



Irish Traveller Movement in Britain

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GYPSY, ROMA AND TRAVELLER EDUCATION: IMPROVING OUTCOMES



An Irish Traveller Movement in Britain Briefing

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Introduction

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils are the lowest achieving groups within schools in England. These poor outcomes are not just limited to education but are also present in areas such as health, child poverty and economic inclusion.¹ Education is a key factor in addressing these issues and the root causes of the wider socio-economic inequalities that Gypsy Roma and Traveller communities face.

Despite the previous government's pro-active policies and the efforts of committed professionals, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families still did not gain their full educational entitlement. In order for government measures to be effective in addressing these inequalities it is crucial that they acknowledge the complexity of the issue and the need for long term policies targeting Gypsy Roma and Traveller communities. It would be complacent of the government to assume that its initiatives, the pupil premium, greater autonomy for schools and a focus on teaching and learning, will be more successful than previous policies and interventions. Continued monitoring and data analysis will be required to evaluate effectiveness, alongside partnership working with stakeholders to review and develop policies.

This briefing will focus on the latest available data on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils' attainment, attendance and exclusion before analyzing the Coalition Governments education policies and mapping out the best route forward to effectively improve outcomes for GRT communities.

1. Attainment, attendance and exclusion

1.1 The 2010 Department for Education (DfE) research report *Improving the outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils* revealed a number of worrying trends in the education outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils.² The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain's (ITMB) 2010 report *Roads to Success: Economic and Social Inclusion for Gypsies and Travellers* also revealed a high incidence of discrimination and bullying experienced by Gypsies and Travellers in school.³

Attainment

1.2 The DfE report conducted a statistical analysis using the National Pupil Database and found that Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils usually attend schools with lower than average rates of achievement.

1.3 The report found a high percentage of Gypsy Roma and Traveller pupils eligible for and claiming free school meals indicating a connection between poverty and disrupted educational experience (see figure 1). Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

¹ EHRC 2009, *Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller Communities*, Cemlyn, Greenfields, Burnett, Matthew and Whitfield for the Equality and Human Rights Commission, particularly pages 5-34 http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/12inequalities_experienced_by_gypsy_and_traveller_communities_a_review.pdf

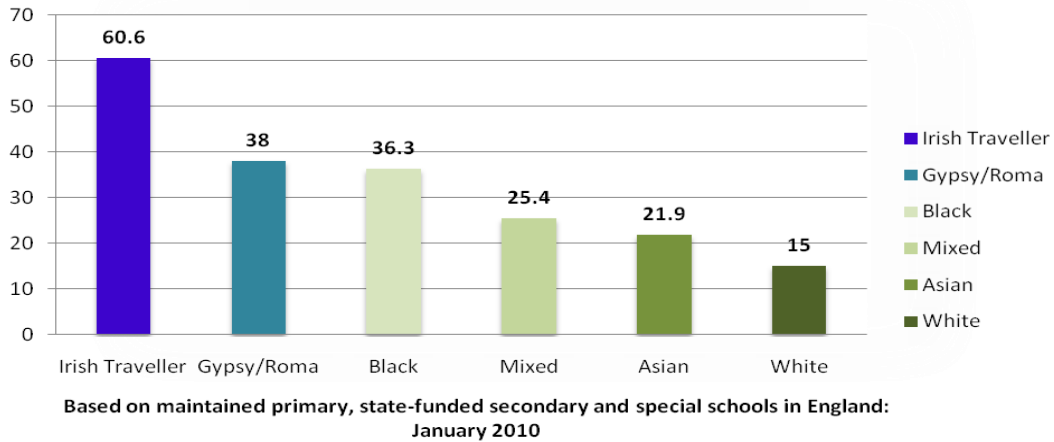
² DfE 2010, *Improving the outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils: final report* <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RR043.pdf>

³ ITMB 2010, *Roads to Success: Economic and Social Inclusion for Gypsies and Travellers*, executive summary, p. v http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Roads_to_Success-15-11.pdf

also had the highest level of Special Educational Needs of all ethnic minority groups.

