



**Greenwich Academic Literature Archive (GALA)**  
– the University of Greenwich open access repository  
<http://gala.gre.ac.uk>

---

*Citation for published version:*

Smith, David M. (2014) Roma migrants, the EU and the politics of integration in the UK. ICIS 2014 The 5th International Conference on International Studies (ICIS 2014). pp. 1224-1246.

*Publisher's version available at:*

---

**Please note that where the full text version provided on GALA is not the final published version, the version made available will be the most up-to-date full-text (post-print) version as provided by the author(s). Where possible, or if citing, it is recommended that the publisher's (definitive) version be consulted to ensure any subsequent changes to the text are noted.**

*Citation for this version held on GALA:*

Smith, David M. (2014) Roma migrants, the EU and the politics of integration in the UK. London: Greenwich Academic Literature Archive.  
Available at: <http://gala.gre.ac.uk/13627/>

---

Contact: [gala@gre.ac.uk](mailto:gala@gre.ac.uk)

# Roma migrants, the EU and the politics of integration in the UK

Dr. David M Smith

Principal Lecturer in Sociology

Department of Psychology, Social Work and Counselling

University of Greenwich

London SE9 2UG

UK

Email: [sd50@gre.ac.uk](mailto:sd50@gre.ac.uk)

Website: <http://www2.gre.ac.uk/about/faculty/eduhea/study/pswc/staff/dr-david-smith>

## Abstract

The Roma (Gypsies) are a semi-nomadic people of Indian origins and are Europe's largest minority group with a population of 10-12 million. Despite the EU Directive on Racial Equality and the adoption of National Roma Integration Strategies by member states, discrimination and marginalisation means that they are the poorest and most socially excluded group in Europe and have been frequent targets of racist attacks by neo-fascist groups as well as forced deportations which are in violation of the fundamental principle of freedom of movement for EU citizens. From the late 1990s an estimated 12-15,000 Roma filed asylum claims and began to leave Eastern Europe. Large-scale westward migration of the Roma followed A8 accession to the EU in 2004 and more recently following the accession of Romani and Bulgaria. The UK now has one of the largest Roma populations in the EU with an estimated population of 200,000 (in addition to 200-300,000 indigenous Gypsies and Travellers).

This paper examines the political and policy response to the arrival of significant numbers of Roma migrants to the UK from mainland Europe in recent years in the context of growing anti-EU sentiment on one hand and a parallel critique of multicultural approaches to managing migration on the other. Roma migration symbolises all that is 'wrong' with the EU, crystallising increasing fears over large scale immigration and contributing to the rise of the anti-EU political party the UK Independence Party (UKIP). In particular the paper explores how the media and politically inspired moral panic surrounding the Roma – dominated by discourses of criminality and welfare dependency – and a 'mainstreaming' approach to Roma integration paradoxically inhibits integration strategies at a local level, limiting the inclusionary potential of such policies and the assimilation of Roma populations.

## **1. Introduction**

The Roma<sup>i</sup> are a people of nomadic origins who, following westward migration from India, arrived in Europe in the 14<sup>th</sup> century being recorded in Constantinople in 1050, and arriving in Scotland in 1505 (Kenrick, 2004). The East and Central European regions have long been home to the largest Roma populations with expansion of the EU in 2004, and again in 2007, encompassing many of the nations with the highest Roma populations such as Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania. EU enlargement has both increased the EU's Roma population to between 10-12 million and also dispersed them more widely as many have taken advantage of the right to freedom of movement to escape dire poverty, violent attacks and racism in their own nations (European Parliament, 2008). The discrimination and inequalities that the Roma face has been well documented across the EU with Roma communities in Western Europe facing similar levels of poverty and discrimination to their counterparts in Eastern and Central Europe (Ringold, Orenstein and Wilkens, 2005; Bell, 2012).<sup>ii</sup> In the UK for example Gypsies and Travellers are the most disadvantaged group in society: they have the lowest life expectancy and highest levels of physical and mental ill health; the poorest educational outcomes, often live in unhealthy and unsanitary environments and have the highest proportion of community members in prison (Cemlyn et al, 2009).

Despite some progress in forging a common identity and political consciousness efforts to mobilise and advance collective interests have often proven difficult (Vermeersch, 2006). Such efforts have been hindered due firstly to the heterogeneity of the 'Roma' which is the term adopted by the Council of Europe to cover various geographically dispersed groups such as Gypsies, Romanichals, Irish Travellers, Manouches, Sinti, Boyash, Kalderashi and Dom often speaking different languages and dialects. Secondly, is the continuing prevalence of structural racism and widespread anti-Roma prejudice (Hancock, 1987). This takes a variety of forms but ensures that the Roma are Europe's most impoverished and marginalised ethnic minority group. Very few politicians openly advocate on behalf of the Roma as there are few votes in adopting a pro-Roma stance. Conversely, many politicians and elected officials are quick to exploit anti-Roma prejudice when seeking votes (Okely, 2013, p. viii). Indeed it has been argued that the experience of prejudice and exclusion is the one factor uniting the diversity of Roma communities.

There are many different groups of Roma and Gypsy-Travellers in Europe and the rest of the world, many of whom do not recognise any commonality between each other. Yet their experience, of being accorded the lowest social status, of enduring persecution and exclusion, spans the differences between the separate groups and the countries they live in (Bancroft, 2005, p. 33).

