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The International Handbook of Hate Crime

Section 3: KEY ISSUES IN HATE CRIME

Hate Crimes Against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe

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Gypsies, Travellers and Roma experience more bias-motivated crime and discrimination in Europe than any other minority communities (Council of Europe, 2011). This chapter will explore how and why hate crimes have manifested against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe in the 21st century. In order to do this, the chapter will initially consider the context within which hate crime has arisen and in doing so will address some of the histories of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe, that are diverse. It will then go on to examine the extent of contemporary hate crimes against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma. The chapter will therefore identify the range of hate crime experiences of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe that range from extreme violence and murder, through serious harassment to hate speech and minor hate incidents inflicted upon them. Importantly, the chapter will consider how hate incidents have been conflated with their experiences of discrimination and prejudice that Gypsies, Travellers and Roma experience as ‘hate crime’.

Having established the circumstances within which Gypsies, Travellers and Roma have become the object of hate in Europe and how that hatred has manifested, the chapter will go on to examine how the existence, or notion, of ‘Europe’ as a political and legal entity, has attempted to resolve this problem. Gypsies, Travellers and Roma have been set out as the ultimate ‘Europeans’, who are ‘stateless’ nomads (Hepworth, 2012, Goldston, 2010). In reality though, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma are citizens of states and their lifestyle does not and should not preclude them from the rights that citizenship entails. The chapter therefore considers the impact of the identities of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma as mobile communities in order to unpack their experiences of hate crime and discrimination. In conclusion, the chapter argues that Gypsies, Travellers and Roma experience hate crime and discrimination as a consequence of a set of othering processes that function to provide settled communities with an acceptable scapegoat for their fears and insecurities. These fears and insecurities have been borne of a changing European environment that has been through rapid political change in the East and fiscal instability in the West.

Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe: A Brief History

In this chapter, I refer purposively to ‘Gypsies, Travellers and Roma’ in an attempt to encapsulate a diverse range of peoples living in Europe who have some commonality of identity based on their ethnic origins, their culture or their way of living that is often associated with nomadism. European academics and policy makers tend to refer solely to ‘Roma’ in reports and writing as per agreement at the first World Romani Congress in 1971 (Council of Europe, 2011). My English European origins however, require me here to represent Gypsies and Travellers in the United Kingdom (UK) who do not identify with the moniker ‘Roma’. In the UK, a clear distinction is made between Gypsies, Travellers and Roma and pride is associated with each of those titles. This differs greatly to the European mainland, where the use of the word ‘Gypsy’ is often considered offensive or degrading in some way. The complexity over titling the peoples discussed here is typical of issues faced by Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities across Europe.

The identities of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe are extremely diverse, including the Sinti, Kale, Manus, Kalderas, Lovari and Romanichals that Liegeois refers to as ‘a rich mosaic of ethnic fragments’(1994:12, Kostadinova, 2011). However, as in the UK, many European countries are occupied by Travellers that are not ethnically defined, but rather, are identified as such due to their nomadic or cultural lifestyles (James, 2013, Council of Europe, 2011). It may be safe to say that despite their contemporary differences, some Gypsies, Travellers and Roma do share a common ancestry. Historiographies have identified their origin as from the Indian subcontinent, from where they appear to have travelled to Europe in the 14th century. On arrival in Europe, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma dispersed throughout the region, often mobilising for commercial purposes (Brearley, 2001).

Acton (2010) argues that Gypsies, Travellers and Roma responded to the economic conditions they met on arrival in Europe which led those in the East to settle to pursue their economic goals, while those that arrived in the West became commercial nomads. Despite the settlement of Roma in the East (and increasing settlement of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in the West), nomadism remained an important aspect of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma identity. As noted by Shubin and Swanson (2010) the mobility of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma does not require them to constantly travel, but can refer to their emotional mobility. Indeed, the lifestyle associated with nomadism, living in close groups with strong bonds of familial attachment and strict moral codes, is what signifies Gypsy, Traveller and Roma cultures most and what the different communities have most in common. It is also the aspect of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma lives that is least understood by other communities and which creates the boundary between those communities that are Gypsies, Travellers and Roma and those that are not. Ultimately, Gypsy, Traveller and Roma identity therefore goes beyond their ‘ethnicity’ (Csepeli and Simon, 2007) or their movement and rests with their lifestyle that is borne of their nomadism.

