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CHAPTER EIGHT

'It is possible to have an education and be a Traveller': Education, Higher Education and Gypsy/Travellers in Britain

Colin Clark

Introduction: setting the agenda

> I believe that Gypsies reject education not because they are constantly moving around but because they are constantly faced with attitudes which deny them their culture whilst in the education system. (Lee, 2000: 23-25)

> Education has not cancelled out my Traveller identity. It gives you more of a chance to be independent in life. Whatever happens in the future, you know you can survive. It is possible to have an education and be a Traveller. (Hedges, 1999: 15)

Ideas such as cultural diversity and celebrating difference are being heard on an increasingly regular basis across many forms of popular culture and media in Britain today. In a liberal country like Britain such positive expressions should not just be voiced and tolerated but also respected and celebrated. However, for many minority ethnic children in Britain there is little to celebrate when it comes to accessing an education that seems relevant to their needs and free of racism. Indeed, even in a pluralistic and multicultural environment, the very right to an education can be an issue, and this can apply to the group of ethnic minorities who tend to be collectively known as Gypsies and/or Travellers. Whether through blatant examples of individual racism or more subtle exclusionary forms of institutional racism, schools, colleges and universities are too often failing to help Gypsy and Traveller children learn new skills and acquire different bodies of knowledge that will allow them to prepare for the challenges of the 21st Century. Whilst it is true that the family and extended family has, and will always be, the primary learning environment for Gypsy and Traveller children, schools, colleges and universities have a part to play in nurturing talent and helping them fulfil their potential. The two quotes that began this chapter, both from female Gypsy students who are in higher education, alert us to the fact that much is at stake here. Factors such as nomadism, attitudes, culture, identity and independence all need to be addressed if Gypsies and Travellers are to participate in further and higher education in Britain, both as students and as teachers.

The limited empirical evidence available on issues of access, pupil/student experiences and achievement rates within HE are stark. The work in which I have been involved with Save the Children revealed that less than 20% of Gypsy and Traveller children of secondary school age in Scotland attend with any degree of regularity (Clark, 2001). This applies across Britain and is usually explained in terms of Gypsy/Traveller cultural difference and their family occupations and mobility. Other nomadic minority groups in Scotland such as Travelling Showpeople have similar experiences of secondary schooling (Jordan, 2000).

Much of the debate on the education of Gypsy and Traveller children is heavily contested and can be deeply divisive. Some educationalists insist on the centrality of formal education – at least until secondary age – within a school environment, whereas Gypsy and Traveller families offer several culturally coherent reasons for not entering children into the settled or *gaujo* (non-Gypsy) education system. Bullying and other social or moral concerns, such as boys and girls mixing freely, concerns regarding drugs and also sex education classes, are cited and the usefulness of what is taught in schools may be questioned. There is tension because the arguments generally rely on anecdotal evidence and uninformed impressions. For example, there is no substantial empirical research or evidence on how young Gypsy and Traveller adults experience the college or university environment in Britain. But low attendance at primary school and lower attendance still at secondary level restricts routes into further and higher education for an ethnic minority group that is almost universally feared and loathed. They are largely invisible in the sense of their exclusion from academic debates on ethnicity and racial studies and among government policy-makers (Morris, 1999). Though accurate numbers are a problem because there was no box for them to tick in the 2001 census, Gypsies and Travellers are roughly as numerous as the Chinese community in Britain – approximately 200,000-250,000 according to most informed estimates, or 0.4% of the total UK population (Kenrick and Clark, 1999; Morris and Clements, 2002). And unlike the gaujo community, it is a young and growing population – so these issues are pressing. Interestingly, whereas in the central and eastern parts of Europe the high birth-rates of the Romani population are seen as a social, economic and political threat to society (see Kohn, 1995) in Britain, perhaps due to Western concerns over the forthcoming demographic time-bomb and the looming pensions crisis, high rates of reproduction may be welcomed. Couples are seldom childless and it is not unusual for families to have five, six or more children (Hawes, 1997; Smart, Titterton and Clark, 2003).

In this chapter I draw upon some of the key findings of the Save the Children study and demonstrate that there is an urgent need for extending the boundaries of what we mean by cultural diversity to include the needs and experiences of Gypsy and Traveller children. If questions about access and academic attainment levels are to be adequately addressed, the experiences of racism and discrimination Gypsy and Traveller children face in every sector of the British education system need to be acknowledged and then tackled and monitored.

