

**All Party Parliamentary Gypsies, Travellers, Roma and Migration:**

**'Brexit: The Impact on Roma Communities in the UK'**

Cholmondley Room, House of Lords

*Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2018*

A transcript of the presentation given by Camille Gangloff:

Thank you very much for the invitation today. I am very pleased to be here and to listen to your concerns because I think it is very important to be aware of what is going on here. I am now working for the Roma and Travellers' Team in the Council of Europe and that is why I am here today. I will talk a little bit about this other institution which is different from the European Union.

The Council of Europe is very important as it is an institution for protecting rights and it is especially important for Roma all over Europe. Of course, what I will say today, will not bring many answers to your very legitimate questions and I am sorry for this. Brexit is a very unique situation – it is the first time that a member state will leave the European Union and I think it is quite experimental. It is normal to have a lot of questions for EU citizens living in the UK and for UK citizens living in the EU and for Roma in particular I guess.

However, what I wanted to underline today is that the most vulnerable groups need special mention in this context because they do not have easy access to information, they need help to understand what is happening, what they need to do. We have mentioned that the lack of documents raises huge questions and for Roma in particular. But what is clear is that even after the Brexit, the obligation of the United Kingdom towards the Council of Europe will remain because the United Kingdom will remain a Member State of the Council of Europe. This is extremely important because the protection of minorities, the protection of fundamental rights of individuals will remain and the prohibition of discrimination as well. All legal instruments existing today and binding for the United Kingdom will remain after Brexit.

As I mentioned before, the Council of Europe is a European Institution with forty-seven Member States, so it is much bigger than the European Union. It includes the United Kingdom since the beginning in 1949. It also includes Balkan countries, Russia, Turkey, a lot of countries from the Southern Caucasus.

The core mission of the Council of Europe is the protection of Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law. It is also an intergovernmental organisation, so it is not like the EU where there was a transfer of competency. The decisions of Council of Europe are taken by Member States with unanimity so it is really a different kind of set up. But, that does not mean that the commitments are not binding, they are binding for the Member States. This is very important because we have a lot of legal instruments and if you check on our website you will see that the United Kingdom has ratified one hundred and twenty-seven Charters, Conventions and Treaties of Council of Europe, so that is a huge number of legal documents. Let me mention some of them, the most relevant ones.

The European Convention on Human Rights is really a key instrument for the protection of individual rights and freedoms. It is also directly applicable which means that individuals can use this Convention for protecting their rights once they have exhausted all internal remedies. In addition, there is also the European Social Charter, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings, and many recommendations and resolutions adopted by the Parliament.

Moreover, the Council of Europe also monitors the application of legal instruments and conventions. This is achieved through a number of monitoring bodies and mechanisms. For example, the European Court of Human Rights. For Roma this is very important as this will remain after Brexit as well as in other parts of Europe. In 2007, we took action against the Czech Republic in relation to the segregation of Roma children in special schools. This is a quality piece of legislation that ensures equal access to education to all Roma children in all Council of Europe Member States. Some of the other monitoring bodies are: The European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, The European Committee of Social Rights, and a group of experts on action against trafficking of human beings. Council of Europe do not only have legal instruments but also monitoring powers to ensure that rights are protected.

It also provides concrete activities. The treatment of Roma in France in 2010 was a turning point for the Council of Europe. Together with the European Union they decided to provide concrete assistance to Member States to improve the situation in the Member States. They implement projects - concrete activities – focusing on housing, community action, inclusive education, teaching history.

The legal instruments will remain after Brexit and the Council of Europe will be willing to support the inclusion of Roma communities whatever happens after Brexit. I am currently managing a programme called 'In School' about inclusive education in schools – four schools in the UK are part of the programme which is partially funded by the EU. After Brexit we won't be able to use EU funding but that is not a problem because the Council of Europe can use its own budget to continue to fund the activities.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.