The UK has experienced successive influxes of Roma Gypsies over several centuries. With the emergence of modernity the official approach towards Gypsies shifted from extermination and/or deportation towards assimilation and integration and by the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century the majority of Gypsies and Travellers had been

'settled' either onto permanent caravan sites (privately or publicly owned) or into housing. (Smith and Greenfields, 2013). However the drive towards settlement rarely resulted in absorption into mainstream society due to the cultural adaptability and resilience of the Roma and by the settled populations' virulent desire for spatial distancing from Roma, Gypsies and Travellers. In practice this has meant that the latter groups have been physically segregated into isolated campsites where contact with the wider society is minimised or more recently, into areas of low income housing where they reside with other marginalised and deprived sections of the population who are increasingly disconnected from the majority society (Greenfields and Smith, 2010). Hence the need to integrate those who violate the social and spatial ordering of society is undermined by the simultaneous desire for spatial cleansing and removal of the offending group to marginal spaces away from the majority population, which reinforces the minority groups 'otherness' (Sibley, 1981).

Since EU enlargement a significant number have arrived in the UK with the population of migrant Roma estimated at around 200,000 in addition to 200-300,000 indigenous Gypsies and Travellers making a combined population of around 400-500,000 one of the largest populations in Western Europe (Brown, Scullion and Martin, 2013).<sup>iii</sup> This is not the first large-scale movement of Roma – the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century for example, witnessed a 'revival of wandering' among the European Gypsies with large numbers arriving in England from continental Europe (Winstedt, 1913). However the numbers involved and the relatively short time frame in which this has occurred (from approximately the late 1990s until the present day) makes the current wave of Roma migration unprecedented. They have also arrived at a crucial point in the UK's often fraught and ambivalent relation with the EU as the pan-European project with its fundamental principle of free movement of persons coming under sustained political and popular critique (Condinanzi, Lang and Nascimbene, 2008). The current backlash against the EU has become entangled with issues around race, mass immigration and national identity provoking a more hostile tone towards immigrants. For critics, the 'open door' policy for EU citizens in an environment of huge economic disparities between member states epitomises the democratic deficit at the heart of the EU

Nobody in Britain – or any other European country – has voted for this fresh wave of immigration. Nobody asked for it, and almost nobody wants it. This is the trouble with the European Union. Decisions are made, no one knows where, which have enormous consequences for the lives of ordinary people, and local politicians are helpless (Oborne, 2013).

Immigration is now one of the most pressing topics of public concern with three-quarters of British people surveyed in favour of reducing immigration (Migration Observatory, 2014). A more stringent approach to non EU migration combined with the continuing economic downturn across much of continental Europe means that net EU migration will exceed non EU net migration for the first time by 2015 (Barrett, 2014).<sup>iv</sup> These changes have led to seismic shifts in the political landscape most notably with the rising popularity

of anti-EU parties in several member states such as in France where the far-right Front National won the 2014 European elections. In the UK, growing anti-EU sentiment resulted in the UK Independence Party (UKIP) winning the 2014 European election with 27 per cent of votes cast. Across Europe Eurosceptic parties made large gains with around one-third of the 751 MEPs Eurosceptic (BBC, 01/07/2014).

This article will examine the political, media and policy responses to the most recent phase of Roma migration in the UK in the context of increasing anti-EU sentiments on one hand, and a parallel critique of multiculturalism on the other. The former has emphasised the erosion of national sovereignty and the ceding of decision-making powers, particularly in respect of immigration policy, that EU membership has entailed while the latter has emphasised the importance of social cohesion, shared values and national identity to counteract the fragmenting forces of multiculturalism. The Roma symbolise, as for much of their history, the quintessential ‘enemy within’ crystallising fears around the socially destructive impacts of mass immigration and cultural diversity (Gozdecka et al, 2014). The construction of the Roma as a threat to national values and security has exploited centuries-old stereotypes of Gypsies as workshy, criminals and child abductors. These habits are assumed to be not the practices of *some* individual Gypsies, but an intrinsic element of *Gypsy culture* – as a historically refined collective solution to their marginal social status (Trumpener, 1992). These assumptions underpin the EU and UK level policy response to Roma migrants which employ culturally deterministic explanations in order to demand that Roma are socialised into conventional modes of economic and civil behaviour, thus complementing a ‘post’ multicultural agenda with its emphasis on regenerating social solidarity and collective values.

## **2. EU Enlargement and the Roma**

With EU enlargement the potential westward movement of large numbers of Roma became a concern for western governments in the context of the worsening situation and rise in violent attacks in the post-communist era (Barany, 2002). Respecting the human and legal rights of minorities as conditions of membership was applied to candidate countries, who had to demonstrate that they had met certain economic and political conditions, such as ‘respect for and protection of minorities’ (Mc Garry, 2012). Despite the formation of legislation and policies to ostensibly assist the social inclusion of Roma in candidate countries there was little improvement in their situation. The lack of detail in terms of political criteria or in the implementation of social and economic inclusion programmes allowed candidate states to engage in ‘creative manipulation’ to appear to have met the accession requirements despite plentiful evidence detailing continuing racism and human rights violations (O’Nions, 2014, p. 7).

The lack of a common immigration and integration policy meanwhile has led to a growing polarisation between the interests of member states depending on their appeal or otherwise to both non EU and (internal) EU migrants (Lesinska, 2014, p. 46). The potential for divisions between member states following A2 accession and the possibility that large numbers of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma would head for Western Europe was a key element of UKIP leader Nigel Farage's opposition to Romanian and Bulgarian membership of the EU. In a debate on *EUobserver TV* he considered

What happens if, say, two and a half million Roma want to move to France, because under the rules they will be allowed to? And that's the prospect we face. For example, over a million Poles came to Britain in 18 months. It's very difficult when you get rid of the boundaries. Don't be surprised that populations are worried.

