

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

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The Higher Education Internationalisation and Mobility (HEIM) project investigates policies, interventions and methodologies for the internationalisation of higher education in different national locations. HEIM focus

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 exist 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)



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

There is little targeted data on Gypsy, Traveller and Roma populations in the UK.

both in their local communities and in school'

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**

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 female, white and middle-class, and are academic high-

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.

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.

Roma exclusion has been conceptualised as a trans-national

	% of Roma aged 20-24 completing post-secondary education (Bachelors Degree,)	% 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)

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, 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

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.

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 organisa, its focus is on developing equality of competencies rather than operating quota system. Passing the RGPP does not guarantee U 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 countries⁷ to an institution where faculty and students come from over 100 countries. The application process also requires students to

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 influenced by the 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 1co t

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 (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 policies at Babes-Bolyai University, Romania. This found that women were over-represented and that female 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**

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 repor

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 R

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

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