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Social Equality vs. Cultural Identity:

Government policies of the Gypsy/Roma¹ education in selected East-Central European states

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Abstract

Two policies aiming at supporting education of the Gypsies/Roma are differentiated in this paper. Policy A deals with Gypsy/Romany communities as cultural minorities and aims at integrating them to the cultural minorities of the respective countries – while Policy B recognises them as groups with social handicap. Policy A applies schools and other institutions for developing Gypsy/Romany cultural identity by conveying and disseminating their cultural heritages. Policy B uses education as a means for socio-economic equality. The two policies are partly complementary, but partly contradictory. Their representatives have been competing from the political transition (1989-93) on, and can also be connected to political ideologies and party politics. 2004-2010 proved to be a period of the domination of Policy B in the new EU countries of the region. Various socio-economic government projects have been launched, they proved to be partly successful, but partly not. Policy A (the one focusing on the cultural identity of Gypsy/Romany communities), in other countries emphasises the outstanding importance of formal and non-formal roles of educational institutions. In this case it is hoped that the higher level of schooling would end up in better labour market chances and improved living conditions of the Gypsy/Romany population.

¹ In the present paper the terms Romani/Gypsy (adj.) and Roma/Gypsies (noun pl.) are used interchangeably without negative connotation.

1 The Problem

1.1 The transition

One of the main reasons for the situation of the Gypsies/Roma becoming a focused international issue has been the transitions of the Central Eastern European Countries. The demolition of the Iron Curtain multiplied the number of possible connections between the Gypsy/Romany communities living on the Western and Eastern parts of the Continent, and shocking news have served as an alarm for the public in other European countries because of war affairs and intensifying migration (Bollag, 1994, Costarelli, 1993, Crowe, 1994, Krause, M. 2000, Liégeois, 1994).

1.2 EU membership

The situation of the Gypsies/Roma has become a determining component of the European Union enlargement negotiations and that of the country reports. Views on the situation and evolvement of the European Gypsies have renewed too. A part of the new aspects would most probably be accepted due to modified circumstances and demands whereas others lead to heated discussions. Statistic collection of data regarding the Roma has remained a sensitive issue. The connection between social integration, inclusion and assimilation, the features of marginalisation and discrimination are just as hot topics as the principle of asymmetric but common, bipolar responsibility. In some cases the leaders of the Romany communities themselves protest against detached support as in their opinion by using those they can become targets of (verbal) attacks. According to opinions of other Romany leaders social support – versus ethnic-based subvention – would not reach the Gypsy communities but those in favour of the policy decision makers. We still lack consensus on favourable judgement considering migration phenomena and immigrant issues.

1.3 Ethnicity

Statistics revealing ethnic consistence and the situation of minorities in European countries are indispensable when discussing the real challenges of the Roma, the phenomenon of discrimination, and during the process of anti-discrimination legislation and elaboration of minority programmes.

Increasing focus on the Romany/Gypsy minority can be traced since the early 1980s due to the programmes and regulations of the European Union and those of the Council of Europe. Parallel to these phenomena thriving self confidence of our target group can be observed (the term “Roma” was accepted in 1971 when the International Gypsy Committee organized its first World Romani Congress in London – and it has been proposed since then as a solid title for political use). Both national and international organisations of the Roma have gained strength in European countries.

1.4 Statistics

Romany organisations themselves have been facing the demand of statistic data considering their own communities more and more frequently. Although today reports on the challenges of the Gypsies have become common and some of these publications contain large data bases, their reliability can be ambiguous in some cases. Discussions and concrete actions in this way are more likely based on estimations rather than facts. In addition governmental statistics and data of minority organisations differ to a significant extent several times (see Table 1).

Table 1
Gypsy/Romany population in some European countries

<i>Country</i>	<i>Government-data</i>	<i>OSCE²-data</i>	<i>Data of minority organisations</i>
Albania	1261	100-120 000	90-100 000
Austria	95	15-20 000	20-25 000
Bosnia	no data	30-50 000	40-50 000
Bulgaria	313 396	800-850 000	700-800 000
Czech Republic	33 489	350-450 000	250-350 000
Croatia	6 695	20-30 000	30-40 000
Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)	143 519	400-500 000	400-450 000
Hungary	143 000	500-600 000	550-600 000
Macedonia	44 000	150-200 000	220-260 000
Moldova	11 600	20-30 000	20-25 000
Russia	152 939	300-400 000	220-400 000
Romania	409 700	2 300-3 000 000	1 800-2 500 000
Slovenia	2 293	8-10 000	8-10 000
Slovakia	83 988	500-550 000	480-520 000
Ukraine	47 914	50-60 000	50-60 000

Source: Roma Demographic Table. European Roma Rights Centre, <http://www.errc.org>

According to estimates there live more than 12 million Roma worldwide. A few years ago the number of European Roma was estimated between 7 and 8.5-9 million but today reports show data on communities expelling altogether 10 million Romany people. 70% of European Roma lives in Central Eastern Europe and in post soviet states. The most significant proportion of the Romany population compared to the majority state populations (9-11%) lives in Bulgaria, Macedonia and Romania. Considering absolute numbers the biggest Romany population lives in Romania (1.5-2 million people, or even more). A notable Romany minority (between 400 000 and 1 million people) lives in Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey and Yugoslavia whereas more than 100 000 Roma live in the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Germany, Italy Macedonia Russia and according to some estimates in Great Britain, too.