The pressure that mass immigration has placed on national infrastructures and the growth of immigrant enclaves in urban areas across Europe has been termed an 'immigration crisis'. The perception of a 'crisis' and of national identities becoming subsumed beneath a multitude of different ethnic, religious and cultural groups reflects a contradiction between the demands of the single European market for 'abstract labour' at liberty to follow economic trends and state requirements for culturally unified 'abstract citizens' with all the rights and responsibilities of citizenship that this entails (Silverstein, 2005). In this respect the Roma have been placed in an anomalous position. Article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU grants the right of movement and residence on EU citizens with expulsion permissible only on the grounds of public policy, security or health. However, this has not prevented the forcible eviction of Roma camps in Italy where legislation has been introduced allowing their collective expulsion (O'Nions, 2014). Likewise, the removal of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma from France in 2010 was judged to be incompatible with the Free Movement Directive and despite assurances that this would be adhered to evidence points to continuing expulsion of Roma migrants from France (CHR, 2010, pp. 200-203). Expulsion, discrimination and violent attacks across much of Europe mean that the UK is seen as a relative safe haven for those fleeing persecution. This is despite the UK's poor record on addressing racism towards its own minorities and for the Roma, ongoing issues of social and economic exclusion once resident in the UK (Craig, 2011; FRA, 2009).

### **3. The Media and Political Response**

Media representations play a crucial part in creating power and ideology, with the meanings associated with Roma and Gypsies deployed in a way that fixes those meanings into 'truths' (Schneeweis, 2012). Sections of the media routinely represent Gypsies in a stereotypical and negative manner and the content of the coverage surrounding Roma migration since the late 1990s has largely centred on the twin concerns of 'benefit tourism' and criminality (Morris, 2000). In October 1997 several hundred Roma families arrived at the port of Dover from the Czech Republic and Slovakia seeking asylum. Press reports described an

'exodus', a 'flood' and an 'invasion' of Gypsies positing a causal relationship between the arrival of these families and the availability of welfare provision (Kaye, 2002). Several months later a reporter wrote an article titled '*Plight of the Gypsies Britain branded as scroungers*' noting that a number had been granted asylum after it was proven they would face persecution if returned to the countries that had removed their citizenship in 1993 (Morris, 2000, p. 216).

Following the accession of East European countries to the EU most Roma have arrived in the UK as A8 and A2 migrants. The search for work, a wish to escape discrimination and to provide a better future for their children is the main rationale for Roma migration (Cherkezova and Tomova, 2013). Nevertheless the media have been quick to exploit fears of uncontrolled EU migration and the potential for exploitation by 'undesirable' elements. One popular newspaper claimed that 1.6 million Roma were ready to 'flood' into the UK to '*leach on us*' (Ingmire and Stables, 2014, pp. 197-198). In the run up to A2 accession in 2014 there was a plethora of similar articles detailing how Roma migrants were using various scams to abuse the welfare system and channel the money back to Romania to build '*luxury homes*' (Reid, 2011). The presence of around 30 Romanian Roma camping in Park Lane Mayfair, one of London's most exclusive streets, received extensive press attention in 2013. One newspaper described the '*the rag-tag encampment with rows of soiled duvets, battered suitcases and cardboard boxes in stark contrast to the nearby luxury car showrooms and pristine Georgian terraces*' (Bird, 2013, p. 5). The sight of squatter camps in the heart of London was a visible symbol of David Goodhart's<sup>v</sup> claim that '*Large-scale immigration has created an England that is increasingly full of mysterious and unfamiliar worlds*' (Malik, 2013). Goodhart was articulating an increasingly vocal concern – continually stoked by sensationalist press reports surrounding immigrant topics - that the UK was relinquishing its identity to a heterogeneous assortment of migrant groups whose basic values, customs, beliefs and lifestyles were antithetical to the British way of life.

The global media attention given to 'Maria' the 4 year old girl found living on a Roma camp in Greece and believed to have been abducted meanwhile, inflamed anti-Gypsy prejudice by playing on medieval notions of Gypsies as child abductors. These ideas are deeply engrained in the collective psyche of most Europeans and evident in folk-tales, beliefs and proverbs such as '*the gypsies are coming the old people say. To buy little children and take them away*' (Goyal, 2005, p. 102). Racialised stereotypes of the 'dark skinned swarthy' Gypsy were widely deployed and in the absence of evidence, sensationalist claims made that Maria '*was groomed to be a child bride*' and that her pale skin would have '*fetched parents a hefty dowry*' (Spencer, 2013). Crime was a product of cultural reproduction on the '*rubbish strewn*' camps where children are taught to '*mug and steal*' by an '*international criminal network*' (Murphy, 2013). Amidst the hysteria surrounding the 'Maria' case, a seven year old girl with blonde hair and fair skin living with a Roma

family in Dublin, Ireland was also removed from her family by police and social workers and in a separate case in Ireland a two year old boy was removed from his parents. Both children were returned after DNA tests proved that the ‘parents’ were indeed the children’s natural parents (MacDonald, 2013).

Press coverage of Roma issues has not been monolithic however, with more liberal and sympathetic journalists highlighting the conditions of the Roma in their homelands. In 2011 the Roma issue was accompanied by a simultaneous debate on the treatment of indigenous Gypsies and Travellers surrounding the eviction of an unauthorised Irish Traveller site in Basildon, Essex (e.g Quarmby, 2013). After DNA tests revealed that the mother of ‘Maria’ was a Bulgarian Roma who had given her away because she was too poor to raise her, several newspapers and news sites ran stories highlighting the dangers of recycling old myths about child-snatching Gypsies and the impact of such stereotypes on an already impoverished minority (Cosse, 2013). The ‘Traveller’s Times’ accused the Greek and Irish authorities of state sponsored ‘child abduction’ of Roma children pointing to evidence of an unhealthy link between state authorities and the media, which is prone to sparking ‘moral panics’ and ‘media frenzies’, especially when reporting Gypsy, Traveller and Roma issues (Doherty, 2013).

