



Xarxa per a l'observatori de la situació de la població gitana de l'Est d'Europa a Catalunya

REPORT OF THE SITUATION OF THE ROMA EAST EUROPEAN COMMUNITY IN CATALONIA, Barcelona, 2018

Introduction

The aim of this report is to manifest our worry by the lack or insufficient attention that the Roma Community receives in our country as well as to contribute with some elements of reflection to influence public policies strategies.

The report has been elaborated within the ROMEST¹ Network, which promoted and coordinated by VINCLE, Association for Research and Social Action, receives economic support from the general Direction of Community And Civic Action of the Department of Work, Social Affairs and Family from the Generalitat of Catalonia through its Roma People's Plan. It is formed by numerous Entities that work direct or indirectly with this population and also by professionals of public services.

The report contains the following sections:

- ✓ A difficult context
- ✓ Why do they come?
- ✓ Once Arrived to Catalonia, what happens?
- ✓ The most worrying aspects
- ✓ Learnings through experiences
- ✓ Challenges
- ✓ Proposals

¹ www.romest.cat

✓ Documentary references

The aims of the Network ROMEST are:

1. Observe the reality of the Roma East European population in Catalonia and the different inclusion strategies.
2. Promote the exchange of knowledges and best practices through the participation of Institutions, Services and Associations.
3. Contribute to the social inclusion of Roma Eastern European population and promote the social cohesion in the neighbourhoods they live in.

And because we affirm the social and community inclusion as a way for this population and because we have confirmed that their inclusion is possible, we would like to state the following aspects:

A particularly difficult context

In Catalonia we have confirmed in the last years, the presence of new Roma east European families. Many of these families arrive directly to Catalonia and others arrive, after being in Italy, France, United Kingdom or Germany. The arrival of this population in Europe and especially in Catalonia is continuous, with periods of more or less intensity. The fact that they arrive from other European countries glimpses their big mobility, given the very diverse motivations they have (familiar, economic...).

The Catalan territory means for many of these Roma east European families a point of arrival after different attempts of insertion in other places. A lot of families arrive to Barcelona after visiting Italy and France as cultural bordering countries, and generally arrive marked by a path of strong social exclusion. The survival marks the rhythm of their priorities and this generates a considerable territorial mobility also in the interior of Catalonia. This socioeconomic reality linked to the survival has strong implications in the way to project themselves in the future, which tends more to the immediacy than to long term planning.

Why do they come?

It is necessary to understand in the first place, the situation their home country. In Romania, country with an important percentage of Roma population, together with Bulgaria and Slovakia, the Roma population estimates roughly in 6,5% of the total population. That supposed in 2002 2 one million and half of people. At present, this number has increased. Although the Spanish state does not identify the ethnic belonging of the people in census data, many authors estimate the Roma population in Spain in a 5% of the group of Romanian migrants.

The starting point of this population is a lot worse that the one of the majority of Romanian population in Romania, explained especially by the historical process lived by the Roma population. Historically the Roma population has suffered a strong social exclusion and prejudices by part of most of the society that has hit deeply in their relation strategies.

The Roma population in Romania is well documented since 14th century. Until the 1864 the slavery was not abolished. After this date, the society and its structural relations were not prepared to change the sign of the relation and therefore the conditions of structural inequality did not improve for the Roma population and many of them decided to leave the country.

In the period from 1940 to 1944 the Roma population is persecuted by the pro-nazi authorities in Romania, with the reclusion in concentration camps that caused the death of a third of the entire Roma population.

After the II World War, the communist governments practiced an assimilation model to manage the migration through the mandatory settlement. Despite the improvement of some problematic aspects, the Roma population was pushed to the lowest stages of resources and services. Although some basics rights began to be guaranteed, the excluding speeches were not modified.

The step to a neoliberal economy market from 1989 implied a series of privatisations, business restructurings, legislative changes, changes in the public services, with critical impact in the population and very especially in the Roma community who was systematically expelled from companies and many properties. Between 1990 and 1993 the systematic violence against the Roma community increases and they are blamed by the critical economic situation and the lack of European recognition.