Within the past few years gathering the statistical data regarding the Roma has proved to be a hot issue in public life. Regarding this challenge the opinion of the Roma is divided. Several Romany associations are susceptible to reject any kind of official statistics or data collection as due to their past experience they see those as first steps of governmental policies being run against them. Others accept and agree with the necessity of central data collection with some restrictions although they also emphasise that such data can be registered only after fighting anti-Roma discrimination successfully and developing guarantee criteria against misuse. At the same time there are Romany politicians who urge establishing statistics that would support gaining information considering the real situation of their people. Several Romany leaders still believe that using statistics that represent the proportion of Gypsies among those

² The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

committing crime or unemployed, national governments probably intend to prove that the Roma “tend to have criminal characteristics” or are genetically determined to be less able to work diligently than the majority of societies.

1.5 Communities

Gypsy/Romany populations of Europe consist of different communities who speak their own languages or dialects and have their own culture. These communities live in diaspora in countries that have different historical traditions and socio-cultural backgrounds, and they can be found in almost every European country. Due to these peculiarities European Gypsy/Romany populations are especially colourful.

When we are investigating bibliography considering our target groups we can suspect that there is not any significant difference considering the situation of the Gypsies/Roma regardless of their home countries let those be flourishing democracies or countries that are just overcoming the inheritance of totalitarian dictatorships, let their national economies be rich or poor. Their situation can be described with similar characteristics of challenges: social handicap – including living conditions, health status, life expectancy – low educational index, high unemployment rate in connection with segregation and stigmatisation. From another approach we have to mention their distinctive cultural features, which can be articulated in minority language use, norms and values, socialisation techniques and seclusion. Basically the biggest challenge is that there are distinctive approaches and more or less working practices considering both the support of marginalised social groups and the elucidation of ethnic-cultural differences, however in the case of Gypsy/Romany people these two should be considered, interpreted and managed together while we do not have matured plans and methodology for this complexity. The experiences that have been gained by rich Western European countries in relevance with their post-colonial immigrant population or host workers can only be applied partly for our case (besides other reasons) because the Gypsies/Roma is an autochton, in-voluntary minority living in diaspora.

1.6 Civil rights vs education?

There are two condensation points of conditioning our question under discussion.

- One is the human and civil rights aspect (the “Roma issue” is one of the most burning challenges of civil rights activists all around Europe).
- The other one is education. Education is articulated on the one hand as a way supporting employment and on the other hand as a matter of social inclusion perspectives and the question of the future. This is why adopting the cultural demands of Gypsy/Romany populations into national education systems is a key component of any piece of writing that covers our question under discussion either partially or with a synthetic nature (Gheorghe, Mirza, 2001).

1.7 Central and Eastern Europe

Challenges of certain countries that seem to be similar at the first glance differ in several respects in case of careful examinations – this is why there is need for international discussion. Central-Eastern Europe however shares numerous peculiarities – hereby we focus on two important features.

- One is that during the decades of state-socialism the situation of the Gypsies/Roma had been shaped differently in these countries than in European democracies where market-

economies had flourished. The ideology of a class free society and the practice of planned economy placed the Gypsy/Romany communities (or a significant number of its representatives) under strong assimilation pressure. Bottom up community organisations were forbidden, caravan sites were illegal, employment (registration at the labour market) and education was mandatory. Consequently an important proportion of Gypsy/Romany communities of these countries affiliated into the class of unskilled workers of heavy industry and large-scale agriculture. Counter-balancing this situation relative (considering the economic situation of these countries) social welfare of the Roma was guaranteed. Regime Change exploded into these enforced though working processes as a time bomb with representative democracy and so called liberal market economy. The Gypsy/Romany communities who had just started their assimilation process during the previous 30-40 years were left no legs to stand on. Demolishing planned economies had to get rid of unskilled workers first and relative social welfare started to disappear together with employment. The collapse of the Ceausescu-regime in Romania generated an exodus among the Gypsies of Romania that exceeded the impacts of abolition and shocked entire Europe. Mass petitions for asylum of Czech and Slovakian Gypsies/Roma in the early nineties warned the old continent that a time bomb is tickling due to the collapse of the Soviet Empire.

- Our second concern of common Central-Eastern European features that distinguishes this region from other parts of Europe is that these post soviet states have been “ordered” to find solutions for the challenges of their Gypsies/Roma as a prerequisite to join the European Union. Due to this aspect in spite of regional similarities comparative analysis of the country peculiarities is definitely reasonable.

3 Government Policies: Seeking for Solutions

The Results of Case Studies in Selected Countries

Although Gypsies live in almost every European country (except for Island) data considering their number is mostly based on estimates. According to a common presumption about 8-8.5 million Gypsies live in Europe, three quarters of them in Central Eastern Europe while others in Western Europe and Scandinavia.