The nomadic tradition of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma has meant that they have always stood out as different to other communities, as their lifestyle and culture has set them apart (Acton, 2010). This cultural divide has resulted in Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities having experienced harassment and persecution since their arrival in Europe (Fraser, 1992). For example they experienced enslavement in fifteenth century Romania, were banned from entering England, on pain of death, in the sixteenth century and were hunted as animals in seventeenth century Holland (Kenrick and Puxon, 1972). They were subject to numerous anti-'vagabond' legislations in the eighteenth century and were considered outlaws that were imprisoned, forcibly settled and had their children taken from them in to the nineteenth century (Brearley, 2001). Gypsies, Travellers and Roma were therefore criminalised and subjected to fear and terror throughout Europe. Despite the enlightenment of the nineteenth century which saw some recognition of the language, music and culture of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, the twentieth century saw no abatement to their persecution. Over time Gypsies, Travellers and Roma identities have been characterised as pathologically criminal and developments in science which explored the nature of human beings had profoundly negative consequences for them. The 'founding father' of criminology, Cesare Lombroso, described Gypsies as atavistic; physiological 'throwbacks' that were born criminal. Such pathologising of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma fed directly in to the development of criminal biology that was taken up by Robert Ritter in the National Socialist Party of Germany in the 1930s and ultimately led to their genocide as part of the Nazi 'final solution' in the 1940s (Widmann, 2007).

The genocide of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in the Second World War has often been ignored or marginalised, but is essential to conceptualising their societal position today and particularly their continued experiences of hate. Gypsies, Travellers and Roma refer to the Holocaust as the 'Porrajmos', which means the 'devouring' in Romani language. It is estimated that between 250,000 and 1,500,000 Gypsies, Travellers and Roma were killed, though records are extremely poor (Hancock, 2004). As part of the Nazi regime's policy of ethnic cleansing, Ritter's research on criminal biology was utilised by Himmler to justify a racialised definition of 'Gypsies', despite their apparent Aryan appearance, and they were sent to concentration camps, particularly Auschwitz. Tragically, Himmler's project was highly effective and Hancock (2004) suggests that the genocide of Gypsies was so comprehensive that it left Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities decimated and in disarray. They had lost so many people and their traditions and stories in the concentration camps that they subsequently dealt with those losses by not speaking about their time there (Kenrick, 1999). In the post-war period they were not recognised by authorities as having suffered, not even by the Nuremberg Trials in 1947 (Kostadinova, 2011). The oral tradition of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, as opposed to the literary tradition of Jews, meant that few records of the Porrajmos were made by Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities. In fact, the development of knowledge and understanding of the experiences of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in the Holocaust were largely written by Jewish scholars (Hancock, 2004). Further, the propensity of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma to not speak about negative experiences meant that their story was withheld, in part, by their own inability to discuss their losses (Kenrick, 1999).

In the post-war period then, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe were disparate communities, ravaged by war and lacking recognition. It was at this point that the difference between Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Eastern and Western areas of Europe again became distinct, as Eastern Europe was taken over by communist regimes and capitalism flourished in the West. Within each of these environments Gypsies, Travellers and Roma continued to experience discrimination, prejudice and hate as stereotyped notions of their lifestyles and culture developed that were not challenged by authorities within or beyond states, or by the Gypsies, Travellers and Roma themselves. In Eastern Europe, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma gained some respite under communism as they were incorporated in to regimes that enforced policies of work and welfare for all, providing them with a sense of security (Brearley, 2001). However, the cultural expression of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma was supressed within these regimes as their language, nomadism, self-employment and way of living was repressed by assimilationist policies and as a consequence their identity was vilified by the state and increasingly by the public. When Eastern European communism broke down in the 1990s, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma were among the first to lose their jobs and subsequently their homes. Factories set up under communism closed in the competitive markets of capitalism and the old stigmas attached to Gypsies, Travellers and Roma emerged amongst the new leaders of post-communist states, a developing free-press and the public alike (Cahn and Vermeersch, 2007, Raihman, 2007).

