

Presbyterian Women's

Ten Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Roma



March 30–April 8, 2011

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The International Day of the Roma is celebrated worldwide each year on April 8 to raise awareness about the most pressing issues for the Roma people and to celebrate Romani culture. In 2011, Presbyterian Women will join this celebration and is publishing this resource, "Ten Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving for Roma," to aid in the celebration.

For each of the 10 days, this resource focuses on a different European country, each with a Roma presence. A Roma Christian or mission coworker from (or with intimate knowledge of) each country has written a prayer and overview of that country. Each devotion offers insights into the faith and daily struggles of the Roma people in a particular community. Learn how they live out their Christian faith while struggling to become an accepted (and, perhaps someday, welcomed) part of the larger society. Learn more about Roma across Europe and join them in prayer as they work to overcome generational poverty and discrimination, and find equal opportunities for their children.

Remember; prayer is the beginning of opening hearts and minds to the struggles of our sisters and brothers. Mohandas Gandhi said, "Prayer is not an old woman's idle amusement. Properly understood and applied, it is the most potent instrument of action."

Three PC(USA) mission coworkers helped organize and create this booklet. Their insights arise from their daily work with Roma and with church partners in these European countries. Presbyterian Women is grateful to these three mission coworkers for their work coordinating this project, and their ministries in their respective countries.

Burkhard Paetzold is the PC(USA)'s regional liaison for Central and Eastern Europe. He facilitates the PC(USA)'s work with the Roma in that region's countries. Learn more about Burkhard's work at <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/missionconnections/paetzold-burkhard>. Burkhard also coordinates the Roma Bridging Group on Mission Crossroads PC(USA), a social networking tool for building effective and faithful mission work. Join the Roma Bridging Group at <http://missioncrossroads.ning.com/group/roma-peoplebridginggroup>.

Liz and Doug Searles serve as mission coworkers in Poland through a joint appointment of the PC(USA) and Common Global Ministries, a combined witness of the Disciples of Christ and the United Church of Christ. Read a letter from the Searles about their time in Poland at <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/missionconnections/searles-douglas-and-elizabeth-20101101>.

Presbyterian Connections with Roma

Presbyterian Women traveled to three of the countries mentioned in this prayer guide—Czech Republic, Hungary and Carpath Ukraine—during the 2008 Global Exchange to Eastern Europe. Women from Central and Eastern Europe, including Aranka Balogh from Debrecen, Hungary, completed the "exchange" part of the program by attending PW's 2009 Churchwide Gathering in Louisville, Kentucky. Learn more about the 2009 Global Exchange and the Romani people in the March/April 2009 issue of *Horizons*. Order this issue, item HZN09210, through Presbyterian Distribution Service, 800/524-2612.

The Spring 2011 issue of *Mission Crossroads* will include an article by Burkhard Paetzold, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s regional liaison for Central and Eastern Europe, about his work with the Roma. Order item 13102-11-001 through Presbyterian Distribution Service, 800/524-2612, or download the magazine at <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/global/magazine>.

Ten Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Roma

How to use this resource

Plan to begin your “Ten Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving for Roma” on March 30. Before that date, share this resource widely in your church, circle, PW group or prayer group. Print extra copies to share, or tell others to download a copy from www.presbyterianwomen.org.

These prayers reflect the societal and religious contexts particular to each country. Some prayers include references to traditions, expectations or beliefs that may be quite different from your own, or perhaps even run counter to your own. In order to honor the voices and experiences of the

women who wrote the prayers, these instances were not altered for the inclusive and expansive language typically used by Presbyterian Women.

Engage your mind and heart with each prayer. Listen to the words, but also go deeper than words, connecting with the writers’ heartfelt joys and concerns. When concluding each meditation, offer your own prayer, or offer the following prayer for those who do violence or harm, or who persecute others: “And today I/we pray for transformation of the hearts and minds of all those who seek to persecute others.”