The deterioration of the socioeconomic situation with the economic crisis of the 2008 and the lack of perspectives cause the migration of this population as it happens with Romanian population.

Arrived to Catalonia, what does it happen?

The Roma population, once arrived to Catalonia are subjected to the legal framework of the European Union that has evolved largely in the last years.

A first point to clear is that we are referring to population with several national origins, subject to the legal framework. However, the Roma population from Romania (currently the majority of the east European Roma population in Catalonia) has, from the entry of Romania to the EU (2007), community citizenship and therefore, under the legal frame of the European Directive 2004/38.

In this sense, a Romanian persona can, from 2007, circulate freely through the European Schengen territories, although to reside more than three months (and access to a lot of rights of citizenship to the country of arrival) has to register like a communitarian resident citizen (obtaining the green card that accredits this fact)). This document has no photo attached to it, therefore, has to be accompanied always of an official identity document from the country of origin (Romanian identity card or Passport).

That was a fundamental change; if any of the several cases for expulsion registered in the Directive 2004/38 occur (be a threat to the order, the security or the public health) in theory, a citizen of a territory member of the European Union cannot be expelled from another country member.

In practice, and since the European Union do not control strictly the borders within country members at the Schengen territories, implies the possibility of staying in a country member without being properly registered. However, many of the documental problems act as a barrier for the Roma population in order to become citizens with access to their rights, like everyone else.

The years after Romania entered in the European Union many extension of the right to work for hire for Romanian and Bulgarians citizens were approved in order to forbid their inclusion

in the Schengen countries labour spheres. For example, a Romanian citizen, despite being registered legally in Spain, was not able to access to labour market like any other European citizen could do. Besides, in July of 2012 the Spanish government began to apply with hardness the economic conditions that appear in the directive. This involves, still today, that in order to obtain the certificate of resident and consistently access to your rights, a person needs to have a socioeconomic situation (savings or an agreement of work with some determinate requirements) that excludes the segments of population in a more vulnerable situation. In practice, that has made very difficult for Romanian citizens even to renew their Spanish documents (NIE).

Without this formal residence, in spite of being able to remain in the territory, the access to rights and support is often very complex. In fact, this global frame articulates with others producing negative effects as for example, the lack of possibility to enrol at the Catalan Labour Service, to access to a Public Health Card, to request social housing aid or to attend to trainings or continue the educational itinerary from the 16 years.

In general the migration of the East European Roma population accustoms to be with members of the familiar core (parents with children, without the babies neither the grandparents, or the couple without the children, for example; many of those who go to work to slaughterhouses bring a person to take care of their the minors, given the large work schedules.

The situation that they live is very diverse, as diverse are their territory origins, their attitudes, their interests, their projects of future making very difficult to include them all in a whole.

However:

The triple condition of being member of the Roma community, being a migrant and being in a very vulnerable situation (economically speaking) causes that this community concentrates the greater discrimination and prejudice in our country, not only in the social field but also in the professional field and in the services that the Roma community often use. The fact that this population belongs to this triple condition, causes that institutionally, the different departments and services of the administration, do not assume the problematic it as its own, causing unprotection.

We confirm also that the internal dynamic of the Roma community at the same time generates a more aggravated situation of defencelessness and lack of promotion in the case of the

children and the women. Any young girls marry in their home country and migrate with the family in law, a good part of these find their selves trapped in the economic and social familiar dynamics without any type of possibility for a personal promotion.

For many, the migration involves besides, coming from rural zones to cities, without possibility of registration, without possibility to access to basic services by lack of documentation, without possibility to find housing in regular conditions, without a lot of possibilities to find a formal work given the formative level acquired, with few exceptions, and often avoiding the institutions: the discrimination lived in origin reproduces in other forms of expression in the destination.

Some members of the Roma community look for work in rural areas (Segarra, Gironès) or small shops (Celrà).

Other families follow the footsteps of many migrated Romanian citizens that migrate from Romania to Catalonia already with a working contract. This is the case of many east European roma families in Celrà, Bordils, Sils in the Gironès, Torà and Guissona in the Segarra and Sta. Eugènia of Berga in Osona. The pole of attraction is to work for slaughterhouses without any type of labour protection.

