

YOUNG GYPSY TRAVELLER'S LIVES

JURYS INN, EDINBURGH, 13TH MAY 2009

CONFERENCE REPORT



**YGTL is a project of Article 12 in Scotland
Scottish Charity Number: SC027711**



Introductions from Chantelle, Rachel-Marie & Justine, members of YGTL Steering Group

Guest Speaker Paloma Fra: University Francisco de Vittoria, Madrid



Left- Fiona YGTL Steering Group and Celeste YGTL Coordinator

Below Q&A Panel Members



Introduction

For many years, Save the Children has been working with young Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland to ensure that their voices are heard. However, due to a recent restructure they will no longer be able to work directly with this minority ethnic community. Aware of the gap this will leave, we, a group of young Gypsy/Travellers have sought assistance from Article 12 in Scotland to realise our rights to speak for ourselves and live in a diverse Scotland, free from prejudice.

Since January 2009, we have been working with Article 12 in Scotland to produce a two year action plan that will provide us, and other young Gypsy/Travellers in Scotland, with the skills and knowledge needed to become an independent voice for our community.

Although we are no longer working with Save the Children we felt it was important to celebrate all the good work we have done together in the past and to let people know what our plans are for the future: because we know that in order to achieve our long term aim of independence we will need the support of the wider Scottish community including not just our peers, and their adult family members, but also professionals with responsibility for ensuring that we can live free from prejudice and enjoy the same rights as all other Scottish children and young people.

With the above in mind, the Conference had three main aims:

1. To highlight and celebrate examples of work undertaken to date by young Gypsy/Travellers
2. To give us the opportunity to share our future hopes and aspirations with professionals and other young Gypsy/Travellers
3. To offer a brief introduction to funding available at the European level to assist those interested in supporting the young Gypsy/Traveller community.

Participants

The total capacity for the conference was 60 people. Our aim was to have around 30 people from the Gypsy/Traveller community, including ourselves, and 30 professional representatives from local and national government, NGOs, the Police, Youngscot, the Office of the Children's Commissioner and Educational establishments. This was achieved with all of the above being well represented and with professionals travelling from as far afield as Grampian region.

We were pleased to find that interest was so high that we had to set up a reserve list for professionals wishing to attend. We realised that those we were unable to offer a place to would have been disappointed so with that in mind we have offered training opportunities, in the future, to some and plan to double the capacity of our next event!

On the day

The Knowledge!

The Knowledge! is a quiz that highlights the issues faced by the Gypsy/Traveller communities. Issues such as:

- Knowing how many Gypsy/Travellers there are in Scotland?
- The discrimination faced when accessing health care.
- And who is a famous and related to Gypsy/Travellers.

Before starting the quiz participants were asked to write three words that describe Gypsy/Travellers on a “Before and After” Card.

We then each read out a question in turn and by asking the audience to stand up if they thought the answers were true, got the whole room buzzing. Some of the questions had heated debates, with some of the participants gasping at the prejudices and discrimination we have to face in our daily lives.

Moving Voices 2

Designed to give people a better idea of our lifestyles and traditions **Moving voices 2** is a DVD made by young Gypsy/Travellers from across Scotland. It discusses how other people may perceive us and how this impacts on us. It also discusses other issues such as camp-sites, daily routines, male and female traditional roles, education, the sense of community they feel when travelling and their hopes and aspirations for the future.

Paloma Fra – European Funding Opportunities

Our guest speaker, Paloma Fra, gave an interesting and informative presentation on the work of the Spanish Roma Federation and an overview of the many European Union funds that are open to organisations working with Gypsy/Travellers and other young people. She pointed out that organisations from Scotland and the UK do not apply very often for these funds and encouraged the audience to consider these opportunities in the future. She reminded the audience that Article 12 in Scotland have a lot of experience of working at the European level and would be willing to assist and advise people if necessary. A copy of her presentation can be downloaded from Article 12 in Scotland’s website at: [Article 12 in Scotland/YGTL](#)

Story Telling

This DVD shows Richard O'Neil a Gypsy/Travellers storyteller working with a group of young Scottish Gypsy/Travellers to develop their storytelling skills. He explores how story telling has changed over the decades for Gypsy/Travellers and how new ways of storytelling such as MC'ing or rapping are valid ways for young Gypsy/Travellers to keep the tradition going.

Question and Answers Session

Panel members: Chantelle Watson, Rachel Marie Devers, Fiona MacDonald, Justine Wilson, Laura Bernstein, Universal Connections. Paloma Fra, Celeste Thomson (Chair).

The three main themes of the Q & A session was European funding opportunities, Education and Gypsy/Traveller culture and traditions. The notes of the session are at annex 1 of this report.

Closing Remarks

Irene Graham from Save the Children (Scotland) spoke about how positive the work has been with the young Gypsy/Travellers community and how the material that has been produced goes some way to highlight cultural traditions in the Gypsy/Travellers community, noting that by showcasing our work to non Gypsy/Travellers we are able to break down stereotypes and prejudices. She wished us and Article 12 in Scotland best wishes for our future work.

Evaluation

Changing minds?