At the same time as the Roma have been demonised in much of the media, political rhetoric has become increasingly resistant to the notion that a multitude of ethnic groups can coexist harmoniously. In a speech in 2011 Prime Minister David Cameron announced ‘state multiculturalism’ had failed and railed against liberal relativism, echoing similar views expressed by German Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2010 and by French President Nicolas Sarkozy in 2011. Cameron stressed the divisive outcomes of such a doctrine arguing that *‘we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives apart from each other and apart from the mainstream...We’ve even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run completely counter to our values’* (cited by Latour, 2012, p. 199). The Roma have frequently been singled out as an example of an inassimilable minority whose way of life is corrosive to social stability and of the incompatibility of a multicultural approach with community cohesion. In 2013 Labour MP David Blunkett argued that tensions between local people and Roma migrants in his constituency of Sheffield could escalate into riots. In an interview for BBC radio Blunkett stressed the cultural and behavioural divisions between the Roma and other groups invoking a ‘culture of poverty’ framework to explain why – unless they could be assimilated – social cohesion would be undermined.

The cultural gulf between the Roma and the settled community is 50 per cent greater than that between white Britons and Pakistani immigrants who came to Britain a generation ago...The Roma youngsters have come from a background even more different culturally, because they were living in the edge of woods, not going to school, not used to the norms of everyday life. We’ve got to change that.’ (cited by Richardson, 2014, p. 54).

Other politicians were quick to join Blunkett's dire predictions of large scale social disorder following the settlement of significant numbers of Roma migrants into largely deprived and ethnically diverse inner city neighbourhoods. UKIP leader Nigel Farage concurred with Blunkett warning of the '*significant difficulties with the Roma population*' as a consequence of '*opening the door*' to Romania and Bulgaria. Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg – a staunch supporter of the EU – also entered the discussion to attribute the blame for community tensions on the Roma's failure to curb their anti-social behaviour.

There is a real dilemma... when you get communities coming into a part of our country and they behave in a way that people find quite difficult to accept, and they behave in a way that people find sometimes intimidating, sometimes offensive I think it's quite right that we should say... if you are going to come and live here and you are bringing up a family here you've got to be sensitive to the way that life is lived in this country (Graham, 2013).

Despite Blunkett's favourable comparison of Pakistani migrants over the Roma incomers who were portrayed as the harbingers of community divisions, fears over ghettoised ethnic neighbourhoods antagonistically divided along ethnic and religious lines emerged following rioting between Pakistani and white youths in several northern towns in 2001. Increasing 'community cohesion' thus became a key policy objective of the New Labour government (Cantle, 2005). The pace of immigration and the development of ethnic communities in a context of 'superdiversity' would signal a change in direction concerning the position of minority groups in the UK marked by a reversal of the previous multicultural approach, towards one that has 'shifted the cultural climate from celebration of cultural diversity as an asset to widespread concern about its socially fragmenting impact' (Lesinska, 2014, p. 39). Such arguments are not entirely consistent with economic and highly skilled migrants generally welcomed by politicians and business leaders. Rather it is the 'problematic' migrants of which Roma represent an 'ideal type' who are seen as requiring 'corrective' treatment through assimilative policies, which aim to engender a common set of behavioural and normative standards. The next section will examine how these discourses have influenced policy debates and shaped what are considered the appropriate policy responses to Roma migrants in order to meet EU social inclusion objectives.

#### **4. EU Roma Strategy and the UK's Policy Response**

Echoing political and media concerns, the public policy response to Roma migration at a European and national level has centred on the economic consequences of a largely unskilled and poorly educated migrant population and the cultural differences of that population (O'Nions, 2014). Efforts to address inequalities experienced by the Roma at a Europe wide level have been attempted since the 1980s. The Open Society and World Bank initiative 'Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-15' attempted to develop a framework programme to address exclusion in the key policy domains of education, health, employment and housing. Despite raising awareness around Roma issues and increasing Roma participation in the

design and delivery of programmes it is widely regarded as a failure due to an absence of clearly specified targets, limited resources and a lack of engagement with grassroots Roma organisations (Rostas and Ryder, 2014). In 2011 the European Parliament announced the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (EUF). The EUF is based on the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) which is a method of policy coordination in respect of poverty and social exclusion for member states. An aim of the EU OMC framework is to lift 20 million Europeans out of poverty and social exclusion over the next decade – one element of this being the EUF (Rostas and Ryder, 2014, p. 189). The EUF will guide national Roma strategies and make funds available to support inclusion efforts while placing responsibility for developing National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) in the hands of member states (McGarry, 2012). Each member state has produced national strategies stating how it will assist Roma inclusion in the key areas of education, housing, health and employment with a holistic emphasis on integrated inclusion and recognition that inclusion in one sphere requires inclusion in the others (European Commission, 2011).

The UK government's response contained no new proposals and focused largely on indigenous Gypsies and Travellers whose distinct needs (notwithstanding the disadvantages and low social status that all these groups experience) are significantly different. The failure to produce a NRIS and the lack of data has been a significant barrier to understanding the impact of Roma migration on local communities and public services (Brown et al, 2014). Emerging evidence on Roma communities in the UK indicates that the majority are concentrated in deprived urban neighbourhoods, predominantly in private sector housing with high levels of overcrowding; levels of access to health and other welfare services is low due to language difficulties and a lack of knowledge concerning available services and many are working in undocumented low pay and exploitative forms of employment. There is evidence of severe poverty due to unemployment exacerbated by low skills and language ability and a tightening of eligibility rules surrounding various welfare benefits and forms of support for EU migrants (Smith, 2014). Studies exploring the educational participation of Roma pupils are more positive however with evidence indicating high levels of attendance and steady progress among most pupils many of whom had been placed in segregated schools in their home countries (Equality, 2011).