The controversial nature of statistics can be pictured by examining the case of relevant estimations in the Republic of Moldova. According to official data the number of the Roma living in the Republic of Moldova is 11 600, OSCE estimations report some 20-30 000 Gypsy/Romany people in this country. The Nationality Office of Moldova tell about 100 000 Gypsies while the Social and Cultural Society of the Roma reports 200 000 Romany people in this state.

Austria can be mentioned as another example. The state of Austria recognises Croats (approximately 20 000 people living in Burgerland and Wien), Slovenians (another 20 000 people living in Karintia), Hungarians (about 10 000 citizens in Burgerland and Wien) and Czechs (around 4 000 people living in Wien) as national minorities. Official publications on the other hand simply do not mention the Roma – due to a guess 95 (!) Gypsies live in Austria, while other estimates tell about more than 25 000 Romany people. Since the Roma are not at all considered as a national community (national minority) by the state in Austria we cannot talk about any governmental policies regarding this people.

3.1 Albania

During the communist era governments intended to assimilate the Gypsy/Romany communities to the socialist Albanian society. Overall employment supported this *assimilation pressure*: our target group was involved in the labour market most typically as unskilled workers. Gypsy/Romany communities had to get involved into education, public health and housing as a result of enforced assimilation.

Their situation started to decay apace after the communist era. Today most of the Gypsy/Romany communities live in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2005). They are targeted by discrimination at the labour market: 80-90% of Gypsy/Romany people were unemployed in 1996 (World Vision, 2007). Today 78% of the Gypsies/Roma lives below poverty line whereas 22% of the non-Roma shares the same fortune. 92% of our target group have difficulties with finding a job in the labour market because of lack of employee skills and spontaneous social discrimination. Many of the Gypsies/Roma lives on state or non-state (i. e. church) *social aid* that is still, the most effective support in Albania. The informal sector is a basis for others' income, such as musicians, workers in construction business, those collecting paper or metal ware.

Lack of education also contributes to the difficult situation of the Gypsies/Roma. According to UNDP and UNICEF reports this characteristics is due to the poverty of Gypsy/Romany families (European Union, 2007). Many Gypsy parents are not educated themselves either, therefore – and because of their poor financial conditions – they do not realise the importance of educating their children.

3.2 Kosovo

When international and NATO forces entered Kosovo in June, 1999, mass escape of the 'Roma', 'Askali' and 'Egyptians' (RAE) has started. Many of them joined the Yugoslavian army to avoid atrocities. Others had to face expulsion (United Nations Development Program, 2003) and escaped to Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Western Europe. A small group of RAE stayed in Kosovo who were labelled with the status 'Internally Displaced' (IDP) and received permission from local authorities to reside. Ten years after they had been chased away from their homes hundreds of Gypsies/Roma live in camps in settlements where even basic health service cannot be found – such as in Kosovska Mitrovica.

Unemployment rate is quite high in Kosovo which is increasing year by year with 10-12% (United Nations Development Program, 2003). Employment in Kosovska Mitrovica is only 22%, the level of education is very low and the RAE is both socially and politically marginalised. Before the conflict in 1999 most of the Gypsies/Roma lived in Mahalla and lived as day-labourers in construction and agriculture. Some of them found permanent jobs. Traditional working positions vanished due to the decay of economy in general and the collapse of industries. Jobs that used to be done by RAE traditionally are done by Albanians today (United States Agency for International Development, 2004).

The education level of RAE population is low. Parents who do not understand the significance of schooling are a huge drawback for their children whose labour and its financial worth is needed in the family. In the case of girls marriage is typical as early as at the age of 12-14. Due to the lack of teachers with RAE background children speaking Gypsy languages cannot adapt schools. School failure is due to the limited number of children speaking Serbian and Albanian. The presence of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in this concern is a key to success: regions, where NGOs help schooling 70% of children who are required to go to

school by law do attend schools. We can assume that regions where NGOs support children especially early school leaving of girls can be prevented (United States Agency for International Development, 2004).

3.3 Serbia

The number of the Gypsies/Roma is an estimated 100 000—500 000 people, which is 1-6.5% of the total population in Serbia. Most of these people live in slums of cities, according to research findings 30% of them in extreme poverty, especially around the capital, Belgrade (73%). As registration of Gypsies is forbidden in the country we need to emphasise that the numbers and percentages in Serbia are merely estimates. Official Serbian documentation of Gypsies and Kosovo refugees are often missing (Milivojevic, 2008).

Romani is the language spoken by most of the Gypsies/Roma and the majority of them also speak at least one another language (Serbian, Albanian, Hungarian, Romanian) depending on where they live. At first sight the Gypsy/Romany population of Serbia is successful with Romani language however statistics show that at least 70% of children do not finish primary school. According to the 2004 Helsinki report poor children in Serbia are practically excluded from education, health service and social services (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, 2004).

According to the data and analysis published in the report the reasons of poor education of Gypsy/Romany children are dominantly poverty, negative stereotypes, discrimination and the interpretation of education in Gypsy/Romany communities. Experts say that the self esteem of Romany children is extremely low because of their discrimination experience, hatred of the majority of the society and negative evaluation of their own language and culture. Analysis tells that Gypsy parents make their children earn money because of their poor financial circumstances. The environment of child labour is outrageous and often strains its power (United Nations Fund for Children, 2007).