Contents

Day 1	March 30	Bulgaria	Day 6	April 4	Romania
Day 2	March 31	Czech Republic	Day 7	April 5	Russia
Day 3	April 1	Albania	Day 8	April 6	Slovakia
Day 4	April 2	Hungary	Day 9	April 7	Spain
Day 5	April 3	Portugal	Day 10	April 8	Ukraine

Day One ♦ March 30, 2011

Ten Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Roma ♦ Bulgaria



Scripture

“And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place.”

—Jeremiah 22:3b, NRSV

Prayer

God of our going out and our coming in, our ever-present comforter and hope, today we thank you for courageous Romani families and communities emerging from cold winters of deprivation in Europe. Today we especially lift up to your care and keeping the Romani people of Bulgaria as they seek acceptance, just treatment and peaceful co-existence with their neighbors. Calm fierce storms of hatred and exclusion; heal deep wounds of separation and misunderstanding; bring heart's peace to shattered homes, lives and families.

Transforming God, move hearts and minds in Bulgarian communities and institutions. Move persecutors toward actions of hospitality and justice, and move Romani people toward actions of forgiveness and peace. We ask this in the name of Jesus, in whose eyes there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free. Amen.

Culturally diverse, as they are elsewhere in Europe, Roma number 700,000–800,000 in Bulgaria¹ and fall into many groups, both Christian and Muslim. Many arrived after Roma enslavement was outlawed in 1856.² Forced “repatriations” of Roma from Western Europe complicate the attempt to find a current figure.

Many, if not most, Roma live in settlements that sometimes mirror ghetto conditions in the developing world. Access to clean water, health services, education, employment, adequate housing and a dependable food supply continue to challenge many Roma families. European winters are harsh; settlements often are far from schools, jobs and grocery stores.

Fewer than 15 percent of Roma teens attend high school³; many do not complete elementary school. Segregated education continues. Ethnic Bulgarian parents often pull their children out of classes with Roma students. Of children in schools for intellectually disabled, Roma comprise over 40 percent.⁴ They make up about 65 percent in boarding schools for children with “deviant behavior.”⁵ Children of Roma who were deported from elsewhere (France or Germany, most commonly) do not speak Bulgarian, creating further challenges for them in Bulgarian schools.

A European Union member since 2007, Bulgaria signed the “Decade of Roma Inclusion” initiative and is subject to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948. However, a 2009 European Commission against Racism and Intolerance report states that initiatives against racism, though in place, are rarely applied.⁶

Bulgarian government officials deny racism, stigmatization, segregation or lack of basic services to Romani people. Yet in late 2010, government heads called Roma a “nomadic tribe,” and “an incubator for generating crime.” As do others, Bulgarians continue to call Roma “Gypsies”—*Tsigane*—an ethnic slur (and identical to words for “thief” or “liar” in many languages).

Read more about Bulgaria and the PC(USA) at
<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/global/bulgaria>.

Country profile and prayer prepared by Doug and Liz Searles, mission coworkers in Poland

Day Two ♦ March 31, 2011

Ten Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Roma ♦ Czech Republic



Scripture

"... Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything."

—1 John 3:18–20, NRSV

Prayer

I praise you, Jesus. Lead us to those paths you want us to walk. I pray for Roma people, that they would bow before you. I pray for Roma, that they would stop playing gaming machines. Descend upon them, make them free of those machines. May they find their way to you. I pray for loan sharks. Nothing is impossible for you. Stop their tricks that they would stop preying on poor people. You said, "For everyone, who knocks, the door will be opened." And I pray for the government—you see, o Lord, how they curtail our social benefits and how our living costs are sky-high. I put the government in your hands. I put our church into your hands, as well as our pastor and our praise. Thanks to you we know the truth and we are changed for the better. Bless them. Thank you. Amen.

