



# **Between Inclusion and Re-Inclusion: How to deal with Roma offenders (ROMA OFF-IN)**

## **Research Methodology**

### **WP 2 – Data Collection and Ethnographic Research**

Draft 1.0

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# **Between Inclusion and Re-Inclusion: How to deal with Roma offenders (ROMA OFF-IN)**

## **The Research Methodology**

WP 2 – Data Collection and Ethnographic Research

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The project is co-funded by the European Commission through DG Justice under the contract no. 881970. The duration of the project is two years. This Research Manual is referring only to WP 2 – Data collection and ethnographic research.

ROMA-OFF-IN is a multi-sited research project. Data collection will be conducted in three places simultaneously: Romania, Bulgaria and Italy. ESC will be responsible for coordinating this activity.

The overall aim of this workstream is:

1. To conduct an in-depth study in the national legal norms concerning resocialization and the national policies for the social reintegration of offenders. Special attention will be awarded to norms, strategies and policies focusing on Roma reintegration in contrast with the European standards, as they are described in EPR, CPT Reports or ECtHR case law.
2. To develop an advanced understanding of the re-entry process from the subjective perspective of prisoners themselves with a special focus on Roma prisoners. The processes, interactions, meanings and conflicts involved in re-entry in Romania, Italy and Bulgaria context will be examined comparatively and from the point of view of Roma prisoners.

The focus of this project is the treatment of Roma prisoners. We use the term 'Roma' in line with the definition of the Council of Europe:

*"The term 'Roma' used at the Council of Europe refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as Gypsies."*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Council of Europe Descriptive Glossary of terms relating to Roma issues (2012). Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680088eab>



In practical terms, we will use the highest standards of research by taking the self-identification strategy. In other words, we will include in our samples only Roma participants who self-define as Roma.

## II. COMPILE THE STATE OF THE ART

This activity will be divided into three main parts:

- The national legal and policy context on the reintegration of Roma (ex)prisoners
- A literature review
- A database with national and international standards on the treatment of prisoners belonging to different ethnic groups, in particular for Roma prisoners.

### II.1 THE NATIONAL LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

This section will describe the relevant legal and policy context in each country regarding the Roma (ex)prisoners reintegration.

The analysis will start with the national policies and strategies and will continue with the relevant legal norms that apply to Roma (ex)prisoners reintegration. It is highly likely that Roma (ex)prisoners are not mentioned explicitly in these documents. In this case the authors will describe the general inclusion framework applicable to Roma in general, mentioning that there is not special provision applicable to Roma (ex)prisoners.

A section will be devoted to highlight the European standards and how they apply to the national context.

### II.2 THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will be conducted in each country and will look for research reports, evaluation reports and other sources that speak about the treatment of Roma prisoners.

Inclusion criteria:

1. Literature and research reports
2. Evaluation or administrative reports (e.g. Ombudsman reports, CPT reports on the country etc.)
3. Reports made by Roma organizations themselves
4. Published since 2010

Exclusion criteria:

1. Documents published before 2010
2. Documents published by right wing or other extremist groups.



When searching for the relevant literature the following keywords will be used alone or in combination, in the national language: Roma, Gypsy, prisoner, inmate, Roma inclusion, Roma reintegration, ex-prisoner etc.

A clear record will be kept as to what databases (e.g. SAGE, Social Science Index etc.) or search engines (ex. Google) were used, with what keywords and with what outcomes:

Example:

Google – keywords ‘reintegrarea romilor’ generated a number of 136.000 results out of which 20 were considered relevant for this review.

Each national report will end with a final concluding chapter on how the treatment of Roma is reflected in the literature in that particular country.

### II.3 A DATABASE OF INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN STANDARDS CONCERNING ROMA REINTEGRATION OF (EX)PRISONERS

University of Florence will conduct a thorough screening of the existing international and European standards relevant for the reintegration of the Roma (ex)prisoners. Both scenarios will be included: Roma prisoners and Roma ex-prisoners.

United Nations, Council of Europe and European Union documents will be taken into account in order to clarify what are the standards and the best practices regarding the treatment of Roma (ex)prisoners.

### III. ORGANIZE ACCESS TO THE PRISON

Each partner will request access to the prisons and prisoners in written. The letter will contain details about the project, the research and the ethical aspects that we will observe all the time (ex. confidentiality, voluntary participation, self-identification of Roma participants etc.).

