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Social Thematic Study

The situation of Roma

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## Table of Contents

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. ROMA POPULATION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2. EDUCATION .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3. EMPLOYMENT.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>4. HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOOD.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>5. HEALTH .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>6. POVERTY/ECONOMIC SITUATION .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>7. ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP/RIGHTS AWARENESS .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>ANNEXES.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>1. Bibliography .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>2. Statistical tables.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>3. Table of complaints.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>4. Table of sources (reports and studies on Roma).....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>5. Roma networks.....</b>	<b>77</b>

## Executive summary

There are no official numbers on the Roma population in Belgium given that ethnicity is not registered in public registers. An average estimate figure counts 30.000 Roma in Belgium, accounting for 0.29% of the total population. Roma are mainly present in Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent and Sint-Niklaas. There is also an important concentration of Roma in Diest, Tienen, Heusden-Zolder and Temse.

Overall, it should be noted that most information on Roma in Belgium is found in Flemish studies and research given that most Roma live in the Flanders and Brussels Capital Region and not in the Walloon Region. This inevitably leads to data gaps on the situation of Roma in Belgium.

In Belgium, the term Roma is used as an umbrella term for different groups of people who have more or less the same cultural characteristics and who share a history of discrimination. Four groups can be distinguished, namely autochthonous groups including the Manush (Sinti of Belgium), Roms and Travellers and Roma (*sensu strictu*) - originally from Western and Eastern Europe. Many studies and reports on Roma in Belgium do not clearly distinguish between the different subgroups of Roma in Belgium. Therefore, when the term 'Roma' is used in this report, it means the study reported on does not clearly indicate which subgroup it covers. Whenever a study makes a distinction between the different Roma groups, the name of this subgroup (Manouches, Roms, Travellers, Roma (*sensu strictu*)) is used.

Given the lack of official numbers on Roma and the absence of ethnic profiling in Belgium, it is difficult to provide concrete numbers on Roma discrimination or segregation in Belgium. The data provided in this study are therefore estimates that are the result of extensive desk research into non-official qualitative studies and reports on Roma in Belgium that were provided by several non-governmental organizations and research institutes. From these studies it is apparent that Roma in Belgium are a disadvantaged group particularly susceptible to social exclusion, poverty and discrimination.

The results of the study show that – compared to the majority population – **education** is problematic for many Roma due to social, cultural and economic discrepancies between Roma and non-Roma, whereas education is key to break the cycle of poverty and help Roma to socially integrate into Belgian society. There are no official or unofficial data available on the number of Roma children enrolled at any level of education in Belgium, yet services working with Roma have noted in recent years that many Roma children and youngsters have never been enrolled in any school in Belgium. Participation of Roma children in pre-school/kindergarten is limited because Roma parents are often not familiar with the Belgian school culture and are not interested in school. The majority of Roma children attend primary education in Belgium; however the rate of absenteeism is high. Research shows there is also a lower pass rate of Roma children from primary to secondary education compared to the majority population, and a higher dropout rate, especially of Roma girls. The problems include attitude, language barriers, expenses of school activities, semi-sedentary/itinerant life style, the precarious residence situation of Roma without Belgian nationality, socio-cultural barriers, underage marriages, teen pregnancies and lack of clarity about the compulsory nature of education. Roma children attending secondary education are often found in technical and vocational training. The educational problems raised in the study are considerably more pronounced for Roma children than for other groups of children in a similar situation, such as children without a legal residence permit. Initiatives working with Roma mediators and focussing on multicultural teaching methods as well as on a culture adapted to Roma culture have proved to be successful in motivating Roma to attend school in Belgium.

Qualitative studies show that many Roma are in a precarious **employment** situation. Roma are

underrepresented on the Belgian labour market and the percentage of Roma employed on the basis of standard employment contracts is low, even though such contracts provide the basis for access to social benefits. Unemployment is high among the Roma population – even when they have a legal residence permit – because of language barriers, low educational achievement, high levels of illiteracy, practical experience and therefore lack the attitude needed in the job search process. Roma who are employed, and especially Romanian and Bulgarian Roma due to transitional restrictions limiting their full access to the Belgian labour market until January 2014, are usually self-employed in both the formal and informal sectors, often barely providing them with minimal livelihood. Many Roma also live through unofficial work, including begging – which for many Roma is a necessary alternative income – selling flowers or playing music. Studies show that Roma children often accompany their parents on the streets, not because this would lead to sympathy but out of practical concerns as leaving young children at home with an adult would mean less income at the end of the day. Employment of Roma in the so-called bottleneck professions is limited because of practical and administrative obstacles, including insufficient insight into employment opportunities and reluctance on behalf of the employers as well as complex regulations on residence status and work. The study does not include information on the old age pension of Roma because no data or reports are available on this issue.

Research shows that both itinerant and sedentary Roma suffer from discrimination in the **housing** market. Moreover, Roma tend to be concentrated in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Sedentary Roma are faced with a lack of available and affordable housing. Roma tend to access mostly low quality rental homes with few amenities due to unemployment, negative image, discrimination, lack of access to social housing and a precarious financial situation. Additionally, Roma families are often the victims of unscrupulous landlords, but are reluctant to file a complaint against them, fearing eviction. Roma prefer buying property, but they risk contracting excessive loans, which in turn exacerbates the downwards spiral of poverty; if they cannot pay off the loan they are forced to sell the property. Roma often stay in poor districts and inadequate housing, even after receiving a permanent residence permit and the right to claim housing benefits. The majority of the Slovak and Czech Roma asylum-seekers stay in collective accommodation centres. Whereas some Roma live in squats, others are temporarily homeless, especially during the first few weeks after their arrival in Belgium or after forced eviction. Waiting lists for social housing are long in Belgium, resulting in homelessness and slums. Roma living in caravans are faced with a shortage of residential and halting sites, which leads to overcrowding of the existing sites or illegal stays on undesignated grounds under the constant fear of eviction/expulsion. The available land is also expensive and it is hard to obtain the necessary building permits for caravans. Itinerant Roma only passing through Belgium are often faced with a shortage of empty plots. Caravan sites are often placed in remote areas thereby limiting opportunities of participation of the Roma in society. Moreover, the quality of the existing sites varies greatly and depends on the site being privately or publicly owned, with living on public land being relatively affordable due to grants from the regional governments. In Brussels, the limited available land is more expensive. In addition to providing funds for the construction, extension and renovation of caravan sites, the Flemish government raises awareness of and disseminates information on halting sites to local governments. In August 2012, the Council of Europe Committee for Social Rights found that Belgium violates the European Social Charter for lacking available sites for caravan dwellers and for not changing its urban legislation.

Many Roma in Belgium suffer from poor **health**, which is – among others – due to bad housing conditions, a poor diet, focus on short-term rather than long-term health concerns, unfamiliarity with disease symptoms and the excessive use of coffee, alcohol and cigarettes. Several qualitative studies show that many Roma are unaware of the existence of or are unfamiliar with the service provisions of health care services. Social and cultural differences, language barriers, poverty and a history of discrimination in the country of origin are identified as the main cause of the lack of access to health care of Roma in Belgium. Access to health care is often also hindered due to

financial concerns and a lack of knowledge of administrative and reimbursement procedures. Cultural barriers can prevent Roma women from visiting a male doctor. There also appears to be a misuse of medical care services in Belgium, as Roma families tend to rather visit the emergency room of a hospital or a pharmacy rather than the private practice of a doctor. Self-employed Roma workers often do not register with a health insurance firm for small risks due to the lack of information on health insurance. In addition to unfamiliarity with the symptoms of various diseases, the lack of access to preventive measures such as vaccination and nutritious food, decent housing conditions, healthy lifestyle, and monitoring of the health status are identified by various studies as the reasons why the health status and life expectancy of the Roma population in Belgium is well below the average life expectancy of the majority population. Whereas Roma tend to disregard their own health status, they are very attentive to the health status of their children. The level of vaccination of Roma children in Belgium is unknown at this time as no instance registers the number of Roma children that are vaccinated annually.

Research shows that Roma in Belgium generally appear to be affected by **poverty** in some way or another, with Roma beggars usually living in extreme poverty. Roma of Romanian origin are the dominant group among beggars in Belgium. The majority of them are women and the average age of Roma beggars of 27 years old stands considerably lower than the average age of national beggars which stands at 41 years old. In light of the precarious economic situation, Roma tend to rely strongly and often exclusively on their own social network – which is often limited to their own Roma community – for mutual support and survival, which makes it harder to break the cycle of poverty. In the Brussels Capital Region, many Roma are not entitled to work or receive social benefits because of their residential status. The money they receive through begging is, on average, 16.8 euro per day. This money is mainly spent on housing and food and what is left is sent to the family in the country of origin. Roma in the Brussels Capital Region often do not know about the existence of social welfare organisations offering food or material help because the existence of such initiatives is not well communicated to them.

Finally, when it comes to the **participation** of Roma in **political and public life**, the level of involvement remains very low except for a few small-scale specific local initiatives across Flanders. Overall there are not many active organisations for asylum seekers, refugees, Roma and Travellers in Belgium. However, not all of those that exist receive sufficient support from the communities they represent, in which case they cannot represent the whole group given they did not receive the explicit mandate to do so. Roma self-organisations are often overburdened, undervalued, underfinanced and understaffed. There is also little political participation and representation of Roma in Belgium. The project ‘VOTE for Roma’ tries to stimulate local political participation of key Roma figures through the organisation of participatory processes in cooperation with the target group. Given that Roma is an ethnicity and not a nationality, no data is collected on Roma participation in European, national, regional and local elections, or on their political participation and their representation in governmental, regional and local authorities. The participation and representation of Roma is also very low in non-governmental organisations in Belgium. People with a migration background are highly underrepresented in administrative councils and consultative bodies such as local consultation, parents’ committees, intercultural councils and welfare councils. The reason for this is that, generally speaking, the Flemish model of associations is very different from the model known by most people with a migration background. Poverty and cultural differences as well as financial and psychological barriers are identified as the main causes explaining the overall political and public inactiveness of Roma in Belgium. Extreme deprivation as well as a history of discrimination in access to education, housing and health services jeopardizes the successful participation of Roma in cultural, political and consultative bodies in Belgium.

This group suffers from discrimination with regard to access to education and vocational training, employment, health services, housing and civil participation. In addition, Roma are often negatively

portrayed in the media. Such stereotyping in combination with a negative attitude from the majority population contributes to further social isolation of Roma in Belgium. It should be noted that even though most Roma suffer from discrimination, some Roma have managed to integrate well into Belgian society without major difficulties.

The Flemish-Speaking Community of Belgium European Social Fund (ESF) Agency and the French-Speaking Community of Belgium ESF Agency do not finance Roma integration projects. The Flemish Agency finances projects relating to the following 4 target groups: the elderly (50+), people with disabilities, individuals with low levels of education and migrants. Roma may be included in one of these target groups, but projects specifically focusing on Roma do not receive ESF funding.

# 1. Roma population

There are no official numbers on the Roma population in Belgium given that ethnicity is not registered in public registers. An average estimate figure counts 30.000 Roma in Belgium, accounting for 0.29% of the total population.<sup>1</sup> Estimates on the total number of Roma in Belgium vary from 15.000 to 50.000 according to different sources. This number consists of approximately 20,000 Roma who do not have Belgian nationality but the nationality of the country of origin; and approximately 7,000 Travellers/Voyageurs, 1,500 Manouches/Sinti and 750 Roms who have Belgian nationality (*see below*).<sup>2</sup> Roma represent 0,15 to 0,3% of the total Belgian population.<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to get more exact numbers because many Roma live anonymously in closed communities, there are no official statistics, Roma families move around easily inside and outside municipality and country borders so the numbers change, and because many Roma prefer not to identify themselves as Roma out of fear of stigma, stereotypes and discrimination.

Roma are mainly present in Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent and Sint-Niklaas. There is also an important concentration of Roma in Diest, Tienen, Heusden-Zolder and Temse.<sup>4</sup> No information is available on where the Roma are located in Wallonia.<sup>5</sup> Overall, it should be noted that most information on Roma in Belgium is found in Flemish studies and research given that most Roma live in the Flanders and Brussels Capital Region and not in the Walloon Region. This inevitably leads to data gaps on the situation of the Roma in Belgium. Most of the organizations working for and/or with Roma in the Walloon Region appear to be currently inactive or do not carry out studies on the situation of Roma in the Walloon Region.

In Belgium, the term Roma is used as an umbrella term for different groups of people who have more or less the same cultural characteristics and who share a history of discrimination. The following four groups can be distinguished.<sup>6</sup> The **Manush** (Manouches) are the Sinti of Belgium (a group that similar to that in France, Switzerland, and parts of Germany) and who describe themselves as Manouche. They are considered the descendants of the first Roma arrived in Belgium in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Manush live mainly in caravans. Their first language is the Sinti Romanes while their second language is the language of the region where they live in. Their number is estimated at about 1500, and they are usually Belgian nationals. Some Manoush are Catholic, whilst others belong to the Christian ‘born again’ movement. A second group is that of **Roms**, meaning Roma descending from the second wave of migration, from what was part of Moldavia and Wallachia in 1856, after the abolition of slavery. Their first language is Vlax Romanes, whereas their second is French. The Roms have a semi-nomadic lifestyle; they travel during the summer and park on land for caravans on private or public land during the winter. There is an estimate of about 750 Roms, they belong to the Christian “born again” movement” and are usually Belgian nationals. The third group, **Travellers** (Voyageurs), are Belgian autochthones, descendants of old travellers groups. Ethnically, they are not related to Roma, but they share some cultural aspects related to the nomadic lifestyle. They live now in caravans or houses and their first language is Dutch (in Flanders) and

<sup>1</sup> Vlaams actieplan MOE(Roma)-migranten 2012, available at

[http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan\\_MOE.pdf](http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan_MOE.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Machiels, M. (2002), *Garder la distance ou saisir les chances, Roms et gens du voyage en Europe occidentale*, Réseau Européen contre le Racisme (ENAR), 43 p., available at [http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/pdf/roma\\_fr.pdf](http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/pdf/roma_fr.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Peña-Casas, R., Ghailani D. and Nicaise, I. (2011), *Belgium – Promoting the Social Inclusion of Roma. A Study of National Policies*, HIVA and K.U.Leuven, 37 p.

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>5</sup> Belgium National Strategy for the integration of Roma, February 2012, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma\\_belgium\\_strategy\\_fr.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_belgium_strategy_fr.pdf), p.9-10.

<sup>6</sup> Belgium National Strategy for the integration of Roma, February 2012.

French (in Wallonia). However, they continue to use many words of their own language (Bargoens) and they are mainly Catholic. Their number is estimated at 7000, and they are usually Belgian nationals.<sup>7</sup> **Roma** (*sensu strictu*), the fourth group, are Roma who are originally from Western- and Eastern Europe. This group has a migration background and their number is estimated at about 20.000. They tend to have the nationality of their country of origin. It should be noted that many studies and reports on Roma in Belgium do not clearly distinguish between the different subgroups of Roma in Belgium. Therefore, when the term 'Roma' is used in this report, it means the study reported on does not clearly indicate the subgroup that it covers. Whenever a study makes a distinction between the different Roma groups, the name of this subgroup (Manouches, Roms, Travellers, Roma (*sensu strictu*)) is used.

Given the lack of official numbers on Roma and the absence of ethnic profiling in Belgium, it is difficult to provide concrete numbers on Roma discrimination or segregation. The data provided in this study are therefore estimates that are the result of extensive desk research into non-official qualitative studies and reports on Roma in Belgium that were provided by several non-governmental organizations and research institutes. From these studies it is apparent that Roma in Belgium are a disadvantaged group particularly susceptible to social exclusion, poverty and discrimination. This group suffers from discrimination with regard to access to education and vocational training, employment, health services, housing and civil participation. In addition, Roma are often negatively portrayed in the media. Such stereotyping in combination with a negative attitude from the majority population, contributes to deeper social isolation of Roma in Belgium. It should be noted that even though most Roma suffer from discrimination, some have managed to integrate well into the Belgian society without major difficulties.

The majority of Roma in Belgium have a sedentary lifestyle.<sup>8</sup> They live in fixed caravans (mostly Manouches and Sinti), houses or apartments (mostly Roma), voluntarily or out of necessity because of the lack of sufficient and appropriate caravan sites. Most Roms in Belgium have a semi-sedentary life-style as they travel during the summer and reside in private or public caravan parks during the winter. Geographically, most Roma are located in larger cities across Belgium such as Brussels, Antwerp, Tienen, Diest, Heusden-Zolder, Temse, Liège, Ghent, Charleroi, Namur and some smaller cities (also smaller numbers) in Sint-Niklaas, Leuven, Ostend, Waver and Verviers.<sup>9</sup> Research concerning the national origin of Roma in Belgium shows that the majority of Travellers, Manouches and Roms in Belgium are of Belgian nationality, while most Roma (*sensu strictu*) in Belgium have the nationality of their country of origin and not the Belgian nationality. Turkey, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania are the most important countries of origin with Poland on a steady first place, while inflows from Turkey show a decreasing trend and, conversely, inflows from Romania show an increasing trend. The inflow from Middle- and Eastern-European countries varies within each Belgian city. In Antwerp, most Roma originate from former Yugoslavian countries such as Kosovo and Macedonia; Roma in Brussels Capital mainly come from Romania and the Roma in Ghent from Slovakia and Bulgaria; in Temse and Sint-Niklaas, most Roma come from Kosovo and in Limburg they mainly come from the former Yugoslavia and more specifically from countries such as Serbia-Montenegro and Kosovo.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See [Samenvatting Diversiteitsbarometer](#)

<sup>8</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), *Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma*, Brussels, 40 p.

<sup>9</sup> Vlaamse Overheid (2011), *Vlaams actieplan MOE(Roma)-migranten 2012*, 56 p., available at [http://binnenland.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/actieplan\\_MOE.pdf](http://binnenland.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/actieplan_MOE.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Vlaamse Overheid (2011), *Vlaams actieplan MOE(Roma)-migranten 2012*, 56 p., available at [http://binnenland.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/actieplan\\_MOE.pdf](http://binnenland.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/actieplan_MOE.pdf)



## 2. Education

Given that there are no official or unofficial data regarding Roma in any level of school, it is difficult to make concrete statements on school attendance among Roma children in Belgium. The available information and data are therefore unofficial and are drawn from studies carried out by non-governmental organizations and research institutes in Belgium. Schools having also Roma pupils have been highlighting problems such as irregular school attendance and a high dropout rate among Roma pupils.<sup>11</sup> Research shows that these problems are observed more often among Roma children compared to other groups of children in a similar situation, such as children without a legal residence status.<sup>12</sup> Services working with Roma also note that in more recent years, they have recorded many Roma children and youngsters who have never been enrolled in any school.<sup>13</sup>

The Flemish-Speaking Community of Belgium European Social Fund (ESF) Agency and the French-Speaking Community of Belgium ESF Agency were contacted for the purpose of this study concerning Roma integration projects and none of them finance such projects. The Flemish Agency finances projects relating to the following 4 target groups: the elderly (50+), people with disabilities, people with low levels of education and migrants. Roma may be included in one of these target groups, but projects specifically focusing on this group do not receive ESF funding. The Brussels ESF Agency was also contacted but was not available for information.

### a) Pre-school/kindergarten

Research from 2008 from organizations working in the area of minorities and integration, shows that Roma children take only limited part in primary education because Roma parents often have a negative school experience and perception of school or, more broadly, they have another approach to values and norms in which the collective wellbeing outweighs the individual educational ambitions.<sup>14</sup> Roma parents are often not familiar with the Belgian school culture, which is translated in a lack of interest in school, especially when they come from a traditional environment and are illiterate themselves.<sup>15</sup> Generally and traditionally, Roma toddlers remain under the care of the family. Many Roma children do not attend kindergarten or start school at a later age than the average child in Belgium, which results in learning disadvantages from an early age<sup>16</sup>. In turn, the age difference – as well as language problems - can be a demotivating factor for the rest of the educational career.<sup>17</sup>

In 2004, the Coordination of non-governmental Organizations for the Rights of the Child (CODE) conducted a thorough analysis of the education of Roma (*sensu strictu*) children in nursery and

<sup>11</sup> Werkgroep Roma en Onderwijs (2008), Motivatieplan scholarisatie Roma, Brussel, p. 5 available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan\\_Scholarisatie\\_080916.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan_Scholarisatie_080916.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Werkgroep Roma en Onderwijs (2008), Motivatieplan scholarisatie Roma, Brussel, p. 5 available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan\\_Scholarisatie\\_080916.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan_Scholarisatie_080916.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Werkgroep Roma en Onderwijs (2008), Motivatieplan scholarisatie Roma, Brussel, p. 6 available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan\\_Scholarisatie\\_080916.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan_Scholarisatie_080916.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Werkgroep Roma en Onderwijs (2008), Motivatieplan scholarisatie Roma, Brussel, p. 7 available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan\\_Scholarisatie\\_080916.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan_Scholarisatie_080916.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Werkgroep Roma en Onderwijs (2008), Motivatieplan scholarisatie Roma, Brussel, p. 7 available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan\\_Scholarisatie\\_080916.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan_Scholarisatie_080916.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Werkgroep Roma en Onderwijs (2008), Motivatieplan scholarisatie Roma, Brussel, p. 7 available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan\\_Scholarisatie\\_080916.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan_Scholarisatie_080916.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Werkgroep Roma en Onderwijs (2008), Motivatieplan scholarisatie Roma, Brussel, p. 7 available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan\\_Scholarisatie\\_080916.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan_Scholarisatie_080916.pdf).

primary education.<sup>18</sup> The first part of the research presented an introduction to the various aspects of the Roma (*sensu strictu*) culture as a better understanding of this group is considered necessary when addressing its problems. The second part of the research analysed the legal and policy framework with regard to begging by minors in Brussels. The study revealed a lack of political will to address this problem; no long-term solutions, appropriate and respectful to the rights of the child, were offered by the authorities. Moreover, begging is not seen as a priority and the authorities are tackling the overall problem in a limited manner. According to the study, the root of the problem lies in the inconsistent policy of public authorities in relation to applications for residence. Therefore, the study recommends introducing a regularization procedure. The study also showed that a social approach focusing on the education of children, in collaboration with the competent authorities and social organizations is essential. The study proposed the creation of a centre of reception which is easily accessible to Roma (*sensu strictu*) simultaneously with a mediation project that would create a reference centre for Roma. Regarding school attendance of children, the study found that job insecurity and residence status are major impediments to school integration. In addition, there are specific cultural barriers and poor communication between the school and families. It is therefore essential, according to the study, to ensure basic needs for improving school participation among Roma (*sensu strictu*). The establishment of communication devices by schools and the strengthening of ties between the district, school and families are fundamental. In this context, the involvement of Roma mediators is the most successful for improving the education of Roma (*sensu strictu*) children. The study therefore strongly suggested creating a mediation programme for Roma (*sensu strictu*).

In 2010, the Research Institute for Employment and Society (HIVA) from the Catholic University of Leuven (KU Leuven) published a study showing a limited participation of Roma children in pre-school.<sup>19</sup> The sample of the study is 119 Roma (umbrella term), and more specifically 40 Travellers, 29 Manouches and 50 Roms. The study concludes that in 2008-2009, only 36 (out of 40) Travellers' children, 27 (out of 29) Manouches children and 29 of the Roms children were enrolled in primary education (see annex 2.1).<sup>20</sup>

#### **b) Compulsory school attendance**

The Compulsory Education Act (1983) applies to all children residing in Belgium, irrespective of their legal status. The Ministry of Education requires all children to attend school from the calendar year in which the child turns 6 until the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday or until June 30<sup>th</sup> of the calendar year in which the child turns 18.<sup>21</sup>

Education is also compulsory for children of foreign nationals from the 60<sup>th</sup> day after their registration in the aliens'/population/waiting register. Parents, thus, have the obligation to enrol their children in school and ensure their regular school attendance.<sup>22</sup> One main problem noted by the Department of Education's Interdepartmental Committee for Ethnic-Cultural Minorities is that children of parents without legal residence status – which is the case of many Roma in Flanders – are often not registered in the aliens'/population or waiting register. Moreover, for unaccompanied

<sup>18</sup> For the full study : Carpentier, S. (2004), Recherche-pilote sur la sensibilisation des autorités publiques à la Communauté Rom et sur l'intégration scolaire des enfants Roms, Brussel, 215 p., available at [http://www.lacode.be/IMG/pdf/Rech\\_Communaute\\_Rom.pdf](http://www.lacode.be/IMG/pdf/Rech_Communaute_Rom.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> HIVA (2010), Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.25.

<sup>20</sup> HIVA (2010), Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.25.

<sup>21</sup> Compulsory Education Act from 29 June 1983, B.S. 06/07/1983, article 1 § 1.

