

## MATRIX begins to deliver for Roma at a local, national and European level

By David Brown, Migration Yorkshire

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Nine months into Roma MATRIX we are beginning to see the impact of our work in local areas across the European Union. The organisations in Roma MATRIX have planned activities together and have consulted and involved a range of organisations in our local areas and individual member states. Now we are moving onto the European stage.

We have held the first of three European Roma MATRIX conferences, with diverse and passionate discussions among nearly 200 participants including leading policy-makers and a strong Greek Roma voice.

As we approach the end of our first year, the message, scope and value of Roma MATRIX is showing at local, national and European levels.

## New team appointed for in-country research

By Dr Philip Brown, University of Salford

Nine researchers from across Europe have been recruited to work to identify key policy developments relating to Roma integration in each of the 10 partner countries. These will form 'country reports' which will bring together key policy developments and help stimulate transnational dialogue about Roma integration strategies. The reports will form the foundation of an interim report which will be released in March 2014. The Roma MATRIX research work seeks to understand and analyse racism and assess how the national strategies for Roma integration are being implemented.

The research team has selected the following case study locations in each partner country: *Bulgaria*, Sofia and Montana; *Czech Republic*, Prague and Usti nad Labem; *Greece*, Athens and surrounding area; *Hungary*, Budapest and Batanyterenyei; *Italy*, Rome and Lazio; *Poland*, Warsaw and Wroclaw; *Romania*, Bucharest and Cluj; *Slovakia*, Bratislava, Sarisske Michalanay and Ostrovanay; *Spain*, Madrid and surrounding area; *United Kingdom*, London and Rotherham.

Professor Peter Dwyer has moved from The University of Salford to the University of York, but maintains his involvement with Roma MATRIX. As a result, the University of York joins the project as the 20<sup>th</sup> partner.



The first Roma MATRIX European conference brings our work into the European spotlight



With financial support from the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme of the European Union

## Athens - Combating Racism through Inclusion conference

By John Donegan, Migration Yorkshire

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*“...Roma people should not be invisible in the mainstream narratives of European history, as they have been Europeans for centuries ...”*

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The three-day project meeting in Athens, in November 2013 included the first of three Roma MATRIX European conferences. The conference – *Combating Racism through Inclusion* - brought together over 150 delegates, including Roma people, agencies, politicians and officials from all over Greece and Europe, and gave them an opportunity to express their views on the fight against anti-Roma racism.

Keynote speakers included Lina Papamichalopolou, head of non-discrimination policies and Roma coordination at the EC’s DG Justice, Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos head of equality at the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, and Councillor Roger Stone of Rotherham Council, UK, who is the Rapporteur on Roma integration strategies for the European Union’s Committee of the Regions.

The conference heard about the work of Roma MATRIX project partners to combat racism and promote inclusion in their countries. Speakers also discussed the progress being made with Roma Integration Strategies, and the continuing discrimination against Roma in the media.

There was particular reference to the recent ‘Blonde Angel’ controversy in Greece and protests against Roma deportations in France. An important part of any solution would involve improving the way member states and organisations work together to address Roma inclusion.

Break-out working groups focusing on employment, health and children, brought together professionals and Roma community members to explore progress made towards Roma inclusion in different member states and to share their experience about what works.

The conference concluded with panel discussions, giving audience members an opportunity to question the keynote speakers.

Questions included a challenge to the EU to find ways of making their broad integration strategy relevant to the life experience of ordinary Roma, whose concerns are often very specific and local. There was also a suggestion that Roma people should not be invisible in the mainstream narratives of European history, as they have been Europeans for centuries.

Other questions lamented the ‘tyranny of the majority’ which can make it difficult for politicians to take effective action for Roma inclusion, for fear of alienating non-Roma who form the majority of their electorate.

*The next Roma MATRIX conference, looking at Redress, Reporting and Support, will be held in Budapest, on Wednesday 25 June 2014.*



*The Children’s workshop at the Athens European Conference*

### Roma MATRIX project partners

**Project Lead:** Migration Yorkshire, based in Leeds City Council, UK. **Bulgaria:** Association National Network of Health Mediators, Association of Young Psychologists in Bulgaria, Regional Administration of Varna. **Czech Republic:** IQ Roma Service Civic Association. **Greece:** Action Synergy SA. **Hungary:** Former State Fostered Children’s Association, Roma Civic Association, Wheel of Future Public Utility Foundation.

## Country focus: United Kingdom

*By Carol Adamson, Rotherham, Marie McLelland, Glasgow and John Donegan, Migration Yorkshire*

**Rotherham:** Roma MATRIX project partner Rotherham Council is helping young people in the town's Roma community to see a brighter future.

