

WORKSHOP REPORT



The Roma: *Between Myth and Reality*



FACILITATED BY:
Denis Iliescu & Sorina Toma
Roma Resource Centre, Belfast

Friday, 26 October 2012

Volunteer Now, 34 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast BT2 7DB

This event was funded by:



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1. Acknowledgments

The Centre for Global Education would like to thank Denis Iliescu and Sorina Toma from the Roma Resource Centre in Belfast for facilitating this informative and participatory workshop. Both Denis and Sorina previously completed the Centre's accredited Global Educator course and applied the skills and knowledge learned on the course to good effect in the delivery of this workshop. They used development education methodologies and activities to widen participants' knowledge and understanding of the realities confronting the Roma community in Ireland. The Centre is indebted to them for their preparation and expert facilitation which made this a really memorable workshop with useful outcomes. The Centre also thanks Irish Aid for financially supporting the workshop as part of the Centre's 'Building Capacity in Development Education' project.

2. Centre for Global Education

The Centre for Global Education was established in 1986 by eight development agencies to provide education services that enhance awareness of international development issues. Its central remit is to provide learning that will enable individuals and organisations to address the causes of poverty, inequality and injustice at local and global levels. The Centre believes that in the current era of accelerated globalisation our society is becoming increasingly interconnected with the wider world. Development education equips individuals and organisations to understand the cultural, economic, social and political influences on our lives that result from our growing interdependence with other countries and societies. It also provides learners with the skills, values, knowledge and understanding necessary to facilitate action that will contribute to poverty eradication both locally and globally.

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The Centre for Global Education is accepted as a charity by Inland Revenue under reference number XR73713 and is a Company Limited by Guarantee Number 25290.

November 2012

3. Building Capacity in Development Education

This one day training workshop on the Roma using development education methodologies was delivered as part of the Centre for Global Education's *Building Capacity in the Development Education Sector in Ireland* project, funded by Irish Aid. The project aims to enhance practice, improve communication and strengthen ties between development educators in all sectors of education. It also aims to increase opportunities for reflection on practice and networking. The project consists of two key activities:

- A bi-annual development education journal: *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*; and
- Three one day development education workshops per annum.

The workshops are participative events that focus on aspects of practice in development education. They address specific training and information needs in the sector and are limited to 16 participants to facilitate interactive learning and dialogue. In the case of 'The Roma: Between Myth and Reality', the workshop aimed to strengthen development education practice in the black and minority ethnic (BME) sector and working links between development and BME organisations.

Policy and Practice serves as a more formal vehicle for discussion and debate. It features contributions from development and development education practitioners from the island of Ireland, Britain, the European Union, North America and the global South. The diversity of contributors helps the sector to widen their understanding of the delivery and effectiveness of development education at local and international levels.

The journal publishes articles on current research initiatives, methodologies and good practice, and enables readers to learn from the knowledge and experience of others. *Policy & Practice* is published online and now has a growing international audience. According to statistics from Google Analytics the journal had a total of just under 55,000 unique visitors between January and October 2012. These users included: 10,940 from the UK, 10,160 from the Philippines, 9,643 from the United States, 4,698 from Ireland, 3,460 from Australia, 2,994 from India, 2,681 from Canada, 1,442 from South Africa and 829 from Germany. *Policy and Practice* has a truly international audience and growing reputation for quality articles.

The journal is available exclusively online at: www.developmenteducationreview.com. To discuss submitting an article or for more information on the journal please contact:

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4. Workshop Theme

This workshop has been one of many fruitful outcomes that have resulted from the Centre for Global Education's delivery of an accredited Global Educator course to the black and minority ethnic (BME) sector since 2008. The aim of the course has been to enhance awareness and understanding of international development issues in the BME sector through the provision of resources, training and mentoring support. To date, 80 participants have completed the course and many of these 'Global Educators' have gone on to use their skills and knowledge in delivering training programmes of their own. Two of the Global Educators, Denis Iliescu and Sorina Toma, work with the Roma community in Belfast and offered to collaborate with the Centre on a global education workshop which aimed to challenge many of the negative myths and stereotypes applied to the Roma in our society. The workshop was successfully delivered in Dublin in April 2012 and resulted in calls from within the development, community and BME sectors for the event to be repeated in Belfast given the size of the Roma community in the north of Ireland. This report details the outcomes of the Belfast workshop.

