Higher Education Internationalisation and Mobility: Inclusion, Equalities and Innovation

Supporting Roma Students in Higher Education

Briefing Report on Higher Education, Internationalisation and Roma in the UK

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Executive Summary

Project Aims

The Higher Education Internationalisation and Mobility (HEIM) project investigates policies, interventions and methodologies for the internationalisation of higher education in different national locations. HEIM focuses on the Roma community in Europe as a critical example of a marginalised group, at both staff and student levels, to consider how principles of equity and inclusion can be applied to HE internationalisation strategies and programmes.

HEIM is a collaboration between three universities (Sussex, Umeå and Seville) and the Roma Education Fund (REF), based in Hungary and with offices also in Romania, Slovakia, Montenegro, and Serbia. The project compromises different components, or Work Packages, delivered over a 3-year period from January 2015 to December 2017, including secondments, staff exchange, research training and capacity-building, co-authored papers and collaborative inquiry.

The HEIM Project has the following Research and Innovation Objectives:

1. To develop research and innovation capacity by building teams and sharing knowledge between early stage and experienced researchers.
2. To share knowledge about internationalisation programmes in the partner organisations via co-written papers, statistical datasets, literature reviews and workshops.
3. To investigate data comparatively on who is participating in selected internationalisation programmes e.g. student and staff mobility schemes.
4. To produce accounts based on literature, statistical data and empirical research, of potential equity and inclusion issues that need to be taken into account for internationalisation programmes.
5. To create a set of guidelines for reflexive and inclusive approaches to the internationalisation of higher education.
6. To contribute to methodological innovation across different fields.

The specific Work Package 4 informing this report on *Supporting Roma Students in Higher Education* involved experienced and early stage researchers from Sussex, Umeå and Seville being seconded to the REF head offices in Budapest, Hungary in March 2015. The intention was to learn from REF and their partners' expertise in order to produce country specific briefing reports on higher education internationalisation and mobility, with a particular focus on access and inclusion of Roma students. The reports scope broad issues and policies and synthesise key resources in order to frame further research on Roma students and international higher education for the remainder of the HEIM project and to suggest recommendations for best practice in relation to country-specific issues, policies and initiatives.

Report Scope

This report focuses firstly on providing contextual information about Roma in UK higher education and secondly on looking at key issues and debates affecting the implementation, by higher education institutions (HEIs) in Europe, of policies and practices supporting Roma students. The report addresses the following questions:

1. How are Roma students conceptualised in UK HE policies and practice in relation to widening access, inclusion and internationalisation? (Section 1)
2. What good practices exists in Europe around implementation of policy to support Roma students in HE? (Section 2)
3. What can these selected case studies of good practice tell us about the barriers and enablers to supporting the inclusion of Roma students in international higher education? (Section 3)
4. What lessons can be learned by drawing parallels between the UK and European case studies to support inclusion and internalisation for marginalised groups? (Section 4)

The report is based on documentary analysis of key reports and policies produced by REF and their partners as well as reviews of existing scholarship on Roma and higher education in Europe. It is also informed by meetings (held during March 2015) with REF colleagues, representatives from Roma civil society organisations including activists and scholarship bodies, as well as Roma students and academics working with Roma students.

Executive Summary of Report Findings

UK Higher Education

❖ Gypsies, Travellers and Roma[1] in the UK are a highly deprived group who experience multiple disadvantage and discrimination, particularly in relation to education, health and employment.
❖ Gypsy, Traveller and Roma school pupils in the UK experience poor achievement as a consequence of marginalisation and discrimination. 12% of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils achieved five or more good GCSEs[2], including English and mathematics, compared with 58% of all pupils. (Department for Education, 2012 cited in Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012). Gypsy, Roma and Traveller school pupils experience '*racist, prejudiced and discriminatory attitudes both in their local communities and in school*' (Deuchar and Bhopal, 2012:747). These factors impede access opportunities to higher education.
❖ **Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people are far less likely to go to university than the population as a whole**. Between **3 and 4% of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller in the UK population over 18 is accessing higher education** (HESA, 2014). **This compares to 43% of those aged 18-30 for the population as a whole (**Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2014b).
❖ Progress on Roma integration and inclusion in the UK (in response to the EU National Framework for Roma Integration) is exceptionally slow or even absent in many policy areas.

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[1] There is considerable debate over appropriate terminology. Gypsy' can be perceived as offensive and consequently 'Roma' is used in EU policy and by the Roma Education Fund. However in the UK, 'Gypsies and Travellers' and 'Irish Travellers' are used as an ethnicity category in the census, and within national policy. In the latter context, Roma is used to refer to migrant groups to the UK from Central and Eastern Europe. Consequently, 'Gypsy, Traveller and Roma' is used in the report tin reference to UK policy and practice and the tern 'Roma' used when talking about the European context.

[2] GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) The standard qualification after completing secondary school in the UK aged 16.

- ❖ There is a lack of national direction and impetus for widening access to, and supporting the retention and success of, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in UK higher education. This is witnessed in a lack of policy attention or targeted interventions for their inclusion and support. The insular, national focus of widening participation policies in higher education fails to account for the needs of disadvantaged groups from outside the UK e.g. refugee and migrant populations.

Roma in Europe and their access to higher education
- ❖ Less than 1% of Roma in Europe continue on to higher education. While accurate data is not available for cross-European comparison, existing surveys do indicate that numbers vary significantly between countries. For example 20% of Roma in the Czech Republic complete secondary or higher education compared to 8% in Romania (UNDP *et al.,* 2011). Further discussion on numbers can be found in Section 2.
- ❖ Access to good quality, non-segregated primary schooling, is the most important issue affecting Roma students' educational and life opportunities, including their ability to access higher education.
- ❖ There are complex factors structuring the under-representation of Roma students within higher education including material deprivation, geographical marginalisation and racism/discrimination.
- ❖ Affirmative action policies represent an important step in supporting Roma students to access higher education, as well as an official recognition of the ways Roma have, and continue to be, disadvantaged in the absence of such measures. While some policies target higher education access specifically, it is crucial that work is also focused in primary, secondary and upper secondary education via scholarships and mentoring to support successful education transitions for Roma.
- ❖ Schemes that offer scholarships for Roma to study abroad (such as REF's International Scholarship Programme) are particularly important to enable disadvantaged groups to have access to international higher education opportunities, which are often dominated by the most privileged students (Ackers, 2008; Waters & Brooks, 2010).
- ❖ The intensive and academically focused nature of the Roma Access Programme of the Central European University in Budapest is commendable and offers important lessons for those working with disadvantaged groups in UK higher education.

