant Roma than in the general population (i.e. 42% of migrant Roma are self-employed; 45.5% work part time; and 83.3% have a temporary contract).

- 50% of the migrant Roma sample said that the main reason for moving to Spain was to look for employment, while 40.1% wanted a better quality of life.
- 79% indicated that their movement to Spain was their first migratory experience; however, for around two thirds it was not their first visit to Spain.
- 54% indicated that they would like to stay in Spain indefinitely, while 44% would leave in the next ten years.
- The main difficulty encountered in Spain was finding employment (90.4% of respondents).
- 87.3% remain in contact with people from their country of origin, with 38.3% sending money back to their home country (e.g. to parents and children).

The survey also provides some indication of educational attainment. However, the authors acknowledge that the data is more subjective given that it relates to the individual respondent who took part in the survey and not other members of their household. The report suggests that 33% have not completed elementary education: consisting of 16.5% who are illiterate and 16.5% who can read and write, but have not completed their studies (ibid: 296). Interestingly, the report suggests that in comparison to Spanish Roma, 'the immigrant Roma population is better prepared from the educational point of view' (ibid: 296). However, the report suggests differences in educational attainment between Bulgarian and Romanian Roma. For example, Bulgarian Roma have a higher level of education, with 41.7% having completed secondary or higher education compared to 27.5% of the Romanian sample. (Please see Fundación Secretariado Gitano, 2011 for more information about the survey and Tarnovschi *et al.*, 2012 for comparisons between Spain and selected EU Member States.)

The number of new Roma within each area of Spain (e.g. Madrid) is currently unknown.

## 4.2 Review of selected policy

### Inclusion and race equality

Spain is one of the 12 countries signed up to the Decade of Roma Inclusion – a collective mobilisation of governmental and non-governmental bodies aimed at improving the socio-economic status and social inclusion of Roma populations. Writing before the Decade of Roma Inclusion began, the Open Society (2002) published a report on *The Situation of Roma in Spain*, highlighting that legislation does not provide comprehensive protection against discrimination (Open Society, 2002: 3). The report suggested that Roma faced disadvantage in relation to education, legal employment, accommodation and health. Furthermore, it highlighted that Roma are not recognised as an ethnic minority and therefore have no legal protection by virtue of minority rights (ibid: 3). However, it needs to be acknowledged that legal protection does not always guarantee equality (see, for example, the 'Inclusion and race equality' sections in the Netherlands and UK chapters of this report).

A review of national policies around the social inclusion of Roma was carried out on behalf of the European Commission (Rodriguez Cabrero, 2011). This review suggests that the social inclusion of Roma communities in Spain emerged over the period 1985-1989 with the Roma

Development Action Plan. This programme included the creation of the Roma State Council and the Action Plan for the Development of Roma (2010-2012) (ibid: 4). At a regional level there are Social Exclusion Regional Plans relevant to Roma, and programmes targeted specifically at Roma; for example, Autonomous Programmes for the Roma Community (ibid: 18). Furthermore, the review makes reference to the 2011 National Reform Programme, which although a universal programme, recognises the specific issues relating to the Roma community (ibid: 18). A more recent publication by the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (2013) provides details in relation to Roma and discrimination in Spain.

## **Education**

The EUMC report referred to in Chapter 3, suggests that in Spain, access to education for Roma children became a priority issue for the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Departments of Education of the Autonomous Communities during the 1980s, including a focus on avoiding segregation (EUMC, 2006: 74). It highlights that during the 1980s Andalusia, for example, had around 100 Roma mediators liaising between schools and families in an effort to reduce absenteeism.

Furthermore, the EUMC report highlights that in 2001, the Education Commission of the “Gitano Development Programme”, belonging to the Ministry of Education and Culture, drafted a document entitled *The Gitano people and education*. This document made a number of recommendations, including ensuring that Roma culture was part of the primary education curriculum, ensuring distribution of relevant educational materials and developing intercultural mediator training programmes (ibid: 74).

A more skeptical view is taken by the Open Society (2002: 17) who argue that despite equal rights to education that are encompassed in the constitution, human rights instruments, etc., ‘In practice, Roma/gitano children face disadvantages in gaining equal access to education, as well as discrimination and segregation within the educational system’. However, it should be noted that ‘segregation’ in this context does not refer to ‘formal’ segregation on the basis of ethnicity, but indicates ‘informal’ segregation by virtue of spatial concentration of populations and/or academic streaming within schools.

The more recent review of inclusion policies in Spain highlights that education was a key component of the Action Plan for the Development of Roma (2010-2012) (Rodriguez Cabrero, 2011: 20). It is also a key feature of the *National Roma Integration Strategy in Spain 2012-2020*, which highlights the progress that has already been made in terms of Roma education, particularly in relation to pre-school and primary school completion (Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, 2012: 5).

## **4.3 Consultation with key stakeholders**

### **Overview of key informants and their work with Roma communities**

A total of five key informants were consulted who had experience of working with Roma communities within Madrid. Key informants were drawn from different sectors in order to provide a range of views on work with new Roma populations. The table below provides an overview of the key informants who took part in the research and their area(s) of work. As

highlighted previously, the stakeholders were not chosen to provide representative or definitive views on Roma. Rather, the aim was to explore some of the key issues arising based on the experiences of selected stakeholders.