It is essential that each prison included in the research will nominate a contact person that will liaise with the researchers. It is essential that a close relationship is formed with that person.

### IV. CARRY OUT THE RECRUITMENT AND THE SELECTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

At least two prisons will be included in the sample in each country – one for men and one for women.

All prisoners in these two prisons who have less than 6 months until release (conditional release or full release) will be informed about the study. This can be done either by placing posters in the main access points in the prison, or by using the prison radio or other forms of communication.



Those interested in taking part in this study will be invited to fill out the questionnaire presented in Annex 1 (Selection questionnaire). This questionnaire will allow the research team to gather more information about the prisoner and also to elicit his/her ethnic identity.

Roma prisoners will be invited to a more in-depth interview where more information about the study will be delivered, and informed consent will be collected (see Annex 2 – Informed consent form).

A participant fiche will be completed for each participant (see Annex 3 – Participant fiche).

#### Important!!

It is of utmost importance that the researchers will develop strong alliance with the prisoners while they are in prison. Trust and bond will be the main reasons they will stay in touch with the researchers upon release.

20 Roma men and 20 Roma women will be selected to take part in the study. Most probably some of them will drop out during the follow up period. This is the reason we suggest having a larger sample in order to finish with at least 30 participants after 10 months (30 participants being the project requested sample).

The selection will be based on the first come first served principle.

However, the researchers will do their best to construct a diverse sample: short sentence-long sentence, released in a city-released in a village; with or without children; young and senior age etc.

## V. CARRY OUT THE FIELDWORK

### V.1 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research methodology is based on an ethnographic design where researchers will 'immerse' themselves into the life spaces of the prisoners. The main research methods will be observation, in-depth interview and photography.

The main theoretical framework is phenomenological. From such a perspective, there is no single objective reality; rather, there are many realities constructed by participants in the social lives. This framework allows researchers to be open and 'dive' into the participant's perceptions and understandings without prejudice.

Furthermore, this framework will allow researchers to use grounded theory as a tool of data collection and analysis. Starting the research with no or only general assumptions about the investigated population will facilitate researchers to take an inductive approach where the theory will be constructed based on the specific empirical data, themes and codes. The use of so-called 'inductive probing' will allow researchers to clarify expressions or understandings and facilitate participant story-telling.

The main research question is: How do prisoners understand the release and re-entry process at different stages, and how do different ways of conceptualising re-entry impact on the process?

Besides this main question, a number of subsequent questions will be addressed:

1. How is the release process understood defined by prisoners pre and post release?
2. Are there any structured strategies for re-entry (any coping strategies that ex-prisoners employ to succeed)? If yes, how are they organized pre and post release?
3. What are prisoners' expectations pre-release and to what extent are they confirmed?
4. Who are the main actors (people and institutions) involved in the re-entry journey and what role do they play?
5. What obstacles to successful re-entry are identified by prisoners?
6. What strategies do they employ to deal with the obstacles?
7. What resources do prisoners use in the re-entry process?
8. How does hope and agency progress during the re-entry process?
9. What is the relationship between the prisoners and the State?

## V.2 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection will be conducted based on:

- **Observation** – during the pre-release stage, in the first day of release, during the periodic interviews (see Annex 4 for the Observation protocol). Social settings, behaviours, actions and interactions will be observed. The ‘thick description’ concept (Geertz, 1973) where the actions and the interactions are situated in the local framework is central in the observation process. The ethic (non-participatory) form of observation or the passive participation form (‘fly on the wall’) is favoured. Taking detailed field notes is essential. They can be taken during the visits, in the breaks or immediately after the interview. Each field note will contain:

- Date
  - Name of the participant
  - Name of the researcher
  - Place of the observation
  - Observations
  - Final thoughts & Preliminary Interpretation
- **In-depth semi-structured interviews** - will be applied:
- at the beginning of the
  - once the conditional release or the full release was approved in the prison (in the last week)
  - after one week from release
  - after one month from release
  - after three months

The interview protocol will follow themes like: definition of the prison experience, definition of the release, expectations after release, expected difficulties, sources of help, plans, relationship with the State and self-identity.