In the Metropolitan area of Barcelona, the east European Roma population tends to look for other forms of survival: collecting waste (scrap and paper among others), underground economy (cleaning and care services...) and a minority dedicated to thefts, swindles and begging. However, we have observed in the last years a descent of these problematic, especially in the case of minors. These practices (thefts, swindles, begging) carried out by a minority of the population, are perceived many times by the Catalan society as general practices, constituting one of the causes of the hostility to all the community.

Most of the settlement of the Roma population in Catalonia is dispersed. That makes their presence not very visible for public administrations. On the other hand, the location of the houses where this population finds some way to settle, accustom to be in zones with a lot of indicators of social and economic vulnerability. The lack of organization of the Roma east European community in Catalonia do not make easy the knowledge of resources and avoids them to get over their severe situation of vulnerability. The identification of the local Roma community of Catalonia towards the east European Roma community is complex. There are some barriers that difficulties its recognition as its own and that makes not possible for the Roma east population to be recognised actively in the networks of social representation

(federations). In Catalonia, the sensitivity by this community goes through professionals, publics and the third Sector, more than through social and politician activism.

In summary, the situation that lives this community is, together with other factors, another consequence of the structural inequality that exists in our society, and that in the case of the east European population, is defined by their state of vulnerability and unprotection. The financial economic –crisis and the drastic reduction of resources that we have lived in these last years has hit very especially the communities with greater difficulties.

The most worrying aspects

Paradoxically, trough the work of Xarxa Romest we have detected that this community is not a concern anymore for the public institutions, driven by several factors:

The expulsion of these families from the settlements in Italy (2007) and of France (2010) did not comport the “massive” migration in Spain and in Catalonia that many politicians feared. At present there are no concentrations to determinate public spaces like happened in the neighbourhood of Sant Roc in Badalona back in 2004-2006 that generated consternation and communitarian conflict.

Socially, other obvious problematic have got the attention lately (refugees and unaccompanied minor MENA). These problematic accumulate the strategies, resources, displacing somehow the focus from the east European Roma community.

There is an enormous difficulty to access to economic resources with continuity for programs addressed to this community.

This “unperceived situation” is one of the most important problems that we face in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area currently. It is very difficult to detect the existence of families in situation of exclusion and less still of the minors that do not state to any archive, to any school, neither there are documents that certify their existence. And in case that, for any reason, they access to social services, the relation is punctual and without creating a link, doing unfeasible processes of transformation and social inclusion.

On the other hand the majority d the public services are territory based, fact that does not understand deeply the great mobility of these families in the territory as a result of the

difficulties when “settling” in regular houses. The personalised accompaniment becomes unfeasible when the territorial limits are not trespassed.

There are not many public services focused on observation and on technical intervention with continuity and with a territorial vision and with orientation to the inclusion, that tackle the existent mobility. Neither they exist specialized public services with the exception of long-term initiatives in the city of Barcelona, with services like SISFA Rom as well as OPAI and SIS. We observe that specialized services adapt way better to the determinants of the community.

Neither there are a lot of examples of basic social services, more generalists, that allow a type of work with the intensity that the Roma community required and that have accommodated of the specificity of this community. However, a very positive example is the UBAI located in Hospitalet of Llobregat and also the one of different people that in the general services promote this flexibility. They are small but significant examples of what we could expect from the Public Administration.

If we analyse these aspects by fields, we observe:

Educational field: The access to the educational system results irregular place because it is linked to the obtaining of the inhabitants census register.. The cuts applied in the educational system have put difficulties to keep the level of quality of the education in general and more specifically, in the population that required an intense mentoring.

Health field: In the health public services, we have detected repeatedly the enormous arbitrariness in the accessibility. The universality of the attention, in practice, in some centres is not guaranteed, or requires of professional accompaniment to undo errors and dispel difficulties, making impossible the autonomy of the Roma community.

Labour field: It is practically impossible that the Roma east community can access to labour itineraries or to specific programs for youth financed by the government, given the enormous difficulties to obtain the documentation required. A lot of teenagers see themselves forced to work in a marginal sphere.