Findings and Recommendations
- ❖ Key enablers to support Roma students to access higher education in the UK and Europe include good quality, de-segregated schooling for Roma children, transparent and accessible information about higher education opportunities, financial support and scholarships for Roma students and the promotion of Roma role models (including teachers) to inspire young Roma in their educational journeys.
- ❖ Key barriers include a lack of disaggregated data on Roma's educational exclusion across Europe include the difficulties of meeting the complex needs of a diverse population of Roma, the broader influence of educational and social disadvantage structuring access to higher education and the role of political will in implementing policies for Roma inclusion.
- ❖ In the UK specifically, there is an urgent need to provide national direction and impetus for widening access to, and supporting the retention and success of, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in UK higher education.

Photo 1: Roma students graduating from the Central European University, Budapest

Table of Contents

Higher Education, Internationalisation and Roma in the UK

Section 1: Higher Education, Internationalisation and Roma in the UK

1.1. Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in the UK

The category of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in the UK is subject to debate over its broad application to a number of diverse communities and its, often confused, usage in policy contexts. The term 'Roma' is used as an umbrella term in European Union (EU) policy frameworks but UK Gypsies tend to be referred to as Gypsies or Romany Gypsies, whereas Irish Travellers refers to a separate ethnic group. The UK also has a growing Roma population who have migrated from Central and Eastern Europe (Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation, 2014; Craig, 2011). In some UK policy contexts, Roma populations are separated from Gypsies and Travellers. For example, England's Department for Education policies do explicitly include Roma. However the UK's Cross Ministerial Working Group on Gypsy and Traveller Inequalities (CMWG) focused their attention on improving social mobility and reducing inequalities only for Gypsy and Travellers, but recognised that Roma populations are likely to experience similar issues. Significantly, a report written from the perspective of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma communities living in the UK positions 'Roma' and 'Gypsies and Travellers' as separate groups with distinct histories and needs - specifically Roma are described as a more recent migrant group, whereas Gypsies and Travellers are defined as those who have lived in the UK for centuries (Lane *et al.*, 2014). Friends, Families and Travellers (2015) an organisation supporting and advocating for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in the UK emphasise the importance creating inclusive strategies for the community as a whole, regardless of ethnicity, culture or background. Consequently, this report uses the phrase 'Gypsies, Travellers and Roma', unless policy or data uses other terminology, but recognises the diversity of the populations described by this label and the importance of giving space to discussing the symbolic importance of terminology.

Photo 2: March in Glasgow for International Roma Day, 8th April 2014

There is little targeted data on Gypsy, Traveller and Roma populations in the UK. In 2011 the category of 'Gypsy and Traveller' was added to the census for England and Wales and Scotland and 'Irish Traveller' added in Northern Ireland. There is no specific Roma ethnicity category on the UK census, although Roma populations could be represented within categories such as White Other, Mixed or Other (where disaggregated data is not available). **In the England and Wales census in 2011 Gypsy and Traveller and Irish Traveller accounted for 58,000 people or 0.1% of the population, the smallest recorded ethnic minority** (Office for National Statistics, 2014). **In the 2011 Scottish census Gypsy and Travellers accounted for 4,212 people or 0.1% of the population** (General Registrar Office for Scotland, 2013). **In the 2011 Northern Ireland census, 1,301 people were listed as Irish Traveller/White Gypsy, representing 0.07% of the population** (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2013). It is worth noting that while failure to complete the census is a criminal offense in the UK, these numbers may not represent the complete picture of the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma populations. For example, many Roma avoid declaring their ethnicity at work and school for fear of discrimination, hostility and racism. Consequently the UK Government have combined census data with direct counts of caravans, school records and other recording and have estimated the numbers at **300,000** (Friends, Families and Travellers, 2015). However, unlike the survey data, this estimate is not broken down into numbers of Roma in education, work and employment in the UK and consequently census data will be analysed in this report. However **further work needs to continue to both develop a more accurate picture of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma life in the UK, as well as to create an inclusive society where Gypsy, Traveller and Roma will feel comfortable declaring their ethnicity via official statistical collection.**

Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are recognised ethnic groups in the UK and are afforded accompanying legal protections from discrimination via The Equality Act (2010). Other traveller groups such as New or Occupational Travellers are not legally recognised ethnic groups but remain broadly protected under the Human Rights Act (1998). Despite such protections **Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in the UK are a highly deprived group, particularly in relation to education, health and employment**. Analysis of 2011 census data for England and Wales (Office for National Statistics, 2014) showed:

- ❖ 70% of Gypsies and Travellers rated their general health as 'very good' or 'good' at compared to 81% of the overall population
- ❖ 20% of Gypsies and Travellers were unemployed, compared to 7% of the overall population
- ❖ 41% of Gypsies and Travellers live in social housing compared to 16% of the overall population.

Analysis of census data for Scotland (Scottish Government, 2013) and Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2013) shows similar patterns of low educational achievement, poor health (including lower life expectancy) and below average participation in the labour market. According to Trevor Phillips, former chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (ECU):

> *For Gypsies and Travellers in the UK, Great Britain is still like the American deep south for black people in the 1950s…Extreme levels of public hostility exist … fuelled in part by irresponsible media reporting of the kind that would be met with outrage if it was targeted at any other ethnic group* (Cottrell-Boyce, 2014:para.11)

Such attitudes serve to further cement Roma exclusion. Cemlyn *et al* (2009) highlighted the '*pervasive and corrosive impact of experiencing racism and discrimination throughout an entire lifespan' in relation to employment, social and public contexts*' (2). In addition James' (2014) recorded the high levels of discrimination and hate crimes against gypsies, travellers and Roma in the UK. For example, in the UK in 2003 a young boy was beaten to death as perpetrators said he was 'only a gypsy' (James, 2013).

UK Gypsy and Traveller populations have responded to their societal exclusion proactively through research, support and campaigning via organisations such as Friends, Families and Travellers, the Gypsy Council, the Traveller Movement, Gypsies and Travellers Wales, the National Federation of Gypsy Liaison Groups, and the UK Roma Support Group. The now disbanded Gypsy and Traveller Law Reform Coalition successfully lobbied for Gypsy and Traveller welfare issues on the government agenda, resulting in the recognition of Gypsies and Travellers as excluded populations. There are several groups related specifically to Education including the National Association of Teachers of Travellers, the Traveller Education Support Service for Northern Ireland the Advisory Council for the Education of Romany and other Travellers, the Scottish Traveller Education Programme. The existence of such group highlights how Gypsy, Roma and Travellers communities in the UK have a wealth of knowledge and experience about their exclusion and are actively committed to social justice work on behalf of their communities. Many UK regions also have local education and support services and a local government commitment to the inclusion of Gypsy and Travellers including (but not an exclusive list) Cornwall, Devon, Leeds, York, London, Norfolk, Pembrokeshire, Somerset, the South-West and West Sussex.