All interviews will follow the same interview protocol (see Annex 5 for the Interview protocol). Interviews after release will take place, if possible, at the participant's house.

Each interview should not take longer than one hour.

A further research tool is possible, not mandatory:

- **Photovoice** - the ex-prisoners will be required to take pictures of their everyday life. A disposable camera will be given to each of them under the condition to take pictures in the first month of release. In the one-month interview, they will be asked to select the pictures most relevant for the first month after release. They will be encouraged to take as many pictures as they want but after one month, they will have to select 10 the most representative picture for the whole month. Researchers will print the pictures and assist the selection process. The selection process is an individual one. An adaptation of photovoice (photo eliciting) (Wang and Burris, 1997) strategy will be used in data analysis. After selection, the researcher will discuss with the prisoner:

- o a general description of the picture – by the participants
- o why was that picture selected?
- o why is that picture important?
- o who is in it?
- o how was the picture related to the other parts of that day?

All interviews and picture-based discussions will be recorded and transcribed verbatim.

In case the person is under the probation supervision, the probation officer responsible will be informed about the study.

Pictures from Facebook or other social media could be also used to elicit what seems to be important for the ex-prisoners in the first month.

## VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Since most data will be of textual nature, data analysis will follow the thematic analysis approach. The process will take the following structure:

### *ANALYSIS STAGE A: REDUCTION OR BREAKDOWN OF TEXT*

#### *Step 1. Code Material*

- (a) *Devise a coding framework*
- (b) *Dissect text into text segments using the coding framework*

#### *Step 2. Identify Themes*

- (a) *Abstract themes from coded text segments*



*(b) Refine themes*

**Step 3. Construct Thematic Networks**

*(a) Arrange themes*

*(b) Select Basic Themes*

*(c) Rearrange into Organizing Themes*

*(d) Deduce Global Theme(s)*

*(e) Illustrate as thematic network(s)*

*(f) Verify and refine the network(s)*

**ANALYSIS STAGE B: EXPLORATION OF TEXT**

**Step 4. Describe and Explore Thematic Networks**

*(a) Describe the network*

*(b) Explore the network*

**Step 5. Summarize Thematic Networks**

**ANALYSIS STAGE C: INTEGRATION OF EXPLORATION**

**Step 6. Interpret Patterns**

(from Attride and Stirling, 2001: 391)

In the first stage, the researchers will work independently to identify the codes (or the basic themes). Once the codes will be determined, they will be clustered into themes (or organizational themes) and then into theories (or global themes). As new raw material will be generated, the process will be repeated until all codes will be included into the final theory.

Findings from the interview will be compared and contrasted with findings from the pictures and observations.

As for the coping strategies, based on the open questions inserted in the interview protocol we will be able to identify the stress, the conflict and the strategies the informants employ to deal with them.

At the end of the research, we expect to find out:

1. How is the resocialization process experienced by the Roma men, women offenders?
2. What are the difficulties in this process?
3. What are the discrimination situations experienced by the Roma offenders?
4. What are the main sources of help that could be mobilized to support the reintegration process?
5. How the Roma offenders see the role of State and communities in the re inclusion process (empowerment).

Based on these answers and on the data collected, a set of best practices will be selected by each partner.

## VII. DATA RECORDING

Each researcher will be allocated a number of participants to work with.

Each participant will have a folder where all the information will be kept (consent forms, interview transcribed, observation field notes, maps etc.). All these data will be safely stored in a special place by each partner. Electronic information will be kept on the computers under password protection.

## VIII. MORE ETHICS

During tracing or interviewing, the researchers will protect the identity of the participants and the confidentiality of the information. Disclosure will follow the national legislation in each participating country.

When searching for the participants, the researchers will not disclose to the third parties the reason why the participants are contacted.

## REFERENCES:

Attride-Stirling, J (2001) Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research *Qualitative Research* 1(385): 385-405.

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## ANNEX 1

### THE SELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRE-RELEASE PRISONERS

#### Instructions

This questionnaire is part of the wider research that tries to understand better the position of the prisoners after release. This questionnaire is collecting only general information about the prison population about to be released in the next four months.

Your answers will be treated with maximum confidentiality. Nobody but the research team will have access to this completed form. Your honest answer is very important to us.

#### General

1. Name of the prison \_\_\_\_\_
2. Name and surname \_\_\_\_\_
3. Age \_\_\_\_\_
4. Time estimated to conditional release \_\_\_\_\_ (months)

#### Personal background

5. The occupation of the grandfather (the father of your father) \_\_\_\_\_
6. The occupation of the father \_\_\_\_\_
7. Your own occupation before conviction \_\_\_\_\_
8. How many children did your grandfather have? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How many children does your father have? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
11. What languages did your grandfather know? \_\_\_\_\_



12. What languages does your father know? \_\_\_\_\_

13. What languages do you know? \_\_\_\_\_

14. What is your ethnic origin? \_\_\_\_\_

### **Participation**

15. If asked, would you be willing to take part in a creative study that will try to understand the perceptions, difficulties and the resources of the prisoners after release?

Yes, in principle

No, in principle

If yes in principle, please tell us:

17. What was the length of your sentence? \_\_\_\_\_ months

18. Where is it likely to live after release? \_\_\_\_\_ (the village/city name)

19. Do you have previous convictions?

Yes  No

If yes in principle, the research team will provide you more information about research, its methods and how the confidentiality will be ensured.

Thanks.



## ANNEX 2

### INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

The ROMA OFF-IN is a project aiming at understanding better the realities and the opinions of people newly released from prison. In this respect we are interested in how you understand the release process, what are the obstacles you face when you are released, who are the people or the institutions that are important to you and so on. The final aim is to advise authorities on how to help ex-prisoners in a more effective way. The project will allow you to communicate back to the authorities how you feel the prison experience and the release process has impacted your life.

To achieve the research aims, we need to run several interviews with you: one when you are still inside and four after you have been released: one after one week, one after one month, one after three months and one after six months. The interviews will last about one hour each time. If an interview in person for some reason is difficult in practice, interviews can be done on Skype or via email.

In the same time you will be given a camera that you can use to take pictures of what you think is important for you in the first month. After a month we will meet and decide which pictures are the most important for you. Discussions will follow based on those pictures.

In the first day of release you will be met by a researcher who will accompany you for the first few hours post-release to better understand the challenges of the first day.

The information obtained in this research is strictly confidential. Only the research team will have access to this data; it will not be made available to the correctional services or any other state or non-state agency. The research conclusions will be presented on a website, at research conferences and in research articles. Under no circumstances will identity of the participants be disclosed. However, if the research team will learn about a crime that put in danger the life of a person, there is a legal obligation to report to the police.

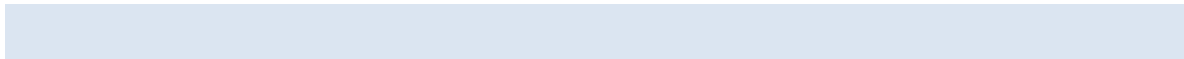
You can choose to participate in this research or not. If you choose to take part in this study, you can always choose not to answer all the questions. You can also withdraw from the project at any time with no explanation needed.

If you have any questions regarding this research you can contact the project leader: .....



If you are so kind to accept our invitation to take part in this study, please complete and sign the attached consent form.

Thank you.



## The consent form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, residing at the following address after release  
\_\_\_\_\_ understand the details of the  
research project 'ROMA OFF-IN' and agree to take part in it.

I also understand that the research team will always protect my identity.

Signature

Date



## ANNEX 3

### THE PARTICIPANT FICHE

1. Name and Surname
2. Date of birth
3. Tel. number
4. Address he is likely to be found after release
5. Alternative 1 contact person (wife, parents, friends etc.)
6. Tel number
7. Address
8. Alternative 2 contact person
9. Tel. number
10. Address

If these people come for visit, it is recommended to contact them prior to release.

## ANNEX 4

### THE OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Note !

If any behaviour seems untypical please ask the participants why they did what they did.

#### *Pre-release (during the 'befriend period' and interviews)*

##### 1. The participant's behaviour

- friendly / hostile
- anxious to be released/enthusiastic /optimistic
- high/low energy (your impression)
- talking about release a lot? (any signs of the 'anticipated socialization'?)

##### 2. Interactions

- interactions with other inmates
- interactions with staff
- interaction with family members/ friends from outside (when they come and visit, if any). When they come to visit inform them about the research and how they will be asked to participate.
- is the prisoner close to any particular member of the family? is that member likely to exert a pro-social or an anti-social influence?