Gypsy/Travellers in Britain and Europe: a snapshot of a culture

The Gypsy and Traveller population of Britain clearly has much diversity within it; it is not a homogenous grouping although tthere are many commonalities. The main groups are, in their own languages, *Romanichals* (English Gypsies), *Kale* (Welsh Gypsies), *Minceir* (Irish Travellers), *Nachins* (Scottish Travellers), New Travellers, and Romanies who have come from various parts of Central and Eastern Europe and groups such as Travelling Showpeople and Circus people. Within that 200,000-250,000 population figure it would be a conservative assumption that around 60,000-70,000 are under the age of 18. In Ireland, where there was an appropriate category in the recent Census, nearly 24,000 Travellers were enumerated (Central Statistics Agency, 2003).

Other reports and sources that might be expected to mention the Gypsy and Traveller population's experiences have generally failed to do so – such as the influential Policy Studies Institute's research on Britain's ethnic minority populations. Even in the 1997 study (Modood *et al*), Gypsies and other Travellers are not mentioned. Without accurate quantitative and qualitative information, it will be a struggle to implement innovative policy.

The legal situation also has implications for access to education. In the eyes of the law, English Gypsies (as of 1989, *CRE vs Dutton*) and Irish Travellers living in England (as of 2000, *O'Leary and others vs Punch Retail and others*) are protected under the Race Relations Act 1976 from racial discrimination. These are significant legal rulings and should offer the communities concerned some protection, but this is not always the case and examples still abound of anti-Gypsy prejudice and discrimination, whether in the education system or in other public services (Discrimination Law Association, 2002). In Scotland the status of Gypsy-Traveller ethnicity is still undecided in a court of law although the Scottish Executive have stated that until such a case comes forward the community should be regarded as a minority ethnic group under the terms of the Race Relations Act, 1976 as amended in 2000 (McKinney, 2003).

If a family wants their children to attend school and perhaps go on to college or University, one important thing they need is secure accommodation, at least during term-time. As of January 2002 there were 325 local authority Gypsy sites in England providing pitches for some 5,005 caravans. But, even according to the government's own figures, this local authority network provides accommodation for fewer than 50% of the total number of Gypsy caravans in England (ODPM, 2003). The situation in Wales, and particularly Scotland and Northern Ireland, is quite different (see Kenrick and Clark, 1999 for more detail). However, across the UK the shortfall in local authority site provision and pitches has meant that private site developments that are on the increase – if families have the money to buy land and the time and money to obtain planning permission. This can be costly and problematic as suitable land is often in the green belt. One common statistic quoted illustrates the scenario vividly – the success rate for planning applications overall, including those made by Gypsies and Travellers, is around 80% whereas for Gypsy and Traveller site plans alone it is a mere 10% (Morris, 1998: 3). As a result of local authority shortages and private site planning difficulties, roadside

sites such as lay-bys, quarries, industrial estates and the like are still used today by at least 3,000 – 3,500 people at any time who have no legal place to stop (Kenrick and Clark, 1999: 183).

Government legislation and tougher policies on the policing and eviction of unauthorised sites have made things much harder. In particular, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (CJPOA) was very damaging and continues to cause many Gypsy and Traveller families severe accommodation problems (Bucke and James, 1998). Not only did this Act tear up the hard won Caravan Sites Act of 1968, which placed a legal duty on local authorities to provide sites, it also transformed trespass from a civil into a criminal act carrying severe penalties (Card and Ward, 1994). The Act effectively criminalised a nomadic way of life, regardless of whether it had an 'economic purpose' as one case suggested (*R vs South Hams DC ex p Gibb [1993] 26 HLR*). The CJPOA did not affect only Gypsy and Traveller accommodation options and patterns of travel, it had a number of unintended consequences in different areas. As Police officers became more familiar with the CJPOA, the police, local authorities and other agencies would be trying to get the family moved on, if they were illegally camped, while the Traveller Education Services were trying to get Gypsy children into schools. Thus the children's education was disrupted. In the words of Cathy Kiddle:

> The CJA [Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, 1994] demonstrated a clear will to force people off the road into settled accommodation denying the right to a nomadic habit of life... For the families with no legal place to be the options are few and bleak.Trying to get a school based education with any kind of continuity for children in these circumstances is difficult indeed. For some, who experience a series of swift evictions right across the country there is scant chance for school access at all. (Kiddle, 1999: 59-60)

