



CHILDREN OF ROMA AND TRAVELLER PRISONERS

A Short Guide



Children of Roma and Traveller Prisoners: A Short Guide

Based on a report by
Rachel Brett

Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) is a pan-European network of non-profit organisations working on behalf of children separated from an imprisoned parent. The network encourages innovative perspectives and practices to ensure that children with an imprisoned parent fully enjoy their rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and that action is taken to enable their well-being and development.

This report has been produced with the financial support of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union. The contents are the sole responsibility of Children of Prisoners Europe and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.

Children of Prisoners Europe is a non-profit organisation registered in France under French Association law 1901.

SIRET : 437 527 013 00019

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Introduction

Roma and Travellers tend to be overrepresented in prison populations in Europe, although it is not possible to document this fully and exact numbers are unavailable, as some countries in Europe do not provide prison population statistics by “ethnicity” and “race”.¹ Yet it is estimated that over one half of sentenced prisoners in Bulgaria are Roma,² with numbers being comparable in Hungary and Romania, while Travellers make up less than 1 per cent of the general population in Ireland, yet nearly 25 per cent of the female prison population.³ Reasons for overrepresentation include, *inter alia*, increased likelihood of racial profiling, greater incidence of poverty, and lack of eligibility for alternatives to sentencing before and during trial and after sentencing. With the exception of Ireland, the UK and Finland, this exploratory study, carried out in eleven countries in Europe⁴, has found that there appears to be a notable lack of studies and attention to the specific situation and challenges faced by Roma prisoners and their children/families in those countries surveyed.

Coming in the wake of preliminary mapping efforts undertaken by the Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE) network across the region, this publication, based primarily on a report by Rachel Brett and drawing on information gleaned from members of the COPE network, aims to bring together information, good practice and recommendations to provide a guidance tool for further investigation with respect to addressing the specific challenges and problems experienced by Roma and Travellers in prison and in maintaining quality contact with their children. These efforts are underpinned by United Nations, European Union and Council of Europe treaties and by the European Prison Rules,⁵ notably Prison Rule 38(1), which stipulates that “special arrangements shall be made to meet the needs of prisoners who belong to ethnic or linguistic minorities”.

The Council of Europe uses the term “Roma and Travellers” which encompasses the wide diversity of groups: a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/ Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); and c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish and the populations designated under the term “Gens du voyage”, and persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. This tool uses ‘Roma and Travellers’ in the same way.

1 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Handbook on Prisoners with Special Needs, Vienna, 2009, p. 58.

2 Written Comments of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee Concerning Bulgaria for Consideration by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at its 92nd Session (March 2017), pp. 7-8.

3 11 COPE countries participating in the study

4 Irish Penal Reform Trust: Travellers in the Irish Prison System (19 May 2014); Tanya Lalor: Ethnic Identifiers in Irish Prisons (Travellers in Prison Initiative, March 2017); Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre and National Traveller Women's Forum: Irish Traveller & Roma Women, Joint Shadow Report (20 January 2017).

5 Recommendation Rec(2006)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the European Prison Rules (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 11 January 2006 at the 952nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies).

Methodology

This report is based on information from members and affiliates of the COPE network, desk research and responses to specific requests made by the author to various organisations and individuals during 2017. The initiative for this report was a decision to send a short questionnaire to the 86 representatives of COPE members and affiliates across Europe and worldwide, inquiring about their experience of working with children of Roma and Traveller prisoners; a total of 19 countries in Europe received the questionnaire.⁶ Twelve representatives responded from nine countries: Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.⁷ A preliminary report drawing on the responses to this questionnaire and other materials was drafted, and a follow-up questionnaire formulated to obtain additional information from those who had responded. A representative from the association NGO Krits in Finland, who had not responded to the initial questionnaire, did so during the second phase of the survey and their responses have been incorporated into the findings. Although this study is exploratory in nature, with several methodological limitations—its limited scope, for example, with some respondents representing local organisations and not operating nationwide—it is believed to be the first of its kind, with its specific focus on maintaining the relationship between children and their Roma and Traveller parents in prison.