Why the Roma community?

In the wake of European Union enlargement and increasing migration to Ireland from the global South, many new communities have settled in our society including the Roma. The Centre decided to organise a workshop specifically on this community because of the level of discrimination and marginalisation to which the Roma have been subject across Europe and the wider world. Members of this community are often greeted with hostility and racism and our knowledge of the Roma is often clouded with stereotypes and myths. The workshop proposed to use global education activities and methodologies to challenge these myths and better enable participants to understand the realities of life for the Roma in Irish society.

It aimed to equip participants with the skills and knowledge needed to challenge these myths in their workplace and encourage closer working links between the Roma and other sectors in civil society. Denis and Sorina were ideally placed to facilitate the workshop given their knowledge of global education practice and their extensive experience of working with the Roma in Belfast.

The workshop aim was to:

- To raise awareness of the Roma community and challenge commonly used myths and stereotypes applied to this minority ethnic group.

The workshop objectives were to:

- To enable participants to 'unveil their lenses': recognize and challenge general and individual assumptions about the Roma.

- To strengthen critical literacy skills by enabling learners to separate myth from reality.
- To bring an awareness of different aspects of Roma culture that move beyond myths and stereotypes.
- To equip participants with learning skills that can be incorporated into their work.
- To encourage stronger links and cooperation between the development sector and Roma community and our own society.
- To equip participants with the skills and knowledge needed to challenge these myths in their workplace.

The workshop was targeted at:

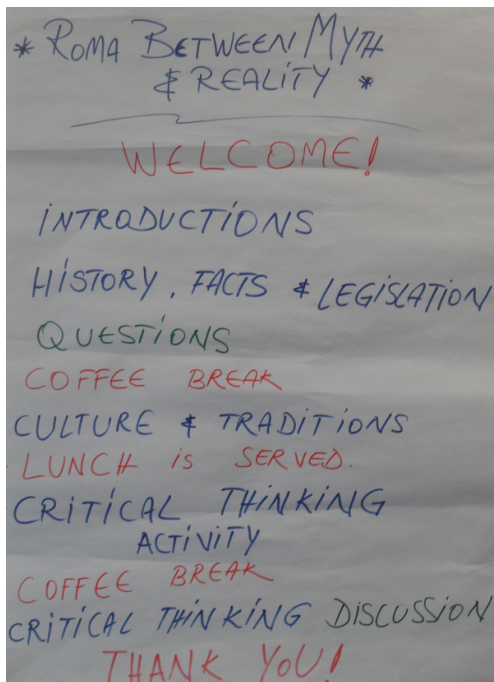
The workshop was targeted at staff, volunteers and management board members of community and development organizations that work in, or in support of, minority ethnic groups. It was also aimed at development education practitioners interested in enhancing their links with the minority ethnic sector.

The workshop's intended outcomes were to:

- Enhance development education capacity among workshop participants.
- Explore the links between the development process at a community and international level.
- Demonstrate the importance of action at a community level on international development issues.
- Demonstrate how development education practice can help to challenge stereotypes and racism directed at minority ethnic communities, particularly the Roma.
- Provide practical ideas as to how the marginalisation and discrimination directed at the Roma community can be addressed.

5. Workshop Programme

09.30am	Coffee / Tea and Registration
10.00am	Introductions / Purpose of Workshop
10.15am	Understanding the Roma: History, Facts and Legislation
11.15am	Coffee / Tea
11.30am	Understanding the Roma: their journey; practices and beliefs.
12.00pm	Exclusion and isolation: experiences of discrimination and marginalisation.
1.00pm	LUNCH (poster exhibition called 'a world without Roma: the contributions of Roma to today's society')
1.30pm	Critical thinking skills: how to challenge prejudice
2.30pm	Coffee / Tea
2.45pm	Critical Thinking skills continued
3.15pm	Feedback and Discussion
4.00pm	Close



6. Understanding the Roma

Participants began the day by discussing some positive and negative perceptions of the Roma living in our society.

Positive

- Talented musicians;
- Roma women in Belfast are kind and warm;
- The Roma place great emphasis on family and community;
- The Roma are a nomadic, dispossessed people with long-standing, culturally rich traditions;
- Roma Pentecostalism is a worldwide phenomenon with many positive features.

