

**Denmark**

FRANET National Focal Point

Social Thematic Study

The situation of Roma

2012

Danish Institute for Human Rights

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## Executive summary

There is a lack of official statistics on the Roma population in Denmark as ethnicity of individuals is not registered. However, estimate figures on the number of Roma vary from 1.500 to 10.000. In 2002, a survey of all Danish municipalities pointed to a Roma population of 1,750 persons (less than 0.1% of the population - approx. 5.5 million) while NGOs estimate there are 5.000 to 10.000 Roma in Denmark. There is a seasonal influx of migrant Roma from other EU member states who temporarily stay in the country, but generally the number of persons with a Roma background is estimated to have been relatively constant for the last ten years.

The majority of Roma are sedentary. Danish authorities distinguish between two groups of Roma. The first group consists of Roma who arrived at the end of the 1960s from former Yugoslavia as migrant workers and who are now completely assimilated. The second group consists of Roma who arrived in the 1990s as refugees fleeing the Balkan wars and recent migrants from Bulgaria and Romania. Roma who have only been in Denmark for a shorter period of time are among the less integrated group.

Regarding the area of **education**, Roma children faced disadvantages. In one of the municipalities with the largest number of Roma, Elsinore, Roma students have been taught in separate classes established in 1982 due to an alleged high rate of absenteeism. This practice was heavily criticised leading to its abolition in 2004. Teachers in the municipality of Elsinore receive training in teaching Danish as a second language. Moreover, local authorities hope to improve school attendance among Roma children with the help of the “morning-ladies” (consultants from the city council whose responsibility is to pick up children who do not show up for class). The municipality of Elsinore assesses that Roma adults typically have lower education levels than the non-Roma in the municipality and that Roma children have a comparatively higher absenteeism rate.

With regards to **employment**, the situation may vary from individual to individual as some Roma have good jobs while others work in informal employment or are unemployed. There are no official estimates regarding the unemployment rates among Roma although it is widely acknowledged that Roma face difficulties in the labour market. Several measures have been taken to improve Roma’s access to the labour market, some of which have been deemed as discriminatory by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI).

There is no information on the **housing** situation of Roma in Denmark.

There are no data available on Roma and **health**, therefore the health situation of the Roma in Denmark cannot be properly assessed.

There are no data available **on poverty and the economic situation** of Roma in Denmark.

Roma is the group considered to have the lowest status in the Danish society, facing discrimination and social exclusion. Discrimination has particularly become an issue in recent years due to the influx of seasonal migrants with Roma background. Issues regarding ethnic profiling and discriminatory treatment of Roma by the Danish Police and immigration authorities were highlighted in 2010 when a group of Romanian Roma were arrested and subsequently (collectively) deported. Following an investigation, the Ministry of Integration deemed the deportations unlawful. Regarding **active citizenship and rights awareness**, the Danish Institute for Human Rights is the main organisation monitoring, raising awareness, and providing assistance to victims of discrimination.

## 1 Roma population

There is a lack of official statistics on the Roma population in Denmark as the ethnic origin of persons is not registered. Estimate figures on the number of Roma vary depending on different sources. According to the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration and based on figures from Council of Europe there are between 1.500 and 10.000 Roma in Denmark. However, in 2002 a survey of all Danish municipalities was carried out and it pointed to a Roma population of 1,750,<sup>1</sup> accounting for less than 0.1 of the population in Denmark (approx. 5.5 million). In 1996, the Danish Refugee Council estimated the number of Roma refugees to be around 2.000. NGOs estimate the number to be between 5.000 and 10.000.<sup>2</sup>

The majority of Roma reside in Elsinore and Copenhagen although small groups also reside in other towns across Denmark, such as Nakskov and Varde.<sup>3</sup>

Denmark experiences seasonal influx of migrant Roma from other EU member states who temporarily stay in the country, but generally the number of persons with a Roma background in Denmark is estimated to have been relatively constant for the last ten years.<sup>4</sup>

According to Roma representatives, the vast majority of Roma are sedentary.<sup>5</sup> Some Roma live several generations under one roof, but many also live alone or in nuclear families. Traditionally,

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<sup>1</sup> Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights (2002), *Legal Situation of Roma in Europe*.

<sup>2</sup> The Danish website about Roma/Gypsies in Denmark and Europe, available at [www.romnet.dk/index.html&forside.html&1](http://www.romnet.dk/index.html&forside.html&1)

<sup>3</sup> Danmarks sigøjnere (Gypsies of Denmark). Nyhedsbrevet: Brikker til et fællesskab. Juni 9. Årgang – Nr 1. The Danish website about Roma/Gypsies in Denmark and Europe, available at [www.romnet.dk/index.html&forside.html&1](http://www.romnet.dk/index.html&forside.html&1)

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration (2011), *Presentation to the European Commission of Denmark's National Roma Inclusion Strategy*.

