

### **50 facts about the Roma community in Europe**

- 1- The Roma exist on all of the continents of the world, including the Americas, the Middle East, Asia and Europe.
- 2- The majority of Roma live in Europe, there are between 10-12 million Roma in Europe today, making them the continents largest minority.
- 3- The Roma are known by several names: Romani, Gitanos, Kale, Manush, Romanichals, Beyash, Romanlarm, Domari and Travellers.
- 4- Though the Roma are composed of many diverse sub-groups, they are usually lumped into one large collective known as Roma because all their cultures are somewhat related.
- 5- Though there is no Roma nation, the Roma have a non-territorial nation called Romani with its own national flag.
- 6- According to genetic and linguistic indicators, the Roma originated from northern India. They most likely left India 1,500 years ago and began arriving in Europe between 1,000 and 900 years ago.
- 7- They left India for reasons familiar to us today: conflict and instability.
- 8- After leaving India, the Roma settled in the Middle East where they called themselves 'Dom', or 'Man'. After they migrated to Europe, the 'D' became rolled into an 'R' to form the word 'Rom', singular for Roma.
- 9- The term Gypsy comes from the false belief that the Roma originated from Egypt.
- 10- Many Roma consider the term 'Gypsy' offensive.

- 11-The Roma are believed to have been originally Hindu, while today they have adopted the religions of their host countries, including Catholic, Muslim, Protestant, Baptist and Anglican.
- 12-It is little known that Roma culture has influenced modern Jazz, Bolero and Flamenco music. Including classical composers like Franz Liszt.
- 13-Many Roma have a common code of honor known as 'Rromano', which means to live with dignity and respect.
- 14-The Roma have a common language known as 'Rromanës', a language related to the Indian Sanskrit. 5 – 6 million Roma people speak Rromanës.
- 15-Historically, Rromanës was not a written language. Instead, like many ancient cultures, the Roma relied on oral tradition and poetry to pass down information from one generation to the next.
- 16-In the past, Roma were not allowed to own land, this resulted in what has been called a 'nomadic lifestyle' by the Roma. Additionally, in order to survive in a hostile environment, the Roma developed the practice of being constantly on the move.
- 17-Traditionally, the Roma travelled together in bands ranging from 10 to a few hundred in what is called a *Kumpanias*.
- 18-Because of their 'mysterious' background, the Roma were historically seen as having a hand in black magic and unnatural occurrences.
- 19-Mistrust of the Roma grew because many believed that they were spies for the Turkish Empire, this led to an increase in the persecution of the Roma.

- 20-In the 1800's, there were around 200,000 Roma slaves in Romania, with active slave markets.
- 21-The Diet of Augsburg, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, declared that it was not a crime to murder a Roma; this resulted in a horrific killing spree.
- 22-They were also put to death in many countries, including England, Switzerland and Denmark.
- 23-Anywhere between 200,000 and 1,500,000 Roma were killed during the Holocaust, known as the Porajmos or 'The Devouring' by the Roma.
- 24-Slovakia even paid the Nazis to deport its Roma population to Auschwitz.
- 25-Many Scandinavian countries carried out mass sterilization programs against their Roma populations as late as 1975.
- 26-A few years ago it was revealed that a police force in Sweden was making a list of thousands of the Roma community, some just a few years old.
- 27-Segregation of the Roma in education still exists: 40% of Roma students in Slovakia go to Roma only schools.
- 28-Segregation is sometimes done by placing Roma students in special education classes. 80% of special education students in Slovakia are composed of Roma.
- 29-Forced evictions, which are illegal under international law, are constantly being carried out against the Roma. Forced evictions are evictions that are

carried out without proper warning or compensation.

- 30-According to the UN, children who face forced evictions, suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.
- 31-The Roma community experiences poverty rates 10 times higher than the average population.
- 32-There is a tragic prevalence of child marriages in the Roma community.
- 33-The Roma community is currently experiencing a lot of friction in relation to women's rights. Traditionally, girls were not allowed to complete their education for fear of being morally corrupted. But young women are increasingly feeling the need to complete their education and getting a job.
- 34-The Roma face a disproportionate frequency of human trafficking. Despite being only 10% of the Bulgarian population, the Roma constitute 50-80% of sexually trafficked persons in the country.
- 35-Roma face trafficking for several reasons, including forced labor, sexual exploitation, forced begging, debt bondage and illegal adoption.
- 36-The life expectancy of the Roma is 10 – 15 years lower than the average population.
- 37-There are at least 10,000 Roma in Italy who are technically stateless, without any citizenship.
- 38-Only 15% of Roma adults have completed upper-secondary or some kind of vocational training.