Negative

- Roma culture encourages begging, stealing and deception;
- Low life expectancy;
- Extended families live in overcrowded accommodation;
- Roma males are associated with sex trafficking, drug dealing, gangs;
- A hierarchy pervades within the community, reinforcing male chauvinism and gender inequality;
- Women are often married at a young age;
- The Roma typically have no right to work in Britain or Ireland;
- Adults and children alike are poor communicators, with low levels of English language proficiency;
- Children have low levels of educational participation and attainment, and are discouraged from attending school;
- Benefit scroungers;
- Roma often move around and fail to settle/integrate into local communities;
- The Roma have limited skills/trades – musicians, *Big Issue*.

7. Presentation: *The Roma between Myth and Reality*

Roma between Myth and Reality





For more than a thousand years, Roma people (including Travellers, Gypsies, Manouches, Ashkali, Sinti etc.) have been an integral part of European civilization.

Today, with an estimated population of 10-12 million in Europe (aprox. 6 million of whom live in the EU), Roma people are the biggest ethnic minority in Europe

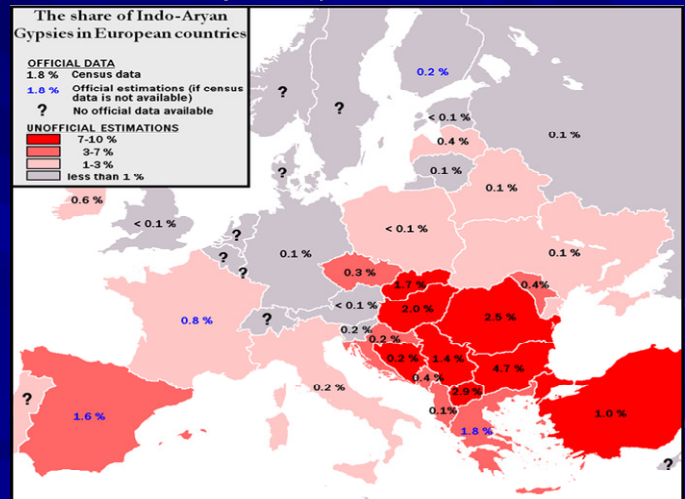
Most Roma are EU citizens.

Populations

Estimated number of Romany population in the EU
(2009-2010)

- Bulgaria – 800,000 ~ 10.33 %
- France – 400,000 ~ 0.62 %
- Germany – 105,000 ~ 0.13 %
- Hungary – 700,000 ~ 7.05 %
- Britain – 300,000 ~ 0.37 %
- Slovak Rep – 500,000 ~ 9.17 %
- Spain – 725,000 ~ 1.57 %
- Romania – 1,850,000 ~ 8.32 %

Total European population:
6,172,000



<http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/default.en.asp>

Their journey...

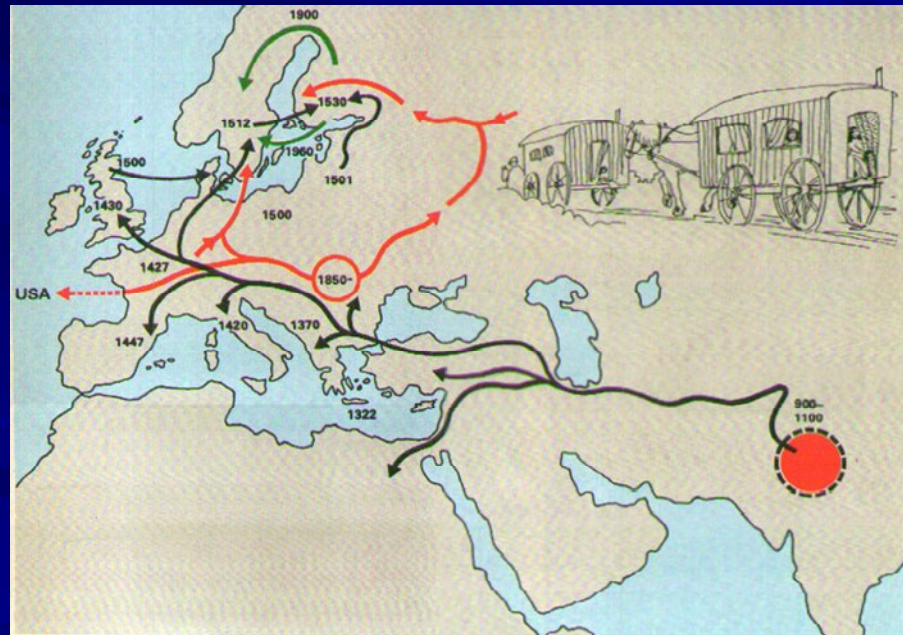
Gypsies/Roma/Romany

- Identity
- Culture
- Values



History, Culture And Perceptions

Migrations and movement



Roma in Europe

The 1st wave of Migration

*Between 15th -17th century Roma have settled in the Ottoman Empire and Central Europe

First experiences of Discrimination: serfdom and slavery in Moldavia and Walachia and discrimination and persecution in West.