<sup>22</sup> Geurts, K., Naegels, N. en Van den Daele, N. (2010), 'Roma kinderen op de schoolbanken', in Welwijs, jaargang 21 nummer 1, 2010, Brussel, p. 3, available at <http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedfiles/VMC/Thema/Minderheden/Roma/Welwijs-Jg.21-nr.1-Roma%20kinderen.pdf>.

minors or minors without legal residence, compulsory education is fully applicable immediately (the 60-day postponement of entry into force of the compulsory education obligation does not apply).<sup>23</sup>

A similar system is applied in the French Community of Belgium.<sup>24</sup> However, contrary to the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice has a different interpretation of the compulsory education obligation: when children are not registered in any of the public registers, they only have a right – and not an obligation – to learn.<sup>25</sup> The difference in interpretation between both Ministries has led to a lack of systematic monitoring and follow-up, and complicates the efforts of Roma workers and counsellors to persuade Roma families to send their children to school.<sup>26</sup>

Research from the non-profit organization Crosspoint Migration-Intregation (*Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie*) from 2010 shows that many Roma children are not enrolled in school.<sup>27</sup> The main causes identified are:

- **Uncertain asylum status:** acute deprivation, no benefit from the Public Service of Social Welfare (OCMW), no right to work, no child benefit;
- **Precarious living situations:** living in poverty leads to Roma resorting to survival strategies in which children are involved (begging, selling on the street), frequent moves and unstable living situation, health issues;
- **Parental history:** low level of education and learning difficulties, negative school experience in the home country, negative perception of school, parents do not see the usefulness of a degree because of the recurring discrimination on the labour market, Roma children often go to school at a later age;
- **Socio-cultural barriers:** Roma are often not familiar with the Belgian school culture; lack of interest from parents on schooling; language problems; different values and norms; the risk of losing social recognition within the Roma communities; unclear views about compulsory education and its monitoring for undocumented children; inadequately adapted teaching models in schools.<sup>28</sup>

In a study of March 2010 entitled ‘Which right to education for children with precarious residence status?’ carried out by different NGOs including the Centre for Migration and Intercultural studies, aid agency workers indicated that they are powerless against the low attendance of Roma children

<sup>23</sup> Response of the “Departement Onderwijs aan Interdepartementale Commissie voor Etnisch - Culturele Minderheden “2002 in Geurts, K. (2010), “Met één achterste kan je niet op twee paarden zitten” - Roma-leerlingen op de schoolbanken, Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer Brussel, Artikel gepubliceerd in Handboek Leerlingenbegeleiding, Plantyn, p. 9, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119\\_Met\\_een\\_achterste\\_kan\\_je\\_niet\\_op\\_twee\\_paarden\\_zitten.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119_Met_een_achterste_kan_je_niet_op_twee_paarden_zitten.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> Response of the “Direction générale de l’Enseignement obligatoire” to Foyer on 26/9/2005 in Geurts, K. (2010), “Met één achterste kan je niet op twee paarden zitten” - Roma-leerlingen op de schoolbanken, Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer Brussel, Artikel gepubliceerd in Handboek Leerlingenbegeleiding, Plantyn, p. 9, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119\\_Met\\_een\\_achterste\\_kan\\_je\\_niet\\_op\\_twee\\_paarden\\_zitten.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119_Met_een_achterste_kan_je_niet_op_twee_paarden_zitten.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> Werkgroep Roma en Onderwijs (2008), Motivatieplan scholarisatie Roma, Brussel, p. 8-9 available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan\\_Scholarisatie\\_080916.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan_Scholarisatie_080916.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> Werkgroep Roma en Onderwijs (2008), Motivatieplan scholarisatie Roma, Brussel, p. 8-9 available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan\\_Scholarisatie\\_080916.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan_Scholarisatie_080916.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> Geurts, K., Naegels, N. en Van den Daele, N. (2010), ‘Roma kinderen op de schoolbanken’, in Welwijs, jaargang 21 nummer 1, 2010, Brussel, p. 11, available at <http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedfiles/VMC/Thema/Minderheden/Roma/Welwijs-Jg.21-nr.1-Roma%20kinderen.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Geurts, K., Naegels, N. en Van den Daele, N. (2010), ‘Roma kinderen op de schoolbanken’, in Welwijs, jaargang 21 nummer 1, 2010, Brussel, p. 12, available at <http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedfiles/VMC/Thema/Minderheden/Roma/Welwijs-Jg.21-nr.1-Roma%20kinderen.pdf>.

in schools as it is difficult to compel parents to send their children to school.<sup>29</sup> The study also points to the difficulties faced by young people in starting higher education, as in Belgium higher education only starts after the end of the compulsory school age (18 years old).

Contrary to the non-official data from the non-governmental organisation “De Foyer, Werkgroep Roma en Onderwijs”, the official National Strategy for the integration of Roma states that the majority of Roma children are enrolled in primary education. However, the rate of absenteeism among these children is stated to be high.<sup>30</sup>

### c) Educational attainment

Although more and more Roma children start secondary education, obstacles such as frequent absences, absolute school absenteeism, being late, unpaid bills, difficult relations between parents and school staff impede Roma pupils from passing from primary to secondary education and result in early school dropout.<sup>31</sup>

In 2008, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination urged Belgium to focus more on the education and employment situation of the Roma.<sup>32</sup> While acknowledging the work of the Walloon Travellers’ Mediation Centre since 2001 and the recognition of caravans as a form of housing in the Flemish Housing Code since 2004, the Committee remains concerned as to the practical enjoyment of social, economic and cultural rights by Roma and Travellers, especially in education and employment. The Committee recommends, in light of its general recommendation No. 27 (2000) on discrimination against Roma, that Belgium strengthen its measures to improve the schooling of Roma children, as well as the employment opportunities for Roma and Travellers. The Committee further recommends that the government provides, in its next periodic report, detailed information on the enjoyment of social, economic and cultural rights of Roma and Travellers, as well as on the impact of the measures taken to increase and improve sites on residential land for caravan dwellers and improve access to health care and other basic facilities.<sup>33</sup>

A 2010 study from the Research Institute for Employment and Society (HIVA) from KULeuven shows that the education level of Roma (umbrella term) is often low or even non-existent.<sup>34</sup> For the study, 230 adult caravan dwellers were interviewed: 101 (when broken down: 32% Travellers, 57% Manouches, 89% Roms) had no qualifications, 74 (when broken down: 38% Travellers, 27% Manouches, 11% Roms) completed primary education, 22 (when broken down: 13% Travellers, 6% Manouches, 0% Roms) completed lower secondary education, 27 (when broken down: 15% Travellers, 10% Manouches, 0% Roms) completed higher secondary education and 3 (all Travellers) completed higher education (see annex 2.2).

The Flemish Government states in its 2011 Action Plan for Middle- and Eastern European (Roma)

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<sup>29</sup> Centrum voor Migratie en Interculturele Studies (UA); le Groupe Interfacultaire de Recherche sur la Socialisation, l’Education et la Formation (GIRSEF, UCL); de UNICEF Chair in Children’s Rights (faculteit Rechten, UA); het Instituut voor Onderwijs en Informatiewetenschappen (UA) (Maart 2010), Welk recht op onderwijs voor kinderen in precair verblijf?, Een analyse van de situatie van kinderen zonder wettig verblijfsstatuut, of met een precair verblijfsstatuut in het lager onderwijs in België, Brussel, p. 15, available at <http://www.kekidatabank.be/docs/Onderzoek/UCARE%20Rapport%20NL.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, p.10.

<sup>32</sup> Geurts, K. (2010), “Met één achterste kan je niet op twee paarden zitten” – Roma-leerlingen op de schoolbanken, Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer Brussel, Artikel gepubliceerd in Handboek Leerlingenbegeleiding, Plantyn, p. 9, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119\\_Met\\_een\\_achterste\\_kan\\_je\\_niet\\_op\\_twee\\_paarden\\_zitten.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119_Met_een_achterste_kan_je_niet_op_twee_paarden_zitten.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> CERD, 2008, Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, A/63/18, 01/11/2008, p. 20-21, available at <http://tb.ohchr.org/default.aspx?ConvType=17&docType=36>.

<sup>34</sup> HIVA(2010), Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.25.

migrants that it is the responsibility of the reception desks to guide newcomers that are minors, including Roma, towards education institutions and options.<sup>35</sup> Annex 2.3 shows an overview of the number of referrals provided in the period 2009 to 30 June 2011.<sup>36</sup> Of 666 guidances in 2009, 169 (25,4%) came from Central and Eastern European countries while in 2010, of 883 guidances, 263 (29,8%) came from Central and Eastern European countries and in 2011, of 849 guidances, 138 (16,3%) came from Central and Eastern European countries. The Action Plan provides that the educational guidance of Roma in Flanders is mainly carried out by the reception desks in Antwerp and Ghent. In 2009, the Antwerp desk office advised 49% of the minors and the Ghent office advised 37%. In 2010, Ghent carried out 52% of all guidances and Antwerp 34%. Of the 263 minors from Central and Eastern European countries who were guided towards education in 2010, 49% were aged between 5 and 12 years old and 44% between 13 and 17 years old.

A 2006 study from the non-profit organization Foyer, which focuses on multi-ethnic work in Brussels, indicates that Roma children sometimes experience difficulties in accessing public transport to go to school, as caravan sites are often located in remote places. This offers fewer opportunities for participation in society. Schools, associations and services are less accessible.<sup>37</sup> A 2010 study from Foyer identifies additional factors that may hinder the educational attainment of Roma children in Belgium, such as poor school performance, educational disadvantages, family issues, financial constraints, the need to work to survive, language barriers, underage marriages and teen pregnancies, or household work in the family.<sup>38</sup> The study concludes that cultural differences are among the decisive factors for Roma parents not to send their children to school.<sup>39</sup>

In 2008, the Working Group on Roma and Education – which consists of a group of organizations working on minorities in Flanders<sup>40</sup> – recommended the enhancement of schooling of Roma children in Flanders/Belgium.<sup>41</sup> The Working Group considers that a clear position is needed from the Government on compulsory education for children without legal residence and on the level of control and monitoring of the school situation. In addition, according to the study, a proactive admission policy in education should be developed, including active tracing of school-age children combined with additional financial and individual support. A regional team of school mediators (especially in Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp and Sint-Niklaas) as well as internal and external motivation factors (including free showers, clothing, bus passes, school meals, child benefits depending on school participation) could enhance school attendance of Roma children.<sup>42</sup> In this regard, a good practice in Molenbeek should be mentioned, where – through a system of subrogation – schools inform families that they can receive contributions from social services for

<sup>35</sup> Flemish Government (2011), Actieplan MOE (Roma) migranten 2012, p. 19 available at [http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan\\_MOE.pdf](http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan_MOE.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> Flemish Government (2011), Actieplan MOE (Roma) migranten 2012, p. 19, available at [http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan\\_MOE.pdf](http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan_MOE.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Nota Situatie Woonwagenterreinen in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest, Brussel, p. 27-28, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website\\_Link\\_Nota\\_Situatie\\_WWT\\_in\\_het\\_BHG\\_0612.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website_Link_Nota_Situatie_WWT_in_het_BHG_0612.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> Geurts, K. (2010), “Met één achterste kan je niet op twee paarden zitten” – Roma-leerlingen op de schoolbanken, Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer Brussel, Artikel gepubliceerd in Handboek Leerlingenbegeleiding, Plantyn, p. 6-10., available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119\\_Met\\_een\\_achterste\\_kan\\_je\\_niet\\_op\\_twee\\_paarden\\_zitten.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119_Met_een_achterste_kan_je_niet_op_twee_paarden_zitten.pdf).

<sup>39</sup> Geurts, K. (2010), “Met één achterste kan je niet op twee paarden zitten” – Roma-leerlingen op de schoolbanken, Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer Brussel, Artikel gepubliceerd in Handboek Leerlingenbegeleiding, Plantyn, p. 6-10., available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119\\_Met\\_een\\_achterste\\_kan\\_je\\_niet\\_op\\_twee\\_paarden\\_zitten.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119_Met_een_achterste_kan_je_niet_op_twee_paarden_zitten.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> The Group consists of Vlaams Minderhedencentrum, Antwerps Minderhedencentrum, Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer, Minderjarigenwerking Onthaalbureau Inburgering Antwerpen.

<sup>41</sup> Werkgroep Roma en Onderwijs (2008), Motivatieplan scholarisatie Roma, Brussel, p. 7-9, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan\\_Scholarisatie\\_080916.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan_Scholarisatie_080916.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> Geurts, K., Naegels, N. en Van den Daele, N. (2010), ‘Roma kinderen op de schoolbanken’, in Welwijs, jaargang 21 nummer 1, 2010, Brussel, p.13, available at <http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedfiles/VMC/Thema/Minderheden/Roma/Welwijs-Jg.21-nr.1-Roma%20kinderen.pdf>.

undocumented children.<sup>43</sup> Another good practice is noted in Sint-Niklaas, where the municipality supports the school with funds for the additional costs of having Roma pupils.<sup>44</sup>

#### d) Vocational training/qualifications

Roma children attending secondary school are frequently found in technical- and vocational education as, often, Roma youth opt for learning manual skills such as auto mechanics, welding, plumbing, carpentry for boys and hairdressing and cooking for girls.<sup>45</sup>

Until January 2014, Romanian and Bulgarian Roma only have limited access to the Belgian labour market and therefore they are not able to register with employment support services such as the Flemish Service for Placement.<sup>46</sup> This means they cannot participate in career- or vocational orientation trainings.<sup>47</sup>

A 2010 study from the Research Institute for Employment and Society (HIVA) from KULeuven highlights that there is an overrepresentation of Roma in special and vocational education.<sup>48</sup> Of the 176 Travellers who participated in the quantitative survey, 129 (73%) school children were enrolled in mainstream education and 47 (27%) in special education (see annex 2.4).<sup>49</sup>

#### e) Different types of schooling

As a result of the Roma survival strategy which is focused on collective welfare, the education of Roma children often takes place at home in a group and very free setting.<sup>50</sup> Roma prefer to raise their children within their own community and teach them how to earn a living and to survive. Many Roma regard the school hierarchy and structure as difficult for the children. Adapted methods such as Personal Development Trajectories (“Persoonlijke Ontwikkelingstrajecten”) could offer a solution to this reluctance of Roma parents to send their children to school.<sup>51</sup>

A 2010 study from the Research Institute for Employment and Society (HIVA) from the KULeuven highlights that there is an overrepresentation of Roma in special and vocational education.<sup>52</sup> Of the 230 respondents who participated in the quantitative survey, 176 Travellers were questioned in relation to vocational education, 129 (73%) school children were enrolled in mainstream education

<sup>43</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Scholarisatie van Roma in Brussel. Analyse en aanbevelingen, Brussel: Foyer, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst\\_Onderwijs\\_061116.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst_Onderwijs_061116.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Scholarisatie van Roma in Brussel. Analyse en aanbevelingen, Brussel: Foyer, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst\\_Onderwijs\\_061116.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst_Onderwijs_061116.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> Geurts, K. (2010), “Met één achterste kan je niet op twee paarden zitten” – Roma-leerlingen op de schoolbanken, in Handboek Leerlingenbegeleiding, Mechelen: Plantyn, p. 9, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119\\_Met\\_ee\\_n\\_achterste\\_kan\\_je\\_niet\\_op\\_twee\\_paarden\\_zitten.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119_Met_ee_n_achterste_kan_je_niet_op_twee_paarden_zitten.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> Originally the transitional restrictions were until 2011 but they were extended until January 2014. Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p.13, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Geurts, K. (2010), “Met één achterste kan je niet op twee paarden zitten” – Roma-leerlingen op de schoolbanken, Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer Brussel, Artikel gepubliceerd in Handboek Leerlingenbegeleiding, Plantyn, p. 9, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119\\_Met\\_ee\\_n\\_achterste\\_kan\\_je\\_niet\\_op\\_twee\\_paarden\\_zitten.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119_Met_ee_n_achterste_kan_je_niet_op_twee_paarden_zitten.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> Geurts, K. (2010), “Met één achterste kan je niet op twee paarden zitten” – Roma-leerlingen op de schoolbanken, Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer Brussel, Artikel gepubliceerd in Handboek Leerlingenbegeleiding, Plantyn, p. 9, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119\\_Met\\_ee\\_n\\_achterste\\_kan\\_je\\_niet\\_op\\_twee\\_paarden\\_zitten.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119_Met_ee_n_achterste_kan_je_niet_op_twee_paarden_zitten.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> Geurts, K. (2010), “Met één achterste kan je niet op twee paarden zitten” – Roma-leerlingen op de schoolbanken, Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer Brussel, Artikel gepubliceerd in Handboek Leerlingenbegeleiding, Plantyn, p. 9, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119\\_Met\\_ee\\_n\\_achterste\\_kan\\_je\\_niet\\_op\\_twee\\_paarden\\_zitten.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119_Met_ee_n_achterste_kan_je_niet_op_twee_paarden_zitten.pdf).

<sup>51</sup> Geurts, K. (2010), “Met één achterste kan je niet op twee paarden zitten” – Roma-leerlingen op de schoolbanken, Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer Brussel, Artikel gepubliceerd in Handboek Leerlingenbegeleiding, Plantyn, p. 9, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119\\_Met\\_ee\\_n\\_achterste\\_kan\\_je\\_niet\\_op\\_twee\\_paarden\\_zitten.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119_Met_ee_n_achterste_kan_je_niet_op_twee_paarden_zitten.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> HIVA (2010), Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners.

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and 47 (27%) in special schools for people with disabilities (see annex 2.4).<sup>53</sup>

#### **f) Issues of segregation and integration**

##### **Segregation**

The Regional Integration Centre Foyer Brussels reported in 2006 that many Roma –especially those without a legal residence status– experience great difficulties in accessing schools.<sup>54</sup> Some schools refuse Roma pupils, allegedly due to a "lack of space" whereas in practice pedagogical and financial reasons, as well as the negative image of Roma, or pressure from other parents on the school board are the reasons why the enrolment of Roma children is refused.<sup>55</sup> The same report concludes that in Brussels almost all Roma are found in French speaking schools and more specifically in schools with a large number of immigrants.<sup>56</sup> These are usually 'positive discrimination schools', in other words schools that receive special grants from the Ministries of Education and Culture to promote social inclusion and equal opportunities.<sup>57</sup> Some of these schools have "classes passerelles" (bridge classes), which are transitional classes in the first year of secondary school to allow newcomers to adapt before including them in regular classes.<sup>58</sup>

A non-governmental study from 2011 concludes that Roma pupils often all go to the same schools, which is - among others – attributed to difficult transportation to other schools, the enrolment or diversity policy of schools and the phenomenon of 'the white flight'.<sup>59</sup> This phenomenon means that parents with a migration history often cannot afford to live in a majority neighbourhood and they want their children to attend a school in the neighbourhood. It also means that some schools do not provide specific support for children such as language support and refer them to other schools to avoid having to refuse the enrolment of Roma children. The curriculum of the school also influences the attendance/absenteeism of Roma children, as more pupils with a migration history will be found in vocational and technical education than in general secondary education.<sup>60</sup> According to the same study, there is a trend of autochthonous parents transferring their children to schools with fewer immigrants.<sup>61</sup>

##### **Integration**

Several good examples of Roma integration initiatives were identified in Flanders and Brussels in a 2006 study of the Regional Integration Centre Foyer. According to the study, initiatives focussing

<sup>53</sup> HIVA (2010), Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners.

<sup>54</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Scholarisatie van Roma in Brussel. Analyse en aanbevelingen, Brussel: Foyer, p.2, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst\\_Onderwijs\\_061116.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst_Onderwijs_061116.pdf).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Scholarisatie van Roma in Brussel. Analyse en aanbevelingen, Brussel: Foyer, p.2, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst\\_Onderwijs\\_061116.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst_Onderwijs_061116.pdf); Koning Boudewijnstichting (2009), Scholing van Romakinderen in België. Ouders aan het woord, Brussel, p. 69, available at [http://www.kbs-](http://www.kbs-frb.be/uploadedFiles/KBS-)

[frb.be/uploadedFiles/KBS-FRB/05\\_Pictures\\_documents\\_and\\_external\\_sites/09\\_Publications/PUB2009\\_1855\\_ScholarisatieRomakinderen.pdf](http://www.kbs-frb.be/uploadedFiles/KBS-FRB/05_Pictures_documents_and_external_sites/09_Publications/PUB2009_1855_ScholarisatieRomakinderen.pdf).<sup>59</sup>

Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie (2011), Omgevingsanalyse 2010. Een stakeholdersbevraging door het Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie vzw en de integratiecentra in Vlaanderen en Brussel, Brussel, p. 30, available at [http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/OMGEVINGSANALYSE\\_2010.pdf](http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/OMGEVINGSANALYSE_2010.pdf).

<sup>59</sup> Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie (2011), Omgevingsanalyse 2010. Een stakeholdersbevraging door het Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie vzw en de integratiecentra in Vlaanderen en Brussel, Brussel, p. 30, available at [http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/OMGEVINGSANALYSE\\_2010.pdf](http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/OMGEVINGSANALYSE_2010.pdf).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

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on personal and concrete contact with the school staff appear to be the most successful.<sup>62</sup>

A number of associations set up partnerships with Centres for Adult Education to allow Roma to follow courses such as business administration.<sup>63</sup> Another good practice is the employment of (intercultural) school mediators in Flanders (among others in Ghent and Sint-Niklaas) and in Brussels in order to improve communication and mutual trust between Roma and the school authorities.<sup>64</sup> Experience in Brussels shows that people of Roma origin can act as a mediator and offer an added value, such as the elimination of thresholds, parents feeling more involved through improved communication leading to Roma children attending school more often and returning more easily after a period of absenteeism.<sup>65</sup> Mediation can also lead to school staff learning about Roma culture and living conditions and thus dealing more effectively with Roma children.

Another good practice regarding integration is the effort of school staff to reduce the distance between the school and the Roma parents by organizing home visits, parents meetings and events, language courses and a Roma-mother group, which proved to be an effective initiative in Molenbeek.<sup>66</sup> In the Mother-group, women support each other in the education process and in their own emancipation. In 2008-2009, the group held 21 meetings.<sup>67</sup>

Other best practices identified in the study relate to a focus on multicultural teaching methods, such as peer learning with personal framework (e.g. POT in Molenbeek, School of Vocational Custom Zavedal) and a curriculum adapted to Roma culture in terms of adjusting and adapting the content of the courses.. In some projects, there may be additional attention to aspects linked to the culture and situation of Roma, such as in history (Holocaust), in music (interpretation about significant Roma musicians: Django Reinhardt, Gypsy Kings, etc.), informing students about familiar characters with Roma roots (actors such as Charlie Chaplin, Yul Brynner, Michael Caine, Natalie Wood, footballer Eric Cantona, etc.). This special attention to Roma culture is extremely important for the other students to break through the clichés, to work towards a different image of Roma and to develop a more positive identity as being a Roma.<sup>68</sup>

In cities and municipalities with a Roma community, initiatives support the integration of Roma children in school.<sup>69</sup> The Regional Integration Centre Foyer, Antwerp Integration Centre and the Flemish Minority Centre designed a motivational plan for the schooling of Roma children in order to ensure – through positive school experiences and benefits – that children enjoy attending school.<sup>70</sup> This internal motivation is complemented with external motivational methods. For

<sup>62</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Scholarisatie van Roma in Brussel. Analyse en aanbevelingen, Brussel: Foyer, p. 7-8, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst\\_Onderwijs\\_061116.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst_Onderwijs_061116.pdf).

<sup>63</sup> Geurts, K. (2010), “Met één achterste kan je niet op twee paarden zitten” – Roma-leerlingen op de schoolbanken, Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer Brussel, Artikel gepubliceerd in Handboek Leerlingenbegeleiding, Plantyn, p. 12-20, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119\\_Met\\_een\\_achterste\\_kan\\_je\\_niet\\_op\\_twee\\_paarden\\_zitten.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119_Met_een_achterste_kan_je_niet_op_twee_paarden_zitten.pdf).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2010), Evaluatie Project Roma-bemiddelaars Foyer als aanpak voor een verhoogde scholarisatie van Roma-kinderen, Brussel, p. 6, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Globale\\_Evaluatie\\_Roma\\_Bemiddelaars\\_100630.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Globale_Evaluatie_Roma_Bemiddelaars_100630.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> Geurts, K. (2010), “Met één achterste kan je niet op twee paarden zitten” – Roma-leerlingen op de schoolbanken, Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer Brussel, Artikel gepubliceerd in Handboek Leerlingenbegeleiding, Plantyn, p. 19-20, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119\\_Met\\_een\\_achterste\\_kan\\_je\\_niet\\_op\\_twee\\_paarden\\_zitten.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119_Met_een_achterste_kan_je_niet_op_twee_paarden_zitten.pdf).

<sup>69</sup> Geurts, K., Naegels, N. en Van den Daele, N. (2010), ‘Roma kinderen op de schoolbanken’, in Welwijs, jaargang 21 nummer 1, 2010, Brussel, p. 15, available at <http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedfiles/VMC/Thema/Minderheden/Roma/Welwijs-Jg.21-nr.1-Roma%20kinderen.pdf>.