Figure 1

Percentage of pupils eligible for and claiming free school meals by ethnic group

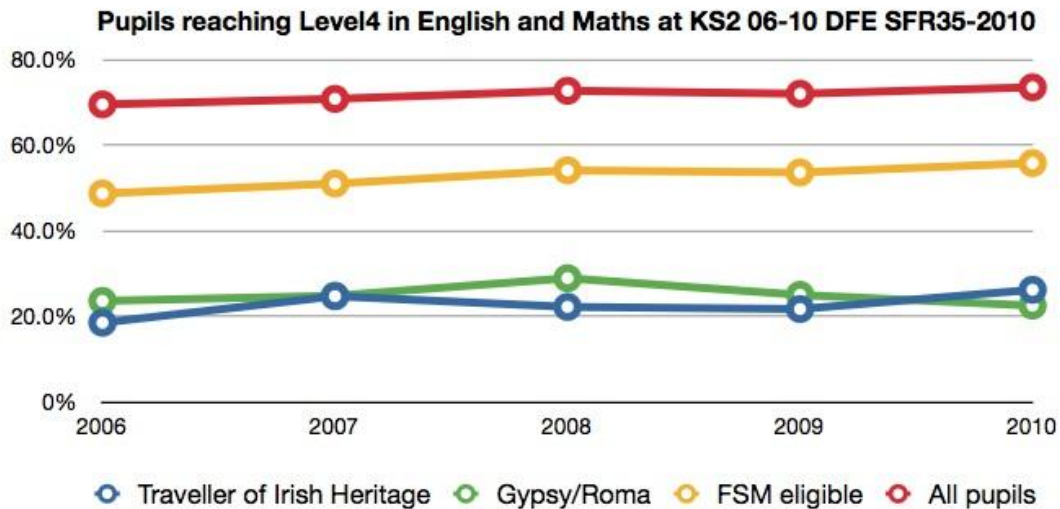


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1.4 DfE study results showed that 41 per cent of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils with KS2 but not KS1 SAT results (suggesting they had disrupted education), were in schools within the lowest quintile (1/5) of attainment.

1.5 While an average of 73.5 per cent of all pupils reached Level 4 in English and Maths at KS2, only 22.5 per cent of Gypsy/Roma and 26.2 per cent of Irish Travellers succeeded in reaching level 4 (see figure 2).

Figure 2



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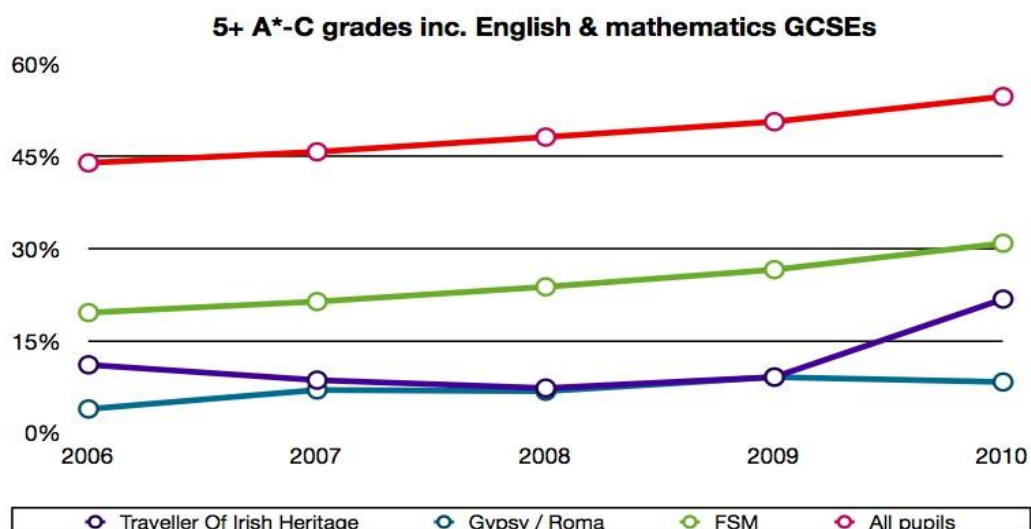
1.6 8.3 per cent of Gypsy Roma pupils achieved 5 A to C grades in their GCSE results while 21.8 per cent of Irish Travellers achieved the same grades in 2010. This compares with an average of 54.8 per cent for all pupils achieving 5 A to C grades