The Serbian government has been participating in the program entitled “*The Decade of Roma Inclusion*” (Decade) that was organised by the World Bank in 2005 and declared that it would improve the situation of the Gypsy/Romany minority amongst the priorities of the country. The Serbian presidency of the program meant a significant step in 2008. In this year Serbia declared and introduced a new strategy: they invested 120 million dinar into the education of the Gypsies/Roma, they subventioned ministries responsible for health services and education, ratified antidiscrimination legislation, and prepared the new bill of primary education.

The “*National Action Plan*” (2009) is the latest programme aiming at raising the status of Gypsy/Romany communities. A part of this plan is the employment of a “*Roma issue respondent*” in every ministry of the government. Today (2010) there is such an employee working in the ministries responsible for education, health service, environment and projection.

3.4 Bulgaria

The Gypsy/Romany population of the country can be divided into three larger groups: the ‘Bulgarian Gypsies’, the “Turkish Gypsies” and the “Vlach” (the later term refers to Romanian Gypsies). Within these larger groups the original sub-group identity is still alive to the extent that researchers describe the larger Gypsy/Romany group identity characteristics only in the case of Gypsy intelligentsia (Tomova, 1995).

We can face “the Gypsy problem” all through the history of Bulgaria. Amongst its several reasons a few have to be emphasised, such as:

- the significant ratio of the nomadic (non-settled) groups,
- a high account of assimilation into muslim Turkish (and Tartar) communities,
- the organisation-level of their elite (cultural associations, newspaper, some schools and a theatre from the late 18th century on)
- permanent public anti-Gypsyism sustained by party regulations and media presentation.

Gypsy Settling Programme started along a historical scale only in the near past years in 1954 and lasted for more than a decade. In the first phase of the programme estates for around 20 000 Gypsy/Romany families have been built in the outskirts of assigned settlements. This segregated, ghetto-like settling was shifted into the *Settling into the Bulgarian Neighbourhood* program in the late 1960ies, prescribing the number of Gypsy families that can be settled into a street (Tomova, 1995).

Until the end of the 1980ies the purpose of extreme Bulgaria has been the creation of the united Bulgarian nation – the Turks and the Gypsies/Roma who had been becoming Turks were seen as the cardinal obstacles of these intentions. *Obligation of Name Change* that had been aiming at visualising the Turks as Bulgarians, was mandatory for the Roma as well. For instance cultural clubs and football teams were ordered to take up a name of a Bulgarian hero and *there was a campaign running against Gypsy musical bands* in 1984. This programme, which was aiming at the assimilation of the Turks primarily have been affecting the Gypsies/Roma as well and it only stopped because of international objection. Its psychological consequences however still live on and get articulated in spontaneous social anti-Gypsyism, blaming the economic situation that has evolved after the collapse of the Zivkov-regime on the Gypsies. Especially crime is seen as the result of nomadic (trading, begging) Gypsies living in the country.

The same contradiction has prevailed in the field of education as it has happened in the case of settling. One approach has focused assimilation intentions and pressure while in the other aspect segregation has taken place. The extremely low education level of Gypsy/Romany population, the significant number of illiterates, school age children not attending school each are features that have become more and more striking and troublesome. Two programmes were chosen in order to increase the level of education of Gypsy/Romany communities. One is taking away children from their families so that assimilation can work more effectively: *weekday boarding schools* have been set up. The other is setting up a system of *Gypsy Schools* (i. e. segregated institutions for Gypsy children without nationality/minority curricula) in settlements that have aimed at education at a level lower than general and practising special skills. (A third tack is *schooling Gypsy children in institutions set up for the mentally disabled*.)

After the regime change masses of people have lost their work and have fallen into poverty. These people have been suffering the consequences of these processes regarding both their personalities and health. The educational index of the Gypsy/Romany people is far below that of the Bulgarian and Turkish population. Gypsy/Romany communities live in segregated,

ghetto-like settlements even today – this is how Tomova (1995) was able to sample them when having carried out research in neighbourhood circles: their housing and living conditions are far below from those of the Bulgarian population.

There are two factors in the way of education of school age children:

- poverty of masses who are unable to buy school equipments, feed and clothe their children properly (school equipments and catering used to be free in Bulgarian schools),
- objection of wealthy Vlach, especially Lovari and Keldarashi groups against assimilation pressure, their intentions aiming at keeping their traditions.

In order to solve educational problems the Ministry of Education and a state organisation responsible for minorities (Ethnic and Demographic National Cooperation Committee) initiated a project with UNESCO and PHARE support. They published school books written in the three most widely spoken Romani dialects, and introduced facultative *Romani language teaching* or *multicultural education projects* in some schools (Njagulov, 2007).

3.5 Croatia

There are contradictory estimates regarding the number of the Gypsy population of the country: it varies between 6 000 and 150 000. Unusually, the Romany Priests' Committee of the Croatian Bishops' Conference has carried out its own research and found that one sixth of the Roma are muslims. They live in the Northern region of Croatia, especially in Medjimurje County, Osijek and Baranja County, Sisak and Moslavina County and Zadar County. The most significant number of Gypsies living in Croatia is the so called Boyash.