A recent study by a team of researchers at Cardiff Law School noted the disruption and financial consequences of repeat evictions and the impact this has on learning and employment opportunities:

> Travelling people have told the TLRU [Traveller Law Research Unit] about having to drop out of evening classes or college courses, and being forced to relinquish good jobs; being unable to reach them any longer following an eviction cycle which forced them to ever greater distances. (Morris and Clements, 2002: 53-54)

They point to the 1999 European Commission report on the case of *Sally Chapman v UK.* To avoid facing court action over alleged planning irregularities with respect to land they owned and lived on, the family had to return to a nomadic way of life that led to a cycle of evictions from one local authority to another:

> The applicant's eldest daughter had started a hairdressing course at a College of Further Education and the second daughter was about to start studying at college for a Diploma in Forestry. Both of these courses had to be abandoned and the two younger children could no longer attend school. (European Commission, 25-10-99, quoted in Morris and Clements, 2002: 54)

A brief overview of history and trends in Gypsy education in Britain

The last two decades have seen some efforts to improve experience of formal educational provision for Gypsies and Travellers. On a practical level, England and Wales, have specialist teams called Traveller Education Services (TES) whose remit it is to offer support to pupils from Gypsy and Traveller families. At formal policy level the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the HM Inspectorate of schools and LEAs in England and Wales, identified 'Gypsy/Traveller pupils as the group most at risk in the education system today' (Ofsted, 1999: para.8). Likewise, the Parekh Report on *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (2000: 146) noted the 'generally low [educational] attainment' of Gypsy and Traveller children as being 'a matter of serious concern'. Such concerns are not new. As far back as 1967, for example, the Plowden Report stated that Gypsies and Travellers are 'probably the most deprived group in the country' due to cultural restraints within Traveller communities as well as bullying and 'negative attitudes' towards children when in school. At the time of the report it estimated less than 10% of school-age children were attending regularly. The Swann report went even further:

> The situation of Travellers' children in Britain today throws into stark relief many of the factors which influence the education of children from other ethnic minority groups – racism and discrimination, myths, stereotyping and misinformation, the inappropriateness and inflexibility of the education system and the need for better links between homes and schools and teachers and parents. (Department of Education and Science, 1985: para. 26)

By the mid-1990s, Ofsted was reporting that attendance levels at primary school age were up to 80%, that old attitudes were starting to shift and relationships between homes and schools were beginning to improve (Ofsted, 1996). But certain factors needed attention, such as school exclusions, high levels of non-registration at secondary level and, consequently the low number of those going on to further and higher education. Seven years on these are still the main issues on the agenda.

The few words we have on record from Gypsy and Traveller pupils who have gone through the system best explain why so few choose to attend school past 12 or 13 years of age and why parents may be reluctant to send their children to secondary school:

> The secondary school I went to was a nightmare, and our education was just about survival. We did not have the time to read and write because we were being spat upon, bullied and generally abused by the pupils and the majority of teachers. (MK, Adult Male Gypsy, Scottish Gypsy-Traveller Association, Equality Opportunities Committee hearings: Oral evidence given to the Scottish Parliament in May 2000)

> You leave school at the age of 11 or 12 or at the time of your first confirmation, whichever comes first. Then you are expected to act like a man.... You would be mocked by the others [young Travellers] for wearing a school bag after the age of 14. It makes it very hard to go on at the schooling. It is very discouraging. (Irish Traveller, boy, quoted in Donahue and McVeigh, 2001: 4)

In 2000 a DfEE funded study in London examined good practice entailed when working with Gypsy and Traveller pupils (Bhopal *et al*, 2000). It described how six schools in England and had taken successful steps to improve attendance and achievement rates of Gypsy and Traveller pupils. Certain factors were found to be crucial: the role of Traveller

Education Services, strong leadership and effective school policies on race equality and bullying, good working relationships between schools and parents and the need for flexibility and a culturally relevant curriculum. The recommendations are a model for schools with Gypsy and Traveller pupils. The research was important in recognising the need for resources and investment to fund inclusionary practices, and support head-teachers who promote good practice for pupils from Gypsy and Traveller background. The case studies demonstrated that with hard work, leadership, dialogue and money, educational provision for Gypsy and Traveller children could improve.

