

Human Security and the Plight of Europe's Roma Population

Written by Brian Stern

This PDF is auto-generated for reference only. As such, it may contain some conversion errors and/or missing information. For all formal use please refer to the official version on the website, as linked below.

Human Security and the Plight of Europe's Roma Population

<https://www.e-ir.info/2010/12/14/human-security-and-the-plight-of-europes-roma-population/>

BRIAN STERN, DEC 14 2010

In 21st century Europe, Roma constitute the continent's largest minority group, numbering in the neighborhood of 8-12 million.[1] Historically labeled "gypsies" and victims of the Holocaust during World War II, Roma continue to suffer and face mass persecution in a Europe that promised 'never again'. Perhaps most appalling about the plight of Roma is what appears to be the direct involvement of European governments as relates to the discrimination experienced by Roma populations and how this translates into a population that lacks the basic fundamentals of human security. UNESCO's Human Security: Approaches and Challenges states that human security "comprises everything...human rights, access to education and health care, equal opportunities, [and] good governance." [2] Indeed, proving or disproving the extent to which these rights are absent from the lives of the Romani people and the extent to which governments sanction the degree of prejudice suffered in everyday society by Roma can be found by examining the actions of such countries as Italy and the Czech Republic, two examples where state-sponsorship of human rights violations are out in the open for NGO's and other advocacy groups to see and aggressively criticize, thus underscoring how states bear the ultimate responsibility: that being the security of the people that live within its borders.

While spread out across continental Europe, a large percentage of Roma can be found in the countries that once made up the Soviet bloc in Eastern Europe. Romania is home to the largest population, estimated at over 2 million on an absolute number basis,[3] while Macedonia, Slovakia and Bulgaria are home to the largest populations on a percentage of total population basis, at 11%, 9.8% and 8%, respectively, as seen in Figure 1.[4] There is growing evidence, however, that with the expansion of the EU to include Romania and Bulgaria, many Roma have been exercising their right to relocate within the EU and have migrated to countries such as Italy and France, with grave consequences noted elsewhere in this paper. According to the International and National Union of Roma and Sinti in Italy (UNIRSI), of the 170,000 Roma now in Italy (of which 70,000 hold Italian citizenship), 30% come from the former Yugoslavia countries while the remaining are leaving Romania, Bulgaria and Poland.[5]

Human Security and the Plight of Europe's Roma Population

Written by Brian Stern

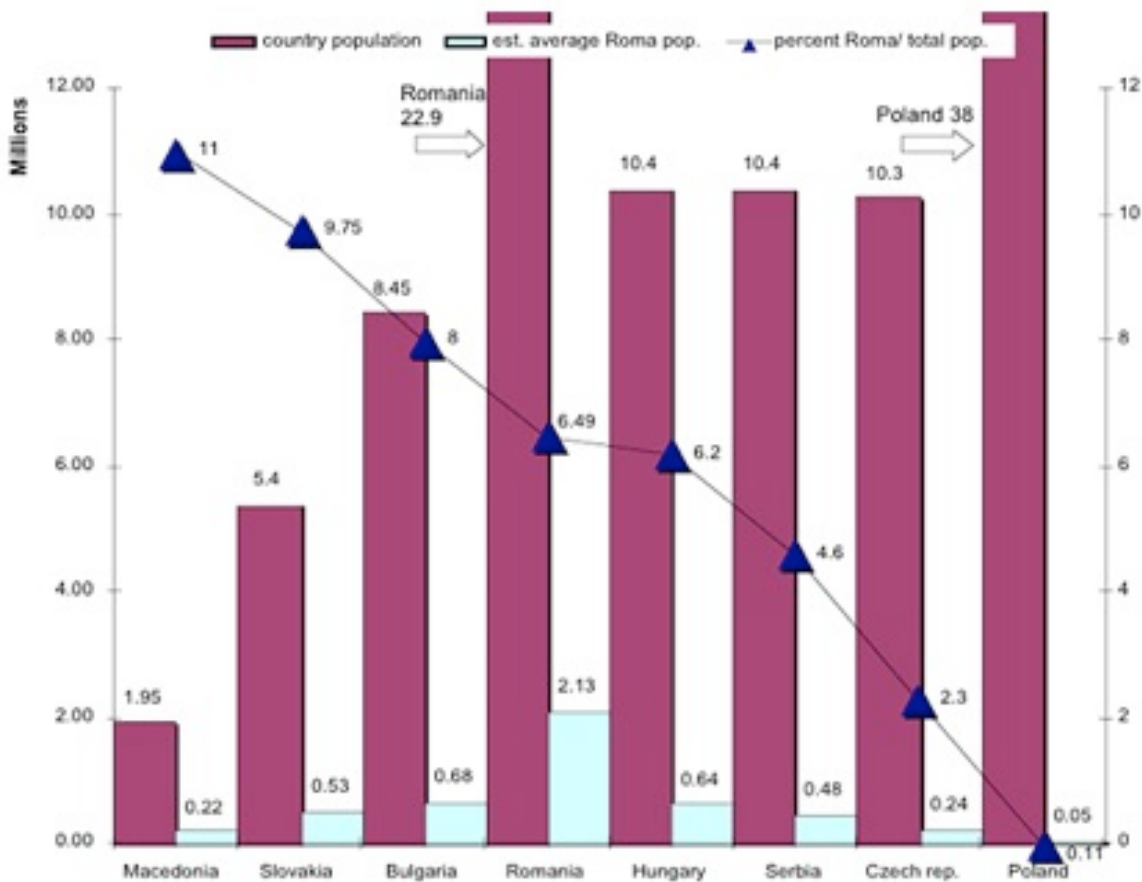


FIGURE 1: Average Roma Populations in Selected Countries and their Percentage Ratio to Total Population (2000). SOURCE: migrationinformation.org