In the West of Europe, the failure to challenge stereotypical, negative perceptions of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma by any authorities meant that the burgeoning populist media grasped them as a scapegoat for the ills of capitalist excess. As land and property had become more valuable in Western Europe and wealth was gained from its sale or use, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma were removed from it (Morris and Clements, 2002). Increasingly then, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma had no places to stop or stay on and they faced a crisis of accommodation (Pusca, 2010, James, 2011). Media accounts of the lives of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma stigmatisatised their communities, informing a negative public discourse (Richardson, 2006). Gypsies, Travellers and Roma were drawn by the media as lazy and work-shy, and over-archingly as unclean in some way, or ‘dirty’. Sibley (1988) utilises the work of Douglas (1966) on ‘purity and danger’ in order to unpack societal responses to Gypsies, Travellers and Roma. In doing so he notes the need of people to make sense of the world through processes of classification, and that those who cannot be classified are identified as pollutants, ‘as a threat to the integrity of the collective’ (Sibley, 1988: 410). Discussion amongst scholars of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma issues focus on the genesis of the threat posed by these communities, which is largely placed in their propensity to nomadism or their mobility. The nomadic nature of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma lifestyles, as noted above, places them apart from the rest of society and subsequently is used as a tool to exclude them. Gypsies, Travellers and Roma have therefore become a ‘problem’ in the perception of non-Gypsy society, fed by a malignant media.

Hating Gypsies, Travellers and Roma

In the late twentieth century then, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma faced a commonality of issues, despite their diverse communities and breadth of experiences throughout Europe. Their nomadic lifestyle was limited by a deficiency of space and place, they suffered from a lack of employment and opportunity and they were demonised by the rest of society as ‘pollutants’. They were beginning to be recognised by European agencies as the poorest people in Europe, with the worst accommodation, health and welfare of any minority communities (Brearley, 2001).

Despite the fact that Gypsies, Travellers and Roma make up the largest minority in Europe (Council of Europe, 2011) their plight has only recently been addressed by research, writing and political movements. This can be explained in part by the very nature of their distance from the rest of society. The lack of public empathy towards Gypsies, Travellers and Roma is augmented by a lack of knowledge or understanding of their communities. Little light is shone on how Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities really live due to the fact that such communities are loath to open their doors to outsiders; they keep to themselves, guarding their privacy after so many years of vilification. An excellent example of the irony of the stigma attached to Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, is the key tool used to attack them: the notion of them as ‘dirty’. Gypsies, Travellers and Roma actually commonly follow strict rules of hygiene, based on their historic nomadism. These rules dictate how they live, work and socialise and they inform moral codes of behaviour. Despite some recent attempts to bring the real lives of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in to the public gaze through television programmes particularly, they remain stereotyping, rather than informative and focus on aspects of their lives that are the most challenging to outsiders’ perceptions (Munk, 2007, Hutchings, 2013, Jensen and Ringrose, 2013).

Gypsies, Travellers and Roma therefore remain the most disliked communities in Europe, as the twenty-first century advances. Numerous studies and surveys have identified negative public attitudes towards Gypsies, Travellers and Roma (for example, Frazer and Marlier, 2011, Csepeli and Simon, 2007, Gounev and Beslov, 2006) and Goldston (2002:157) suggests that prejudice against them is ‘casual’ and ‘insidious’ throughout Europe, resulting in it becoming normalised. It is unsurprising then that politicians and officials have been able to voice negative views against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma without recourse (Parker, 2012) and subsequently, governmental policies and legislations have been created that directly discriminate against and criminalise Gypsies, Travellers and Roma. For example, in the UK legislation has prevented Gypsies, Travellers and Roma from staying on publically owned land (James, 2007), in Italy Gypsies, Travellers and Roma were subject to fingerprinting and expulsion (Clough-Marinaro, 2009), in Turkey they were removed forcibly from areas to allow for the gentrification of cities (Somersan and Kirca-Schroeder, 2007) and in Slovakia they were not allowed to live in certain areas (Goldston, 2006), to name but a few. These policies have acted to place Gypsies, Travellers and Roma within a ‘discourse of punishment’ (Bancroft, 2000), rather than provision and as such their identity has been framed as offenders, rather than as victims (James, 2013). Such populist punitive approaches to Gypsies, Travellers and Roma have resulted in increased victimisation of them.