<sup>5</sup> The Danish website about Roma/Gypsies in Denmark and Europe, available at [www.romnet.dk/index.html&forside.html&1](http://www.romnet.dk/index.html&forside.html&1)

people with Roma background marry early, but in Denmark many have abandoned this tradition, potentially due to the adverse effects on girls' possibilities of receiving education, in particular.<sup>6</sup>

With regard to origin, the Roma in Denmark mainly come from Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Kosovo.<sup>7</sup> The Roma currently living permanently in Denmark arrived primarily in the 1970s from former Yugoslavia as migrant workers and in the 1990s as refugees fleeing the Balkan wars. At the same time, in view of the EU directive on free movement, most recent migrants are from Bulgaria and Romania but there are no data regarding their share within the Roma population.<sup>8</sup>

In terms of integration, there are considerable differences within the group. While there are Roma who see themselves as well-integrated with jobs, housing and children in schools, other Roma are not as integrated. Danish authorities distinguish between two main groups of Roma, namely those having arrived at the end of the 1960s as labour migrants and recent refugees from former Yugoslavia having arrived in the 1990s. According to the Danish authorities, Roma who took up residence prior to the 1960s have been completely assimilated and do not emerge as an identifiable group.<sup>9</sup> Roma who have only been in Denmark for a shorter period of time are among the ones who are less integrated. In this group there are also Roma who are traumatised by the war in ex-Yugoslavia.

## 2 Education

With regard to education, Roma children have faced disadvantages. In the municipality of Elsinore Roma students have, since 1982, been taught in separate classes which were established due to an alleged high level of absenteeism. This practice was severely criticised and was first reduced and then abolished in 2004.<sup>10</sup> In the segregated classes, the attendance rate was reportedly around 66%.<sup>11</sup> In 2005, in view of the high rate of absenteeism in segregated classes, Council of Europe recommended

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<sup>6</sup> The Danish website about Roma/Gypsies in Denmark and Europe, available at [www.romnet.dk/index.html&forside.html&1](http://www.romnet.dk/index.html&forside.html&1)

<sup>7</sup> Carsten and Malene Fenger-Grøndahl (2006), *Sigøjnere – 1000 år på kanten af Europa*. (Gypsies – 1000 years at the edge of Europe)

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration (2011), *Presentation to the European Commission of Denmark's National Roma Inclusion Strategy*.

(2006) *Sigøjnere – 1000 år på kanten af Europa*. (Gypsies - 1000 years at the edge of Europe) Carsten and Malene Fenger-Grøndahl

The Danish website about Roma/Gypsies in Denmark and Europe, available at [www.romnet.dk/index.html&forside.html&1](http://www.romnet.dk/index.html&forside.html&1)

<sup>9</sup> European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), available at [www.errc.org](http://www.errc.org)

<sup>9</sup> Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the protection of National Minorities (2005) Second Opinion on Denmark adopted on 9 December 2004, ACFC/INF/OP/II(2004)005, Par. 51.

<sup>10</sup> Roma rights. Positive action to ensure equality. Number 1, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Laursen, J. (2004), *Sigøjnernes disintegration i velfærdsstaten*.

finding alternative solutions in order to guarantee equal access to education for Roma children who remain in a separate Roma class.<sup>12</sup>

According to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration, teachers in the municipality of Elsinore receive training to be able to teach Danish as a second language. Moreover, local authorities hope to improve school attendance among Roma children with the help of the “morning-ladies” (consultants from the city council whose responsibility is to pick up from home children who do not show up for class).<sup>13</sup>

The municipality of Elsinore has identified a variety of social problems in the Roma group residing in the area, although no statistical data are available. For instance, the municipality assesses that Roma adults typically have lower education levels than the non-Roma in the municipality and that Roma children have a comparatively higher level of absenteeism.<sup>14</sup>

### 3 Employment

Within the labour market, Roma face difficulties which are, among others, related to poor performance in the educational system. Several measures have been taken to improve Roma’s access to the labour market, some of which have been deemed discriminatory by ECRI. For instance, two social workers had been assigned by the labour market department of the Elsinore municipality to work specifically with Roma. As such, Roma were always directed to them, regardless the purpose of their enquiry. This measure – ostensibly aimed at providing better responses to the needs of the Roma – was not optional as Roma had to address themselves only to those two persons. This measure was therefore considered discriminatory.<sup>15</sup>

There are no official estimates regarding unemployment rates among Roma. According to Roma representatives, the situation in employment differs significantly for each individual within the group. Some Roma have good jobs and are well established while other Roma work in the informal sector or are unemployed.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Resolution RES CMN(2005) on the implementation of the framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Denmark.