There are an estimated 200,000 Roma living in the Czech Republic,¹ mostly in northern Bohemia and Moravia. Most of them live in communities throughout the country, but these communities are usually segregated from larger society. Most Czech Roma were exterminated in World War II, so the majority of today's Roma in Czech Republic are those who migrated from Slovakia since 1945 or are descendants of those immigrants.² Roma women in Czech Republic (and the former Czechoslovakia) have been victims of forced sterilization as recently as 2008.³

Roma are frequently excluded from many aspects of community life. In Ostrava, Roma children make up less than five percent of primary school children, but represented 50 percent of the enrollment in schools for children with learning disabilities.⁴

Low levels of education for Roma limit their opportunities to participate in the labor market; unemployment for Roma in the Czech Republic is between 70 and 90 percent.⁵ Very often Romani people face discrimination, stigmatization or even violence from the members of the majority society. They often become lethargic and they experience feelings of helplessness and fear. The economic crises and ongoing economic hardships increase the social tensions in the present time.

Read more about Czech Republic and the PC(USA) at <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/global/czech-republic>.

Learn more about Karen Moritz's work as a mission coworker there at <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/missionconnections/moritz-karen>.

Country profile by Marta Doubravová, Diakonia in Vsetín

Prayer by Soňa Kandračová, Roma woman from Vsetín

Translated by Eva Grollová, Diakonia in Prague, with assistance from Karen Moritz, mission coworker in Prague

Day Three ♦ April 1, 2011

Ten Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Roma ♦ Albania



Scripture

"I am the LORD; I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the LORD."

—Jeremiah 9:24b, NRSV

Prayer

We pray to our Lord, Jesus Christ, for Roma people: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen!

God save the Roma people and protect them from anger, hunger, illness, earthquake, flooding, fire, attack, inner fight and unexpected death. Lord, have mercy on us, for in you we have put our trust; be not exceedingly angry with us, nor remember our many iniquities; but look upon us now as the Compassionate, and deliver us from our enemies. For you are our God, and we your people; we are all the work of your hands, and upon your name we have now called. Now and forever and to the ages of ages, amen.

Since 1990, Albania has experienced severe economic recession, resulting in widespread poverty and the deterioration of public buildings, including schools. Political instability has meant that the state has largely neglected the Roma population. This neglect is exemplified by the absence of efforts to develop policy directed toward the Roma minority during the post-Communist period.

As in other countries, it is difficult to offer a reliable number for the Roma population in Albania. Current estimates range from 80,000 to 150,000.¹ Today, some Roma are settled, but others migrate for seasonal work in the country or abroad.

While school is compulsory in Albania, a high percentage of Roma youth do not attend schools. Contributing factors include failure to register migrants, discrimination against Roma and closing of decaying school buildings. Very few Roma attend preschool classes because of prohibitive costs, problems of accessibility and high rates of female unemployment. Officials appear unwilling to enforce compulsory education among Roma and can only levy fines that the Roma cannot pay. Where Roma do attend schools with other Albanians, lack of materials and teachers negate constitutional rights to education. Nongovernmental efforts to help Roma children include Romani summer camps, curriculum development and vocational-skills training for disadvantaged young people.

Country profile by Burkhard Paetzold

Prayer by Margarita, a Roma woman from Albania

Day Four ♦ April 2, 2011

Ten Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Roma ♦ Hungary



Scripture

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

—Hebrews 13:2, NRSV

Prayer

My beloved Heavenly Father in Jesus Christ, I bless you and praise you for my every day. I am really thankful that you are with me, and you will not forsake me. Thank you for Jesus Christ, your only Son, who was sacrificed on the cross for us, whose death and resurrection demolished the whole of the sins which separated us from you.

I know you are Lord of all and you are Lord of death and illness. You showed your power when you resurrected Lazarus and the dead girl, and healed the blind and the lame and those who suffered from leprosy. I glorify you, that you cured me as well! I'm really thankful that I could have the possibility to pray to you for those who suffered from illness, for the orphans, for the widows. Bless them in the Lord. Give the hungry food, cure those who are fighting illnesses, and comfort those who are bereaved or have broken hearts.