- 39-Only one in three Roma adults are currently in paid employment.
- 40-Only 16% of the Roma who are employed are working informal jobs (no contract and do not pay taxes), this contradicts the stereotype that most Roma work in informal jobs.
- 41-50% of Roma report facing discrimination based on their ethnic background in the past year.
- 42-Almost 50% of Roma who felt discriminated against in the job market reported that the employer informed them that they did not get the job because of their ethnicity.
- 43-Only 40% of Roma are aware of laws forbidding discrimination when applying for a job.
- 44-One in three Roma adults report health problems that limit their daily activity.
- 45-40% Roma live in accommodations without at least one basic amenity such as toilets, kitchen, shower or electricity.
- 46-Nine out of ten Roma live below the national poverty lines.
- 47-40% of Roma households have someone who had to go to bed hungry in the past month.
- 48-In Greece and Romania, one in ten Roma children is reported to be working outside the home.
- 49-38% of Roma live in areas that are segregated from the rest of the

community.

50-Despite all of the obstacles faced by the Roma, there is an increasing awareness of the discrimination they face. With the end of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, many lessons have been learned and many organizations are working to right the many wrongs that hold back the potential of the Roma community.

*This document has been prepared by Kareem Korayem, for Child Protection Hub for South East Europe, 2016.*

#### Sources:

- *The Situation of Roma in 11 EU Member States Survey Results at a Glance*. Report. Vienna: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2012 and UNDP, 2012, 2012. (henceforth: Situation of Roma) [http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance\\_EN.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf).
- Bradford, Alina. "Gypsy Culture: Customs, Traditions & Beliefs." LiveScience. 2015. Accessed April 11, 2016. [http://www.livescience.com/44512-gypsy-culture.html?li\\_source=LI](http://www.livescience.com/44512-gypsy-culture.html?li_source=LI).
- Mansel, Tim. "Roma in Sweden: A Nation Questions Itself - BBC News." BBC News. December 4, 2013. Accessed April 11, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-25200449>.
- Mansel, Tim. "Roma in Sweden: A Nation Questions Itself - BBC News." BBC News. December 4, 2013. Accessed April 11, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-25200449>.
- Lallanilla, Marc. "5 Intriguing Facts About the Roma." LiveScience. 2013. Accessed April 11, 2016. <http://www.livescience.com/40652-facts-about-roma-romani-gypsies.html>.
- Radu, Delia. "On the Road: Centuries of Roma History." BBC News. July 08, 2009. Accessed April 11, 2016. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8136812.stm>.
- Bradford, Alina. "Gypsy Culture: Customs, Traditions & Beliefs." LiveScience. 2015. Accessed April 11, 2016. [http://www.livescience.com/44512-gypsy-culture.html?li\\_source=LI](http://www.livescience.com/44512-gypsy-culture.html?li_source=LI).
- Hyde, Ann. "Systemic Exclusion of Roma from Employment." - ERRC.org. March 31, 2006. Accessed April 22, 2016. <http://www.errc.org/article/systemic-exclusion-of-roma-from-employment/2535>.
- *GENDER DIMENSIONS OF ROMA INCLUSION Perspectives from Four Roma Communities in Bulgaria*. Publication. Washington DC: World Bank Group, 2014. Accessed April 22, 2016. [http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/eca/Bulgaria/Roma\\_Gender-ENG.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/eca/Bulgaria/Roma_Gender-ENG.pdf).
- *Breaking the Silence*. Publication. Budapest: ERRC, 2011. Accessed April 22, 2016.

<http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/breaking-the-silence-19-march-2011.pdf>.

- The US Holocaust and Memorial Museum has an online collection of scholars speaking on the Roma during the holocaust. (<https://www.ushmm.org/research/scholarly-presentations/symposia/roma-and-sinti-under-studied-victims-of-nazism>)
-