DISCRIMINATION AND PREJUDICE

The Romani people suffer discrimination and prejudice that runs the gamut. Social policies in place have created segregated housing, segregated education, lack of employment opportunities, abject poverty to include lack of electricity and proper sanitation, difficulty accessing health care, police brutality, and attacks by the general public which are not always pursued by the police in response. The situation is further exacerbated through difficulty in achieving political representation in government, as prejudice keeps Roma out of the political process. The resulting effect has been a continuous cycle of non-progress as relates to integration with the majority populations and achieving some sense of normalcy and a sense of individual security.

CRISIS IN ITALY

“Despite being the country of Europe with the lowest percentage of Roma, Italy is behind at least 25 years compared to all policies integration (sic) for the people of the Roma.”[6] Indeed, a country that many Americans would consider a classic American destination, as recently as one month ago, the Italian authorities, under the government of Silvio Berlusconi, forcibly evicted a community of about 400 Roma people in Rome.[7] According to Amnesty International, Italian law requires advanced notice to any resident when such an eviction process is on the horizon. Amnesty International also stresses that it reminded Italian authorities that forced evictions, as carried out by Rome authorities, “are prohibited under international law as a gross violation of a range of human rights; in particular, the right to adequate housing.”[8] To be more specific, as a country that is a party to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which states, “Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his

Human Security and the Plight of Europe's Roma Population

Written by Brian Stern

correspondence,”[9] Italy is in direct breach of the ECHR through its policy of forced evictions.

Central to the problem in Italy is the Berlusconi-lead government. In winning the April 2008 election, Berlusconi's coalition partners included the Northern League and the National Alliance party, both parties that are strong supporters of anti-immigration measures.[10] The politicians from these parties have fanned the flames designed to reinforce the fear among Italy's people surrounding the unknown Roma by issuing public statements through the media. An example is seen on May 11, 2008, where Minister of Interior Roberto Maroni stated, “All Romani camps will have to be dismantled right away, and the inhabitants will be either expelled or incarcerated.”[11] This statement was followed two days later by a pogrom against a Romani camp in Naples[12], illustrating how the media can be used to erode the security of a given group.

The extent to which the Italian government has taken anti-Romani rhetoric to the extreme can be seen by the Council of Ministers of the Italian government. On May 21, 2008, they passed an Emergency Decree, unprecedented in post-WWII Europe, entitled, “Declaration of the state of emergency with regard to nomad community settlements in the territories of Campania, Lazio and Lombardia regions.”[13] The Decree continues on, singling out the ‘nomadic communities’, as being the cause of ‘serious social alarm’ and constituting a security threat for local majority populations. Causing great alarm to advocacy groups, however, is that the Decree stipulates that all Roma come under close monitoring, agree to be fingerprinted, agree to participate in census taking and agree to be photographed. In a report published by Rome's Commissioner for Roma, Carlo Mosca, it states that “Gypsies would be ‘monitored’, and a ‘census’ would be carried out. Gypsies would also be fingerprinted and photographed and this would allow the authorities to identify them.”[14]

Berlusconi's anti-immigration stance was strengthened on May 23, 2008, when Decree no.92 was put in place. The Decree's purpose was in direct response to the Roma ‘emergency’ and enacted in an effort to stem the tide of Roma inflows. The European Roma Rights Centre points out that such a Decree directly contradicts “obligations of the Italian state at the international level and, in particular, with European Community legislation in the field of freedom of movement of persons.”[15] As Italy has continued down this path, European actors of different stripes have issued harsh criticisms, but with little impact. The European Commission, EU members Romania and Spain, and high ranking officials from the Council of Europe have all spoken out against Italy's anti-Romani actions.

Italy's violations also underscore its lack of concern for human security, as UNESCO points out in addressing migrant rights. All evidence points to Italy's noncompliance for what UNESCO calls “the value of and respect for cultural diversity in multicultural societies and improve the balance between policies promoting diversity and policies promoting social integration.”[16] Italy has chosen to ignore all policies of diversity and social integration and resort to state-sponsored forced movement of a people on the basis of ‘otherness’.