There has also been progress on counting numbers. In 2003 the DfES statement(2003a, Table 3) on pupil characteristics and class sizes reported that, as of January 2003, there were some 7,000 pupils from Gypsy and Traveller backgrounds in primary schools in England and 2,800 in secondary schools. However, as the DfES acknowledges, there are around 42,000 school-age Gypsy and Traveller children in England (DfES, 2003b). With regard to achievement, Ofsted (1999) has shown that Gypsy and Traveller children have the lowest results overall of any minority ethnic group and are at risk in the education system. A recent document from the DfES (2003c) has promised that data on Gypsy and Traveller achievement will be collected as part of the 2003 Pupil Level Annual Schools Census so that their needs can be considered alongside those of other minority ethnic pupils. But the main issue for Ofsted today is the refusal of some schools still to even admit Gypsy and Traveller children, or imposing discriminatory conditions on admission or delaying the registration procedure. Bhopal (2000) identifies this as a major hurdle: an admissions policy that is open and accessible to Gypsies and Travellers is essential to good attendance and working relationships between parents and teachers. Little will change until this fundamental equality issue is addressed.

Denied a future? the Save the Children report and European perspectives

> Interviewer: If you were Minister of Education for a day what changes [to the education system] would you make to promote education for Roma?
>
> Roma student: I would prefer to be Minister of Finance and allocate money to implement it effectively.

This insightful answer from one of the tiny minority of Romani University students in central Europe illustrates one dimension of the key findings from the Save the Children report *Denied a future?* Changes in educational systems are ruled by their budgets (SCF, 2001). The report examines the current situation of Roma/Gypsy and Traveller education across a range of European countries including the UK. The findings from fourteen countries make grim reading. Amongst the repeated reports of poor access and provision, exclusion, lack of legal redress, poverty and racial discrimination were the voices of children who were trying to learn. 'School is good for the future, we can achieve something', said one 12 year old Romani girl. A 16 year old Romani boy expressess the difficulty of trying to take up education in a society in the grips of economic transition: 'I would like to continue, but my parents don't have enough money for the books and everything else I need' (Andruszkiewicz, 2001).

The principle aim of the Save the Children report is to make available a text which for the first time critically questions the legislation, policy and practice of the type of education being offered to Romani children – one of Europe's largest, most impoverished and discriminated against ethnic minority groups. The continental population of Roma/Gypsy and Travellers is estimated at some 7 to 9 million people with more than half thought to be under the age of 18 (Barany, 2002). It is a young and growing population that will not just go away. The report is based on a rights model: one that fuses minority, human and child rights to create a holistic approach to investigating issues relating to education. Although not entirely unproblematic, this model can deal with the wider social and political context of the democratisation and economic restructuring process across Europe and how it impacts on specific issues for specific groups – principally Roma/Gypsy and Travellers' right to education.

The problems with this framework are that it allows for contradictions and tensions. For example, Brian Barry has argued in the *New Left Review* that the law on attendance for nomadic Gypsy/Traveller children (50% the attendance of settled children in a school year) is 'an ill-conceived example of deference to minority cultures'. He acknowledges that 'children belonging to cultural minorities should be able to enjoy their own culture' but asks 'but must this culture be frozen in time forever? That convention [the Convention on the Rights of the Child] and other UN documents also contain 'the unequivocally expressed right of all children to education', and I would argue that parents should not be able to deny them such a right' (Barry, 2001: 71). Jane G. Lee, a Gypsy woman currently studying for a Ph.D. at the University of Durham, goes some way to explaining the situation for many Gypsy and Traveller students and pupils:

> So we may well ask why offer education to Gypsies at all? It might be 'equal' to do so, but are there any benefits to the education of Gypsies? After all, education prepares an individual for their life as an employee, *but what is the use of teaching children the skills they will never use as adults?* Although the majority of Gypsies would agree with the education authorities that it is beneficial for a basic level of education to be acquired, I believe they consider that there is a price to be paid (assimilation) and so opt out [at secondary level]. (my emphasis). (Lee, 2000: 23)

Thus the rights of Gypsy/Traveller parents to operate as commercial nomads are presented as conflicting with the rights of the child to a stable and full-time education. But need they be mutually exclusive? This is where the Traveller Education Services (TES) comes in with distance learning packages and other education provision outside the school gates. It is evident that minority, human, and child rights are becoming problematic when fused together like this. Scottish Gypsy-Traveller families may refuse to be labelled ethnic minorities, attributing the label to visible minorities. At one Save the Children seminar in Dundee in 1999, I saw one Gypsy-Traveller woman take issue on this matter with the leader of the workshop session on equality issues and the law. She demanded: 'Do I look Black to you, son?' (Clark, forthcoming).

