



EU and the Roma

Summary

1. This note compares the living conditions of the Roma in Romania and Bulgaria with those in the other Eastern European member states.¹ They suffer from widespread discrimination in all these countries, as well as significantly worse living standards than their compatriots. However, the evidence suggests that the Roma suffer from less discrimination in Romania and Bulgaria than in the other East European member countries but face equivalent levels of material deprivation. EU attempts to improve the conditions of Roma have had very limited success.

2. The number of Roma in the EU is uncertain but the Commission estimate it at six million. The number in Romania is between 1.2 and 1.5 million while in Bulgaria it is thought to be around 750,000. The 2011 census in the UK did not include a category for Roma. A specialist charity suggests that 300,000 are already here.

Demographics

3. Recording the numbers of Roma in Europe has proven difficult. According to the EC, this is because Roma are often reluctant to supply information about themselves.² The European Commission estimates there are about six million Roma in the EU.³ Romania and Bulgaria have larger Roma populations than any of the A8 states, except possibly Hungary. The Roma's demographics are quite different from the EU as a whole and the states which they predominantly inhabit. The average age of a person in the EU as a whole is 40⁴ while the average Roma person is 25.⁵ 26.7% of the Roma population is between the ages of 15 and 29 compared to 19.3% in the EU population as a whole. The proportion of Roma who are under the age of 15 is 35.7% compared to 15.7% for the EU population at large. In Bulgaria two thirds of Roma are children and youth – almost twice as many young people as among ethnic Bulgarians.⁶

1 Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania. Slovakia, Slovenia and Poland

2 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_health_en.pdf, p.11

3 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/index_en.htm

4 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_health_en.pdf, p.18

5 Ibid

6 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_health_en.pdf, p.100

EU State	Minimum no of Roma	Maximum no of Roma	Average Estimate	Total population	Roma as % of total population (average)	Roma as % of population (minimum)	Roma as % of population (maximum)
Bulgaria ⁷	700,000	800,000	750,000	7,262,675	10.33%	9.6%	11%
Romania ⁸	1,200,000	2,500,000	1,850,000	22,246,862	8.32%	5.4%	11.24%
Czech Republic ⁹	150,000	250,000	200,000	10,220,911	1.96%	1.5%	2.44%
Slovakia ¹⁰	400,000	600,000	500,000	5,455,407	9.17%	7.33%	11%
Hungary ¹¹	400,000	1,000,000	700,000	9,930,915	7.05%	4%	10.6%
Estonia ¹²	1,000	1,500	1,250	1,307,605	0.10%	0.076%	0.11%
Latvia ¹³	13,000	16,000	14,500	2,245,423	0.65%	0.58%	0.71%
Lithuania ¹⁴	2,000	94,000	3,000	3,565,205	0.08%	0.56%	0.11%
Poland ¹⁶	15,000	60,000	37,500	38,500,000	0.10%	0.049%	0.156%
Slovenia ¹⁷	7,000	10,000	8,500	2,007,711	0.42%		

EU work with the Roma

4. In 2011 the European Commission published a document *'Working together for Roma Inclusion'* which declared that the EU would attempt to change the Roma's poor social indicators in four key areas: education, health, employment and housing. It established the concept of national strategies for member states to pursue.¹⁸ In the same year the Commission began providing member states their relevant expertise. National strategies have subsequently been established in 20 EU states. The document requires EU states to produce documentation that they are following "EU Roma integration goals, with targeted actions and sufficient funding" and to show that they have created a "robust monitoring mechanism to ensure concrete results for Roma."¹⁹ These plans have been conducted in co-ordination with the "Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015" launched by the World Bank and the Open Society Institute.

5. The most recent, significant piece of work is the 2012 document "An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020."²⁰ This states that "many of the Roma in Europe face prejudice, intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion in their daily lives. They are marginalised and live in very poor socio-economic conditions. This is not acceptable in the EU at the beginning of the 21st century."²¹ The document is an assessment of the national strategies laid out in *'Working together...'* for combatting the Roma's poor socio-economic situation. All member states were asked to publish their strategies by March 2012, some of which did. "An EU framework..." is an assessment of the member states' progress in four areas: education, healthcare, housing and employment.

7 http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/default_en.asp Stats

8 Ibid

9 Ibid

10 Ibid

11 Ibid

12 Ibid

13 Ibid

14 Ibid

15 http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/default_en.asp Stats

16 Ibid

17 Ibid

18 <http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/working-together-for-roma-inclusion-pbDS3011315/>

19 http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf

20 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011DC0173:en:NOT>

21 Ibid

6. The commitments established by the Commission are fairly weak: for example in education, the principle goal outlined is to ensure all Roma children actually attend school between the ages of 7 and 15.²² Progress in implementation has been even weaker. Although 23 states have endorsed the principle of improving the educational attainment of Roma, only 16 have taken 'concrete steps.'²³ Of those 16, the EU has admitted that many (including Romania and Bulgaria) have actually done very little. The EU's own assessment of the progress of member states so far has been damning: in their own words the National strategies have so far been ineffective and have been implemented "sporadically". The EU has said that certain member states "lack genuine political will to implement the positive measures in national programmes as this makes them unpopular with the majority of the population who are very often intolerant of and have discriminatory attitudes towards the Roma."