The 2nd wave of Movements:

*in the 19th century, when the slavery was abolished in the Romanian principalities and the industrialisation emerged, Roma people were forced to migrate towards West, South (Turkey and Greece) and East and some even reached America and Australia

Discrimination and persecution have intensified, especially in the era of Ex Austro-Hungarian Empire.



Roma Holocaust

Discrimination reached its peak during the Second World War, with a genocide orchestrated by the Nazis.

- *the Veto right for Roma -denied
- *Roma sterilisation
- *Forced labour camps for Roma
- *Nomadic lifestyle had become forbidden
- *General decree against Roma and Sinti (1939)
- *mass deportations and executions

It is estimated that between 400,000 and 500,000 of Sinti and Roma were massacred

During the Nuremberg Trials no mention of this genocide was made and no assistance and compensation was given to the Roma who had survived the concentration camps.



Roma in Communism

- After the 2nd WW the “Socialist Bloc” had emerged over a large area of Europe, where most of the European Roma lived
- The main aim of the socialist policies was the integration in society, being considered the answer to the “Gypsy problem”.
 - Settlement of Nomads (repression or assistance?)
 - Ethnic cleansing / homogenization
 - Forced assimilation
 - The Roma general meetings (high number gatherings) had been banned
 - Education and qualifications – compulsory

Roma in transition

...or the 3rd wave of migration (1960 – today)
caused by war, political and economic instability,
discrimination, racism and systematic violation of
their human rights

The fall of the “Iron Curtain”(1989) and European
Union Extension (2004 & 2007)

- *asylum seekers and refugees
- *foreign workers
- *new opportunities

Roma, today..

Thanks to the founding of Roma organisations, worldwide lobbying, cooperation with international organisations and institutionalisation of their issues, the Roma today are in a position to influence political processes on a communal, national and international level.

*A joint responsibility: the European institutions and EU countries have a joint responsibility to improve social inclusion and integration of Roma, by using all the instruments and policies for which they are responsible.

Communication on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies by 2020 – was adopted by the EC, to ensure that the national and regional integration policies focus on Roma in a clear manner.



Roma in Ireland

“Roma are a minority ethnic group whose recent origins are predominantly from Eastern and Central Europe.

It is estimated that 3000 Roma are currently living in Ireland. About 90% of them travelled from Romania. “

Recent studies have shown that in Northern Ireland there is an estimate of 300 Roma families, the majority of whom are living in Belfast area.

www.romasupport.ie

Legislation in UK

Romania – A2 European Country since 01/01/2007 – restrictions in rights of work and residency and, therefore, access to public services and funds in UK.

The EU countries can hold restrictions for the new members for the first 7 years of their membership, with the option to review their policy after 3, 5 or 6 years.

Conditions:

- Student -> 20hr/week employment
- Self-employment
- Work permit – high skilled workers

Roma between Myth and Reality

Thank you!



8. Exclusion and Isolation

The group discussed some of the factors that resulted in the exclusion and isolation of the Roma in many of the societies in which they live.

- A high level of poverty
- Poor literacy and inadequate access to education
- Poor access to services
- Unemployment
- Poor sanitary and living conditions
- Experience of discrimination, isolation and mistrust
- Anti-social behaviour from within and without Roma community

Effects of Exclusion and Isolation

- Poor levels of literacy (“they don’t value education”)
- Unemployment
- Anti-social behaviour
- Poor access to services
- Fear of the ‘authorities’

Bennett Model of Intercultural Sensitivity: Towards Ethnorelativism

1-3 Ethnocentric Stages

1. Denial
2. Defence
3. Minimalisation

4-6 Ethno-relative Stages

4. Acceptance
5. Adaptation
6. Integration

9. Critical Thinking Skills

Poster Activity

In the first activity after lunch, participants were invited to read information presented in posters about Roma traditions, customs and lifestyle. The information in the posters was then discussed and contrasted with pre-conceived ideas about the Roma.