To measure if participants had increased their awareness and understanding of our culture and traditions we asked people to complete the "After" section of the "Before and After" cards at the end of the conference to see if their awareness and understanding had changed. We were pleased to see that the many of the "after" words reflected a greater understanding of us and the way we live. For example:

Before

*Unknown (to me)
Closed community
Distant
Mistrust
Trouble
Lazy*

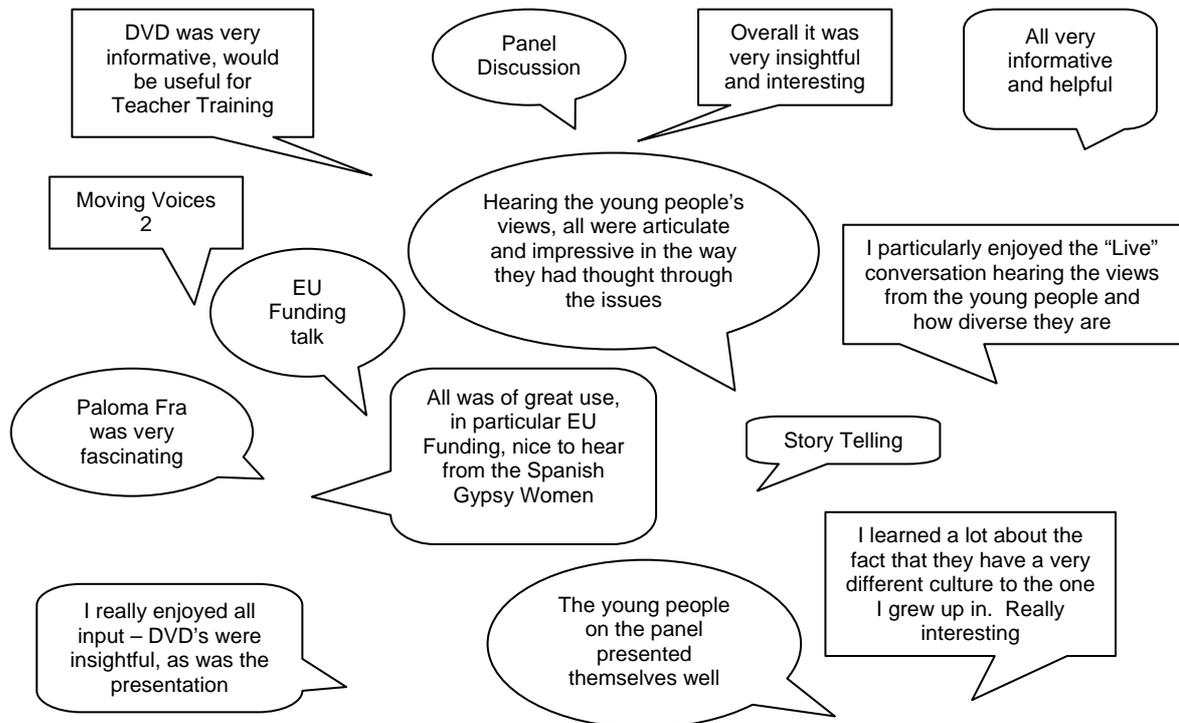
After

*Enthusiastic, strong culture
Open, willing to learn
Interesting, I now understand
Active members of the community
Unique and resilient
Hard working, family oriented*

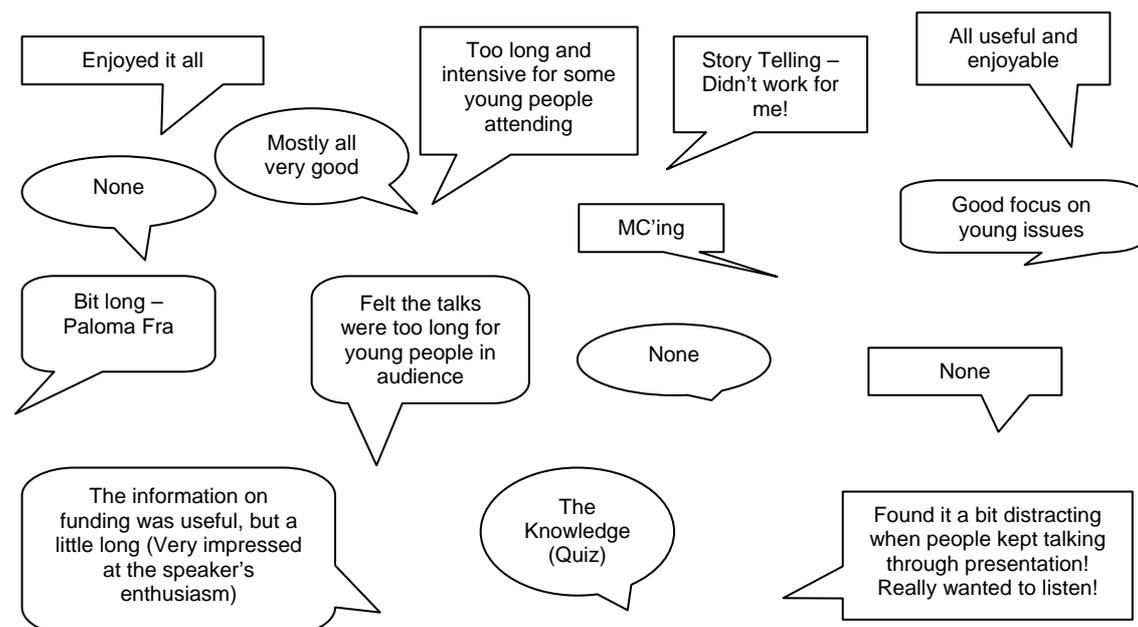
How was it for you?