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration (2011), *Presentation to the European Commission of Denmark’s National Roma Inclusion Strategy*.

<sup>14</sup> Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration (2011), *Presentation to the European Commission of Denmark’s National Roma Inclusion Strategy*.

<sup>15</sup> Council of Europe (2010) ‘[The situation of Roma in Europe and relevant activities of the Council of Europe](#)’. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, third report on Denmark, adopted on 16 December 2005, made public on 16 May 2006 (CRI (2006)18).

<sup>16</sup> The Danish website about Roma/Gypsies in Denmark and Europe, available at [www.romnet.dk/index.html&forside.html&1](http://www.romnet.dk/index.html&forside.html&1)

## **4 Housing/ Neighbourhood**

No data on housing are available, apart from a project carried out in 2009 revealing a strong experience of discrimination and exclusion in the society in general on the basis of five interviews with homeless Roma individuals in Copenhagen.<sup>17</sup>

## **5 Health**

There are no data on Roma regarding the area of health in Denmark.

## **6 Poverty/ Economic situation**

There are no data available on poverty and the economic situation of Roma in Denmark. A study carried out in 2006 analysing the situation of Roma in 15 countries, including Denmark, provides to a certain degree information on the impoverishment of Roma across Europe.<sup>18</sup>

## **7 Active citizenship/ Rights awareness**

It is acknowledged that Roma experience problems in Denmark, including discrimination and social exclusion. Discrimination has become an issue especially in the recent years due to the influx of seasonal migrants with Roma background. According to a survey carried out by the Danish daily Politiken, Roma is the group considered to have the lowest status in the Danish society.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, a project from 2009 found a strong experience of discrimination and exclusion in society, on the basis of five qualitative interviews with homeless Roma in Copenhagen.<sup>20</sup>

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) has been monitoring the human rights situation of Roma in Denmark since 2003 and has highlighted that Roma often face prejudice. For instance, in 2010, 23 Roma from Romania were arrested and subsequently deported although none of them was staying illegally in Denmark. The (collective) deportation was justified on ground that Roma were considered a “threat against public order and public health.” The ERRC pointed out the failure to carry out individual assessments and filed a complaint to the government. The Ministry of Integration has afterwards deemed the deportation unlawful. The case raised a political debate in Denmark regarding

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<sup>17</sup> Kristin Storck Rasmussen, Lotte Langgaard Andersen & Mathilde Nygaard Sørensen (2009), På rejse efter anerkendelse – Et studie af hjemløse romaer i Danmark (Searching for recognition – a study of homeless Roma in Denmark), available at [http://samf.ku.dk/pkv/rapportserie2/257/257\\_samlet\\_pdf\\_til\\_web.pdf/](http://samf.ku.dk/pkv/rapportserie2/257/257_samlet_pdf_til_web.pdf/)

<sup>19</sup> Article in Politiken 14 April 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Kristin Storck Rasmussen, Lotte Langgaard Andersen & Mathilde Nygaard Sørensen (2009), På rejse efter anerkendelse – Et studie af hjemløse romaer i Danmark (Searching for recognition – a study of homeless Roma in Denmark), available at [http://samf.ku.dk/pkv/rapportserie2/257/257\\_samlet\\_pdf\\_til\\_web.pdf/](http://samf.ku.dk/pkv/rapportserie2/257/257_samlet_pdf_til_web.pdf/)

the treatment of Roma and their potential discrimination.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, in its submission to the UN Human Rights Council, ERRC pointed out ethnic profiling issues and discriminatory treatment of Roma by the Danish Police and immigration authorities.

It is argued that in general it is particularly difficult for Roma lacking basic education to cope in the Danish society. Various cultural and social projects have been implemented for example in Elsinore to support the integration of Roma. However, specifically in relation to the situation of migrant Roma, a study carried out in 2004 highlighted the lack of integration of Roma and the failure of the authorities to provide a more flexible model of integration which would take into account the cultural practices of the Roma.<sup>22</sup>

The Danish Institute for Human Rights is the main organisation monitoring, raising awareness and providing assistance to victims of discrimination, in general.