The Croatian Constitution and the minority act ratified in 1991 bestow equal rights on each national community who can have their seats in the parliament in case of the number of the community members reaches a certain number. In the case of the Gypsies/Roma the number is not high enough to enable them to send representatives to the parliament on a community basis.

In Croatia there has not been research carried out regarding the living conditions, attitudes towards the majority of the society of the Roma or that of the majority of the society towards the Roma. Experts tell that wealthy Roma assimilate and identify themselves as Croats while amongst the poor there are people who apply for social aid and identify themselves as Roma even if they are Croats (Forray – Szegál, 2002).

Living conditions and housing of the Gypsies/Roma compared to the general level in the country is worse, most of them live in settlements. (On the other hand they rejected the suggestion of the Croatian government, which suggested them *to move into the villages of chased away Serbians.*) Their educational index is very low: they do not attend kindergarten or pre-school, they start school at the age of 7-8 instead of the age 6, they live far away from schools so due to the lack of proper clothing and other reasons they attend school irregularly until they become teenagers – and at this point their education is most likely over as they start their own families at an early age. Earlier endeavours aiming at *organising kindergarten or schools* at their settlements had not lead to success and today they reject these kinds of initiatives because of suspecting racism behind these efforts. Unsolved schooling of the Roma causes real conflicts (The State of Croatia sentenced... 2010). Teachers tell that most Gypsy children do not speak Croatian and they can hardly understand a word in Croatian because

they speak “the Roma Language” at home – in their opinion this is the root of their failure at school. In spite of this feature the number of Gypsy youth – probably not amongst those who live in settlements – going to secondary education is slightly increasing.

Diffuse projects (initiated by the Roma Alliance in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and the Romany Priests’ Committee of the Croatian Bishops’ Conference) primarily aim at *developing Romani literacy* and its introduction at schools. *Summer camps and schools* represent another type of initiative that focuses on secondary school students, the future intelligentsia of the Roma. Organisations dealing with educational, cultural issues of the Roma lack international relations. It may be the reason for the lack of multicultural and intercultural projects that are in favour of other countries facing similar challenges (Szilágyi, 1996).

3.6 Slovenia

There are about 6-7 000 Gypsies/Roma living in this country who belong to subgroups. Most of them live in the Mura Region, they speak Romani or Hungarian. In the North-West of Slovenia the Sinto settled and there are new waves of Gypsies moving from Kosovo and Macedonia to the region of Maribor and Ljubljana. Most of them are settled but we can also meet traditional travelling Gypsies in Slovenia (Szilágyi, 1996).

Since 1960 the social, cultural and legislative situation of the Roma has been burning issues. Although a single act has not been ratified, several action plans and programmes have been developed aiming at supporting social, health and cultural conditions of the Roma.

Only one quarter of registered Romany children attend school regularly, one third of them do not go to school at all, while others go inordinately. When reasoning these features Gypsy/Romany families tell about traditional family occupations (such as picking plants), poverty, early marriage, inappropriate knowledge of Slovakian, school discipline, or teachers’ unadapted behaviour.

Although the social status of Slovenian Gypsies is worse than that of the average Slovenians, according to the action plan regarding education it is not the factor that causes the biggest challenge but language. Most of the Gypsy/Romany children do not speak Slovenian, therefore *one year long language kindergartens have been organised aiming at developing children’s Slovenian and other skills*. One year has proved to be a short time to recover shortcomings. The challenge is even more serious in multi-lingual regions of the country where Slovenian, Hungarian, Croatian and Romani are spoken. *Therefore two or three-lingual learning groups are created*. Although this practise is taken as an example quite often, regarding Gypsy children it causes extremely serious challenges. Children, whose mother tongue is Romani and who speak Romani only at home has to acquire two foreign languages at a time (Slovenian and Hungarian) and consequently they do not become able to express themselves sophisticatedly and are not able to understand transmitted information. As in these classes there are less Slovenian or Hungarian children – because parents register their children elsewhere – learning groups turn into “Gypsy classes” where education is trilingual.

3.7 Romania

Analysis of the social status (including education) of national communities in Romania, including the Gypsies/Roma is eased by a report published in 1994 by the Romanian government: Romanian Institute for Human Rights (1994). According to this book the

Romanian government does not find the status of the Gypsies worrisome. They emphasise the important results below:

- The Gypsies/Roma in Romania received the ‘national minority’ status and in this way they can claim the same rights as any other minorities;
- Representatives of Gypsies/Roma are involved in the work of state organisations and offices;
- Work has started in the field of education: as a feature of this phenomena they mention three schools where *Romani language teaching has been introduced*.

Although so far only 55 pupils have participated in this programme the mere organisation of such a project is quite important considering that before 1989 Romani was not taught in Romanian schools at all. The ministry has a ‘Romany issues expert’ in every county, financial support focusing on minority projects have been increased. The ministry principally supports *anti-discrimination actions*. Also, the idea of setting up a research centre focusing on national and ethnic minorities presented itself. Political articulation of the Gypsies is quite significant, Nicolae Gheorghe, the well-known representative of European Gypsies/Roma fights for their cultural and political rights on the European level (Gheorghe, Mirga, 2001).