⁴ DfE 2010

⁵ DfE SFR35-2010

in their GCSEs. The GCSE grades for Irish Travellers had improved dramatically (from 9.1 per cent in 2009 to the 21.8 per cent in 2010) and may be partly attributed to a stronger emphasis on vocational subjects in the GCSEs (see figure 3).

Figure 3



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Attendance and retention

- 1.7 Evidence suggests that where Gypsy and Traveller pupils do transfer successfully to secondary school, they are likely to drop out or be excluded at some point before the statutory leaving age.
- 1.8 The DfE report found that 20% of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils fail to transfer from primary to secondary school.
- 1.9 Just over half of the national cohort of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils dropped-out of secondary school. The study also found that only 38% of Irish Travellers reach statutory leaving age.
- 1.10 National data, published by the DfE, shows the average absence rate of Gypsy/Roma pupils' was approximately three times that of all pupils while for Irish Traveller pupils the rate was four times the national average (see figure 4).
- 1.11 The Irish Traveller Movement in Britain's 2010 report on economic and social inclusion for Gypsies and Travellers found that racist bullying acts as a barrier to participation in school with parents often removing children from schools when this occurs. Fifty five per cent of the sample of 95 interviewees experienced bullying and discrimination during their time in education.⁷ This figure compares with one third of Black and Asian students who experienced racial discrimination at school, college or university and just 1 per cent of white students.⁸

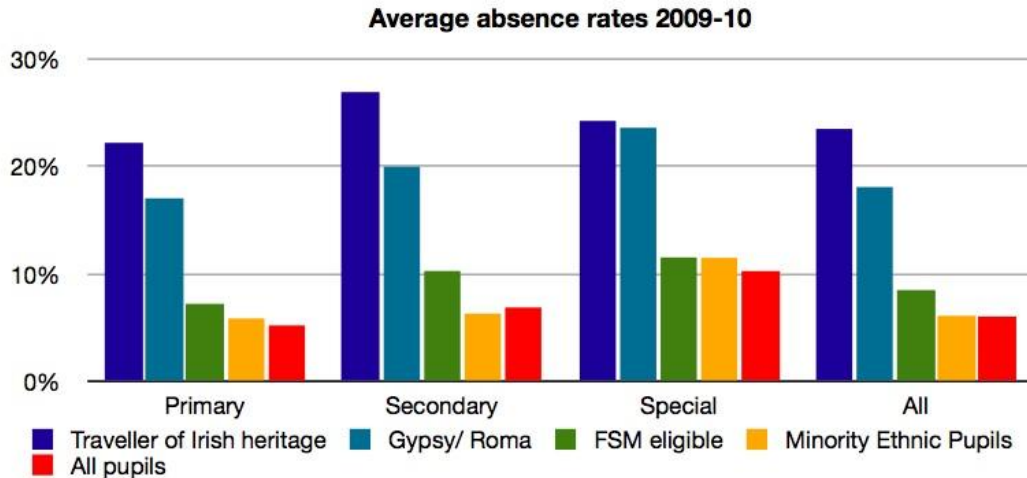
⁶ DfE SFR37-2010

⁷ ITMB 2010, *Roads to Success: Economic and Social Inclusion for Gypsies and Travellers*, executive summary, p. v

http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Roads_to_Success-15-11.pdf