In the UK the devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own approaches and policy towards Gypsies and Travellers. However this only relates to fully devolved powers such as education and housing. Some policy areas overlap between counties e.g. issues relating to employment and pensions apply to England, Scotland and Wales and those relating to criminal justice apply to only England and Wales. The CMWG for England were asked to respond to a EU framework on National Roma Integration Strategies and their report highlighted the considerable vulnerabilities and inequalities faced by Gypsies and Travellers. They published a list of 28 proposed commitments to reducing inequality relating to education, health, housing, discrimination, criminal justice, employment and community engagement (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012). The Welsh Assembly Government (2008) have also produced a series of good practice guidelines and a commitment to ensuring the inclusive education of Gypsy and Traveller children and young people. The Scottish Government (2014) is currently working on an action plan related to their proposed commitment to reduce discrimination towards Gypsy and Travellers by 2017. However, a summary report from the Decade Secretariat Foundation (2014) a civil society organisation promoting the Decade of Roma Inclusion from 2005-2015 and the 2011 National Roma Integration Strategy, reported that **progress on Roma integration in the UK is 'exceptionally slow or even absent in many policy areas' (47) and that there is a notable absence of action on implementing EU strategies for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma inclusion in the UK.**

Levinson & Hooley (2013), in drawing parallels between UK Gypsies and Indigenous Australians, highlight the ways nomadic, transnational groups are excluded and misrecognised in national education systems. In the UK, **research indicates low achievement levels and systematic misrecognition of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma school pupils** who experience '*racist, prejudiced and discriminatory attitudes*

both in their local communities and in school' (Deuchar and Bhopal, 2012:747). This is likely to lead to further educational inequalities for adults and young people accessing post-compulsory education. 2011 Census data showed that in England and Wales:

- ❖ 60% of Gypsy and Travellers (over 16) had no qualifications, compared to 23% of the overall population.
- ❖ 12% of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils achieved five or more good GCSEs, including English and Mathematics, compared with 58% of all pupils. (Department for Education, 2012 cited in Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012).
- ❖ 9% of Gypsy and Travellers over the age of 16 had a Level 4 qualification[3] and above compared to 27% of the whole population

Photo 3: UK Traveller children protesting over their eviction from the Dale Farm site.

There is a noticeable lack of both scholarship and empirical data on Gypsy, Travellers and Roma within higher education in the UK. However important work has been conducted on Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children in primary and secondary education (see, for example, Crozier, Davies & Szymanski, 2009; Deuchar & Bhopal, 2012; Levinson & Sparkes, 2003; Levinson, 2008; Lloyd & McCluskey, 2008 and Levinson & Hooley, 2013). A notable study was also carried out by Equality (2010) who researched Roma migrant children in UK, who experienced segregation and exclusion in their countries of origin and who succeeded in mainstream schools and classrooms in the UK, adding further weight to arguments for non-segregated schooling for Roma (further discussed below).

Ethnicity data about students studying in higher education is drawn from student applications via the University and Colleges Application Service (UCAS). There are separate ethnicity categories for 'Gypsy and Traveller' and 'Irish Traveller' (NI only) but not Roma. In the majority of publicly available data sets, Gypsies and Travellers are included within the category of 'White' but disaggregated data is available, on

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[3]The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) in the UK sets the level and equivalency of academic and vocational qualifications. A Level 4 qualification under the QCF equates to a Degree (for example BA, BSc), Higher Degree (for example MA, PhD, PGCE), NVQ Level 4-5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher level, Foundation Degree (NI only) and certain professional qualifications (for example teaching, nursing, accountancy).

request, from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). Table 1 shows the most recent statistics on Gypsy/Traveller students in UK Higher Education:

	2012/13	2013/14
Total UK domiciled students with known ethnicity	1,876,235	1,830,230
Numbers of Gypsy/Traveller (% of total student population)	120 (0.006%)	150 (0.008%)
Numbers of Irish Traveller (NI only)	5	5

Table 1*. Numbers of Gypsy/Traveller students in UK Higher Education*

Accurate proportionate comparisons from the above cannot be made with current population data for Gypsy, Travellers and Roma as the census is by UK region and in 2011, whereas HESA data is annual and for the whole of the UK. HESA also takes 'UK domiciled' to include Guernsey, Jersey and the Isle of Man, which are not officially part of the UK and EU and who do not collect data on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller in their census. However, even accounting for such statistical inaccuracies the numbers above are very small. It is worth noting that it made headline news in the UK when in 2012 Shelby Holmes became the first UK Traveller to attend Oxford University (picture below). She has since completed her studies and news headlines reported (with derision) how she would return to work on the family's fairground after graduation (Daily Telegraph, 2015).

Photo 4: Shelby Holmes, reported to be one of the first UK travellers to attend Oxford University in 2012.

A proportional estimate of numbers of Gypsies and Travellers in higher education can be gathered if we take the 2011 census data of usual residents in aged 18 and above of Gypsy/Travellers or Irish Travellers at **37,037 (England and Wales), 3095 (Scotland) and 758 (Northern Ireland) – a total of 40,890.** If this is compared with the numbers of UK domiciled Gypsy/Traveller and Irish Traveller students accessing

higher education at 125 in 2012/13 and 155 in 2013/14. This sets **an estimate of between 3 and 4% of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller population over 18 accessing higher education in any given year.** While there are a number of problematic elements to this estimate, it provides a general picture, where no other is available. The proportions of the UK population aged 18-30 accessing higher education is not disaggregated by ethnicity but in 2012/13 it was estimated at 43% in England, Wales and Scotland (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2014b)**.** This suggests that **Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students are far less likely to go to university than the population as a whole.**

1.2 Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in relation to Widening Access to Higher Education

There are numerous policies and institutional initiatives to target under-represented groups in higher education but few make specific reference to Gypsy, Traveller and Roma as a disadvantaged group[4]. However the University of Sussex Widening Participation Handbook (2014) does explicitly target Gypsy and Travellers for widening access initiatives and funding. Here they are included as young people from ethnic backgrounds where GCSE attainment is lower than the national average (as detailed in section 1.1).

