



Introducing the *MigRom* project

'The immigration of Romanian Roma to Western Europe:
Causes, effects, and future engagement strategies'

*A European consortium led by the University of Manchester's
Romani Project, in partnership with Manchester City Council*



Background

The Romani Project at the University of Manchester was established in 1999 to investigate and promote awareness of the Romani language in its cultural and historical context. It has since become one of the main international centres for academic research, networking and public engagement on Roma culture and identity. In 2008, a partnership was set up with Gorton Mount Primary School to support the inclusion of children of Roma background and to raise awareness of Roma culture, language and history among school staff.

In July 2009, Manchester City Council's Regeneration Team commissioned the Romani Project to assess the needs and aspirations of the local community of Roma migrants from Romania and to propose an Engagement Strategy for the city. This Strategy became a blueprint for the engagement with the Roma migrant community in Manchester on the part of independent organisations such as the Big Life Group and third sector agencies such as the BHA, which began its intervention in 2010 supported by the city's Migrant Impact Fund.

MigRom is a four-year project sponsored by the European Commission's Seventh Framework Research Programme, and the biggest ever EU research project on Roma. It was launched in 2013 in order to continue to implement the Engagement Strategy, to monitor and assess its success, and to draft and pilot new ideas to support the Roma community. The project is a European consortium involving academic partners in the UK, Spain, France, Italy and Romania, and the non-academic partners Manchester City Council and the European Roma and Traveller Forum (official Roma representation at the Council of Europe).

Mission statement

Roma are the most vulnerable ethnic minority in our society; their treatment by the majority and its institutions is a measure of the degree of tolerance and flexibility that our society is able and willing to afford to its minority populations. The social inclusion of Roma is a two-way process: Roma face the challenge to make use of the opportunities available to them in education and economic and public participation. Majority society and its institutions are

challenged to confront traditional perception and prejudice against Roma and to help secure opportunities for equal participation. Both processes require information, critical reflection, and the will to test new approaches; the active involvement of members of the Roma community in this process is essential. This is the basis for our partnership between academic researchers, policy makers, and practitioners.

Project strategy

MigRom is a catalyst for positive change in the relations between public institutions and the Roma community. MigRom is directly informed by public debates on Roma migration. We address issues of concern and seek to understand the Roma community's own perspective. We encourage Roma to engage with public institutions, and local agencies to engage with the Roma. We draft strategies to facilitate engagement and we help pilot their implementation. We encourage public and third sector agencies to adopt our strategies, and we continue to monitor and assess the manner in which they are implemented. We are inspired by a vision of Roma empowerment to negotiate the needs and aspirations of their own community; our research and our intervention strategies are directly informed by the participation of Roma and of academics with close familiarity with Romani language and culture.

Project activities

- Weekly drop-in sessions: Our outreach team offers support to the Roma community and we monitor and assess needs and concerns
- Supporting Roma self-reliance: We help members of the Roma community to manage their own interactions with local institutions and to reduce their dependency on public and third sector advice and support
- Empowerment through education: We help promote consideration of Romani language, culture and history in schools by raising awareness among pupils and staff and by encouraging young Roma to become Role Models for the community's younger generation
- Roma Youth Forum: We facilitate exchange and engagement with university students, media, academic experts and international Roma activists
- Raising public awareness: We are active contributors to public debates and media interventions on the relations between Roma and majority society and its institutions
- Assessment and dissemination of good practice: We compile and distribute policy briefings and review policies and policy-oriented research
- International networking: MigRom is a European consortium with direct access to the highest levels of research-policy interface at European level, through partnerships with the European Commission, the Council of Europe, and local authorities, and with access to leading research forums in Romani studies

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