THE NRIS report stated that existing race relations legislation such as the Equality Act 2010 protected all groups from discrimination including Gypsies, Travellers and Roma and outlines the government's belief that it is primarily the responsibility of local authorities, charities and the voluntary sector to develop local integration policies since

...the challenges facing local communities today are too complex to be tackled simply by blanket solutions - or by singling out specific groups for special treatment. We are moving away from a centrally dictated approach

towards one in which the Government encourages local areas to take the lead. Government will act only exceptionally (European Commission, 2011, p.3).

The UK's approach, in common with the EU generally, is to employ the policy tools of mainstreaming and anti-discrimination to assist Roma integration. This treats Roma issues using existing policies and avoids Roma specific policy interventions. Instead,

Roma are therefore treated as *individuals* who suffer from discrimination when accessing socio-economic provisions which ignores the racial/ethnic motivation of their discrimination. Roma activists have been quick to highlight the inadequacy of this approach, namely, that it hasn't worked so far (McGarry, 2012, p. 132)

This approach rests on two premises. Firstly a 'cultural deficit' model is employed which assumes the primary reason for the Roma's continuing poverty and low status is its dysfunctional and pathological culture. Therefore a major challenge facing European societies is the assimilation of such non-modern, culturally backward minorities. Improving their access to basic services such as education and employment from this perspective, will depend on whether their dysfunctional cultural traits can be rectified (Silva, 2014). Secondly the approach continues the emphasis in UK and EU social policy since the mid 1990s of focusing on 'supply side' measures to combat social exclusion and poverty. From this angle the problems of poverty have less to do with structural unemployment and/or institutional racism and more to do with the dysfunctional behaviour and passive attitudes of the poor (Smith, 2005). Instilling the necessary skills and character traits necessary in a flexible, globalised labour market has become a major concern of policy makers and given rise to a policy agenda, which aims to enhance social and personal competencies, 'the question' wrote Lawrence Mead (1992, p. 211) a leading exponent of this approach 'is how to deal with problems of basic functioning of the poor. The social, more than the economic structure of society is at issue.' This explanatory framework has been increasingly employed by politicians and policy makers to explain the persistence of poverty and unemployment among certain groups. Roma (and other marginalised groups) certainly do need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills that so many lack in order to participate in UK society or the poverty that they have moved to escape from will be repeated in a new context.

Critics of the way in which 'integration' has been deployed argue that it is founded upon a homogenous template of the 'citizenship' in order to denigrate and stigmatise those who do not fit the template. To this extent 'integration' policy complements a 'post multicultural' era in which the moral judgement of immigrant 'inferiority' is masked by focusing attention on either religious, cultural and/or political origins (Gozdecka et al, 2014). Integration policy aims to raise individual competence but pays less attention to addressing the discrimination and racism which Roma and Gypsies routinely experience across the EU and which operate from the macro-level of political decision making and institutional practices to the micro-

level of everyday personal interactions. Indeed Silva (2013) argues that the discourse of ‘integration’, through focusing on the reforming the lifestyle of the Roma, serves to accentuate their difference. This prevents racism being addressed by policy through regarding it is an outcome of *individual* attitudes and irrational beliefs towards difference, or else of extremist political ideologies rather than entrenched in the social structure and institutional decision making and practices. If racism is regarded as an individual and irrational phenomenon the solution demands better education about how to accept other cultures through *sensitisation* via training and cultural awareness programmes. This approach negates the political and legal structures and processes which govern those minorities and sustain existing power relations. As a result argues Silva (2013, pp. 21-22) the discourse of integration and the understanding of racism as an outcome misguided individual beliefs play an important function in contemporary European societies in so far as they

*protect* democratic societies from questioning the racial/racist nature of their formation and its enduring legacies...depoliticisation of *sources* of political problems pervades the politics of ‘integration’...The grammar of integration naturalises the whiteness of societies, of the nation, and therefore the *fatal strangeness* of the ‘other’.

The omission of a robust strategy in the EUF and at the national level for addressing anti-Gypsyism and tackling deeply rooted prejudices and stereotypes will also mitigate the social inclusion of Roma in other ways. Powell (2008) notes that while academics and Roma sympathisers have comprehensively addressed the Roma’s structural exclusion these exclusionary processes are played out in social interactions with the wider society. The almost universal desire among the majority society for spatial and social segregation from Roma and Gypsies has consigned the latter groups to the most marginal and undesirable locations which has strengthened stereotypes associating Gypsies with dirt and squalor (Sibley, 1981). The prevalence of media propagated ‘moral panics’, which demonise the Roma through the recycling of historical stereotypes bars many from formal employment except in the most menial jobs or else they are forced to resort to scavenging, begging, short-term opportunistic opportunities or else in undocumented work where they are often paid below national minimum rates and employed without any of the usual employment rights or regulations (Hyde, 2006). Improving access to education, employment, health services and accommodation is vital but this should comprise one element of a two-pronged approach which pays equal attention to addressing Roma related discrimination and prejudice and tackling their cultural marginalisation through what McGarry (2012) terms a *politics of recognition*. Otherwise, without a more general reorientation of public attitudes, their poverty and exclusion will continue regardless of the Roma Framework or any future strategies that the EU or its member states implement.