Clear guidance on how specific groups are defined as disadvantaged by HEIs is difficult to find. Discussions with colleagues working in senior widening participation roles in HEIs suggests that it is the responsibility of individual institutions to target groups they define as disadvantaged, but that such decisions are informed by national policy frameworks. The most recent national strategy in England for access and student success in higher education describes disadvantaged groups as being those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds or disadvantaged areas, those that are the first in their family to attend universities, mature students aged 23 and older, care leavers and disabled students (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2014a). The only reference to Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in higher education policy (that I can find) is in the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) guidance (2007) in relation to Aimhigher (a UK widening access programme that ran from 2004-2011). This states:

> *There are disadvantaged learners that do not fit neatly into any of the broader social categories, for example travellers, refugees and asylum seekers. While many of these will fall within the target group, many will not. Aimhigher aims to be inclusive and we do not wish to discourage this. However, partnerships will need to think carefully about whether targeting such learners requires particular forms of intervention, which will draw resources away from the main target group* (p. 9)

That HEIs are left to define what groups are marginalised makes sense in being able to target the needs of the local populations (where they may be a community of Gypsies and Travellers, for example). It is also logical for reporting purposes to focus on disadvantaged groups where larger data sets are available – such as for socio-economic status – to be able to measure the success of widening participation initiatives against a significant target group (not available for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma). However, this means that **there is a lack of national direction and**

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[4] An online search on 'site ac.uk' using the keywords 'widening participation strategy gypsy traveller' found mention of gypsy and traveller in widening participation strategy at the University of Sussex and, Doncaster University College, University of Surrey, University of Southampton. None of these related to specific outreach programmes but in the first three gypsies and travellers were specifically included as disadvantaged groups and the latter was a subject specific outreach programme related to the research interests of academics in the departments. None of these could be described as targeted or comprehensive.

impetus for widening access to, and supporting the retention and success of, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in UK HE. While Gypsies, Travellers and Roma could be included within the disadvantaged groups mentioned above (in relation to low income, or first-in-the family status), there is no specific UK wide guidance or policy on their inclusion within higher education that details their particular issues and requirements.

It is also worth highlighting that there is no overarching widening participation guidance for the UK as a whole but separate national based policy for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (the latter 3 as a consequences of devolved decision making powers on education policy). However, the majority of UK initiatives for widening participation do not currently provide for students from the EU, international students or migrant groups such as refugees. **The insular, national focus of widening participation policies fails to account for the needs of disadvantaged groups from outside the UK (which could include migrant Roma groups from Central and Eastern Europe, for example).** While international mobility in higher education is often conceptualised in terms of privilege, this may fail to account for those who are both international *and* disadvantaged.

1.3 Internationalisation Opportunities

The UK policy discourse around internationalisation has traditionally been understood in relation to the numbers of students from outside the UK entering UK higher education institutions. It is changing now to look at mobility more broadly and also in relation to migrant academics, research partnerships and trans national education (Grant, 2013). There are substantially more non-UK students coming to the UK to study than UK students migrating outside of the UK to study. In 2013/14, **81% (1,863,860) of all students registered at a UK higher education provider (including undergraduate and postgraduates) were from the UK 5% (125,300) were from other counties in the EU and 14% (310,195) were from outside the EU** (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2014). Different estimates are provided for the numbers of UK students studying abroad with OECD estimating 37,491 and UNESCO estimating that 28,588 UK students went abroad for either a full degree or for a minimum of one year in 2011/12 (Go International, 2014).

UK students tend not to access internationalisation opportunities, such as Erasmus, compared to their counterparts in countries such as France, Germany and Spain whose Erasmus participation rates are approximately three times that of the United Kingdom (European Commission, 2014). In 2012/13, 14,572 UK students took part in an Erasmus exchange in compared to 27,182 students coming to the UK in the same year (European Commission, 2014). The reasons for the UK being a host, rather than an origin country for international student mobility include the perceived quality of a UK higher education in the global market, and the attractions of the English language. However, it is worth considering the characteristics of the UK students that do access internationalisation opportunities such as Erasmus. King *et al.* (2010) found that the most mobile students in the UK were 'disproportionately young, female, white and middle-class, and are academic high-achievers' (2). NUS (National Union of Students) research conducted for a House of Lords report into student mobility found that '28% of students decided not to study abroad because of uncertainty about language; 11% were unaware that opportunities were there at all and did not know that they could do it; and 37% cited financial implications' (House of Lords, 2012). Hence, there are exclusions and class, gender and age-based privilege in opportunity structures for internationalisation (Ackers, 2008; Waters & Brooks, 2010). **It is likely that the most disadvantaged social groups in the UK (potentially including Gypsies, Travellers and Roma) would experience obstacles, especially financial, more than their socio-economically non-**

disadvantaged peers, and be less likely to access internationalisation opportunities as a result. More broadly, this view was paralleled in a discussion with the director of Roma Versitas (a scholarship and training programme for Roma university students) in Hungary, whose feeling was that Roma students in Europe were less likely to participate in Erasmus mobility opportunities. However Erasmus do not currently collect data on numbers of Roma students accessing their programmes.

Section 2: Approaches to Higher Education, Internationalisation and Roma in Europe

Roma are the largest ethnic minority in Europe, yet there remains uncertainty about even basic demographic information – with population estimates of between 7 and 12 million people. The reasons for this knowledge gap include the fact that many European countries do not track or record ethnicity data e.g. France. Even where they do, there is a mistrust from Roma of revealing their ethnicity due to a perception that such information will be used to discriminate against them (Greenberg, 2010). Additionally, many Roma communities are outside official census processes due issues such as the precarity of their housing or their migrant status. Roma communities across the world have a long history of marginalisation and exclusion and continue to experience illiteracy, poor health including high rates of infant mortality, unemployment and educational segregation (Open Society Foundations, 2014). Ringold *et al.* (2005) highlight how Roma are stuck within a cycle of poverty that is multifaceted. **Consequently marginalisation can only be addressed by a comprehensive policy approach that attends to all dimensions of Roma social exclusion. However, a lack of data makes targeting and measuring the success of educational (and other social policy) initiatives to tackle such inequalities highly problematic.**

Photo 5: Roma street children in Albania holding the Roma flag.

Roma exclusion is, importantly, both a global and local concern. As a 'true European people' (Guy, 2001: 2) Roma exclusion has been conceptualised as a trans-national issue. However, McGarry (2011) highlights how the Roma construction of a transnational identity, which offers a powerful articulation of their multiple exclusions, contributes to the idea that Roma are not constituted within or separate from national identities. He further emphasises the importance of political mobilisation, participation and representation of Roma in individual nation states to inform key debates over their marginalisation (McGarry, 2010). The role of the EU is also identified as a crucial enabler for Roma inclusion. Müller & Jovanovic (2010) highlight the ways the accession process could hold prospective member states to account in relation to their obligations to their most marginalised citizens such as Roma. Yet Rorke (2011) highlights how much EU policy on Roma remains at the level of rhetoric, rather than political action in member nation states. The European Roma Information Office (2014) emphasises that key barriers for implementation of inclusion strategies include a lack of awareness of Roma exclusion, a lack of funds (related to the economic crisis, negative perceptions of Roma within countries and a lack of political will at the national level.