Oh, my Lord, make us be able to forgive those who hurt us, as you forgave on the cross your offenders. I bless and praise your holy and precious name, blessed by every tongue! In Jesus' name, listen to my prayer. Amen.

Roma account for roughly seven percent of the Hungarian population, with an average estimate of 700,000 people (figures range from 400,000 to 1,000,000 Roma).¹ They are culturally and linguistically diverse, but most are native Hungarian speakers. Roma live throughout Hungary concentrated in poorer regions, more than half in the countryside.² Researchers note that Roma employment has been below 20 percent consistently since 1993. Especially in the north of the country where nearly 100 percent of the population is Roma, there is virtually total unemployment.³

Extensive educational disadvantages, poverty, deteriorating living conditions and poor health have a cumulative negative effect on educational opportunities for Roma children. A survey in 1993–1994⁴ found that fewer than three percent of Roma completed grammar school and that most Roma in secondary education went to vocational schools.⁵ Roma participation in higher education is estimated at less than 0.1 per cent.⁶ Currently just three percent of children in Hungary are involved in remedial education. In 1993, the percent of Roma in remedial education was disproportionately high, at 43 percent.⁷ Other studies report that Roma children make up as much as 90 percent of enrollment in special schools.⁸ Both the state and nongovernmental organizations in Hungary have been active in efforts to reform the educational system, promote minority rights and support Roma communities.

Read more about Hungary and the PC(USA) at <http://gamic.pcusa.org/ministries/global/hungary>. Learn more about Joe and Kathy Angi's work as mission coworkers at <http://gamic.pcusa.org/ministries/misionconnections/angi-kathleen-and-joseph>.

Country profile by Burkhard Paetzold

Prayer by Aranka Balogh, Roma woman in Debrecen

Day Five ♦ April 3, 2011

Ten Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Roma ♦ Portugal

Scripture

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

—Matthew 5:10, NRSV

Prayer

God of all peoples, races and places, we thank you for the gift of hope and the promise of peace with justice, held out to all, especially to those who are poor in means, health or spirit. Today we especially lift up to your care and keeping the Romani people of Portugal. Move those in power to provide for the poor—to provide adequate housing, utilities, education and police protection. Move neighbors in their communities to reach out a hand of welcome and assistance. Bring down the walls of hatred, racism and neglect.

Gracious God, you have the heart of a generous Father and a loving Mother. Hear the cry of your children, the Roma people in Portugal, and see their need. They live with so many difficulties. They are a people afflicted and acquainted with grief: a living prolongation of the Servant of Yahweh. By your grace, a few have become fully Portuguese, but many more just barely survive on the margins of society. Give us, gracious God, the hope and strength to work for a Portugal in which all people may live in your peace and with your justice.

Bring your peace to hearts and minds, and bring your justice to the halls of power and privilege, in Portugal and in all the world. All this we ask in the name of Jesus, Prince of Peace.

Amen.

Settled in Portugal since the fifteenth century, Roma have faced and continue to face fierce persecution. They now number roughly 55,000 in Portugal,¹ mostly of the Iberian Kale group. In Portugal, Roma are called by the pejorative *Ciganos*, echoing the designation of the fourteenth-century Franciscan monk who described them as *atsinganoi* (“untouchable,” in Koine Greek).

They are concentrated in the south and southeastern parts of the country and are settled in important urban centers. Most are unassimilated, living separately from the rest of the population in primitive conditions. They are the most marginalized, rejected and discriminated against of any Portuguese ethnic groups. Roma experience difficulties gaining access to jobs, adequate housing, education and social services, including police protection. Some earn money by selling clothes or costume jewelry on the sidewalk or in stalls. In places where they cannot survive by these enterprises, unassimilated Roma may engage in illegal activities to provide for their families.

Since the late 1990s, public housing (*bairros sociais*) has begun to be available for the Portuguese poor, including Romani people. And yet, in mid-2010, the European Committee of Social Rights registered a complaint against Portugal on the basis of five years of continuous monitoring, finding failures to meet obligations to protect Roma from poverty and social exclusion, especially in the areas of housing, utilities, segregation and practical access to legal help and redress.²

Read about Bob and Keiko Butterfield’s experience as mission coworkers in Portugal at <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/missionconnections/butterfield-bob-and-keiko>.