While the state is clearly engaged in activities designed to rid the country of Roma, non-state actors are also taking a toll. This not only compounds the state-sponsored violations, but illuminates the degree to which the police refuse to punish crimes when they are carried out by non-Romani Italians against Roma. The ERRC reports that non-Romani Italians have engaged in attacks against Roma, which have included the use of Molotov cocktails used to light Romani homes on fire. The report states that “police response to such events is abysmal, with little to no investigation taking place and not a single perpetrator detained or arrested in connection with the violent attacks, which is in violation of Italy's obligations under Article 3 (freedom from ill-treatment) and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the ECHR.”[17]

The activities and descriptions above lead to the conclusion that in Italy's case, the plight of the Roma can be directly attributed to the government and its actions and inactions. The combination of public anti-Roma speech, the enactment of laws targeted directly at singling out Roma through monitoring and fingerprinting and police abuse and inaction have made a difficult situation worse. The ERRC calls for the Italian authorities to repeal the enactments it has put in place, cease all public speech of hatred, and seek to educate its majority population about Roma while conducting a campaign of anti-racism to mitigate a growing crisis. The ERRC also calls on other actors in the European community such as the EU, the EU's Fundamental Right Agency, the Council of Europe and the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to take action against Italy and its violation of human

Human Security and the Plight of Europe's Roma Population

Written by Brian Stern

rights for which it is a party to. Finally, the ERRC calls on the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination to “initiate its early warning or urgent measure procedure to prevent the situation in Italy from escalating and to prevent or limit the scale or number of serious violations.”[18]

ROMA IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Problems facing Roma in the Czech Republic are equally as troubling, with coerced sterilization of Romani women only recently receiving a formal message of regret from the Czech Prime Minister and segregated schools that continue to rob Romani children of equal educational opportunities as those enjoyed by the majority population, even as the Czech government promised to move Romani children over to standard schools. This non-compliance has not gone unnoticed by the ERRC and efforts are being taken to remedy the situation.

Coerced sterilization of Romani women occurred regularly under the communist regime from the 1970's through the transition to a market economy in 1990. The purpose, clearly, was to reduce the birth rate of Romani children. More recently, from 2004 through September 2005, 87 victims complained to the Czech Public Defender of Rights, with 25 Romani women coming together to form a victim advocacy group called the Group of Women Harmed by Forced Sterilization (GWHF).[19] Together with NGOs, GWHF pressured authorities and on November 23, 2009, Czech Prime Minister Jan Fischer issued a formal apology for the actions taken by the Czech government this decade. Elena Gorolova, a spokeswoman for GWHF, stated that “the apology means a first step towards long awaited justice although much remains to be done. We hope that this apology will serve as an example to Slovakia, where the problem of coercive sterilization still has not been addressed.”[20] While Roma communities received a formal apology, actual compensation for their troubles remains out of reach. The ERRC reports that the statute of limitations on several cases has expired, criminal charges have been tabled or due to poverty, the lack of legal funds keeps Roma communities from bringing the offenders in front of a court. While this shows that the pattern of being slighted by European governments continues, its progress brought about by Romani people coming together and demanding equal treatment. They achieved their goal and most likely have put a stop to the illegal practice of coerced sterilization. With that said, this also acts as further evidence that Roma women suffer from a lack of human security in the forms of both gender equality and ethnicity and how the state can play an active role in seeing that human security can become comprised due to xenophobia.

While coercive sterilization has been addressed in a relatively direct manner by the Czech government, the topic of education has become more complicated. In January 2005, new legislation was enacted that forbid the segregation of Czech schools. Segregation places Romani children into so-called ‘special’ schools, more appropriate for mentally disabled children, even in the case where Romani children do not exhibit any traits of a mental disorder. Furthermore, to foster integration with the majority population, the legislation stipulated the use of Romani teaching assistants and prep classes. As of November 2007, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) formally declared the practice of assigning Romani children to ‘special’ schools as unlawful discrimination and a violation of the European Convention of Human Rights. The ERRC continues to fight, as the Czech government has not complied with the legislation or with the ECHR's ruling.[21]

The non-compliance is so brazen, the ERRC surveying of 14 schools in 2005 found that once children were in ‘special’ schools, only 5 children had received a transfer to a standard primary school more suitable to their skill level. Four of those children were in one school that is located in the region of the country where the original lawsuit was brought.[22]

The Czech Deputy Minister for Education, Dusan Luzny, states in an interview that “the will is limited. The members of Parliament reflect the mood of the majority of society. And even in Parliament, there is xenophobic moods.”[23]

The Czech situation, seen in other countries as well, underscores what the ERRC refers to as “the glass box”, [24] a concept that refers to high unemployment among Roma that has a direct causal relationship with education levels among Romani adults. Figure 2 below illustrates the low education levels achieved across 5 countries: Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania.

Human Security and the Plight of Europe's Roma Population

Written by Brian Stern

AGE	Highest Level of Education Achieved												Totals
	None		Basic		Secondary		Vocational		University		Other		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
15-20	4	15	12	42	4	15	3	14	0	0	3	14	26
21-30	15	12	53	44	19	15	21	17	6	5	7	7	120
31-40	9	6	73	55	19	13	26	20	5	3	4	3	136
41-50	5	6	50	60	9	11	14	17	2	2	3	4	83
51-60	3	10	17	57	2	7	6	20	2	7	0	0	30
Over 60	2	22	6	67	0	0	1	11	0	0	0	0	7
Totals	38	9%	211	52%	53	12%	71	19%	15	3%	17	5%	402

FIGURE 2: Highest Education Level Achieved. SOURCE: The Glass Box: Exclusion of Roma from Employment

It's clear that with some 15% of Roma aged 15-20 receiving no education, 42% receiving a basic level of education and another 15% achieving secondary levels of education, that the education systems across these countries are failing Roma at the critical time of development in a person's life, which can and has led to economic insecurity. Overall, 9% received no education, while the bulk, or 52%, receive only a basic level of education. In all, this amounts to about 7 to 8 years of education, indicating that access to education is a challenge and achieving success in education to propel young adults to university levels (only 3%) of education is elusive. This underscores the need to remove segregation from schools across all countries to achieve better integration, which would potentially lead to a more normal flow from grade to grade. The low education also underscores the high unemployment seen among Roma, estimated to be as high as 62%,^[25] as education usually translates into qualifications to compete in the labor market. The lack of education is leaving Roma out of the labor market, creating even greater difficulty on Roma communities and keeping the cycle of poverty going, and yet, as UNESCO points out, education "is the keystone of the policies on human security...elementary education is the very first step to security, employment, political participation and the enjoyment of legal rights."^[26] But while UNESCO is the lead stakeholder in driving its Education for All campaign, it is quite clear that its impact on European governments is minimal as relates to providing individual security in the form of equal education to Roma children.

