

OUTREACH
KIRKENS
KORSHÆR



GET TO KNOW THE ROMA IN YOUR CITY

Hundreds of migrants live on the streets of Copenhagen and in Denmark, in general. Many of them are members of Roma communities from eastern-European countries. This year we celebrate the International Roma Day by making Roma voices heard.

8th of April is International Roma Day

It is a day for celebration of the Romani culture. On this day, we call on respect for Roma human rights.

T., 37 years

We come to Denmark pushed by the shortcomings from home. In Romania we have a lot of poverty and we've heard that here people can earn money from collecting bottles. We sleep where we can and we actually clean the streets of the city from bottles.

Many Danes are good to us, others are bad. We don't do any harm to anyone, we are all people. We are seen bad because we are Roma, we are called *gypsies*. That is a very bad word, everywhere is seen as something bad. We don't use that word, we call ourselves Roma, in Romani we say "me sem Rom" ("I am Roma man") or "me sem Romni" ("I am Roma woman"). Gypsy is something ugly and people yell after us "sigøjner, go home".

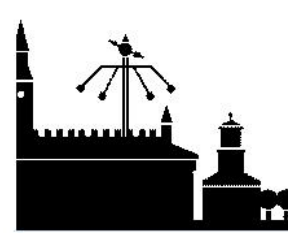
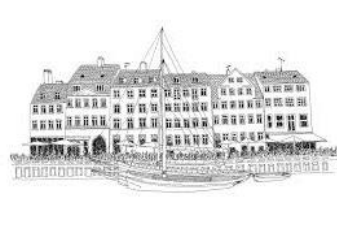
If we had with what to support ourselves we would stay home, but we don't and that's why we are coming here. And we don't come here for us, we do it for our children, to help them. We are happy with the money we can earn here and we do not have a palace or big fortunes. We only have a house with one room and a bathroom, and we thank God for it.

Roma is an ethnic minority numbering between 10 – 12 million in Europe. Roma have had a history of persecution and oppression – in Romania Roma were enslaved for 500 years. More than 500 000 Roma were killed during the Holocaust (in Romani: Porajmos) and still suffer discrimination in Europe today.

R., 50 years

Not all Roma steal. If one steals we don't have to pay all of us. And if a Dane steals or takes drugs it doesn't mean that all of them do. It's like that for us, not all of us are the same.

We come here to collect bottles to support our family. In Romania there isn't anything for work, there are no jobs and the salaries are small. The police don't let us sleep in cars, at the social shelters we don't have enough space, inside the main station we can't stay... then we go to the park, but we are not allowed there... where can we go then? There is no place for us. Some police officers have good soul and they let us be. The European Union should assure a place for us to sleep in Denmark, at least. This is why we sleep on the street...



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There is a lot of diversity amongst Roma groups. Some speak the language of their country of origin, while others also speak Romani – the Roma language, which is used internationally.

C., 44 years

We don't have jobs and there is a lot of poverty at home. There are no bottles to collect, like here. We don't like to send our children begging. We don't have other possibilities to support our families and put our kids in kindergarten and school.

All kinds of people do bad things, not just the Roma or the Romanians. I do not steal because I don't want to lose the possibility to come to this country, otherwise what will I do home with my boy and my girl? I wanted to get hired at home, even for sweeping and cleaning the streets and I would have been happy to be home with my children, but it wasn't possible. You need to have connections and to give bribes to get a job. Here at least you can earn money from collecting bottles.

M., 36 years

Every Roma who leaves from his country leaves because of poverty, because their children don't have what to eat, not because we are rich and we want to make big villas. We leave to support our family, to have food, to have a bread on the table, to have what our children need, a backpack for school, clothes, what the children need! I, my family, we work for the children, that's why we come to collect bottles at the festivals. Because life in Romania is very expensive, very expensive!

We don't steal because if you steal you go to prison and then you don't get to see your children anymore, your family, and they still don't have what to eat. We come here to be able to raise some money, pick up a bottle, go to a festival or ask from people, to save some money for our family. We're not making much, we make what God wants. We go home and stay with the children and then we leave again. I didn't make money from Denmark to buy a car or a villa. No! Just the necessary living expenses for my children that I can't make in Romania.

The Roma Flag was approved at the First World Romani Congress in 1971. The flag has a background of blue and green, representing the heavens and earth with a wheel in the center, representing the itinerant past of the Romani people.

A., 47 years

I first came here to find a job, but that wasn't possible. I stayed to collect bottles and save money for my medicine. I have a son at home who is with my sister and I have to send them money. Sometimes the police are mean to us, some tell us to leave back home to Romania. If I could talk to the police I would tell them to leave me in peace to continue with my work here because this is also a kind of work, what we do. We walk thousands of kilometers and sometimes we find bottles, sometimes we don't.