Spain (S) Key informant (KI)	Sector	Summary of work with Roma
S KI 1	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assistance with school registration and enrolment in mainstream schools</li> <li>• Works with a specific Roma settlement</li> </ul>
S KI 2	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service aimed at all communities</li> <li>• Provides information about schools, supporting resources, school support associations, recreation associations</li> <li>• Includes specific programme around prevention of absenteeism of Roma working in partnership with the Police and NGOs</li> </ul>
S KI 3	Social work / education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides 'Link Classes' for migrant children, including Roma. These classes last up to nine months and focus primarily on language acquisition</li> </ul>
S KI 4	Various sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National organisation providing support to Roma communities around a broad range of issues</li> <li>• Areas of work vary depending on geographical location and needs of Roma</li> <li>• Working within a number of settlements in Madrid</li> </ul>
S KI 5	Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service aimed at all communities</li> <li>• Includes specific programme with Roma communities focusing primarily on child immunisation, general health check-ups, and assistance with accessing health card</li> </ul>

### Views on data on Roma communities

The literature referred to above has provided an overview of some of the data that was available in relation to the size of the new Roma communities. The respondents were asked to reflect on the estimated population size provided by this data and whether or not they felt it was accurate; all of the key informants indicated that they did not know with any certainty as to whether this was accurate or not. In most cases, respondents could only comment on data relating to their own specific services or programmes (e.g. indicating that they were working with a certain number of families and/or children); however, in some cases it was admitted that even this information could be out of date. They were unable to provide estimates on the number of Roma children in Spain and/or Madrid, again unless it related to the specific families they were working with at the time.

There were three key issues raised in relation to the difficulty of collecting data from Roma communities. Firstly, the mobility of Roma communities was an issue. It was highlighted that people sometimes moved to different areas or returned to their home country for a period then came back to Spain:

*"I was there yesterday and there were like 50 people just arrived...not new, 50 people with a medical history here. They were gone last May, and now they came back...I don't know if it is related to the weather, because is a very cold winter there [Romania]. It happened as well last September, many of them arrived. If you talked to people from education they can tell you, because it is crazy, they registered long ago in school, then they left, now they come back again." (S KI 5)*

For this particular respondent the lack of data was not perceived to be a huge issue for their specific area of work (health); however, they saw the impact it had on other sectors, particularly education:

*"For us is not so crazy, because the worst that can happens is that I vaccinate them twice, but in education [it] is more complicated, leaving their place in May, coming back now in October." (S KI 5)*

Secondly, it was highlighted that there can be a reluctance of Roma to provide information given concerns about what the data would be used for. This was perceived to be related to negative experiences in their country of origin:

*"...whenever I had to do fieldwork, doing surveys, many people didn't want to answer them because they said that in their countries, a few years ago, the government was also doing this type of surveys and enquires, but to damage them, to have them numbered..." (S KI 4)*

Finally, a broader issue was highlighted relating to the fact that the collection of data on ethnicity is prohibited, with one respondent referring to ethnicity as 'private' information. Consequently, the data that is available just relates to nationality:

*"...so maybe you can find out the Romanian population registered in Madrid, but to know who of them are Gypsies and who aren't is more complicated." (S KI 4)*

### **Views on policy relating to Roma children**

The respondents were not aware of any specific policies in place relating to Roma children:

*"You asked me before if there was a regulation or some law. I think it is the opposite, there is a lack of them." (S KI 1)*

*"There is special policy but about special educational needs, associated with social disadvantages, or to physical and mental disabilities, but nothing specific for Roma children." (S KI 2)*

With the exception of the reference to 'special educational needs' above, respondents suggested that all children are covered by the same policies rather than having targeted policies for specific communities.

## The engagement of Roma in education

### *Views on key barriers to engagement*

The interviews reiterated widely acknowledged issues around Roma and education; for example, absenteeism and lower levels of attendance, drop-out at secondary education level, etc. It is not our purpose here to highlight what is already known as these issues are discussed in detail in previous research and publications. Rather, we want to highlight views on some of the underlying issues that respondents felt impacted on overall engagement (or lack of) in relation to education. The interviews highlighted a number of key issues, although some of these were in many respects interrelated. Firstly, while respondents often talked positively about the children they worked with, it was felt that a key underlying issue related to a lack of engagement by parents in relation to children's education:

*"The children, like mainly all children, engage very optimally. The fact of playing, learning new things, socialize, development. They participate a lot in the class, they are very intelligent, very fast, develop a lot in arts, in education. The only difficulties seen from the school are due to the relation with the families, that the children sometimes should be more motivated at home." (S KI 2)*

*"When they come, to register the kids and all that...They normally come with an educator, or with someone that helps them, they do the registration as well as they can, and after that, the parents practically disappear." (S KI 3)*

Secondly, lack of engagement sometimes related to the more practical issue of travelling to and from schools. This was a particular issue when children from the same family were split between different schools and was often a result of mid-term registration. This required multiple journeys by parents and increased the likelihood of non-attendance:

*"...the kids started school in the middle of the term, maybe in the second semester, they got split in different schools, they were divided because they couldn't find places in the same one for all of them. So the father or the mother had to take each child to each school, and that was a problem, and to pick them up afterwards...And because of it, we would find more absenteeism in the afternoons. The children would go to school in the morning, then they were picked up to have lunch, and then they weren't taken back to school for the afternoon lessons." (S KI 4)*

The barrier of having to travel was not just confined to school attendance, however, and one respondent highlighted that this issue was relevant to other services, including health:

*"...with regard the access to the health system, it is the geographical distance, because they live very far from the urban net...and they don't have the chance of using public transport to go to the doctor, or to the hospital, or to the school, or to any services. They need someone to take them out, if they have to go to the doctor, get the prescription, buy it from the pharmacy and come back home. It is cheaper for them to go straight away to the pharmacy and get it without the prescription." (S KI 5)*

These barriers were particularly relevant in situations of poverty. Indeed, poverty and day-to-day survival was perceived to underpin the lives of many Roma; emphasising a difference in the priorities of service providers in comparison to those issues prioritised by the Roma families themselves. As the comments below suggest, the need to earn a living often meant that older children were required to look after younger children so parents could work, or older children were themselves required to contribute to income generation:

*"...their interests are not, obviously, ours, and we also run against their culture...For example, in the, I mean we are a link, all the time motivating and trying so that this link with the school happens...but this, these interests [are] not always, I mean, the need of money is more important for them than, for instance assisting to the school. In the end, the school is just the school...I think they live more the 'here and now', getting the means for the day to day, than the long term project of having an education and a future." (S KI 1)*