Like Italy, the government of the Czech Republic has and continues to play an active role in the exclusion of the Romani people and the violation of their human rights. With the admission of coercive sterilization combined with the admission that Parliament lacks the political will to impact change in their education system, the government has essentially admitted they are guilty of state-sponsored violation of Roma.

VIOLATIONS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

The ERRC, in its advocacy role, has made public numerous other violations that are clearly state-sponsored. They range from defending the right for Roma to access social assistance and health care in Bulgaria, criticizing hate speech by a member of the Hungarian Parliament and seeking compensation from Serbia resulting from the country violating the Torture Convention after it was found that Serbian police officers violently attacked a Romani man "due to his Roma ethnic origin and unavoidable association with a minority subjected to discrimination and prejudice."^[27]

THE GLASS BOX: EXCLUSION OF ROMA FROM EMPLOYMENT

A common theme throughout Europe and its Roma communities is rampant unemployment which leads to severe economic insecurity. While unemployment is a function of low education levels, the process by which Roma are excluded from earning a living is, in many cases, directly attributed to policies by employers where they will not hire

Human Security and the Plight of Europe's Roma Population

Written by Brian Stern

Roma. Which is to say, regardless of qualifications, education level or experience, employers actively screen out Roma from applications.[28] The ERRC refers to this as the “Glass Box”, or limiting the Roma from opportunities to “progress upwards, sideways or to obtain employment that is not connected to the delivery of service for other Romani people.”[29] Figure 3 below illustrates how unemployment among Roma adults compares to the majority population and shows how it can exceed 50%, with Hungary having the lowest unemployment rate at about 25%.

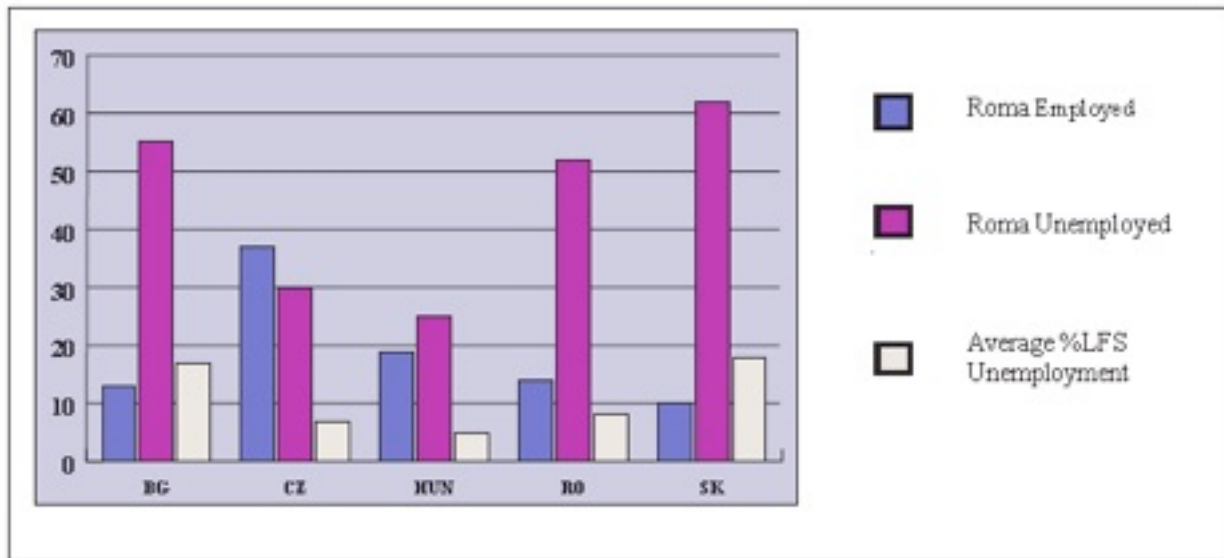


FIGURE 3: Roma Unemployment Across Five Countries. SOURCE: *The Glass Box: Exclusion of Roma from Employment*

As former communist countries, it may not be surprising to learn that under the communist regime, the unskilled labor provided by Roma kept them employed, as the inefficient labor-intensive industries accommodated Roma skill sets. As economies transitioned to capitalism in the early 1990s, Roma skill sets could not compete, leaving them to where they are today. [30] The majority of those who are employed are not working in office settings or teaching, or other types of occupational careers, but rather in low level menial jobs. In fact, only about 10% of Roma are employed in jobs considered professional or managerial.[31] Figure 4 below illustrates ERRC’s survey of 369 Romani adults and how they would categorize their category of employment.