Housing Field house: The context makes very difficult for the Roma community to access to a decent housing. They usually trust someone from their known network in order to find a place where to live. Many times they are exposed to live in irregular conditions without knowing it (squatting).

To all this we need to add the key element, the **documentation aspect:**

In Catalonia, being registered at the municipally census as a inhabitant, becomes indispensable for everything. The impossibility to obtain it constitutes a barrier of prime importance. The experience shows us that the fact of not being able to obtain solutions for the census registration does not dismay the decision to reside in the city of election and complicates enormously the life of this population. This fact contributes even more to a deficit recognition of citizenship for the Roma community in our context.

A lot of people and families present difficulties to obtain it due to their situation of residence (squattng), their residence in the street and the absence of renting contract.

Seen the situation of these families and other communities in similar situations, some City councils have looked for solutions that guarantee the exercise of the human rights.

For example, the City council of Barcelona stipulates that the social services can register in the Census as “no permanent home”, and like this, they can access to educational, health and social services. It is a great initiative but not enough to process their spanish identity and residence card (NIE).

The City councils of Hospitalet de Llobregat and Badalona, have the possibility of register in the Census giving the direction of the municipal hostel or the social services headquarters, unblocking, therefore, also the accessibility. These practices need to be applied in a larger scale.

These barriers add to the barriers of the own Romanian Consulate in Barcelona: all the appointments need to be asked telematically with a personal email, making the process a barrier for the Roma community.

Learnings through experiences

This is the seventh year of operation of the Xarxa Romest. We have been able to learn from other experiences, done in other places as the Social Intervention of the Red Cross in Andalucía, Fundación Imaginario Social El Gallinero from Madrid, Romi Bidean at Hernani and Astigarraga, the Roma association Kaledorkayiko in Bilbao and the experience of the Casa de Ila Carità in Milano (Italy). These learnings can be summarized in the following aspects:

- ✓ The work that has a larger impact requires an intense accompaniment, continued and with a reinforcement of the bonds, with a significant interaction.

- ✓ The work needs to adapt to the reality of the population, and not the other way around. The very rigid services focused just on resources need to be used just as a punctual solutions.
- ✓ The intercultural social inclusion requires of community intervention that make possible direct contacts between diverse people to generate the “deconstruction” of discriminatory prejudices. It is necessary to work in the communitarian contexts to contribute to the decrease of prejudices and labelings, making possible the direct interaction with the whole community.
- ✓ The importance of the working continuously in the street, in the neighbourhoods, allow to detect what is not detectable from the offices, and makes possible the generation of personal bonds that allow to take the first steps for a full social inclusion.
- ✓ The efficiency of local and territorial networks that allow identify social situations, detect the in-access of people to the services, allows to do a common approach and share interventions. A large portion of the success has to do with a real and effective coordination between different services.
- ✓ Given the forced mobility of the families to the surroundings of the Metropolitan area of Barcelona, it is necessary that the teams can accompany the families without being limited to their territory.
- ✓ The saturation of basic Social Services and its territoriality does that this type of intense work is very difficult to achieve, remaining these families in a situation of severe vulnerability.
- ✓ Attend the immediate emergency, that accustoms to be quite extreme, at the same time that it procures a process of continuous work that generates empowerment processes.

- ✓ Understand that the processes of work can be interrupted by multiple emergencies of the families that live here or of the rest of the family who remain in the place of origin, and learn to restart a thread of accompanying in a socio educative way.
- ✓ Assume that the vital and familiar projects, are familiar projects and no service projects. The caseworkers and other agents give support to open perspectives, reinforce networks and in any case we can project our model to the families.
- ✓ In this sense we also have learnt that despite some social, cultural and economic conditionings, there is an extraordinary diversity according to origins, interests, capacities, wills and projections of future. It is indispensable to surpass the generalisations and ensure the singularity of each person and of each familiar system.
- ✓ It is of vital importance to believe and to value what has been done and to make visible the interventions of success, by intervention of success we understand actions that generate positive changes, no matter how small they are.
- ✓ It is necessary to make individual plans for each person, each family, further of the protocols and actions prefixed. It is convenient to be very attentive and act with flexibility in order to to attain a more specific intervention.