*"I think that as long as their children are in primary school they don't see the need, they are good with it, or they see it as a basic need to have their kids assisted and cared for by third persons so they can both work. The situation changes though when the kids reach secondary. There the kids stop being in the education system, and many of them decide that their kids have to start working...or also, to take care of the younger ones of the family, while the oldest ones at home go out to earn money." (S KI 2)*

Interestingly, while poverty was perceived to be a reason for lack of engagement, at the same time the resources sometimes attached to school attendance were often perceived as a key reason for some parents to engage with the education system. One respondent, for example, made reference to the importance of provision of meals at school:

*"And if they can stay to dine, that's what really makes children to attend daily, because the parents appreciate a lot their children staying in school to eat. On one hand, they are well fed, and on the other, if the children stay in the school most of the day, the parents can go to make a living out there." (S KI 4)*

While another respondent made reference to social assistance being conditional on school attendance. As such, they felt that families would engage purely for that reason:

*"I think, in general, the way they think is that they go to school because we force them, and because our policy here forces them, but most of the children, I told you, they come with very serious education needs, and here they go to school because the laws force them. And then, if they join the wheel of social help and attention [referring to financial assistance] one of the requirements is that children have to be listed in the school. So they take it as a minor sacrifice in exchange for social help." (S KI 3)*

### ***Views on differences in support required by Roma***

Given the complexity of the issues raised above, the respondents indicated that different approaches or a different level of support was required when working with Roma communities. There was a view that the support required by new Roma was far more intensive than that required by other migrant communities. It was highlighted that building up trust was a key issue. One respondent, for example, made reference to difficulties arising when a 'new worker' was introduced to families, which could apply to any service area.

With specific reference to education, while for many migrant children, the language barrier was the key issue, for new Roma children – although language was obviously a concern – there was a wider issue relating to a lack of formal education that Roma children have experienced in their country or origin:

*"...we detect that [Roma] kids have a very weak education from the origin...in the end, we don't teach them how to read in Spanish, we have to teach them how to read...it's not that they are under the curricular level, it's that they don't have a level at all. In their countries, in the countries where they come from, they haven't attended school, or they have, but very irregularly." (S KI 3)*

For one respondent, when working with Roma communities there was a need to recognise the complexity of the issues and accept that there was only so much that could be achieved at any one time:

*"...the truth is that with them we have to work over little achievements." (S KI 1)*

### ***Changes in approaches to working with Roma over time***

Respondents were asked to reflect on any changes that had occurred over time in the way they worked with Roma communities. Three of the respondents made reference to their approach changing as they learnt more about the communities and their particular needs, and responded accordingly in terms of work and resources. As these respondent highlighted:

*"Because we get to know the needs they come with and we gradually adapt the resources we have to the needs they have." (S KI 3)*

*"It's changed because it's been adapting to the different families we've been working with." (S KI 4)*

*"It is still a very closed community, but we learn bit by bit how this community works, we find out things..." (S KI 5)*

One respondent made reference to having a greater understanding of the countries of origin of the families they were working with, and how the needs and values of Roma can differ depending on what area of that country Roma originate from; for example, there may be different employment experiences or different views on acceptable age of marriage. Another respondent referred once again to the issue of building up trust over time. From the perspective of their particular service (health) they had noticed that Roma families would now come to them for support rather than them having to go out into the communities.

A final issue that was raised was the increase in multi-agency/joint working that had occurred over time. One respondent made reference to a better coordination of services but also an increase in the number of services that were now involved. This has led to more targeted work around particular issues; for example, Roma women and employment:

*“...all of it is happening, and even growing. Currently we coordinate a lot better, more precisely, with the social services of the area. We have created, since one year ago, a very wide work group...and the net has grown a lot...Now we are working hard with associations as well, to make encounters with women, especially targeting women, co-ordinating ourselves with the social services too...we want to help them find a job.”*  
(S KI 2)

**Other issues highlighted in the interviews**

While the interviews focused primarily – but not exclusively – on engagement with education, a number of additional issues were raised which are also important to highlight as they provide additional insights into the complexity of the barriers facing Roma communities and those providing support to them. These issues are summarised in the table that follows.

Issue	Example(s)
Lack of legal documents/legal status and issues with registration for documents	<p><i>“...we have a big problem with the NIEs [Identification Number for Foreigners]...NIEs now are impossible to get...and the passports, the problem with them is the money they cost in the embassy, and that’s it. There are no Government subsidies to help get them, and they don’t have the means to obtain them.”</i> (S KI 1)</p> <p><i>“Well, all the changes that are happening now in general, they are making more and more difficult for them to live here, even with people that have been living here for more than ten years now, with a decent life. It is still like if they don’t have the right, or like if they don’t deserve a dignified life. For example, this new law about work, and the people that weren’t registered in the Employment Office before last July, now they need a Residence Permit to work, so it is a contradiction. They are EU citizens, and to some services, they can’t access like regular immigrants because they belong to the European Union, but then they have the same restrictions that non EU citizens, so it is a big barrier.”</i> (S KI 4)</p>
Segregation within schools	<p><i>“...and some parents have complained that the child in the class is not taught what the rest are, and the teachers have the child painting in a course where they should be doing more advanced tasks, and the parents don’t understand why the child is not being taught like the rest.”</i> (S KI 4)</p> <p><i>“They don’t even share the break for playtime with the rest of the children.”</i> (S KI 1 – referring to ‘Link Classes’)</p>
Lack of flexibility in relation to services/education	<p><i>“For example, if a pregnant woman needs a blood check, and she is five minutes late, sometimes there is no way she is going to have the blood check, even if she is just late for five minutes, there is no flexibility in the system on many occasions...Or to group the appointments, instead of making the people come one day, and the next one and the next one. Come on, try to group the three appointments.”</i> (S KI 5)</p>