The Roma Education Fund (REF) was created in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2005 to close the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and non-Roma. A report establishing REF's aims and priorities (REF, 2004) highlighted the poor educational outcomes for Roma populations in Decade countries[5], stating that:

> *70- 80 % of Roma populations have less than a primary school education, while very few have completed primary and secondary education. Some Roma have no education at all and **less than 1% of Roma continue on to higher education*** (p.8).

Comprehensive and reliable cross-national statistics on the numbers of Roma accessing education across Europe do not exist. However, in 2011, the United Nations Development Programme. World Bank and the European Commission conducted a large-scale survey of Roma across 11 countries[6]. This showed that only 1 out of 2 Roma children surveyed attended pre-school or kindergarten. During compulsory school age (with the exception of Bulgaria, Greece and Romania) 9 out of 10 Roma children aged 7-15 are in school. These numbers drop sharply higher up the educational trajectory, with on 15% of young Roma completing upper secondary or vocational education (UNDP *et al*, 2011a). Analysis of the survey from the Decade Secretariat revealed considerable differentiation between countries with those with the number of Roma aged 14-20 *who completed upper secondary education* ranging from 30% in Czech Republic and 23% in Hungary to only 7% in Montenegro and 3% in Albania (Brüggemann, 2012). The UNDP/World Bank/ED survey found that **less than 1% of Roma have completed higher education** (UNDP *et al*, 2011a), although these numbers are also vary between country as Table 2 below indicates:

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[5] The report and estimated statistics are based on the original 8 decade counties of Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovakia. REF now works in 16 countries, the additional 8 are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Moldova, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine.
[6] The survey was conducted in the EU member states of Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and the non-EU Member States of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Montenegro, Republic of Moldova and Serbia.

	% of Roma aged 20-24 completing post-secondary education (Bachelors Degree, Master's, PhD)	% Non-Roma Comparator
Albania	1% women 0% men	8% women 0% men
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1% women 0% men	2% women 5% men
Bulgaria	0% women 0% men	7% women 0% men
Croatia	0% women 1% men	3% women 8% men
Hungary	0% women 0% men	3% women 6% men
Moldova	1% women 1% men	34% women 10% men
Montenegro	1% women 0% men	5% women 2% men
Romani	0% women 0% men	16% women 4% men
Serbia	0% women 0% men	2% women 7% men
Slovakia	1% women 0% men	2% women 0% men
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	1% women 1% men	16% women 11% men

Table 2: *Numbers of Roma and Non-Roma aged 20-24 completing post-secondary education (2 year College Degree, Bachelors Degree, Master's and PhD) in 11 countries.* (UNDP *et al*, 2011b).

Although I cannot find direct clarification from the data set, is worth stating the 0% may not mean that there are no Roma students are accessing higher education opportunities in these countries, but that the numbers are rounded up or down accordingly. These national differences and specifically their relation to the proportion of non-Roma of the same age with equivalent qualifications needs to be considered when understanding this figure of 1%. For example, 1% of Roma attending post-secondary education in Serbia would be less of a significant improvement than it would be in Moldova. Furthermore, Brüggemann (2012) suggests that these numbers may underrepresent the true picture as the data is based on household surveys of areas with concentrated Roma populations, which are often poor and isolated and thus unlikely to provide work for graduates, who will subsequently not appear in such household data. He also argues that Roma who complete university are less likely to return to their locality and instead 'live more or less invisible among the non-Roma' (p. 24). However **despite these methodological limitations the survey is the only existing comprehensive multi-country database on Roma and confirms that, for Roma, education operates as a site of exclusion and that Roma students are less likely to go to higher education than their non-Roma peers.**

As well as, often incomplete, national statistics described above, further evidence about the situation of Roma university students can be found via bodies such as REF who report that, despite this 1% figure, the situation is slowly improving – with more students accessing their scholarship programmes than ever before and an increase in implementation of support for Roma higher education students via national policy. For example, REF's tertiary scholarship programme has increased from providing 677 scholarships in 2005 to 1441 in 2014, in 16 different countries. In 2014, while 1,441 tertiary education students were given scholarships, 2,410 applied, suggesting the numbers are significant (REF, 2014: 28). At a national level, REF (2013) also report how Hungary has recently implemented Romaversitas, an academic, pastoral and financial support programme for Roma university students (but explicitly for those studying religious programmes only), while Macedonia (REF, 2007a) Romania (Pantea, 2014; REF and Gallup, 2009) and Serbia (REF, 2007b) have established national scholarship schemes to increase the numbers of Roma attending higher education. Furthermore, academic research on Roma in higher education is in progress across Europe, for example in Serbia (Jovanovic, 2014) and Romania (Pantea, 2014) which should provide further information on country specific barriers and enablers. **While it is difficult to provide a confident estimate of the numbers of Roma students accessing higher education, affirmative action initiatives and REF's figures suggest that while it is increasing it still falls considerably short of numbers for the population as a whole**.

Roma students in higher education continue to experience educational disadvantage in relation to their non-Roma counterparts. A meeting with several Roma students studying on the Roma Access Programme at the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary, further highlighted how the educational system strongly disadvantaged Roma success. For example the Hungarian government recently lowered the age for compulsory schooling from 18 to 16, potentially demotivating poorer students, including Roma, to continue studying. One student was keen to emphasise that she was not exceptional and that many of her friends also had the potential to go to university but that she was simply lucky. She talked of there being a 'systematic problem' that means a number of factors have to come together for a Roma child to succeed including a lack of community discrimination, family support, good (non-segregated) schooling and the support of teacher and how easy it is for one of these to slip and for Roma children to fall out of the education system. **This suggests that there are complex, and often precarious factors structuring the under-representation of Roma students within higher education including structural disadvantage (e.g. poverty and lack of access to quality education) and social exclusion (e.g. racism and discrimination).** This finding articulates with some of the global research on widening participation of under-represented groups in higher education that talks about how students are not simply misrepresented in numbers but misrecognised through a university culture that caters to the social and cultural needs of dominant groups, symbolically excluding marginalised groups (see Aim Higher, 2013 for a summary literature review).