Country profile and prayer by Doug and Liz Searles, mission coworkers in Poland

Day Six ♦ April 4, 2011

Ten Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Roma ♦ Romania



Scripture

“Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

—Philippians 4:6–7, NRSV

Prayer

Dear God, please bless me and my family and send the Holy Spirit upon us. You are our mother and father and our only hope. We have been running around from door to door and still we couldn't find any solution or answer so we put all our trust in you. Please God give me healing for my child and help me put up four walls. I put all my trust in you for I am living amidst garbage right now. Please help me out of this trouble and help us love you more than we do now. Please God take care of Mary and Anca and everybody else who is thinking of us. Thank you, God. Amen.

In the 2002 Romanian census, 535,140 people (roughly 2.5 percent of the total population) reported themselves to be Roma. Today, estimates are 1,200,000–2,500,00—just over eight percent of the total population.¹ The figures vary widely because many Roma do not declare their ethnicity in the census, and are undocumented.

Roma have been living within the territory of present-day Romania since the fourteenth century. Most Roma lived in slavery until their liberation in 1856. The late 1800s and early 1900s marked a period of some integration into larger society for Roma, but Nazi policies spread to Romania in the 1940s, ending the period of acceptance. In 1942, dictator Ion Antonescu deported more than 25,000 Roma to Transnistria (a region of the USSR occupied by Romania during World War II) where at least 11,000 died.²

Although the persecution of Roma ended as a policy after 1945, their social situation has not improved substantially. Roma became a scapegoat for Romania's increasing poverty. They disproportionately live in poverty themselves—79 percent, as opposed to 31 percent of the country at large.³ A 2009 EU report found that while Roma in Romania reported lower levels of discrimination than did Roma in other European countries, the percentage who reported discrimination based on ethnic or immigrant origin widespread was 42 percent.⁴

Today, Romanian Roma are not of one monolithic culture—they speak a variety of languages, practice a range of trades and live in many parts of Romania in both cities and small villages. Over the last few years Roma from Romania migrated to Spain, Italy, and France, and forced evictions from France have become a contentious political issue.

Read more about Romania and the PC(USA) at <http://gamic.pcusa.org/ministries/global/romania>. Learn more about Mary Ferris's work as mission coworker at <http://gamic.pcusa.org/ministries/missionconnections/ferris-mary>.

Country profile by Mary Ferris, mission coworker in Romania

Prayer by Natalia Miron, Roma woman in Tulcea

Day Seven ♦ April 5, 2011

Ten Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Roma ♦ Russia



Scripture

"And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'"

—Matthew 28:18–20, NRSV

Prayer

Gracious God,
I pray for Pastor Andrej
Beskorovainiy,
for his congregation in Kursk,
for the women and men who have
recently come to Christ,
for Roma Christian communities in
other regions,
for the children's camp in the
summer of 2011, and
for upcoming leadership seminars.
May God's many blessings be
showered upon this pastor as
he continues to minister to the
Roma in Russia.
Amen.

The number of Roma in Russia varies very widely, with estimates ranging from 450,000 to 1,200,000.¹ While there are a few very wealthy Roma, most live in poverty, subject to discrimination by the government and by their neighbors. Many adult Roma, especially women, are functionally illiterate, and many Roma children attend school only occasionally, if at all. In a society where having the correct identification and residence documents is a prerequisite for access to housing, health care and education, many Roma are undocumented.

Many Roma live in isolated settlements on the outskirts of cities and towns, in housing that is substandard. Many suffer from drug and alcohol addictions. Because of lack of education, problems with documents, and blatant discrimination, most Roma find it very difficult to find work. Some are employed as vendors in markets, others are forced to resort to fortune-telling, begging or even to crime, perpetuating negative stereotypes.