Gypsies, Travellers and Roma are victimised in two distinct ways that are conflated by the fact that each is motivated by bias or ‘hate’ against their communities. Firstly, they are discriminated against by both state and non-state agencies and they therefore experience prejudice in their daily lives. Secondly, they experience crimes committed against them that are motivated by hate. The conflation of discrimination and traditionally understood ‘hate crimes’ against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe has occurred for a number of reasons: Gypsies, Travellers and Roma tend to place their experiences of hate on a continuum that ranges from crimes committed against them, to their poor treatment by state and non-state agencies; the continued failure of states and agencies to challenge discrimination heightens their victimisation; and, scholars of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma issues have incorporated analysis of *all* prejudicial actions and sentiments against them as ‘anti-Gypsyism’ (James, 2014).

In terms of discrimination, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma do not receive the same levels of care and welfare that other communities’ access. They suffer high levels of deprivation and live in poor accommodation, have high infant mortality rates, poor general health and low life expectancy, and are discriminated against in education systems throughout Europe, resulting in some countries placing high proportions of their Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children in schools for children with learning difficulties (for an excellent European-wide summary of the welfare outcomes for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, see Frazer and Marlier, 2011). Gypsies, Travellers and Roma are commonly refused services, including entrance to amenities such as libraries, launderettes, sports facilities and local community spaces (Cemlyn et al, 2009). Further, they are often refused entrance to shops, bars and restaurants (Goldston, 2006).

Perhaps the most serious discrimination experienced by Gypsies, Travellers and Roma though, is that where state agencies are complicit in the bullying or exclusion they receive. Additional to the populist punitive policies and legislation applied to Gypsies, Travellers and Roma from the top of states down, as outlined above, research papers detail horrific acts meted out on Gypsies, Travellers and Roma by local policing agencies and local authorities. For example, in Hungary police physically abused suspects in their custody and took part in local violence against a Romani man (Szikinger, 2010). In Serbia police used torture against members of the Roma community, and were often violent and abusive towards them (Kesetovic, 2009). In Romania, Roma communities were ghettoised by local authorities that constructed large walls to exclude and hide them from other Romanians (Bumbu, 2012) and in Slovakia police used cruelty and brutality against Roma and coercion and segregation was practiced by local authorities (Buckova, 2012). In Italy Gypsies, Travellers and Roma were forced to live in ‘camps’ that equated to ghettos (Clough Marinaro, 2009) or they were expelled from the country (Costi, 2010). Similarly, in France, police brutality was used in forced evictions (James, 2007) and Gypsies, Travellers and Roma were expelled from the country (Pusca, 2010).

This discrimination experienced by Gypsies, Travellers and Roma from multiple agencies and actors across Europe (I have only provided a brief snapshot here), has fed in to the vicious cycle of stereotyping that is fed by the media and has increased public dislike of their communities. Further, particularly in post-communist Eastern Europe, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma have suffered exclusion to the degree that they have turned to petty crime to survive. This criminality has been perceived as evidence of their inbred delinquency and has further augmented other communities’ hatred of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma (Brearley, 2001). They have subsequently been met by mob-violence that amounts to pogroms in many countries, including in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and the Czech Republic (Brearley, 2001). Such shocking violence has rarely been held to account by either state or European authorities.

In both the East and West of Europe, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma are hated within their own countries due to public belief in stereotypes of their criminality and their lifestyles as previously discussed. They are also hated for their mobility. In the East they are hated because they are believed to have brought disrepute to Eastern European countries when they have moved in to Western Europe. In the West, they are hated because they are perceived as invaders (Kabachnik, 2010) from the East, despite the fact that most Western European Gypsies, Travellers and Roma have resided there for generations, even centuries. Within this environment of hate and frustration, far right political movements have latched on to the ‘Roma-problem’ as a tool to gain recognition, membership and electoral success.

Varying analyses of the role of far-right organisations in hate motivated crimes against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe exist, with some placing their involvement at the root of all hate crimes (Brearley, 2001) and others seeing them as riding the populist wave of anti-Gypsyism (European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, 2012). It is quite likely that both of these analyses are true, as different states histories determine the activity and prominence of far-right groups (Savelsberg and King, 2005). In real terms, knowledge of hate crimes committed against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma is limited, as countries lack effective recording practices. Furthermore, throughout Europe, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma do not report hate crimes committed against them to the authorities, due to their lack of faith in criminal justice systems. For example, the European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (2012) found that despite very high levels of violence and harassment experienced by ‘Roma’, 75% of victims were unwilling to report such offences to the police due to a lack of confidence in them. Also, Gypsies, Travellers and Roma do not report hate crimes for similar reasons to other hate crime victims: they lack faith in the police as above, they perceive that there is little that could be done to resolve the problem, the problem is normalised within their communities or they perceive the problem as too minor to involve authorities (Hall, 2005).