3.8 Slovakia

Before the detachment in 1991 the Slovakian government accepted a document entitled “Governmental policy considering the Gypsies”, which disposed several ways to develop the situation of the Gypsies. This document consists of *projects regarding education, employment and housing*. Although some of the projects had started the following year, after the detachment realisation of every program considering the Gypsies stopped due to financial problems.

More projects have been introduced aiming at developing the situation of the Gypsies/Roma since 1998 but we cannot talk about significant results. Billions of Euros have been invested into building low comfort houses that should have solved housing problems of the Gypsies but this project lead to even more spectacular segregation. These flats have been built 2-3kms away from towns and villages in areas that do not have any connection to public services, or in the case of children – schools. The most important sponsors have been the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development, PHARE and the European Union. In 2004 the government invested 200 million Euros into building low comfort social blocks of flats in towns where one can find districts overrepresented with Gypsy/Romany population. It meant 14 micro regions with 134 000 inhabitants. In 2006 they used 170 million Euros for renovating 24 blocks that consist of 432 low comfort flats. (Gallová Kriglerová, 2006). These flats have been built for the Roma – and problems started the very moment they were settled. They had to settle outside the town in strange environment surrounded with new and alien neighbours without any public services. School was very far from this area, children did not even attend it when the weather was bad. In a district of Eperjes for instance 176 flats have been built for 1236 (un-officially 1700) residents with the support of the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development. This district has become the second largest ghetto of Slovakia. (The first one is situated in Kosice with almost 4400 official and another 900 un-official residents.) Many of those living here do not have money so they have started to steal from neighbouring gardens. Eperjes is planning to build a wall around the district.

In education they are continuing their traditional practice: they are sending Gypsy/Romany children to special education classes without any psychological examination where the level of education is very low and children are targeted of discrimination. Today 59% of Gypsy pupils attend special classes. (In Pavloce nad Uhom 99.5% of Gypsy children attend special classes) Parents often agree with schooling their children in such circumstances because they are not aware of the consequences of this kind of education. These institutions of special education are maintained with a bigger financial support therefore they are ready to accept as many Gypsy children as they can regardless of the real skills of the pupils. “Romany children regularly face disadvantages because of inappropriate monitoring, non-transparent financial controlling, legislation deficit and enforcement” (Tichy, 2009). The Slovakian National Action Plan that is being prepared for the Decade programme declares that “the number of Gypsy/Romany children learning in special education classes has to be reduced” but it does not define indicators and criteria along which this purpose should be realised. Another suggestion is boarding school. Some Gypsy/Romany parties as well as the Amnesty International argue against this kind of institutions: “Deepening the segregation of Romany children aside the general education system would contribute to derogating their basic human rights” (Tichy, 2009).

There have been successful programs carried out between 2002 and 2006, mostly with PHARE support and that of the Romany Educational Centre in Eperjes. The eight graded secondary grammar school (the *Gandhi School*) that was introduced for talented children in Zolyom is well worth mentioning although later on they wanted to close it due to financial problems and lack of pupils' interest. A similarly successful experiment is the George Hronca Secondary School in Bratislava (since 2004) which offers courses in English and Romani. *Training Romany educational assistants* is also a remarkable programme. These assistants help Gypsy/Romany children at school to overcome language barriers and those of other nature.

3.9 Hungary

The situation of the Gypsies/Roma in Hungary is well known due to several thorough researches.

It has been primarily the Gypsies/Roma who paid the price of the regime change, the implosion of planned economy and the slow development of market economy. According to one way of research (Forray, 2009) high unemployment ratio considerably correspond with low education level and the lack of skills. The main channel of young people's vocational education the system of vocational schools at secondary level has become much narrower and in this way the road of secondary education closed down for many. The Gypsy/Romany community is far behind the majority of the society regarding their educational and vocational index. Compared to other countries of the region, on the other hand the country can report on illustrious results. About three quarters of young Gypsies/Roma remain in the compulsory education system for eight years, (ISCED 1-2). The most significant challenge today (2009-2010) is education at secondary level (the remaining four years of compulsory education, ISCED 3).

One of the main goals of the Hungarian education policy is to prepare as many Gypsy/Romany children to a successful start of institutionalised education as possible because a well-set start can ensure the completion of the eight primary classes. There are typical programmes aiming at fulfilling this goal – a kind of streaming of Gypsy/Romany children

either based on failures (catch-up programmes) or success (gifted education). Another intention of Hungarian education policy is to direct as many young people as possible to secondary education that train them to take matura/GCSE exams – a prerequisite to enter tertiary education in Hungary. State and non state (or partially state, so-called ‘public foundational’) *grants* support those who continue their education successfully (Dezső, 2009).

The second priority of educational policies is to treat the Gypsy/Romany communities as a *national minority*. The 1993 minority act ratified Gypsy/Romany communities as national minorities, the two Gypsy languages (Romani and Boyash) spoken in Hungary have become recognised languages as well as any other languages of national minorities living in the country. Institutions of public education receive normative support based on educational programmes organised for Gypsy/Romany children (these programmes include Gypsy/Romany folklore and culture or become articulated as gifted education projects – tutorial for talented Gypsy/Romany children) (Forray, 2009).