Women and girls have a particularly difficult time—many Roma girls are married as teenagers, becoming virtual servants in the home of the husband's family. Domestic violence is common, and there is widespread indifference to it.

Although most Roma identify themselves as belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church, many, if not most, have no regular contact with the church. Andrej Beskorovainiy, the only ethnic Roma pastor ordained in the Baptist church, works tirelessly to bring God's saving message to his people. He ministers to his own congregation in the city of Kursk, and travels regularly to other communities to support groups of believers there, leading worship and evangelizing, and organizing children's camps and seminars for the leaders of Roma churches and groups.

Read more about Russia and the PC(USA) at <http://gamic.pcusa.org/ministries/global/russia>. Learn more about Ellen and Al Smith's work as mission coworkers at <http://gamic.pcusa.org/ministries/missionconnections/smith-alan-and-ellen-20100721>.

Country profile by Ellen and Al Smith, mission coworkers in Russia; prayer by Larisa Beskorovainiy

Day Eight ♦ April 6, 2011

Ten Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Roma ♦ Slovakia



Scripture

"Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you."

—Ephesians 4:31–32, NRSV

Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus,
Please fill us with your Spirit so that we will have harmony in our marriages. Please help us to be submissive to our husbands, and our husbands to be considerate of us. Please enable us to forgive one another. Please help us to agree with our husbands concerning how we raise our children. Please help us to teach them about you. Please help us to restrain from unwise spending and be content. Please help us to always seek you first. Thank you for what you have done and are doing, even when we do not see you at work. Amen.

When Slovakia became a separate country from Czechoslovakia in 1992, it maintained the previous country's Declaration of Basic Human Rights and Freedoms, which allowed residents to freely declare themselves as members of a distinct minority in the census. A 2001 census in Slovakia counted 89,920 Roma, but current estimates are 400,000–600,000.¹ After Hungarians, Roma are the second largest Slovakian minority,² making up roughly nine percent of the population.³

A combined high birth rate for Roma (4.2 children per Roma family versus 1.5 children per non-Roma family) and a shorter life expectancy (12 years shorter than non-Roma) have created a young Roma population—nearly 30 percent of the population was between 0 and 18 years old in 1995.⁴

Many Roma are bilingual or even trilingual, but if children cannot speak Slovak, they often are placed in schools for children with mental disabilities. Segregation or exclusion that begins at kindergarten age continues throughout the children's schooling.

Unemployment is rampant for Slovakian Roma—according to CNN, more than 80 percent of Roma were unemployed in 2004,⁵ compared to 15 percent for the country at large.⁶ Given the obstacles Roma face in receiving education and finding work, they suffer from higher rates of poverty, illiteracy and health issues.

Large numbers of Roma live in settlements of makeshift houses with no utilities and no facilities, in rural communities or at the edge of towns. Some of the settlements are on river banks, subject to regular flooding, as the one near Svinia, Eastern Slovakia. Others, like Rudnany, were built on dumping grounds containing contaminants such as mercury and arsenic. Hunger and discrimination led to unrest in Roma communities in 2004. The Roma Union of Slovakia continues to lobby for rights and benefits for Roma. Housing projects and labor programs have eased conditions in some areas.

Read more about Slovakia and the PC(USA) at
<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/global/slovakia>.

Country profile by Burkhard Paetzhold; prayer by Ema Buzove, a Roma woman from Hlinné

Day Nine ♦ April 7, 2011

Ten Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Roma ♦ Spain



Spain is currently home to an estimated 725,000 Roma.¹ While the Roma initially were welcomed to Spain in the early 1400s, by the late 1400s, legislation and public sentiment became anti-Roma. In 1749, the Roma population of Spain was rounded up and interned in camps or expelled from the country. Their captivity lasted 16 years.² Harsh treatment of Roma continued, and reached another particularly cruel peak under Francisco Franco in the 1930s. During Franco's reign, Roma could not work, access health care, or assemble in groups of more than four people, even for family celebrations.³

More recently, however, anti-Roma laws have been repealed and Spain is being held up as a model for the fair treatment and integration of Roma into larger society. Spanish culture reflects a Roma influence, including flamenco dancing, which originated with the Roma. Nearly half of Spanish Roma own homes, nearly all have health care and close to 75 percent have a regular income.⁴ Although only 30 percent of Spain's Roma children finish elementary school, nearly all children at least start and 85 percent of the Roma population is literate—thanks to programs that allow access to social services after enrolling children in school.⁵

Scripture

"I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!"