The lack of consistent recording of hate crimes across Europe raises particular issues in tackling it. In the UK recording tools have been set up by both state and non-state organisations to capture hate crime levels. Though these can be problematic in themselves (Christman and Wong, 2010), they are comprehensive relative to other European countries. This means however, that the UK hate crime statistics are high in comparison to the rest of Europe, which implies that the UK has a greater hate crime problem than other European states (Donnelly, 2002). Indeed, some states in Europe have denied any issues with hate crime, utilising a lack of records as evidence of this (Frazer and Marlier, 2011). High levels of discrimination and hate crime against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma across Europe since the 1990s have been recorded by research however (Stewart, 2012, European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, 2012, OSCE, 2012, 2011) and public resentment of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities has even led to protests and riots (Ivanov, 2012). Even a brief review of literature provides comprehensive information on the serious crimes committed against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma that are not reflected in any official statistics. For example, in Hungary between 2008 and 2009 six Roma people were killed in incidents when ‘molotov cocktails’ were thrown at their homes and they were shot as they attempted to flee (Daroczi, 2012). In the UK in 2003, a young boy was beaten to death as perpetrators said, ‘he was only a Gypsy’ (James, 2013) and similarly, in the Czech Republic a Roma man was stabbed to death following racial abuse in a bar (Goldston, 2010). In Italy in 2008, a Roma camp was set fire to following a conflict between the Roma community and their settled neighbours the previous day (Costi, 2010). OSCE reports on hate crimes in Europe (for example, 2012, 2011) detail numerous other examples of such serious hate crimes. Further, reports of other hate offences such as damage to homes, vehicles and sites, as well as other physical abuse against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe litter the pages of research papers (for example, James, 2014, Kyuchokov, 2012, Kabachnik and Ryder, 2010) .

The role of ‘hate speech’ in the perpetuation of hate crimes in Europe evidences the other end of the spectrum of hate committed against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma. Hate speech is far less likely to be perceived as crime per se, but its impact on communities is overwhelming as both individuals and whole communities are beleaguered by it (Bowling, 1999). Again, the use of hate speech is identified in multiple research studies across Europe (Stewart, 2012, Vidra and Fox, 2012, Mirga, 2009). Goldston (2002) cites the hate speech of powerful elites in dictating negative public attitudes towards Gypsies, Travellers and Roma. So, he refers to a Hungarian Mayor in 2000, who he reports as saying, 'The Roma… have no place among human beings. Just as in the animal world, parasites must be expelled' (Goldston, 2002: 156). The media amplifies such negative attitudes and behaviour with similarly problematic hate speech. For example, in the UK in 2005, a popular national daily newspaper ran a campaign against Gypsies and Travellers entitled, 'Stamp on the Camps' (Dear, 2005). The use of hate speech then frames the stigma attached to Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe, exacerbating their experiences of discrimination and hate crimes committed against them.

European responses to hate against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma.

Hate speech against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma has been used for political gains by far-right groups in Eastern Europe (Mirga, 2009) which Csepeli and Simon (2007) suggest has interrupted the development of positive relations with Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities. At the same time some Eastern European countries have courted membership of the EU and have tried to minimise the extent of their problematic issues with Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities to that end (Sobotka and Vermeersch, 2012). As part of the process of accession to the EU, Eastern European states have been required to address their human rights record, and so the gaze of the EU and its related agencies, such as the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), that have specific human rights agendas, have enhanced their consideration of the lives of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma. This process has led to an interrogation of data and evidence on discrimination towards Gypsies, Travellers and Roma that has resulted in the 2011 EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 (Luggin, 2012) and increased monitoring of 'anti-Gypsyism' across Europe by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights under the remit of the OSCE. Reporting to these organisations remains poor however as countries aspiring to EU entry, or newly entered continue to hide hate and discrimination towards Gypsies, Travellers and Roma within their state boundaries (OSCE, 2012, 2011).