Challenges

The most important challenge in a territory like Catalonia is the guarantee of the human rights of the Roma population, reinforcing their dignity, and their rights of citizenship making possible their access to the services and their participation.

To a more concrete level:

1.- It is necessary **to attend properly this community with all the peculiarities and objective difficulties**, when the social services of primary are swamped, when the schools do not have enough resources to attend the diversity and when the primary health attention of health is blocked.

For example, the ratios of the professionals, according to the LSS (2007) of Social Services of Barcelona are old-fashioned and do not allow to attain the aim of the law that is to guarantee

the subjective rights and provide an attention of quality to the citizenship. The current context and the social needs that have been born from the approval of the LSS does that the ratio of the professionals have remained obsolete. The rhythms of these services make impossible a patient work, physical accompaniments, informal conversations in a frame of bond and confidence.

2.- The documentation aspects need to stop being a **barrier** that block the incorporation of families, youth and childrens to the programs and services.

3.- It is necessary **to work in network** and not only coordinated, in the areas of health, housing, education and social services in the territories.

4.-It is necessary to link **familiar and community processes** without being limited to a territory.

5.- There is a need of **investment in social policies**, that include the Roma east European community and that these investments suppose real advances in their basic social rights.

6.- It is necessary to procure that **the application of the Law 14/2010**, of 27 May, **of the rights and the opportunities for the infancy and the adolescence**, that forces to the administration to give the necessary integral attention for the development of their personality and their welfare in the familiar and social context for all children and teenagers be effective.

7.- It is necessary **to resolve** the aspects of documentation that have become a barrier , (health card, census register). What represents a right can become an exception.

8.- It is necessary to tackle a quantitative **knowledge of the presence** of the community, when it is unconstitutional in Spain to distinguish the ethnicity of the people and when we know that many do not access to the services and that generally avoid any institutional relation.

Proposals

Having observed the current situation of the Roma East European population in Catalonia, we would like to contribute with the following proposals:

- 1.- Their rights have to be guaranteed like citizens of our country with access to all the services without despite the no presentation of documentation. They need to exercise their fundamental rights, in order to obtain the full citizenship.
- 2.- Articulate the implementation of measures that give answer to the challenges posed. To such effect it is necessary that each stakeholder assume their responsibilities. Besides that, resources are needed in the different systems of welfare.
- 3.- Specific and stable investment by part of the Administration, allocated to services and projects for the Roma community. These projects can have an specific character or a general character.
- 4.- Erase the arbitrariness in the criteria of access to the services and the right to be registered at the inhabitants census.
- 5.- The different participatory organisms of the Roma population (Pla Integral, Local Councils..) need to incorporate the specific approach tfor the East European Roma population to generate different models of organization.
- 6.- The East Roma community needs to have a voice and to participate in the design of the public policies that affect them. Therefore, there is a need for mechanisms and channels of effective participation that allow to participate in equality of conditions. This participation has to be made without reproducing roles of dependency.
- 7.- Look after an intervention of quality: incorporate the learnings of the network and taking into account that the intervention with this community has to contain an individual, familiar and community dimension.
- 8.- The model of attention of basic social services has to change. There has to be great quality and sufficient professionals motivated to do accompaniment. In order to be able to do that, it is necessary to stabilize the professionals in order to reinforce the bond and the accompaniment with the community.
- 9.- Face seriously the problems of discrimination and prejudice that exists with Roma population, especially with the East European. More campaigns are needed as well as also a greater clarity in the law in order to avoid personal interpretations that punish the community.

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ROMEST notes:

Q1. Difficulties, approaches and successes in the work Roma East European population

Q2. Barriers to the social inclusion.

Q3. Practices of success

Q4. Accompaniment

Q5. Housin

Q6. Women trapped

Q7. Labour inclusion

All these works can be consulted at the following website <http://romest.cat/quaderns-edicions-romest/>

Entities from Xarxa ROMEST that sign the document:



Entities and organisations that support the report:

