

Human rights, needs and discrimination - The situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine in Poland

**Report on research and
intervention activities**

Authors

Elżbieta Mirga-Wójtowicz

Joanna Talewicz

Małgorzata Kołaczek

Published by

Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma
Central Council of German Sinti and Roma
Bremeneckgasse 2 | 69117 Heidelberg | Deutschland
zentralrat@sintiundroma.de
www.sintiundroma.de

Cooperation with

Fundacja Jaw Dikh
Fundacja w Stronę Dialogu (Foundation Towards Dialogue)

© **Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma /
Central Council of German Sinti and Roma**
September 2022

This publication was supported by the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media (Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien, BKM). The views of all authors in this publication are their own and cannot be considered to reflect the views of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, or the Federal Commissioner for Culture and Media (Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien) of the German government. They do not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION	5
FINDINGS AND INTERVENTION ACTIVITIES	7
Roma in Ukraine in the context of respect for human rights	7
Dynamics of refugee movements from Ukraine.....	7
Characteristics of Roma refugees from Ukraine	9
Main problems and needs of Roma refugees from Ukraine	10
Discrimination and antigypsyism	13
Available assistance – National governmental, local governmental, and non- governmental	16
Mobilisation of Roma organisations in Poland	18
ACTIONS TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION OF ROMA FROM UKRAINE	19
Polish authorities, non-governmental institutions, international outreach	19
International humanitarian aid	22
Media, public discourse and Roma refugees from Ukraine	23
RECOMMENDATIONS	25
At the level of the national Government/ministerial institutions:	25
Recommendation on specific measures to deal with the current situation and enhance successful advocacy.....	26
ANNEX: MEDIA MONITORING	27
Polish media	27
International media	28
AUTHORS	30

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this report is to highlight the situation in Poland of Roma refugees fleeing war-torn Ukraine. From the beginning of March 2022 to the end of May 2022, the authors undertook research, intervention activities, and intensive monitoring of the mass media and social media and have formulated the following conclusions:

Roma from Ukraine constitute a particular group of refugees due to their experience of discrimination in Ukraine and subsequently in Poland. This discrimination stems from a number of deeper cultural-historical issues not covered in this report, but which are resulting in problems that non-Roma refugees from Ukraine do not encounter in most cases. These include both verbal and non-verbal acts of discrimination and/or social and cultural exclusion from resources available to refugees: housing, jobs, information, transport, material resources, and psychological, legal and educational support.

Faced with antigypsyism and discriminatory behaviour both in Ukraine and Poland while in a state of trauma as refugees from war, Roma refugees tend to gather in larger groups of several dozen people (most often women, children and elderly people) and to remain together to increase their sense of security, which significantly hinders the voluntary activities of Polish society towards them.

Most interventions to help Roma refugees are therefore being undertaken by Roma activists and organisations. Polish NGOs treat the Roma as equals, but the specificity of their problems sometimes exceeds the capacity of the volunteers, who are already in a difficult situation themselves. As a result, Roma activists in Poland, as well as the organisations they work for, are automatically treated as the people who are supposed to solve the given problem, to support the Roma refugees on their own and to take sole responsibility for their wellbeing. A similar attitude towards Roma refugees is also displayed by local authorities. This puts organisations and Roma activists under enormous personal, financial, societal and cultural pressure. There needs to be a clear mechanism of financial assistance provision for NGOs working with Roma refugees as well as individual support, e.g., psychological or legal assistance for activists (see the recommendations below).

There is practically no system of assistance, whether from the central government, local administrations or non-governmental organisations, for the Roma refugees from Ukraine. As a result of intensive efforts by Roma activists in this field, some signs of change can be seen, but concrete solutions or strategies are still lacking.

We did not encounter any services being denied explicitly to Roma, as the official position of those offering services is to be 'colour-blind', but we argue that this implicitly has the effect of denying the existence of institutional antigypsyism and discrimination against Roma in Poland, which just makes matters worse. However, we did encounter several cases of groups of Romani people who had no stamps in their passports being refused entry to refugee reception centres in Warsaw that are managed by the Masovian Voivodship. The volunteers who provide support for groups of refugees were told by the reception centre's personnel that a Roma group had stolen something previously and that was why other Roma could not be welcomed. The ombudsman's office had to intervene. This shows that in some cases, any excuse that seems suitable has been used to refuse Roma refugees equal treatment.

The report also presents the intensive, multifaceted activities of Roma activists in Poland and abroad aimed at raising public awareness about the situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine in Poland and targeted at various social actors (authorities at different levels, NGOs, media).

INTRODUCTION

The war in Ukraine has triggered a refugee crisis unprecedented in Europe since the Second World War. Nearly 7 million Ukrainian citizens¹ have crossed the country's borders in the last three months, and although there are signs of a return movement, it cannot be said that the war is over. In the flood of information noise about this crisis, it escapes the public's notice that Ukraine is an ethnically and culturally diverse country, that not all of its citizens are ethnic Ukrainians. Among them are the Roma living in Ukraine.

This report was commissioned by the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma to analyse the situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine in Poland. The report summarizes data collected during field research at reception points for refugees, meetings with Roma from Ukraine, and the authors' involvement in humanitarian aid activities. The aim of the report is to highlight the most pressing problems faced by the Roma of Ukraine, with particular emphasis on systemic antigypsyism and the resulting discriminatory practices. It is an interventionist, up-to-date report on the reality unfolding before our eyes and is not necessarily exhaustive. We believe, however, that as a result of this intensive period of data collection over the past three months we have been able to gather sufficiently rich material to also make the necessary recommendations to NGOs and public institutions at various levels, both local and national.

Methodology

This report is the result of activists collaborating on helping Roma refugees. In order to identify the problem that is underway, the authors put together a significant database of information on various aspects of the situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine. The authors drew on their knowledge and experience of helping Roma refugees in different situations and contexts. The report also takes into account the voices and experiences of people helping Roma from different places in Poland where such refugees arrive.

Above all, as direct participants in humanitarian aid campaigns, we have held and/or witnessed conversations with the very people concerned – Roma refugees from Ukraine who came to Poland in search of shelter. The ethnographic data includes our observations, these informal conversations, and above all, our extensive years of experience in both research and activism on Roma issues. Part of the ethnographic data comes from Elżbieta Mirga-Wójtowicz's participation in two intervention and research projects for the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERAC)² and a pilot cooperation programme with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Both projects started in March and April 2022 and are ongoing. Joanna Talewicz and Małgorzata Kołaczek used data collected by

¹ [Ukraine | ReliefWeb](#)

² Elżbieta Mirga-Wójtowicz is part of the project implementation team for the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERAC) Roma for Roma project, which aims to document the accounts of Roma refugees from Ukraine and the work of Roma organisations and activists responding to the humanitarian crisis. In order to record and document the situation of Roma fleeing Ukraine, as well as Roma-led activities to help refugees, ERAC has set up documentation teams in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. These teams form a digital archive that documents Roma historical memory of the war, focusing on stories of survival, resistance, solidarity and humanity, as well as cases of mistreatment and discrimination. The project aims to provide reliable information and first-hand accounts of the Roma refugee experience, with a particular focus on transnational Roma civic cooperation. More about the project: <https://eriac.org/roma-for-roma-documenting-the-oral-history-of-roma-refugees-from-ukraine/>

the informal group Poland-Roma-Ukraine,³ which is associated with the Foundation towards Dialogue, which was formed in response to the refugee crisis.

In addition, other data sources were used when preparing the study. These consist of our own sources, data directly generated during expert interviews with activists of Roma origin, conversations with non-Roma aid coordinators and volunteers, and data extant elsewhere – such as information posted to the social media groups which have become important communication channels, as well as the rich media content taking Roma activist voices into account (a detailed list of them is available in the section "Media and public discourse"). In order to describe humanitarian aid structures and the aid system in Poland, the publicly available official government websites, websites of international organisations and institutions, as well as articles in the press and a few academic articles were used.

³ The Foundation towards Dialogue (active since 2012): In the first days of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, Joanna Talewicz, Agnieszka Caban, Małgorzata Kołaczek and the activist Paulina Piórkowska initiated the creation of an informal support group for Roma refugees from Ukraine, called Poland-Roma-Ukraine (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1610884865911857>). Since its inception, the support group has provided immediate, interventionist support to Roma refugees from Ukraine, mainly in Warsaw where they have arrived in the largest numbers, but also in other cities where a network of contacts and mutual support was created together with other Roma activists. The group helps and acts by securing temporary accommodation, helping with administrative procedures, buying medicines and food, organising transport locally and abroad (mainly to Germany and Sweden where, together with Roma organisations from these countries, we have organised comprehensive support for Roma groups from Ukraine), preparing information leaflets about the possibilities for assistance and activities of the support group in Ukrainian, Polish, Russian, English and German with phone numbers of group members and the address of the support group's platform on Facebook, and creating a volunteer intervention group in Warsaw.

A second informal support group for Roma refugees from Ukraine, operating along similar lines to the one described above, is formed by the Harangos Roma Educational Association, Sinti Art and the Jaw Dikh Foundation: Help Roma from Ukraine *Допомога для ромів з України* (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/789426448695472>)

FINDINGS AND INTERVENTION ACTIVITIES

Roma in Ukraine in the context of respect for human rights

There is no reliable, comprehensive data on the exact number, needs and living conditions of Roma in Ukraine. It is estimated that there were between 200,000 and 400,000 Roma living in Ukraine before the war, dispersed throughout the country and encompassing a range of dialects and cultural identities. However, regardless of this diversity, the Roma as a whole were considered the minority group in the country most vulnerable to social exclusion and racism. The largest Roma communities were and are located in the Transcarpathian, Odessa, Donetsk and Kharkiv Regions.⁴

Antigypsyism, racism and discrimination against Roma is and has been illustrated by the limited representation of Roma in public life in Ukraine and the increasing intensity of hate speech and violence used against Roma by far-right groups. A series of arson attacks directed against Roma settlements in 2018 reflected the increasingly visible presence of right-wing extremist groups in Ukraine. Beginning in April 2018, five attacks against Roma in Ukraine were recorded, targeting women and children in different regions of the country (the Kyiv Region, the Kharkiv Region, and the Ternopil and Lviv areas). Extreme nationalist organisations vandalised encampments, destroyed property, attacked families and chased them away. In 2018, on the night of 23-24 June, a violent attack took place on a Roma encampment located on the outskirts of Lviv in which a 23-year-old Roma man was killed and four people were injured, including a 10-year-old boy and a woman. Just nine days later, on 2 July 2018, a Roma woman was murdered in the Transcarpathian Region. This was also reported by the main European media. It is important to keep these dramatic events in mind when analysing the situation of Roma in the country today and, above all, the relations between non-Roma and Roma refugees from Ukraine in Poland.⁵

Dynamics of refugee movements from Ukraine

The information presented below comes from two reception points for refugees, one in Korczów Młyny and one in Przemyśl. The main border crossing points through which Roma refugees enter Poland are at Korczów and Medyka, although they certainly use other crossing points to a lesser extent. We have also met Roma fleeing from eastern Ukraine who crossed the Ukrainian-Russian border and then entered Poland via Estonia. Usually these people do not have the passport stamps and documents required in Poland to prove their citizenship or residency of Ukraine in order to qualify for support.

Most Roma refugees cross the border by public transport (train or bus) although there are also cases of families crossing the border on foot. They usually stay for a few days at the refugee reception points before traveling further into Poland or possibly further west.

It is extremely difficult to estimate the number of Roma from Ukraine who are seeking refuge in Poland from the war. For the purposes of our project with the IOM, we kept a

⁴ Halyna Bocheva, 'Roma in Ukraine - A Time for Action: Priorities and Pathways for an Effective Integration Policy', Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE), May 2019: https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/MRG_Rep_Ukraine_EN_Apr19.pdf

⁵ Elżbieta Mirga-Wójtowicz and Kamila Fiałkowska, 'Be careful out there, in that Gypsy district' - anti-gypsyism in a war situation, May 2022: https://pl.boell.org/pl/2022/05/16/uwazajcie-tam-w-tej-cyganskiej-dzielnicy-antycyganizm-w-warunkach-wojny?fbclid=IwAR0A55PmTsNLjjZ7Wb-rOd67J5bHuH0yu1XF-QvnLtWNqXlmg3YNCvaL_mw

rough record of the number of Roma people whom we met and tried to help in various ways.

According to our estimates, the number of Roma from Ukraine who have crossed the Polish border is in the tens of thousands, while the European Commission's estimates from April show that at least 100,000 Roma have fled Ukraine.⁶ It should be noted, however, that these numbers are extremely fluid and subject to considerable fluctuation, most likely similar to the dynamics of refugee flows from Ukraine in general. The data on Roma that is unofficially available to the authorities and NGOs is estimated and is not precise, as the collection of sensitive data is complicated and Polish law does not establish options for collecting ethnic data. Since the beginning of the war, Border Guard officers have cleared 3.9 million⁷ people at border crossings from Ukraine to Poland, but now there is also movement in the other direction and people are clearly returning to Ukraine. We know from Roma organisations that these movements are also of a multiple mobility nature - for example, Roma refugees who first arrived in Poland in March, who after some time returned to Ukraine, but returned in May to Poland again.

According to our information, the Roma refugees entering Poland come mainly from eastern Ukraine, from the Kharkiv, Donetsk, Odessa and Zhytomyr Regions. This is quite an important piece of information because it indicates that Roma from the region with the largest number of Roma in Ukraine, Transcarpathia, go mainly to Hungary, Slovakia or Romania when they decide to leave Ukraine. According to our research, the majority of Roma in Ukraine are Lovars, but there are also other groups such as Kalderash, Servitka Roma, Madziarska Roma, Kishinevska Roma and Ruska Roma. Most spoke different dialects of the Romani language (dominated by the Lowara dialect), as well as Ukrainian, Hungarian and Russian. The groups of Roma from the east often just spoke Russian.

Most of the Roma refugees from Ukraine whom we encountered have identification documents, either ordinary passports or biometric passports, and some also hold Russian passports.⁸ From our informal conversations with the Roma refugees, it appears that the Polish border guards did not have any problems with letting them through at the border and assisted them with producing the necessary documentation. If there were gaps in their identity documents, they were filled in, and we have not encountered reports of major difficulties in this regard. In Czechia and Germany, it turned out that some⁹ Roma from Transcarpathia have dual citizenship (UA + HU)¹⁰. Institutions are not giving such dual nationals temporary protection status, and they do not receive any support as refugees in those countries. As opposed to the situation in Czechia, the issue of people holding dual

⁶ European Commission statement on International Roma Day (accessed 31.05.2022): https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_22_2326

⁷ <https://polskieradio24.pl/5/1222/artykul/2975515.prawie-4-mln-uchodzcow-przekroczylo-granice-polski-nowe-dane-strazy-granicznej>

⁸ The situation in Poland is estimated on the basis of information obtained from assistants and volunteers working with Roma refugees; problems with documents are beginning to appear as of this writing, but they are still isolated situations. On the European level, international and national Roma and non-Roma NGOs (ERRC, the International Charitable Organization Roma Women's Fund "Chirikli", the Statelessness Network) as well as the UN are speaking of as many as 20 % of Roma refugees without identification documents.

⁹ In the Czechia, allegedly 3 % of 5,000 Roma vetted for dual citizenship: 12.6.2022 <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-police-tell-public-broadcaster-that-of-more-than-5-000-romani-refugees-from-ukraine-who-have-been-vetted-just-150#.YqWmQ1mCv0Q.twitter>

¹⁰ See 17.4.2022, "In Czech Republic, the Hungarian passports held by some Romani refugees from Ukraine have not proved to be an advantage": <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/in-czech-republic-the-hungarian-passports-held-by-some-romani-refugees-from-ukraine-have-not-proved-to-be-an-advantage>

citizenship (and thus being excluded from international protection as refugees) did not appear to be significant in Poland.

The Roma refugees currently residing in Poland are under the care of various assistance structures organised by the authorities, either central or local, or by Roma NGOs. Some of them have since returned to Ukraine for good, while others went back there for a brief stay before re-entering Poland. A significant minority decide to go west, mainly to Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands or France. The reasons for Roma refugees' reluctance to go west include their fear and anxiety about the uncertainty of the situation there, as many of them are going abroad for the first time in their lives. In Poland, they feel close to their home country and to their loved ones who have stayed in Ukraine and who often are in the military - their brothers, husbands and fathers. The linguistic and cultural similarities between Poland and Ukraine also play an important role in the decision to remain.

Characteristics of Roma refugees from Ukraine

A distinguishing feature of the Roma refugees from Ukraine in their border-crossing practices is that they move in large family groups of a dozen or more persons or even sometimes several dozen people. These are usually extended multi-generational families with many children who organise their evacuation from Ukraine together or who join together at successive stages of the journey and do not want to separate. Women and children predominate, but there are also men who have been released from service in the Ukrainian Army for various reasons (men living with disabilities, men who are chronically ill, the elderly, and fathers of three or more children). This creates particular challenges for reception facilities in terms of their transport and accommodation and above all in terms of their relations with other (non-Roma) Ukrainian refugees and local volunteers. We need to emphasize here that the strategy of gathering in large groups, migrant collectivism of Roma¹¹, is mainly a defense mechanism in response to antigypsyism, one that ensures group safety, and is not a culturally-determined feature as it is perceived sometimes by the non-Roma world. Roma refugees' sense of insecurity and of danger from the outside world results in their seeking safety in numbers. This is a very common psychological and sociological mechanism that occurs universally at times of outside threat to a group, especially to a minority/marginalized group.

Consequently, Roma refugees have been either unwilling or unable to leave the refugee reception centres for long periods of time – they either have nowhere else to go because of the big number of people in their family, or they are still waiting for relatives to join them. In the course of our research-intervention activities, we received regular calls from volunteers working at the reception points with requests to persuade the Roma families to leave, as those locations are not prepared to hold people for more than two or three days, especially not large groups of several dozen people usually with young children or elderly people requiring medical care. Against this background, misunderstandings and quarrels between Roma refugees and non-Roma Ukrainians occur at these points, and as a consequence, volunteers together with local authorities make quite controversial decisions and initiate improvised, poorly-planned activities.

This problem is an outgrowth of the general difficulties faced by these reception facilities for refugees. Lack of information from the authorities, organisational chaos, language and cultural barriers, and above all the high levels of stress among all refugees lead to crisis situations. However, there is no doubt that due to the antigypsyism coming both from the

¹¹ Fiałkowska K., Garapich.M. P., Mirga-Wójtowicz E., (2018), Migration Paths of Polish Roma "Between Tradition and Change – Migration Paths of Polish Roma", Centre of Migration Research, Warszawa.

Polish and the Ukrainian sides, Roma refugees are exposed to the consequences of these problems to a much higher degree than non-Roma.

Main problems and needs of Roma refugees from Ukraine

On a general level, the needs of Roma refugees from Ukraine do not differ from those of their Ukrainian fellow citizens. Above all, these needs concern employment, housing, enrolment into school for children, and access to health care. Due to their high levels of stress related to the traumatic experiences of war, there is a great need for therapists and psychologists who can work with Roma refugees, especially those trained to work in diverse, culturally different environments.

At the same time, it is much more difficult for Roma refugees to access assistance on such issues than it is for non-Roma refugees. Due to the problem of the discrimination and the antigypsyism that we describe below, Roma refugees have more limited opportunities to obtain information or find housing, jobs and doctors, which only increases their sense of marginalisation and isolation. The family groups we came into contact with are dominated by children, elderly people and women, who frequently have undergone traumatic experiences but are unable to speak about them yet. There is a strong lack of trust in institutions, both Polish and Ukrainian, among the Roma refugees. This includes children's education, and the vast majority of Roma refugee children have not yet been integrated officially into the Polish education system.

Sense of safety at refugee reception points

From our experience working and observing at the refugee reception points and in the residential hotels¹² or flats where refugees are being housed, we know that Roma refugees have a great need to establish relationships with other Roma people who speak Romani, and they look for valuable, reliable information from such persons. Roma refugees trust people who are Roma much more than people of non-Roma origin irrespective of their good intentions. This is related to the issue we describe below, but it is important to emphasise here that this results in a specific cultural and social need. Roma people experience antigypsyism in Ukraine in a very significant way in every area of social life which, together with the trauma of war, makes them particularly suspicious of the new conditions in which they find themselves. The presence of a person of Roma origin wanting to help them is most often welcomed and they feel relieved by it. Moreover, given the cases of discrimination and hostile behavior by the non-Roma staffs of reception centres and by other non-Roma Ukrainian refugees, the necessity of having a trustworthy Roma person to whom Roma refugees can turn for support becomes even more dramatic and urgent.

In this regard, it is important to stress that there is a need to create safe social spaces for Roma refugees, whether at refugee reception points or in larger cities where refugees congregate. This also implies the need to appoint and engage more Roma staff and volunteers prepared to work with Roma to support such refugees. Non-Roma refugees should never be separated from Roma ones. When mentioning safe places, we primarily mean places that are Roma-friendly and that do not engage in discriminatory practices against Roma, places with staff or mediators from the Roma community who will help with communications and will work with the Roma refugee families effectively. What is important in this regard are the issues related to the cultural, linguistic and social aspects of the Roma in Ukraine, which naturally affect their current situation and relations with non-Roma from Ukraine.

¹² Long-term accommodation administered either by the authorities or NGOs.

Accommodation

In the first weeks of the war, refugees from Ukraine were taken in by private citizens who organized themselves online without any significant support from the authorities. Although this has now changed, Polish households still advertise online about their readiness to host refugees from Ukraine. However, in contrast to non-Roma refugees, there are far fewer cases of Roma refugees being accommodated in private housing. Private individuals who come to the reception centres to host refugee Ukrainian families sometimes react to Roma refugees in a racist way by saying "We don't want gypsies". This is not the rule; we know of several cases where Roma refugees were invited by non-Roma Polish hosts into accommodation. In Szczawnica, the owner of a tourist facility invited several dozen people from Ukraine, including two Roma families of 14 people. In Warsaw, several Roma refugee families were successfully placed in rented flats and jobs were created for them (approx. 50 persons in total). Many of the Roma refugees in Warsaw (approximately 70 people) live in hostels established by local authorities. Roma from Ukraine are also still being placed in refugee shelters.

In Radom, it was possible to place about 30 Roma refugees in a private hotel, including five who obtained employment. Near Białystok, it was possible to arrange accommodation for about 50 Roma refugees, including jobs for six. However, we have come across numerous instances of racist, antigypsyist attitudes among non-Roma.

Unfortunately, as a result of the quite frequent reactions of Polish hosts "selecting" their guests, as well as due to the Roma tendency to travel in large groups, Roma refugees in Poland are being accommodated mainly in places that are run or administered by the public authorities, by municipalities or municipal departments, or that are created and run by NGOs. Such facilities are mostly gymnasiums, former shopping centres, warehouses, sports halls, theatres, refugee reception centres, former hospital buildings, recreational centres, hotels and residential hotels, including facilities of this type inhabited mostly by people of color. Since the beginning of the war, these facilities have been administered and maintained by local authorities and by various sponsors and donors. The accommodation in these facilities has just been secured through either May, June, or August of this year.

Education

In theory, access to education is possible, but in practice it is difficult, depending on where the Roma refugees live. In small towns (such as Szczawnica, Jordanów, Krościenko nad Dunajcem, Wasyłkowo) it has been quicker to resolve these issues and practically from the beginning Roma children have been attending school. In several places in Kraków the situation was similar, but the vast majority of Roma children have not attended school since the war began. The insecure housing situation, the unprepared Polish school system, the language differences, and Roma parents' fear and disagreement with enrolling their children into different schools, have all negatively played a role in this matter. As a consequence, Roma refugee children have not accessed any educational activities at all. Some could have had the opportunity to participate in remote learning, but because they did not have access to a computer, they have not participated in online classes.

Currently in Warsaw, several Roma refugee children attend Ukrainian schools and several Roma refugee children are in kindergartens. The Foundation Towards Dialogue and the Poland-Roma-Ukraine Support Group operating as part of the Foundation aims its activities at preparing Roma refugee children for education in the schools starting in September 2022. As of July 2022 in Warsaw, at the initiative of the Foundation Towards Dialogue, a Day Centre for Roma refugees from Ukraine will offer regular instruction in English, Polish and IT.

Roma educational assistants are a very important potential asset in this context, but there are not many of them and they are notoriously underfunded. Their work is financed from the state budget through an increased educational subsidy for schools that hire them, but as some research indicates,¹³ local governments often fail to appropriately use these funds to employ more Roma assistants.

There are several instances where Ukrainian Roma refugees are joining the activities of Polish Roma NGOs, thus *de facto* becoming subjects of Government funding as part of the *Programme for the Social and Civic Integration of the Roma Community in Poland for 2021-2030*.¹⁴ This is very evident in Kraków, where Roma assistants and organizations have taken care of Roma refugees from Ukraine. Roma families took part in day-care centre activities during the "Painted Tabo" art workshop project run by the Harangos Roma Educational Association in cooperation with the Jaw Dikh Foundation, led by the artist Ms. Małgorzata Mirga-Tas.

Health

Access to medical services is generally difficult for Roma refugees due to the heavy burden being placed on the health care system in Poland by the refugee influx. In theory, access to healthcare for refugees is free of charge for those registering with the system. However, language barriers and antigypsyist attitudes make this difficult sometimes. Help is possible through the support of Roma assistants working with Roma refugees, or volunteers; thanks to their work, visits can be expedited and prescriptions and medicines can be purchased.

From our data it is clear that Roma refugees have needs that are significant in terms of healthcare provision for the elderly, women and children. Their harsh travel conditions mean some Roma refugees have arrived in a state of exhaustion and in need of medical care. We have heard of cases of tuberculosis and of people with HIV who had difficulties accessing the necessary medicine.

Due to the trauma they have sustained during the war and the process of fleeing, many Roma refugees are in need of careful psychological assistance, but due to their mistrust of authorities and to the frequent language and cultural barriers that exist, this care is difficult to provide. Here again, the key role is played by Roma volunteers.

Employment

Access to labour market entry for permanent residents is relatively possible and there are no legal obstacles for refugees wishing to take up employment in Poland. Refugees from Ukraine need to register within the PESEL¹⁵ system and are given the right to work. Usually the offers concern manual labour in sorting plants, in gardening, or on construction sites. For women, the offers are mostly work in kitchens and in cleaning.

¹³ [Raport OWIM Krakowscy Romowie LAST.pdf \(uek.krakow.pl\)](#)

¹⁴ *Programme for Social and Civic Integration of the Roma Community in Poland for 2021-2030*: <https://www.gov.pl/attachment/2f8296d9-80d5-4236-a6a8-3e22260e38f1>

¹⁵ This is Poland's Universal Electronic Population Registration System, which generates an 11-digit code identifying individuals registered as residing there.

However, we have witnessed and heard about cases of discrimination against Roma refugees in employment that are similar to those faced by Polish Roma. Often an offer of employment is made over the phone, only to be refused when the potential employer racially profiles the candidate in person.

Discrimination and antigypsyism

In the course of our research and intervention work, we have come across numerous cases of overt discrimination against Roma refugees on the basis of antigypsyism and prejudices. We have mentioned some above; here we intend to present the complexity of this phenomenon at different levels.

Roma refugees from Ukraine have had traumatic experiences of verbal, physical and social violence in Ukraine, and this experience, combined with the trauma of the war and fleeing their homes for safety, translates into, a huge lack of security and trust, and thus a tendency to stick to large, close-knit groups of other Roma, with a high degree of suspicion towards any relations with non-Roma.

The evacuation route for the Ukrainian Roma refugee itself has sometimes been associated with acts of aggression - we have heard reports of Roma Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) not being allowed on board trains, or being thrown off of trains in Ukraine, and of aggression against and aggressive surveillance of Roma IDPs by the Ukrainian Police or Army. The Roma refugees have emphasised that the Polish Border Guard treats them well and does not create problems for them to enter Poland, which they feel is in stark contrast to the behaviour of the Ukrainian uniformed services.

It is a common experience for Roma refugees to be racially stigmatised in refugee reception centres, where they are suspected of giving false information, of 'pretending' to be refugees, or of greedily taking advantage of humanitarian aid, e.g., taking more than their fair share of food or cleaning products. There have also been cases of Polish Roma volunteers being subjected to racist verbal attacks by non-Roma Polish or Ukrainian volunteers.

On several occasions, we have also encountered reports of racially-motivated police actions in Warsaw's Central Railway Station. Police officers patrolling the station area regularly ask the Roma refugees there to identify themselves without taking the same action against the other refugee Ukrainians there.

The aforementioned experience of reluctance on the part of non-Roma Poles to accept Roma refugees as guests is a regular theme in our conversations with both Roma refugees and volunteers. Disputes arise in the refugee reception centres between non-Roma refugee Ukrainians and Roma ones, often over the occupation of the space, negative perception of each other's personal hygiene, or mutual suspicions.

Not all cases of the discrimination reported by our interviewees were direct or even consciously committed. Since the outbreak of the war and the appearance of information in the public space about Roma citizens fleeing Ukraine, it has become a common expectation among a large part of the majority society that the small Roma community in Poland (numbering 20,000-35,000 persons) will "take care" of the Roma from Ukraine. Such opinions have not just appeared on the Facebook profiles of groups helping refugees from Ukraine, but have also been expressed by decision-makers and aid providers, because allegedly "Roma prefer to be taken care of by their own people". Unfortunately, most of the practices about which we have collected data involved antigypsyism and discrimination that has been open.

Acts of discrimination against Roma refugees were committed by:

- Volunteers at the border, at railway stations, and in refugee reception centres suggesting, for example, that they suspect Roma refugees will steal something, or that the non-Roma Ukrainians are afraid of them, so the Roma refugees should be "taken somewhere";
- Administrators of Facebook pages helping refugees from Ukraine have deleted or declined to accept posts concerning aid to Roma refugees;
- Official helplines, such as the most blatant case of a volunteer in Warsaw who was told by a staffer at the Mazovian Voivodship helpline that "We do not accept gypsies because they have lice". Suspicions about Roma refugees' potential propensity to steal, or a declared unwillingness to accept Roma refugees because "They behave aggressively/brawl" were the most common excuses given. Accusations of theft remained mere allegations, as the police were never called in any of the cases, which must therefore be treated as slander. However, such allegations led to the development of a mechanism of collective blame towards Roma refugees from Ukraine in many places, e.g., the refusal of accommodation because the previous Roma group/family who used it in a facility allegedly "stole something, it's a pity";
- Non-Roma refugees from Ukraine who openly showed hostility toward Roma refugees, separating themselves from Roma refugees and refusing to share space with them, as testified by coordinators, persons providing support to Roma refugees and volunteers at refugee reception centres;
- Property owners/managers on the commercial market who, - when contacted about the rental of a flat or larger dwelling that could serve as a centre for long-term residence, very often had second thoughts after being informed that the prospective tenants would be of Roma origin and refused to rent to them.
- Employers/employees - many Roma refugees in Kraków and Warsaw report discrimination on the labour market. When they call about a job and identify themselves as refugees from Ukraine, they are told the job is available, but when they make contact in person and their Roma origin is recognized, they are immediately told the job is no longer available. This pattern was repeated many times.
- Local authority: A municipal council or from Przemyśl posted information on social media that Roma refugees from Ukraine are coming to Poland to "extort" benefits and financial support.

Members of civil society who cooperate with Roma organisations and support Roma refugees from Ukraine are also targeted with discrimination and violence by refugee reception centre staff and volunteers. One such example happened in Warsaw, when a female and a male volunteer from the Poland-Roma-Ukraine Support Group were assaulted, one of them physically and both of them verbally, by the centre's coordinator and staff. This issue was officially reported to the centre's management, to the Office of the Ombudsman and to the Masovian Voivod, which runs the centre on behalf of the Government. The coordinator who physically assaulted the female volunteer still works at the refugee reception centre and no disciplinary action has been taken against him.

Regarding specific cases of discrimination against Roma refugee women from Ukraine, since the outbreak of the war the supporters of the Ukrainian Roma have reported that:

- Roma refugees did not receive entry stamps in their passports after crossing the border into Poland, which in turn was often used as an excuse to refuse them accommodation at refugee reception centres, despite the fact that this practice is illegal. On more than one occasion, after interventions by Roma activists, the Office of the Ombudsman intervened in such situations;
- accusations of Roma refugees allegedly being "greedy and selfish" when they took, in the opinion of some volunteers, "too many clothes" or "too much food" being provided as humanitarian aid, and allegedly "organised feasts for themselves" or "probably want to sell it";
- denying Roma refugees the right to refuge and to be considered part of the Ukrainian nation on an equal footing with non-Roma Ukrainians;
- taking several Roma refugee groups from the refugee reception centres in Warsaw in minibuses to a forest near the German border and abandoning them there. The groups managed to re-enter Poland on foot. They are suspected of being human trafficking victims;
- reported cases of discrimination committed against Roma IDPs on the Ukrainian side of the border by, for example, not allowing them to board trains, forcing them to wait for many hours in line even if they arrived at the border earlier than non-Roma Ukrainians, and dealing with them only after everybody else had been handled;
- separating Roma from Ukrainians of other ethnic origins - for example, according to the account of a group of 20 Roma refugees who arrived at the Nadarzyn EXPO in Warsaw on 14 March after hours of travelling, they were told to sit in corridors away from non-Roma Ukrainians in order to "avoid tensions". They were not allowed to lie down there or to change places for many hours;
- Many cases were reported of a radical or even an aggressive attitude from some volunteers and coordinators in conversations with Roma activists, demanding that the activists "take [the Roma refugees] somewhere" or claiming that "since they don't want to take [the Roma refugees] anywhere, there is something wrong";
- Several cases were reported of refusing previously-agreed accommodation after it turned out that it was to be for people from the Roma community. For example, on 9 March, seven persons, four women and three children, who arrived in Warsaw on transportation organised by a Roma organisation from Medyka were to be accommodated for one night in a Hindu temple in Warsaw. When the Roma refugees arrived there at 1 AM, they were told that as they did not have Indian citizenship they had no right to stay there. The police were called and the group was taken to the refugee reception centre. Previously, the temple has housed many non-Roma Ukrainian refugees through the Other Space Foundation, and there has never before been a problem with those refugees not having Indian citizenship.

These experiences do not just reinforce Roma refugees' feelings of being lost and marginalised, but at the same time put them at a disadvantage vis-à-vis Polish institutions. Among Polish NGOs there is also a habit of shifting difficult issues to Roma organisations. The local authorities act in a similar way. This is not open discrimination, but a hidden institutional inertia which, in the case of the Roma refugees from Ukraine, has the same effect that open discrimination does, placing the Roma in an inferior position without access to equal opportunities. This often results in Roma refugees being 'pushed' to the west, usually to Germany or Sweden. Sometimes such transportation is successfully arranged, with agreement on all sides. Sometimes, however, it happens that Roma refugees in Germany are left to their own devices, without any knowledge or an address where they can seek help. Many Roma refugees have returned to Poland from Germany - mostly from Berlin - reporting mistreatment by the police, including beatings and aggression.

We have encountered stories about Berlin being a hostile, unwelcoming place, with police violence being a frequently reported experience. Sometimes Roma refugees warn each other "not to go to Berlin" due to the antigypsyism of the authorities and local population.

Case: Antigypsyism at the refugee centre in Korczowa

This story was recounted by a volunteer from one of the refugee reception points in Korczowa: Over the course of four or five days, the group of Roma refugees from Ukraine there grew to almost 100 individuals. Families were waiting for their relatives and sticking together for a sense of security, as the situation at the refugee reception point was fluid and volatile. After some time, as a result of pressure from the refugee reception point's managers and the involvement of local authorities, the Roma refugees were put on a train to Berlin and then given the opportunity to be transported to Sweden. From the account of the person witnessing the decision-making process (or part of it) it seems there was a deliberate collusion of a few actors to simply get rid of the group, sending them without any proper preparation, undertaking no communication with any receiving partners, nor giving any assurances to the Roma refugees about their plight. This informal strategy of sending groups of Roma refugees "wherever" seems to be common. From our knowledge of the case, it appears that the Roma refugees themselves were not aware of where they were going or what awaited them, which is indicative that these activities by the refugee reception points were aimed at getting rid of Roma refugees perceived as a "problem" and were poorly prepared. The group ended up in Berlin and then found themselves on a ferry to Sweden. It has been impossible to trace them to figure out what happened to them next.