7. In 2009 a series of documents was produced by the European Council that related to the socio-economic position of the Roma in the EU. They were: "Housing conditions of Roma and Travellers in the European Union"²⁴, "Health and the Roma community-analysis of the situation in Europe"²⁵ and "Data in focus report-the Roma-FRA EU-MIDIS survey."²⁶ These papers will extensively inform this account of the EU's work with the Roma.

8. The EU has also commissioned extensive polling across the states with the largest Roma populations²⁷ asking Roma about issues like Education, Health and Housing, to build up a picture of the socio-economic status of the Roma in different EU states. The findings of this polling have also helped inform this paper.

Education

9. Roma have very low levels of educational attainment in Eastern European member states.

EU State	No studies	Primary education	Secondary education or beyond
Czech Republic	20.4%	70.3%	9.3%
Slovakia	25.4%	47.8%	26.8%
Bulgaria	30.5%	28.5%	35.7%
Romania	37.4%	26.9%	41%

Employment

10. Fewer than one out of three Roma are in paid employment across the EU²⁸ and one out of three are unemployed.^{29, 30}

EU State ³¹	Employed	Unemployed
Czech	43.4%	30.5%
Slovakia	50.2%	24.7%
Romania	48.6%	8%
Bulgaria	61.9%	7.1%

22 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_nat_integration_strat_en.pdf, p.6

23 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_nat_integration_strat_en.pdf, p.5

24 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_housing_conditions_en.pdf

25 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_health_en.pdf

26 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_midis_survey_en.pdf

27 Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Spain, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia

28 Defined as full time paid work

29 http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf, p.16

30 http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf, p16

31

Housing

11. The percentage of Roma living in shanty towns is higher in the Czech Republic and Slovakia than it is in Romania and Bulgaria. However, the percentage that lives in inadequate housing in Romania is higher than in the Czech Republic.

12. There is some evidence that the housing conditions of the Roma in Bulgaria may be worse than reported in most publications. One EU document about Roma access to housing claims that in Bulgaria, 70% of Roma housing is built illegally.³² The same report highlights that Roma are far more disadvantaged when compared to other ethnic groups in terms of access to public utilities: 75% have no access to gas supply and 72% have no access to basic sanitation.³³ EU data shows that one fifth of Roma people in Bulgaria live in homes where they have less than 4 sq. m. per capita. Another two fifths have between 4 and 8 sq. m. floor space at their disposal.³⁴

EU State	% of Roma that live in shanty towns ³⁵
Czech Republic	4.7%
Slovakia	6.2%
Romania	0.8%
Bulgaria	4.4%

EU State	% of Roma living in substandard housing
Czech Republic	32.8%
Slovakia	47.3%
Romania	33.5%
Bulgaria	25%

Health

13. Roma generally suffer from worse levels of chronic disease than the general population does. 14.5% of Romanian Roma and 12.6% of Bulgarian Roma respectively are afflicted compared to 18.8% in Slovakia who suffer from chronic illnesses and 16.6% in the Czech Republic.³⁶

14. In Romania, 45.7% of Roma children are not being properly vaccinated. In Bulgaria 28.9% of Roma children are not vaccinated properly. These proportions are much higher than in the Czech Republic where only 2.6% were not properly vaccinated and Slovakia where 17.1% were not.³⁷

32 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_housing_conditions_en.pdf, p.58

33 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_housing_conditions_en.pdf, p.66

34 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_health_en.pdf, p.98

35 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_health_en.pdf, p.26

36 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_health_en.pdf, 33

37 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_health_en.pdf, 50

EU State	% of Roma that suffer from chronic disease ³⁸
Czech Republic	16.6%
Slovakia	18.8%
Romania	14.5%
Bulgaria	12.6%

EU State	% of Roma adults that have never been to the dentist ³⁹
Czech Republic	8.8%
Slovakia	6.2%
Romania	33.7%
Slovakia	6.2%

EU State	% of Roma minors not vaccinated ⁴⁰
Czech Republic	2.6%
Slovakia	17.1%
Romania	45.7%
Bulgaria	29.9%

Discrimination

15. In an EU-MIDIS survey, Roma across the EU reported widespread racial discrimination. In the seven member states surveyed⁴¹ 47% of respondents said that they had been victims of discrimination in the previous 12 months. Bulgarian and Romanian Roma actually reported the lowest levels of discrimination with only 26% and 25% of respondents respectively stating that they had been discriminated against in those countries. In comparison, Roma in the Czech Republic reported far higher levels of discrimination with some 64% of respondents stating that they had been discriminated against in the previous 12 months.⁴² Romanian and Bulgarian Roma have consistently reported the least amount of discrimination in EU polling⁴³ while those in the Czech Republic have reported the most. However, the Commission has stated that it feels that discrimination experiences are underreported in Bulgaria and Romania.⁴⁴

16. Though it is lower than in many comparable states, Roma in Romania and Bulgaria still report significant amounts of discrimination. 15% of Bulgarian Roma claimed that they had been discriminated against when looking for work, 11% by healthcare personnel, 10% by social service personnel, 2% by school personnel and 7% in when purchasing private services. In Romania the picture was broadly similar with 9% claiming they'd been discriminated against in work, 3% by housing agents/landlords, 11% by healthcare personnel, 4% by the social services, 4% by school personnel and 14% by people in private services.⁴⁵

38 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_health_en.pdf, p.33

39 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_health_en.pdf, p.51

40 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_health_en.pdf, p.50

41 Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Greece, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania

42 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_midis_survey_en.pdf, p4

43 <http://www.migrationwatchuk.org/briefingPaper/document/287>, p.19

44 http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf, p.19

45 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_midis_survey_en.pdf, p.5

Romania and the Roma

17. Despite having agreed to improve the situation of its Roma people, the Romanian Government's strategy document for improving Roma conditions was one of the most heavily criticised by the European Commission. For example, it did not include a concrete commitment to ensure Roma children complete primary school.⁴⁶ Nor did it take into account the actual level of Roma unemployment, merely setting a goal of increasing the number of employees by 60,000.⁴⁷ Overall, the EU was highly critical of the Romanian strategy for improving conditions for the Roma.⁴⁸

Bulgaria

18. The European Commission described the official strategy written by the Bulgarian Government for integrating the Roma as 'seriously lacking.' For example, it contained proposed education reforms that had not been properly costed. The report also failed to address the chronic lack of health insurance among Roma people in Bulgaria.⁴⁹

Poverty

19. Roma households are much more likely to be at risk of extreme poverty than their compatriots across the EU.⁵⁰ In Romania just under 90% of Roma live in households affected by severe material deprivation⁵¹; while in Bulgaria this figure is over 80%.⁵² In Hungary it is over 90%, in the Czech Republic 70% and in Slovakia, 80%.⁵³

Roma in the UK

20. According to Equality, a charity that works with Roma in the UK, the best estimate of Roma numbers in Britain is 300,000.⁵⁴ However, counting their numbers is extremely problematic as many Roma prefer to declare their nationality, rather than ethnicity.⁵⁵

21. The 2001 Census did not include separate categories for gypsies or travellers but combined them with Irish travellers.⁵⁶ 18,600 people classed themselves as being in this category⁵⁷, but it is very likely that many Roma did not include themselves in this category. A 1990 estimate suggested that there were 90,000 Romani speakers in the UK⁵⁸

22. Equality themselves acknowledge how difficult it is to build up a clear picture of Roma numbers. For example, in 2009, Sheffield council reported 997 Slovak Roma living in their city, but Equality suggested that the actual figure was more likely to have been between 3,000 and 4,000.⁵⁹

46 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/country_factsheets_2012/romania_en.pdf

47 Ibid

48 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/country_factsheets_2012/romania_en.pdf

49 http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_nat_integration_strat_en.pdf, p.25

50 http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf, 25

51 'Severe material deprivation' is defined to be the inability to pay for at least four of the following items: to- pay rent or utility bills, heat a home, deal with unexpected expenses, eat protein every second day, have we weeks holiday away from home, a car, a washing machine, a colour tv and a telephone. In Bulgaria over 80% of Roma are therefore classed as at 'severe risk of material deprivation.'

52 http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf, p.26

53 http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf, p.26

54 <http://equality.uk.com/Roma.html>

55 Ibid.

56 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-12914877>

57 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2065876/Traveller-population-Britain-risen-400-year.html>

58 <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/rme>

59 Focus group held on 2 April 2009, Sheffield, cited on p.60 of http://equality.uk.com/Resources_files/movement_of_roma.pdf

23. The UK is regarded as an attractive destination for Roma from Eastern Europe. According to Equality, 97.1% of those who have moved here felt their lives in the UK were better than in their country of origin.⁶⁰

24. A 2013 study by the University of Salford estimates that there are around 200,000 Roma in the UK. The University came to their estimate after receiving asking Local Authorities to estimate the number of Roma in their communities.⁶¹

Nation	Estimated population (individuals) ⁶²
England	193,297
Scotland	3030
Northern Ireland	500
Wales	878
Total	197,705

Region	Estimated population (individuals) ⁶³
North East	10,656
North West	38,976
Yorkshire and Humber	25,451
East Midlands	23,530
West Midlands	23,316
East	12,524
London	35,997
South East	19,853
South West	2,994
Total	193,297

updated 31 October, 2013

60 http://equality.uk.com/Resources_files/movement_of_roma.pdf, p. 8

61 Philip Brown, Lisa Scullion and Philip Martin, "Migrant Roman in the United Kingdom, Population size and experiences of local authorities and partners", University of Salford P.29 http://www.salford.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/363118/Migrant_Roma_in_the_UK_final_report_October_2013.pdf

62 Ibid

63 Ibid