Essentially, the SCF work is asking whether the money currently spent by governments, intergovernmental agencies and international NGOs on educational reform across Europe for Roma/Gypsy and Traveller groups is actually paying dividends. Certainly the

World Bank, European Union and many national and local governments and other agencies are interested to find out if their investment is worthwhile (see, for example, Ringold *et al*, 2003). But equally crucially, what noticeable impacts are these investments having? How are they being monitored and measured? Are innovative and temporary pilot initiatives leading to secure and robust long-term projects? Is systemic change a future possibility or current reality? Or are Roma/Gypsy and Traveller children continuing to lose out? Much is still to be done. The answers are far from simple but the report is at least asking these difficult questions and indicating that putting them on the European political agenda might be a way forward.

The current European context demands that safeguarding the right to education of Roma/Gypsy and Traveller minorities should be of primary concern to politicians and policymakers. From debates about European Union enlargement, migration and asylum policies to questions of democratisation and human rights, there is usually some mention of Roma/Gypsy and Traveller groups in the European corridors of power. The UK situation also deserves attention at this level – in particular why so few Gypsy and Traveller students make it to college and University.

Gypsies and Travellers in further education and higher education

> There are still many secondary aged [Gypsy] children who are not receiving adequate secondary education, or even in many cases registered with a secondary school... *There is likely to be less than twelve Gypsy students in further or higher education in Britain at any one time.* (Morris, undated: 2 – my emphasis)

> I've never heard of a Gypsy girl going to college... no Gypsy goes to school after the age of thirteen or fourteen. Perhaps one in ten might. (Anonymous Gypsy, Heath Common Site, Wakefield, quoted in Daley and Henderson (eds.) 1998: 70)

Empirical research on how Gypsy and Traveller children experience further and higher education in Britain is urgently needed. All we have are scraps of anecdotal evidence and personal testimony from families whose children have tried to get a place at college or University and the few who have made it. There is, however, some literature and research on secondary schooling (Kenny, 1997; Derrington and Kendall, 2004). One survey from 2001 found that in the entire south of Ireland there were only 38 6th form pupils in secondary schools and just one Traveller enrolled in further education (Birkett, 2002). Similarly in Central and Eastern Europe, few Roma progress to secondary level or attend college or University. It is estimated that in Hungary for example – which has managed relatively well since the post-1989 changes – only 1.5% of Roma graduate annually from High School and 0.001% from University (United States Embassy, 2003). Despite the funding efforts of financier George Soros to create Roma-focused specialist primary and secondary educational opportunities, and thus help establish a new Roma intellegentsia in Hungary, success is still some way off (Open Society Institute 2003).

In Britain the situation is grim but appears to be improving. Some local colleges, when approached directly or via third parties (e.g. Gypsy civil rights groups or voluntary agencies that work with Travellers) are providing specific courses to meet the needs of the community in their local areas. This has been evident in central Scotland, the north

east of England and Cambridgeshire. The courses tend to be vocational in nature (such as welding, building and construction work, car mechanics, nursery nursing, landscape gardening, childcare) or in the arts and humanities with a view to university access. Young Gypsies and Travellers are breaking through into certain professional areas such as the law, journalism, academia, the voluntary sector and town planning. With regards to legal and public administration training, the respected European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) offers scholarships to students from a Roma/Gypsy or Traveller background to take up degree courses in such subjects at local universities in their own countries (see: http://errc.org/capacitation/index.shtml). There is some media exposure about those who enter such occupations but some individuals understandably do not want publicity or to be identified as someone from a Gypsy or Traveller background. It is evident that prejudice and discrimination can operate even in the most liberal of institutions. Beyond undergraduate studies at university, an increasing number of postgraduates are doing critical work on their own culture and on different topics – such as at Greenwich, Leicester and Durham Universities.