We need to stress here that, as many reports indicate, anti-Roma discrimination in Poland also affects Polish Roma and is additionally present as a problem in the case of Roma refugees from Ukraine.

Available assistance – National governmental, local governmental, and non-governmental

The European Union, through the European Commission, has launched special support for refugees from Ukraine under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Through this mechanism, the EU provides support and humanitarian assistance not only to Ukraine, but also to Poland thanks to the in-kind support of 18 EU countries and Norway. Additionally, on 18 May, the European Commission decided to transfer EUR 248 million total to Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic to aid refugees from Ukraine. While Roma refugees have so far not been singled out as a separate category of people who need special support under these mechanisms, during the International Roma Day celebrations in April, European Commission Vice-President Věra Jourová, Equality Commissioner Helena Dalli and Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, pointed out that around 100,000 Ukrainian refugees are of Roma origin.

The Council of Europe held an online consultation on 1 April with 35 representatives of Roma NGOs from Ukraine and Roma refugees, during which the needs and situation of Ukrainian Roma during the war were discussed. On the occasion of International Roma Day on 8 April, Council of Europe Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić also appealed to Council of Europe member states to support Roma refugees from Ukraine who face prejudice and discrimination - either not being able to escape the war due to lack of documents (about 10-20% of Ukrainian Roma) or facing discriminatory practices in the

countries to which they flee. Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatović also made a similar statement on the occasion of 8 April.

In the initial weeks and months of the refugee crisis, virtually all aid in Poland was organised from the bottom up by NGOs, private individuals and local authorities. The state authorities slowly adapted to the situation, but in a rather reactive way. In the perception of both the central governmental and local authorities, all refugees from Ukraine are treated equally and until recently, the central authorities either did not notice the problems faced by Roma refugees at all or did not want to notice them. The Polish Government has introduced a number of assistance measures for refugees from Ukraine and by definition these include Roma refugees: Financial aid and support with obtaining a PESEL (Universal Electronic Population Registration System) number, finding a job, or inclusion in the education system. Information campaigns about these measures are conducted in Ukrainian.¹⁶

In our experience, the authorities have taken a rather reactive stance and are not taking action on their own initiative. They are informed of problems by Roma leaders and activists who make requests for concrete interventions. At the same time, we must stress that as a result of pressure from Roma activists, these interventions are usually fairly effective, although depending on the region of Poland, experiences in this regard may differ. The position of the authorities is often based on the assumption that since all should be treated equally, there is no need to take special measures with regard to Roma refugees. The authorities also state that Roma refugees are being treated equally. Officials responsible for Roma issues in Poland, on the other hand, within the framework of the Government's Roma Programme, have referred to the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities, which in theory makes it impossible to include Roma refugees from Ukraine in the activities under the Act, which just applies to citizens of Poland. Despite this, as a result of pressure from Roma activists in Poland, the attitude of the officials shows a certain degree of flexibility, and in several regions and cities where cooperation with specific officials has been established, it has been possible to negotiate and find a solution to the accommodation problems of Roma refugees from Ukraine. The issue of mobilizing Roma organizations in Poland is discussed in the next part of the report, but here it should be emphasized that the fact of Roma organizations' strong involvement in helping Ukrainian Roma refugees has, in a way, forced the authorities in Poland to take a more proactive stance and to be more attentive to the problems of Roma refugees. On the initiative of the Ministry of Interior and Administration, which is responsible for Roma policy in Poland, meetings have been held with the Plenipotentiaries of Voivods for National and Ethnic Minorities, and although there no concrete decisions have been made yet (and thus no budgetary declarations allocating financing), there is a declared willingness to help in the field of information and communication with the relevant voivodeship and self-government units in providing assistance to Roma refugees. The personal involvement of the plenipotentiaries or individual officials (in the Podlaskie, Mazowieckie, Lubelskie Voivodeships) in helping particular groups or families of Roma refugees from Ukraine is not without significance here.

Moreover, as part of the activities of the Poland-Roma-Ukraine Support Group, the Foundation towards Dialogue is in advanced talks with the City of Warsaw on cooperation and on the creation of a model for the integration and adaptation of refugee women of Roma origin residing in long-term accommodation managed by the city authorities.

¹⁶ Online information and campaigns for Ukrainians on government websites: <https://www.gov.pl/web/mswia/informacja-dla-uchodzcow-z-ukrainy>; <https://pomagamukrainie.gov.pl/>; <https://www.gov.pl/web/ua>

Overall, however, our assessment is that the Government authorities in Poland do not recognize this issue as a priority, even to the point of neglect. There is unwillingness to come up with policy-relevant solutions and no interest in coming up with proactive measures. As we demonstrate here, although the principle of equal treatment applies in theory, in practice it is far from achieved. Roma refugees from Ukraine are disproportionately affected by the crisis and the Polish authorities fall short when it comes to addressing the issue. If anything is done, it is mainly through the pressure of non-governmental actors.

Mobilisation of Roma organisations in Poland

Domestic Roma NGOs have found themselves in the position of having to act in the face of institutional inaction. As a result of the slow, negligible reaction of the state structures, even as ever more reports of discriminatory practices at different levels resulting from antigypsyism were reaching the NGOs, most of humanitarian aid activities towards Roma refugees from Ukraine have been taken up by Roma organisations in Poland. They do not operate directly at the border, but as a result of their strong, informal networks, they have managed to create a system of support and intervention in difficult situations.

Roma activists play a huge role here, mobilising their social capital, including mobilising the Polish authorities at various levels (from municipalities and provinces to ministries) to launch concrete solutions. Unfortunately, this is not matched by adequate declarations of financial support from the state. Roma organisations have to rely on their own resources or apply for support to other aid organisations, for example, international ones. As we report more extensively in the section on Roma advocacy and campaigning, thanks to dense networks and pressure from activists, there has been a noticeable change in the attitude of the authorities. However, the problem is still far from being fully recognised, especially when it comes to antigypsyism and discrimination issues.

A noticeable role is also played by Roma religious communities, e.g. Pentecostals. Polish Roma pastors (from Bystrzyca Kłodzka, but also from Czechia, Slovakia and England) have become heavily involved in helping the Roma (e.g. Pastor Andrzej Malawski hosted several Roma groups in Bystrzyca Kłodzka, who then traveled further west). We should also mention the Warsaw Jewish Community, women's organisations and feminist organisations, which since the beginning of the war in Ukraine have been providing financial and material support to individuals and entities working on behalf of the Roma refugees.

ACTIONS TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION OF ROMA FROM UKRAINE

Monitoring and analysis related to acts of discrimination experienced by members of the Roma minority are being carried out in order to respond adequately to these disturbing phenomena. These actions are crucial not just in the context of the humanitarian aid activities being addressed to Roma refugees, but also with regard to the activists to whom the job of providing assistance to Roma refugees from Ukraine has been almost completely transferred. Equally important are preventive measures and the development of tools that will protect refugees including Roma refugees from acts of violence or being deprived of access to the services and assistance provided to refugees from Ukraine.

A key aspect of the advocacy activities undertaken after the war began were informational and social work activities, mainly through what are called social media, the aim of which was to draw the attention of politicians, decision-makers and public opinion to the Roma refugee situation. These activities were carried out mainly by Roma activists from Poland. They were combined with the media activities of non-Roma people working on behalf of the Roma community and were a response to the discrimination resulting from antigypsyism, as well as to the indifference of the authorities to the problems of Roma - both refugees from Ukraine and other Roma in Poland.

These advocacy activities can be divided into those initiated in Poland and those that involved contact with international institutions and organisations. Those conducted via the Internet are worth mentioning. The social media profiles of general humanitarian aid groups (e.g. Your Visible Hand, Help Ukraine, Open Kraków Coalition), Roma and non-Roma NGOs, and the humanitarian aid groups created by Roma activists were used: Poland-Roma-Ukraine, Help the Roma from Ukraine.¹⁷

Polish authorities, non-governmental institutions, international outreach

The domestic level of ministries and the intergovernmental/international level

The Department of National and Ethnic Minorities of the Ministry of Interior and Administration organised a meeting on 23 March to which representatives of Roma organisations and activists from the Polish Roma community acting on behalf of Roma refugees from Ukraine were invited. During the meeting, activists from Poland spoke about problems related to the lack of adequate support for and discrimination against Roma refugees. The situation faced by activists in Poland in various regions was described. In response, they heard from national officials that all refugees are treated equally and there is no possibility of or need for dedicated support to Roma refugees. In addition, it was stressed that the ministry does not have the possibility to support Roma refugees from Ukraine, as its aim is to extend assistance to Roma residents of Poland. The issue of supporting Roma activists from Poland in the context of their activities on behalf of Roma refugees was not addressed.