	<p><i>“Well, these kids, in an ordinary class, with a determined and closed curriculum like we have in Secondary [education], it’s very difficult that they reach the minimum aims. Sometimes they do it, but because they come at a certain age, with motivation...If you have an education system where you can be flexible, and give more...” (S KI 3)</i></p>
Roma perceptions of and/or approaches to health and illness	<p><i>“...their concept of health and disease, how they relate any symptom of illness with death. It also happens a lot with the Spanish Gypsies, any symptom, they think they are going to die, they relate it with death. They don’t have the concept of prevention. They think, health is the opposite of illness, and illness is death.” (S KI 5)</i></p> <p><i>“Most of them don’t eat healthily, the children take too much sugar, the women usually smoke even when they are pregnant.” (S KI 5)</i></p>
Need for more employment opportunities	<p><i>“...always try to prioritise the work issue, because we think it is a real way out for these families, to improve, to have a better living, to be able to rent a flat...” (S KI 4)</i></p> <p><i>“...women now provide for the family...and for them right now it is easier than for the men to get a job. There are more opportunities for women now than for men, there are not many offers of physical jobs now for men.” (S KI 5)</i></p>
Lack of language skills, particularly amongst adults	<p><i>“Well, when they get to learn the language, they get to integrate more...as soon as the kid learns the language [they] manage, [they] integrate, and everything goes fine...” (S KI 3)</i></p> <p><i>“The children speak very well because they go to school, they have relations with other children, but the adults, if they work, they may work together. Most of the families I’ve been with are dedicated to picking up scrap, so there wasn’t a meeting space to talk to other people out of their own community, so it’s difficult to learn the language.” (S KI 4)</i></p>

## **5. United Kingdom (UK)**

### **5.1 Review of selected data**

There is a lack of robust national and local level quantitative data in relation to Roma in the UK, and estimates vary widely from 100,000 to one million (Craig, 2011). The most numerous groups are suggested to be Czech, Slovak and Romanian, with the largest populations in cities across the North of England, East Midlands, Kent, north and east London (European Dialogue, 2009: 38), with some groupings in Glasgow (Scotland), Cardiff (Wales) and Belfast (Northern Ireland) (Craig, 2011). During the 1990s and early 2000s, a number of Roma came to the UK seeking asylum; however, very few were allowed to stay (Horton and Grayson, 2008). Nonetheless, the settlement patterns of Roma seem to reflect areas where there have been populations of asylum seekers in the past, or where they have existing contacts, and in many cases Roma from specific areas/neighbourhoods of a country will settle in a limited number of areas in the UK (ibid).

It has been argued that there has been a failure of local authorities to recognise the existence of many thousands of Roma in specific localities, with suggestions that there are as many undetected Roma as there are those that are 'counted' (European Dialogue, 2009). However, on-going work by the present authors suggests that the issue may not necessarily be a 'failure to recognise' but a lack of understanding about 'new' Roma together with a lack of meaningful contact points at which ethnic data pertaining to Roma populations can be recorded – a key exception being registrations of children in school.

With reference to the case study area of Manchester, the local authority (Manchester City Council) – as part of on-going work being undertaken by the present authors – provided an estimate that there are 3,000 Roma within the city. This was based on estimates provided by specialist education services, schools, health services, the Police, NGOs and experience from targeted outreach to Roma families. The Council indicated that Roma in Manchester come from the following new EU countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. However, it was stated that Manchester also has Kosovan and Serbian Roma. The Council highlighted that Roma were present in Manchester prior to EU expansion, albeit in smaller numbers. Following EU expansion, A8 Roma are mainly dispersed across the city as individual families and small groups. However, in more recent years it is suggested that there has been a rapid increase in the number of A2 (Bulgarian and Romanian) Roma, who have tended to be concentrated in a small number of areas.

### **5.2 Review of selected policy**

#### **Inclusion and race equality**

Although it has been suggested that, when compared to many EU countries, the UK demonstrate good practice when it comes to inter-cultural relations, as well as policies for promoting race equality, it is argued that there is still a long way to go (Wilkin et al, 2009: 55). Within the UK, Roma are covered under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and Equality Act 2010 as a defined ethnic group (Craig, 2011). This legislation places a duty on local authorities and other public bodies to eliminate race discrimination, promote equality

of opportunity and good relations between all racial groups (ibid: 18). However, it has been suggested that there are few processes in place to ensure these rights can be accessed/enjoyed by Roma (Poole and Adamson, 2008). For example, research suggests that some schools in England were potentially discriminating against Roma children for fear that their presence would damage the reputation of the school (European Dialogue, 2009).

In the UK, the previous All-Party Parliamentary Group on Traveller Law Reform has been renamed the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (Craig, 2011: 22). However, while Roma are being included in terminology, it is suggested that there is no specific action plan for this 'new' grouping. Given this 'policy vacuum', local agencies have tended to adopt their own approach, often largely driven by their current approach to minority ethnic communities (including UK Gypsies and Travellers) (Craig, 2011: 23). Consequently, there is no consistent approach (ibid).

The UK submission to the EU call for Integration Strategies for Roma Inclusion has been the production of a statement outlining the approach of the UK Government, but not producing a separate strategy. Within this statement Roma are not consistently treated as distinct from UK Gypsies and Travellers, framing most of the response around Gypsies and Travellers and only including Roma as a distinct group in the area of education, which is seen as a cross-over issue.

## **Education**

Children in the UK have three basic rights in relation to education: free and compulsory education; equal access for minorities to education; and equal opportunities within the education system (Craig, 2011: 10). As highlighted above, UK policy often focuses on Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (GRT), incorporating Central and Eastern European Roma into discussions of UK Gypsy and Traveller populations. In many respects the issues that Roma face – lower attendance levels, access problems, low achievement rates, early drop-out, cultural norms, etc. – are the same as those found within UK Gypsy and Traveller communities (Brown, Dwyer and Scullion, 2012).