## 5. Conclusion

Addressing the social exclusion of Roma is a long term, complex and so far elusive process. The relationship between socioeconomic status, culture and individual agency have been conceptualised and deployed in varied and contradictory ways in public and policy discourse surrounding the Roma, which has tended to confuse and converge causes and symptoms. Political and media discussions have been largely preoccupied with crime, welfare abuse and social disorder and have treated the behaviour of *some* community members as a *collective* trait and therefore representative of the majority of Roma. In policy arenas by contrast, exclusion from institutions such as the labour market or political system are viewed not as a product of structural and systemic forms of discrimination, which act to marginalise individuals on the basis of their collective identity. Rather, policy discourse and interventions treat social exclusion as a matter of *individual* competency and a lack of key skills due to a cultural orientation that is contemptuous of paid work and places a low value on social mobility or self-improvement. Without a clearer understanding of how causal processes linking structural constraints and opportunities, cultural responses and individual outcomes operate, the potential of policy interventions to increase Roma inclusion is likely to be negligible.

In a report on the implementation of the NRIS in the UK, the authors' argue that the 'mainstreaming' approach combined with a devolved approach to integration has prevented a targeted and national approach towards the social inclusion of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities from developing (Ryder and Cemlyn, 2014). While examples of innovative local projects in respect of the four key policy areas are identified in the report, a lack of funding, the short-term nature of funding streams that are available and poor dissemination and sharing of best practice means that '*progress on Roma integration in the UK is extremely slow or absent in many policy areas*' (Ryder and Cemlyn, 2014, p.13). The report takes issue with the Coalition Government's narrow approach to integration whereby UK decision makers have 'disparaged multi-culturalism and increasingly offered a '*one size fits all*' menu of policy interventions' instead of adopting a broader approach aiming at '*breaking down...barriers to inclusion and communication by promoting better mutual understanding and respect*' (2014, p. 27).

The 'mainstreaming' strategy in relation to Roma inclusion is part of a more general trend among politicians and policy-makers. Laungani (2002) identifies a growing disposition towards offering universalistic solutions to culturally specific behaviours accompanied by an increasingly intolerant and coercive approach towards groups who cannot, or will not, be moulded into dominant notions of what is rational and in the group's 'best interests'. Targeted policy approaches have generally been avoided in the UK due to their discriminatory nature, which grants rights and privileges to one group on the basis of shared identity and their predilection towards homogenising group identities and neglecting internal

diversity and differences *within* groups. Critics are also sceptical over the ability of individuals from marginalised and excluded communities to engage in decision making processes ‘on their own terms’ due to institutional systemic policies and practices, which have consistently disadvantaged members of those same groups (McGarry and Agarin, 2014). The case for a tailored approach towards Roma integration is made by McGarry (2012) who argues that because negative ascriptions of Roma identity means all individuals labelled and identified as Roma suffer discrimination and prejudice as individuals and as a group, that policy provisions should take account of this. Certainly many community workers and grassroots policy workers who work on migrant integration policies argue that a more focused approach would be beneficial. This is due to the extremely low skills and language base of Roma migrants compared to other eastern and central European migrants; their suspicion and reluctance to engage with ‘officialdom’ or state agents; limited knowledge surrounding basic services such as health and education or their rights in respect of welfare benefits, housing and employment. Furthermore the fact that recent restrictions on accessing welfare benefits are having a disproportionate impact on the Roma leaving increasing numbers totally destitute means that integrating Roma communities requires a more finely tuned and resource intensive approach (Smith, 2014).

The fact that the EU and member states are resistant to acknowledging and responding to the specific nature of the Roma exclusion suggests that the ‘mainstreaming’ approach fulfils a much more important latent function. Okely (1983, pp. 1-2) notes that although the threat Gypsies pose to society is trivial their presence exposes profound dissatisfactions in the dominant system. In this respect recognising the Roma as a distinctive group moulded through its interactions with the wider society and channelled into the lowest and most reviled social status through political and institutional processes, would have enormous repercussions for the EU as a pan-European institution and for individual member states.

...the EU is unwilling and unlikely to recognize the difference of groups as this is regarded as a challenge to the sovereignty of member states which may be concerned with potential secessionist claims within their borders from national minorities. Suffice to say, Roma make no territorial claims and have no emotional or political aspirations for territory (McGarry, 2012, p. 131).

The Roma therefore are located at the intersection of fundamental issues concerning national sovereignty, immigration, the position of minority groups in different member states and within an enlarged EU and the appropriate policy tools to ensure social integration and minimise the potential for social disorder. For the Roma, who have been centre-stage to these issues and generally too marginalised, too poor and too unrepresented to enter mainstream political debates or to challenge the derogatory stereotypes which have been deployed for political purposes. Upon completion of this article it has been announced today (10<sup>th</sup> October 2014) that former Conservative MP Douglas Carswell has captured UKIP’s first parliamentary

seat following a bye-election in Clacton, a small coastal town which has experienced significant economic decline and a large rise in its migrant population in recent decades. As anti-EU and anti-immigration rhetoric gathers pace the position of the Roma is likely to become increasingly tenuous and the wider problematic of social integration likely to remain ever more elusive.