Teaching Gypsy languages is a permanent goal, although due to lack of teachers there are hardly any schools where they could be introduced. Kindergartens and schools, which aim at satisfying special educational needs of the Gypsy/Romany population at quality level, are notable. In most institutions of teacher training courses on peculiarities of the Gypsies/Roma can be studied, Romany Studies (Romology) specialisation is being organised both in elementary teacher training and at bachelor’s level.

4 Comparing Government Policies

This section of our paper compares the realisations and implementations of those government policies.

4.1 Interpretations

The expression ‘policy’ will be used as a series of decisions, resolutions (and feedback, if any) that aims at changing a segment of actuality. In this broad sense developing the circumstances of schooling of the Gypsy/Romany children or building new estates for their families are understood as policies. Those policies might be differentiated in various ways

- *According to their subject* (in other words according to those who are targeted by the particular policy – in our case it is the Gypsy/Romany communities as a matter of course).
- *According to the actors*, in other words according to those whose policies we actually consider. In our case studies we discuss several kinds of actors of policies targeting Gypsy/Romany communities explicitly or implicitly. In the present study our intention is to concentrate on policies proceeding from governmental organisations, this is why we call them “governmental policies”. (“Latent policies” such as those targeting Gypsy/Romany communities articulated by some social groups and therefore cannot be defined as policies initiated by politicians would be well worth examining. Although while processing our treatise we have come across several policies of this type – those that could be documented and ones that could not – we do not engage in discussing these examples in the present study.)

- *According to the goal and purpose* of the political act considering Gypsy/Romany communities. In the first instance difference can be described between inclusive and exclusive policies: integration and segregation. (An extreme realisation of the latter one is genocide that we mention because our goal is policy classification. During the process of our comparison we assume that the goal of each policy being examined is similarly the inclusion of Gypsy/Romany population.)
- *According to their implementation.* We can observe different governmental and social philosophies behind them. In our treatise we distinguish among policies along their implications referring to the social-political ideologies behind them (without targeting a detailed analysis of those.)

4.2 Policy types

Two policies aiming at supporting education of the Gypsies/Roma can be differentiated. *Policy A* deals with Gypsy/Romany communities as cultural minorities and aims at integrating them to the cultural minorities of the respective countries – while *Policy B* recognises them as groups with social handicaps. *Policy A* applies schools and other institutions for developing Gypsy/Romany cultural identity by conveying and disseminating their cultural heritages. *Policy B* uses education as a means for socio-economic equality. Both policies have been seeking their own means of realisations after the fall of the Soviet Empire and the political transition. Both policies are legitimate, building on real social processes, seeking solutions for discrepancies, trying to find socially and legitimately effective answers for old questions. None of these policies can achieve their goal with eternal scope however they reflect on an important social group, the Gypsies/Roma, whose demands, opportunities and public appearance both has to be considered and will have to be considered in Central Eastern Europe.

- *Policy A has built on the concern that the Gypsy/Romany community is one of the national and ethnic groups:* its culture, traditions and language differs from those of the majority and the other minorities as well. Being the representatives of such a community their own nationality education has to be organised in case they require it according to relevant legislation. This fact reflects on the demand that the culture of the Gypsies/Roma deserves the same level of attention and respect as any other folk groups in a country: language and every other aspect of a culture represented by its people have to be assumed, cultivated and developed. Consequently education has to be developed in a way that it can serve the demands aiming at regular teaching of Gypsy languages and culture.
- *Policy B focuses on those with social handicaps.* According to this policy school has to be developed so that students who cannot get on with their studies in general circumstances could progress together with their peers. Students who are focused by this policy are those with (heavy) social handicap let them be Gypsies or subjects of special education. The challenge of teaching development is to guarantee equal chances for students risking failure because of social reasons and personal peculiarities in school: these students must have the same chance for development and progress as their peers who do not struggle with drawback alike. Most Gypsies/Roma in this sense belongs to the category of those living with social handicap or even more challenging: *heavy* social handicaps. The central task of development is catching-up education: finding the most appropriate ways that support these students to achieve more favourable results and more valuable school certificates.

These policy types have a long history and both represent important values. The first one (Policy A) emphasises sustainability and development of Gypsy culture – it reveals the significance and equality of Romany culture and its components compared to other cultures. The second one (Policy B) aims at achieving equal social inclusion regardless of the nature of the social and cultural group focused. Policy A understands the Roma as a group that can be distinguished along substantive cultural values and aims at ensuring individuals belonging to this group with equal social positions along a cultural legislation argumentation. Policy B characterises the Roma as a group of people with social handicap and therefore it aims at enabling them achieving equal social positions along a social justice argumentation. Both policies can be argued pro and contra. In the case of absolute success of Policy B would it let the Roma to be understood as a culturally different group of people? In case Policy A achieves full completion what remains to the Roma living at the edge of our societies? Or should we instead understand the two policies as ones equally supporting our target group?

4.3 Comparisons

We may assume that *each of the states in our consideration has its own policy targeting the inclusion of Gypsy/Romany communities* – or as the case studies put it fairly often: “they are aware of the challenge considering the Gypsies/Roma”. It is the first recognition. This recognition makes the governmental policies comparable--however the significance, importance and success of these policies vary to a great extent.