The Children's Act (2004) provides a strategy for improving children's lives, covering universal services which every child accesses as well as for more targeted services for those with additional needs, including Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (Bartlett et al., 2011: 102). In the area of education the key aim is to increase the educational inclusion of the GRT population; this encompasses participation, enrolment and regular attendance at school as well as improving levels of achievement (ibid). The Department for Education (until 2010 Department for Children, Schools and Families) in the UK includes a 'Raising Community Aspirations and Attainment Team' with policy advisers on GRT issues (ibid: 101). The Department of Education has published a range of reports aimed at local authorities and staff in educational settings, focusing on GTR education, including *Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Minority Ethnic Pupils* (March 2003); *Aiming High: Raising the Achievement of Gypsy Traveller pupils: A Guide to Good Practice* (July 2003); and *The Inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Children and Young People: The Inclusion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils: strategies for building confidence in voluntary self-declared ethnicity ascription* (2008) (this latter report focuses on need for better ethnic monitoring in schools, ensuring that children can be open about their ethnicity).

Within local areas the educational needs of children within Roma communities often fall within the remit of the local Traveller Education Support Service (TESS). In some local authorities there are Ethnic Minority and Traveller Attainment Services (EMTAS), with a broader remit of addressing the educational needs of school age children from all minority ethnic communities. Within Manchester, support falls within the remit of the dedicated International New Arrivals, Travellers and Supplementary Schools Team. These services all tend to share a common goal, which is to provide support to specific communities with access to education as well as providing support within schools. However, given recent public sector budget cuts in the UK, there are concerns about the future of such services.

### 5.3 Consultation with key stakeholders

#### Overview of key informants and their work with Roma communities

A total of five key informants were consulted who had experience of working with Roma communities within Manchester. Key informants were drawn from different sectors in order to provide a range of views on work with new Roma populations. The table below provides an overview of the key informants who took part in the research and their area(s) of work. As highlighted previously, the stakeholders were not chosen to provide representative or definitive views on Roma. Rather, the aim was to explore some of the key issues arising based on the experiences of selected stakeholders.

United Kingdom (UK) Key informant (KI)	Sector	Summary of work with Roma
UK KI 1	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works within a large secondary school with all international arrivals</li> <li>• Works with around 40% of the school’s student population</li> <li>• Around 10% of the school’s population are Roma</li> </ul>
UK KI 2	Voluntary and community group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service aimed at all migrant communities across Manchester</li> <li>• Supports access to mainstream services such as education</li> <li>• Provides support to schools by providing outreach support workers</li> </ul>
UK KI 3	Local authority/education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of an international arrivals support service to schools across Manchester</li> <li>• Provides support to Gypsies, Roma and Travellers</li> <li>• Supports partnership working between schools and enables sharing of practice and experience</li> </ul>
UK KI 4	Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head teacher of a primary school in an ethnically diverse area</li> </ul>
UK KI 5	Health/education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service aimed at all communities</li> <li>• Works to help teenage mothers access education</li> </ul>

## Views on data on Roma communities

Previous literature has provided an overview of some of the data that was available in relation to the size of the new Roma communities. The respondents were asked to reflect on the estimated population size provided by some of this data and whether or not they felt it was accurate; most respondents thought that the estimation of 3,000 people across Manchester was reasonably accurate. However, two respondents commented that this seemed quite a small population relative to the size of the city. It was highlighted that there may be reasons why this figure - although informed a range of data sources - might be an underestimate of the population. This included the reliance on self-ascription when collecting data:

*“That’s the ones that we know are Roma. If you looked at the official figures it would be half of that. The ones that ascribe. That is one of the issues with any data about Roma. We base our numbers on our knowledge. So it’s the outreach work, etc. Many of those families when they go to the school they will write their children down as say, Czech and not Roma. The official data is based on what’s collected by the schools.”*  
(UK KI 3)

Estimates for the number of Roma children living in Manchester were provided by one well informed respondent (UK KI 3), who suggested an estimate of around 1,000. This equates to around one-third of the known Roma population. However, it was acknowledged that this figure could be higher once the population of babies and infants is taken into consideration.

The respondents who were teachers or were working within schools suggested that the number of Roma children is still a relatively small population within the student population. Within the secondary school that took part in the research, Roma children were estimated to be around 5-8% of the school population (this equates to around 40 children from a population of 850) with a smaller number attending the primary school we spoke to (approximately 3%/8 children from a population of 250).

Within Manchester an annual census of school children enrolled across the area is carried out (this census is carried out for all local authorities across the UK). Although it was acknowledged that there are operational differences in how the census are carried out by schools this was thought to give as good a snapshot as it was possible with regards to the ethnic background of children. However, it was once again acknowledged that this data relied to a great extent on self-ascription of the families concerned:

*“...with some of the parents, they are very happy to say that they are Roma if they are approached in the right way and if they trust the person that they are talking to. The first instinct would be probably to say their country, that they Romanian or they are Slovakian or Czech and not put the Roma bit down. There is obviously, for obvious reasons there is a worry about letting the authorities know that that’s their true ethnicity.”* (UK KI 2)

The respondents suggested that they had to demonstrate a great deal of pragmatism in their attempts to provide an accurate picture as to the size of the Roma population. Although it was acknowledged that it was difficult to reach the most isolated community members, once they began working with families, the ethnicity of these families became more obvious:

*“We do work with some families who won’t subscribe to being Roma. It often takes a while before they will actually say they are Roma or they will still deny it after a year or two of working with the family. You have a Russian interpreter and then the family go off and speak their own language and you say, you are speaking Romani...The Romanian Roma always ascribe to being Roma.” (UK KI 4)*

Similar to the experiences highlighted in the Netherlands and Spain, the mobility of Roma families often meant that the number of Roma in the city at any one time were subject to change. Respondents in Manchester referred to it being commonplace for families to move around the local authority area, to other areas in the UK and back to their country of origin. Such mobility made providing an accurate estimation as to the size of the population difficult.

The only issue raised in relation to the impact of inaccurate data was how this impacted on the ability of schools to request additional resources to provide support for children with particular needs.