<sup>70</sup> Geurts, K., Naegels, N. en Van den Daele, N. (2010), ‘Roma kinderen op de schoolbanken’, in Welwijs, jaargang 21 nummer 1, 2010, Brussel, p. 15, available at



example, the Antwerp integration centre invests in knowledge, expertise and methodologies related to education and Roma through training, coaching and mentoring. In Brussels, the integration centre Foyer invests in training, mediation and advocacy/lobbying.<sup>71</sup>

In 2006, the Brussels Integration Centre Foyer coordinated a consultation regarding schooling of Roma children in the Brussels Capital Region.<sup>72</sup> Negotiations concerned both the introduction of Roma mediators to help families access education and the financial intervention for school expenses. Foyer reported that same year that its Service on Travellers and Roma helped Roma with – among others – school enrolment by monitoring of schooling in collaboration with the school board, family supervision and home visits.<sup>73</sup>

The social service (OCWM) of Molenbeek has a service for urgent medical care that provides financial support for school expenses from its own resources to individuals who are entitled to urgent medical care. This includes hot school lunches, school trips, fixed support (30-50 Euro) for children of primary/ secondary school, sports and cultural activities (from sports and cultural subsidies).<sup>74</sup>

As mentioned above, the initiatives and good practices have had so far mainly local results. In its 2012 National Strategy for Roma Integration, the Belgian federal government put forward the goal that every child and young person from the Roma community should enjoy compulsory education.<sup>75</sup> In the Flanders Region, the government wants to contribute with additional resources to schools with pupils with migrant background, invest more in initiatives guiding children and young people to school and keeping them there (through specific actions in the education plan), increasing parent's involvement through local projects and monitoring students from Central and Eastern Europe. In the Walloon Region, the focus will lie on the employment of Roma mediators, the elimination of learning difficulties and illiteracy of parents through collaborative projects, as well as on comparing, exchanging and disseminating various pedagogical tools for teachers of pupils with learning difficulties, in particular Roma pupils. Finally, in the Brussels Capital Region, the focus will be on improving the school maturity of Roma children, enhancing cooperation between schools and Roma families by supporting the actions of the Regional Integration Centre Foyer Brussels on Roma education, and on the further development of appropriate pedagogical methods.

#### **g) Experiences and perceptions of discrimination**

Children of parents without legal residence are also required to attend school in Belgium between the ages of 6 and 18, yet they do not receive any support from the state, such as social support or child benefits.<sup>76</sup> Belgium is party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and therefore obliged to promote access to education and to guarantee the right to education to all children without discrimination, not even on the basis of residence status.

In conclusion, Roma generally experience difficulties accessing education in Belgium, especially those in a situation of irregular residence.

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<http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedfiles/VMC/Thema/Minderheden/Roma/Welwijs-Jg.21-nr.1-Roma%20kinderen.pdf>.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. For more information, see [www.vmc.be / toolbox](http://www.vmc.be/toolbox).

<sup>72</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Scholarisatie van Roma in Brussel. Analyse en aanbevelingen, Brussel: Foyer, p. 7-8, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst\\_Onderwijs\\_061116.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst_Onderwijs_061116.pdf).

<sup>73</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Scholarisatie van Roma in Brussel. Analyse en aanbevelingen, Brussel: Foyer, p. 7-8, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst\\_Onderwijs\\_061116.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst_Onderwijs_061116.pdf).

<sup>74</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Scholarisatie van Roma in Brussel. Analyse en aanbevelingen, Brussel: Foyer, p. 7-8, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst\\_Onderwijs\\_061116.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst_Onderwijs_061116.pdf).

<sup>75</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, p. 23.

<sup>76</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Scholarisatie van Roma in Brussel. Analyse en aanbevelingen, Brussel: Foyer, p.6, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst\\_Onderwijs\\_061116.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst_Onderwijs_061116.pdf).

The Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism did not receive any complaints regarding discrimination in relation to access to education, as can be seen by the figures provided in annex 3.

### 3. Employment

The Flemish-Speaking Community of Belgium European Social Fund (ESF) Agency and the French-Speaking Community of Belgium ESF Agency were contacted for the purpose of this study in relation to projects on Roma integration co-funded by EU funding. None of the agencies finances specifically such projects although the Flemish Agency finances projects relating to the following 4 target groups: the elderly (50+), people with disabilities, individuals with low levels of education and migrants and Roma may be included in one of these target groups. The Brussels ESF Agency was also contacted but was not available for information.

#### a) Paid employment

According to the National Roma Strategy of the Belgian federal government, in Belgium, only a very limited number of Roma are employed on the basis of a standard employment contract, while such contract provides the basis for access to social benefits.<sup>77</sup>

Until 31 December 2013, Belgium applies transitional restrictions to the national labour market for workers from Romania and Bulgaria. From this it follows that until January 2014, Romanian and Bulgarian Roma cannot fully access the Belgian labour market yet they are eligible for employment in bottleneck professions.<sup>78</sup> Despite this possibility, only few Roma of Romanian or Bulgarian origin found jobs in bottleneck professions due to several reasons, namely (1) the limited list of occupations, with few jobs without qualification requirements, (2) complex regulations on residence status and work, (3) reluctance on behalf of employers to take on the administrative burden, (4) inter agencies with the vacancies not having Roma in their registers, (5) insufficient insight of employers and social secretariats into the possibilities.<sup>79</sup> As mentioned above, as long as Romanian and Bulgarian Roma do not have access to the labour market, they are unable to register with regional employment support services – such the Flemish Department of Employment Mediation – and participate in career- and/or vocational orientation.<sup>80</sup>

With the aim of ensuring that Roma have access to paid employment, the Belgian federal government set the goal that in its 2012 National Strategy for Roma Integration, differences in access to employment between Roma and the rest of the population should be eliminated.<sup>81</sup> On the federal level, the government wants to invest in trained social workers who should socially and professionally help Roma with the support from the European Social Fund. In the Flanders Region, the government wants to take an active approach towards Bulgarians and Romanians, by monitoring of services to eliminate the problem of malicious service providers, and the development of entrepreneurial trajectories in order to integrate new and established migrants with special attention to Central- and Eastern-European migrants. In the Walloon Region, emphasis will be placed on the expansion of the transversal platform for transversal employment, information gathering by the

<sup>77</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, p. 10, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma\\_belgium\\_strategy\\_nl.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_belgium_strategy_nl.pdf).

<sup>78</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p.13, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, p. 26, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma\\_belgium\\_strategy\\_nl.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_belgium_strategy_nl.pdf)

Walloon employment and training services and access to training – including reading and writing in French – to prepare Roma for the labour market. Finally, in the Brussels Capital Region, the Flemish Communities Commission will invest in a two-year pilot programme that guides Romanian and Bulgarian newcomers to independent activities.

#### **b) Self-employment**

According to the National Roma Integration Strategy, many Roma are self-employed.<sup>82</sup> Due to transitional restrictions limiting full access to the Belgian labour market, which were extended until 31 December 2013, Romanian and Bulgarian Roma tend in particular to be self-employed. In order to receive the status of a self-employed person, in many cases one has to provide evidence of sufficient business skills or to demonstrate competence. Roma generally appear to lack the educational level, qualifications or professional capacities to qualify as self-employed.<sup>83</sup> The Minorities Forum – an organization representing and defending the interests of ethnic-cultural minorities in Belgium – reported in 2010 that for the Roma originating from these respective countries, the profits from self-employed activities were often too small to provide means of subsistence.<sup>84</sup>

As long as these Roma do not have full access to the labour market, they are unable to subscribe to the Flemish Service for Employment Mediation (VDAB) and this means they cannot participate in career- or vocational orientation trainings.<sup>85</sup>

The Flemish government reported in its 2012 Action plan for Roma that in 2009, 75.592 entrepreneurs started a company in Flanders, a number that is broken down as follows by nationality: 60.913 Belgians, 11.814 EU citizens and 28.265 third country nationals.<sup>86</sup> When taking a closer look at the number of EU citizens who started a company in Flanders, it is apparent that especially the number of Polish people, Romanians and Bulgarians with an independent status has increased significantly in recent years (see annex 2.5 for more concrete numbers).<sup>87</sup> They often work as subcontractors.

#### **c) Communal work and other forms of payment schemes**

Many Roma families earn a living through unofficial work, such as begging, selling newspapers to homeless people, selling flowers, fixing used TVs and electric equipment, playing music and cleaning.<sup>88</sup>

Undocumented migrants in Belgium are not entitled to child benefits or support from the Public Centres for Social Welfare. An alternative could be their referral to a federal centre for material support (art. 57 § 2 Public Service of Social Welfare (OCWM) Act). For certain categories of irregular migrants there is a limited right to social services; irregular migrants with children are

<sup>82</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, p. 10, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma\\_belgium\\_strategy\\_nl.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_belgium_strategy_nl.pdf)

<sup>83</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p.13, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, p. 10, available at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma\\_belgium\\_strategy\\_nl.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_belgium_strategy_nl.pdf)

<sup>86</sup> Flemish Government (2011), Actieplan MOE (Roma) migranten 2012, p. 19, available at [http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan\\_MOE.pdf](http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan_MOE.pdf)

<sup>87</sup> Flemish Government (2011), Actieplan MOE (Roma) migranten 2012, p. 19, available at [http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan\\_MOE.pdf](http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan_MOE.pdf).

<sup>88</sup> Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en Racismebestrijding (2009), RAXEN Thematic Study – Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers – Belgium, RAXEN, p.32, available at [http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Belgium\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Belgium_en.pdf)

entitled to material reception despite their residence status. According to the Regional Integration Centre Foyer, however, this system is not very effective and relatively few families move to a shelter.<sup>89</sup>

#### **d) Unemployment**

According to a working paper from the Flemish Minorities Forum from 2010, many Roma (*sensu strictu*) are unemployed, even when they have a residence permit.<sup>90</sup> In 2010, the Flemish Minorities Forum – an organization representing and defending the interests of ethnic-cultural minorities in Belgium – identified the following problems as the main obstacles to employment for Roma in Belgium: (1) difficult integration trajectories with long waiting lists (2) problems related to residence status and citizenship because legal residence documents are required in order to access the labour market, (3) low employability because of low education, , discrimination, lack of experience and therefore lack of attitudes needed in the job search process, conflicting work system that is very competitive and the economic crisis, (4) lack of customized training and social employment measures as many Roma are illiterate, do not meet the language requirements, do not have the possibility to follow language or vocational training with employment support services, training programs are too short and transition to regular employment is difficult.<sup>91</sup>

A 2010 study from the Research Institute for Employment and Society (HIVA) from KULeuven shows a low employment rate among Travellers.<sup>92</sup> More than 50% of the 230 respondents, who were questioned in relation to employment, declared not being employed in any paid work in the past week. Of the active working population – in the study, this group is defined as 20-59 year olds – interviewed, 66 (29%) were employed and 32 (14%) received unemployment benefits (see annex 2.6). When looking not only at the active working population, but at all 230 respondents, 14% are entitled to unemployment benefits, 25% to a pension, 27% to a compensation due to disability or accident, 7% to a living wage or other financial benefits from the Public Service of Social Welfare (OCMW) and 9% to other benefits (see annex 2.7). The study also reveals high financial stress among Travellers.<sup>93</sup> When asked whether the household can survive with the current total disposable income, 75% of respondents state it is rather difficult or very difficult. The households that most easily manage to get by are mainly the group of Voyageurs.

#### **e) Child labour**

The main causes of begging identified in a 2007 Belgium study on begging are social exclusion and poverty as Roma children often have to beg as a survival strategy.<sup>94</sup> In many cases, adults bring a child to beg. The reason for this is that in Roma communities organised babysitters and crèches are unheard-of and very costly. Thus, taking children along on the street can be seen as an inherent part of the Roma culture and is not directly a sign of abuse or neglect by the parents.<sup>95</sup>

- In a 2003 study, the Coordination of non-governmental Organizations for the Rights of the Child (la CODE) considered several factors that play a role for parents taking their children

<sup>89</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Scholarisatie van Roma in Brussel. Analyse en aanbevelingen, Brussel: Foyer, p.6, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst\\_Onderwijs\\_061116.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst_Onderwijs_061116.pdf)

<sup>90</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p. 12-14, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf)

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> HIVA, Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, 2010, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.23 .

<sup>93</sup> HIVA, Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, 2010, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.23 .

<sup>94</sup> Clé, A. (2007), Bedelarij onderzocht, Brussel, p. 7; Clé, A. (2007), La Mendicité interrogée, Brussel, p.7,

<sup>95</sup> Van Houcke, F. (2005), *Recherche d'une réponse sociale à la mendicité des mineurs*, Brussel, p. 12, available at [http://www.lacode.be/IMG/pdf/Article\\_JDJ.pdf](http://www.lacode.be/IMG/pdf/Article_JDJ.pdf).

along to beg on the streets:<sup>96</sup>

- For Roma families, it is normal for small children to participate in adult activities. Some parents may rely on their children to contribute to the precarious family income;
- The bond between a Roma mother and her child is very close and being separated from her child at a young age is seen as a form of abandonment;
- Families do not have access to childcare and lack alternatives to keep children at home;
- For some families enrolling their children in school remains difficult, for cultural and financial reasons (see above).

On 26 May 2010, the Court of Appeal of Brussels decided that a parent who begs with his/her own child does not commit a criminal offence.<sup>97</sup>

#### **f) Old age pension**

There are currently no data or reports available on old age pension of Roma. The National Service for Pensions “*Rijksdienst Pensioenen*” was contacted, but no answer has been received.

#### **g) Experiences and perceptions of discrimination**

There is no information available at the time this report was authored on experiences and perceptions of discrimination of Roma in employment in Belgium.

The Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism did not receive any complaints regarding discrimination in relation to employment, as can be seen by the figures provided in annex 3.

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<sup>96</sup> Joppart, C. (2003), Recherche relative au développement d’une réponse sociale à la question de la mendicité des enfants en Belgique, Brussel, 104 p., available at [http://www.lacode.be/IMG/pdf/Rech\\_mendicite.pdf](http://www.lacode.be/IMG/pdf/Rech_mendicite.pdf) ; Coordination des ONG pour les droits des enfants (octobre 2010), la mendicité des enfants: questions – réponses,

<sup>97</sup> La Cour d’Appel de Bruxelles, 14ème Chambre, 26 Mai 2010, Nr. 747: The case concerns a young 20 year old Romanian woman who was begging in Brussels with her children of 3 years and 7 months. Between January 2007 and March 2008 she was fined several times by the police. In first instance, the woman was sentenced to actual imprisonment and a fine. But in appeal, the penalty was negated.

## 4. Housing and neighbourhood

The Flemish-Speaking Community of Belgium European Social Fund (ESF) Agency and the French-Speaking Community of Belgium ESF Agency were contacted for the purpose of this study in relation to projects on Roma integration co-funded by EU funding. None of the agencies finances specifically such projects although the Flemish Agency finances projects relating to the following 4 target groups: the elderly (50+), people with disabilities, persons with low levels of education and migrants and Roma may be included in one of these target groups. The Brussels ESF Agency was also contacted but was not available for information.

### a) Quality and affordability of housing

Regarding the quality and affordability of housing, this study differentiates between the Roma with an itinerant lifestyle and those with a (semi)sedentary lifestyle.

#### Itinerant lifestyle

The Regional Integration Centre Foyer Brussels reported in 2006 that the quality of private caravan sites varies depending on the financial capacity of the owner of the site.<sup>98</sup> Commonly, they offer less facilities or more precarious sites than public sites. On the other hand, public sites are usually of good quality, as a result of financing by the Regional governments.<sup>99</sup> The guidelines of the Flemish Caravan Commission – that works on caravan dwellers in general, including Roma – regarding the layout of the site provide a clear framework.<sup>100</sup> Due to a lack of sites, there is a problem of overcrowding which mostly affects the communal facilities on the site.<sup>101</sup> The quality criteria for halting sites are similar to those for residential sites, but the facilities are more collective and less extensive, due to temporary stay.<sup>102</sup>

In 2007, the Walloon Government created a permanent inter-cabinet working group led by the Office of the Minister of Social Action and Equal Opportunities. Within this framework of regional expertise, the working group aims to stimulate local authorities to improve the daily lives of Roma travellers. In light of this, the Interdepartmental Direction on Social Cohesion from the Walloon Public Service (*Direction Interdépartementale de la Cohésion sociale du Service public de Wallonie*) and the Travellers' Mediation Centre (*Centre de Médiation des Gens du Voyage en Wallonie*) jointly distributed a guide summarizing all useful information to help develop positive

<sup>98</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Nota Situatie Woonwagenterreinen in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest, Brussel, p. 31-33, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website\\_Link\\_Nota\\_Situatie\\_WWT\\_in\\_het\\_BHG\\_0612.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website_Link_Nota_Situatie_WWT_in_het_BHG_0612.pdf)

<sup>99</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Nota Situatie Woonwagenterreinen in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest, Brussel, p. 31, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website\\_Link\\_Nota\\_Situatie\\_WWT\\_in\\_het\\_BHG\\_0612.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website_Link_Nota_Situatie_WWT_in_het_BHG_0612.pdf)

<sup>100</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Woonwagen op wielen. Woonwagenterreinen aanleggen, en beheren, een handleiding, Brussel, 160 p., available at [http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/Thema/Woonwagenterreinen/WonenOpWielen2010\(1\).pdf](http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/Thema/Woonwagenterreinen/WonenOpWielen2010(1).pdf)

<sup>101</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Nota Situatie Woonwagenterreinen in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest, Brussel, p. 31, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website\\_Link\\_Nota\\_Situatie\\_WWT\\_in\\_het\\_BHG\\_0612.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website_Link_Nota_Situatie_WWT_in_het_BHG_0612.pdf)

<sup>102</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Nota Situatie Woonwagenterreinen in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest, Brussel, p. 33, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website\\_Link\\_Nota\\_Situatie\\_WWT\\_in\\_het\\_BHG\\_0612.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website_Link_Nota_Situatie_WWT_in_het_BHG_0612.pdf)

practices regarding the temporary stay of travellers in Wallonia.<sup>103</sup>

### **Sedentary lifestyle**

Mainly due to unemployment and/or the lack of regular income many Roma in Belgium experience difficulties in leasing decent housing.<sup>104</sup> Therefore some Roma prefer buying their own home, especially given the low interest rates.<sup>105</sup> This trend was noticeable in recent years, particularly in Waasland (Flanders). Consequently, buyers tend to contract excessive loans with little or no money left to renovate the property. This means that houses remain in a poor state and Roma risk not being able to reimburse the loan, forcing them to resale the house.<sup>106</sup>

In 2009, the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism reported that rental homes available to Roma are often of low quality, with many being unhealthy, unsafe and damp.<sup>107</sup>

Moreover, houses are often old with minimal or no existing amenities or heating and the bathroom and the kitchen are often not adapted to the composition of the household. The present equipment does not comply with modern security norms and many houses are infested with parasites, the rooms are damp and there is mildew on the walls. In addition, Roma families are often the victims of unscrupulous landlords. Roma are reluctant to complain about them out of fear of being evicted.<sup>108</sup>

The Minorities Forum – an organization representing and defending the interests of ethnic-cultural minorities in Belgium – carried out a study in 2010 and identified the following causes for hindered access of Roma to suitable rental housing:<sup>109</sup>

- Roma have the negative image of having little respect for property;
- Belgium deals with a lack of social housing, especially for large families;
- The precarious financial situation of Roma makes landlords reluctant in renting to them;
- Some Roma do not have legal residence in Belgium and cannot pay the deposit for rental homes on a blocked bank account;
- New EU citizens are not eligible for intervention or guarantees by the Public Centre for Social Welfare (OCMW).

In light of the housing issues faced by Roma, the Belgian government, in its 2012 National Strategy for Roma Integration, set the goal that differences between the number of Roma who have access to housing and public services compared to the general population, must be eliminated.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Direction Interdépartementale de la Cohésion sociale du Service public de Wallonie (2009), Guide pratique pour la gestion du séjour temporaire des Gens du Voyage en Wallonie, Namur, 28 p., available at <http://www.cmgv.be/images/stories/pdf/GUIDEGensduvoyage.pdf>

<sup>104</sup> Morel, M. (2010), De Romakwestie: een mensenrechtelijk perspectief, Oikos, 55(4), p. 25-37, available at [www.oikos.be/tijdschrift/.../725-55-03-morel-de-romakwestie.html](http://www.oikos.be/tijdschrift/.../725-55-03-morel-de-romakwestie.html)

<sup>105</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p. 16-17, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf)

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en Racismebestrijding (2009), RAXEN Thematic Study – Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers – Belgium, RAXEN, p. 28-29, available at [http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Belgium\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Belgium_en.pdf)

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p. 16, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf)

<sup>110</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, p. 29.

To this end, the Federal government wants to make sure that support from the Public Centre for Social Welfare (OCWM), when applying for rent deposits, is in the future better communicated to the Roma community in order to facilitate access to housing.<sup>111</sup> In the Flanders Region, the government wants to invest in a comprehensive housing policy that promotes the quality of the home, decency of the neighbourhood and affordable rent. The Flemish government will also fight landlords in deteriorating neighbourhoods via increased control in the areas and regions with a high concentration of Roma, and will support the implementation of caravan sites.<sup>112</sup> The Flemish government currently promotes the creation of caravan sites by cities, municipalities and social housing through a grant of 90% of the cost. A number of provinces pay for the remaining 10%. In the Walloon Region, a plan for permanent housing will be developed and the Walloon Housing Code must be reformed to provide a stronger protection for Roma living in a caravan.<sup>113</sup> Finally, in the Brussels Region, local and regional authorities shall provide advice in the development of appropriate policies for caravan dwellers.<sup>114</sup>

## **b) Access to social or private housing**

### **Itinerant lifestyle**

According to the Federal Government's 2012 National Strategy for the Integration of Roma, there is a lack of residential and halting sites to meet the needs of the Roma population.<sup>115</sup> Caravans are recognised as property, as a full form of living<sup>116</sup> yet caravans are not accepted everywhere as a primary residence.<sup>117</sup>

The shortage of caravan sites and the fact that it is difficult to obtain the necessary building permits for caravans and that the land is expensive lead to many illegal resident camps that are being tolerated by the municipalities. Therefore, Roma families live under the constant threat of expulsion.<sup>118</sup> Itinerant Roma who are passing through are often faced with a shortage of empty plots. Until recently, the Brussels Housing Code provided no place for living in caravans, nor recognition of caravans as a full form of housing.<sup>119</sup> This changed on 1 March 2012 when the Brussels Parliament approved an ordinance to adjust the housing code. The right to adequate housing is now also applicable to mobile homes in the Brussels Region.<sup>120</sup>

In 2006, the Regional Integration Centre Foyer of Brussels identified the following causes for the shortage of caravan plots: the lack of specific spatial guidelines adapted to caravans, the lack of an explicit policy for plots, the lack of a coherent and coordinated policy and the lack of commercial interest in caravan sites. On the other hand, the Foyer also identified factors having a positive impact on the policy for caravan plots, namely that policies for plots are often realised much quicker where Travellers are present such as in Flanders, spatial structure plans help formulate the policy for plots, and the cooperation with professional caravan workers or voluntary workers is effective.<sup>121</sup>

### **Sedentary lifestyle**

According to a study from the Flemish Centre for Minorities from 2010, many Roma in urban areas

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, p. 30.

<sup>116</sup> Decreet 15 juli 1997 houdende de Vlaamse wooncode, art. 2,33° en art.4 §1,4°c.

<sup>117</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, p. 30.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Koen Geurts, Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2012), Een eerste stap in de richting van

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.



are confronted with poor housing conditions or homelessness.<sup>122</sup> Unscrupulous landlords also pose a major problem. For most Roma, renting is unaffordable and the waiting lists for social housing are long.<sup>123</sup> This leads to squatting and slums.