In mid-March a meeting was held with a delegation from the Council of Europe in Warsaw, including Deputy Ombudsman Hanna Machinska, Andrzej Mancewicz from the Council of Europe's Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, and Joanna Talewicz from the Foundation towards Dialogue. Mr Mancewicz also witnessed research-intervention activities with the participation of a team working within the framework of a project for ERIAC, *Roma*

¹⁷ Facebook Groups : <https://www.facebook.com/groups/789426448695472>;
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1610884865911857>

for Roma (Elżbieta Mirga-Wójtowicz, Monika Szewczyk, Tomasz Kosiek, Ignacy Józwiak and Gniewko Falana) who spent several days on the Polish-Ukrainian border in Korczowa.

Representatives of the Central Council of Roma in Poland, Karolina Stankiewicz-Kwiatkowska and Karol Kwiatkowski, have repeatedly met with the Plenipotentiaries of the Governors of the Mazowieckie and Podlaskie Voivodeships, as well as with the authorities of the cities and towns where accommodation for Roma has been found (Łódź, Białystok, Radom, Funka near Bydgoszcz, Łowicz). Thanks to their interventions, Roma refugees have been accommodated in safe spaces, given help with paperwork, several adults found employment (eight people) and children (about 30) were enrolled in school. The Central Roma Council also held talks with Marcin Sośniak from the Ombudsman's Office and with the representatives of international and Polish organisations that work for refugees and migrants.

Various Roma organisations have created both grassroots initiatives to support Roma refugees and a national network of cooperation with each other and with other human rights organisations. The Foundation towards Dialogue and the informal group Poland-Roma-Ukraine that was created within that foundation, in cooperation with the Union of Ukrainians in Poland, prepared an appeal to the Polish authorities to initiate additional actions in support of refugees focusing on the Ukrainian Roma community. The appeal was signed by 36 Polish NGOs, including Roma organisations, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, the Ocalenie Foundation, the Polish Migration Forum Foundation, the Central Council of Roma's Information and Consultancy Centre for Roma, the Jewish Community in Warsaw, the Minority Rights Group, the Jaw Dikh Foundation, the Roma Consultancy and Information Centre, the Krystyna Markowska Jewish Centre in Oświęcim, and Nomada - Association for Integration of Multicultural Society. The appeal was sent to the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration Mariusz Kamiński, State Secretary at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration Paweł Szefernaker, and Mazovian Governor Konstanty Radziwiłł and was published on websites and social media.

Another example of successful intervention as a result of advocacy work is the establishment of contact with Joanna Kluzik-Rostowska, a member of the Polish Parliament who has become involved in helping Roma refugees in her constituency. In the Głowaczów municipality she managed, through her intermediary, to persuade Konstanty Radziwiłł - the Mazovian Governor - to make a flat in Warsaw available to one of the Roma refugee families from Ukraine.

On 31 May, OSCE/ODIHR/CRPSI organised a thematic meeting of the International Roma Contact Group on Roma and Sinti populations in crisis situations, with particular attention to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, where Elżbieta Mirga-Wójtowicz presented the situations and challenges that are arising in working with Roma refugees and presented recommendations in this regard.

The international organisation level and local government level

An example of advocacy work here is the meeting with the Deputy Mayor of the City of Warsaw, Aldona Machnowska-Góra, held on 22 April. The meeting was attended by a co-author of this report, Joanna Talewicz, who presented the main problems faced by Roma refugees. She stressed the need to initiate actions aimed at Roma refugees as well as those aimed at the volunteers working in reception and refugee centres (educational actions). The deputy mayor was aware of the situation, including the discrimination and racism against Roma, but her awareness was based on a letter that the Poland-Roma-Ukraine support group had sent to the City of Warsaw and the Mayor of Warsaw, Rafał Trzaskowski, reporting on the difficult situation of Ukrainian Roma. The discussion revolved around possible scenarios (whether Roma refugees would stay or return) and the potential number of Roma refugees in Warsaw, about which the city has no data. Nonetheless, Machnowska-Góra promised to support such activities and to help create a safe place for these people where activities aimed at various forms of assistance could take place. The next meeting

was scheduled for 25 May and was initiated by the Deputy Mayor of Warsaw and Tomasz Pactwa, Director of the Office for Assistance and Social Projects. Furthermore, Joanna Talewicz was invited to take part in a meeting of the Human Rights and Equal Treatment Commission of the Association of Polish Cities, which took place on 27 May, during which she spoke about the situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine.

As a result of the activities of Roma leaders and contacts with Warsaw city authorities, as of this writing the Poland-Roma-Ukraine group is finalising cooperation between the city, the Foundation towards Dialogue and its Poland-Roma-Ukraine group, the aim of which will be intervention assistance and support with the integration of Roma refugees from Ukraine. Activities within the framework of this cooperation were to start in June 2022. Additionally, a team from the Poland-Roma-Ukraine group, Małgorzata Kołaczek and Olena Vaidalovych, were to conduct a training on the situation of Roma in Ukraine and in Poland for OXFAM and the Polish Migration Forum in June this year.

As part of this cooperation, people from the foundation and its Poland-Roma-Ukraine group will conduct workshops for four groups of employees at the short-term and long-term residences where Roma refugees from Ukraine are staying. The workshop was scheduled for June 2022.

Another important person in the context of helping the Roma is the well-known Polish film director Joanna Kos-Krauze, whose contacts opened up many avenues for humanitarian aid. She supported activists in Warsaw, helping to organise transport and accommodation. Thanks to her support, one of the Roma refugee families received access to a flat and has been living there since the beginning of April. Contact was also made with a former MEP, Professor Magdalena Środa, and with Holocaust survivor Marian Turski, who took advantage of the media coverage he received to mention the situation of Roma refugees in an interview he gave on the occasion of being awarded his honorary doctorate at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin.

In Gorzów Wielkopolski, a city that also receives refugees from Ukraine, Roma activists Roksana and Patrycja Mroczek have been in contact with Paweł Klimczak, Plenipotentiary for National and Ethnic Minorities and with Małgorzata Domagała, the Vice-Mayor, and have helped Roma refugees there. The Mroczeks drew attention to the main needs of the Roma refugees, but unfortunately in this case they did not receive any support.

Joanna Talewicz participated in the IMPULS meeting, organized by the Auschwitz Foundation and Google, during which the war in Ukraine and the situation of refugees, including those of Roma origin, were discussed. There were also meetings and discussions with Polish NGOs including the Polish Migration Forum, Ocalenie Foundation, Homo Faber, Granica Group, FemFund, Nomada, Association for Legal Intervention, Doctors without Borders, Akcion Regeneracja, Interkulturalni.PL Association, and SalamLab. Elżbieta Mirga-Wójtowicz, Karolina Stankiewicz-Kwiatkowska, Karol Kwiatkowski, Monika Szewczyk and Agnieszka Caban also participated in a series of training sessions organised by the US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) for representatives of NGOs working with Ukrainian refugees.

An example of grassroots Roma activism is the activity and work of Rajmund Siwak, who cooperates with many Roma organisations, such as the Poland-Roma-Ukraine group. Siwak is in constant contact with Judyta Rozbicka-Prokopowicz, Plenipotentiary of the Mazovian Governor for National and Ethnic Minorities. As a volunteer at one of the refugee reception points, Siwak constantly reports on the situation in the refugee reception centres at EXPO Modlińska and Nadarzyn, highlighting the problems and needs of the Roma refugees staying at these centres.

A Roma assistant and leader of the Harangos Roma Educational Association, Edyta Jaśkowiak, together with Marzena Fraś from the Sawore Integration Association, got in touch with the Salam Lab organisation. That cooperation resulted in the creation of a safe, friendly place for Roma refugees who arrived in Kraków - a residential hotel for 120 people. Jaśkowiak took part in a meeting organised by the Malopolska Voivodeship Office in Kraków, where she described the situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine who are staying

there. In Kraków, everyday support for Roma refugees is also provided by the Roma education assistants who work in cooperation with the Jaw Dikh Foundation, which is part of the Open Kraków Coalition bringing together municipal institutions and NGOs. The coalition has become heavily involved in helping refugees, including Roma, from Ukraine.

Jaw Dikh Foundation activist Elżbieta Mirga-Wójtowicz has also established contact with the International Organisation for Migration (the IOM), resulting in a project to financially support the volunteers working with Roma refugees from Ukraine in several cities in Poland, including Kraków, Warsaw, Radom and Poznań.

Already at the beginning of the war, Mirga-Wójtowicz and Joanna Talewicz started cooperation with international Roma organisations - the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and the Youth Network of Roma Organisations Ternype - in order to support Ukrainian Roma refugees emigrating to Germany from Poland and to obtain funds to support activities for Roma refugees who decide to stay in Poland. This cooperation continues in various fields.

In conclusion, Roma activists in Poland are trying to make the Polish authorities and civil society aware that Roma refugees face particular problems (antigypsyism, discrimination) which clearly contradict the principles of decent coexistence and humane treatment of people affected by armed conflict. The challenge is to provide Roma refugees with decent accommodation and with psychological, legal, educational and health assistance.

Importantly, most Roma activists feel that they are being left on their own by the state, that they have no support, and that responsibility for Roma refugees has been shifted entirely onto them. They also feel unlistened to and fear that the unresolved problems of refugees of Roma origin will result in growing resentment against all Roma in Poland.