Although many European institutions and some NGOs have a particular focus on the situation of Roma and Travellers, including in relation to the administration of justice, they have not addressed this particular area, rather focussing (with justification) on the questions of police attitudes and harassment, and of hate crimes or racially motivated crimes against Roma and Travellers and the response (or lack thereof) to them. Studies which have been carried out, and the responses from COPE members and affiliates in this exploratory study, clearly indicate that there are specificities, some of which are common across Roma and Traveller communities and some of which are not, as well as some shared with the children of other prisoners. The additional problems and challenges faced when Roma are imprisoned outside their own country, whether the children/family are in the same country as the prisoner, in their own country or another country, also need greater attention, again taking into account the similarities and differences with other foreign national prisoners.

⁶ Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. Hungary and Poland were not COPE network members in 2016.

⁷ Respondents included Deputy Children's Ombudsperson (Croatia), Za Branou (Czech Republic), Hoppenbank e.V. and a social worker in Cologne Prison (Germany); Bedford Row Association and Irish Penal Reform Trust (Ireland), Exodus (the Netherlands), FFF (Norway), BUFFF and Solrosen (Sweden), Heilsarmee Gefängnisdienst (Switzerland) and Play Factors (UK).

Carrying out such a study can act as an impetus for stakeholders and civil society organisations to expand their frames and the way they work. The element of process plays a key role here: surveying COPE organisations supporting children with imprisoned parents raises awareness of the need to reflect more deeply on ways in which they can support children of Roma prisoners as well. Likewise, through this report, non-COPE organisations and partners who have developed or are currently developing support schemes for Roma can reflect on how to incorporate aspects that address issues relevant to children of Roma prisoners. In this way, The recent Roma and Travellers Team training organised by the Office of the Directorate General of Programmes⁸ for staff at Sliven Prison, Bulgaria's sole female prison, in November 2017 is a good example. The training looked at ways in which discrimination can be tackled and how to work with women with special needs, and will be ultimately rolled out to the male prison in Sofia. This kind of training session could provide an ideal platform for exploring ways in which to expand the frame to incorporate a more in-depth focus on the needs of children of Roma prisoners and on how prison staff can help support the relationship with their parent. As COPE launches a support initiative for imprisoned fathers in Sofia in 2018,⁹ we hope to work closely with prison staff to together foster ways to better address the needs of all children separated from a parent in prison.



⁸ The Office of the Directorate General of Programmes (ODGP) designs and coordinates Council of Europe cooperation activities in member states.

⁹ "Papa Plus" is a positive parent support initiative for imprisoned fathers in Bulgaria, co-developed with the Sofia-based organisation Child & Space and drawing on expertise from the Fédération des Relais Enfants Parents in France.

A few figures

As previously indicated, exact numbers are unavailable, as some countries in Europe do not provide prison population statistics by “ethnicity” and “race.”

The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee estimates that over 50 per cent of sentenced prisoners in Bulgaria are Roma.¹⁰ An unsourced report in 2015 by Agence France Presse indicated that most of the inmates in one juvenile detention facility in Bulgaria were Romani.¹¹

In Croatia, Roma are overrepresented in the prison population; this is particularly disproportionate in the case of minors and young adults.¹²

In England and Wales, about 5% of prisoners self-identified as Gypsy, Romani, Travellers in 2012-13, according to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons,¹³ or approximately 4,200, with 12% in facilities for 15-18 year olds. This may not include foreign Roma as they may have been recorded only under their nationality.¹⁴

In Finland, it was estimated in 2010 that 6% of the prison population was Roma who comprise 0.2% of the general population of the country.¹⁵

In Germany, the Federal Government disputes the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention's finding of a disproportionate application of pretrial detention in the case of foreign nationals and Roma, including minors on the basis that there are no figures to support it.¹⁶

In Hungary, although data is not collected, empirical studies indicate that Roma are overrepresented in the criminal justice system¹⁷ with possibly 45% of prisoners being Roma¹³; similarly in Romania.¹⁸

In Ireland, Irish Travellers make up 0.6% of the general population but 15% of the male and 22% of the female prison population.¹⁹

In Italy, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has particularly noted the need to monitor and remedy the disproportionate application of pretrial detention in the case of foreign nationals and Roma, including minors.²⁰

A study in Spain in 1999 found that 25% of women prisoners were Roma although only 1.5% of the general population are Roma.²¹

10 Written Comments of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee Concerning Bulgaria for Consideration by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at its 92nd Session (March 2017), pp.7-8

11 <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/bulgaria-most-inmates-in-shocking-juvenile-prison-conditions-are-romani> (accessed 24/9/17)