10. World Café – The Future for Roma in Ireland: Challenges and Opportunities

In four groups, participants considered two questions: what are the challenges to and opportunities for addressing the problems of discrimination and isolation currently experienced by the Roma?



Challenges

- Media portrayals of the Roma, which gives rise to acceptance of stereotypes;
- The political agenda, which relegates the importance of Roma issues;
- Social, cultural and language barriers;
- A fear of difference that resides in some local communities;
- The precarious economic climate, which gives rise to an 'us and them' mentality;
- Closed communities, which are a hangover of the Troubles;
- Hitherto, a lack of encounters between locals and members of the Roma community has proven a significant obstacle to integration;
- Lack of leadership within the Roma community, and limited representation at a political/policy level.

Opportunities

Legislative Measures

- Lobbying political representatives and arranging meetings between Roma groups and MLAs/MPs/TDs in order to put Roma-related issues on the agenda and effect positive changes in the legislation;
- Petitioning amenable representatives to bring the Roma community to the attention of relevant ministers and committees.

Education and Training

- Incorporate a more significant Roma element into the curriculum, particularly in teacher training programmes;
- Providing representatives of the Roma community with opportunities to develop the necessary media and lobbying skills to put their case to decision-makers.

Information Dissemination

- Encouraging partners and friendly organisations to provide more space on their websites for information on the Roma community;
- Using social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter to disseminate information on Roma more widely;
- Explore all media outlets – radio, TV, newspapers, NGO publications etc. - to promote positive images of the Roma. This may include the launch of a specialised Roma publication;
- Identify opportunities for Roma speakers to visit schools, universities and workplaces;
- Challenging the perpetuation of prejudices and promoting acceptance of the Roma at home and in the local community.

Spaces for Dialogue and Exchange

- Forging lasting alliances between the Roma community and civil society groups and organisations;
- Intercultural projects;
- One-off events such as conferences and seminars promoting a cultural exchange, using music, film, art, literature etc.;
- Family-oriented events;
- Peer-mentoring schemes;
- Community initiatives aimed at instilling a more inclusive and integrative ethos in all quarters – ‘inclusive neighbourhood projects’.

11. Participant Feedback

“I went from knowing virtually nothing to gaining lots of valuable information and a much better understanding of the Roma traditions, culture and issues facing them today”.

“I did have a certain degree of knowledge of the Roma in Belfast. However the workshop furthered my understanding, mostly with regards to traditions and culture”.

“The facilitators were excellent and kept the entire workshop very relaxed but controlled. Having two facilitators who knew, from first-hand experience, what they are talking about is a huge advantage. No questions were left unanswered”.

“Overall, I greatly appreciated the variety of methods used in teaching. The photo activity seemed to work especially well in drawing out our questions and unveiling our assumptions”.

“Sorina and Denis did a wonderful job! They are full of insight and knowledge and led the workshop very well”.

“I would encourage you to keep running the same workshop as long as there is interest. It is great material and very relevant!”

“The best part was the fact that a Roma (partly so) gave the workshop with a Romanian, both very capable ladies. A few words from a Roma are worth thousands from the rest of us as they are speaking from their experience”.

“I am most grateful to the presenters and to Centre for Global Education for putting on this workshop – hopefully our attitudes to the Roma will have been enhanced and maybe we will be able to help those who are so disadvantaged in some way”.

What we could do differently next time

“In depth case studies and some inter community dialogue”.

“I would really enjoy an opportunity for dialogue directly with members of the [Roma] community”.

“Personally I would have liked to have found out more about Roma throughout Europe and more on legal status, restrictions”.

“I would not change any of it, except to have two or three (more) local Roma people coming in at one session to talk about begging, car wash work, youth experiences, relations with local people, etc...i.e. some genuine chalk face input”.

12. Facilitators

Denis Iliescu

Denis is a Romanian national with a background in teaching, social care, community development and global education. She is currently Project Leader of the Roma Resource Centre Belfast which provides early years education for the Romanian Roma children. She was previously Community Liaison Officer for the Roma community in Belfast. Denis has extensive experience in working with disadvantaged groups in Romania, including work with members of the local Roma community, both institutionalized and supported by community based organisations.