## References

- Amnesty International (2012) *Discrimination against Roma in Europe: a media briefing* [http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR01/008/2012/en/4b26ca20-ff46-4013-9fa6-2b0f884d6d5e/eur010082012en.pdf?utm\\_source=twitterfeed&utm\\_medium=twitter](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR01/008/2012/en/4b26ca20-ff46-4013-9fa6-2b0f884d6d5e/eur010082012en.pdf?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter) accessed 27/07/2014.
- Bancroft, A. (2005) *Roma and Gypsy-Travellers in Europe: modernity, race, space and exclusion*, Gateshead: Athenaeum Press.
- Barany, Z. (2002) *The East European Gypsies: Regime Change, Marginality and Ethnopolitics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barrett, D. (2014) 'European Union migrants will overtake immigrants from outside Europe for the first time, says report', *Daily Telegraph*, 4<sup>th</sup> April, p. 5.
- BBC News (2014) 'How Eurosceptic is the new European Parliament?' 01/07/2014 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-28107633> accessed 17/07/2014
- BBC News (2014) 'Big increase in net migration to the UK' 27/02/2014 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-26367391> accessed 10/08/2014
- Bell, B. (2012) 'Roma 'face same inequalities in west Europe as in east' BBC News 23/05/2012 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18176450> accessed 10/08/2014 accessed 05/08/2014
- Bird, S. (2013) 'The Roma gipsy beggars of Park Lane: 30 Romanians camp out with soiled duvets and cardboard boxes in exclusive London street' *The Daily Mail*, 24<sup>th</sup> May.
- Brown, P; Scullion, L. and Martin, P. (2013) *Migrant Roma in the United Kingdom: Population size and experiences of local authorities and partners*, Manchester: University of Salford/ Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.
- Brown, P; Martin, P. and Scullion, L. (2014) 'Migrant Roma in the United Kingdom and the need to estimate population size', *People Place and Policy*, Vol. 8, Issue 1, pp. 19-33.
- Cantle, T. (2005) *Community cohesion: a new framework for race and diversity*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cemlyn, S; Greenfields, M; Burnett, S; Matthews, Z. and Whitewall, C. (2009) *Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities: a review*, Manchester: Equalities and Human Rights Commission.
- Cherkezova, S. and Tomova, I. (2013) *An Option of Last Resort? Migration of Roma and Non-Roma from CEE Countries*, Roma Inclusion Working Papers: UNDP.
- Commission on Human Rights (CHR) (2010) *Human Rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Condinanza, M; Lang, A. and Nascimbene, B. (2008) *Citizenship of the Union and Freedom of Movement of Persons*, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV.
- Cosse, E. (2013) 'Europe: Time to Drop the Roma Myths' *Human Rights Watch*, November 4<sup>th</sup> <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/11/04/europe-time-drop-roma-myths> accessed 26/07/14
- Craig, G. (2011) *The Roma: A study of national policies*, York Workshops: European Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.
- Doherty, M. (2013) 'Media frenzy over Roma child stealing claims unravel as new facts come to light' *Traveller's Times* 27<sup>th</sup> September, <http://www.travellerstimes.org.uk/Mobile/list.aspx?c=00619ef1-21e2-40aa-8d5e-f7c38586d32f&n=9711a2e2-523d-47bb-95f4-58228857c3dd> accessed 27/07/14.

- Equality: *From Segregation to inclusion. Roma pupils in the United Kingdom, a pilot research project*. November 2011.
- European Commission (2011) *An EU Framework for National Integration Strategies up to 2020*, COM 173/4: Brussels.
- European Parliament (2008) *Resolution of 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2008 on a European Strategy on the Roma P6\_TA\_0035* <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do>? accessed 24/07/2014.
- Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) (2009) *The situation of Roma EU citizens moving to and settling in other EU member states*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- FRA (2012) *The situation of Roma in 11 EU member states: survey results at a glance* [http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance\\_EN.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf) accessed 24/07/2014.
- Goyal, O. P. (2005) *Nomads at the Crossroads*, Delhi: Isha Books.
- Gozdecka, D. A.; Ercan, S. and Kmak, M. (2014) 'From multiculturalism to post-multiculturalism: Trends and paradoxes', *Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 50 (1), pp. 51-64.
- Graham, G. (2013) 'Nick Clegg: 'intimidating' and 'offensive' Roma migrants must be sensitive to British way of life', *The Daily Telegraph*, 14<sup>th</sup> November.
- Greenfields, M. and Smith, D. (2010) 'Housed Gypsies and Travellers, social segregation and the reconstruction of communities', *Housing Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3, May, pp. 397-412.
- Hancock, I. (1987) *The Pariah Syndrome: an Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: Karoma Publishers Inc.
- Hyde, A. (2006) 'Systemic Exclusion of Roma from Employment', *Roma Rights Quarterly*, Issue 1, pp. 3-8.
- Ingmire, S. and Stables, N. (2014) 'Roma communities in the UK: 'opening doors, taking new directions', in Ryder, A; Cemlyn, S. and Acton, T. (eds.) *Hearing the voices of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Kaye, R. (2002) 'Blaming the victim: an analysis of press representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK in the 1990s', in King, R. and Wood, N. (eds.) *Media and Migration: Constructions of Mobility and Difference*, London: Taylor and Francis.
- Kenrick, D. (2004) *The Romani World: A historical dictionary of the Gypsies*, Hatfield: University of Hertford Press.
- Latour, V. (2012) 'Muscular liberalism': surviving multiculturalism? A historical and political contextualisation of David Cameron's Munich speech', *Observatoire de la societe britannique*, No. 12, pp. 196-219.
- Laungani, P. (2002) 'Stress, trauma and coping strategies: cross-cultural variations', *International Journal of Group Tensions*, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 127-154.
- Lesinka, M. (2014) 'The European backlash against immigration and multiculturalism', *Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 50 (1), pp. 37-50.
- Mc Garry, A. (2012) 'The dilemma of the European Union's Roma policy', *Critical Social Policy*, 32: 126, pp. 126-136.
- McGarry, A. and Agarin, T. (2014) 'Unpacking the Roma Participation Puzzle: Presence, Voice and Influence', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, published online DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2014.897599
- MacDonald, H. (2013) 'Irish police return blonde girl to Roma family', *The Guardian*, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2013.
- Malik, K. (2013) 'In defence of diversity', *Eurozine*, 18<sup>th</sup> December <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2013-12-18-malik-en.pdf> accessed 12/08/2014
- Mead, L. (1992) *The new politics of poverty*, New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Migration Observatory (2014) *UK Public Opinion towards Immigration: Overall Attitudes and Levels of Concern* <http://www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/briefings/uk-public-opinion-toward-immigration-overall-attitudes-and-level-concern> accessed 29/09/2014
- Morris, R. (2000) 'Gypsies, Travellers and the Media: Press regulation and racism in the UK', *Communications Law*, Vol. 5, No. 6, pp. 213-219.