12 According to the Republic of Croatia Ombudsperson for Children around 38% of those in the Correctional Institution in Turopolje are Roma (response to COPE questionnaire, 14 September 2016)

13 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP): People in prison: Gypsies, Romany and Travellers (11 March 2014), p.7

14 "Bridging the Gap between Academics and Policy Makers" Thematic Meeting Report and Policy Guidance from a Council of Europe/European Academic Network on Romani Studies funded International Seminar "Crime and Punishment: Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in the criminal justice system" 3rd December 2014 Venue: New Scotland Yard, London, UK, pp 45 and 46

15 Krits Probation Foundation response to COPE questionnaire, 1 August 2017

16 Report of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Follow up Mission to Germany, A/HRC/30/36/Add.1, paras. 12-13, and 72 (10 July 2015)

17 Report of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Mission to Hungary, A/HRC/27/48/Add.4, paras. 118-121, 3 July 2014

18 Response to COPE questionnaire by Winie Hanekamp (Exodus)

19 Irish Penal Reform Trust: Travellers in the Irish Prison System (19 May 2014); Tanya Lator: Ethnic Identifiers in Irish Prisons (Travellers in Prison Initiative, March 2017); Pavee Point Traveller & Roma Centre and National Traveller Women's Forum: Irish Traveller & Roma Women, Joint Shadow Report (20 January 2017)

20 Report of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Follow up Mission to Italy, A/HRC/30/36/Add.3 (10 June 2015)

21 Barañi Project: Study of Romani Women in Prison in Spain (1999)

Disproportionate representation in prison populations: some hypotheses

Several factors, including racial profiling, a lack of legitimate opportunities for securing income, and ineligibility for alternative sentencing, can lead to higher rates of incarceration for Roma/Travellers. Many of the reasons for the over-representation of Roma and Travellers in European prison populations are identified as priority issues to be addressed in the European Union's Roma Integration Strategies. The European Commission has linked monitoring progress in Roma integration to its wider growth agenda, Europe 2020.

- Roma/Travellers being more often subjected to police stop and search operations increases the likelihood they will enter the criminal justice system²²
- Greater frequency in reporting offences committed by perpetrators from Roma/Traveller backgrounds
- Discrimination in sentencing²³
- Difficulty in claiming state benefits²⁴ and punitive denial of benefits²⁵ increases the likelihood of both poverty and 'antisocial behaviour' (e.g., begging) leading to arrests, unpaid fines and imprisonment²⁶
- Greater reliance on court-appointed defence counsel, who tend to be less active in defending their clients as they are often poorly paid
- Alternatives to imprisonment before and during trial and after conviction²⁷ (including early release²⁸) may be premised on the offender having a certain identity, residence, family and social network, job and roots in the community²⁹
- Because Roma are often amongst the poorest members of society, they are not in a position to post bail (pre-trial) or pay fines instead of a custodial sentence.



22 Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: Non-discrimination and the protection of persons with increased vulnerability in the administration of justice, in particular in situations of deprivation of liberty and with regard to the causes and effects of overincarceration and overcrowding (A/HRC/36/28 of 21 August 2017), para. 17; Baraňi Project

23 Written Comments of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee Concerning Bulgaria for Consideration by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at its 92nd Session (March 2017), p. 30

24 Pavee Point joint submission to CEDAW: for example being unable to demonstrate their right to reside in accordance with European Directive 2004/38 and other conditions. This problem may also mean that Roma and Traveller victims of domestic violence may not be able to access services or alternative accommodation.

25 Written Comments of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, *op cit*, p. 30

26 Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies: *Situation of Roma in Latvia*

27 Baraňi Project: *Study of Romani Women in Prison in Spain* (1999)

28 Can Yildiz presentation, "*Bridging the Gap between Academics and Policy Makers*" report, p. 46

29 Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: General recommendation XXXI on the prevention of racial discrimination in the administration and functioning of the criminal justice system (2005), para. 26(a) and (c); *Situation of Roma in Latvia*, p. 50

Roma, Gypsy, Traveller, Irish Travellers: similarities and distinctions relevant to children of prisoners

Although the issues faced by imprisoned Roma and Travellers and the impact on their children may be similar, there are general differences to consider as well, of course, as their individual experiences and circumstances differ.