Human Security and the Plight of Europe's Roma Population

Written by Brian Stern

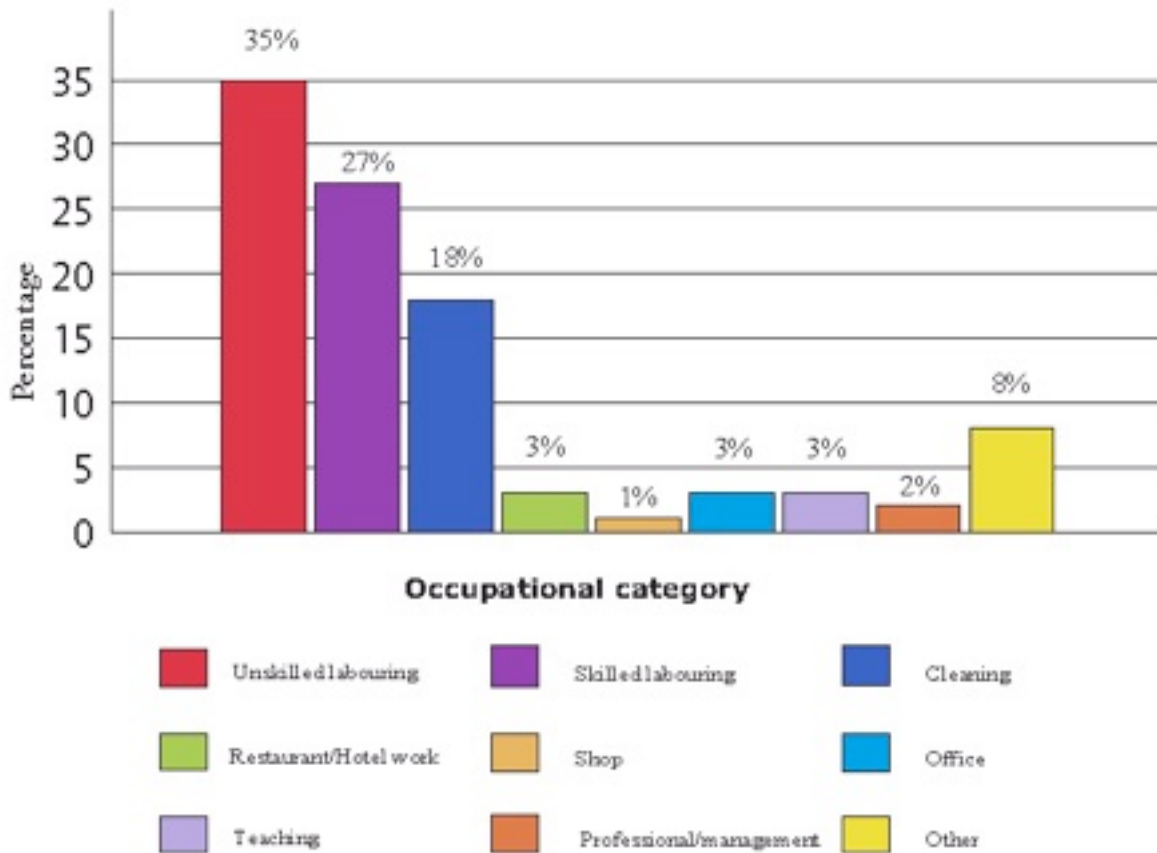


FIGURE 4: Category of Employment. SOURCE: *The Glass Box: Exclusion of Roma from Employment*

All five countries researched by the ERRC – Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Czech Republic – are bound by the ILO Discrimination Convention. The Convention is a national policy aimed at eliminating discrimination in access to employment regardless of race, color, gender, political opinion, national extraction or social origin and promotes equality of opportunity and treatment.[32] These countries are also party to other European law mechanisms that make discrimination by ethnicity illegal. These include the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.[33] And yet, while Europe clearly has their own Equal Opportunity Employment laws similar to the U.S., flagrant violations are occurring. Take for instance the percent of Roma interviewed who claim that they were told directly by the employer that they have a policy of not hiring Roma. As shown in Figure 5, almost 50% of the 369 surveyed say they were told directly by employers they cannot be hired due to their ethnicity. Another 35% said they “had a feeling” the denial of employment was due to their ethnicity.

Human Security and the Plight of Europe's Roma Population

Written by Brian Stern

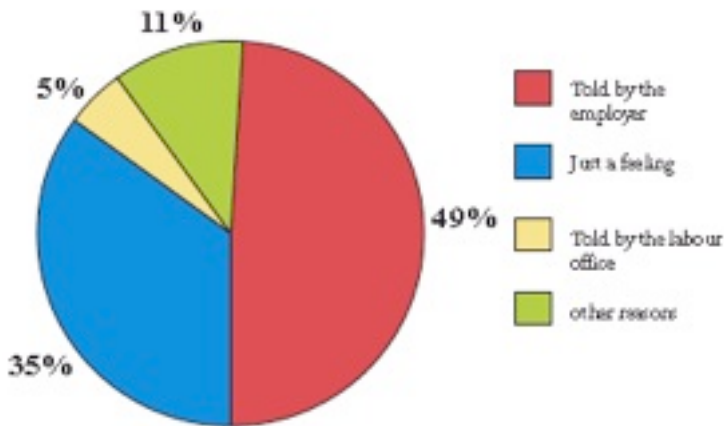


FIGURE 5: "How Do You Know it was Because You are Roma?" SOURCE: *The Glass Box: Exclusion of Roma from Employment*