We worked hard to plan this conference and worked even harder on the day to make sure things went to plan. The many positive comments from participants made all that work worthwhile.

Question 1: Which parts of the conference worked best for you?



Question 2: Which parts, if any, were least useful?



Next Steps?

To help us with our future plans, in addition to asking “How was it for you?” we asked participants the following question:

“Today’s conference has been an introduction to where we have travelled so far and where we hope to travel in the future. What do you think governments and other agencies should do to help us make our hopes a reality?”

- *Develop a better understanding of the Gypsy culture*
- *Make sure travellers are represented*
- *The issue with sites seems very important – where they are located.*
- *Increase funding!*
- *Not decide what you need, for you*
- *Continue to support projects like this to help Gypsy/Travellers have more of a say about their lives*
- *NGOs, Voluntary Organisations and Government, should work in partnership more*
- *Keep promises!*
- *Loads of respect – Both ways*
- *Perhaps be more inclusive when designing media campaign and promote cultural diversity*
- *Work together and help create a positive understanding of the Gypsy/Travellers culture*
- *Look at how they can fulfil all they promise made at the Gypsy/Travellers inquiry*
- *Take this community seriously and work together more in meeting the needs of the YGTL – continue consultation with young people*
- *The Bill through the Scottish Parliament to help Gypsy/Travellers*
- *Finding ways to share best practice between agencies and different Local Authorities areas.*

And finally..... we would like to thank all those who attended our conference; we value your views and opinions and look forward to working with you in the future.

The YGTL Steering Group

YGTL Conference Questions & Answer Panel Notes

QUESTION	ANSWER
Are Euro funds open to Local Authorities (LA)?	Yes, many funds are open to them not only the Youth Programme.
Can you tell me more about the education programme at U.C.?	Young people use facilities at U.C. because attendance at school did not work. The HMCI have given us three excellences for our work. ASDAN recognition re: qualifications. 4 year pilot. Alternative teaching attitude required with a creative approach. Short-term vocational courses are urgently required. Need to campaign to make this happen.
Response to previous question –	LA delivered e-learning funds has been secured by Scottish Travellers Education Programme (STEP). Want to link with South Lanarkshire, Highlands and Glasgow. Project in the early days but happy to talk to organisations and people that are interested in taking part.
What are the challenges for young Gypsy/Travellers in terms of engaging with educational opportunities?	Sometimes family members can be reluctant to let young person access opportunities. It was easy for me to access the education growing up because I knew all the other young Gypsy/Travellers in school. Work priorities have to come first for boys, traditional family focussed culture can present challenges. Sometimes frowned upon by others that are not in education – peer pressure. ASDAN works as it is flexible (only 60 hours) SQA courses are coming online that are also flexible.
Can the young people from West Lothian come and see the project at U.C.?	Yes, more than welcome. Young people often return to the group after they have been travelling around.
Is there a base on site?	We use the U.C. as the main base but also have a portakabin at the site. Took a while to build trust between the travelling community and using the community facilities.
Response to previous question –	It is important to utilize modern technologies and EU funds to support this to facilitate links between peers and to access e-learning opportunities.
How do the women feel about their only tasks being housework and child rearing?	Still very traditional in terms of roles within the family. Women are changing with their attitudes but men often are stuck in the traditional roles. Need tools to stay out of poverty. Should have choices in every culture, what works for some doesn't work for everyone. Respect other peoples ideas and points of view.

<p>***** Council is setting up an educational service for young Gypsy/Travellers. Do you feel you have the choice to go to school or so your families make the decision for you?</p>	<p>My family will listen to my opinions and let me make my own choice whether I want to go or not. Some young people do have the choice.</p>
<p>What can be done to make school better for young Gypsy/Travellers?</p>	<p>Remove the discrimination and the prejudice.</p>
<p>It is not true that people without a high school education will not achieve higher education as there are other ways to access opportunities.</p>	<p>Some things in school that young people are taught are not culturally acceptable to the Gypsy/Travellers community, mainly because of religious beliefs or because things are discussed in mixed sex groups.</p>
<p>Further comments on re: school and education</p>	<p>Discrimination within the wider community needs to be urgently addressed. There can be an element of protection in schools but what about outside school? There is no understanding or appreciation of Gypsy/Travellers culture by the wider community. Campaigns like One Scotland do not go far enough in encouraging better understanding.</p> <p>LA's also encourage discrimination by placing sites next to bad ground or in the back of beyond away from the settled community.</p>
<p>What was the best thing about Save the Children work?</p>	<p>Residential's - meeting up with other young Gypsy/Travellers, meeting other people.</p>