—John 16:33, NRSV

Prayer

God of all our journeys and our ever-present hope, today we thank you for courageous Romani families and communities emerging from cold winters everywhere in Europe. Today we especially lift up to your care the Roma of Spain, as they leave behind the terrors and repressions of the past and journey toward restoration and integration. Comfort those who mourn, heal deep hurts, help children and adults hold onto their best hopes and dreams. Continue to make your transforming presence known in Romani lives and communities in Spain and in all your world. All this we ask in the name of God, our creator, redeemer and sustainer. Amen.

Read more about Spain and the PC(USA) at
<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/global/spain>.

Country profile and prayer by Liz and Doug Searles,
mission coworkers in Poland

Day Ten ♦ April 8, 2011

Ten Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Roma ♦ Ukraine



Scripture

"And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."

—Romans 5:5, NRSV

Prayer

Gracious God, please hear our prayers for the Roma mission. The goal of the mission among the Roma people is to teach God's word. Bless the two families who are praying for a new opportunity to talk with fellow Roma about the gospel and answer their prayers. Empower the Gyszli family from Szernye and the Béla family from Nagydobrony to share the Good News. Grant that the Roma hear this message from the Roma mission workers who are living among them and teaching them every day. Open the hearts of Roma villagers who belong to no church, to hear the messages taught. By your grace, guide those who seek places for the mission workers and their families to live among those in the villages. Help them to find and prepare housing for the families who are sharing God's word of life. We pray in the strong name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Estimates of the number of Roma in Ukraine vary widely, between 120,000 and 400,000, but an average estimate is 260,000.¹ Approximately 30,000 live in Transcarpathia, the westernmost part of Ukraine, mainly in ghettos near towns with Hungarian minorities.²

Most Roma settlements consist of houses that are little more than shacks without clean running water or electricity. These slum areas often are walled off from the surrounding town. Some settlements—like the one in Beregszasz with 6,000 Romani inhabitants—have only a few pumps for drinking water. Tuberculosis and other contagious diseases are widespread. Children from these camps are not accepted in the public schools, either because they do not speak Ukrainian or because they are discriminated against. Illiteracy and high unemployment follow. Many Roma girls become mothers by age 14, thus ending any continuation of education. Without education both women and men find it difficult to find employment.

The Reformed Church of Carpath Ukraine has reached out to the Roma community, and presently there are nine village churches. Some house Roma preschools. The church also has a leadership program among the Roma. Church members and Roma leaders have developed programs to train Roma for some jobs. A Roma mission center provides a summer camping program for children and young

Read more about Ukraine and the PC(USA) at <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/global/ukraine>. Learn more about Nadia Ayoub's work as a mission coworker at <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/misionconnections/ayoub-nadia>.

Country profile by Burkhard Paetzold

Prayer by Livia Tomes, mission worker in Ukraine

Ten Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving for the Roma ♦ Notes

Bulgaria

1. Council of Europe, Roma and Travellers Division, Roma statistics, www.coe.int/t/dg3/romatravellers/default_en.asp.
2. The Associated Press, "Romania sets holiday to mark end of Gypsy slavery," *Washington Post*, March 11, 2011, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/11/AR2011031101538.html.
3. Open Society Institute, "Monitoring Education for Roma: A Statistical Baseline for Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe," 2006, 3, www.soros.org/initiatives/roma/articles_publications/publications/monitoring_20061218/monitoring_20061218.pdf.
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