- Murphy, S. (2013) 'Was missing Ben Needham at the same gypsy camp as 'Maria'? Police probe claims that abducted British boy was seen at site where blonde girl, four, was found' *Daily Mail*, 3<sup>rd</sup> October.
- Oborne, P. (2013) 'Britain's doors are wide open and we can't even talk about it', *The Daily Telegraph*, 13<sup>th</sup> November.
- Okely, J. (1983) *The Traveller-Gypsies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Okely, J. (2013) 'Foreword' in Smith, D. and Greenfields, M. (2013) *Gypsies and Travellers in Housing: the decline of nomadism*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- O'Nions, H. (2014) 'Some Europeans are more equal than others', *People, Place and Policy*, Vol. 8, Issue 1, pp. 1-19.
- Powell, R. (2008) 'Understanding the stigmatization of Gypsies: power and the dialectics of (dis)identification', *Housing, Theory and Society*, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 87-109.
- Quarmby, K. (2013) 'Gypsies belong here too. So why do we always expect them to 'move on?'', *The Observer*, Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> August.
- Reid, S. (2011) 'Benefits Boulevard: Gypsies' gaudy mansions built in Romania...with YOUR money', *The Daily Mail*, 21<sup>st</sup> May.
- Richardson, J. (2014) 'Roma in the News: an examination of media and political discourse and what needs to change', *People, Place and Policy*, Vol. 8, Issue 1, pp. 51-64.
- Ringold, D; Orenstein, M. A. and Wilkens, E. (2005) *Roma in an Expanding Europe: Breaking the Poverty Cycle*, Washington DC: The World Bank.
- Rostok, I. and Ryder, A. (2014) 'EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies: insights into empowerment and inclusive policy development', in Richardson, J. and Ryder, A. (eds.) *Gypsies and Travellers: Empowerment and Inclusion in British Society*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Ryder, A. and Cemlyn, S. (2014) *Civil Society Monitoring on the Implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy in the UK*, Budapest: Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation.
- Schneeweis, A. (2012) 'If they really wanted to, they would: The press discourse of integration of the European Roma, 1990-2006', *International Communication Gazette*, Vol. 74, No. 7, pp. 673-689.
- Sibley, D. (1981) *Outsiders in Urban Societies*, New York: St. Martins Press.
- Silva, R. M. (2014) 'Civilising the Roma? The depoliticisation of (anti-) racism within the politics of 'integration'', *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, online version published 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1070289X.2014.931234#.VCmlGvldXu4> accessed 17/07/2014.
- Silverstein, P. A. (2005) 'Immigrant Racialization and the New Savage Slot: Race, Migration and Immigration in the New Europe', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 34, pp. 363-384
- Smith, D. (2005) *On the Margins of Inclusion: changing labour markets and social exclusion in London*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Smith, D. (2014) *Local Engagement Roma Integration Project: UK Feasibility Report*, EU: Fundamental Rights Agency.
- Smith, D. and Greenfields, M. (2013) *Gypsies and Travellers in Housing: the decline of nomadism*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Spencer, B. (2013) 'Maria was 'groomed to be a child bride' – Police claim girl found in gipsy camp was set to be married off at the age of 12 by couple who adopted her', *Daily Mail*, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2013.
- Trumpener, K. (1992) 'The Time of the Gypsies: A 'People without History' in the Narratives of the West', *Critical Enquirer*, Vol. 18, No. 4, Summer, p. 843-884.
- Vermeersch, P. (2006) *The Romani Movement: Minority Politics and Ethnic Mobilization in Contemporary Central Europe*, Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Winstedt, E. O. (1913) 'The Gypsy coppersmiths' invasion of 1911-1913' *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, Vol. VI, Pt. 4, pp. 244-302.

---

<sup>1</sup>Throughout this article the terms Roma, Gypsy and Traveller are used. Donald Kenrick (2004) defines 'Rom/Romani' as the word used to describe themselves by most ethnic Gypsies. He notes (2004, p.143) that their basic characteristics of the Romani

---

people are an ‘awareness of a common history and destiny and of a language (even if no longer spoken). Gypsy culture preserves a spirit of nomadism, whether exercised or not, a preference for self-employment and – for most groups – laws of hygiene’. The term ‘Gypsy’ is a non Roma word (from ‘Egyptian’ as the early Roma arrivals who falsely believed to have originated from Egypt). The word is often used as a synonym for Roma/ Romani (pp. 81-82) while ‘Travellers’ describe commercial nomadic groups who are not of Indian origin but who share many characteristics with Gypsies – nomadism, family based self-employment – with intermarriage between the different nomadic groups occurring over the years (p. 179). In popular usage in the UK Roma is generally used to refer to Romani migrants from East and Central Europe while Gypsy/Traveller are used – often interchangeably – to describe indigenous nomadic groups or those with a history of nomadism.

<sup>ii</sup> An Amnesty International survey reported that across Europe the Roma fared significantly worst on a number of indicators such as education, employment, levels of poverty, health and accommodation (Amnesty International, 2012) while a report by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) revealed that on average one-third of the EU Roma population is unemployed, 20 per cent are not covered by health insurance and 90 per cent live in poverty (FRA, 2012).

<sup>iii</sup> Population estimates based on census figures are notoriously unreliable in the case of Roma and Gypsies as many do not declare their ethnicity due to fear of prejudice and discrimination.

<sup>iv</sup> In the year to September 2013 net EU migration to the UK was up from 149,000 to 209,000 while net migration from outside the EU fell from 269,000 to 244,000 on the previous year (BBC, 27/02/2014)

<sup>v</sup> Director of think tank Demos.