To summarize the issue of (un)employment, it is clear that even with binding instruments of law that forbid discrimination of race as a basis to deny employment opportunities, European governments are not taking action to improve the situation. While there is no evidence that government officials are issuing marching orders to the private sector to exclude Roma from employment, there is also no evidence that they are taking action against the private sector to alleviate the discrimination. Like education, without gainful employment, Roma will not be able to break the cycle of exclusion and poverty that keeps them from improving their situation. Absent government intervention, Roma will continue to suffer at the hands of the majority population. In Sheehan's *International Security*, he breaks out economic security and illustrates how human security is threatened through compromised economic insecurity, an obvious offshoot of chronic unemployment. He states that, "if security is to be defined on an existential basis, then it is clearly legitimate to understand economic security in terms of basic human needs. An individual's survival and development as a human being is crucially dependent upon the provision of certain basic needs for sustaining life, such as adequate food, water, clothing, shelter, education and healthcare."^[34]

THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)

The OSCE, in answer to government inaction as relates to the Roma question, has been working to improve the situation and bring its 56 member states around. While it is yet another strong indication that European governments are not taking the necessary action to reduce hardships experienced by Roma, the OSCE's *2003 Implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area* was a critical step. The 2008 status report provides information and analysis on where the implementation stands and where the problems persist. While the report takes care to call out improvements made by governments, it cautions that many changes are not sustainable over the long term. The status report also makes clear that among the OSCE's 56 participating states, there are instances where awareness of the action plan is lacking and some national authorities simply overlook it. As a result, while initiatives have been put forth, they "have not alleviated, in proportion to the resources invested, the continuing social and economic inequalities, marginalization, racism, and discrimination."^[35]

With that said, several governments have taken action, especially in the form of allocating budgets to the implementation of integration activities. The report lists Poland as a country that has put aside 30 million euros to be used for integration efforts over a 10 year period. Montenegro has put aside 0.2% of its annual budget for Roma integration activities, while Slovenia's Office for National Minorities adopted the Legal Protection of the Roma Ethnic Community in Slovenia Act, legislation aimed at fostering integration between Roma and the majority population. ^[36] These actions by these governments are a step in the right direction, but it remains to be seen if they will have the desired impact over the long-term, as^[1] "the implementation process often suffers from a lack of political will."^[37]

The OSCE report brings to light issues as relates to the media and how the media fans the flames of racism and

Human Security and the Plight of Europe's Roma Population

Written by Brian Stern

discrimination which gets picked up quickly by the majority populations. The OSCE recommends participating states take action against media outlets in an effort to portray Roma in a more balanced light. This requires removing all stereotypes, such as representing Roma as nomadic, as thieves and as people who rely on or without right, take advantage of Europe's social safety nets. To combat the negative media coverage, steps have been implemented where Roma are participating in media, either through hosts of their own television or radio programs or an Internet-based radio station dedicated to Roma. Additionally, the OSCE report states that media campaigns against racism have been implemented in several countries to stem the tide of hatred. Documented campaigns include "Racism spoils the game. Violence destroys lives" in Romania; and the Council of Europe sponsored "All Different – All Equal" in Bulgaria. There is also a noticeable trend among the media where the term "Gypsies" is no longer being used and Roma are now being referred to correctly as "Roma." [38] Improvements in how media represent Roma can have a significant impact on how majority populations arrive at their perceptions of the Romani people. If governments can continue this trend, in time, it could reshape the picture of exclusion and aid in slowly building a society of inclusion.

The problem of housing is a critical one, where forced evictions have occurred multiple times in Italy and in other countries such as Bulgaria. The OSCE recommends its membership states take proper action to alleviate the issue by putting in place "procedures to clarify property rights, resolve questions of ownership and regularize the legal status of Romani people living in circumstances of unsettled legality." [39] This action is necessary as the OSCE believes there is "an evident lack of will on the part of local authorities to include informal settlements in urban upgrading plans. Roma settlements are planned for modern residential complexes, therefore the demands of the housing market suggest that those Roma living in informal settlements will be evicted." [40] Here again the OSCE gives clear indication that politics are determining how governments react to issues concerning Roma. With that said, some progress has been seen, specifically in Hungary, where between 2005 and 2007, the government implemented the "Housing and social integration program of people living in Roma settlements." More than 10,000 Roma benefited directly from this effort. Croatia also implemented a housing program in recent years that legalized and upgraded Roma settlements, in turn settling property issues and improving infrastructure. [41] It's noteworthy to mention that the Croatia effort was done within the Decade of Roma Inclusion project, to be discussed in the pages following. These improvements prove that action by governments can make a difference in the lives of Roma, but what's needed are policies and funding to be put aside for the projects on a widespread basis rather than as isolated incidences. Governments need to include informal Roma settlements in their urban upgrade planning initiatives and laws need to be enacted that legalize informal settlements, which would together protect against eviction and provide security for Roma living in informal settlements.