The issue of **segregated schooling was highlighted as the most important issue affecting Roma students' educational and life opportunities and their ability to access higher education**. Colleagues working in *Roma Versitas Hungary*, a training and scholarship programme for supporting Roma in higher education, reported how the root of the issue of access to higher education lies in the problem of segregated schooling, limiting Roma students' opportunities from an early age. The European Roma Rights Centre (EERC) works to investigate and litigate against cases of segregated schools. Following the European Court of Human Rights affirming that school segregation of Roma children (in schools for children with disabilities and in separate schools or classes in mainstream schools) constitutes illegal discrimination,

the ERRC have successfully litigated against educational authorities in the Czech Republic, Croatia and Greece. Despite these rulings, the ERRC argues that educational segregation of Romani children is systemic in many European countries including: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, Macedonia, Northern Ireland (UK), Portugal and Spain (European Roma Rights Centre, 2011). However, Equality (2011) demonstrated how Roma migrant children to the UK, who experienced segregation and exclusion in their countries of origin, succeeded in mainstream schools and classrooms in the UK, thus demonstrating the lack of pedagogical evidence for segregated classrooms. REF developed a 'Making Desegregation Work' toolkit providing further details, which lists the benefits of desegregation. This has interesting parallels with the literature on the 'diversity premium' in higher education, which argues that **diverse educational contexts have academic, social and cultural benefits for all students** (Hurtado, 2007).

Undertaking this report has unearthed the complexity of documenting the diversity of Roma experiences of higher education participation and the relevance of policy to this. Section 1 discussed the complexities of defining, measuring and providing targeted policy for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities in the UK and this is magnified when trying to understand such diverse communities and their national contexts across the whole of Europe. Secondly, the number of actors at work including national and local political structures, higher education institutions, civil society organisations and Roma students themselves, complicates implementation of EU policy and directives on Roma at a national, let alone an institutional level. Finally, access to higher education is difficult to separate from the broader educational trajectory, where economic and social disadvantage structures access to educational opportunities from birth. This report highlights several case studies of good practice in supporting Roma students in higher education and uses these to raise key issues and suggest areas for further research. These three selected case studies have been identified through meetings with REF colleagues as good practice in supporting Roma students to access international higher education. They were selected to demonstrate the broad range of support structures on offer, though many further examples can be found at both national and institutional levels. The first case study is an example of support for Roma at a higher education institution via an access programme; the second is an example of national level affirmative action policy and the third at an international level, via a scholarship programme for Roma students wishing to attend higher education outside of their home country.

2.1 Roma Access Programme

The Roma Access Programme (RAP) in the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, Hungary is designed to prepare Roma students coming from a variety of European countries with undergraduate degrees to access Master's level programmes. The unit has two programmes, the Roma Graduate Preparation Programme (RGPP) and the Roma English Language Programme (RELP). The RGPP is an intensive 9-month course, preparing students for further studies in the humanities and social sciences via academic tutoring and critical debates in subjects including Economics, Gender Studies and History, intensive English language training and the auditing of Master's classes at the CEU. The RELP is an intensive 8-month English language course. Both schemes are for Roma students only and places are fully funded, including tuition and living expenses. According to discussions with colleagues on the programme, the RAP and RELP students comprise the largest community of Roma higher education students in one institution in Europe. An evaluation of the programme in 2010 reported that 90% of students complete and 50% were granted admission to Master's programmes at CEU or elsewhere (Rostas, 2010). Latest figures provided by RAP colleagues stand at 60%

accessing Master's programmes. Despite the fact that the Hungarian education ministry does not formally accredit the course, RAP colleagues reported that many graduates who do not continue to further study enter related employment, in NGOs for example.

Photo 6: Roma Access Programme graduates speaking at a protest in Hungary on International Roma Day 2013

Three key features of the programme are striking:

- ❖ The first is that it is an affirmative action programme for Roma students aimed at levelling opportunity of access to further study, which, according to a discussion with colleagues teaching on the RAP 'wasn't going to happen organically'. However, its focus is on developing equality of competencies rather than operating quota system. Passing the RGPP does not guarantee access to a Master's programme at CEU or elsewhere. Indeed, the staff we spoke to at CEU were keen to emphasise that **the RAP prepares Roma to compete for MA places with non-Roma as equals and succeed based on merit, not simply because they are Roma**.

- ❖ The second is its focus on building an international community of Roma. The programme invites applicants from 21 different countries[7] to an institution where faculty and students come from over 100 countries. The application process also requires students to 'desire to study in a multicultural and international environment' (Central European University, 2011b: para 5). This fits with the **RAPs broader agenda to develop an international community of 'young, motivated Roma who are capable agents of change in their Roma communities and beyond'** (Central European University, 2011c: para 1).

- ❖ The third is the **RAP's focus on developing highly educated Roma students to 'serve as role models and leaders' and to advocate on behalf of the Roma community'** (Central European University, 2011a: para 1). The call for applications section of their website also emphasises how

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[7] Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, FYR Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, and Ukraine.

applicants should be ready 'to become an advocate for change and a role model in your own community and beyond' (Central European University, 2011b: para 5). This notion of 'giving back' is potentially influenced by the programme's funding via civil society organisations focusing on Roma rights. Colleagues teaching on the RAP are keen to emphasise that this is an educational, not a political, initiative. However, students studying in the programme discussed the tensions of desiring to represent and give back to the Roma community, whilst being defined by other identities and concerns. The following (summarised) quote from a student is indicative of this burden of representation:

> *We are not only Roma, we possess other identities. I am not detached from Roma community, but I have also other interests. It can be a burden on my shoulders to always be seen as a Roma. Giving back to the community is a personal choice, but I do not see it as my personal responsibility.*

Nonetheless, **the Roma Access Programme represents an important merit based, internationally focused and academically led initiative to support Roma students to access and succeed in postgraduate higher education.** It is, however, made possible because the CEU is a private university and international private foundations and donors support the course costs. No such UK parallels exist. Access to university courses, which often target groups under-represented in higher education such as mature students, tend to be delivered outside of universities in further education or university partner colleges. Widening access initiatives in the UK operated by HEIs usually operate on a much smaller scale in the institution via taster days or pre-induction weeks. Examples include the [Access Schemes to Russell Group Universities,](#) which include online study, university 'taster' days or weeks and scholarships. The [compendium of best practice](#) for in supporting access, retention and success of disadvantaged groups produced by the Higher Education Academy has further examples of initiatives across the sector. One example is that of Headstart Week at Brunel University, a programme targeted at mature students, those leaving local authority care, those who are the first in their family to attend university and those with non-traditional entry qualifications in the local area. This runs for a week before induction within the institution and comprises of a mixture of academic and social activities designed and has been shown to ease the transition into higher education for marginalised groups and contribute to their retention and success (Danvers & Crooks, 2013). Furthermore, while most universities offer pre-sessional English language programmes for non-native speakers but these tend not to be integrated within academic programmes but are separate courses before or during study. **The intensive and academically focused nature of the Roma Access Programme is commendable and offers important lessons for those working with disadvantaged groups in UK higher education. However the examples of local, targeted widening participation initiatives in the UK could be beneficial for nations and institutions looking for best practice to support Roma students entering higher education.**