Facilitators of the workshop. Sorina Toma on the left and Denis Iliescu on the right.

Sorina Toma

Sorina is a Romanian / Roma and Global Educator. She has a background of working closely with the Roma community in Belfast over the past three years.

Appendix A: Participant List

NAME	ORGANISATION	ADDRESS	E-MAIL
Kelli Boyles	Women's Resource and Development Agency	6 Mount Charles Belfast Co. Antrim BT7 1NZ	Kelli.boyles@wrda.net
Noel Bredin	St. Vincent de Paul	75 Malone Avenue Belfast BT9 6EP	
Rory Byers	St. Columba's College	2 Ballyphilip Road Portaferry Newtownards Co. Down BT22 1RB	
Aneta Dabek	Embrace	9 Lennoxvale, Belfast, BT9 5BY	aneta@embraceni.org
Helena Daly	TESOL Project	1 Home Avenue Newry BT34 2DL	h.daly@btinternet.com
Phyllis Graham		13 Winchester Avenue Carryduff Co. Down	phyllisgraham3@hotmail.com
Paul Hainsworth	Amnesty International		pa.hainsworth@me.com
Janet Horner	Comhlamh	Ballast House 2nd floor Aston Quay Dublin 2	janetp.horner@gmail.com
Brenda Hughes	Cultural Integration Development Worker, Gold Community Partnership	GOLD Community Partnership 2nd Floor Loy Buildings 18 - 24 Loy Street Cookstown Co Tyrone BT80 8PE	brendae-hughes@hotmail.co.uk
Judy Jennings	St. Vincent de Paul	116 Malone Road Belfast BT9 6ES	

Fiona Leary	Green Hat	30 Main Street, Maguiresbridge, Co Fermanagh, BT94 4RZ	fiona@greenhat.org.uk
Jenna Liechty Martin	Embrace	9 Lennoxvale, Belfast, BT9 5BY	jenna@embraceni.org
Rebekah McDonald	Youth Worker Dunmurry Presbyterian Church		becks.mcdonald07@hotmail.c o.uk
Paula McIlwaine	NICIE	25 College Gardens Belfast BT9 6BS	<u>pmcilwaine@nicie.org.uk</u>
Brendan Quail	NICRAS	143a University Street Belfast BT7	brendanquail@gmail.com
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Aoife Titley	DICE Project	Church of Ireland College of Education 96 Upper Rathmines Road Rathmines Dublin 6	atitley@cice.ie

Appendix B: Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review

Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review is an open access, bi-annual global education journal which has been the Centre for Global Education's flagship publication since its launch in 2005. *Policy and Practice* aims to provide a space for practitioners to critically reflect on their practice and discuss the main challenges faced by the development education sector. The journal features in-depth contributions on aspects of global education practice such as research, methodologies, monitoring and evaluation, the production of resources, enhancing organisational capacity, strategic interventions in education, and sectoral practice. The journal aims to share research findings, update academics and practitioners on policy developments, celebrate and promote existing good practice in global education, inform the work of practitioners in development education and related adjectival education organisations and to promote global education within the statutory education sector in Ireland. The journal can be found at www.developmenteducationreview.com.

Submissions and suggestions for contributors or topics should be sent to:

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Appendix C: Useful Web Links

European Roma Rights Centre: www.errc.org

European Network against Racism: www.enar-eu.org

International Step by Step Association: www.issa.nl

Ireland's National Traveller / Roma Integration Strategy:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_ireland_strategy_en.pdf

Pavee Point Travellers' Centre: www.paveepoint.ie

Roma Education Fund: www.romaeducationfund.hu

Roma factsheets: <http://romafacts.uni-graz.at/>



The Centre for Global Education (CGE) is a development non-governmental organisation that provides education services to increase awareness of international development issues. Its central remit is to promote education that challenges the underlying causes of poverty and inequality in the global North and South and effect action toward social and economic justice.

The Centre equips individuals and organisations to understand the cultural, economic, social and political influences on our lives that result from our growing interdependence with other countries and societies. It also provides learners with the skills, values, knowledge and understanding necessary to facilitate action that will contribute to poverty eradication both locally and globally.

The Centre delivers a participative approach to education and we deliver our work across the formal and informal education sectors. Our approach to education is participative and experiential, and creates agency for social change. For more information on our work contact:

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