Similarities include:

- Experience of long-term discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion.³⁰
- Negative experiences of governmental authorities, including the police, prison officials and social services.
- Tendency for the level of education and literacy to be much lower than in the general population³¹, which may make accessing information, services and resources in prison harder too³² as well as maintaining contact with family.³³
- Tendency for Roma and Travellers to have more children and from a younger age than the general population.³⁴ This suggests a need to be alert to the importance of working with those in juvenile detention facilities as well as those in adult prisons.³⁵
- As with prisoners in general, who looks after any children not imprisoned with the mother varies with extended family often stepping in with the usual benefits and challenges of these arrangements.
- Foster or state care may raise concerns about the safety of the children and their losing their Roma/ Traveller cultural identity.³⁶
- Generally high levels of poverty and social deprivation reduce the possibilities of travelling to visit an imprisoned parent, the frequency of phone contacts and access to services and assistance.³⁷
- Added difficulties of maintaining contact with family arise for those who are nomadic or semi-nomadic, or live on temporary sites from which they may be moved on, so that mail may not be received, and internet access and mobile phone signals may be limited.³⁸
- Lack of data is correlated with lack of support.

30 See European Commission: Assessing the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the Council Recommendation on Effective Roma integration measures in the Member States 2016

31 Families Outside response to COPE questionnaire; TPI Strategic Plan: 53.5% of Travellers in British prisons have self-reported literacy problems. p.6; Overlooked and Overrepresented: Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children in the youth justice system (The Traveller Movement, 2016); Pavee Point joint submission to CEDAW; The situation of Roma in Latvia (Riga, 2003)

32 Rachel Doyle: 'Hearing their Voices' Traveller Women in Prison (Travellers in Prison Initiative, Draft, March 2017)

33 Situation of Roma in Latvia

34 According to HMIP, in England and Wales Gypsy, Romany and Traveller prisoners were significantly more likely to report having children under the age of 18 (64% compared to 51%). According to Overlooked and Overrepresented: Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children in the youth justice system, one in ten of the boys (aged 15-18) in Young Offender Institutions reported that they had a child. In Ireland, the Pavee Point joint submission to CEDAW reports that "There are 252 married 15-19 year old Travellers of which 91 are males and 161 are females; 27% of Traveller women have had 5 or more children compared with 2.6% of women overall." Also Families Outside response to COPE questionnaire, and Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, p. 30.

35 Maria Baum, Caritas Erzbistum Cologne, interview with Claudia Vogg, 25 April 2017; Republic of Croatia Ombudsperson for Children response to COPE questionnaire 14 September 2016.

36 Rachel Doyle: 'Hearing their Voices' Traveller Women in Prison (Travellers in Prison Initiative, Draft, March 2017)

37 Republic of Croatia Ombudsperson for Children response to COPE questionnaire 14 September 2016.

38 I-HOP Recognising the Needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Children Affected by a Family Member's Offending (10 July 2017)

Distinctions include:

- Nationality and language
- Settled vs. nomadic
- Some may be imprisoned in their own country; in that case, Travellers are more likely to speak the language of that country.
- Some Roma may not use the national language as their mother tongue (may also be an issue for communication between prisoner and child if the prison authorities do not permit the use of a language they do not understand).³⁹
- Those imprisoned in another country, like other foreign nationals, may not speak/understand the language of the place of imprisonment. The prisoner may be subject to deportation at the end of the sentence, even if there are family members in the country of imprisonment.⁴⁰ Furthermore, they may be 'irregular migrants' which raises issues not only for the prisoner but also for the family/partner/spouse if they are also in the country irregularly and so may be afraid to visit or contact the prisoner.⁴¹ Those without nationality may have a temporary leave to remain.
- A nomadic lifestyle or living in an informal settlement (even within the country of imprisonment let alone in another country) makes communication between prisoner and children harder as there may not be effective postal or phone communication, or only mobile phone access with increased costs.⁴²
- The child, or family members able and willing to look after the baby or child, may be in a third country, ie neither the country of origin nor the country of imprisonment, and may also not be easy to contact.⁴³ This could also be complicated by immigration status or rules.
- In some communities, it is not common to name the father on the birth certificate which creates problems for children wishing to visit their imprisoned father.⁴⁴



³⁹ Czech Ombudsman's 2009 Report states that it is prohibited for prisoners to speak Romani language to own preschool age children on telephone

⁴⁰ Response to COPE questionnaire by Hedy Brenner, Heilsarmee Gefängnisdienst (Switzerland)

⁴¹ Example from Terre des Hommes Belgium in email to author

⁴² HMIP, p.10: Despite being more likely to report that staff had supported them to maintain contact with their family (40% compared with 35%), a greater proportion of Gypsy, Romany and Traveller prisoners than other prisoners reported problems with sending or receiving mail (52% compared with 45%) and access to telephones (35% compared with 28%).