2.2 Affirmative Action in Romania

Romania, as a country, operates an affirmative action policy for Roma students, providing a number of allocated places in high schools, vocational schools and universities. This is not the only example of affirmative action for Roma in Europe but was selected because a thorough research evaluation was publically available. REF and Gallup evaluated this in 2009 and the following data is summarised from their comprehensive analysis (REF and Gallup, 2009). Two key policy milestones included the first reserved places for Roma social work students being offered at the

University of Bucharest in 1992 and in 1998 the Romanian Ministry of Education creating official regulations to expand the provision of special places for Roma students in secondary and higher education. **During 2000-2006, 1,420 students benefited from reserved places for Roma students at Romanian universities**, Four times as many students accessed such places in 2006 than in 2000. Despite only 2/3rds of the places reserved for secondary and higher education being taken 'due to the administrative and mechanisms of establishment and distribution' (p.12), the proportion of reserved places taken has steadily increased in the 7 year period.

In relation to the characteristics of those on reserved places such as these, Horvath (2007) conducted a case study of affirmative action polices at Babes-Bolyai University, Romania. This found that women were over-represented and that female Roma students' life situations were easier compared to young male Roma students who were expected to take on part-time work. However this correlated with age, with older female students being less likely to be supported in higher education and more likely to be experience pressure to conform to traditional gender roles for Roma women relating to children and home**.** The socio-economic characteristics of Roma students more broadly has been investigated by Garaz (2014) who found that while those Roma accessing affirmative action opportunities tend to be more advantaged in relation to other Roma, they are still comparatively more disadvantaged than the non-Roma student population. **Gender, as well as other characteristics such as nationality, age, language and socio-economic background intersects with Roma ethnicity to produce a complexity of factors that impact on being a Roma student in higher education.**

Photo 7: Romanian Roma medical student

Key characteristics of the beneficiaries of reserved places for Roma include:

- ❖ The most common specialisms of study were human/social sciences (social work, sociology, education) (35%), followed by arts/sport (19%) and economic sciences (17%).
- ❖ 55% were women.
- ❖ 20% came from rural areas.
- ❖ 17% cited the Roma language as their mother tongue.

- ❖ None of the beneficiaries mentioned their Roma ethnic affiliation as among the first three things that characterise their identities.
- ❖ 11% cited that they found out about the special places from their schools or teachers.
- ❖ Roma leaders were reported as significant in influencing students' decision making, with 34% discussing their application with Roma community leaders.
- ❖ 25% had marks that were below the standard admission criteria for non-Roma places.
- ❖ 78% said they would have enrolled for university even if the special places were unavailable.
- ❖ 70% said their colleagues were aware that they were the beneficiaries of affirmative action, with the most common way being a publically displayed list of students highlighting those on reserved places. (REF and Gallup 2009).

The REF and Gallup Report provides further detailed analyses of the above, however several key thoughts emerge:

- ❖ Firstly, the small number of beneficiaries who would not have been able to access places by merit alone suggests that those Roma who are applying to university are those with the academic and social capitals to do so. **This raises questions about the many Roma who do not get this far and the significant (and inseparable) role of the early childhood, primary and secondary education systems in structuring access to higher educational opportunities**.

- ❖ Secondly, **making public the names of those receiving scholarships visibly marks these students as different from their peers.** While 93% of beneficiaries reported getting on with all their colleagues, I am reminded of discussions with REF colleagues who talk of the 'shadow' policy of discrimination or the way it works at a micro-political level, where it becomes hard to pin down the source and/or moment of racism/discrimination, which are often subtle.

- ❖ Thirdly, that the focus of specialisms on humanities and social sciences as opposed to STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine) is troubling in relation to the relative exchange rate of a humanities, rather than a science degree, in the global labour market. REF and Gallup (2009) cite several reasons for this including Roma having poorer quality secondary education in the hard sciences, and that a concern with the lower numbers of STEMM students is part of a broader trend not limited to Roma populations. It is also up to universities to decide how the Roma places will be allocated and some of this relies on historical patterns of distribution e.g. that this programme originated in the Social Work department means they continue to receive a number of scholarships. However, **the focus on topics such as social work, coupled with discourses of Roma 'giving back' to their communities has the potential to situate Roma graduates in work providing only for Roma issues and communities. Furthermore, it raises questions of the extent to which subject choice is related to social background and ethnicity.** Some parallels can be drawn with UK studies on how social class and race influence the degree of 'choice' students face in relation to institution and subject of study (Reay *et al.*, 2001).

The affirmative action policies represent an important step in supporting Roma students to access higher education, as well as an official recognition of the ways Roma have, and continue to be, disadvantaged in the absence of such measures.

In relation to the UK, there are no specific quotas for students accessing higher education. However, since the cap on tuition fees was lifted in 2006 in the UK, universities in England are required to introduce access agreements in order to be able to charge higher tuition fees. These documents set out measures to ensure socio-economically disadvantaged students are encouraged to access and succeed in higher education e.g. through scholarships, summer schools, outreach programmes. These are monitored by a government body and technically the tuition fee rate can be altered if universities fail to meet the terms set out in their access agreement (OFFA). However, it is up to institutions to decide who in their student body is under-represented and strategically with whom they will work. While this is not specifically labelled affirmative action, it does legally require institutions to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups and is arguably affirmative in its outreach and intent. Much of the focus of access agreement work is on raising the aspirations of disadvantaged applicants, and supporting adaptation and transition rather than changing broader institutional practices (Hinton-Smith, 2012).

2.3 Roma International Scholarship Scheme (RISP)

While this case study is a scholarship programme, rather than an initiative based in an academic institution, it is interesting for its relation to higher education and internationalisation. Its specific aim is to 'promote academic mobility of Roma students and support their academic integration internationally' (REF, 2015). The scholarship provides partial support for Roma students who are citizens of 16 Central Eastern and South-Eastern European countries[8] for pursing Bachelor, Master, Doctorate, or Postdoctoral education outside of their home country. Successful applicants receive up to a maximum of 9,050 EUR per annum towards tuition fees and living costs but because students are expected to have supplementary support the usual scholarship amount awarded is around 5,000 EUR per year. Scholarships are not automatically renewed and applicants have to reapply each year demonstrating successful academic progress, however preference is given to renewals over new applications. In the 2014-15 academic year, 24 scholarships were awarded to students studying in the UK (8), Austria (3), Germany (2), Czech Republic (2), Netherlands (2), USA (2), Russia (1), Switzerland (1), Italy (1), Hungary (1) and France (1).