### **Views on policy relating to Roma children**

The specific policy relating to the work across the local authority area was the Ethnic Minority Achievement Strategy. This provided a framework within which the organisations were working to improve the educational outcomes of members of ethnic minority communities. This included the administration of additional resources, provision of outreach work, multi-agency/joint working and opportunities for sharing learning between agencies, schools and areas. One respondent indicated that - in addition to the good practice operating in Manchester - at a national level, there were a number of documents providing guidance on working with minority ethnic children:

*“...there is a strong legacy of good practice in Manchester...and generally across the UK there is a lot is known about how to work with minority ethnic children...there is a lot of extremely useful guidance from the national strategies that were developed under the previous [Labour] government...a lot of schools in Manchester still use that guidance.” (UK KI 1)*

### **The engagement of Roma in education**

The engagement of Roma children/families within the education system in Manchester was a complex issue. Those with direct experience in educational settings talked about how families appeared to want to engage, and that education was valued by most of the Roma families and children that they had encountered:

*“We don’t have attendance problems with Roma in the sense that, if they have a school place, they seem to really value it.” (UK KI 4)*

Indeed, one respondent suggested that Roma were sometimes more engaged than British children:

*“...it’s better working with Roma. The white British are often switched off and sometimes disengaged and very passive. It’s the opposite with Roma. They are enthusiastic and sometimes more so. They do want to get involved with everything and the majority do and learn and achieve. They want to move into mainstream now and get involved with everything.” (UK KI 1)*

However, while it was acknowledged that families and children appeared to be broadly engaged in education, underpinning much of this engagement was the work that had been carried out with Roma families. One respondent highlighted that the impact of this work was the establishment and maintenance of trust:

*“It’s whether or not they trust you, basically. Their mums will say whether or not you’ve got a good heart. If you love the children or they know if you are caring or not or if you don’t like them. We have to work very much on building trust, because there are a lot of language barriers.” (UK KI 4)*

A lot of this trust seemed to be built by acknowledging cultural differences, and adapting the way in which existing services were provided, including assisting with issues that were perhaps outside the remit of their specific area of work. For example, one school had helped families with issues such as housing:

*“Sometimes if the Roma parents think you are right then they will bring other people in to—I’ve had Roma families in asking me to deal with landlords...or asking me for a reference to help them with admin and paperwork.” (UK KI 4)*

### **Views on key barriers to engagement**

It was acknowledged that there were still gaps in the engagement between some schools and Roma families. However, these gaps mainly related to the wider role that schools have in establishing relationships with families; for example, through parent’s evenings, coffee mornings and other activities:

*“We have parent evenings. We’ve had [Roma] taking part and attending the parents evening, but probably not enough. I think up to like three or four years ago, they were quite, really involved and it is not as much now. I don’t know why. We needed to support them and they needed to get involved and know about school and show them round. It’s not, it’s gone off and petered off a little bit now. We are trying to do that again.” (UK KI 5)*

*“We run parents coffee mornings. We never ever get any parents from...the Roma community coming to any of our parent things. This has been a big thing that we’ve tried to sort out. But when we ask the Roma parents what they wanted, particularly the mothers, they like craft things. So we got a load of things donated from ASDA [a UK supermarket]. We did a workshop on making cards and the Roma parents came. The mums came. They absolutely loved it. We are thinking well, if it’s food or craft, they like it. But it’s really hard if you can’t read or write to participate.” (UK KI 4)*

Respondents also highlighted that Roma parents were not always aware of what was expected of them with regards to education:

*"I think it's always not knowing what's expected of you as a parent. Parents often not going to parent's evening, because they might not know what it's about or what it's for and what it will mean to them or their child."* (UK KI 2)

*"...some of the, Roma families don't understand the value of children attending nursery or even reception age. That can lead to conflict as well."* (UK KI 3)

### **Views on differences in support required by Roma**

The respondents indicated that Roma communities did require slightly different support when compared with some other international arrivals. Such differences were underpinned by the size of the population of Roma from the same country living in one local area; their previous (lack of) experience with education; and their lack of trust towards agencies:

*"...initially...we did have a large population of Roma [and] we had to take a different support and had to put much more support in. We had some Roma support workers and people would take a lunch time with families and there is lots of integration going on. I think, as it settled, the integration has been more smooth and it's gone into the mainstream."* (UK KI 1)

*"Well, the main thing is that their parents are not literate in any language."* (UK KI 4)

*"I think with Roma it's a lot more labour intensive and time intensive. It does take longer to build up trust. It might take you three or four times until you actually even get through your front door and then it can take you two or three times before you get to the right person that you need to speak to. For outreach workers it's just about patience and perseverance and tenacity and not giving up, basically."* (UK KI 2)

One of the main issues, however, related to the heterogeneity of the Roma population. Most Roma within Manchester appeared to be from Romania, but there were also smaller populations from the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia. Such populations were often dispersed across the city and were therefore potentially isolated. This inevitably impacted negatively on their ability to be identified and supported within the framework of educational outreach:

*"They don't necessarily have the network, the family support or community support. With those families we very often, it might be some time before we find them. For example, one family, they've been living in the UK for four years and they have never been to school. With those families they are much more under the radar. They haven't got, I think the Romanian Roma have got a kind of identity as a Romanian Roma community now in that particular bit of Manchester. The others don't necessarily ascribe as Roma. As I say, they are much more hard to work with in a way, because they are more isolated. There is quite high mobility as well amongst some of those Czech or Latvian, Lithuanian families."* (UK KI 3)

As can be seen, the mobility of some families was a key issue that was raised once again. As highlighted previously, it was not unusual for families to move across the city, to other areas of the UK or back to their country of origin. While sometimes such moves were permanent, more often than not it was temporary mobility, with people returning some weeks or months later. This movement sometimes created challenges for outreach workers and the schools working with Roma families. It was suggested that this mobility was sometimes instigated by family events, but also information received about opportunities available in other areas within the UK:

*“They can disappear. They will come and see us and say, ‘we are going back to Romania’. They can all just pile in a car and set off. They just come and say, ‘we are going...somebody is ill, we are going’. It can be a grandparent or something.” (UK KI 4)*