Individual state policies on prejudice and discrimination differ widely across Europe, dependent on their origins. As Savelsberg and King (2005:579) note, 'collective memory' and 'cultural trauma' activate different national responses to hate victimisation for 'political, legal and moral purposes'. So, the resounding memory of the Holocaust in Western Europe has resulted in particular concerns regarding the development of far-right political activism, whereas this has been overtaken in the East by the more recent memory of communist control and repression, potentially leaving space for far-right political voices to be heard. The EU developed from the perspective of the West, with its onus on ensuring human rights and therefore its policies reflect this perspective. In the rest of Europe, organisations such as the OSCE attempt to drive the human rights agenda forward, but it is often non-governmental organisations that have pushed for change most effectively, partly due to their local knowledge of the realities of hate crimes and discrimination against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma.

Ignatoiu-Sora (2011) argues that the development of rights organisations, such as the European Roma Rights Centre in Hungary, has resulted in better recognition of discrimination and offending against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma. Despite EU programmes to improve knowledge of discrimination and hate towards Gypsies, Travellers and Roma and policies designed to tackle such problems, their implementation is met by bottlenecks at national, regional and local levels due to institutionalised prejudice, as outlined above (Sobotka and Vermeersch, 2012). Therefore, minority rights law is being increasingly utilised by non-governmental organisations to ensure that Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe are recognised as equal citizens of states and that resources are redistributed to them (Kostadinova, 2011). Such initiatives from the bottom of states up challenge local, regional and national approaches to Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in order to prevent discrimination against them and to lift them out of poverty more effectively (Goldston, 2010). Following successful use of minority rights law within states that have such laws enshrined and use of EU law when they have not, resources have begun to make a positive impact on Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities in Europe. Goldston (2002) suggests that there have been improvements in media representations of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma and EU grants have been utilised to improve educational opportunities. Some policing approaches have also subsequently improved, so training of police in Slovenia for example has resulted in improved relations between police and Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, which has also resulted in better overall community relations (Strobl, Banutai, Duque and Haberfeld, 2013). Also, in Poland, development of human rights legislation has improved public perceptions of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma (Celinska and Gutkowska, 2013).

Conclusion: Recognising hate against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma

In this chapter I have attempted to provide an overview of hate crimes committed against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe and some responses to them. In doing so, I have not prescribed boundaries of what ‘Europe’ constitutes, but have intentionally distinguished between the East and the West. I have done this in order that any commonality of problems can be drawn out, while their genesis can be distinguished. As such, the chapter refrains, I hope, from ethicising the experiences of Roma in the East and nomadising Gypsies and Travellers in the West (Simhandl, 2006). Academic discourse surrounding Gypsies, Travellers and Roma is fraught with difficulty, as any attempt to homogenise such heterogeneous communities should. I have therefore tried here to be all-encompassing, to include all those people who may perceive themselves as Gypsy, Traveller or Roma, akin to the UK definition of hate crime that allows for the perception of prejudice by any person (James, 2014).

In presenting the hate experiences of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma here, the chapter initially identified their placing as ‘others’ in communities. This process of othering has occurred in Europe through historic ignorance of the cultural differences of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, through pathological determination of their identity and their exclusion from society. The chapter has therefore provided an outline of the contemporary position of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma as framed by a stigma that has been perpetuated by the media and utilised by populist punitive political agendas throughout Europe. In such conditions Gypsies, Travellers and Roma have experienced high levels of hate crime and discrimination against them, some of which I have detailed here. A paucity of official records of hate crime is available however and therefore state responses to hate crimes have been relatively limited. Nor have states seen the utility of addressing hate against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma, given the extent of public dislike of such communities. Nevertheless, an increasing gaze of European-wide agencies and pressure from local non-governmental organisations has slowly brought to light the extent of discrimination and hatred against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma which is making change possible. As such ‘anti-Gypsyism’, or ‘Romaphobia’ (Ljujic, Vedder, Dekker and van Geel, 2012) is being tackled more.

Despite positive strides made, the extensive nature of hate crime against Gypsies, Travellers and Roma in Europe and their exacerbation since the 1990s, as detailed in this chapter, need greater recognition. As post-communist countries in the East of Europe struggle to manage the vagaries of market economies, so community insecurities continue to rise and othering processes function to provide a scapegoat for these fears in the figures of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma. Similarly, in the West of Europe, state recession as a consequence of fiscal crises, has led to greater competition for resources and subsequent community tensions that place Gypsies, Travellers and Roma as scapegoats for the losses communities have experienced. Therefore throughout Europe Gypsies, Travellers and Roma continue to struggle for a voice, a place and space to exist free of acrimony, hostility and hate.

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