The Pathway to Employment project was launched in November 2013, in partnership with local organisations, to increase the employment prospects of young Roma people, aged 15-16 by providing skills and guidance.

The first Pathway to Employment project welcomed 34 students from local secondary schools.

As well as workshops, presentations and taster sessions, the event allowed the young people to question the representatives of local employers and higher education providers to learn about the educational progression and training opportunities available to them.

A Roma MATRIX workshop held in Rotherham in November 2013 attracted over 200 people to discuss ways of improving support for the Roma community. After a successful workshop to promote Integration of Roma children, young people and parents in September, Rotherham are planning to run a second event in February 2014.

**Migration Yorkshire:** Migration Yorkshire has appointed experienced sub-contractors to train and support 45 Roma Women Health Mediators in the Yorkshire region. One, covering South Yorkshire, is a partnership led by Sheffield City Council. The other, covering West and East Yorkshire, is The Big Issue in the North – a high-profile voluntary sector organisation, known for providing opportunities for homeless people and other socially marginalised groups.

Sub-contractor Stop Hate UK is about to start the first of a series of workshops within Roma communities to raise awareness of hate crime, Roma people's rights in UK law, and what they can do if they experience racism.

Roma MATRIX also manages the UK National Roma Network, which aims to facilitate discussion between local authorities, national government and other relevant parties throughout the UK on Roma issues.

At the last meeting, a representative of the British embassies in Central and Eastern Europe led a discussion on linking Roma work in the UK to their work with Roma across Europe.

**Glasgow:** Glasgow City Council has an ambitious programme to develop entrepreneurship skills in young Roma living in the city. This will be supported by targeted engagement with potential employers.

Glasgow is also developing its scheme to provide mentoring opportunities for Roma people with public authorities. These will be combined with employment opportunities, training and language support.

Glasgow is also working with Roma groups in the City, to promote positive images of Roma in the run-up to International Roma Day in April 2014

### Roma MATRIX Project Partners

**Italy:** Bologna Municipality, Emilia Romagna Region. **Poland:** Roma Cultural and Community Association.

**Romania:** Roma Women Association in Romania. **Slovakia:** Society of Friends of Children from Children's Homes Smile as a Gift. **Spain:** Maranatha Federation of Gypsy Associations. **United Kingdom:** Glasgow City Council, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, Social Marketing Gateway Ltd, University of Salford, University of York



*Roma MATRIX partners in the UK are working to improve employability and job opportunities for Roma people*

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## Country focus: Czech Republic

By Šárka Pólová, IQ Roma Servis

Education of Roma children is a polarizing topic around the whole of Europe, including the Czech Republic. A common feature of education for Roma children in Czech is their segregation and a high representation of Roma in 'special' education' which often leads to poorer qualifications and a significant worsening of their future life prospects.

IQ Roma Servis (IQRS) is the biggest Czech Roma NGO that offers services and activities for Roma of all age groups. Through Roma MATRIX, IQRS has started a new campaign focused mostly at non-Roma, parents, so they let Roma and non-Roma children sit *Together At One Desk*.

This public campaign aims to persuade them to give Roma children a chance to go to mainstream schools. It also aims to support these schools as the directors often face strong pressure from non-Roma parents to reject Roma children.



*IQRS is working to improve education for Roma Children in the Czech Republic*

"I want my children to have a quality education. I know that they may not be the smartest, but they have a right to a good education. One of them goes to the primary school together with non-Roma children and I think that this is one of the best decisions that I've made for him", says

Silvia, a Roma mother with two children.

The campaign *Together at One Desk* aims to be prominent during the January enrolment period, so just right now Brno citizens can see campaign posters on the public transport, read about the topic in newspapers or on social networks or meet IQRS workers and Roma children with their parents in schools during specific events. Through Roma MATRIX, we aim to give them an opportunity to discuss their opinions and worries so together we can find solution to make the quality education of Roma children possible.



*Campaign posters for the Roma MATRIX Together at one Desk campaign have been appearing around Brno*

As well as its work with children, IQRS has been providing individual counselling for Roma people experiencing discrimination, including some historical discrimination dating back to World War 2. They have also been meeting with the Office of the Public Defender of Rights to discuss ways of improving how Roma discrimination cases are handled.

Mentoring schemes for Roma people are now underway in Zastávka and Tišnov and Rosice. The work aims to connect Roma clients and relevant clerks in town, so they can solve future problems effectively and independently

This publication has been produced with the financial support of the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Migration Yorkshire and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.