*“It’s really hard to generalise. For example, they found that some families found out that you know that the Roma families can’t claim benefits. So the families are on a sort of self employed ticket. But, they get these kind of, sometimes it’s misinformation that, but Birmingham [another UK city] have started a pilot haven’t they where they are giving benefits to Roma families. They all shot off to Birmingham. Some got mixed up and went to Bradford. So one of our families said, we are going to Bradford and then they came back and went, we don’t like Bradford.” (UK KI 4)*

While it was acknowledged that mobility was challenging, one respondent talked about how they had adapted to this situation:

*“The problem is that they can just take off and then we don’t know where they are. It’s if they are missing from education. With Roma families normally statutory things, you take a child off if they miss, I think it’s four weeks, you can take them off the register. We don’t do that with Roma families, because what we find is if they come back it takes more resources to get them back into school than if you just hung onto the place for a bit longer...We’ve got special permission. We do the date differently for Roma families to take account of their lifestyles.” (UK KI 4)*

### ***Changes in approaches to working with Roma over time***

It was apparent from the interviews, that in many respects, the service providers across the city were well equipped to work with Roma families when they started arriving in greater numbers in recent years. This was largely a consequence of the experience they had developed following the previous Labour government’s policy of dispersing asylum seekers away from London and the South-East, from 1999 onwards. As a result, services and many schools were already familiar with working with diverse communities. However, while services were already experienced at working with different minority communities, respondents did highlight a number of changes in their approach to working with Roma populations. One of these changes related to the way in which children are now framed as ‘individual students’ as opposed the ‘the Roma children’:

*“Obviously, the school’s population settled in school and all the Roma, they just saw them as a homogenous group and not as individuals. I’ve got to know them very well. Now they are in year 11 and they are all individuals and all different skills and abilities and that’s the thing.” (UK KI 1)*

Interestingly, some Roma children who had arrived a number of years ago had become ‘community advocates’ following their engagement in education. This had enabled deeper relationships to be established with some sections of the community:

*“The relationship that we’ve established with certain young people. We’ve got a bank of Romanian interpreters who we are able to use and kind of communicate with the Roma community.” (UK KI 2)*

Furthermore, the importance of building up trust over time was also reiterated by respondents. It was highlighted that as the communities became more established in the area it became easier to work with newly arriving families. One person suggested that the knowledge and experience of more established Roma was passed onto new arrivals. There was a perception that this had helped to increase trust in organisations but also increase engagement in relation to education:

*“It is about the fact that we have established trust over a long period of time. The families will now say, the Routes project can help you [referring to their specific project]. Once you’ve got the trust within the community it would be easier to kind of work with other families.” (UK KI 2)*

*“Families that are new are still arriving, they tend to pick up the expectations and attitudes of the existing families. We have noticed a definite difference, much more interest in education and support for education and understanding. I think they and we’ve had reports from some of the families that they do feel valued. They have had very positive experiences in the schools, and that has made a big difference.” (UK KI 3)*

Finally, respondents highlighted that joint working between agencies, particularly schools, was commonplace, with networking perceived as vital for working with Roma communities. The work of the International Arrivals, Travellers and Supplementary Schools Team within Manchester City Council was also highlighted as good practice within the case study area, particularly the role it had played in providing support to the different agencies working with Roma communities.

### **Other issues highlighted in the interviews**

While the interviews focused primarily – but not exclusively – on engagement with education, a number of additional issues were raised which are also important to highlight as they provide additional insights into the complexity of the barriers facing Roma communities and those providing support. These issues are summarised in the table that follows.

Issue	Example(s)
Integration and inclusion within the wider area	<p><i>“Talking about integration, but it does seem that the community is so concentrated in certain places like Gorton [an area of Manchester] there is not much chance of integration really, because it’s very concentrated.” (UK KI 5)</i></p>
Cultural issues and teenage pregnancy	<p><i>“It’s a very sensitive topic, because when you talk about teenage pregnancy with the young people that we’ve got very good relationships with, they often kind of shut down or want to avoid that conversation altogether. It’s a topic that really needs to be sensitively approached.” (UK KI 2)</i></p> <p><i>“...Definitely for girls, anyway. I think the expectation is that they do marry young and that they will have children. It’s not very common for them to stay in education.” (UK KI 5)</i></p>
Understanding Special Educational Needs	<p><i>“We had a Roma boy who was really quite special needs, but presented as a fairly normal, personable boy, but he was special needs. He had lots of global development problems. Because he could read and write his name, he was eleven. He could just about read and write his name and he could count to about twenty. The parents thought he was a genius. We couldn’t explain to the parents that this boy had real special needs and he got in trouble a lot...But the parents could not get it into their heads that he had real special needs and was a very vulnerable child.” (UK KI 4)</i></p>
Poverty	<p><i>“A big issue for Roma families is food. It’s some of the survival things. What really bugs me is they are not entitled to free school meals. They come with really awful packed lunches. The Roma children want to work for food. They will clean the dining room up if they can have some food. They do it because they will get some biscuits or food at the end of it.” (UK KI 4)</i></p> <p><i>“My experience so far is that families have more important things to worry about like being evicted or not having any money or not having basics in the house. That is their priority and the priority is not education at all.” (UK KI 5)</i></p>
Housing	<p><i>“I’ve been in homes visiting with Roma, young Roma families and the privately rented accommodation. It’s not very nice living conditions. There are cockroaches climbing up the walls and the house isn’t big enough. Often the house isn’t big enough for the amount of people that are living there.” (UK KI 5)</i></p> <p><i>“There are perceived issues really about overcrowding. When agencies first came across Roma they were usually very shocked by the number of people living in the house...typically there will be two families in a house, a lot of children, you know very big extended families. There is usually a lot of concern about the conditions they are living in. Although, once you actually get to know the families you will see that they are very well cared for, on the whole. They are kept warm and clothed and it’s a very loving, caring families. Sometimes the positives are not perceived by some agencies.” (UK KI 3)</i></p>

## **6. Concluding comments**

This research does not seek to make definitive statements about the situation of Roma or the engagement of Roma in education in each partner country. Rather, it was exploratory research which aimed to provide a greater understanding of some of the key issues emerging from the perspective of specific stakeholders. This chapter offers some brief concluding comments based on the data – both primary and secondary – collected in each case study area, focusing specifically on the difficulties of collecting data around Roma communities; the perceived barriers to engagement in education; and perceived differences in support required by Roma in comparison to other communities.