⁴³ Maria Baum, Caritas Erzbistum Cologne, interview with Claudia Vogg, 25 April 2017

⁴⁴ Response to COPE questionnaire by Winie Hanekamp (Exodus)

Women and children in Finland: Romano Missio case study

Romano Missio, an organisation working to support Roma people in Finland, have been working with Roma female prisoners since 2010, overseeing initiatives such as a child protection unit for Roma children. After a series of projects, they have now secured permanent funding for working with Roma female offenders from the Criminal Sanctions Agency. Their target group is small but demanding, and Romano Missio's work is crucial. As part of their work, the "Women's Turn" project developed a culturally sensitive service scheme with practices that have been introduced into mainstream prison services. An initial project was staffed by Roma project workers hired to support female Roma prisoners on an individual basis, while also leading thematic focus groups as part of "Voiva" (loosely translated as "able"), a programme launched in 2011 in Vanaja women's prison. Voiva has 11 themes, one of which is parenthood. Discussions draw on a method called "the map of parental roles", which explores parenting through a variety of different parental roles, ranging from guardian; to loving and nurturing; to setting boundaries. Other themes related to children include child-rearing practices common to Roma culture and the evolution of parenting over the years. Some 400 people have participated in the Voiva groups in four prisons in Finland to date. Many women serve short sentences and thus participate in the group several times.

The women's prison also has a family unit where prisoners can reside with their children, who can stay with the mother in prison if under age 2 at the time of incarceration; they can remain there until age 3. The family unit staff took care of the children when their mothers attended the Voiva group; in some exceptions, the children could accompany their mothers to the group sessions. Likewise, when the women came to meet the Roma workers on an individual basis, they could bring their children along. Roma workers also went to visit the women in the family unit.

The Roma workers were in touch with a range of services and authorities, including child protection services, as well as the families of the prisoners. Some of the prisoners had children that were placed in the Romano Missio Roma child protection unit.

Responses to the project have been positive: female Roma prisoners have felt that they benefited from the presence of Roma workers. The women in Roma culture play a very central role in keeping families together. Helping the mother benefits the whole

family. The women have expressed relief over their having someone to work with who understands the culture they come from. Roma in Finland speak Finnish as their native language, but usage differs slightly, which can sometimes contribute to difficulties in communication. The women have said that they don't always feel able to communicate and explain their needs to the prison staff. The prison staff has reacted favorably to the project and reported gains of important information about Roma culture that enhanced their understanding of the women. The staff also maintain that the women seek out more contact with staff as a result.

Romano Missio secured additional funding for a follow-up project in 2015-2016 called "Time for Change", which offered female Roma prisoners support during the post-release resettlement process. In Finland, prisoners can be eligible for probationary supervised freedom, allowing them to serve the end of their sentence outside the prison, supervised technically and subject to strict regulations, including participation in mandatory activities.

Time for Change offered regular, individual support meetings as a part of Roma women's supervised probationary freedom. Children could accompany their mothers to the sessions, with their needs being accounted for as well in terms of age and development.

After Time for Change ended, in 2016, permanent funding was secured in 2017 for Women's Corner, which is a meeting point and support centre in Helsinki. The meeting point coordinates the prison work and Voiva-work and offers personal support with post-release resettlement and service counselling. A play corner has been set up at Women's Corner and it is developing additional mother-child work. The initiative involves cooperation with child protection services and other organisations who support the mother-child relationship. The overall idea is to support the mother to use existing services with the assistance and help of a Roma worker.