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<sup>21</sup> Submission of the European Roma Rights Centre concerning Denmark for Consideration under the Universal Periodic Review by the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) at its 11<sup>th</sup> Session on 2 – 11 May 2011 (2010), available at <http://www.errc.org/article/errc-submission-to-un-upr-on-denmark-november-2010/3793>

<sup>22</sup> Laursen, J. B. (2004), Sigøjnernes desintegration i velfærdssamfundet psykologiske perspektiver på den kulturelt betingede psyke og dens betydning for en vellykket integration.



# Annexes

## 1. Bibliography

- Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the protection of National Minorities (2005) Second Opinion on Denmark adopted on 9 December 2004, ACFC/INF/OP/II(2004)005,Par. 51.
- Article in Politiken 14 April 2012.
- Carsten and Malene Fenger-Grøndahl (2006), Sigøjnere – 1000 år på kanten af Europa. (Gypsies – 1000 years at the edge of Europe)
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- Danish Refugee Council (1996): Sigøjnere/Roma, Dansk Flygtningehjælp
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- European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, third report on Denmark, adopted on 16 December 2005, made public on 16 May 2006 (CRI (2006)18).
- European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) , available at [www.errc.org](http://www.errc.org)
- Kristin Storck Rasmussen, Lotte Langgaard Andersen & Mathilde Nygaard Sørensen (2009), På rejse efter anerkendelse – Et studie af hjemløse romaer i Danmark (Searching for recognition – a study of homeless Roma in Denmark), available at [http://samf.ku.dk/pkv/rapportserie2/257/257\\_samlet\\_pdf\\_til\\_web.pdf/](http://samf.ku.dk/pkv/rapportserie2/257/257_samlet_pdf_til_web.pdf)
- Laursen, J. (2004), Sigøjnernes disintegration i velfærdsstaten.
- Laursen, J. B. (2004), Sigøjnernes desintegration i velfærdssamfundet psykologiske perspektiver på den kulturelt betingede psyke og dens betydning for en vellykket integration.
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration (2011), *Presentation to the European Commission of Denmark's National Roma Inclusion Strategy*.
- Roma rights. Positive action to ensure equality. Number 1, 2005.
- Submission of the European Roma Rights Centre concerning Denmark for Consideration under the Universal Periodic Review by the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) at its 11<sup>th</sup> Session on 2 – 11 May 2011 (2010), available at <http://www.errc.org/article/errc-submission-to-un-upr-on-denmark-november-2010/3793>

The Danish website about Roma/Gypsies in Denmark and Europe, available at [www.romnet.dk/index.html&forside.html&1](http://www.romnet.dk/index.html&forside.html&1)

## 2. Statistical tables

No data available.

## 3. Table of complaints (if available)

No data available.

## 4. Table of sources (reports and studies on Roma)

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	(2009) På rejse efter anerkendelse – Et studie af hjemløse romaer i Danmark (Searching for recognition – a study of homeless Roma in Denmark) Kristin Storck Rasmussen, Lotte Langgaard Andersen & Mathilde Nygaard Sørensen <a href="http://samf.ku.dk/pkv/rapportserie2/257/257_samlet_pdf_til_web.pdf/">http://samf.ku.dk/pkv/rapportserie2/257/257_samlet_pdf_til_web.pdf/</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Bachelorproject, Copenhagen University
<b>Thematic area</b>	<i>Education</i>	
	<i>Housing</i>	✓
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	✓
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	✓
	<b>Sample</b>	5 qualitative interviews
	<b>Location</b>	Copenhagen
	<b>Target population</b>	Strong experience of discrimination and exclusion in society.
	<b>Key findings</b>	Strong experience of discrimination and exclusion in society.
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative interviews
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	-

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	(2006) Sigøjnere – 1000 år på kanten af Europa Carsten og Malene Fenger-Grøndahl <a href="http://www.historie-online.dk/nyt/bogfeature/roma.htm">http://www.historie-online.dk/nyt/bogfeature/roma.htm</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Freelance journalist and historian of ideas.
<b>Thematic area</b>	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	

	<i>Poverty</i>	✓
	<i>Migration</i>	✓
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	✓
	<b>Sample</b>	-
	<b>Location</b>	Romas in 15 different countries, including India, Rumania, France, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Macedonia, Kosovo, Spain, Denmark, Sweden, Norway.
	<b>Target population</b>	-
	<b>Key findings</b>	Description of the fight for recognition by Roma across Europe. Description of poverty and marginalized livelihood situation in fx Slovakia and Czech Republic.  Tendency that Romas now organize themselves politically across Europe.
	<b>Methodology</b>	Qualitative interviews
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	-