Many Roma families live on the streets or in public areas such as train stations. Until recently the Federal government provided shelter for Roma families from the European Union with no right to reside in asylum centres, within the framework of material support for illegal families with children. In May 2009, the transitional measure for “new EU countries” came to an end. As a result, it was perceived that Roma families from these countries would experience fewer difficulties to provide for their own livelihood; therefore, since the transitional measures ceased to exist, the Federal government refused to receive these Roma families in those centres.<sup>124</sup> However, the other disadvantages many Roma have to deal with are so big that finding housing is still far from easy.<sup>125</sup>

The large majority of Roma in Belgium live in houses and flats found in the lowest segments of the private housing market. The majority find themselves in a precarious or illegal administrative situation with no access to the official labour market and no right to state benefits. In the absence of a secure income, access to quality housing is very problematic. An estimated 80% of the Brussels Roma live in poverty. Payment of the rent is the heaviest financial burden. Networks with other Roma or family members are of primary importance in finding housing. Newcomers are frequently accommodated by family upon arrival. After that, they have to search for affordable housing in the private housing market and during this search they often fall prey to unscrupulous owners offering poor quality housing at a slightly lower rent than the rest of the market.<sup>126</sup> Roma also tend to rent dwelling units without any type of formal contract, paying cash deposits and rent in cash which makes them more vulnerable to abuse.<sup>127</sup>

According to the 2010 Flemish Centre for Minorities study, approximately 80% of the Slovak and Czech Roma asylum seekers stay in Belgium in collective accommodation centres. A few Roma live in squats. Others are temporarily homeless, especially during the first few weeks after their arrival in Belgium or after forced eviction. Some of them then sleep in their cars or caravans. In addition to the scarcity of social housing in Brussels, the size of Roma families is an obstacle as units for large families are rarely available.<sup>128</sup>

In 2009, the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism reported that the quality of housing becomes more important when Roma acquire legal residence, even though the Public Centre for Social Welfare (OCMW) has noticed that these people often stay in poor districts and inadequate housing, even after receiving their permanent residence permit and the right to claim housing benefits.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p.16-17, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf)

<sup>123</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p.16-17, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf)

<sup>124</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p.16-17, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf)

<sup>125</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p.16-17, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf)

<sup>126</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p.16-17, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf)

<sup>127</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p.16-17, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf)

<sup>128</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p.16-17, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf)

<sup>129</sup> Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en Racismebestrijding (2009), RAXEN Thematic Study – Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers – Belgium, RAXEN, p. 34-35, available at [http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Belgium\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Belgium_en.pdf)

### c) Location and access to public utilities and infrastructure

#### **Itinerant lifestyle**

In Belgium, there is a lack of legal residence sites for caravans. In March 2010, the President of the Flemish Parliament stated in response to a question from a member of the Flemish Parliament that according to calculations by the Flemish Centre for Minorities, in 2007 there was a shortage of about 425 of residence sites for caravans.<sup>130</sup> In 2003, 841 families in Flanders chose the nomadic lifestyle. It was estimated that this number would increase by 275 in 2010, thereby bringing the estimated number at 1.116 families - whereas there are only 388 legal residence plots available.<sup>131</sup>

In response to a question of Veerle Heeren in the Flemish Parliament in March 2010, the then Vice minister-President Geert Bourgois specified that Flanders had 469 residential plots in municipal caravan sites, in addition to 88 plots on halting sites.<sup>132</sup> Annex 2.8 provides an overview of the number of plots per municipality in 2012. Annex 2.9 contains the evolution of the number of sites in Flanders since 1989.

In 2010, Meeuwen-Gruitrode and Bree submitted an application to the Agency for Management for the construction of respectively 6 and 8 plots on new residential caravan sites.<sup>133</sup> There were also two grant applications, namely from Aalst for the renovation of 9 sanitary blocks, and from Bilzen for the acquisition of land for the creation of a residential caravan site with 13 plots.

Annex 2.10 gives an overview of the budgets that, since 2000, were earmarked for the construction, renovation and expansion of caravan sites. In March 2010, the President of the Flemish Parliament stated in response to a question from a member of the Flemish Parliament that up until 2010, no single application for caravan sites has been refused.<sup>134</sup> However, the budgets have not been fully utilised, as funding was available for more applications than received.<sup>135</sup> A possible explanation could be the administrative burden connected to the application, as a planning process must be completed prior to the construction of a caravan site.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, there is little public support for the construction of residential caravan sites.<sup>137</sup>

The Strategic Plan Living in Diversity ("*Strategisch Plan Samenleven in Diversiteit*") of March

<sup>130</sup> Vlaams Parlement, schriftelijke vraag, nr. 253 door Veerle Heeren aan Geert Bourgois, Viceminister-President van de Vlaamse Regering, Vlaams minister van Bestuurszaken, Binnelands Bestuur, Inburgering, Toerisme en Vlaamse Rand, 10 maart 2010.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Nota Situatie Woonwagenterreinen in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest, Brussel, p. 27-28, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website\\_Link\\_Nota\\_Situatie\\_WWT\\_in\\_het\\_BHG\\_0612.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website_Link_Nota_Situatie_WWT_in_het_BHG_0612.pdf)

<sup>133</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Nota Situatie Woonwagenterreinen in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest, Brussel, p. 27-28, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website\\_Link\\_Nota\\_Situatie\\_WWT\\_in\\_het\\_BHG\\_0612.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website_Link_Nota_Situatie_WWT_in_het_BHG_0612.pdf)

<sup>134</sup> Vlaams Parlement, schriftelijke vraag, nr. 253 door Veerle Heeren aan Geert Bourgois, Viceminister-President van de Vlaamse Regering, Vlaams minister van Bestuurszaken, Binnelands Bestuur, Inburgering, Toerisme en Vlaamse Rand, 10 maart 2010.

<sup>135</sup> Vlaams Parlement, schriftelijke vraag, nr. 253 door Veerle Heeren aan Geert Bourgois, Viceminister-President van de Vlaamse Regering, Vlaams minister van Bestuurszaken, Binnelands Bestuur, Inburgering, Toerisme en Vlaamse Rand, 10 maart 2010.

<sup>136</sup> Vlaams Parlement, schriftelijke vraag, nr. 253 door Veerle Heeren aan Geert Bourgois, Viceminister-President van de Vlaamse Regering, Vlaams minister van Bestuurszaken, Binnelands Bestuur, Inburgering, Toerisme en Vlaamse Rand, 10 maart 2010.

<sup>137</sup> Vlaams Parlement, schriftelijke vraag, nr. 253 door Veerle Heeren aan Geert Bourgois, Viceminister-President van de Vlaamse Regering, Vlaams minister van Bestuurszaken, Binnelands Bestuur, Inburgering, Toerisme en Vlaamse Rand, 10 maart 2010.

2004 had aimed for 750 plots to be created on residential caravan sites and 500 on halting sites by 2010.<sup>138</sup> The plan failed and therefore the Flemish coalition agreement of July 2009 reiterated that the Flemish Government would ensure that local authorities continue to pursue this objective of ensuring adequate and sustainable caravan sites. In July 2012, the Flemish Government presented the Strategic Plan for Caravan Dwellers as a part of the Flemish Integration policy.

The Flemish government not only provides funds for the construction, extension or renovation of caravan sites, but also focuses on awareness raising campaigns and the dissemination of information – among others – by means of the brochure "Living on wheels" in 2001 (including an update in 2010) and the diffusion of annual circulars about halting sites to all the local governments and the organisation of a seminar for administrators of caravan sites.<sup>139</sup> The Flemish Caravan Commission coordinates the Flemish policy on the issue. In 2010, the committee had the task to seek leverage to generate more plots.<sup>140</sup> As a possible solution, the development of more opportunities for private caravan sites was suggested. In addition, the Committee is appointed to develop a scenario-for-growth per province.

In 2011, an estimated 967 families lived in a trailer or caravan in the Flemish Region and the Brussels Capital Region, which corresponds to approximately 2.600 people. Almost one quarter of these families are Roms, while other families are Voyageurs (Travellers) and Manoush. Compared to 2003, the number of families living in a trailer or caravan increased by 15%.<sup>141</sup>

In 2012, 474 plots were available on 30 residential (legal) caravan sites suitable for permanent living in Flanders and the Brussels Capital Region.<sup>142</sup> These sites can be found in Aalst, Aarschot, Antwerpen, As, Beersel, Bilzen, Brussel, Dendermonde, Diest, Genk, Gent, Grobbendonk, Ham, Hasselt, Heist-op-den-berg, Herentals, Kortrijk, Leuven, Maaseik, Maasmechelen, Mechelen, Mortsel, Oud-Turnhout, Puurs, Rotselaar, Sint-Katelijne-Waver, Sint-Truiden and Wetteren.<sup>143</sup> The other – approximately 500 – families reside on unregulated private sites (100 in Flanders), which they rent or buy. For the approximately 1.000 migratory Travellers families travelling through Flanders or Brussels annually, there are currently 6 halting sites accounting for 103 plots.<sup>144</sup> Some municipalities also have a system for the relief of travellers on so-called stopping places (*pleisterplaatsen*).<sup>145</sup> Finally, 24 sites – both residential and halting – are planned either on municipal or provincial level, more specifically in Zottegem, Zonhoven, Tongeren, Tienen, Roeselare, Overpelt, Oudenaarde, Oostende, Ninove, Meeuwen-Gruitrode, Maldegem, Leopoldsburg, Ieper, Herent, Geraardsbergen, Eeklo, Diest, Brugge, Bree, Beringen, Asse, Aarschot and Aalst.<sup>146</sup>

<sup>138</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Nota Situatie Woonwagenterreinen in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest, Brussel, p. 27-28, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website\\_Link\\_Nota\\_Situatie\\_WWT\\_in\\_het\\_BHG\\_0612.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website_Link_Nota_Situatie_WWT_in_het_BHG_0612.pdf)

<sup>139</sup> Vlaams Parlement, schriftelijke vraag, nr. 253 door Veerle Heeren aan Geert Bourgois, Viceminister-President van de Vlaamse Regering, Vlaams minister van Bestuurszaken, Binnelands Bestuur, Inburgering, Toerisme en Vlaamse Rand, 10 maart 2010.

<sup>140</sup> Vlaams Parlement, schriftelijke vraag, nr. 253 door Veerle Heeren aan Geert Bourgois, Viceminister-President van de Vlaamse Regering, Vlaams minister van Bestuurszaken, Binnelands Bestuur, Inburgering, Toerisme en Vlaamse Rand, 10 maart 2010.

<sup>141</sup> <http://www.integratiebeleid.be/integratiebeleid/integratiebeleid>

<sup>142</sup> Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, July 2012; Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie, Lijst Residentiële en Doortrekkersterreinen, available at <http://wwt.kruispuntmi.be/>

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> In Antwerpen, Beersel, Brussel, Gent, Kortrijk and Zottegem; Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, July 2012; Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie, Lijst Doortrekkersterreinen (april 2012), available at [http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/Thema/Woonwagenterreinen/Lijst\\_Doortrekkersterreinen\\_2012\(1\).pdf](http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/Thema/Woonwagenterreinen/Lijst_Doortrekkersterreinen_2012(1).pdf)

<sup>145</sup> Information received via email from the Flemish Study Service – to be published in 2012 "Regionale indicatorenboek VRIND 2012".

<sup>146</sup> Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie, Lijst Residentiële en Doortrekkersterreinen, available at <http://wwt.kruispuntmi.be/>

Most municipalities do not have a specific policy for caravans, mobile homes, private caravan sites or group housing.<sup>147</sup> The cost of managing a caravan site constitutes an additional barrier for some municipalities.<sup>148</sup>

As mentioned above, Flanders is faced with a serious shortage of both residential (50%) and halting (80%) sites for Travellers, which increases the pressure on public residential caravan sites in the sense of overcrowding and double camping.<sup>149</sup> This shortage is dealt with by the creation of additional plots on existing sites rather than by building new sites. East Flanders counts 679 families of nomads (meaning Voyageur [Travellers], Manoush or Roms), 214 of which live in a caravan.<sup>150</sup> Moreover, 42% of the families living in fixed housing would prefer going back to living in a caravan.

In 2012, the Research Institute for Employment and Society (HIVA) from KULeuven reported that two social housing departments in Flanders are looking into the possibility of building a caravan site.<sup>151</sup> In terms of the management of a municipal caravan site, the overpopulation of sites and the size of the sites for more than 15 families are two main challenges. The management of small family sites usually proceeds easily. In 2008, the user price for a place in a municipal area varied between 12,5 and 85 EUR per month.<sup>152</sup> The most important barriers to the construction of a private caravan site are the cost of the land and obtaining a building permit.<sup>153</sup>

The Walloon Mediation Centre for Travellers (*“Centre de médiation des gens de voyage”*) was contacted regarding the number of available residential and halting sites in Wallonia, but no answer has been received as of yet.

In August 2012, the Council of Europe Committee for Social Rights concluded that Belgium violates the European Social Charter because it lacks available sites for caravan dwellers and because it has not changed its urban legislation.<sup>154</sup> The Committee for Social Rights concluded that caravan dwellers remain discriminated against in Belgium. The situation in the Brussels Capital Region reflects this reality. In Brussels there are 120 families living in a caravan. Of the 120 families, only 46% found residence on a residential plot on 8 different sites, whereas the remaining 54% have no plot and circulate around Brussels, constantly looking for a legal plot.<sup>155</sup> The number of plots on official or private caravan sites in the Brussels Capital Region has not increased in the last 15 years while the population living in caravans has grown since the last 15 years. It is estimated there will be around 200 families living in a caravan in Brussels in 2020 and without the active establishment of additional sites, only 1 in 4 families will be allocated a legal plot in the Brussels Region in 2020.<sup>156</sup> Due to urban guidelines unsuited for caravans, only a small minority successfully obtains the necessary permissions. This legal uncertainty results in people having to live with the constant fear of eviction. On 1 March 2012, an ordinance was adopted amending the

<sup>147</sup> HIVA, Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, 2010, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.19

<sup>148</sup> HIVA, Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, 2010, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.19

<sup>149</sup> HIVA (2012), Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> HIVA (2012), Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Council of Europe European Committee of Social Rights, Internatinonal Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) v. Belgium, complaint nr. 62/2010, 31 July 2012.

<sup>155</sup> Koen Geurts, *Nauwelijks de helft van de Brusselse woonwagenbewoners heeft een standplaats*, De Foyer, 1 augustus 2012.<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

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Brussels Housing Code regarding the recognition of the caravan as a legal residence.

According to a study of the Regional Integration Foyer of 2006, caravan sites are often placed in remote areas where there is the least resistance from the local population. However this offers fewer opportunities for participation in society as schools, associations and services are less accessible. The ideal location of a caravan site is in a residential area or in the vicinity thereof, where facilities such as schools, shops, services and public transport are easily accessible as this leads to better contact with the local residents. Most sites have house regulations, but it is not always obvious who is supervising them. According to the Foyer, financial support for local government may offer a solution.<sup>157</sup>

In 2009, the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism stated in a study that halting sites should be located close to roads, public transportation, schools and hospitals and that they require a different kind of management.<sup>158</sup> For example, in the Romanian mini-camp in Ghent every basic need is lacking and the stay is very precarious.<sup>159</sup>

### **Sedentary lifestyle**

In a 2009 study, the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism reported that Roma tend to dwell in the most affordable areas of cities, usually in the poorest neighbourhoods in housing of the poorest quality.<sup>160</sup> Such neighbourhoods usually encompass high unemployment rates, high incidences of discrimination and a lack of investment. Bad quality housing also has a negative impact on people's health and children's schooling and often lacks facilities for persons with disabilities or other special needs.<sup>161</sup>

### **d) Security of tenure (including forced evictions and expulsions)**

#### **Itinerant lifestyle**

In 2010, the Mediation Centre of Travellers and Roms in the Walloon Region (*Centre de Médiation des Gens du Voyage et des Roms en Wallonie*) reported that in Brussels, the precarious situation of most caravan sites poses a problem.<sup>162</sup> Because of the difficulty in obtaining the necessary building permits for caravans and the high cost of the land, Roma camp illegally or are tolerated by the municipalities under the constant fear of eviction or expulsion.

#### **Sedentary lifestyle**

Roma are often and regularly victims of forced eviction, in particular in Ghent.<sup>163</sup> The underlying reasons for eviction are usually related to private ownership, the need for demolition for security reasons (unstable buildings) or the need to create new buildings.

<sup>157</sup> Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), Nota Situatie Woonwagenterreinen in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest, Brussel, p. 28-29, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website\\_Link\\_Nota\\_Situatie\\_WWT\\_in\\_het\\_BHG\\_0612.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website_Link_Nota_Situatie_WWT_in_het_BHG_0612.pdf)

<sup>158</sup> Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en Racismebestrijding (2009), RAXEN Thematic Study – Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers – Belgium, RAXEN, p. 39-40, available at [http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Belgium\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Belgium_en.pdf)

<sup>159</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p. 16, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf)

<sup>160</sup> Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en Racismebestrijding (2009), RAXEN Thematic Study – Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers – Belgium, RAXEN, p. 39-40, available at [http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Belgium\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Belgium_en.pdf)

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Centre de Médiation des Gens du Voyage et des Roms en Wallonie (2010), Caravane et logement: entre précarité juridique et bien-être social, Namur, p. 8-10, available at [http://www.cmvgv.be/images/stories/pdf/DOSSIER\\_CARAVANE\\_ET\\_LOGEMENT.pdf](http://www.cmvgv.be/images/stories/pdf/DOSSIER_CARAVANE_ET_LOGEMENT.pdf)

<sup>163</sup> Morel, M. (2010), De Romakwestie: een mensenrechtelijk perspectief, Oikos, 55(4), p. 25-37, available at [www.oikos.be/tijdschrift/.../725-55-03-morel-de-romakwestie.html](http://www.oikos.be/tijdschrift/.../725-55-03-morel-de-romakwestie.html)

It is not uncommon that Roma occupy abandoned buildings, where living conditions are often precarious and unhealthy and lacking every basic need.<sup>164</sup> In July 2010, Roma families occupied buildings in Ghent that were respectively owned by the City of Ghent and the University of Ghent. The Flemish Centre for Minorities also reported that several families live in squats in Antwerp and Brussels.<sup>165</sup> Squatting currently is not criminally prohibited in Belgium. However, in civil matters, squatters may be removed from the property when the owner makes a request to this effect to the justice of the peace. In case the squatters break into the building to enter thereby causing damage to the building, this constitutes burglary, which is a criminal offense.<sup>166</sup>

#### e) Residential segregation

Irrespective of the itinerant or sedentary lifestyle of Roma, they tend to concentrate in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.<sup>167</sup> Housing is more expensive in the Brussels Capital Region than elsewhere in the country. In a 2009 study, the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism identified several issues Roma deal with in the housing rental market in Brussels-Capital:<sup>168</sup> (1) Roma are victims of discrimination and racism; (2) Roma face problems with the residence status and insecurity of stay; (3) Roma often have a low and/or irregular income; (4) Roma are often unaware of their rights regarding housing; (5) Roma tend to have a bad reputation as tenants. All these issues lead to the majority of Roma settling in socio-economically deprived areas where housing is cheaper and where there is a concentration of poverty and immigrants, such as Molenbeek, Schaarbeek, Anderlecht and Saint-Josse-Ten-Noode.<sup>169</sup>

#### f) Experiences and perceptions of racial/ethnic discrimination

The Centre on Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism reported in a 2009 study that many Roma experience difficulties in entering a lease because of discrimination and a lack of secure employment and a steady income.<sup>170</sup> Roma also face additional discrimination because of enduring negative stereotypes, which are reinforced by the poor socio-economic situation of many Roma in Belgium. In addition, Roma often share a house or flat with other Roma families out of practical and financial concerns, but the rented units are in such case too small and thus more easily damaged, leading to conflicts with the neighbours. In Brussels, according to the Centre on Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, direct discrimination was repeatedly reported when landlords realised the ethnic origin of their prospective tenants.<sup>171</sup> In order to improve the housing situation of Roma and neighbourhood issues, the government included a goal on access to social integration of Roma in its 2012 National Strategy for Roma Integration.<sup>172</sup>

<sup>164</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p. 16-17, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf)

<sup>165</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p. 16-17, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf)

<sup>166</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p. 16-17, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf)

<sup>167</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p. 16, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf) ; Morel, M. (2010), De Romakwestie: een mensenrechtelijk perspectief, Oikos, 55(4), p. 25-37, available at [www.oikos.be/tijdschrift/.../725-55-03-morel-de-romakwestie.html](http://www.oikos.be/tijdschrift/.../725-55-03-morel-de-romakwestie.html)

<sup>168</sup> Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en Racismebestrijding (2009), RAXEN Thematic Study – Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers – Belgium, RAXEN, p. 31-33, available at [http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Belgium\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Belgium_en.pdf)

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en Racismebestrijding (2009), RAXEN Thematic Study – Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers – Belgium, RAXEN, p. 33-34, available at [http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Belgium\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Belgium_en.pdf)

<sup>172</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, p. 33.

## Major projects or initiatives

The federal government published a Circular on European citizens and access to social services (on 29 June 2011) and established a “Roma Helpdesk” for Public Services of Social Welfare (OCMW’s) that will make information available, ensure the exchange of good practices and will establish contact with other partners. In the Flanders Region, Roma will be referred to integration programmes and neighbourhood stewards will be employed in cities with high numbers of Roma to prevent problems and mediate where necessary.<sup>173</sup> In the Walloon Region, a pilot project on the integration of Roma focuses on the development of the social and language skills of Roma families as well as on the improvement of access to services in employment, housing and the social sector.<sup>174</sup> Finally, in the Brussels Capital Region, Roma integration and mediation is enhanced through the so-called street corner work financed by the Communal Community Commission, Roma mediators and neighbourhood stewards.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.



## 5. Health

The Flemish-Speaking Community of Belgium European Social Fund (ESF) Agency and the French-Speaking Community of Belgium ESF Agency were contacted for the purpose of this study in relation to projects on Roma integration co-funded by EU funding. None of the agencies finances specifically such projects although the Flemish Agency finances projects relating to the following 4 target groups: the elderly (50+), people with disabilities, people with low levels of education and migrants and Roma may be included in one of these target groups. The Brussels ESF Agency was also contacted but was not available for information.

### a) Health status/limitations in daily activities/disability

According to a working paper from 2010 from the Flemish Centre for Minorities, many Roma suffer from poor health and it is not uncommon for Roma families to include one or two persons with a severe illness or disability.<sup>176</sup> The most frequent diseases include diabetes, obesity, asthma and infections of the respiratory tract. Poverty is considered as one of the main causes of such illnesses as treatments are too expensive, there is insufficient fresh and healthy food and because poverty leads to bad housing conditions with fungus, cold water, no sanitation.<sup>177</sup> In addition to poverty, cultural elements are also a factor as Roma tend to focus on short-term rather than long-term health concerns. There is also the problem of poor monitoring of sickness and disease, excessive use of coffee, alcohol and cigarettes and a poor diet.<sup>178</sup> The pressure of living in anxiety and traumatic war-experiences has impacts on mental health, and depression and psychosomatic complaints are common among Roma.<sup>179</sup>

The 2011 Inter Ministerial Conference (IMC) Working Group on Roma described the overall health status of the Roma and their access to health services as follows: Roma suffer from poor general health (life expectancy is 10 years below the average of the general population); poor housing is a factor in the poor health status; there is a lack of proper monitoring often due to cultural barriers; Roma often suffer from eye and dental problems; there are more smokers among Roma and they have an unbalanced diet. Roma often mistrust the health care system and language barriers lead to difficult communication which in turn may lead to a wrong treatment/medication. Roma also lack knowledge of administrative procedures and they would benefit from better information provisions from Public Centres for Societal Wellbeing (OCMW). Moreover, Roma also face discrimination in accessing health services.<sup>180</sup>

The Flemish Agency Care and Health (*Vlaams agentschap Zorg en Gezondheid*) was sent a request for the purpose of this study on the number of vaccinations of Roma children. The Agency however does not register the number of Roma children who are vaccinated annually. Child and Family (*Kind en Gezin*) – the Flemish public institution providing help and advice on the wellbeing of children – was also contacted, but it does not register such information either. Hence, the level of vaccination of Roma children in Belgium is unknown at this time.

The Federal Governmental Department Social Security (*FOD Sociale Zekerheid*) was also contacted, but no response has been provided as of yet.

<sup>176</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p. 15, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf) ; Morel, M. (2010), De Romakwestie: een mensenrechtelijk perspectief, Oikos, 55(4), p. 25-37, available at [www.oikos.be/tijdschrift/.../725-55-03-morel-de-romakwestie.html](http://www.oikos.be/tijdschrift/.../725-55-03-morel-de-romakwestie.html)

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> OCMW Temse Actie-plan Roma (7 september 2011), received via e-mail from OCMW Temse.



## **b) Unmet needs in the area of health**

Medical services – and especially services on preventive care such as vaccinations – are not easily accessible for Roma.<sup>181</sup> Roma also encounter difficulties in making optimal use of the existing health care services because of the language or cultural barrier; for example, Roma women cannot visit a male doctor.<sup>182</sup> There is also an apparent misuse of the medical care services, as Roma families tend to rather visit the emergency room of a hospital than the doctor's private practice.<sup>183</sup>

A 2010 study from the Minorities Forum concludes that a large number of Roma do not know where to turn to in case of illness.<sup>184</sup> Roma are not always aware of the existence of emergency medical assistance or lack knowledge of the applicable procedures. Therefore they tend to go directly to the pharmacy for medication or they use medication they brought from their home country.<sup>185</sup> When they do address medical services, Roma are often not properly taken care of.<sup>186</sup>

According to a working paper by the Flemish Centre for Minorities from 2010, Roma often suffer from poor health. This is true as far as it concerns adults. In contrast, Roma are very attentive to the health status of their children. Roma mothers often make use of the services of the National Office for the Child (l'Office national de l'Enfance (ONE)) and Child and Family, the Flemish public institution providing help and advice on the wellbeing of children.<sup>187</sup> The latter has clinics in the Brussels Capital Region that are attended by many Roma. The service associated with Integration Centre Foyer is a particular success, however only a few of these services exist and therefore they are overburdened.<sup>188</sup>

Despite awareness of welfare and health services, Roma's knowledge about the proper functioning and mission of these institutions is rather limited. Roma prefer to care for the elderly and disabled people within the family. There are several noticeable changes whereby caravan dwellers are more informed via the Internet and television.<sup>189</sup>

A 2010 study from the Research Institute for Employment and Society (HIVA) from KULeuven shows that 72 (63 of 190 Travellers, 7 of 36 Manouches and 2 of 43 Roms) of 269 respondents of the caravan population relies on benefits for illness, disability or accident.<sup>190</sup> 43% of those surveyed in the HIVA study consider their health to be good to very good, and 34% consider it poor to very poor.<sup>191</sup> In the same study, 52% of the respondents said they suffer from a disability, illness or a disorder.<sup>192</sup> The life expectancy of Roma is found to be below the average life expectancy in

<sup>181</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p. 15, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf) ;

Morel, M. (2010), De Romakwestie: een mensenrechtelijk perspectief, Oikos, 55(4), p. 25 - 37, available at [www.oikos.be/tijdschrift/.../725-55-03-morel-de-romakwestie.html](http://www.oikos.be/tijdschrift/.../725-55-03-morel-de-romakwestie.html)

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p. 15, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf)

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Clé, A. (2007), Bedelarij onderzocht, Brussel, p. 7, Clé, A. (2007), La Mendicité interrogée, Brussel, p. 7

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> HIVA (2010), Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, , Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.27

<sup>190</sup> HIVA (2010), Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.27.