Good practice: examples across Europe

Good practices do exist and much benefit could be derived from increased sharing of them. These include working with Roma and Traveller organisations, employing Roma and Travellers in work engaging with prisoners and their children, and having programmes or links both within the prisons and in the Roma and Traveller communities. The findings of this exploratory study clearly indicate that good practice includes working with Roma or Traveller organisations, based not only on the experience of COPE members who participated in the study, but also on such schemes as the Irish Travellers in Prison Initiative (TPI), launched in 2014, with a steering group which includes Traveller organisations. The overall aim of the TPI is to embed positive change in policy and practice. The TPI has identified five key action areas that have the potential to inform policy and practice in a pragmatic and sustainable manner. They are:

1. Building a knowledge base about Travellers in prison
2. Increasing and improving access to prison-based services for Travellers
3. Strengthening supports for families of Travellers in prison, and following release, via a multi-agency approach
4. Strengthening self-identity and self-advocacy for Travellers in prison by mainstreaming a peer support model
5. Increasing awareness and capacity through training and learning programmes to prison service and probation service staff.⁴²

This Initiative and the examples of good practice from the UK (England & Wales) on the next page follow from the studies undertaken about the specific situation of Travellers in prison in these two countries; in the latter case, Roma were included in the study.

Given Roma/Travellers' generally negative experiences with respect to government authorities, underscoring the non-governmental status of COPE members and affiliates was beneficial.

1 Travellers in Prison Initiative (TPI) www.ssgt.ie

Good practice: examples across Europe

England and Wales

Good practice for Gypsy, Romany and Traveller prisoners in England and Wales include:

- At HMP Woodhill, Gypsy, Romany and Traveller prisoners could apply for additional weekly telephone credit from their private cash if their only means of contact with family was by mobile telephone. A database of approved Traveller sites was maintained, and Traveller and Gypsy month had been celebrated.
- At HMP Leyhill, families of Gypsy, Romany and Traveller prisoners were able to collect visiting orders at the gate.
- At HMP Leeds, links had been established with community organisations to support Gypsy, Romany and Traveller prisoners on release.⁴³ In addition, good practice guidance, developed in partnership with NACRO, is available to staff on the NOMS intranet. The guidance comprises several annexes including 'Myths and Facts' and 'A Brief History of Gypsies and Travellers in the UK'.⁴⁴
- At HMP Ford there is a Gypsy, Travellers, Romany (GTR) Offender Representative who meets and greets new offenders which helps them to establish a feeling of belonging, and also a GTR staff member, who is a member of the education department, and is someone the prisoners can approach for help and guidance and to act as an interface with the prison system and prison officers.⁴⁵
- Friends, Families and Travellers (FFT) have hosted offenders on a Community Service placement within their organisation.



⁴³ HM Inspectorate of Prisons: *People in Prison: Gypsies, Romany and Travellers*, February 2014, p. 11

⁴⁴ UK response to OHCHR's questionnaire on minority issues, 2015

⁴⁵ Joseph Wenman, Jimmy Wenman, Frenny Green, Sean Price, Jessie Fuller, Aleta Blackall: HMP Ford Model of Good Practice Gypsy, Traveller, Romany (undated)

Good practice: examples across Europe

Latvia

The Ilguciems Women's Prison in Latvia in 2003 was reported as having its own children's home for children of prisoners up to the age of three. The nurses at the children's home speak Romani and a Romani woman worked there as a nanny for a time.⁴⁶

Croatia

In Croatia, the Ombudsperson for Children is a source of support for the imprisoned Roma in the same way as for other imprisoned parents and their children and has encouraged programmes to improve the parenting skills of prisoners, both for mothers⁴⁷ and fathers (including juveniles/young adults) because of their identification of this as a particular need, especially for Roma. These programmes are general but have a significant participation by Roma because of the high proportion of Roma prisoners. A notable example is the 'Be a Man Club Turapolje', run by the organisation Status: M for the young males in that Correctional Institution, which includes a broad range of issues around gender equality, power relations, expressing emotions and domestic violence as well as parenting. In addition, the programme encourages the young men to continue to work with them in their own communities after their release and which has resulted in cooperation with the Croatian Roma Union and social welfare centres with large Roma populations.⁴⁸

Bulgaria

A similar programme for imprisoned Roma mothers launched by the association Child&Space is run at the only women's prison in Bulgaria⁴⁹. Child&Space support Roma mothers in writing to their children (low levels of literacy and difficulties in expression), and also have a mobile family counselling service going from one Roma community to another, thus not only working in the community but also connecting life in the prison with life outside.

⁴⁶ Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies: *Situation of Roma in Latvia*, Riga, 2003.

⁴⁷ Children born in prison are allowed to stay with their mothers in the maternity ward of the Pozega Penitentiary.