International humanitarian aid

There has also been an international dimension to this advocacy work during which Roma activists made contact and held discussions with the following organisations: Open Society Foundations, Mercy Corps Health Coordination Meeting WHO, Medico International from Germany, Safe Passenger from UK, USAID, House of Freedom, Choose Love from UK, Oxfam, Minority Rights Group, European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAN), Ternype, ERGO Network, ARCA, Chirikli, Nevo Parudimos, National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Associació Gràcia, Yahad-in Unum, and the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti (CPRSI) at the OSCE-ODIHR. These contacts have resulted in consultational support, education support about humanitarian aid, and financial support, among other kinds of support.

International organisations such as the UNHCR, IOM or Amnesty International are currently drawing attention to Roma refugees as an important category of refugees who, due to the high level of discrimination, including multiple discrimination, and high risk of social exclusion that they face, need support that is addressed to them. It should be noted, however, that the activities planned by UNHCR or IOM are addressed to Ukrainian refugees in general and there are not usually any activities or programmes addressed exclusively to Roma. However, for almost the first two months after Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the awareness of both governmental and international institutions about the scale and the specific situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine was almost non-existent. The change in their perception of the position of Roma fleeing the war on Ukraine can be attributed to two factors. The first is the advocacy activity of Roma women and leaders in the media and public space. The second is the increasing tension between Roma and non-Roma refugees from Ukraine in refugee reception centres and in their places of residence, which has made it no longer possible to ignore and omit the Roma from the discourse on the situation of Ukrainian refugees.

The above-mentioned factors have mobilised many international organisations and institutions working in the field of humanitarian and charitable assistance, as well as in the field of human rights, to look into the situation of the Roma refugees from Ukraine and to start discussions with the representatives of Roma and pro-Roma organisations. Within the framework of such cooperation, the IOM, a specialized agency of the United Nations, has granted funding to a network of Roma organisations and leaders/others led by the Central Council of Roma in Poland through its Roma Information and Counselling Centre which is providing intervention and social support to Roma from Ukraine and to Roma in Ukraine. UNHCR in turn has studied the needs of the Roma refugees during its own interviews with Roma activists.

Many independent humanitarian and charitable organisations such as Oxfam, Mercy Corps, Habitat for Humanity, Choose Love, Foundation de France, etc., are also interested in the situation of Roma refugees. Representatives of these organisations met with Roma refugee activists in April and May to better understand the specific situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine in Poland. Some Roma and pro-Roma organisations managed to receive support from these charities for intervention expenses, e.g., buying medicines, food, covering transport and accommodation costs, etc. These types of organisations seemed to have been the first to be aware of the situation of Ukrainian Roma refugees, and some contacted selected organisations on their own to offer financial support to Roma refugees in the form of small intervention grants.

The international Roma youth network TernYpe launched a fundraiser, the proceeds of which it then donated to Roma and pro-Roma organisations helping Roma inside Ukraine. ERGO Network, together with Ukraine's Chirikli Association, and the European Roma Institute for Art and Culture (ERIAC), together with the Ukrainian Youth Agency for the Promotion of Roma Culture (ARCA), have run a similar collection effort and additionally are carrying out the work of documenting the experiences of Roma refugees in Poland, Slovakia, Romania and Hungary.

Media, public discourse and Roma refugees from Ukraine

As in the case of the advocacy work, the aim of the media activities has been to publicise the situation faced by Roma refugees. From the first days of the presence in Poland of Roma refugees from Ukraine we received information about acts of discrimination against them. In the situation of this unprecedented refugee crisis in Poland, the dominant narrative was and still is that all refugees are treated equally and that reports of discrimination are allegedly exaggerated. The dominant narrative of the Polish media and the governmental information apparatus is that by welcoming millions of refugees from Ukraine into their homes, the Poles have demonstrated extraordinary acts of hospitality, solidarity and kindness towards their eastern neighbours. We do not intend to detract from the sense of pride in this collective gesture from Polish society, but our experience and the data collected during our research show that this was often hospitality and solidarity of a rather selective nature.

This report, based on a series of research-intervention activities, shows that unfortunately, antigypsyism in Poland and Ukraine is still a fairly common and accepted form of racism. In addition to actions targeting state institutions and NGOs, intensive media activities were therefore also undertaken. The aim of these activities was not just to raise awareness for preventive purposes, but also to provide assistance to those in need of support. As in the case of the advocacy, the media activity can be divided into two groups: Polish media and international media. The annex contains a detailed list of publications that have appeared on this subject.

The articles in Polish and international media reporting on the situation of Roma refugees from Ukraine are focused mainly on:

- the topic of antigypsyism and discrimination in confrontation with the Polish support system for Roma refugees from Ukraine; there are cases of discrimination experienced by Roma refugees from Ukraine in Poland, but also cases of the unequal treatment and intolerance faced by Roma assistants or volunteers working with Roma refugees from Ukraine,
- the topic of working with Roma refugees, building a support system, and the mutual communication that Roma NGOs engage in in order to do their work better,
- descriptions in newspapers of many initiatives providing assistance, interventions, and research undertaken by Polish Roma organisations with the support of international institutions such as the ERIAC "Roma for Roma" project and the European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network initiative, together with the Chirikli Association, called "Soup for Refugees",
- The passivity of the Polish authorities and the transfer of the responsibility for the Roma refugee situation to domestic Roma activists,
- Roma people's situations in Ukraine before the outbreak of the war,
- The stories of Roma refugees,
- Situations in Poland in the context of the inclusion of both Roma and non-Roma from Ukraine into various areas of social life,
- The Roma refugee situation is sometimes compared to certain social attitudes held towards people living at the Polish-Ukrainian border. There is also a thread of talking about the lack of preparation of the Polish system to absorb refugees, starting with education, which we assume will be a topic in the coming months.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Below we present two sets of recommendations. The first is addressed specifically toward influencing social policy in Poland in the area of human rights protection, with the specific target of fighting antigypsyism and the resulting discrimination against Roma refugees from Ukraine, while the second details more specific measures to deal with the current situation and enhance successful advocacy on behalf of this population.

At the level of the national Government/ministerial institutions:

- Development of migration policy to incorporate Roma refugees from Ukraine into its framework.
- Development of an Intergovernmental Working Group (Poland, Germany, Czech Republic, Sweden, Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine) on Roma refugees from Ukraine.
- Address the issue of discrimination against Roma people more broadly and of Ukrainian Roma refugees more specifically at the level of the national Government/ministerial institutions, such as the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Education.
- Align the Governmental Programme on Roma in Poland with the needs of Roma refugees from Ukraine (and also Roma migrants) and set forth specific legal provisions to address the immediate needs of Roma refugees in the areas of education, health, employment and anti-discrimination measures.
- Consider the specific situation of Roma refugees in migration policy, its tools, and its particular policies.
- Create a clear mechanism for financial assistance provision for NGOs working with Roma refugees.
- Create the position of a special envoy within the Office of the Ombudsman with the remit to monitor cases of discrimination against Roma refugees and streamline policies to tackle them.
- Implement systemic solutions regarding the inclusion of refugees, including Roma refugees, in Polish schools (for example: lessons in Polish as a foreign language, Roma assistants in schools helping Roma refugees, anti-discrimination classes and intercultural competence training for teachers and students).
- Provide support for Roma NGOs and Roma activists, e.g. psycho-social assistance for those working with traumatised people, or legal expertise if needed.

Recommendation on specific measures to deal with the current situation and enhance successful advocacy:

- Create effective support systems based on research and on monitoring data about the situation of Roma refugees.
- Create a system for monitoring, reporting and responding to cases of discrimination, or integrating the collection of such data into already-existing mechanisms for collecting data on discrimination that is based in antigypsyism.
- In addition to intervention measures, create conditions conducive to integration: Workshops and training for those helping Roma refugees and for teaching staffs, development of a support system for Roma refugees in terms of language support.
- Activate national Roma structures within the individual states (in Poland on the basis of the Roma Programme) in order to include issues affecting Roma refugees on their agendas. The Polish Roma are involved in solving the problems of the Roma refugees from Ukraine, and therefore the actions of the state structures should not exclude the Ukrainian Roma.
- Training for people working with Roma refugees from Ukraine, including Roma activists, on how to work with refugees, what risks exist and what challenges they may face; this should not just be general knowledge, but also related to refugee reception procedures, current legislation, etc.
- At the national level it is necessary to support the Roma community members involved in the work for Roma refugees; there is a lack of money, of competences, of the ability to build coalitions and partnerships, of the ability to advocate and conduct dialogue with local authorities and international organisations willing to support Roma organisations. Often such meetings are poorly run because Roma organisations are unable to articulate their needs, plans, activities, etc., well.
- Organisation of trainings for Roma activists on how to build cooperation at the international and transnational level.
- Support Roma volunteers and individuals working on behalf of Ukrainian Roma refugees; provide grants to Roma organisations working on behalf of Ukrainian Roma refugees.
- Contact humanitarian organisations working at the borders and in refugee reception centres to sensitise them to the situation of Roma refugees by providing them with training and putting them in touch with Roma volunteers.
- The situation of Roma refugees is an appropriate opportunity to start a discussion on the concept of antigypsyism, to work out and introduce a definition of antigypsyism into the legal nomenclature. Antigypsyism is still not recognized or properly combated in most European countries.