⁸ Ibid

Figure 4

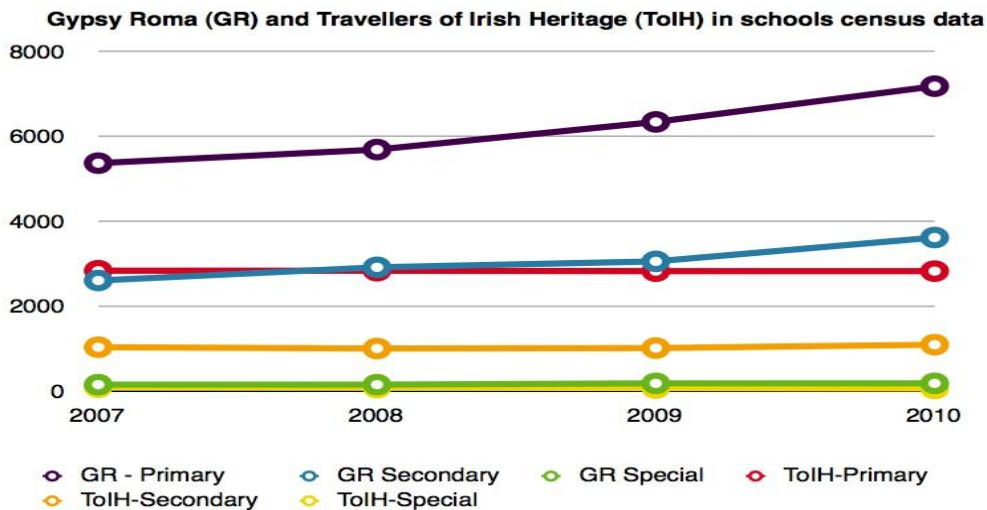


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Enrolment and exclusion

1.12 National published data suggests there has been a 34% increase in the number of Gypsy/Roma pupils in Primary schools, and a 39% rise in the number of Gypsy Roma Secondary pupils since 2007 (see figure 5). The increase in numbers of Gypsy/Roma is almost certainly due to growing numbers of Roma mainly from Romania and Slovakia.

Figure 5



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1.13 It should be remembered that a very high proportion of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils do not opt to identify themselves to the Gypsy/Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage codes. The DfE (2010)¹¹ study found that over two thirds of Gypsies and Irish Travellers, and 85% of Roma in the 2003 KS2 cohort, changed their ethnicity code in the following five years, compared to 20% of all pupils. In addition to this, Traveller Education Services involved in the study in the South East region, when

⁹ DfE SFR03-2011

¹⁰ DfE 2011, Pupils on roll 2007-10 from sfr09-2010 and previous

¹¹ Improving Outcomes of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils

asked to confirm the numbers of pupils identified in the schools census, suggested that the figures represented no more than half of the children they were supporting. That is only half identify to the codes and of those that do identify more than two out of three will change their ethnic code in secondary school. In that context the growth in numbers indicated in Figure 5 could be very significant.

- 1.14 Traveller Education Support Services have focused on encouraging transfer to secondary schools and preventing exclusion and drop out. Although the figures very significantly underestimate the numbers, they do indicate there is a gradual increase in participation in this phase. Without TESS inputs, it is likely that schools will fail to identify Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils and consequently fail to focus on their educational vulnerability.
- 1.15 Gypsy/Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage boys are much more likely to be excluded than any other ethnic minority group with a quarter of Irish Traveller boys, and over a fifth of Gypsy/Roma boys being excluded in the course of an academic year.

2. Coalition Policy

- 2.1 This section will firstly cover the key changes to the existing/previous policies for and relating to Gypsy Roma Traveller education. It will then scrutinise the Coalition's new education policies and initiatives in the context of improving Gypsy Roma and Traveller outcomes.