<sup>191</sup> HIVA (2010), Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.25.

<sup>192</sup> Federale Overheidsdienst Economie, Sterftetafels en levensverwachting 1997-2010, available at [http://statbel.fgov.be/nl/statistiek/cijfers/bevolking/sterfte\\_leven/tafel/](http://statbel.fgov.be/nl/statistiek/cijfers/bevolking/sterfte_leven/tafel/)

Belgium. In Limburg, between 2005 and 2009, the average life expectancy was 65 years old for Roma and 80 years old for Belgians.<sup>193</sup> The difference in life expectancy between Roma and others in Belgium is believed to be due to the poor health of Roma, notably to the excessive use of products such as coffee, sugar, salt, fats, cigarettes and medicines. There is however no report of problematic drug use among Roma in Belgium.<sup>194</sup>

Self-employed Roma workers are often not formally registered with a health insurance for small risks due to a lack of information on health insurance access. As a consequence, they are less eager to contact a doctor in order to avoid problems with the National Health Service.<sup>195</sup> A 2010 study from the Research Institute for Employment and Society (HIVA) from KULeuven confirms this finding. In its 2012 National Strategy for Roma Integration, the Belgian government included access to healthcare for Roma as a goal to achieve in the future.<sup>196</sup> The Federal government invests in intercultural mediators of Albanian, Bosnian, Romanian and Serbo-Croatian descent who are active in various hospitals in the context of the intercultural mediation programme of the Federal Governmental Service for Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment in order to ensure the accessibility, quality and continuity of care for Roma.<sup>197</sup> In the Flanders Region, the focus lies on networking between professionals to exchange information and best practices, and the provision of accessible health care for Roma patients. In light of this and to promote accessible health care for Roma patients, the city of Sint-Niklaas initiated, with the support of the Flemish government, a pilot project on accessible health care for Roma by means of customized health care for this group, additional medical attention through counselling, training initiatives and individual guidance on social and psychological level.<sup>198</sup> The German-speaking Community supports a new project of the European Refugee Fundraising at ensuring psychological and psychiatric help for refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>199</sup> Support includes guidance with integration by means of information and education (intensive language courses).<sup>200</sup> The project focuses on linguistic, social, education and professional integration.<sup>201</sup> Specific psychological and psychiatric guidance of refugees and asylum seekers with the assistance of recognized translators is provided and an artistic therapeutic group is offered to women in vulnerable situations.

### c) Medical insurance coverage

When it comes to medical insurance coverage, a distinction should be drawn between EU-citizens and people without legal residence in Belgium. Roma with the nationality of an EU country who stay in Belgium for less than 3 months can contact the health services in their country of origin to recover their medical expenses, provided they are insured in the country of origin.<sup>202</sup> Legal residents from EU countries who stay in Belgium for more than 3 months can join a Belgian

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[http://statbel.fgov.be/nl/statistiek/cijfers/bevolking/sterfte\\_leven/tafels/](http://statbel.fgov.be/nl/statistiek/cijfers/bevolking/sterfte_leven/tafels/). HIVA, Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, 2010,

Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.25.

<sup>193</sup> Cijfers pric Limburg 2009, HIVA, Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, 2010, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.27.

<sup>194</sup> HIVA, Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, 2010, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.27.

<sup>195</sup> HIVA, Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, 2010, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.27.

<sup>196</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, p. 28

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, p. 29

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p. 15, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf) ; Morel, M. (2010), De Romakwestie: een mensenrechtelijk perspectief, Oikos, 55(4), p. 25-37, available at [www.oikos.be/tijdschrift/.../725-55-03-morel-de-romakwestie.html](http://www.oikos.be/tijdschrift/.../725-55-03-morel-de-romakwestie.html).

National Health Service.<sup>203</sup> The Public Service for Societal Welfare (OCMW) may intervene in case of need for Roma who reside in Belgium irregularly, as they are entitled to emergency medical service from the Public Service for Societal Welfare of their actual place residence.<sup>204</sup> Not everyone is aware of the existence of this scheme and some Public Services for Societal Welfare only provide this emergency assistance when the family is registered in a municipality for at least 3 months, which is often not the case.<sup>205</sup> Additionally, Roma often cannot present a rental agreement, which leads some Public Services for Societal Welfare to disregard their application for medical care.<sup>206</sup>

No official or unofficial data or reports containing information on the medical insurance coverage of Roma who are Belgian nationals were found during the research for this report.

#### **d) Circumstances around giving birth**

Research from 2010 concludes there are many teen pregnancies among the Roma population in Belgium.<sup>207</sup> The study does not contain more detailed information on pregnancies. According to a study from 2009 on Roma from Kosovo in Temse and Sint-Niklaas, teen pregnancies are a problem among the Roma population, as both in- and outside marriage, girls become pregnant at a young age. The study states that this is partly because of social taboos whereby Roma girls have a limited knowledge of sexuality and preventive measures.<sup>208</sup>

#### **e) Experiences and perceptions of racial/ethnic discrimination**

No reports or studies on experiences and perceptions of racial/ethnic discrimination of Roma in Belgium were found. There are however several projects on the issue:

### **Major projects or initiatives**

At federal level

#### **Intercultural mediators in the healthcare sector**

Although there is no reliable data in Belgium on the health of the Roma or on the problems that they experience in the healthcare system, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that they face many problems in terms of their health situation and access to healthcare. Under the auspices of the intercultural mediation programme run by the Federal Public Service for Health, Food Chain Safety and the Environment, intercultural mediators who act on behalf of Roma are currently employed in a number of hospitals. There are Albanian, Bosnian, Romanian and Serbo-Croatian intercultural mediators. Some of these are now also deployed via a videoconferencing link in both hospitals and primary healthcare facilities. For vulnerable groups such as Roma, these social services in hospitals are particularly important in order to guarantee accessibility, quality and continuity of care. The Federal Public Service's working group on 'Social Services in Hospitals' considers, amongst other

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<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Geurts, K. (2010), "Met één achterste kan je niet op twee paarden zitten" – Roma-leerlingen op de schoolbanken, Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer Brussel, Artikel gepubliceerd in Handboek Leerlingenbegeleiding, Plantyn, p. 6-10., available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119\\_Met\\_een\\_achterste\\_kan\\_je\\_niet\\_op\\_twee\\_paarden\\_zitten.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119_Met_een_achterste_kan_je_niet_op_twee_paarden_zitten.pdf).

<sup>208</sup> Decoodt, F. en De Reu, S. (red.) (2009), Kosovaarse Roma in het Waasland. 10 jaar beleid met Roma in Temse en Sint-Niklaas, p. 50, available at <http://www.odice.be/userfiles/file/ODiCe/Lokaal%20beleid/Roma/Kosovaarse%20Roma%20in%20het%20Waasland%20-%20onderzoeksrapport.pdf>. Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p.18, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf).

things, the problems faced by patients from ethnic minorities and people residing illegally in Belgium, a group to which many Roma belong. In an effort to support the coordinators of intercultural mediation in hospitals, the Federal Public Service's Intercultural Mediation and Policy Support Unit recently organised training sessions on working with Roma patients in conjunction with the not-for-profit regional integration centre FOYER.<sup>209</sup>

Flanders

### **Accessible healthcare for ROMA patients**

With the support of the Flemish Government, a trial project on accessible healthcare for Roma is under way in St-Niklaas. In the day-to-day care of Roma patients there are major issues surrounding taking medicines, preventive medicine, teenage pregnancies, poor eating habits and poor dental health. The idea is to adapt the care provided to this target group by paying particular attention to the Roma's specific medical needs, through training initiatives and by offering individual social and emotional support.<sup>210</sup>

### **Networking between healthcare providers**

Healthcare providers share information on individual cases and deepen their understanding of poverty.<sup>211</sup>

German-speaking community

### **Psychological and psychiatric help for recognised refugees and asylum seekers**

The German-speaking Community is supporting a new project sponsored by the European Refugee Fund, which relates to recognised refugees and asylum seekers. Amongst other things, it offers support with a view to integration by providing information and training (intensive language courses) and social support. As well as working towards linguistic, social, educational and professional integration, the project also aims to offer employees a number of tools to simplify their work, including supervision and training. Dedicated psychological and psychiatric support of refugees and asylum seekers is achievable with the help of accredited interpreters. An art therapy group is offered to women in vulnerable circumstances.

In 2012, two therapists from the German-speaking Community's Centre for Mental Health (*Centrum voor geestelijke gezondheidszorg*) attended a training course on ethno psychology. Ethno psychology works on the premise that every individual comprises two elements: a psyche and a culture.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> European Commission, National Roma Integration Strategy for Belgium, (2012) p. 35-36. available at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma\\_belgium\\_strategy\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_belgium_strategy_en.pdf)

<sup>210</sup> European Commission, National Roma Integration Strategy for Belgium, (2012) p. 35-36. available at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma\\_belgium\\_strategy\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_belgium_strategy_en.pdf)

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

## 6. Poverty/Economic situation

The Flemish-Speaking Community of Belgium European Social Fund (ESF) Agency and the French-Speaking Community of Belgium ESF Agency were contacted for the purpose of this study in relation to projects on Roma integration co-funded by EU funding. None of the agencies finances specifically such projects although the Flemish Agency finances projects relating to the following 4 target groups: the elderly (50+), people with disabilities, people with low levels of education and migrants and Roma may be included in one of these target groups. The Brussels ESF Agency was also contacted but was not available for information.

### a) Households at risk-of-poverty

Based on origin, two dominant groups of beggars can be distinguished:<sup>213</sup> the largest group is comprised by Roma of Romanian origin (66.5%), followed by Belgian nationals beggars (24.8%). Overall, there is an almost equal representation of male and female beggars in the Brussel Capital Region. However, when comparing on basis of origin, major differences are noticeable. Within the group of Roma beggars of Romanian origin, 69.5% are women, whereas among the group of Belgian nationals beggars, 87.9% are men. Moreover, the average age of beggars of Romanian origin (27 years) is significantly lower than the average age of the Belgian nationals beggars (41 years).

In 2009, 453 Roma (88 families) were registered with the Public Service of Societal Welfare (OCMW) of **Limburg**.<sup>214</sup> Of them, 35 Roma (7%) did not have legal residence in Belgium, while 191 (more than 40%) were either recognised as refugees or legalised. More than 50% concerned families with children, including 6,8% single mothers.

When considering the sex of the Roma depending on support from the Public Service of Societal Welfare, there is a balanced distribution with 241 men compared to 205 women. More than 60% of the registered Roma are children and young adults under the age of 25, whereas 12% are Roma between the age of 30 and 40, and the age group 40-50 accounts for 9%. The elderly aged 60 and more are less represented in the charts.

In 2011, the Public Service of Societal Welfare (OCMW) of **Diest** had a record of 136 known Roma (in 33 family entities), mostly young families with many children. Most of them reside in Belgium/Diest since 2009 and 2010.<sup>215</sup> Of 33 families, 22 (67%) have permanent residence, 6 (18%) families have a temporary residence permit pending asylum procedure or application for urgent medical condition, and 5 families (15%) – including 2 families with minor children – reside in Belgium illegally. Of the 33 families in Diest, 15 families (47%) are active through Public Service of Societal Welfare (OCMW) employment, or their situation is further monitored by the Flemish Service for Employment Mediation (VDAB) or other social security authorities. 13 of 33 families (40%) - of which 4 with a temporary residence status whereby employment options are limited and 9 families with permanent residence status - have a minimum wage.

The equivalent minimum wage in these 9 families is linked to conditions regarding language classes and an active search for work, unless mitigating factors (illness, family situation) are invoked. Given that five of the 33 families (15%) reside irregularly in Belgium, their support from the Public

<sup>213</sup> Clé, A. (2007), *Bedelarij onderzocht*, Brussel, p. 4, Clé, A. (2007), *La Mendicité interrogée*, Brussel, p. 4

<sup>214</sup> Information received via email from the Provinciaal Integratiecentrum (2009), *onderzoek aantal Roma gekend bij de Limburgse OCMW's*.

<sup>215</sup> Information received via email from the Public Service of Societal Welfare of Diest, *samenvatting ROMA's*, situation on 28/9/2011.

Service of Societal Welfare (OCMW) is limited to urgent medical services, possibly supplemented by food parcels or maternal help.

The Public Service of Societal Welfare (OCMW) of **Diest** does not take specific initiatives towards Roma. The non-profit organization GOK/LOP Diest employs a mediator to help supervise the 82 Roma children. In terms of leisure activities, there are a number of grant applications, for example on poverty in motion and impulse fund for migrants. Although not specifically targeted towards Roma, they can also benefit from them.

Annex 2.11 shows the unemployment pressure and the number of Central and Eastern European immigrants, including Roma receiving social assistance, at the Public Service of Societal Welfare (OCMW) of **Antwerp**.<sup>216</sup>

The Public Service of Societal Welfare (OCMW) of **Ghent** noted an increase in the number of Roma receiving a living wage/integration income from 241 in early 2008 to 984 in September 2010.<sup>217</sup>

The Public Service of Societal Welfare (OCMW) of **Brussels** was contacted but informed that they do not register the number of Roma making use of their services, because Roma is an ethnicity and not a nationality. They therefore do not have specific statistics relating to Roma.

The Public Service of Societal Welfare (OCMW) of **Sint-Niklaas** and the one of **Temse** were also contacted; no response has been received as of yet.

#### **b) Income/expenditure**

A 2007 research study on begging in Belgium shows that, because of their residential status, many Roma in the Brussels Capital Region are not entitled to work or to receive social benefits.<sup>218</sup> As a result, they are dependent upon money gathered through begging for their income. An investigation into the proceeds of begging concludes that a Roma woman earns an average of 16,8 € per day.<sup>219</sup> For common expenses, such as rent and food, the bill is divided among the people living in the dwelling. Roma often take on jobs in the informal sector to make some more money and to escape the humiliation of begging, but they rarely find a regular job.<sup>220</sup> The amount of money they have at their disposal to survive is very low. They use it mainly for buying food, for housing and send some of it to family in the country of origin.

No information was available on the income of national Belgian Roma.

#### **c) Financial situation/social transfers/debts/borrowing**

Many Roma depend strongly upon their own social network – which is often limited to their own family and Roma community – for survival. Roma help each other where possible regarding food and housing.<sup>221</sup> Roma barely have contacts outside their own Roma community, which makes it harder to break the cycle of poverty.

#### **d) Malnutrition/hunger**

<sup>216</sup> Actieplan MOE (Roma) migranten 2012 – deel Flemish Government (2011), Actieplan MOE (Roma) migranten 2012, available at [http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan\\_MOE.pdf](http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan_MOE.pdf). 1

<sup>217</sup> OCMW Gent (2011) Verslag OCMW-Raad 20 Januari 2011: bespreking handhavingsbeleid OCMW.

<sup>218</sup> Clé, A. (2007), *Bedelarij onderzocht*, Brussel, p. 6, Clé, A. (2007), *La Mendicité interrogée*, Brussel, p. 6

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> Clé, A. (2007), *Bedelarij onderzocht*, Brussel, p. 7, Clé, A. (2007), *La Mendicité interrogée*, Brussel, p. 7

In 2012, the Minorities Forum – an organization representing and defending the interests of ethnic-cultural minorities in Belgium – reported that Roma have an unhealthy lifestyle with reduced intake of fresh, nutritious food, and increased use of alcohol and coffee as well as cigarettes.<sup>222</sup>

**e) Material deprivation and/or other non-income poverty indicators**

A 2007 study examining begging in Belgium shows that Roma beggars in the Brussels Capital Region hardly ever appeal to organisations offering food or material help, mainly because the existence of such initiatives is barely communicated to the Roma.<sup>223</sup> In the Brussels Capital Region, there is only one part-time fieldworker who understands the language and who works specifically with Roma. Roma apply their own survival strategies instead, namely looking for cheap or free food on the market and for clothing in rubbish bags.<sup>224</sup>

No further information was found on the material deprivation and/or other non-income poverty indicators.

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<sup>222</sup> Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Brussel, p. 15, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota\\_Roma-actieplan\\_100211.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf)

<sup>223</sup> Clé, A. (2007), Bedelarij onderzocht, Brussel, p. 6, available at [http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/KUB\\_Studie\\_Bedelen\\_Samenvatting.pdf](http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/KUB_Studie_Bedelen_Samenvatting.pdf) ; Clé, A. (2007), La Mendicité interrogée, Brussel, p. 6

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

## 7. Active citizenship/Rights awareness

The Flemish-Speaking Community of Belgium European Social Fund (ESF) Agency and the French-Speaking Community of Belgium ESF Agency were contacted for the purpose of this study in relation to projects on Roma integration co-funded by EU funding. None of the agencies finances specifically such projects although the Flemish Agency finances projects relating to the following 4 target groups: the elderly (50+), people with disabilities, people with low levels of education and migrants and Roma may be included in one of these target groups. The Brussels ESF Agency was also contacted but was not available for information.

### a) Awareness of the existence of representative Roma organisations, other civil society organisations, anti-discrimination legislation and equality bodies

Immigrant organisations exist, but not every subgroup within the group of people with a migration background is organised because in order to do so the community must be sufficiently large.<sup>225</sup> There is a tendency that the strongest minority groups organise themselves, while those groups in greatest need are often left behind.<sup>226</sup> For example, there are not many organisations for asylum seekers, refugees, Roma and Travellers. Moreover, not every organisation receives enough support from its community, in which case they cannot represent the whole group as they are not given the explicit mandate to do so.<sup>227</sup>

Over the past few years, several local initiatives have been taken to increase the rights awareness and active citizenship of Roma in Belgium. What follows is an overview of these initiatives by city:

In 2011, **Ghent** set up a project to tackle the issue of landlords in deteriorating neighbourhoods (“**Actie huisjesmelkers**”).<sup>228</sup> The municipal integration service of the city of Ghent provides legal advice to newcomers (“*Team Rechtspositie*”) and the non-profit organization Com-pass (*Kom-pas*) has a reception room where newly registered entrants can attend an integration program. It also helps parents to look for appropriate education for children.<sup>229</sup> The city also ensures the referral of refugees and asylum seekers. The Intercultural Network of Ghent (“*Intercultureel Netwerk Gent*”) raises awareness about rights and obligations, while the non-profit organization Opré Roma Ghent – which is established from within the Roma community itself – helps Roma on a voluntary basis to improve communication and integration and to ensure a better representation of Roma and community-orientated operations such as a Roma soccer team.<sup>230</sup>

In **Sint-Niklaas and Temse (“Waasland”)**, the non-profit organization ODiCe, which focuses on refugee work, employed (until 2009) a Roma assistant who made the organization more accessible for Roma to visit, ask for help, advice or information.<sup>231</sup> Questions mainly relate to the asylum

<sup>225</sup> Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie (2011), *Omgevingsanalyse 2010*. Een stakeholdersbevraging door het Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie vzw en de integratiecentra in Vlaanderen en Brussel, Brussel, p. 28., available at [http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/OMGEVINGSANALYSE\\_2010.pdf](http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/OMGEVINGSANALYSE_2010.pdf).

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Stamper, M. (2011), *De Roma-problematiek te Gent. Naar een integrale en duurzame oplossing*, Gent, p. 30-35, available at [http://doks.katho.be/do/files/FiSe8a8182f02fe3b103012ffdb0a5bc00b3/Matthias\\_Stamper\\_BaMV\\_Bachelorproef.pdf;jsessionid=8EE16D3977FEB1585D96359F5C85BA39?recordId=SKAT8a8182f02fe3b103012ffdb0a5bc00b2](http://doks.katho.be/do/files/FiSe8a8182f02fe3b103012ffdb0a5bc00b3/Matthias_Stamper_BaMV_Bachelorproef.pdf;jsessionid=8EE16D3977FEB1585D96359F5C85BA39?recordId=SKAT8a8182f02fe3b103012ffdb0a5bc00b2).

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Decoodt, F. en De Reu, S. (red.) (2009), *Kosovaarse Roma in het Waasland. 10 jaar beleid met Roma in Temse en Sint-Niklaas*, p. 33-34, available at



procedure, the subsidiary protection status, family reunification, employment, Roma certificates, energy bills and the possibility of a repayment plan, education, travel, translation and mediation between Roma families themselves.

The Roma community in **Temse** grew considerably over the past few years and the city gradually initiated actions that were targeted specifically towards this group. In 2009, four projects were set up and aimed at increasing the opportunities of Roma in the Flemish society, mainly through education or training:<sup>232</sup>

1. The first project consists of weekly meetings of Roma women between 18 and 60 years old. The women are educated in an accessible manner about society and integration. OCMW Temse organises this training. This is a voluntary project and focuses exclusively on Roma. The number of participating women remains constant, indicating the motivation of this group;
2. The second project was initiated by Group Intro that developed, with European funding, the “**Travak-project**” to steer young people into part-time education to the active labour market. 18 of 20 participants were Roma;
3. The compulsory integration programs for newcomers are also accessible for Roma. Through the course “**Social Orientation**”, newly arrived Roma are better integrated in the Flemish society;
4. The latest initiative consists of the recurring informational meetings in the city hall of Temse. All new residents of Temse are invited. For Roma, this is organised several times. During the informal meetings, the municipal official takes the opportunity to discuss complaints about socially inappropriate behaviour.

A future initiative concerns the **Roma-men-project** which will help establishing the necessary trust between Roma men and the services, to raise issues in an expeditious manner and to obtain the cooperation of Roma in solving these issues.<sup>233</sup> This initiative is the result of a joint request by the Public Service of Societal Welfare and the local police.

Since October 2008, various services in Temse organise a monthly meeting in which Roma issues are discussed.<sup>234</sup> The consultation aims at developing a more coherent policy towards Roma. In addition, some organisations initiate projects for the entire population whereby Roma are a specifically targeted audience.

In 2009, there were seven projects in **Sint-Niklaas** that specifically targeted the Roma population.<sup>235</sup> Two projects focused on education, namely one specifically aimed at married Roma mothers of school age who are no longer attending school in order to provide them with a customized curriculum (**Roma-mama** and Groep Intro, a non-profit organization for training, education, counselling, job coaching, work experience and social economy that assists people who have difficulty finding their way into the Belgium society, in acquiring and strengthening their

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<http://www.odice.be/userfiles/file/ODiCe/Lokaal%20beleid/Roma/Kosovaarse%20Roma%20in%20het%20Waastrand%20-%20onderzoeksrapport.pdf>.

<sup>232</sup> Decoodt, F. en De Reu, S. (red.) (2009), Kosovaarse Roma in het Waasland. 10 jaar beleid met Roma in Temse en Sint-Niklaas, p.34-38, available at <http://www.odice.be/userfiles/file/ODiCe/Lokaal%20beleid/Roma/Kosovaarse%20Roma%20in%20het%20Waastrand%20-%20onderzoeksrapport.pdf>

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Decoodt, F. en De Reu, S. (red.) (2009), Kosovaarse Roma in het Waasland. 10 jaar beleid met Roma in Temse en Sint-Niklaas, p. 38-43, available at <http://www.odice.be/userfiles/file/ODiCe/Lokaal%20beleid/Roma/Kosovaarse%20Roma%20in%20het%20Waastrand%20-%20onderzoeksrapport.pdf>

competencies)<sup>236</sup> and one training programme for young people in part-time education who do not have access to the labour market (**Travak-project** – Groep Intro). Another project concerns the health of Roma and consists of monthly consultation hours of Child and Family (“*Kind en Gezin*”) for Roma mothers. Another initiative concerns a woman E. Erstukajeva who works for the Society municipal department and spends much of her time solving neighbourhood problems (among other) with Roma. Since 2007, all newcomers – including Roma – must be registered in this course of Social Orientation.