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	(2004) Sigøjnernes desintegration i velfærdssamfundet psykologiske perspektiver på den kulturelt betingede psyke og dens betydning for en vellykket integration. (Gypsies disintegration in the welfare state) Johannes Busk Laursen
	<b>Source and type</b>	Thesis, Institute of Psychology.
<b>Thematic area</b>	<i>Education</i>	
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	✓
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	The thesis is mainly based on 8 evaluation-reports regarding different projects concerning the integration of Roma.
	<b>Location</b>	-
	<b>Target population</b>	-
	<b>Key findings</b>	Lack of integration of Roma, failure by authorities to understand the needs of Roma, including the need for a more flexible model of integration.  It is argued that traditional perspectives on the disintegration of Roma do not capture the cultural practice of Roma and its embeddedness in society.
	<b>Methodology</b>	Study based on reports
	<b>Representativeness,</b>	-

	<b>transferability of findings</b>	
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	<b>Title, author, source</b>	(2010) Submission of the European Roma Rights Centre concerning Denmark for Consideration under the Universal Periodic Review by the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) at its 11 <sup>th</sup> Session on 2 – 11 May 2011 <a href="http://www.errc.org/article/errc-submission-to-un-upr-on-denmark-november-2010/3793">http://www.errc.org/article/errc-submission-to-un-upr-on-denmark-november-2010/3793</a>
	<b>Source and type</b>	Non-governmental submission to UN Human Rights council when Denmark was examined in May 2011
<b>Thematic area</b>	<i>Education</i>	
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	✓
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	-
	<b>Location</b>	Denmark
	<b>Target population</b>	-
	<b>Key findings</b>	Collective expulsion and violation of the right to freedom of movement of migrant Roma by Danish authorities  Ethnic profiling and discriminatory treatment of Roma by Danish Police and immigration authorities
	<b>Methodology</b>	ERRC's monitoring activities in Denmark
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	-

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the protection of National Minorities (2005) <i>Second Opinion on Denmark adopted on 9 December 2004</i> , ACFC/INF/OP/II(2004)005, Par. 51.
	<b>Source and type</b>	Report Council I of Europe
<b>Thematic area</b>	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	✓
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	-

	<b>Location</b>	-
	<b>Target population</b>	-
	<b>Key findings</b>	Roma face problems, including discrimination and social exclusion  High rate of absenteeism in separate Roma classes.  According to Danish authorities Roma who took up residence prior to the 1960s have been completely integrated and do not emerge as an identifiable group.
	<b>Methodology</b>	-
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	-

	<b>Title, author, source</b>	Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Resolution RES CMN(2005) on the implementation of the framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Denmark.
	<b>Source and type</b>	Report Council of Europe
<b>Thematic area</b>	<i>Education</i>	✓
	<i>Housing</i>	
	<i>Employment</i>	
	<i>Health</i>	
	<i>Poverty</i>	
	<i>Migration</i>	
	<i>Active citizenship</i>	
	<b>Sample</b>	
	<b>Location</b>	
	<b>Target population</b>	
	<b>Key findings</b>	High rate of absenteeism in separate Roma classes.  Council of Europe recommends that alternative solutions are found for the Roma children who remain in a separate Roma class in order to guarantee equal education
	<b>Methodology</b>	
	<b>Representativeness, transferability of findings</b>	

## 5. Roma networks

Type of Associations, Organisations, NGOs	Name of Organisation	Email/Website	Roma involvement	Main area of expertise
<i>NHRI/NEB</i>	<i>Danish Institute for Human Rights</i>	<a href="http://www.humanrights.dk">www.humanrights.dk</a>	<i>Consultations with Roma organisations and individual contact</i>	<i>Monitoring, awareness raising, reporting and promotion of right, assistance to victims of discrimination</i>
NGO	Amnesty International	<a href="http://www.amnesty.dk">www.amnesty.dk</a>		Reporting, actions to combat discrimination and inhuman and degrading treatment of Roma at music festivals etc.
Individual person/ writer and journalist	Malene Fenger –Grøndahl	Malene Fenger-Grøndahl (malene@fenger-grondahl.dk)		Books for professionals and the Danish education system on Roma, advocacy for Roma Rights
NGO	Nyt Dansk Romanetværk	<a href="http://nytdanskromanet.wordpress.com/">http://nytdanskromanet.wordpress.com/</a>	Yes -	Cultural exchange among Roma
Independent Website	Romnet.dk	<a href="http://www.romnet.dk/">http://www.romnet.dk/</a>		Information website about Roma in Denmark and Europe