Key changes under the Coalition

- 2.2 In October 2010 ACERT and NATT+ met with the Minister for Schools, Nick Gibb, to seek clarification on the Government's future support of Traveller education. The representatives sought to establish how key initiatives introduced by the previous Labour Government were viewed by the Coalition and how they might be built upon.¹²
- 2.3 The Minister confirmed that the **Home Access scheme** (HAS) would no longer be available to support low income or mobile pupils, only those children with disabilities and SEN. Considering a high number of Gypsy and Traveller pupils claim free school meals and that many have semi-nomadic lives it follows that the removal of the HAS will have a disproportionate impact on Gypsy and Traveller pupils.
- 2.4 **National Strategies** are not being replaced and there is uncertainty as to whether its website and downloadable resources will continue to be available. This is especially relevant to materials from the Gypsy Roma Traveller Achievement Programme (GRTAP) which did much to develop good practice and disseminate it to schools nationally. The high quality materials the GRTAP produced represented an effective partnership between Local Authorities, TESSs, schools and communities.
- 2.5 The Minister for School made no commitment to consider the findings of **DfE 2010 research** *Improving the outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils* despite

¹² Foster and Cemlyn 2011, *Education, inclusion and government policy*, p. 7

the report providing the most detailed and up to date information on Gypsy Roma and Traveller outcomes in school.

- 2.6 **Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month** (GRTHM) will continue to be endorsed by the DfE, however, no funding will be available. Considering the wide success of GRTHM in promoting GRT culture and breaking down misconceptions and prejudices (which indirectly improves community cohesion and GRT experiences in schools) the removal of all funding for GRTHM will most likely have an adverse impact on GRT education outcomes.
- 2.7 Whilst there is no government plan to dismantle **Traveller Education Support Services** (TESSs) their continued future existence will be at the discretion of local authorities. A recent survey by the National Union of Teachers estimated that one third of local authorities have no identified support for the education of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers and in most other areas staff numbers have been reduced and roles have been restricted, and/or extended to other areas of support.¹³

New Coalition policies and initiatives

- 2.8 The **pupil premium** will provide schools with an extra £430 for every pupil on Free School Meals, looked after children and those whose parents are in the armed forces.¹⁴ In practice pupils will not “benefit directly” since the pupil premium can be used however schools see fit, with schools being held accountable by OFSTED, applying a more “focused” approach, mainly concerned with attainment. For deprived pupils in non-mainstream settings (which in many may include Gypsy Roma and Traveller pupils), it will be for the local authority to decide how to allocate the pupil premium.¹⁵ In the context of the pupil premium, the Coalition has sought to preserve funding to schools at the expense of LA services. As a result the TESS network has suffered disproportionately from cuts to its services (see paragraph 2.8).
- 2.9 The **Education Endowment Fund** (EEF) with a budget of £110 million will distribute money to local authorities, academy sponsors, charities and other groups that bring forward innovative proposals to improve performance in under-performing schools.¹⁶ Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils, if they benefit at all, will only do so through the general improvement in the schools they attend.
- 2.10 **Vocational education** appears to be an area the government wants to develop following Michael Gove’s commissioning Professor Alison Wolf to lead a review into pre-19 vocational education. The 2010 report by the Irish Traveller Movement in Britain on Traveller economic and social inclusion found that younger Gypsies, Roma and Travellers had a strong interest in vocational skills, and favoured experiential styles of learning. The survey found that 35% of their sample of 95 interviewees had experience of further or vocational education, and that the learning styles supported in post-school education were more acceptable to young

¹³ NUT (2010) On-line NUT survey November 2010 (unpublished)

¹⁴ DfE 2011, *Pupil Premium – what you need to know*

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/premium/a0076063/pupil-premium-what-you-need-to-know>

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ DfE 2010, *New endowment fund to turn around weakest schools and raise standards for disadvantaged*

<http://www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/inthenews/a0066416/new-endowment-fund-to-turn-around-weakest-schools-and-raise-standards-for-disadvantaged-pupils>

people from these communities.¹⁷ While the government has yet to produce substantive policy in this area it would seem to be an approach with potential to benefit these communities.

