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## **Romani Immigrants: Knocking Down the Walls**

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## Reviews (I)

Sordé, T.. (2010) *Romani Immigrants: Knocking Down the Walls*. Barcelona: Hipatia, 134pp. ISBN: 978-84-936743-8-0

Dr Teresa Sordé is a researcher for GEDIME (Group of Studies Study Group on Immigration and Ethnic Minorities) in the Autonomous University of Barcelona. One of her last works was this publication, based on the research commissioned by the OSCE-ODHIR (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe- Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights).

This study focus on racism as one of the major social barriers still nowadays, thus its prevalence reinforces existing inequalities among the most disadvantaged groups. Amongst these, the immigrant Roma population has become one of those which are most likely to face racism's consequences.

This problem is specially complex in Spain: The situation of Romani immigrants involves a myriad of factors and circumstances that vary greatly from one area to another. In that sense, this study attempts to address this complexity by providing an account based on data gathered through a range of means: a review of the scientific literature, policy analysis, media monitoring and qualitative fieldwork with Romani immigrants in Barcelona and Madrid.

Chapter one reviews the relevant literature about this issue. According to the author, research dedicated to Romani immigrants is still very scarce, as this group is rarely considered by researchers studying either the Roma or immigration. The majority of European studies that do consider them have focused on barriers to their freedom of movement and their main reasons for migrating, rather than analyzing their situation in a given country. This chapter examines existing literature focusing specifically on Romani immigration to Spain. The immigration of Roma to Spain must be understood in the context of other major population movements. In that sense

there is general agreement that these fit into the broad pattern of international westward migration flows, but that circumstances specific to the Roma – including discrimination, insecurity, and lack of opportunity - make this group especially likely to migrate. On the other hand, this study analyses the situation of Romani immigrants in various domains including housing, healthcare, education and employment. The situation of Roma with regard to housing and employment varies from one region to another; they range from being on the very margins of society to being more included in it.

In chapter two an overview of policies affecting Romani immigrants at state, regional and local levels shows that, at each of these, specific factors affecting this group are not always taken into account level. The analysis focuses on the extent to which the particular situation of Romani immigrants has been considered in two policy domains, namely those on immigration and on the Roma. In Madrid the most effective programs are delivered at local level, and in a decentralized format, in collaboration with various NGOs. In Catalonia the Integral Plan for Roma (Pla Integral del Poble Gitano), an interdepartmental commission created specifically to co-ordinate all actions developed at local level, serves as the umbrella under which policy targeting Roma - both Spanish and immigrant - is formulated.

Chapters three and four present findings from a qualitative fieldwork with Romani immigrants and media analysis. The present research is framed under critical communicative methodology that seeks to move beyond traditional theoretical dualisms in the social sciences, including also the direct and active participation, throughout the research process, of the people whose reality is being studied. Moreover, all data pertaining to Romani immigrants has been analysed using the dimensions we refer to as exclusionary and transformative. Differentiating between the two makes it possible to identify the main barriers that prevent Romani immigrants from being included within the host society, as well as elements that contribute to their inclusion.

The report ends with conclusions and recommendations. Equal treatment free from discrimination of any kind should be guaranteed for all; this is particularly important in the case of those at high risk. To achieve that, programs aimed at breaking down the vicious circle of social exclusion by improving employment opportunities, access to decent housing, quality education, and measures drawing on the specific role played by Romani women (like the Accreditation of Prior Learning policies) need to be enhanced.

*Romani immigrants are creating new job and educational opportunities. By participating in the system, they find ways to take the initiative and develop opportunities for other migrants (Sordé 2010: 12).*