### **6.1 Data on new Roma**

The research confirmed the widely acknowledged difficulties in estimating the size and nature of Roma populations at a national, regional and local level. In the Netherlands and Spain, to a certain extent this issue was even more problematic given that ethnic monitoring is prohibited. Consequently, data often only relates to nationality/country of birth. While surveys and research had been undertaken in Amsterdam and Spain, these studies were not able to provide a comprehensive estimate of the number of new Roma. In the UK, ethnic monitoring is permitted and there appear to be a broader range of data sources that could be drawn upon to estimate the size of the population, with data collected in relation to education being one of the key sources.

With regards to the stakeholders who were interviewed in all three case study areas, very few were able to comment with any certainty around the size of the population. However, it was suggested by a number of respondents – across the case study areas - that current data underestimated the size of the population. The respondents highlighted two main barriers to data collection. Firstly, there was an over-arching issue around individuals/families not wanting to identify themselves as Roma, which related to the historic discrimination Roma have faced, the fear of being 'known' to the authorities and fears about what the data may be used for. Thus, while some of the stakeholders – based on their experience of working with Roma – often suspected that they were supporting a Roma family, the family would not always divulge their ethnicity until they were able to trust that worker. Secondly, the mobility of Roma communities was highlighted. This related to movement within case study areas/countries, but also transnational movement. It was therefore difficult from a practical point of view to estimate the size of the population when individuals/families often changed addresses, moved to other areas or spent periods of time in their country of origin or other countries.

The key impact of the lack of data on Roma communities related to how data is often used by authorities to allocate resources. Respondents in the UK and the Netherlands, for example, suggested that it was difficult to argue for additional financial resources to provide support to communities when they were unable to accurately state the size of the population they were required to support.

## 6.2 Barriers to engagement in education

As highlighted previously, there are widely acknowledged issues around Roma and education, with low levels of attendance – particularly at secondary school level – and poor educational attainment being two commonly cited concerns. In this research we sought to explore some of the main underlying reasons for these acknowledged issues, from the perspective of key stakeholders. What was evident from the interviews was that there were a range of issues that were sometimes interrelated, but more importantly combined to create a complex picture in relation to engagement (or lack of) in education.

Across all case study areas the respondents discussed a lack of engagement from parents in relation to education. Thus, while children were often engaged in education (and reportedly enjoyed going to school), parents were perceived to show limited interest in, or understanding of, the value of education. However, the respondents suggested that this was not simply an unwillingness to engage, but sometimes related to lack of understanding of the expectations of schools in the case study countries (e.g. compulsory education, requirement to attend parents' evenings, etc.).

While understanding of systems was important, there was one key issue that appeared to underpin discussions around engagement in education; the underlying issue of poverty. Interestingly, the accounts of respondents highlighted duality in relation to how poverty impacted on engagement. On the one hand, for some Roma families, education is a secondary consideration in comparison to income generation and day to day living. Consequently, while younger children were often engaged in education, it was suggested children at secondary school level were sometimes required to assist with income generation (whether by working themselves or looking after younger siblings so parents could work). On the other hand, however – and illustrating the complexity of the issue – it was highlighted that engagement in education sometimes provided families in poverty with additional support. For example, respondents made reference to receipt of benefits sometimes being conditional on school attendance, as well as schools providing food for Roma children and enabling parents to work during the day more freely.

Linking in with underlying issues of poverty, the issue of the socio-legal status (i.e. rights to residence, work and social welfare) of Roma was also referred to. In the Netherlands, for example, it was highlighted that many new Roma are undocumented migrants, while in Spain there were issues around difficulties registering for residence permits, etc. The precarious status that some new Roma faced impacted on their ability to access particular services, financial resources and employment opportunities. While this issue was not raised directly in the interviews carried out in the Manchester case study, previous research has highlighted the importance of socio-legal status and its impact on different migrant communities in the UK, including Roma (see Dwyer et al., 2011).

### **6.3 Reflections on approaches to working with Roma communities**

Finally, stakeholders reflected on their approaches to working with Roma individuals/families, including how this had changed over time (if at all). The respondents highlighted a number of key messages in relation to engaging with Roma communities. One of the over-arching issues related to the perception that working with Roma required a more intensive and longer term approach than working with other migrant or minority communities. This related to the complexity of the issues that Roma faced, some of which have been referred to above. Consequently, some stakeholders talked about the need for multi-agency approaches which brought together a range of key service areas (e.g. education, health, social services, Police, etc.). However, this approach was not advocated by all respondents. One respondent in Amsterdam, for example, felt that a single service providing an integrated approach to working with families was more efficient than multiple agencies. Regardless of views on multi-agency or integrated approaches, it was evident that a number of respondents had adapted their approach in response to the needs of Roma communities. In Manchester, for example, one school made reference to providing greater flexibility in how they worked with Roma families as their understanding of Roma mobility increased.

Building up trust with Roma communities was also deemed vital; although it was suggested by some respondents that intensive support by one key worker could sometimes lead to an over-reliance on that individual, which made it difficult to introduce new workers or withdraw support. Comparing the three different case study areas, it was apparent that the respondents in Madrid and Manchester talked about approaches involving targeted work with Roma communities. However, from the accounts of respondents in Amsterdam it was evident that approaches had moved away from targeted – and arguably more supportive – work, to focus on equal treatment with an emphasis on ensuring Roma communities understood the compulsory nature of education in the Netherlands.

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