2.11 The **Free Schools programme** has been viewed by some community members and representative groups as an opportunity for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children to attend schools where they might access a more relevant curriculum, appropriate learning styles and without being vulnerable to racist bullying or moral and cultural challenges. While Free Schools may provide opportunities for some Gypsy Roma Traveller communities (namely those who are academically more capable and geographically more concentrated) for the vast majority it would not. In general Traveller communities are quite dispersed, not well organised and have low education and literacy skills - all factors essential for establishing a free school.

2.13 The Education Bill (clause 30) will abolish various current **duties on schools to co-operate with local authorities to improve children's well-being** and be represented on local Children's Trust Boards. The Coalition emphasis on small government could undermine LAs' ability to reach out proactively to excluded groups Gypsy Roma and Travellers, which has resulted in the gradual improvement on secondary enrolment.

3. The way forward (conclusions and recommendations)

- Strengthen the Gypsy Roma Traveller Stakeholder Advisory Group so it has greater input into DfE policy and establish key performance indicators and a reporting schedule to enable the stakeholders to review progress made and advise how policy might be developed.
- TESSs have been recognised by the European Commission as a model of good practice in engaging with the education needs of Gypsy Roma Traveller communities (see Appendix C).¹⁸ The government should closely monitor the impact of financial restraint on Traveller Education Support Services (TESS) to ensure that the impact of local authority cuts does not fall disproportionately on these educationally vulnerable, racial groups.
- Under their obligations in the 2011 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies the government should set targets for improving the education outcomes of Gypsy Roma and Traveller pupils' in both primary and secondary school (see appendix A).¹⁹ These targets should be made in consultation with and scrutinised by the DfE Gypsy Roma Traveller Stakeholder Advisory Group.
- The Government should establish a fund to support specific work on improving GRT education outcomes. Such a fund could be used to support Traveller Education Support Services or equivalent services where they are working

¹⁷ ITMB 2010, *Roads to Success: Economic and Social Inclusion for Gypsies and Travellers*, p. 41
http://www.irishtraveller.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Roads_to_Success-15-11.pdf

¹⁸ European Commission 2011, *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, p. 5
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0173:FIN:EN:PDF>

¹⁹ European Commission 2011, *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, p. 5
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0173:FIN:EN:PDF>

effectively whilst also being used to develop new support structures where they do not exist or have failed. The Department for Communities and Local Government's reinstating of the Traveller Sites Grant is an example of a similar focused support package initiated by Government to tackle the inequalities and difficulties Gypsies and Travellers face in securing appropriate accommodation.

- Need for improved monitoring and research of GRT pupils in the areas of Special Educational Needs (SEN), enrolment, attendance and exclusion. We suggest the government targets funds from the EFF or research funds towards improving these indicators. The DfE stakeholders group could have role in reviewing proposals and receiving interim and final reports.
- We welcome Local Authorities role as 'champions of vulnerable pupils' as described in the white paper *The Importance of Teaching* (see Appendix B).²⁰ However, we are concerned that it has not been made explicit in the Education Bill and emphasise that the definition of vulnerable should include those who are highly mobile, have had disrupted or marginalised educational experiences, and who may be subject to discrimination.
- Whilst the DfE statement to continue endorsing Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month (GRTHM) is welcomed, the reality is that without any Government funding GRTHM will struggle to continue. Considering the wide success of GRTHM in promoting GRT culture and breaking down misconceptions and prejudices (which indirectly improves community cohesion and GRT experiences in schools), we recommend the Government supply minimal transitional funding for the continuation of the month until other steady funding sources are secured.

²⁰ DfE May 2011, *The Importance of Teaching: Schools White Paper: Local authorities acting for vulnerable pupils*
<http://www.education.gov.uk/b0068570/the-importance-of-teaching/new-schools-system/vulnerable-pupils>

Appendix A: Extract from 2011 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020

Full document available at:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0173:FIN:EN:PDF>



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 5.4.2011
COM(2011) 173 final

**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020

- **Access to education: Ensure that all Roma children complete at least primary school**

Educational achievement within the Roma population is much lower than the rest of the population, although the situation differs among Member States¹⁷.