Interestingly and perhaps surprisingly, most students are female, which challenges the assumption of feminist commentators who view Gypsy society as overtly patriarchal (see Okely, 1983). Gypsy men, like many of their working class peers in the wider settled society, are still concerned to have 'real jobs' and carry on family businesses working with uncles, brothers and cousins. The family name, whether associated with being a general dealer, landscape gardener or scrapping, is important to pass on – although with room to adapt to new business opportunities when they arise.

Ethnic invisibility is an issue. Unlike many ethnic minority groups in Britain, Gypsies and Travellers can opt whether to disclose their ethnicity. There are certain identifiers such as an address on a caravan site, or a surname and style of appearance, but in terms of physiology and skin colour then there is room for manoeuvre. Witness what one female Traveller has said regarding her identity and how it is both presented and received by others within a higher education setting:

> There are only a few teachers at college who know I'm a Traveller... it's a hard thing to come out with. If I were to tell other students, some wouldn't speak to me again and some would say 'So?' You just can't tell what their reaction will be, even though, being a Traveller, you come to be a good judge of character. (Hester Hedges, Traveller, female student, quoted in Klein, 1997: 4)

Institutionally, current admissions process and the basis of how decisions are made needs examining – just when the government is also interested in this. This applies for all ethnic minority communities. Funding mechanisms also need to be examined. How are the government-backed Partners/widening participation programmes working for Gypsy and Traveller populations? Are such initiatives extending to Traveller sites and sixth form colleges that may have Traveller students? More pro-active careers advice is needed at the secondary school level, that respects the opinions and wishes of both pupils and parents, whilst also pushing the boundaries of what may be considered do-able. Stereotyped ideas of Gypsies and Travellers looking after their own is no reason for witholding

advice that could make the difference in students considering applying for further or higher education.

Conclusion

> Many teenage children still take time off school to learn their parents' trades. But secondary school attendance is better from Thistlebrook [Gypsy caravan site, Greenwich] than from most Gypsy sites, because the site is so well established. *The schools have taken steps to respect the Gypsy way of life and make sure they meet Gypsy pupils' needs*' (my emphasis). (Acton and Gallant, 1997: 8)

This chapter has shown that a holistic approach to issues affecting how Gypsy and Traveller children experience educational institutions is essential. Matters such as accommodation and family work schedules will often have a direct bearing on how educational opportunities are regarded and whether they are taken up. As the Thistlebrook example shows, with some work and understanding on all sides positive results can be achieved.

What hopes are there for Gypsies and Travellers in Britain in the future? In January 2001 the Traveller Law Reform Unit at Cardiff Law School published the Traveller Reform Bill. This working document, drafted as a Bill and now going through Parliament under the direction of the multi-ethnic Traveller Law Reform Coalition (http://www.travellerslaw.org.uk/) – outlines a clear agenda for change across many areas of public life that currently affect Gypsies and other Travellers adversely. The Bill addresses concerns about sites and other forms of accommodation, health care, criminal justice, social security and education. Clauses 10-12 of the Bill directly address problematic issues in the funding mechanisms for Traveller Education Services. But it is uncertain whether this Bill will have the support it needs in the House to lead to significant legislative changes, especially as the current government is pre-occupied with other competing social and political issues.

How high up the political agenda can issues affecting Gypsies rise (Turner, 2002)? Much attention is given in the press and in parliament to evictions and other law and order issues involving Gypsies and Travellers, but pro-Gypsy policies are rarely heard and will rarely win votes. Instead in many countries including the UK, the issues are seldom addressed directly but are spoken of in terms of the problem with Gypsies and Travellers and what the cure or solution might be. Such an approach can lead potentially useful discussions back into the racist and assimilationist problematic that generated them.

This chapter and the SCF work on which it draws suggest that what we should be examining are the problems faced by Roma/Gypsy and Traveller communities in accessing the right to an education that is inclusive, relevant, participatory, appropriate and responsive to the needs of those engaging with it. The many recommendations outlined in the SCF report, from the use of stronger affirmative action programmes to wider access to pre-school provision, suggest that much can be done in both the long and short term that will not be too costly to the countries and education systems involved. It is hoped that the SCF work will create an established European educational benchmark and a new beginning for the many Roma/Gypsy and Traveller children and their families who

continue to face major barriers in taking up their right to education. Commitment to multiculturalism and antiracism will hopefully inform education systems and Gypsy and Traveller children will look forward to the challenges and indeed the frustrations of further and higher education.

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