For Roma to improve their own circumstances in all areas of society requires participation in the political process and representation in political office. Predictably, due to low civic education, Roma, who in many cases have the right to vote, do not participate in the election process. Furthermore, for Roma to seek office is a challenge due to the rampant discrimination in European society. However, the OSCE, promoting heavily the need for Roma to participate in the political process as a means to facilitate integration and inclusion, has seen some positive movement in this area. Generating Roma participation can be seen in Hungary, where a Roma office has been set up, in Romania, where a Roma agency has been created, and in Slovakia where a plenipotentiary for Roma issues has been established. [42] These agencies are all designed to be headed by Roma to enact policies that impact Roma directly. This type of localization is crucial in areas of high Roma populations. Adding to this progress are several governments that have initiated training courses for young Romani adults aimed to encourage participation. The former Yugoslav republics of Croatia and Serbia have engaged Roma at this level, where a program of hiring Roma coordinators in local self-government units is providing the minority group with hands-on training in issues pertaining to government and policy-making. [43] The area of political participation may be the most hopeful for ambitious Roma, as it does appear governments are taking positive action to include them in the process, and the efforts to include Roma in training and the establishment of local agencies will provide the Roma with some sense of control over their own people where perhaps they can play a role in improving the various facets that make up human security, whether it be education, employment, housing, etc. Should this area continue to progress, the improvements in Roma life will be both measurable and sustainable.

DECADE OF ROMA INCLUSION 2005-2015

Human Security and the Plight of Europe's Roma Population

Written by Brian Stern

The Decade of Roma Inclusion is a commitment by European governments to improve the situations in their countries as relates to Roma, their social exclusion and their socio-economic status. There are twelve countries taking part in the Decade initiative, one of which is not Italy. But from Albania to the former Yugoslav republics and as far west as Spain, governments have come together, in partnership with other international organizations such as the World Bank, George Soros' Open Society Institute, UNICEF and of course the ERRRC, to tackle four key areas of society where Roma are most vulnerable. These areas are housing, health care, employment and education. To this end, each country has created their own action plans, not be confused with the OSCE's action plan, to improve their treatment of their Roma minorities.

A central component to the Decade is the Roma Education Fund (REF), aimed to aid Roma in achieving higher levels of education. The REF receives funding from governments, private donations and through NGOs. The REF is also the chief administrator of a scholarship targeted directly at Roma youth to help them achieve a university level education.

Outcomes over the first four years of the initiative are not entirely clear, with the most recent status report posted on the Decade website from 2007 stating that the first two years was focused on inputs, rather than outcomes. With that said, as noted earlier, Croatia has taken steps to alleviate housing issues for Roma, done in accordance with the Decade initiative. The Decade website also calls out the Romani people and urges for a high level of participation from them. What is not clear is how the organizers of the Decade have reached out to Roma communities to alert them of the inclusion effort. Also not presented is the extent to which governments are educating their majority populations in an effort to mitigate negative stereotypes and untrue myths that undoubtedly exist in the media if not elsewhere.

While outcomes are not yet certain, the Decade initiative has brought forth the cost of excluding Roma from society. According to a report commissioned by the Bratislava office of the Open Society Foundation, excluding Roma from Slovak society brings with it a cost that would increase Slovakia's GDP by 7-11% per year.[44] With its large Roma minority, it's not the savings from the reduced welfare payments that would increase the GDP, but rather the increase in employment and the resulting output that would drive the GDP to unprecedented levels.[45] This projected increase would justify the investment needed to improve education and deliver Roma-targeted programs designed to facilitate integration with Slovak society. The report calls for the end of the practice of placing Roma children in 'special' schools, similar to the Czech Republic, to bring children up-to-speed with the majority population. To reduce the opportunity cost incurred through Roma exclusion, proper education would then lead to employment opportunities. Figure 6 below, calculated by the authors of the report, illustrates how through inclusion of Roma into the labor market, proper schooling, access to health care and reduced crime within Roma settlements, Slovakia would see savings that by 2030, would achieve about an 11% increase in GDP. While this is only for Slovakia, one can only assume that similar savings would apply across all European countries with excluded Roma populations. Putting a number on prejudice and discrimination is powerful and should be a valuable motivator to all countries should they wish to bring the wealth of their country to new heights.

Table no. 19 – Summary of assumed savings

	2000-05	2006-10	2011-15	2016-20	2021-25	2026-30
Direct costs, EURm	102,7	156,0	223,3	301,8	383,6	479,3
Welfare benefits	45,1	45,8	59,5	76,7	93,4	109,8
Social security	6,2	14,0	20,8	26,5	28,6	28,5
Education system	14,5	21,7	26,3	33,5	41,1	48,1
Health insurance	21,3	50,9	84,8	123,8	169,2	231,2
Crime	12,7	19,1	25,6	32,9	40,5	48,1
Administrative costs savings						
2,9%	2,9	4,4	6,3	8,5	10,8	13,5
Indirect costs, EURm	2.457,0	4.632,2	7.583,8	11.714,8	17.649,1	24.956,9
- total, EURm	2.559,7	4.788,2	7.807,1	12.016,6	18.032,7	25.436,2
- total, % GDP	6,4	7,1	7,8	8,7	9,7	10,6

Average yearly numbers. Source: calculations of authors.