In the **Brussels Capital Region**, the Regional Integration Center Foyer (*Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer*), initiated three good practices in eight years with funding from the Flemish Community and the Flemish Community Commission:<sup>237</sup> (1) **The Support Point Roma and Travellers** (*Steunpunt Roma & Woonwagenbewoners*) customises support to strengthen the emancipation and integration process through education and training, both in respect of social services, authorities, schools and local authorities (information, advice, mediation, training, development of partnerships) and in respect of Roma and caravan dwellers (mediation, information, sensitization, animation); (2) Since 2007, team mediators strengthen the trust between families and schools (or other bodies) and strengthen communication and cooperation, primarily with a view to better schooling (school orientation, enrolment and succession of schooling, mediation, encouraging parent involvement, family support system, etc.). The interventions occur mainly in the context of collaboration with various partners (education institutions, municipal and judicial services, police, social partners, etc.), but also at the request of Roma themselves; (3) **Training Centre Foyer** (*Vormingscentrum Foyer*) gives vulnerable youth (16 to 18 years old, of which the majority is Roma) the opportunity to be qualitatively educated and to boost their self-esteem through training and guidance to working through personal development trajectories. It also allows Roma people with learning disabilities to keep motivated to follow training and prepare themselves for the job market through adapted methods.

In the **Walloon Region**, the Mediation Centre for Travellers and Roms (*Centre de Médiation de Gens de Voyage et Roms*) is recognized for its central position as a mediation centre between governments, Roma and Travellers, and the whole population. In this respect, several good practices are worth mentioning:<sup>238</sup>

1. Administrative and socio-professional mediation. Roma who experience administrative difficulties or who are looking for a house or a job are supervised and receive advice. They are orientated to different authorities or associations. The presence of the team, working with Roma mediators and the collaboration with social translation services led to an improved integration, both with regard to the Roma and in respect of the services.
2. Education. The centre has been known for its quality and the effectiveness of the training it provides to organisations that work with Roma. Organisations such as Fedasil, medical centers, OCMW's regional integration centers, schools, etc. regularly call on the Centre to provide training to their teams.
3. Information and awareness-raising. The projects of the Mediation Centre aim at working around the issue of stigmatisation. It offers clear and precise information as well as a nuanced portrayal of the Roma community. In this respect, the exhibition “*Des Roms debout!*” realized by the Centre in collaboration with various partners (photographers, Roma mediators), is one such example. The success of the exhibition, since its launch on 8 December 2011, shows the merits of the Centre, as well as that of the existing needs.

<sup>236</sup>INTRO Group is active in the five Flemish provinces and Brussels. More information at <http://www.groepintro.be/#/pagina/9>

<sup>237</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, p. 17.

<sup>238</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, p. 17-18.

4. Coaching and supervision for a win-win integration. The Centre is available to departments and agencies for guidance and counselling with regard to difficulties in their daily work experience with Roma families during their integration. These may include issues about socio-professional integration, education, housing, health care and care for young children.

In 2012, the National Belgian Council of Roma, Sinti and Travellers was founded as an advisory body for the purpose of representing Roma, Sinti and Travellers' (RSW) communities in Belgium.<sup>239</sup> This Council will act as a mediator between the communities and Belgian authorities to improve the integration and social inclusion of RSW in different areas. The Council will make its expertise and advice available as well as cooperate with the communities and the authorities at all levels. Its work will be supported by five thematic working groups, namely Education and Youth, Employment and Social Affairs, Health and Housing, Media and Culture, Migration and Integration / Non-discrimination and human rights.<sup>240</sup>

In its 2012 National Strategy for Roma Integration, the Belgian government made the increase of participation and empowerment of the Roma population in Belgian society a goal that must be achieved in the future.<sup>241</sup> To achieve this goal, the federal government has established a Roma Council that should increase the participation of Roma and Travellers in Belgian policy making on Roma issues.<sup>242</sup> The Federal government also applied for the participation in the ROMED programme of the Council of Europe that focuses on training intercultural mediators for the Roma community.<sup>243</sup> According to the Flemish government, more support will be given to Roma associations and mediators in order to strive for equal participation and responsible citizenship for the Roma community.<sup>244</sup> In the Brussels Capital Region, the focus lies on mediation, counselling, referral and information provided by the Service Roma and Travellers ("*Dienst Roma en Woonwagenbewoners*" (DRW)) of Foyer that will regularly bring key figures from the Roma communities together in order to discuss current affairs within the communities, to exchange experiences and listen to developments and needs. Based on these gatherings, informative and awareness-raising actions are provided to meet these needs<sup>245</sup>.

#### **b) Participation in elections and political representation;**

In a 2011 study, the non-profit organization Cross point Migration-Integration (*Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie*) reported there is little political participation/representation of Roma in Belgium.<sup>246</sup>

The Flemish Minorities Forum – an organization representing and defending the interests of ethnic-cultural minorities in Belgium – started a project called "**VOTE for Roma**" in 2012 to stimulate local political participation of Roma key figures through the organisation of participatory processes in cooperation with the target group.<sup>247</sup> The project focuses on the local level, since local decisions directly affect the community. The local elections in 2012 provided momentum to work around local participation policy. Through participatory activities (trainings, debates), Roma are encouraged to learn more about local policy and decision-making processes and to strengthen the skills necessary to play an active role. The "VOTE for Roma" project is a participatory project

<sup>239</sup> For more information see: <http://www.rsw-crsgv.be/index.html>

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, p. 21.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie (2011), Omgevingsanalyse 2010. Een stakeholdersbevraging door het Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie vzw en de integratiecentra in Vlaanderen en Brussel, Brussel, p. 27, available at [http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/OMGEVINGSANALYSE\\_2010.pdf](http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/OMGEVINGSANALYSE_2010.pdf)

<sup>247</sup> Minderhedenforum, met steun van federaal impulsfonds, stem voor roma (2012), available at <http://www.minderhedenforum.be/2participatie/brochurestemvoorRoma.pdf.pdf>

where all the steps are taken along with the target group and the evaluation of the project will also be done along with the target group. In 2012, the project focuses on the regions of Ghent, Sint-Niklaas, Temse and Hasselt.

The Council of Roma, Sinti and Travellers (*Raad van Roma, Sinti en Woonwagenbewoners - RRSW*) was requested to provide data on Roma participation in European, national, regional and local elections, their political participation and their representation/appointment on governmental, regional and local authorities positions, for the purpose of this study. The President of the Council, stated that this type of information is not recorded and thus does not exist, as Roma is an ethnicity and not a nationality.

#### **c) Participation and representation in non-governmental organisations;**

Overall, the participation and representation of Roma in non-governmental organisations in Belgium is low.<sup>248</sup> People with a migration background are highly underrepresented in administrative councils and consultative bodies such as local consultation, parents' committees, intercultural councils and welfare councils.<sup>249</sup> If there is any representation at all, it is often very forced and construed for example in the context of a social policy. Generally speaking, participation of persons with a migration background in Flemish associations is rare because the Flemish model of associations is very different from the model known by most individuals with a migration background.<sup>250</sup> Persons with a history of migration often limit their contacts to their own networks and associations, especially when the group or community whom they belong to is well organised.

In its 2012 National Strategy for Roma Integration, the Federal government identified numerous obstacles that hinder the socio-cultural inclusion of Roma in Belgium:<sup>251</sup> (1) Roma are often unaware of existing services because they lack information and/or are excluded from the social networks that provide the necessary information; (2) Providing for a daily livelihood is a priority, culture and participation is secondary; (3) Given their history of expulsion, exclusion and discrimination, Roma tend to be distrustful towards governments; (4) The cultural services and support mechanisms that enable their full participation are lacking, as do the services that support their indigenous culture, leading Roma to fear and distrust public services, to feel intimidated, and to lack the interest in or experience with socio-cultural services and initiatives; (5) The Roma who do make use of the services face other barriers (language, culture, lack of knowledge and understanding of administration and procedures, different expectations) standing in the way of good cooperation.

#### **d) Awareness and use of complaints procedures;**

Roma self-organisations are often overburdened, undervalued, underfinanced and understaffed. There is little or no support from structural policies for their operation, regardless of how valuable their initiatives and activities may be.<sup>252</sup> Roma self-organisations often feel there is a lack of recognition of their work. These organisations usually have to count on the voluntary commitment of individuals. There is a need for structural funds for the continuation and expansion of the operations of Roma self-organisations.<sup>253</sup>

<sup>248</sup> Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie (2011), *Omgevingsanalyse 2010*. Een stakeholdersbevraging door het Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie vzw en de integratiecentra in Vlaanderen en Brussel, Brussel, p. 27, available at [http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/OMGEVINGSANALYSE\\_2010.pdf](http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/OMGEVINGSANALYSE_2010.pdf)

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> Federale Overheid (2012), *Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma*, Brussels, p. 11.

<sup>252</sup> Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie (2011), *Omgevingsanalyse 2010*. Een stakeholdersbevraging door het Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie vzw en de integratiecentra in Vlaanderen en Brussel, Brussel, p. 29, available at [http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/OMGEVINGSANALYSE\\_2010.pdf](http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/OMGEVINGSANALYSE_2010.pdf)

Overall Roma self-organisations need more support and in particular new organisations need guidance, financial support (fundraising, grant applications, rent or building maintenance) and help to find a suitable location.<sup>254</sup> Roma organisations often tend to expect too much from the municipalities, which ultimately leads to disappointment and incomprehension.<sup>255</sup>

The Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism is the national equality body, responsible for receiving complaints on discrimination and racism. In addition to this national mechanism, Flanders has thirteen Hotlines for Discrimination. The Flemish Government annually enters into a collaboration agreement with the Centre to support the Hotlines in their activities as well as in the organization of prevention and awareness raising campaigns. For the Walloon Region and the French Community, the Centre has entered into cooperation protocols, allowing the Centre to receive complaints within this Region and Community.<sup>256</sup>

The Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism is implementing a project (“ADAR”) to bring Roma organizations and Roma mediators together in order to provide explanations on the existing anti-discrimination legislation. Two training sessions already took place: one in Flanders, to the staff of Foyer and one in Brussels, to the staff of the Centre of travellers and Roma in Wallonia (“Le Centre de Mediation des Gens du Voyage et des Roms en Wallonie”). Through these training sessions, the Centre was able to reach thirty mediators dealing with Roma and could inform them about anti-discrimination laws and about the procedure to submit complaints to the Centre. The same training will be given to the members of the Council of Roma, Sinti and Travellers in Belgium and to the various social integration services that have frequent contacts with the Roma population. The aim of the project is to provide information about discrimination to Roma in order to increase the number of complaints of discrimination against Roma; this will allow the Centre to give better advice to policy makers. In terms of awareness-raising campaigns, the Centre has also published a brochure about the organization of the temporary stay of caravan dwellers.<sup>257</sup> On the basis of this brochure, the Centre was able to meet with local policy makers and to raise awareness of the issue.<sup>258</sup>

Annex 3 shows the number of complaints received by the Centre. The Centre began registering complaints lodged by Roma in 2009. For the 2009-2011 period, a total of 23 complaints were registered. Most complaints concerned “Hatred via the internet” (10). 4 dossiers were submitted concerning feelings of discrimination and racism in the written press. Racism by police officers or other people in authority account for 2 claims. During this 3 year period, only 1 complaint was made regarding access to the public domain, bullying by neighbours, registration in the city or town or statements on official documents. For 2012, 5 complaints were made until now: hatred via internet (2), written press (1), statements on official documents (1), and registration in city/town (1).

#### e) Experiences and perceptions of racial/ethnic discrimination.

When asked about the number of complaints received on discrimination as perceived by Roma, both the Centre and the local Flemish Hotlines acknowledged that they receive little or no

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en Racismebestrijding (2012), Discriminatie en Diversiteit. Jaarverslag 2011, Brussel, p. 159-160, available at [http://www.diversiteit.be/?action=publicatie\\_detail&id=147&thema=2&select\\_page=216](http://www.diversiteit.be/?action=publicatie_detail&id=147&thema=2&select_page=216)

<sup>257</sup> Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en Racismebestrijding (2011), Organisatie van het tijdelijke verblijf van woonwagenbewoners *Een praktische gids voor lokale overheden*, Brussel, 33 p. available at [http://www.diversiteit.be/diversiteit/files/File/brochures/woonwagenbewoners\\_web.pdf](http://www.diversiteit.be/diversiteit/files/File/brochures/woonwagenbewoners_web.pdf)

<sup>258</sup> Information obtained via “Centrum voor gelijkheid van kansen en voor racismebestrijding”.

complaints from Roma, as these complaints mechanisms are usually unknown to this group or the hurdles to contact these institutions are still too high (language, etc...). The Flemish Hotlines also recognized that their inability to act (judicially) to solve the problem is an additional barrier for people to contact them.<sup>259</sup>

Annex 3 shows the number of registered cases of discrimination against Roma at the equality body Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism (*Centrum voor gelijkheid van kansen en voor racismebestrijding*). The numbers concern the period of 2009-2012, as before 2009 no specific reporting was carried out. These numbers are not representative since Roma have difficult access to the Centre. The centre is now working on the aforementioned project (ADAR) to meet with all Belgian Roma and Traveller organizations with the aim of explaining anti-discrimination rules and regulations that apply to Roma. Through this, Roma might learn more about the role of the Centre in order to increase the number of reports/complaints made by the Centre and increase its representativeness.<sup>260</sup>

Discrimination of Roma is highly underreported. This is often due to daily experiences of discrimination and segregation in the home country, general inaction of authorities or national bodies for equality and against discrimination and an overall distrust towards governmental bodies. Additional reasons are: family solidarity, Roma focus on short-term benefits, survival strategy takes precedence, unfamiliarity with administrative formalities, distrust towards police and fear of more problems when filing a complaint. According to the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, Roma only file complaints in cases of serious mistreatment.<sup>261</sup>

The Institute for the equality of men and women (*Instituut voor de gelijkheid van mannen en vrouwen*) was also contacted for this study, but could not provide any data as it does not register complaints or conduct any research regarding Roma.

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<sup>259</sup> Information obtained via “Centrum voor gelijkheid van kansen en racismebestrijding” (CEOOR), “Gelijke Kansen Vlaanderen” (Equal Opportunities Flanders), “Meldpunten Discriminatie” (Hotlines Discrimination)

<sup>260</sup> information obtained via the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism

<sup>261</sup> information obtained via the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism

## Annexes

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## 2. Statistical tables

### Annex 2.1: Did your children go to primary education?

	Voyageur	Manoesj	Rom	Total
Yes	36	27	29	92
No	4	2	21	27
Total respons	40	29	50	119

(Source: HIVA (2010), Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.27.)

### Annex 2.2: Qualification

Qualification 20-59 j (HIVA 2009)	Voyageur	Manoesj	Rom	Total (n=230)
No qualification	32 %	57%	89%	44% (n=101)
Primary education	38%	27%	11%	33% (n=74)
Secondary education	13%	6%	0%	10% (n=22)
Higher secondary education	15%	10%	0	12% (n=27)
Higher education	1%			1% (n=3)

(Source: HIVA, Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, 2010, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.27.)

### Annex 2.3: Educational guidance of Central and Eastern European countries minors by the reception desk

Guidance to minors from Central and Eastern European countries	2009		2010		30/06/11	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	
EU-Countries	98	58%	133	51%	69	50%
Englargement countries	52	31%	117	44%	59	43%
Total of other EU countries	19	11%	13	5%	10	7%
Total Central and Eastern European countries countries	169	100%	263	100%	138	100%
All guidances	666		883		849	
Proportion of Central and Eastern European countries relative to all the countries	25,4%		29,8%		16,3%	

(Source: Flemish Government (2011), Actieplan MOE (Roma) migranten 2012, p. 19, available at [http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan\\_MOE.pdf](http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan_MOE.pdf).)

#### **Annex 2.4: school career**

	Voyageur	Manoesj	Rom	Total
Regular education - Gewoon onderwijs	73	22	34	129
Special education - Buitengewoon onderwijs	20	9	18	47
Total responses	93	31	52	176

(Source: HIVA, Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, 2010, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.28.)

#### **Annex 2.5: Evolution of the amount of Poles, Bulgarians and Romanians being self-employed**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Pols	5.819	7.283	7.780	7.714	7.914
Bulgarians	827	1.961	2.770	3.365	4.279
Romanians	2.363	4.726	6.183	7.337	9.321

(Source: Flemish Government (2011), Actieplan MOE (Roma) migranten 2012, p. 19, available at [http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan\\_MOE.pdf](http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan_MOE.pdf).)

#### **Annex 2.6: How would you describe your current state of activity?**

	Voyageur	Manoesj	Rom	Total
Full-time job as employer	19	4	0	23
Part-time job as employer	18	3	0	21
Full-time self-employed	13	1	2	16
Part-time self-employed	1	0	2	3
Sometimes self-employed	2	1	0	3
Unemployed with benefits	16	16	0	32
Unemployed, without benefits	3	3	1	7
Student, paid vocational training	0	0	1	1
Pension	5	1	1	6
Permanently incapacitated	31	2	0	33
Disabled	17	2	4	23
Houswife/man, without benefits	23	0	21	44
Work in company of wife or husband	3	0	0	3
Others	11	0	4	15
Total responses	162	33	35	230

(Source: HIVA, Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, 2010, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.25.)

#### **Annex 2.7: Income of last month**

	Voyageur	Manoesj	Rom	Total
Unemployment benefit	24	13	0	37
Pension	55	9	3	67
Benefit for sickness, invalidity or accident	63	7	2	72

"Leefloon" or other financial benefit form OCMW	8	4	6	18
Other	18	1	4	23
Total responses	190	36	43	269

(Source: HIVA, Kwantitatieve bevraging van de maatschappelijke en economische positie van woonwagenbewoners, 2010, Vlaams Strategisch Plan voor woonwagenbewoners, p.25.)

## **Annex 2.8: Overview public camping sites (13 March 2012)**

Existing public residencial caravan areas		
municipality		Number of sites
Aalst	Hofstade	13
Aalst	Bleekveld	15
Aarschot	Ou'rodenberg	11
Antwerpen	Deurne	24
Antwerpen	Wilrijk	14
As		6
Bilzen		2
Bilzen		6
Dendermonde		5
Diest		8
Genk	Waterschei	52
Gent		27
Grobbendonk		10
Ham	Kwaad-mechelen	8
Hasselt	Kuringen	26
Heist o/d Berg		10
Herentals	Heirenbroek	20
Herentals	Herenthout-sestwg.	17
Leuven		26
Maaseik	Wurfeld	26
Maasmechelen	Eisden	28
Mechelen		20
Mortsel		26
Oud-Turnhout		8
Puurs	Breendonk	8
Rotselaar	Werchter	7
St.-Katelijne-Waver		12
St.-Truiden		18
Wetteren		15

Existing public halting sites		
municipality		Number of sites
Antwerpen	Hoboken	18
Beersel	Huizingen	15
Brussel	Haren	25
Gent		25
Kortrijk		20

(Source: numbers provided by The Flemish Agency for Domestic Government (Vlaamse Overheid - Agentschap voor Binnenlands Bestuur))

### Annex 2.9: Caravan space in sites

Annex 204 Caravan space in sites

Name	Caravan space: authorized caravan sites and number of seats																			
Dimentions	Place			Flemish Region																
	Time			From 1989																
Source	Flemish Minority Centre / Department Domestic Policy, Integration and Cities																			
More info	http://aps.vlaanderen.be/sgml/largereeksen/1153.htm																			
Approved residential caravan sites and pitches																				
	01/08	01/07	01/06	01/05	01/04	01/03	01/02	01/01	01/00	01/99	01/98	01/97	01/96	01/95	01/94	01/93	01/92	01/91	01/90	01/89
Sites	31	29	29	29	28	28	28	28	27	27	27	27	23	23	23	23	18	18	18	18
Pitches	4 3 4	4 3 2	4 3 2	4 2 5	4 1 8	4 1 6	4 1 6	4 1 6	3 8 7	3 8 7	3 8 7	3 5 9	3 5 9	3 5 9	3 5 9	3 5 9	2 8 2	2 8 2	2 8 2	2 8 2
Seats																				
	2008			2007			2006			2005			2004			2003				
Number of seats	4			4			3			1			1			1				
Pitches	65			65			40			7			7			7				

(Source: numbers provided by the Research Department of the Flemish Government (Studiedienst Vlaamse Regering))

### Annex 2.10: Budget for camping cites

Jaar	Budget in euro	Budget spend in euro
2000	1.125.000	1.125.000
2001	1.024.000	1.024.000
2002	950.000	931.000
2003	964.000	761.500
2004	978.000	805.000
2005	994.000	993.000
2006	1.011.000	1.011.000
2007	4.273.000	4.106.182
2008	4.358.000	1.814.079
2009	168.000	91.281

(Source: Vlaams Parlement, schriftelijke vraag, nr. 253 door Veerle Heeren aan Geert Bourgois, Viceminister-President van de Vlaamse Regering, Vlaams minister van Bestuurszaken, Binnelands Bestuur, Inburgering, Toerisme en Vlaamse Rand, 10 maart 2010)

**Annex 2.11: Unemployment in % OCMW (Openbare Centra voor Maatschappelijk - Welzijn Public Centre for Social Welfare)-welfare recipients by nationality in 2010 in Antwerp**

Nationality	NWWZ	OCMW	Active age			Percentages	
			Population	nwwz	ocmw	Unemployment rate	Ocmw help
Total residents	32898	8.002	296.800	32481	7479	10,9%	2,5%
East Europe	1405	678	11032	1352	626	12,3%	5,7%
Poland	257	46	4178	252	44	6,0%	1,1%
Russia	276	137	1253	275	129	21,9%	10,3%
Bulgaria	78	17	1016	76	17	7,5%	1,7%
Jugoslavia	244	93	890	222	81	24,9%	9,1%
Romania	111	23	831	110	20	13,2%	2,4%
Serbia	80	93	459	69	89	15,0%	19,4%
Macedonia	108	63	386	104	62	26,9%	16,1%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	66	59	359	60	51	16,7%	14,2%
Ukraine	43	36	351	43	31	12,3%	8,8%
Albania	40	25	259	39	21	15,1%	8,1%
Kosovo	0	29	185	0	26	0,0%	14,1%
Belarus	39	14	162	39	14	24,1%	8,6%
Hungary	17	4	154	17	3	11,0%	1,9%
Slovakia	4	20	141	4	20	2,8%	14,2%
Croatia	16	6	102	16	6	15,7%	5,9%
Czech republic	0	2	88	0	2	0,0%	2,3%
Lithuania	9	1	57	9	1	15,8%	1,8%
Latvia	4	1	56	4	1	7,1%	1,8%
Moldavia	8	5	53	8	4	15,1%	7,5%
Slovenia	4	0	21	4	0	19,0%	0,0%
Estonia	1	1	19	1	1	5,3%	5,3%
Montenegro	0	1	11	0	1	0,0%	9,1%

Bron: VDAB 2010 - OCMW 2010 - Stad Antwerpen, Districts- en loketwerking 2010  
Bewerkingen door Stad Antwerpen, Studiedienst Stadsobservatie

(Source: Actieplan MOE (Roma) migranten 2012 – deelFlemish Government (2011), Actieplan MOE (Roma) migranten 2012, p. 41 available at [http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan\\_MOE.pdf](http://www.inburgering.be/inburgering/sites/www.inburgering.be.inburgering/files/actieplan_MOE.pdf).)