##### 3. Identity

- does the prisoner present himself/herself as an offender or as someone ready to start a new life/identity?



### ***The day of release***

#### 1. The participant behaviour

- Level of energy (your impression)
- Emotional state (your impression)

#### 2. Interactions

- Who come to welcome him/her at the gate?
- What people s/he meets that day?
- Who seem to offer emotional support??
- Who seem to play a crucial role in the return for the participant? what kind of influence they are likely to exert?
- Who offers housing, financial, employment or other sorts of support?

#### 3. 'Walk through the spaces'

- What is the map of movement?
- Where is he going first? (ask why this was first)
- Short description of the visited spaces. Please pay attention to the existence of vandalism, damage property, homes run down and litter/rubbish in the neighbourhood.

### ***During the follow-up interviews and photo-based discussions***

#### 1. The participant behaviour

- Level of energy (your impression)
- Physical appearance (dressing, shaved, clean etc.)
- Hopeful or not
- Observe body language

#### 2. Interactions

- With whom s/he seems to interact with? what sort of influence they seem to have? (pro-social, anti-social)
- Whose opinions seem to be more important?
- What are the most important interactions for the participants? (pro-social or anti-social)
- Is there hostility in 'the air'?

#### 3. Social space

- Short description of the space and the people in it. Please pay attention to the existence of vandalism, damage property, homes run down and litter/rubbish in the neighbourhood.

#### 4. Identity

- Is s/he presenting himself/herself as a new person or s/he seems attached to his ex-con identity?
- Is s/he talking much about his/her prison experience? or s/he systematically tries to avoid the 'prison talk'?

## ANNEX 5

### THE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### I. Pre-release

##### *Demographics*

1. Name and Surname
2. Age
3. The moment of the interview – pre-release, after the first week etc.

##### *The understanding of release and narrative identity*

4. What meant prison for you? (the idea is to capture how and to what extent prison experience impacted on his/her identity/perceptions)
5. How would you describe release? What does that mean to you?
6. If you would compare the release with something else what would be that?
7. If someone would ask you who are you? Or How would you describe yourself?

##### *The expectations*

What do you expect after release?

Do you think you will return to prison? Why?

Do you think it will be difficult to stay out of trouble?

On a scale 1 to 5 how sure/optimistic you think you are to stay out of trouble? Where 1 not likely and 5 very likely.

Do you expect any obstacles in staying out of trouble?

What do you plan to do once released? (general plan)



Who can help you put this plan into work? (what are the resources he estimates to put in place)

Do you have concrete plans for accommodation?,

Finances?

Employment?

Medical treatment?

## **II. Post-release**

### ***Demographics***

1. Name and Surname
2. The moment of the interview – pre-release, after the first week etc.
3. Place

### ***The understanding of release***

4. What happened after release until now? Or Tell me the story of what happened after release.

(issues to follow: was it difficult, was it easy, what went well, what went wrong, how was the initial plan and how realistic was it – check with the answers in the pre-release stage)

### ***Difficulties & resources***

5. What were the difficulties you faced after release? Or What was hard after release? What was the hardest?
6. How did you deal with them?
7. Who helped you? Or Were there any people in particular who helped you? How did they help you?
8. Did you interact with any State institutions (e.g. employment agency, police, social services etc.)? if so, how was the experience?
9. Did you ever feel mistreated or discriminated against? If so, please describe.

### ***Identity***

10. If someone would ask you who are you, what would you say? How would you describe yourself?

### ***Expectations for the future***

What are your plans for the future?

Do you think you will succeed in staying out of trouble? (not reoffend)



If yes, why?

If not why?

On a scale 1 to 5 how sure/optimistic you think you are to stay out of trouble? Where 1 not likely and 5 very likely.

What can help you stay out of trouble?

### **III. If they reoffend**

Demographics

1. Name and surname

2. Place

Reoffending story

3. How long have you been out?

4. What happened after release?

5. How would you explain reoffending?

6. Check if the expectations were confirmed (compared with the first interview)

7. Who or what helped you when you were out?

8. What were the obstacles? which one was the main one? discrimination?

Identity

9. How would you describe yourself?

Future plans

10. What are your plans for the future?

