



Many have mistakenly approached the Roma as a blank slate, naively suggesting solutions to their ‘issues,’ without understanding their painful past and current worldview. This has hindered the Romas’ acceptance of the gospel.

Gadje (non-Roma) have always described the Roma by the pejorative term ‘Gypsies,’ and stereotyped them as witches and child-abductors, or portrayed them as free, beautiful, and musical fairytale beings.

After their initial migration from India, as early as 1385, most Roma lived wherever they chose and were basically tolerated. However, WWII and the communist era manipulated and moulded the Romas’ identity, and forced their habitation on the outskirts of towns and in constructed ghettos.

Eight centuries of slavery, and the maltreatment suffered as ‘historical subjects’ during the *Porrajmos* (the Holocaust), has caused the Roma to be distrustful and unreceptive of *Gadje*. Many Roma are still used as scapegoats for crime and ethnic animosities and anxieties in society.



A STUDY OF... THE ROMANIAN PEOPLE & OF ROMANIA

Ministry approaches need redefining to prevent a repetition of atrocities and to develop reconciliation both between Roma and *Gadje*, and, more importantly, between Roma and God.



Discussion with contacts ministering among the Romanian-Roma were used to identify potential avenues for ministry over the next decade and beyond.

(this map shows the location of the Questionnaire respondents)

Roma communities are strongly collectivistic, with social control, decisions and conflict entrusted to the immediate and extended family.

Romanian-Roma tend to stay in the same village for most, if not all, of their life. Their identity is not based on a homeland or nationality, but on their language, culture and traditions.

The Roma culture and lifestyle varies quite broadly across Romania. Therefore, ministry approaches must consider this and approach Roma communities individually.

Music has been integral to the Roma life for centuries.

Consequently, creative mediums such as story-telling, folk tales, songs and poetry could be openings for sharing and explaining the gospel.

Discipling and encouraging Roma to write and perform their own music, using their own instruments, which applies the gospel to their lives, will empower them to own and implement the changes needed in their communities.

“We need to utilise their talents and skills in church and as a way to teach the biblical principals, such as stewardship and acts of service.”
- The Mureş Respondent.



& THE KEY MINISTRY APPROACHES

Those who work with the Roma cannot assume ‘instant credibility,’ nor approach Roma communities with their own agendas or superior attitudes. Trust, openness and awareness are paramount in any ministry approach. Both the mindset of *Gadje* and Roma must change if the Roma are to accept the message brought by ‘outsiders.’

Most Roma communities struggle with high illiteracy and low educational standards. Providing education will enable the Roma to contribute to society, initiate generational change, open doors into the workforce and improve health and living standards.



Since Romania’s induction into the EU in 2007, a new type of sojourning Roma lifestyle has been identified, with Roma seasonal-workers now travelling around the Schengen countries to find work and provide for their families.

(The Schengen Area is a ‘free travel’ zone, in which the border controls between 25 nations have been eliminated according to the EU policy developed in 1985.)



There are an estimated 3 million Roma in Romania alone, the world’s largest Roma population. Efforts to identify and integrate them into Romanian society have proven almost impossible. However, there have been successful attempts to contextualise the gospel, which ensures it is ‘not a foreign ideology [but] a gospel that has taken on Romani colors’ (Acton cited in Persaud 2010).

Roma require assurance that it is good for them to be simultaneously Roma and Christian. Teaching them that all who believe are of one family, (Gen 1:26; Acts 10:34) Christ’s family, may prevent future Christian witness from being a “clanging cymbal” (1 Cor 13:1).

“The greatest resource we have is the Roma themselves.”
- The Alba Respondent.



NEEDED FOR THE NEXT DECADE...

By Manda Lewis