### 3. Table of complaints<sup>262</sup>

FENOMENON	2009-2011	2012
Hatred via internet - <i>Haat via internet</i>	10 dossiers	2 dossiers
Written press - <i>Geschreven pers</i>	4 dossiers	1 dossier
Police - <i>Politie</i>	2 dossiers	
Language of people in authority - <i>Uitlatingen gezagsdragers</i>	2 dossiers	
Statements official documents - <i>Vermelding officieel document</i>	1 dossier	1 dossier
Registration in city/town - <i>Inschrijving in gemeente</i>	1 dossier	1 dossier
Access horeca - <i>Toegang horeca</i>	1 dossier	
Bullying by neighbours - <i>Pestgedrag van bureen</i>	1 dossier	
Public domain - <i>Openbaar domein</i>	1 dossier	
<b>TOTAAL</b>	<b>23 dossiers</b>	<b>5 dossiers</b>

(Source: information obtained via the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism)

<sup>262</sup> Information obtained via Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism

#### 4. Table of sources (reports and studies on Roma)

Thematic area	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Bedelarij onderzocht</b> Clé, A. (2007), <i>Bedelarij onderzocht</i> , Brussel, 13 p.
	<b>Source and type</b>	Social report; academic research (doctoral research)
	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	✓
	<i>Health</i>	✓
	<i>Poverty</i>	✓
	<i>Migration</i>	✓
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	230 structural interviews with beggars, 38 interviews with people working with beggars on a daily basis and about 20 interviews with key figures of police, social services and justice department
	<b>Location</b>	Brussels Capital Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma beggars
	<b>Key findings</b>	Extreme poverty common among Roma beggars; asylum request almost always rejected; request of stay for humanitarian reason gives no right to social aid or employment nor protection against expulsion; victims of slum landlords; ignorant about existence of welfare and health care services; great dependence on social network (restricted to the Roma community); realisation of importance education but limited school enrolment (language barriers, expenses of school activities); bad relations with police (incl. notifications of abuse of power)
	<b>Methodology</b>	Quantitative surveys and narrative interviews
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

Thematic area	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>De Roma van Brussel</b> , Geurts, K. (2004 – actualised in 2006), <i>De Roma van Brussel</i> , Brussel: Foyer, 298 p.
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report
	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	✓
	<i>Health</i>	✓
	<i>Poverty</i>	✓
	<i>Migration</i>	✓
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	7 Romanian families, 2 former Yugoslavian families and 1 Bulgarian family
	<b>Location</b>	Brussels Capital Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma migrants
	<b>Key findings</b>	Culture-specific elements influence integration process; Illegal and insecure residency situation results in futureless poverty; cultural values precede societal values; strong survival logics shows through on all fronts (independence important); self-reliant or reliant on the group for employment/income; typical attitude (conflicted) towards education and health care (short vs long term benefits/concerns);



		housing is a priority yet quality is secondary; precarious residency situation; recognition of cultural specificity is a precondition for efficient assistance and purposeful integration policy
	<b>Methodology</b>	Fieldwork (semi-structural interviews) checked against existing literature and theoretical analyses
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

<b>Thematic area</b>	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>“Met één achterste kan je niet op twee paarden zitten” – Roma-leerlingen op de schoolbanken</b> , Geurts, K. (2010), “Met één achterste kan je niet op twee paarden zitten” Roma-leerlingen op de schoolbanken, in <i>Handboek Leerlingenbegeleiding</i> , Mechelen: Plantyn, 330 p., available at <a href="http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119_Met_een_achterste_kan_je_niet_op_twee_paarden_zitten.pdf">http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/100119_Met_een_achterste_kan_je_niet_op_twee_paarden_zitten.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report
	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not indicated
	<b>Location</b>	Flanders and Brussels Capital Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma students
	<b>Key findings</b>	Social, cultural and economic discrepancies between Roma and non-Roma in society can be overcome through inter-cultural communication and mediation to build up trust and lead to efficient cooperation; attitude and communication skills of schools and teachers crucial; adapted educational methods desirable to correspond with Roma culture; long term initiatives needed to break vicious circle of exclusion and poverty
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research, practical experiences
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

<b>Thematic area</b>	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Motivatieplan scholarisatie Roma</b> , Werkgroep Roma en Onderwijs (2008), Motivatieplan scholarisatie Roma, Brussel, available at <a href="http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan_Scholarisatie_080916.pdf">http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Motivatieplan_Scholarisatie_080916.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report
	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not indicated / not applicable
	<b>Location</b>	Flanders and Brussels Capital Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma students
	<b>Key findings</b>	Need for a specific working method towards and support of Roma in

		addition to the general policy which mainly benefits target groups needing it the least; limited structural impact of individual and isolated initiatives; necessity of global method of working; utmost importance of education for future integration and societal participation of Roma in addition to strong family ties
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research; practical experiences concerned partners
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

<b>Thematic area</b>	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Scholarisatie van Roma in Brussel. Analyse en aanbevelingen</b> , Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), <i>Scholarisatie van Roma in Brussel. Analyse en aanbevelingen</i> , Brussel: Foyer, available at <a href="http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst_Onderwijs_061116.pdf">http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Visietekst_Onderwijs_061116.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report
	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not applicable / not indicated
	<b>Location</b>	Brussels Capital Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma students
	<b>Key findings</b>	Importance of education for integration of Roma children; high number of irregular school attendance and absenteeism of Roma children in primary school; low pass rate for Roma students to secondary school; need for integrated approach to the multi-problematic context of Roma; coordinated, consistent and waterproof methods including structural agreements
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research, literature and field work experience
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Recherche relative au développement d'une réponse sociale à la question de la mendicité des enfants en Belgique</b> , Joppart, C. (2003), <i>Recherche relative au développement d'une réponse sociale à la question de la mendicité des enfants en Belgique</i> , Brussel104 p., available at <a href="http://www.lacode.be/IMG/pdf/Rech_mendicite.pdf">http://www.lacode.be/IMG/pdf/Rech_mendicite.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Social report / non-governmental report
<b>Thematic area</b>	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	✓
	<i>Migration</i>	✓
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not applicable / not indicated

	<b>Location</b>	Walloon region and Brussels Capital Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma beggars
	<b>Key findings</b>	Non-accompanied minors begging in the streets are from central- en eastern-Europa, mainly Romania and former Yugoslavia, the majority being Roma; they are forced to beg to fulfil their needs because of the lack of social aid for rejected asylum seekers and proper framework for minors; need to structurally tackle the social causes leading minors to beg rather than the phenomenon of begging itself; informing and sensitise social services about existence, causes and needs of minor beggars is key; competent translators key for link between minor beggars and existing social aid services
	<b>Methodology</b>	Quantitative research, narrative interviews, literature, discussion forum
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

Thematic area	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Recherche-pilote sur la sensibilisation des autorités publiques à la Communauté Rom et sur l'intégration scolaire des enfants Roms</b> , Carpentier, S. (2004), <i>Recherche-pilote sure la sensibilisation des autorités publiques à la Communauté Rom et sur l'intégration scolaire des enfants Roms</i> , Brussel, 215 p., available at <a href="http://www.lacode.be/IMG/pdf/Rech_Communaute_Rom.pdf">http://www.lacode.be/IMG/pdf/Rech_Communaute_Rom.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Social report
	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	✓
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not applicable / not indicated
	<b>Location</b>	French speaking Community and Brussels Capital Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma students
	<b>Key findings</b>	Roma often victims of racism and discrimination by police in country of origin, hence distrustful towards police in general; important for Belgian police to consider distrust and fear towards police in encounters with Roma; respectful attitude is key; repressive policies have limited impact; need structural solutions and political clarity
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research, literature
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

Thematic area	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Recherche d'une réponse sociale à la mendicité des mineurs</b> , Van Houcke, F. (2005), <i>Recherche d'une réponse sociale à la mendicité des mineurs</i> , Brussel, 23 p., available at <a href="http://www.lacode.be/IMG/pdf/Article_JDJ.pdf">http://www.lacode.be/IMG/pdf/Article_JDJ.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Social report
	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	✓

	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not applicable / not indicated
	<b>Location</b>	French speaking Community and Brussels Capital Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma beggars
	<b>Key findings</b>	Vagrancy results from exclusion and poverty; minor beggars are Roma from Central- and Eastern-Europe; many prejudices against Roma community; better comprehension would allow development of better approaches to problems; repressive policies towards vagrancy reinforces their mobility, resulting in lack of access to structural long term help, social stability and educational ties; does not tackle causes of vagrancy; education is key to integration; need for social response to vagrancy of minors and coordinated actions on federal, Community, Regional and communal level
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research, Literature
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Nota Situatie Woonwagenterreinen in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest</b> , Regionaal Integratiecentrum Foyer (2006), <i>Nota Situatie Woonwagenterreinen in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest</i> , Brussel, 42 p., available at <a href="http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website_Link_Nota_Situatie_WWT_in_het_BHG_0612.pdf">http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Website_Link_Nota_Situatie_WWT_in_het_BHG_0612.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report
<b>Thematic area</b>	<i>Education</i>	
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not applicable / not indicated
	<b>Location</b>	Brussels Capital Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma migrants
	<b>Key findings</b>	Precarious situation on caravan terrains in Brussels Capital Region; difficulty to get building permits for caravans and high cost of limited available ground results in illegal stays or toleration by cities with constant fear of expulsion; poor – if any – infrastructure and sanitary fittings; lack of caravan standing places is a national problem; neighbourhoods are against caravan terrains; lack of coherent and coordinated policy
	<b>Methodology</b>	Quantitative research; qualitative research; literature
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Only regional (Brussels)

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Bouwstenen voor een effectief minderhedenbeleid. Ons verleden, onze toekomst</b> , Minderhedenforum (2010), <i>Bouwstenen voor een effectief minderhedenbeleid. Ons verleden, onze toekomst</i> , Brussel, 86 p., available at
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		<a href="http://www.minderhedenforum.be/documents/bouwstenenII_proef03.pdf">http://www.minderhedenforum.be/documents/bouwstenenII_proef03.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report
<b>Thematic area</b>	<i>Education</i>	
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not applicable / not indicated
	<b>Location</b>	Flemish speaking Community
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma migrants
	<b>Key findings</b>	Acute shortage of legal standing places for residential caravans (about 700 places short in October 2010); government fails to reach self-imposed objectives; NGO's are monitoring the issue; division of competences between regional, provincial and local governments complicates/slows progress; there are often protests from neighbours against instalment caravan terrain; Minderhedenforum is a forum established to promote the self-organisation of Travellers, creation of network of engagement towards policy, provision of training; need for more enforceable Flemish policy concerning Travellers' caravan places; housing security will enhance their education employment, health;
	<b>Methodology</b>	Quantitative research, qualitative research
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Only regional (Flanders)

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>La Mobilité, un mode de vie. Guide Juridique</b> , Centre de Médiation des Gens du Voyage et des Roms en Wallonie (2003), <i>La Mobilité, un mode de vie. Guide Juridique</i> , Namur, 59 p., available at <a href="http://www.cmgv.be/images/stories/pdf/guide_juridique/guide%20juridique.juin2004pdf.pdf">http://www.cmgv.be/images/stories/pdf/guide_juridique/guide%20juridique.juin2004pdf.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Juridical report
<b>Thematic area</b>	<i>Education</i>	
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	✓
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	✓
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not applicable / not indicated
	<b>Location</b>	Walloon Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma Travellers
	<b>Key findings</b>	There are many prejudices against Travellers leading to complete denial of their rights; problematic interpretation of caravan as housing in Belgian legislation; lack of caravan places; need cooperation between villages, cities and regions for long term solutions;
	<b>Methodology</b>	Juridical research
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

Thematic area	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Caravane et logement: entre précarité juridique et bien-être social</b> , Centre de Médiation des Gens du Voyage et des Roms en Wallonie (2010), <i>Caravane et logement: entre précarité juridique et bien-être social</i> , Namur, 19 p., available at <a href="http://www.cmgv.be/images/stories/pdf/DOSSIER_CARAVANE_ET_LOGEMENT.pdf">http://www.cmgv.be/images/stories/pdf/DOSSIER_CARAVANE_ET_LOGEMENT.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Social report
	<i>Education</i>	
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not applicable / not indicated
	<b>Location</b>	Walloon Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma Travellers
	<b>Key findings</b>	Urgent lack of terrains for Travellers; lack of adequate provisions on available terrains; caravans must be interpreted as housing under Belgian legislation; need for objective criteria to get construction permit for caravans;
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Only regional (Wallonia)

Thematic area	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Guide pratique pour la gestion du séjour temporaire des Gens du Voyage en Wallonie</b> , Direction Interdépartementale de la Cohésion sociale du Service public de Wallonie (2009), <i>Guide pratique pour la gestion du séjour temporaire des Gens du Voyage en Wallonie</i> , Namur, 28 p., available at <a href="http://www.cmgv.be/images/stories/pdf/GUIDEGensduvoyage.pdf">http://www.cmgv.be/images/stories/pdf/GUIDEGensduvoyage.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Social report; political report; governmental report
	<i>Education</i>	
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not applicable / not indicated
	<b>Location</b>	Walloon Region and Brussels Capital Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma Travellers
	<b>Key findings</b>	Shortage of designated spaces for Roma + problems with provision of water, electricity, social contacts; diversity among municipalities concerning implication with Roma, from punctual tolerance to systematic organisation of residence throughout the year; successful local initiatives; need for procedures adapted to life style and needs of the Roma
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research and narrative interviews
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	(Wallonia and Brussels)

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Omgevingsanalyse 2010. Een stakeholdersbevraging door het Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie vzw en de integratiecentra in Vlaanderen en Brussel</b> , Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie (2011), <i>Omgevingsanalyse 2010. Een stakeholdersbevraging door het</i>
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		<i>Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie</i> vzw en de integratiecentra in Vlaanderen en Brussel, Brussel, 83 p., available at <a href="http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/OMGEVINGSANALYSE_2010.pdf">http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedFiles/VMC/OMGEVINGSANALYSE_2010.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report; social report
Thematic area	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	✓
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	✓
	<b>Sample</b>	Four groups of primary external stakeholders at provincial and local level ((1) provincial boards, city councils, social welfare services and integration services, (2) reception offices, social interpreter and translation services, (3) people with a migration background, migration self-organisations, volunteer organisations working with these groups, (4) other organisations from different sectors as well as expert groups at Flemish level
	<b>Location</b>	Flemish Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma representatives
	<b>Key findings</b>	Especially the strongest minority groups establish self-organisations; groups needing it the most – e.g. Roma and Travellers – do not form so many self-organisations; many cases of truancy + irregular school attendance, esp. among Roma toddlers and girls (ethnic-cultural and social-economical causes); Roma focus on own community/identity instead of integration and participation in society; lack of individual assistance; good connection and dialogue with key figures and associations is key; downside: low cohesion among Roma + poor organisation making contact difficult; integration sector signal function for government
	<b>Methodology</b>	Stakeholder survey
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium
	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Scholing van Romakinderen in België. Ouders aan het woord</b> , Koning Boudewijnstichting (2009), <i>Scholing van Romakinderen in België. Ouders aan het woord</i> , Brussel, 91 p., available at <a href="http://www.kbs-frb.be/uploadedFiles/KBS-FRB/05_Pictures_documents_and_external_sites/09_Publications/PUB2009_1855_ScholarisatieRomakinderen.pdf">http://www.kbs-frb.be/uploadedFiles/KBS-FRB/05_Pictures_documents_and_external_sites/09_Publications/PUB2009_1855_ScholarisatieRomakinderen.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Social report
Thematic area	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	

<b>Sample</b>	45 persons whose ethnic origin is representative for the geographical distribution of Roma in Central- and Eastern-Europa: 18 Romanians (4 males, 14 females), 4 Serbs (all females), 4 Bulgarians (1 male, 3 females), 3 Slovaks (0 males, 3 females), 6 Kosovarians (4 males, 2 females), 1 Croatian (female), 1 Czech couple (females), 2 EU interns (females), 1 teachers (male) and 4 mediators (females)
<b>Location</b>	6 localities in Belgium (Brussels, Liège, Charleroi, Antwerp, Ghent, Sint-Niklaas)
<b>Target population</b>	Roma students
<b>Key findings</b>	No unequivocal Roma identity; no homogeneous Roma community; need for separation of culture and identity; most Roma stop education after primary school (combination of different cultures, historical rejection, difficult migration circumstances); Roma parents lack experience with school visits; language barrier hinders good understanding with school personnel; material implications of children in school; itinerant lifestyle negatively affects the children's school track record; good practice of adult education; good practice of Roma mediators as privileged informants and permanent commentators
<b>Methodology</b>	Quantitative surveys; narrative interviews; qualitative evaluations
<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

<b>Thematic area</b>	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>De Roma-problematiek te Gent. Naar een integrale en duurzame oplossing</b> , Stamper, M. (2011), <i>De Roma-problematiek te Gent. Naar een integrale en duurzame oplossing</i> , Gent, 60 p., available at <a href="http://doks.katho.be/do/files/FiSe8a8182f02fe3b103012ffdb0a5bc00b3/Matthias_Stamper_BaMV_Bachelorproef.pdf;jsessionid=8EE16D3977FEB1585D96359F5C85BA39?recordId=SKAT8a8182f02fe3b103012ffdb0a5bc00b2">http://doks.katho.be/do/files/FiSe8a8182f02fe3b103012ffdb0a5bc00b3/Matthias_Stamper_BaMV_Bachelorproef.pdf;jsessionid=8EE16D3977FEB1585D96359F5C85BA39?recordId=SKAT8a8182f02fe3b103012ffdb0a5bc00b2</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Academic research
	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not indicated
	<b>Location</b>	Ghent
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma migrants
	<b>Key findings</b>	Problematic housing situation (homeless, victims of slum landlords, squat buildings); problematic school attendance among Roma children; integration issues (cultural differences, history of discrimination); Roma presence is a heavy load on quality of neighbourhood (noise nuisance, waste management, begging); no quantitative information on criminality by Roma; police, judicial, governmental, integration sector all attempting to deal with situation and problems; image formation of Roma problems too narrow thus limiting impact initiatives; need for more consultation between partners involved
	<b>Methodology</b>	Literature; qualitative interviews
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium



Thematic area	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Omgevingsanalyse Meerjarenplan 2009-2014</b> , Masquillier, D. (2009), <i>Omgevingsanalyse Meerjarenplan 2009-2014</i> , Leuven, 58 p., available at <a href="http://www.risovlb.be/documenten/MJP%202009-2015%20-%20omgevingsanalyse%20(pdf)%20(2).pdf">http://www.risovlb.be/documenten/MJP%202009-2015%20-%20omgevingsanalyse%20(pdf)%20(2).pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report; social report
	<i>Education</i>	
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not applicable / not indicated
	<b>Location</b>	Flemish-Brabant
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma Travellers
	<b>Key findings</b>	Roma situation is unclear, no estimations of Travellers' numbers given that Roma live in legal and illegal caravan terrains + more and more in private housing sector; legally insecure housing situation (policy of tolerance); existing caravan terrains insufficient; urgent need for in depth change policy
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research; literature
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

Thematic area	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Vlaams actieplan MOE(Roma)-migranten 2012</b> , Vlaamse Overheid (2011), <i>Vlaams actieplan MOE(Roma)-migranten 2012</i> , 56 p., available at <a href="http://binnenland.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/actieplan_MOE.pdf">http://binnenland.vlaanderen.be/sites/default/files/actieplan_MOE.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Governmental report
	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	✓
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	✓
	<i>Migration</i>	✓
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not indicated / not applicable
	<b>Location</b>	Flemish region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma migrants
	<b>Key findings</b>	Good practices exist at local level, but too fragmented and too little known; there is a Roma presence in nearly all Flemish cities and villages; Roma problems in different areas (i.e. housing, employment, health, education.), need for multi-disciplinary horizontal approach at Flemish and local level; Contact Points for Middle- and Eastern-European (Roma) migration across Flanders; support for specific bottlenecks; there are close links between Roma policy and local poverty policy (more broadly local social policy); change in enrolments of civic integration contracts; steep increase of self-employment of Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian Eastern- and Middle European (Roma) migrants; focus on achieving proportional participation and responsible citizenship for Roma migrants; need for an exhaustive, coordinated and inclusive Roma policy and reinforcing social cohesion

	<b>Methodology</b>	Quantitative and qualitative research
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

<b>Thematic area</b>	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Kosovaarse Roma in het Waasland. 10 jaar beleid met Roma in Temse en Sint-Niklaas, Decoodt, F. en De Reu, S. (red.) (2009), Kosovaarse Roma in het Waasland. 10 jaar beleid met Roma in Temse en Sint-Niklaas, 114 p., available at <a href="http://www.odice.be/userfiles/file/ODiCe/Lokaal%20beleid/Roma/Kosovaarse%20Roma%20in%20het%20Waasland%20-%20onderzoeksrapport.pdf">http://www.odice.be/userfiles/file/ODiCe/Lokaal%20beleid/Roma/Kosovaarse%20Roma%20in%20het%20Waasland%20-%20onderzoeksrapport.pdf</a></b>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report
	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	✓
	<i>Health</i>	✓
	<i>Poverty</i>	✓
	<i>Migration</i>	✓
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	✓
	<b>Sample</b>	45 key-figures from services, provision and policy (face to face interviews); 68 actors from education, health care, housing and employment, sport, tourism and library services (incl. directors, consultants, employers, secretaries, advisors, coordinators, presidents) (internet survey); 21 Roma from both cities – no further characteristics provided (face-to-face interviews). Very detailed list with organisations and names of participants of the first two groups on p. 105-108 of the report)
	<b>Location</b>	Temse and Sint-Niklaas (East-Flanders Province - Flemish Region)
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma representatives
	<b>Key findings</b>	Need for integral approach + firm cooperation across policy borders; issues are all interrelated; priority of legal residency status over other policy themes; housing and good health care first step to integration; different approaches to health care (teen pregnancies, unhealthy lifestyle); need more attention for promoting Roma on labour market; need realistic approach to Roma education; neighbourhood mediator could solve community problems; culturally different approach to role of women
	<b>Methodology</b>	Quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Only local (Temse and Sint-Niklaas)

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Roma kinderen op de schoolbanken, Geurts, K., Naegels, N. en Van den Daele, N. (2010), 'Roma kinderen op de schoolbanken', in <i>Welwijs</i>, jaargang 21 nummer 1, 2010, Brussel, available at <a href="http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedfiles/VMC/Thema/Minderheden/Roma/Welwijs-Jg.21-nr.1-Roma%20kinderen.pdf">http://www.kruispuntmi.be/uploadedfiles/VMC/Thema/Minderheden/Roma/Welwijs-Jg.21-nr.1-Roma%20kinderen.pdf</a></b>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental organisation; social report
<b>T</b>	<i>Education</i>	✓

	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not applicable / not indicated
	<b>Location</b>	Flanders and Brussels Capital Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma students
	<b>Key findings</b>	Roma are a heterogeneous group: many families value the importance of education as a crucial factor for improved integration; still many Roma families face issues relating to education: uncertain residency status, precarious living situation; individual history, culture specific elements, uncertainty concerning compulsory school attendance; poor school results, Roma get behind on the school curriculum, , extreme truancy, school absence is higher among Roma children than among other groups; usefulness of school mediators proven; need to focus on relation of trust between parents and school personnel; need for more Roma school mediators + structural embedding
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

Thematic area	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>De aanpak van criminaliteit gepleegd door zigeunergroepen. Een casestudy van de politie en gerechtelijke aanpak in het gerechtelijk arrondissement Gent<sup>263</sup>, Dewulf, A. (2010), <i>De aanpak van criminaliteit gepleegd door zigeunergroepen. Een casestudy van de politie en gerechtelijke aanpak in het gerechtelijk arrondissement Gent</i>, 105 p., available at <a href="http://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/001/458/096/RUG01-001458096_2011_0001_AC.pdf">http://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/001/458/096/RUG01-001458096_2011_0001_AC.pdf</a></b>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Academic research
	<i>Education</i>	
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	✓
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	✓
	<b>Sample</b>	Not indicated / not applicable
	<b>Location</b>	Judicial district of Ghent
	<b>Target population</b>	Manoesjen, Tinkers, Romanian, former Yugoslavian, Polish
	<b>Key findings</b>	Heterogeneous group of Roma: Manoesjen, Tinkers, Romanian, former Yugoslavian and Polish. No general or detailed image forming of these groups and their activities. Burglary and pickpocketing typical for Romanian and former Yugoslavian Roma; use of contrast strategies (esp. use of minors, use of aliases, lack of reliable translators) hinders police operations; lack of places in closed institutions for minors who are caught
	<b>Methodology</b>	Quantitative, qualitative research and narrative interviews
	<b>Representativeness,</b>	only for this group

<sup>263</sup> This thesis research was highly criticized and the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism considered lodging a complaint for racism against this master student.

	transferability of findings	
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Thematic area	Title, author, source	Jaarboek 2010 Migratie en Integratie in Limburg, Daemen, B., Janssens, D., Kuijpers, A. en Quintens, M. (2011), Jaarboek 2010 Migratie en Integratie in Limburg, Provinciaal Integratiecentrum Limburg: Hasselt, 60 p., available at <a href="http://www.limburg.be/webfiles/leven/welzijn/integratiecentrum/integratiecentrum/documenten/publicaties/jaarboek2010.pdf">http://www.limburg.be/webfiles/leven/welzijn/integratiecentrum/integratiecentrum/documenten/publicaties/jaarboek2010.pdf</a>
	Source and type	Governmental report
	Education	
	Housing	✓
	Employment	
	Health	
	Poverty	
	Migration	
	Active citizenship	
	Sample	Not applicable / not indicated
	Location	Province Limburg
	Target population	Roma Travellers
	Key findings	Shortage of recognised stand spots for caravans is the biggest issue for Voyageurs; some forced to live in a house or stay on illegal sites; Municipalities not living up to promises to provide more caravan standing places and sites; better co-habiting between Voyageurs and citizens, especially young people who are less prejudiced; social-economical improvements for the situation of Voyageurs; sickness and invalidity slightly decreased but remains very high; only limited amount of Voyageurs receive social welfare; education remains an issue (2006 numbers: 1 out of 5 Voyageurs children from Limburg in special education compared to 1 out of 17 children in whole of Flanders); itinerant lifestyle Roma limits accessibility to education and welfare work; lack of real self-organisation of Roma
	Methodology	Qualitative research
	Representativeness, transferability of findings	Generally for Roma in Belgium