ANNEX: MEDIA MONITORING

Polish media

Newsweek

https://www.newsweek.pl/swiat/wojna-na-ukrainie-ukrainscy-romowie-uciekaja-z-ukrainy-romowie-uchodzcy/gpncqtp?fbclid=IwAR0rBVbXboinDdMAodSuuLbAUQM9dZYdei7ML6BzLXI2yifdn8W_bv-pWyI

<https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/polityka/uchodzcy-w-polsce-polacy-pomagaja-ukraincom-gdzie-jest-rzad/cmdkqwl>

<https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/spoleczenstwo/wojna-w-ukrainie-prawoslawni-zydzi-i-nowe-zwyczajy-w-polsce/m2yls4h>

ONET

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5VNKNhCENA>

TVN

<https://dziendobry.tvn.pl/styl-zycia/romska-kultura-czym-sie-wyroznia-jak-zyja-wspolczesni-romowie-5669876>

Gazeta Wyborcza

<https://wyborcza.pl/magazyn/7,124059,28275260,wolontariusze-odganiaja-ukrainskich-romow-bo-beda-jedzeniem.html>

<https://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,28260190,sa-tu-romowie-nigeryjczycy-arabowie-uchodzca-z-ukrainy-to.html>

Okopress

<https://oko.press/romowie-z-ukrainy-traktowani-jak-uchodzcy-drugiej-kategorii-slyszymy-tych-ludzi-nie-pryjmuujemy/>

Polityka

<https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/spoleczenstwo/2162527,1,cyganow-nie-bierzemy-ukrainscy-romowie-uchodzcy-gorszego-sortu.read>

Rzeczpospolita

<https://www.rp.pl/spoleczenstwo/art35881951-dr-machinska-prowadzimy-polityke-podwojnych-standardow-wobec-uchodzcow>

Więź.pl

<https://wiesz.pl/2022/03/30/tzw-ofiarne-serca-od-jakiegos-czasu-dopytuja-o-narodowosc-uchodzcow-romow-nie-chca/>

International media

CNN

<http://www.romea.cz/en/news/world/cnn-romani-refugees-from-ukraine-are-discriminated-against-in-poland>

Le Courier (Switzerland)

<https://lecourrier.ch/2022/04/11/lexil-des-roms-dukraine/?fbclid=IwAR3fDUq2fJ-a0i6xjdjNvXswO2D2fkrTUYTTdFaA-Xyghi8qTor3HBoH78c>

L'Express (France)

https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/europe/reportage-guerre-en-ukraine-l-accueil-a-plusieurs-vitesses-des-refugies-en-pologne_2172230.html?fbclid=IwAR3Gu6Fu6pA60TWH_xt4NBSOIuOTvBs2qxdCWo_2dz4WuZrBVOIInz-Ycok

Maryknoll Magazine

https://www.maryknollmagazine.org/2022/03/roma-fleeing-ukraine-stuck-in-shelters-in-poland/?fbclid=IwAR3gMoIWLepqIXZQwLjQe_bD9J8BqNqGxizGXZA9dfye-s05mYTSO8Kfz6E

Medico International

https://www.medico.de/en/roma-face-racism-and-discrimination-18589?fbclid=IwAR10woM3YaIGN2bNxUbYz4WDTiD_qwpT7IkG7zAcVXyqXUR1TUdrARWb7AQ

The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/may/10/ukraine-roma-refugees-poland>

Amnesty Press (Sweden)

<https://www.amnestypress.se/artiklar/reportage/26798/romer-pa-flykt-fran-ukraina-togs-emot-i-goteborg/?fbclid=IwAR2sU6s54v6J3L-Otu6zC7jVwu40SEw-zBZPwJk4t1hY68E8LKyFxfjKctvU>

Al-Jazeera

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/7/ukraines-roma-refugees-recount-discrimination-on-route-to-safety>

UCANEWS

<https://www.ucanews.com/news/many-roma-refugees-stuck-in-temporary-shelters-in-poland/96704>

The Tablet

<https://thetablet.org/roma-refugees-temporary-shelter/>

World of Labor

<https://wol.iza.org/news/ukraines-roma-refugees-face-rejection-in-poland>

Heinrich Böll Foundation:

<https://pl.boell.org/en/2022/05/16/uwazaicie-tam-w-tej-cyganskiej-dzielnicy-antycyganizm-w-warunkach-wojny?fbclid=IwAR2VAQJswzrrjEryyqT2siz2PxrwOcuSBlp14eqCdKQVVaKHh5p8q4Efceo>

ERiac Roma for Roma:

<https://eriac.org/roma-for-roma-documenting-the-oral-history-of-roma-refugees-from-ukraine/>

EL PAIS

https://elpais.com/planeta-futuro/2022-06-09/la-huida-de-los-romanes-de-ucrania-entre-la-solidaridad-y-el-racismo.html?utm_source=Facebook&ssm=FB_CM_PF&fbclid=IwAR2IbH-NP-kQAIWUktduoRPTfBqaW2f0mfCjEOMKntJqeWC_r1mgF5pcfw#Echobox=1654755638

https://elpais.com/planeta-futuro/2022-06-08/la-comunidad-romani-de-ucrania-no-encuentra-su-lugar.html?fbclid=IwAR38hW94dWogQy73NK9uuYAZI-0-eEOuuvf_VbyOvIB03AYaooFTMzf4g00

Die ZEIT

<https://www.zeit.de/zustimmung?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.zeit.de%2Fzett%2F2022-05%2Fgefluechtete-romnja-ukraine-russisches-militaer>

AUTHORS

Elżbieta Mirga-Wójtowicz, PhD, is a cultural animator, political scientist and researcher, and graduate of the Jagiellonian University. She cooperates with the Centre of Migration Research at the University of Warsaw. She has almost 15 years of experience in government administration in the implementation of state policy towards ethnic and national minorities and in coordinating the implementation of integration policy towards Roma in Poland. From 2008-2014 she was the Małopolska Voivode Plenipotentiary for National and Ethnic Minorities. She is the author of evaluation reports for the European Commission within the Roma Civil Monitor project (2017-2020) and in the current edition of the Roma Civil Monitor II project (2021-2025). She is a graduate of the Roma Leadership Academy "Nicolae Gheorghe" (2019) organized by the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues at the OSCE-ODIHR, a Fellow of the US State Department's International Leadership Visitor Program (2010), a graduate of the Roma Access Program at the Central European University in Budapest (2006), and served as an intern at the European Commission (2005).

Joanna Talewicz, PhD, currently works at the Institute of Ethnography and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Warsaw. She is the founder and president of the Foundation towards Dialogue's intervention group for Poland-Roma-Ukraine. She is a graduate of the University of Cambridge, Judge Business School in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. She has received scholarships from the Alliance for Historical Dialogue and Accountability Program at Columbia University, the Leadership Academy for Poland, the Fulbright Commission, the Tom Lantos Institute, the European Commission programme: Marie Curie, attending conferences and training courses on multidisciplinary and cross-national approaches to Roma Studies at Central European University, and attended the International Leadership Visitor Program of the US State Department. She is a member of the Polish delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Her work focuses on Roma communities in Europe, with a particular emphasis on the Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti. She is an author and co-author of books, and of both academic and popular articles on Roma issues.

Małgorzata Kołaczek, PhD, is a political scientist and an assistant professor at the Institute of Intercultural Studies, Jagiellonian University, where she also serves as Deputy Director for Didactics. She is a graduate of Public Relations studies at the Warsaw School of Economics in Kraków (2006) and of the Academy of Professional Coaching at the Warsaw School of Economics (2022). She is a co-founder and Vice-President of the Foundation towards Dialogue. She is a review editor for the *Romani Studies* journal of the Gypsy Lore Society. She has been a scholarship holder of the European Commission and the US State Department's the International Visitor Leadership Program - Minority Outreach Program. She was a visiting Professor at the University of Rochester, USA (2017); she has also taught as a guest lecturer at the University of British Columbia, Canada and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA. For over 18 years she has been researching issues related to Roma communities with a particular focus on the ethnic mobilisation of Roma in Central Europe. She is the author of many academic and popular publications. She also educates and trains those providing education in informal settings.

About this report

The war in Ukraine has triggered a refugee crisis unprecedented in Europe since the Second World War. Nearly 7 million Ukrainian citizens have crossed the country's borders within the first three months of the war. In the flood of information noise about this crisis, it escapes the public's notice that Ukraine is an ethnically and culturally diverse country, that not all of its citizens are ethnic Ukrainians. Among them are the Roma living in Ukraine.

The aim of this report is to highlight the situation in Poland of Roma refugees fleeing war-torn Ukraine. From the beginning of March 2022 to the end of May 2022, the authors undertook research, intervention activities, and intensive monitoring of the mass media and social media and have formulated conclusions and policy recommendations. The report highlights the most pressing problems faced by the Roma of Ukraine, with particular emphasis on systemic antigypsyism and the resulting discriminatory practices. It is an interventionist, up-to-date report on the reality unfolding before our eyes and is not necessarily exhaustive.