While primary school attendance is compulsory in all Member States, Member States have a duty to ensure that primary education is available to all children at the compulsory ages. According to the best available evidence from the Labour Force Survey 2009¹⁸, an average of 97.5% of children completes primary education across the EU.

Surveys suggest that in some Member States, only a limited number of Roma children complete primary school¹⁹. Roma children tend to be over-represented in special education and segregated schools. There is a need to strengthen links with communities through cultural/school mediators, churches, religious associations or communities and through active participation of the parents of Roma, to improve the intercultural competences of teachers, to reduce segregation and to ensure compliance with the duty to primary school attendance. The Commission plans a joint action with the Council of Europe to train about 1000 mediators over two years. Mediators can inform and advise parents on the workings of the local education system, and help to ensure that children make the transition between each stage of their school career.

It is well known that children who miss out on, enter late into the school system, or leave too early will subsequently experience significant difficulties, ranging from illiteracy and language problems to feelings of exclusion and inadequacy. As a result, they will have a harder time getting into further education, university or a good job. Therefore, initiatives of second chance programmes for drop-out young adults are encouraged, including programmes with an explicit focus on Roma children. Support should also be given to reform teachers' training curricula and to elaborate innovative teaching methods. Attendance of multiply disadvantaged children requires a cross-sectoral cooperation and appropriate support programmes. The High Level Group on Literacy and the Literacy Campaign the Commission is launching as a contribution to the Europe 2020 flagship "New Skills and Jobs" will stress the importance of combating illiteracy among Roma children and adults.

The Commission adopted a Communication on Early Childhood Education and Care²⁰ which highlighted that participation rates of Roma children are significantly lower, although their needs for support are greater. Increased access to high quality non-segregated early childhood education can play a key role in overcoming the educational disadvantage faced by Roma children, as highlighted by pilot actions on Roma integration currently underway in some Member States with contributions from the EU budget²¹.

This is why Member States should ensure that all Roma children have access to quality education and are not subject to discrimination or segregation, regardless of whether they are sedentary or not. Member States should, as a minimum, ensure primary school

¹⁷ As regards secondary education, the Roma attendance is about 10% as estimated on the basis of the Open Society Institute (OSI) Survey 2008 (data available for seven Member States).

¹⁸ Labour Force Survey, 2009 - <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/microdata/lfs>

¹⁹ Open Society Institute, *International Comparative Data Set on Roma Education*, 2008. Data on primary education is available for 6 Member States: Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, and Slovakia. 42% is the weighted average for these Member States.

²⁰ COM(2011) 66.

²¹ Pilot project: "A Good Start: scaling-up access to quality services for young Roma children".

Appendix B: The Importance of Teaching: Schools White Paper: Local authorities acting for vulnerable pupils

Department for Education
07 March 2011

5.40 The local authority role as a convenor of local services also means that they are best placed to act as the champion for vulnerable pupils in their area. In particular, they will continue to ensure that disabled children and those with Special Educational Needs can access high-quality provision that meets their needs, and they will continue to be responsible for funding provision for pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs. We will give local authorities more freedom to develop their own plans to support vulnerable children in their education. They will be free to develop new and innovative approaches to providing services and deploying resources.

5.41 Their role in relation to broader children's services will continue. They will continue to act as the corporate parent for Looked After Children – with a key role in improving their educational attainment. They will similarly continue to secure the provision of education for young people in custody. Their broad responsibilities for safeguarding children will, of course, continue – developing in the light of the findings of the review being undertaken by Professor Eileen Munro.

Appendix C: UK Traveller Education Support Services cited as model of good practice in 2011 EU Framework for National Roma Integration

Full document available at:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0173:FIN:EN:PDF>

‘Some Member States have already successfully used positive action in favour of Roma, considering that classical social inclusion measures were not sufficient to meet Roma specific needs.’

‘For example, the United Kingdom’s local Traveller Education Support Services (TESS) is a tailored service to achieve equal access to education and equal educational outcomes for Traveller and Roma children.’

(Page 4)