FIGURE 6: Assumed Savings From Roma Inclusion. SOURCE: Decade of Roma Inclusion, The Cost of Non-

Human Security and the Plight of Europe's Roma Population

Written by Brian Stern

Inclusion

CONCLUSIONS

Given the severity of the discrimination and prejudice suffered by Europe's Roma minority, defining government's role was key to further understanding the challenges faced by Roma and how they live in a perpetual state of crisis as relates to human security. As UNESCO puts it, "The question of Roma is a thorn in the eye of Europe, not only for Roma for whom freedom from want, freedom from fear and a life of dignity remains a distant dream, but also for the region as a whole that cannot afford such human insecurity among its population." [46] In proving the hypothesis that governments are playing a role in the suffering of the Romani people, classic American destinations such as Italy and now the Czech Republic have been provided. There is no doubt that Italy's Roma population is suffering from state-sponsored discrimination and threats to their own security that violate even the most basic of human rights laws. The Czech Republic, as stipulated by law, has not desegregated its schools and continues non-compliance in this area, therefore leaving Roma children to a future of continued poverty and compromised economic security. Other countries have been found in violation of certain conventions, be it Serbia or Bulgaria, and others not documented here. The OSCE, charged with oversight for security concerns throughout its 56 member states saw the need to prepare and publish a comprehensive action plan designed to drive its member states to take steps to improve the situations impacting Roma. Overlaying the OSCE effort, governments, with the help of IGOs and NGOs, formed the Decade of Roma Inclusion, now going into its 5th year, but to what level has it been successful? Between the OSCE action plan and the Decade initiative, clearly the multiple calls-to-action indicate that there is an urgent problem that needs solving. And finally, as Europe continues its exclusionary practices towards a people it knows only through media outlets and hearsay, the economic impact of their prejudice is costing countries millions of euros in productivity. How can this be ignored?

Sheehan's Robert F. Kennedy quote further underscores the brazenness of Europe's parliaments in their role of not providing security to all populations, he writes, "there is another kind of violence...this is the violence that afflicts the poor, the slow destruction of a child by hunger and schools without books and home without heat in the winter." [47] Clearly, there is much work to be done for organizations like the ERRC in their mission to bring about equality and security in a Europe struggling to come to terms with the differences in people.

—

*Written by: **Brian Stern***

*Written for: **Dr Everita Silina***

*Written at: **New School University, New York***

*Date: **December 2009***

[1] migrationinformation.org, The Roma in Eastern Europe: Still Searching for Inclusion, May, 2005

[2] UNESCO, Human Security: Approaches and Challenges, Page 3

[3] migrationinformation.org

[4] migrationinformation.org

[5] UNIRSI, Report on Roma Communities in Rome, Naples and Milan, Feb 20, 2009

[6] UNIRSI, Report on Roma Communities in Rome, Naples and Milan, Feb 20, 2009

[7] Amnesty International, Italian Authorities Forcibly Evict Another Roma Community, November, 2009

[8] Ibid.

Human Security and the Plight of Europe's Roma Population

Written by Brian Stern

- [9] European Rome Rights Centre, International NGO Coalition Report, Page 24, July, 2008
- [10] Ibid. Page 18
- [11] Ibid. Page 15
- [12] ERRRC Calls On Italian Government to Stop Anti-Romani Pogroms, July, 2008
- [13] European Rome Rights Centre, International NGO Coalition Report, Page 17, July, 2008
- [14] Ibid. Page 19
- [15] European Rome Rights Centre, International NGO Coalition Report, Page 21, July, 2008
- [16] UNESCO, Human Security: Approaches and Challenges, Page 30
- [17] European Rome Rights Centre, International NGO Coalition Report, Page 29, July, 2008
- [18] European Roma Rights Centre, International NGO Coalition Report, Page 38, July, 2008
- [19] European Rome Rights Centre, Czech Prime Minister Apologizes to Victims of Coercive Sterilization, November, 2009
- [20] Ibid.
- [21] European Roma Rights Centre, Persistent Segregation of Roma in the Czech Education System, Page 3, May, 2009
- [22] Ibid., Page 4
- [23] Al Jazeera, available at YouTube.com, The Roma Struggle, November 25, 2008
- [24] European Roma Rights Centre, The Glass Box: Exclusion of Roma from Employment, Page 21, February 2007
- [25] Ibid. Page 22
- [26] UNESCO, Human Security: Approaches and Challenges, Page 12
- [27] European Roma Rights Centre, UN Committee Finds Serbia Violated Torture Convention, July, 2009
- [28] European Roma Rights Centre, The Glass Box: Exclusion of Roma from Employment, Page 9, February 2007
- [29] Ibid. Page 9
- [30] Ibid. Page 16
- [31] Ibid. Page 24
- [32] Ibid. Page 35
- [33] Ibid. Page 36
- [34] International Security: An Analytical Survey, Michael Sheehan, Economic Security, Page 76

Human Security and the Plight of Europe's Roma Population

Written by Brian Stern

[35] http://www.osce.org/publications/odihr/2008/09/33130_1186_en.pdf, Page 7

[36] Ibid. Page 20

[37] http://www.osce.org/publications/odihr/2008/09/33130_1186_en.pdf, Page 21

[38] Ibid. Page 28

[39] Ibid. Page 29

[40] Ibid. Page 30

[41] Ibid. Page 32

[42] Ibid. Page 45

[43] Ibid. Page 46

[44] Decade of Roma Inclusion, The Cost of Non-Inclusion, Page 5, July, 2009

[45] Ibid. Page 5

[46] UNESCO, Human Security: Approaches and Challenges, Page 99

47 International Security: An Analytical Survey, Michael Sheehan, Economic Security, Page 77