Three key features are important to highlight:

❖ Firstly, as with all REF scholarships (and related schemes such as Roma Versitas) students are asked to declare their willingness to 'appear publically as Roma' (REF, 2015). The names of beneficiaries and their institutions of study, for reasons of transparency, are also listed on the REF website. **While a public declaration of Roma is symbolically important in gaining access to scholarships intended to benefit Roma communities, this could potentially exclude Roma who are uncomfortable (for whatever reason) with defining themselves publically by their ethnicity.**

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[8] Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

❖ Secondly, **while the amount provided is generous it could strategically limit applicants without considerable financial support from families or other scholarships to study in certain countries, such as the UK and USA, thereby limiting the scope of international mobility.** For example, the tuition fees in Hungary average around 1,000 EUR a year, whereas in the UK tuition fees for UK and EU students are 12,000 EUR (£9,000) and in the USA is considerably more. However REF colleagues report that the UK is popular because it offers provide further financial aid and scholarships to supplement the RISP funds. It is very encouraging that the RISP programme beneficiaries are choosing to study in the UK but it would be interesting to do further research on the relationship, if any, between student applicant finances and choice of country.

❖ Thirdly, applicants to RISP need to be able to speak foreign languages in order to access higher education international opportunities. Indeed, unlike other REF scholarship schemes, information and application procedures are available in the English language only (rather than other international mobility languages such as German, French or Spanish). The language of application is less significant than the ability to speak a foreign language in the first place. **Where Roma experience low quality schooling their ability to learn additional languages required for international mobility is likely to be negatively affected, potentially denying them access to international opportunities.**

Researching UK students studying abroad, Waters and Brooks (2010) state how such opportunities reproduce existing privileges and discuss how international higher education is 'spatially uneven and socially exclusive (p.217). **It is symbolically important that the RISP exists to provide disadvantaged groups such as Roma with access to (what is often the privileged space of) international higher education opportunities.**

Section 3: Key Issues Affecting Roma Inclusion in Higher Education

Understanding how institutions support Roma students to access in higher education reveals multiple complexities due to the diverse (and shifting) national and institutional contexts and the multiple actors involved from university staff to Roma young people. Key barriers and enablers are summarised below.

Enablers

❖ **Financial support and scholarships** that ideally provide for full tuition fees and living expenses and that are not limited, for example, by subject or institution of study.
❖ **Transparent and accessible information** for all students in secondary schools and community organisations about opportunities to access higher education, including scholarships and reserved places.
❖ **The promotion of Roma role models (including teachers)** to inspire young Roma in their educational journeys through outreach schemes.
❖ **Good quality, de-segregated schooling** for Roma children to provide them with the academic competencies (including language skills and training in a broad range of subjects including STEMM- Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine) to enable them to access the widest range of higher education opportunities (including internationally).

❖ **Sensitivity in approaches to ethnic affiliation for scholarships** that offer students a choice in relation to making a public declaration of Roma ethnicity at their institution of study. REF are clear that students accessing 'Roma' scholarships should be open about their ethnicity, along with their broader aim to develop educated Roma citizens proud of their heritage. However, due to the prevalence of racism towards Roma young people, higher education institutions should handle this sensitively. There may be a need for approaches that are country specific and take account of different cultural contexts and the diverse nature of Roma populations.

Barriers
❖ **Lack of disaggregated statistical data on Roma:** It is difficult to capture and measure the scale of the issue of Roma's educational exclusion. This makes it difficult to target, and measure the success of, educational initiatives to support Roma to access higher education.
❖ **Meeting the complex needs of a diverse population of Roma**. European Roma students occupy multiple identities related to gender, social class, disability and nationality. There is a balance to be struck between working within a general categorisation of Roma order to frame international policy yet at the same time recognising Roma students' diverse needs.
❖ **Education disadvantage for Roma set at an early age.** Access to higher education (and subject and institutional choice) cannot be separated from other educational trajectories and social issues including poverty, health and housing inequalities, access to quality schooling, employment opportunities and discrimination.
❖ **Institutional implementation cannot be separated from national and international policy**. Many colleagues reported a lack of political will at a national level to improve Roma inequalities, which filters down to institutions. In particular, the rise of right wing political parties across Europe which position Roma inclusion as the responsibility of NGOs or a failure of Roma communities themselves, rather than being a structural concern requiring political attention.

Recommendations

Many of these recommendations are simple to articulate but very difficult to address and implement. It is important to commend the excellent work undertaken by colleagues working for Roma inclusion (specifically REF) for their passionate, strategic and research informed commitment to Roma educational equality.

Roma Education Academics, Activists and Policymakers
In order to develop support for Roma students to access the broadest benefits of higher education, it would be helpful to:
❖ Collect disaggregated data on Roma communities and specifically on their educational trajectories, to measure the extent of the education gap in access to higher education, and to act as baseline data for strategic action.
❖ Encourage the provision (at a national level) of accessible information about higher education opportunities, including scholarships, with accompanying transparent application procedures in multiple languages.
❖ Work with university departments to develop outreach schemes and partnerships with schools to further encourage a more seamless transition to higher education, particularly for disadvantaged groups such as Roma.

- ❖ Consider STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine) subject based interventions, such as catch up summer schools, to ensure Roma students are academically prepared to compete with non-Roma applicants, for the broadest possible subject choice.
- ❖ Provide scholarship opportunities at an international level to allow disadvantaged groups such as Roma to benefit from international mobility.
- ❖ Design research interventions demonstrating the effects of the diversity premium in higher education (such as a case study of the Roma Access Programme at the CEU) to provide further evidence for the benefits of inclusion of marginalised groups such as Roma, as further evidence for policy makers.
- ❖ Continue to examine the ways to focus scholarship opportunities to the most disadvantaged by regularly reviewing beneficiaries' social class, gender, nationality and age, to ensure equity of access. Garaz (2014) has already undertaken excellent work, for example on affirmative action policies and their relation to social and economic disadvantage.

UK Policymakers

In order to develop support for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma students to access the broadest benefits of higher education in the UK, it would be helpful to:

- ❖ Provide national direction and impetus for widening access to, and supporting the retention and success of, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in UK higher education.
- ❖ Consider whether institutional autonomy to categorise who counts as diverse and disadvantaged is problematic in relation to the inclusion of smaller minorities such as Gypsies, Traveller and Roma.
- ❖ Review the insular, national focus of widening participation policies in higher education for the potential impact on addressing global questions of education and social justice and subsequently the inclusion on internationally disadvantaged groups. Institutions should provide scholarship opportunities that reflect international student needs and financial requirements.
- ❖ Conduct further research into the links between socio-economic privilege and access to international mobility opportunities to ensure equality of access for disadvantaged groups including Gypsies, Travellers and Roma.

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