Thematic area	Title, author, source	Jaarverslag 2010 Migratie, Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en Racismebestrijding (2011), Jaarverslag 2010 Migratie, 235 p., available at <a href="http://www.diversiteit.be/?action=publicatie_detail&amp;id=131&amp;thema=2&amp;select_page=216">http://www.diversiteit.be/?action=publicatie_detail&amp;id=131&amp;thema=2&amp;select_page=216</a>
	Source and type	Governmental report, social report
	Education	✓
	Housing	✓
	Employment	✓
	Health	
	Poverty	
	Migration	✓
	Active citizenship	
	Sample	Not indicated / not applicable
	Location	Ghent
	Target population	Roma migrants
	Key findings	Roma face image problem; important to realise this, even though

		situation less severe as in country of origin; Belgium only country considering asylum requests from EU citizens; focus on informal economy and irregular work for income; shortage of reception services and possibilities, social housing and affordable rental houses, discrimination on basis of origin by lessors; squat buildings often only option; irregular school presence of Roma children
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Federale Overheid (2012), Nationale strategie voor de integratie van de Roma, Brussels, 40 p.</b>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Governmental report
<b>Thematic area</b>	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	✓
	<i>Health</i>	✓
	<i>Poverty</i>	✓
	<i>Migration</i>	✓
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	✓
	<b>Sample</b>	Not indicated / not applicable
	<b>Location</b>	Belgium
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma migrants
	<b>Key findings</b>	Need explicit, coordinated and integrated measures both horizontally (different policy domains) and vertically (different competence levels), and at the local, provincial, communal, national and European level; difficult access to education for Roma, decent housing, health care and labour market; truancy is an important issue; poor passing rates of Roma children to secondary school; little employment through standard employment contracts – most are self-employed; facilities for caravan dwellers and passage plots for itinerant groups; slum lords issue; multi-problematic and structural situation of Roma families complicates social work; Roma suffer from negative stereotypes leading to social exclusion and discrimination; integration capacity narrowly connected to residency conditions; good practices in Ghent, Brussels and Namur;
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research (literature)
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Werknote: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen, Vlaams Minderhedencentrum (2010), <i>Werknota: Roma in Vlaanderen, knelpunten en aanbevelingen</i>, Brussel, 24 p., available at <a href="http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf">http://www.foyer.be/IMG/pdf/Nota_Roma-actieplan_100211.pdf</a></b>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report; social report
<b>Thematic area</b>	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	

	<i>Health</i>	✓
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not applicable / not indicated
	<b>Location</b>	Flemish Region and Brussels Capital Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma migrants
	<b>Key findings</b>	Need to strengthen the integral provision of services concerning Roma; need focus on education by eliminating thresholds; Roma need to get adapted opportunities on the labour market; health issues following cultural elements and life in poverty; housing issues (indecent quality, slum landlords); teen pregnancies and traditional underage weddings influence the position Roma women (incl. school dropouts)
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

Thematic area	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Romakinderen op weg naar school</b> , Cobbaut, N. and Demets, J. (2011), <i>Romakinderen op weg naar Brussel</i> , Brussel, 60 p.
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report; social report
	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	10 projects (by primary schools in Flanders and Brussels, NGOs, and public services in and across Belgium)
	<b>Location</b>	Belgium
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma students
	<b>Key findings</b>	Education key to break vicious circle of social exclusion of Roma; trust relations between Roma families and school must be strengthened to enhance their participation and involvement in school life (importance of school mediators and bridge figures from the Roma community); language often barrier; need strengthening of knowledge and cultural competences for school personnel; integration of Roma children in school crucial to keep them there;
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

Thematic area	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Roms et Gens du Voyage. Recommandations generals</b> , Centre de Médiation des Gens du Voyage et des Roms en Wallonie (2010), <i>Roms et Gens du Voyage. Recommandations generals</i> , 16 p.
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report; Social and political report
	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	✓
	<i>Health</i>	✓

	Poverty	
	Migration	
	Active citizenship	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not indicated / not applicable
	<b>Location</b>	Belgium
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma Travellers
	<b>Key findings</b>	Caravans not legally recognised as housing so Travellers assimilated in fact with homeless people, having administrative, social, employment, health and educational implications; shortage of caravan plots; local authorities need regulatory framework for organizing temporary stay for Travellers; must focus on mediation services to facilitate Roma access to housing and employment; must invest in education and raising awareness of local authorities and social services on the precarious situation of many Roma families; awareness raising concerning health services (focus on prevention); financial barriers to education must be eliminated; need for project of mobile education for Travellers; mediation key to improve communication and information between school/social services and Roma families
	<b>Methodology</b>	Not indicated
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Bemiddelaars en brugfiguren voor Roma – Essentiële schakels voor een betere integratie. Basisnota</b> , Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie (2011), <i>Bemiddelaars en brugfiguren voor Roma – Essentiële schakels voor een betere integratie. Basisnota</i> , Brussels, 7 p.
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report; policy note
<b>Thematic area</b>	Education	
	Housing	
	Employment	
	Health	
	Poverty	
	Migration	✓
	Active citizenship	✓
	<b>Sample</b>	Not indicated / not applicable
	<b>Location</b>	Flanders and Brussels Capital Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma mediators
	<b>Key findings</b>	Importance of Roma mediators and bridge figures for better integration of Roma; shortage and lack of permanency mediators/bridge figure problematic; importance of participation of Roma and framework for new mediators/bridge figures
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research; interviews with experts from the integration sector
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Garder la distance ou saisir les chances – Roms et gens du voyage en Europe occidentale</b> , Machiels, T. (2002), <i>Garder la distance ou saisir les chances – Roms et gens du Voyage en Europe occidentale</i> , 43 p.
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report

<b>Thematic area</b>	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	✓
	<i>Health</i>	✓
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	✓
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not indicated / not applicable
	<b>Location</b>	Belgium (and Europe)
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma migrants
	<b>Key findings</b>	Shortage of caravan spaces leads to Roma living in houses; low school attendance among Roma children; preference of self-employment among Roma; lower life expectancy than average (20 years lower for men, 14 years lower for women); ignorance and lack of interest policy makers regarding problems, needs, culture and lifestyle Roma
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

<b>Thematic area</b>	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Roma in het basisonderwijs</b> , Naegels, N. (2005), Roma in het basisonderwijs, 85 p.
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report; social report
	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	✓
	<i>Health</i>	✓
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not indicated / not applicable
	<b>Location</b>	Flanders and Brussels Capital Region
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma students
	<b>Key findings</b>	Policy makers lack interest for Roma issues; basic services (incl. full-fledged residency status) for this group is a precondition to enhance school participation; education is key to break the vicious circle of marginalisation; bottlenecks relate to attitudes and lifestyle of Roma as well as to education system tuned to Belgian middle-class – less easily accessible for other groups; communication also problematic; financial and material thresholds
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

<b>Thematic area</b>	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Roma in Vlaanderen. Minderheid onder de minderheden</b> , Bruggen, W. (2003), <i>Roma in Vlaanderen. Minderheid onder de minderheden?</i> , Vlaams Minderhedencentrum, 26 p.
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental organisation; social report
	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	✓
	<i>Health</i>	✓



	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	✓
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not indicated
	<b>Location</b>	Flanders Region and Brussels Capital (city)
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma migrants
	<b>Key findings</b>	Precarious residency status (or lack thereof) main problem to which other bottle necks are connected; lack of translators at Foreign office, prejudices and misconceptions; big differences between the education and health care system of Belgium and Eastern-Europe, so Roma don't know what the services are when they get here, how they work and what they're entitled to. (socio-cultural, psycho-pedagogical, continuity issues); precarious housing situation and lack of legal employment are consequences of precarious residency status
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research; narrative interviews
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

Thematic area	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Roma, een vernieuwde en integrale aanpak</b> , OCMW Heusden-Zolder (2012), <i>Roma, een vernieuwde en integrale aanpak</i> , 66 p.
	<b>Source and type</b>	Governmental report (local social governmental)
	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	✓
	<i>Health</i>	✓
	<i>Poverty</i>	✓
	<i>Migration</i>	✓
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not indicated
	<b>Location</b>	Heusden-Zolder
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma migrants
	<b>Key findings</b>	Roma are a relatively new migrant group –this leads to suspicion and anxious approximation by institutions, organisations and society, hence slow progress; many differences among Roma (geographical, arrival period) and they need attention for that; average figures of arrival/departure of Roma between March 2011/March 2012; start bridge figure project; need cooperation between organisations and services to identify and remove gaps in service provision and assistance; different policy levels must cooperate and take stances on policy to conduct towards Roma
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research; study visits, narrative interviews
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Only local (Heusden-Zolder)

Thematic area	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Samenleven met Roma: fictie of realiteit?</b> , Hemelsoet, E. (2011), 'Samenleven met Roma: fictie of realiteit?', in D. Dierckx, J. Coene en A. Van haerlem (ed.) (2011), <i>Armoede en sociale uitsluiting. Jaarboek 2011</i> , Acco: Leuven, 549 p.
	<b>Source and type</b>	Social report
	<i>Education</i>	
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	✓

	Migration	✓
	Active citizenship	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not applicable
	<b>Location</b>	Not indicated
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma migrants
	<b>Key findings</b>	Need for nuances in Roma discourse; social issues are not neutral but socially constructed; Roma poverty is not exclusively a Roma issue but largely similar to other migrants' situation; need for reconsideration and re-evaluation of Roma discourse; need for change in image forming of Roma – policy partly to blame
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Bij de Roma op de sofa. De brugfiguur als hefboom voor maatschappelijke integratie</b> , Hemelsoet, E. (2011), <i>Bij de Roma op de sofa: de brugfiguur als hefboom voor maatschappelijke integratie</i> , Welwijs, 2(22), p. 10-13, available at <a href="http://users.ugent.be/~ehemelso/Bij%20de%20Roma%20op%20de%20sofa.pdf">http://users.ugent.be/~ehemelso/Bij%20de%20Roma%20op%20de%20sofa.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Social report
<b>Thematic area</b>	Education	✓
	Housing	
	Employment	
	Health	
	Poverty	
	Migration	✓
	Active citizenship	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not indicated / not applicable
	<b>Location</b>	Ghent
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma mediators
	<b>Key findings</b>	Good practice of bridge figure project in primary education: lever to bridge gap between home culture and school culture for Roma; catalyst for social integration; success of bottom-up approach embedded in social context
	<b>Methodology</b>	Not indicated
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>De Romakwestie: een mensenrechtelijk perspectief</b> , Morel, M. (2010), <i>De Romakwestie: een mensenrechtelijk perspectief</i> , Oikos, 55(4), p. 25-37, available at <a href="http://www.oikos.be/tijdschrift/.../725-55-03-morel-de-romakwestie.html">www.oikos.be/tijdschrift/.../725-55-03-morel-de-romakwestie.html</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Social report
<b>Thematic area</b>	Education	
	Housing	✓
	Employment	
	Health	
	Poverty	
	Migration	✓
	Active citizenship	

	<b>Sample</b>	Not indicated / not applicable
	<b>Location</b>	Europe and Belgium
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma migration
	<b>Key findings</b>	Continuing discrimination and segregation Roma across Europe + forced evictions; difficult migration status + limited access labour and housing; need for alternative housing; Belgium final responsibility when violation housing rights Belgian territory; much improved at EU level since 2008 – much remains to be done
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

<b>Thematic area</b>	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Oost-Vlaamse woonwagenbewoners tellen (we) mee</b> , Couckuyt, H. en Joos, L. (2011), <i>Oost-Vlaamse Woonwagenbewoners tellen (we) mee</i> , 40 p., available at <a href="http://www.odice.be/userfiles/file/ODiCe/Beleidsadvies/publicatie%20oost-vlaamse%20wwb'ers.pdf">http://www.odice.be/userfiles/file/ODiCe/Beleidsadvies/publicatie%20oost-vlaamse%20wwb'ers.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report; social report
	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	✓
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Quantitative research: about 500 families of caravan dwellers; Qualitative research: 183 families of caravan dwellers about their profile and housing situation – 292 adults (140 men, 152 women) and 109 children = 401 caravan dwellers
	<b>Location</b>	East-Flanders
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma Travellers (Manoesj and Roms)
	<b>Key findings</b>	Study about Travellers, Manoesj and Roms, not Roma (sensu stricto); living in a caravan recognised as fully-fledged dwelling form in Flanders; youth caravan dwellers show a remarkably higher attendance rate of technical/part-time education than Flemish average; low employment rate compared to Flemish average; preference for jobs with high independence; high energy- and water costs because poor isolation in caravans; need for uniformity in rental prices of caravan places; Travellers interested in self-organisation with other Travellers (exclusively)
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative and quantitative research
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Only regional (Flanders)

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>RAXEN Thematic Study – Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers – Belgium</b> , Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en Racismebestrijding (2009), <i>RAXEN Thematic Study – Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers – Belgium</i> , RAXEN, 69 p., available at <a href="http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Belgium_en.pdf">http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/RAXEN-Roma%20Housing-Belgium_en.pdf</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental report

<b>Thematic area</b>	<i>Education</i>	
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	10 Authorities and relevant civil society organisations both at federal and regional level
	<b>Location</b>	Belgium
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma Travellers
	<b>Key findings</b>	Lack of official data/statistics on Roma in Belgium; Roma face similar difficulties as other persons without valid residence permit; regional housing codes sometimes do not consider Travellers; strict access conditions to social housing can be discriminatory; permanent residence permit requirement can be discriminatory; lack of and wide variety of quality of encampment/halting sites;
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research, quantitative research, narrative interviews
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	<b>Belgium – Promoting the Social Inclusion of Roma. A Study of National Policies, Peña-Casas, R., Ghailani D. and Nicaise, I. (2011), Belgium – Promoting the Social Inclusion of Roma. A Study of National Policies, HIVA and K.U.Leuven, 37 p.</b>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Social report
<b>Thematic area</b>	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	✓
	<i>Health</i>	✓
	<i>Poverty</i>	✓
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	Not indicated / not applicable
	<b>Location</b>	Belgium
	<b>Target population</b>	Roma migrants
	<b>Key findings</b>	Lack of ethnic statistics + little debate on the issue; patterns of poverty and social exclusion of Roma and Travellers to a certain extent is similar to other population, but Roma also are affected by strong racial discrimination; key importance of mediation structure to bridge large cultural gaps between Roma groups and society/public services
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative research
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	Generally for Roma in Belgium

## 5. Roma networks

Type of Associations, Organisations, NGOs	Name of Organisation	Email/Website	Roma involvement	Main area of expertise
Non-profit organisation	Foyer	<a href="mailto:Koen.Geurts@foyer.be">Koen.Geurts@foyer.be</a> , <a href="http://www.foyer.be">http://www.foyer.be</a>	Foyer is a Belgian non-profit association with two key goals, namely (1) enhancing equal opportunities for ethnic-cultural minorities and (2) enhancing living together in diversity. 5 Roma mediators are involved in the organisation	Education Sport Migration Employment Social cohesion Health Interculturality Sensitisation Assistance (social, legal, medical, mediation)
Non-profit organisation	Vlaamse Vereniging voor Voyageurs, Roms, Roma en Manoesjen – Vroem VZW	<a href="mailto:vroem@vroemvzw.be">vroem@vroemvzw.be</a> (Toon Machiels), <a href="http://www.vroemvzw.be">http://www.vroemvzw.be</a>	Vroem vzw (Flemish Association for Travellers, Roms, Roma and Manouches) enhances the dialogue between the community and Travellers, Roms, Roma and Manoesjen. Volunteers – both Roma and non-Roma – support self-organisations of these minority groups, coordinate collaboration between governmental institutions and organisations and provides them with advice.	Housing, incl. durable stands for caravans Education Integration Assistance
Non-governmental Organisation	Unie van de Roma Gemeenschap België / Union of the Roma Community Belgium	<a href="mailto:ngo.unieromabelgie@hotmail.com">ngo.unieromabelgie@hotmail.com</a> (president: Sait Sehersijan) No website, only a facebook page: <a href="http://nl-nl.facebook.com/pages/UNION-OF-THE-ROMA-COMMUNITY-BELGIUM/150394895026866?sk=info">http://nl-nl.facebook.com/pages/UNION-OF-THE-ROMA-COMMUNITY-BELGIUM/150394895026866?sk=info</a>	The Union of the Roma Community Belgium is a Belgian NGO working to enhance social integration and fight discrimination of Roma in Belgium.	Education Discrimination Social integration Housing Youth – sport and recreation
Non-profit organisation	Minderhedenforum	<a href="mailto:info@minderhedenforum.be">info@minderhedenforum.be</a> (general), <a href="mailto:kim@minderhedenforum.be">kim@minderhedenforum.be</a> (Roma), <a href="http://www.minderhedenforum.be">http://www.minderhedenforum.be</a>	The Minderhedenforum (Minorities Forum) works to enhance the participation of Roma and Travellers in society and societal debate by forming/educating trailblazers who than can act as spokesperson of their family, trailer park, self-organisation and so on. A staff worker of Roma origin has been	Education Employment Media Discrimination Diversity

			appointed for a one year project to stimulate participation of Roma to the 2012 municipality elections.	
<b>Non-profit organisation</b>	Vluchtelingen Ondersteuning Sint-Niklaas (VLOS)	<a href="mailto:info@vlos.be">info@vlos.be</a> , <a href="http://www.vlos.be">http://www.vlos.be</a>	VLOS (Refugees Support Sint-Niklaas) assists asylum seekers and refugees (small % Roma from Kosovo are expelled) in their search for reception services, material help and administrative assistance during their regularisation process	Integration Reception service Material assistance Administrative assistance
<b>Non-profit organisation</b>	Bureau Européen des Gens du Voyage (BEGV)	<a href="mailto:info@begv.eu">info@begv.eu</a> , <a href="http://www.begv.eu/">http://www.begv.eu/</a>	BEGV (European Bureau for Travellers) is a European non-profit organisation working to enhance the integration and participation of Travellers within the EU by distributing information, creating a European communication network and the organisation of conferences, debates, expositions and so on.	Awareness raising Education Culture Representation European communication network
<b>Non-profit organisation</b>	Centre de Mediation des Gens du Voyage et des Roms en Wallonie (CMGV)	<a href="mailto:gensduvoyage@skynet.be">gensduvoyage@skynet.be</a> (general), <a href="mailto:aahkim@cmgv.be">aahkim@cmgv.be</a> (Roma), <a href="http://www.cmgv.be/">http://www.cmgv.be/</a>	The Centre de Mediation des Gens du Voyage et des Roms en Wallonie (Centre for Mediation of Travellers and Roma in Wallonia) is the link between Travellers and Roma and the government and its institutions in order to improve living conditions and to harmonise society.	Mediation Integration Caravan parks and regular presence on land Equality of opportunities Awareness raising
<b>Non-profit organisation</b>	Opré Roma VZW – Liga voor Roma Rechten / Ligue des Droits des Roms / Roma Rights League	<a href="mailto:opreromavzw@yahoo.com">opreromavzw@yahoo.com</a> (general), <a href="mailto:Balogh.opreroma.martin@gmail.com">Balogh.opreroma.martin@gmail.com</a> No website	Opré Roma is a socio-cultural self-organisation of and for Roma in Ghent that advises municipality services on Roma issues with the aim to obtain structural improvements	Education Well-being Housing Culture
<b>Non-profit organisation</b>	Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie (before 1 January 2011: Vlaams Minderhedencentrum)	No general email address (possibility to send emails via webpage), <a href="mailto:dirk.beersmans@kruispuntmi.be">dirk.beersmans@kruispuntmi.be</a> (Roma), <a href="http://www.kruispuntmi.be">http://www.kruispuntmi.be</a>	Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie (Crosspoint Migration-Integration) is an independent non-profit organisation that develops and exchanges information on migration, integration and ethnic-cultural diversity. Concerning Roma, the	Housing Education Employment Integration Migration Assistance (to minorities and government)

			focus of work lies on caravan camp issues in Belgium.	
<b>NGO</b>	Communauté Roms de Belgique (Roma Belgian Community)	<a href="mailto:crbasbl@gmail.com">crbasbl@gmail.com</a> (general) <a href="mailto:um@live.be">um@live.be</a> (president: Ursu Marius) no website but Facebook page <a href="http://www.facebook.com/pages/Communauté-Roms-de-Belgique/127086674033342?sk=info">http://www.facebook.com/pages/Communauté-Roms-de-Belgique/127086674033342?sk=info</a>	The Roma Belgian Community is a partnership of Roma who promote the values, democratic practices, fundamental liberties, social, political, cultural and economic rights of the Roma minority in the national and international context.	Social Cultural Media Non-discrimination Fight against racism Integration Education
<b>Non-profit organisation</b>	Minderhedencentrum de8	<a href="mailto:info@de8.be">info@de8.be</a> (general), <a href="mailto:natasja.naegels@de8.be">natasja.naegels@de8.be</a> (education and Roma), <a href="http://www.de8.be/content.php">http://www.de8.be/content.php</a>	De8 (Minority Centre the Eight) informs schools and educational partners about Roma; provides trainings based on self developed schooling information and an extensive syllabus; develops methods to create broader access to education by Roma pupils; formulates policy proposals; writes out Roma certificates providing school with additional means to welcome and guide Roma pupils. Two Roma mediators (both of Roma origin) mediate exclusively in case of education/school problems for Roma (e.g. truancy)	Education
<b>Non-profit organisation</b>	Vereniging van de Roma in België 'Gelijke Kansen voor Integratie'	<a href="mailto:ros_kupate@abv.bg">ros_kupate@abv.bg</a> (Zlatko Mladenov) No website	The Vereniging van de Roma (Association of the Roma) in Belgium is a self-organisation of Roma from different ethnicities and sub-groups that works to support the integration process of Roma in Belgium. Priority is given to the problems of Roma children as well as violence against unmarried women	Integration Education Employment Health Housing Women and children Charity and Assistance
<b>Local government</b> (public centre for social welfare)	OCMW Heusden-Zolder	<a href="mailto:info@ocmwheusdenzolder.be">info@ocmwheusdenzolder.be</a> (general) <a href="mailto:Petra.Pantic@ocmwheusdenzolder.be">Petra.Pantic@ocmwheusdenzolder.be</a> (Roma) <a href="http://www.ocmwheusdenzolder.be/">http://www.ocmwheusdenzolder.be/</a>	Since March 2011 a Roma project of staff member was appointed within the OCMW to conduct research on Roma within the Municipality (numbers, needs, services)	Bridge figure between Roma and the local government

<b>Non-profit Organisation</b>	ASBL Diogenes VZW	<a href="mailto:asbldiogenesvzw@hotmail.com">asbldiogenesvzw@hotmail.com</a> <a href="http://diogenes.wikeo.be/">http://diogenes.wikeo.be/</a>	By means of street corner work, Diogenes offers the homeless in the Brussels Capital Region a listening ear, support and access to social services. The target group also includes Roma, mainly female beggars (often with children) and disabled people. Since August 2003, one street worker is of Roma origin, enhancing the street work with Roma	Integration Assistance Guidance Support Information sharing Translations/Interpreters Social work
<b>Non-profit Organisation</b>	ODiCe – Oost-Vlaams Diversiteitscentrum VZW	<a href="mailto:Odice@odice.be">Odice@odice.be</a> (general) <a href="mailto:Stijn.dereu@odice.be">Stijn.dereu@odice.be</a> (Roma) <a href="http://www.odice.be">www.odice.be</a>	ODiCe (Oost-Vlaams Diversiteitscentrum – East-Flemish Diversity Centre) is a autonomous provincial integration centre aiming to enhance diversity and full participation ethnic-cultural minorities in Eastern-Flanders (except for Ghent)	Non-discrimination Fight against racism Full participation
<b>Non-profit Organisation</b>	Ons Leven VZW	N/A	Ons Leven (Our Life) is a self-organisation of and for Travellers with provincial sections in Limburg, Antwerp, Flemish-Brabant and East-Flanders	Housing Caravan plots
<b>Non-profit Organisation</b>	Picardie Laïque	<a href="mailto:Barbara.mourin@laicite.net">Barbara.mourin@laicite.net</a> <a href="http://www.picardie-laique.be">www.picardie-laique.be</a>	Picardie Laïque works toward a society without discrimination and with full equality by eradicating sexist and racial stereotypes and promoting human rights and ideas of equality and democracy by organizing meetings and preventative actions	Bridge figure between Travellers and the government Caravan plots Housing Equality Solidarity Democracy Non-discrimination Prevention
<b>Non-Profit Organisation</b>	Prisma VZW	<a href="mailto:info@prismavzw.be">info@prismavzw.be</a> (general) <a href="mailto:marlies.stubbe@prismavzw.be">marlies.stubbe@prismavzw.be</a> (Roma) <a href="http://www.prismavzw.be">http://www.prismavzw.be</a>	Prisma VZW is active as a professional expertise- and support centre in ethnic-cultural diversity. The VZW works with diversity consultants and intercultural regional staff members	Diversity Equal and full participation Support (local governments, organisations and companies) Education
<b>Non-governmental Organisation</b>	Romano Dzuvdipe	<a href="mailto:urydbelgium_1@msn.com">urydbelgium_1@msn.com</a> (Imer Kajtazi) No website	Romano Dzuvdipe is a strong self-organisation from and for Roma (mainly from Kosovo) in Sint-Niklaas working to integrate Roma in Belgian society by	Integration Culture Education Assistance



			providing information, advice, services, help, education to both Roma and service providers	
<b>Non-profit Organisation</b>	Roma Cultureel Centrum Sint-Niklaas	<a href="mailto:urydbelgium.1@msn.com">urydbelgium.1@msn.com</a> (Imer Kajtazi) No website	The Roma Cultureel Centrum (Roma Cultural Centre) is a self-organisation of Roma involved with both religious (the organisation has a mosque) and cultural activities	Religion / religious education (Quran classes) Culture