

**9<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference  
Delivering Services for Roma (Gypsies and Travellers) 16<sup>th</sup>  
March 2011**

*The future of GR&T education-an  
international perspective*

***“Perhaps a few small  
chinks of light”***

## What does the balance sheet look like within a national and international perspective? (An overview at best within the time available)

- The credit side:
- Growing international concern about the situation of Gypsy, Roma and Travellers (GR&T). No shortage of research publications.\*
- Encouraging statements by most governments to improve the educational opportunities of GR&T communities. Say the right things!
- Hypoactive civil society and NGOs
- Supportive actions and rulings by international bodies ECHR, EU, C of E, UNDP, OSI, World Bank, UNCIFE, UNESCO, OSCE, OEDC, Save the Children etc.
- Hungarian EU Presidency (followed by Poland in July) and a strong push to EU re Roma Integration Strategy (expected in April)
- Existence of good and excellent practice in all aspects of policy and provision. An international culture of creative innovation
- Growing number of high quality books and learning resources for schools in many countries and particularly the UK
- Growing acceptance and inclusion of GR&T culture, history and language
- Increasing number of GR&T going into further and higher education and thus a growing high-achieving middle class with great leadership and political potential
- Decade of Roma inclusion

Like all good bankers hopefully know, a balance sheet has two sides ! **The red!**

- **The debit side: (in these times it is bound to be bigger!!! )**
- **Quantity and quality issues:- good practice is a victim to financial cuts in public funds (e.g. DfE consultants and TESSs)**
- **Governments strapped for cash will have no political will/mandate to invest in the education of Roma, Gypsies and Travellers when education budgets are being cut!**
- **Growth of far-right political movements who target Roma**
- **Toothless international organisations**
- **A lack of understanding/wilful ignorance by many key players who exercise racist discrimination with stealth**
- **Attacks from all sides on human rights legislation**

## **The debit side: – It begins to look grim!**

- **Official attacks on settled/nomadic GR&T communities = devastation to children's education/life chances and lost generations**
- **Race hatred will remain root cause of continued educational exclusion, restricted access and segregation of children/young people**
- **Non-existent educational data on GR&T pupils**
- **Poor health care with little improvement will continue to undermine attendance and learning at school**
- **Underachievement data will show little narrowing of the gaps and may continue to deteriorate**
- **Children will become invisible – few with the professional duty and knowledge to find them & demand a fair deal**
- **Scale and pace of educational improvement is inadequate and thus grossly disproportionate to the need**

# So where are the small chinks of light?

- All of those listed items on the credit side of the balance sheet and as aforementioned – but with reservations (**See debit side of balance sheet**)
- GR&T people involved in some decision taking – but very modest
- Increasingly assertive actions by the communities themselves (NFGLG/ERF)
- Most statutory duties still there and so a need for legal actions!
- The Roma Education Fund and possible extension of the Decade of Roma Inclusion
- EU/WB/Soros actions with helpful funding to short-circuit the difficult politics surrounding Roma
- In UK - Primary schools are now valued by parents and many schools are familiar with strategies for inclusion of GR&T children as result of 30 years work by TESS
- Those with the knowledge and experience and expertise are still there and don't give up a fight so easily! Cunningness to outwit evil!

## An overall pan-European judgement?

- If you want inclusion with dignity and respect
- If you want real equal opportunities
- If you want a sound education based on happy and successful learning
- If you want to experience social justice
- If you want to live your life with hope and an expectation of your human rights being respected, then:
- **Don't be Roma, Gypsy or Traveller!**

# Thank you for listening

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