⁴⁸ See also Jurica Pacelat, Status: M, Croatia, 'Strengthening parental competencies of young prisoners', in *European Journal of Parental Imprisonment*, pp. 5-7.

⁴⁹ Presentation by Vessela Banova, Therapeutic Director of Child&Space at COPE Annual Conference, Naples, 19 May 2017.

Good practice: examples across Europe

Finland

In Finland, the 'Womens's turn' project developed a culturally sensitive service-package with practices that have been incorporated into the mainstream prison services. Roma women have been hired to work as mentors in prisons to support female Roma prisoners. The follow-up 'Time for change' post-release resettlement project supported the resettlement of Roma women. Targeted stakeholders include Roma and non-Roma NGOs and public authorities dealing with crime.⁵⁰ A core principle of the prison rehabilitation programme is the involvement of Roma workers who therefore understand the culture and appropriate approaches so that the participants feel equal and understood, enabling an open and constructive dialogue about the causes of criminal behaviour and the possibility of other solutions. In addition, having a Romani colleague in the prison helps to build mutual trust and understanding with the other staff.⁵¹ The programme is now being extended to male Roma prisoners. *(For additional information, see boxed feature on pages 10-11).*

Czech Republic

In the Czech Republic, a programme has been developed by the Czech Probation and Mediation Service to ensure that the Roma minority receives equal access to services during the implementation of alternative sentences.⁵²

Challenges for NGOs

The two primary challenges according to COPE member responses were language—making communication difficult and/or requiring the use of an interpreter—and lack of COPE members' contact with Roma families.



⁵⁰ European Commission: Assessing the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the Council Recommendation on Effective Roma integration measures in the Member States 2016, pp25-26

⁵¹ Krits Probation Foundation response to COPE questionnaire, 1 August 2017

⁵² Handbook on prisoners with special needs, UNODOC 2009, page 68

Recommendations

1. The relevant European Union, Council of Europe and OSCE bodies should give attention to the specific situation of Roma and Traveller prisoners and their children and families.
2. The EU should organise a workshop/focussed discussion on these issues with a view to informing the strategy for Roma Integration, a better understanding of the difficulties and challenges, and a sharing of good practice.
3. The experience and materials of the organisations and bodies working with Roma and Traveller prisoners and their children and families should be widely shared. COPE could assist with this by having a link on their website to such materials and encouraging others to use and to contribute to it.
4. COPE members/affiliates could undertake studies of the situation of Roma and Traveller prisoners and their children/families in the same way as has been done in Ireland and the UK, and which have formed an important basis for subsequent work and initiatives, and ensuring that such studies specifically include foreign national Roma prisoners.
5. Encourage the European Network of Children's Ombudsmen (ENOC) to undertake a specific study of the situation of Roma and Traveller children who have an incarcerated parent.
6. Recognise the additional burden of stigma and exclusion carried by children of prisoners who are also Roma/Travellers.
7. Encourage contacts amongst COPE members in different countries, and/or with Roma/ Traveller organisations in different countries, where the prisoners' children are in another country in order to assist with maintaining contacts between the children and their imprisoned parents.

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Useful links

Barnardo's i-HOP - <https://www.i-hop.org.uk>

Council of Europe CAHROM - <https://www.coe.int/web/youth-roma/cahrom>

Council of Europe Committee for the Prevention of Torture – www.cpt.coe.int

Council of Europe European Commission against Racism and Intolerance – https://www.coe.int/t/democracy/migration/bodies/ecri_en.asp

Equal Rights Trust - www.equalrightstrust.org

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European Roma Rights Centre - www.errc.org

Friends, Families and Travellers (FFT) – www.gypsy-traveller.org

HEUNI – European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control – www.heuni.fi

Irish Chaplaincy - <http://www.irishchaplaincy.org.uk>

Minority Rights Group – <http://minorityrights.org>

Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights – www.osce.org/odihr

Penal Reform International - <https://www.penalreform.org>

Raoul Wallenberg Institute – <http://rwi.lu.se>



Children of Roma and Traveller Prisoners: A Short Guide
www.childrenofprisoners.eu

Children of Prisoners Europe is a non-profit organisation registered in France under French Association law 1901. COPE is grateful for the longstanding support of the Bernard van Leer Foundation and current financial support of the European Union for making the production of this journal possible.

SIRET : 437 527 013 00019



This report has been produced with the financial support of the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union. The contents are the sole responsibility of Children of Prisoners Europe and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.