The second recognition is the political (economic and social) transition (‘regime change’) at the turning of the 1980s to the 1990s. These transitions have drawn a dramatic caesura in the fortune of the Gypsy/Romany communities and in this context in the governmental policies targeting them. In dictatorial and totalitarian political systems before the transition years relevant societies had been homogenised by executors of political power. Gypsy/Romany communities have also got drifted into this *enforced social integration*. As prisoners in jail they could have lived in relative security (even if less comfortable) due to representative democracies and liberated market economy after the regime change. The first decade of freedom brought forth the drifting of Gypsy/Romany communities to the margins of the societies region-wide.

Keeping the above mentioned in mind, an initial comparison of the government policies shows the following.

- Both policies distinguished along a theoretical basis in the introduction (Policy A: social inclusion through strengthening cultural identity; Policy B: inclusion through improving social status) can be demonstrated in the governmental policies investigated. *None of the governments apply exclusively either Policy A or Policy B, these policies occur together in the states under discussion.* The question is the extent of the ratio to which the particular policies are applied: which one is emphasised, which one is considered with greater expectations. These two policies can also be distinguished along the methods they are using. Schools and education for the youngsters of Gypsy/Romany communities can be aiming at social mobility (as this approach is reasoned by governmental or expert argumentation) or in order to exfoliate and strengthen their cultural identity. Languages can be taught in order to enable someone with skills that give them a better chance in the narrowing labour market or to steady one’s community consciousness. (There are policies of course that are exclusively typical of either Policy A or Policy B. For example building new estates in Bulgaria or Slovakia has a social nature primarily so

they can be classified as a feature of Policy B. Different ways of protecting cultural inheritance on the other hand can be described as features of Policy A – even if surplus education facilitate finding one’s place in the labour market.)

- Still, we can insist that these policies interweave characteristically, their pattern is coherent both historically and considering international affairs. *Policy A usually appears in states where national consciousness has been started to re-formulate vigorously after the transition.* It is not surprising – this kind of cultural and political atmosphere subserves community consciousness. *Policy B is typical in periods of times when a state or the other is poised to join the European Union.* As in this case states are aiming at fitting the regulations of the European Union they start to apply different forms and versions of Policy B almost irrespectively of the readiness of targeted Romany/Gypsy communities and the achievability of results. (Some leaders of Gypsy/Romany communities in our case studies reject those applying Policy B because the support of the European Union has been obtained aiming at integration and catching up.)
- This condition is typical of governmental policies considering Gypsy/Romany communities in the region. As it has been outlined in the case of other kinds of governmental policies (education policy vs. accreditation, Bologna process...) *these governmental policies are top down policies where bottom up initiatives do not fit in or fit in slightly.* Bottom up policies – although we do not investigate them in the present treatise – always appear as a part of some governmental policy (such as the case of the Gandhi Secondary School in Hungary or Slovakia). The more (real or presumed) support the European Union expresses, the narrower latitude is left for bottom up policies – at least the less of these policies can be observed and visualised.
- Due to this circumstance the governmental policies investigated, which has been trended towards the Gypsy/Romany communities of the region notwithstanding their positive intentions are contradictory and contra-productive most of the time. Policy B intends to raise Gypsy/Romany communities socially, however this intention requires discrimination (even if it means affirmative action such as building new estates). Policy A focuses on strengthening the cultural identity of Gypsy/Romany communities, although it can lead to legitimising behaviour that is not acceptable for the majority of the society (for instance the negative relation of Gypsy/Romany communities to education and culture).
- The contradictions above spring from one root, they can be traced back to the same reason. *Governmental policies of the region do not aim at supporting the challenges of Gypsy/Romany communities – or do not exclusively target this reason – but those of the majority of the society* (intentions, such as fencing the housing estates of the Gypsies/Roma, building separate schools for them “in order to ensure education close to their homes” etc.). Furthermore – and this has been typical of the governmental policy of the region, especially during the period of joining the European Union – these policies get articulated in order to ease the problems of the earlier member states of the European Union. Consequently the primarily practice of Policy B can be observed everywhere where the experts of the European Union come into view who usually lack information considering the particular local Gypsy/Romany communities. Their reports are formulated by foreign concepts based on earlier experience in other countries (examples from the Balkan are typical, the case of Serbia for instance). These diagnoses do not

focus on the needs of local Gypsy/Romany communities as much as on those of the sponsors who finance the programmes.

- We miss information considering the real challenges of Gypsy/Romany communities of respective countries due to lack of relevant research. Being aware of some cases – especially the case of Hungary – we can most probably claim that *every society in the region has an interest in the establishment of her own Gypsy/Romany middle class*. Without any doubt the way towards establishing Gypsy/Romany middle classes can be reached by Policy B. At a certain point of development however governmental policies have to enrich with Policy A (even if this concept is foreign for European communities who would prefer homogeneous political nation states). Gypsy/Romany middle class supported by Policy A (cultural identity) will necessarily require their own positions at political forums so that they can contribute to formulating their issues. In some countries – in the case of Hungary, for instance – we can already trace this process. We cannot foretell if the Gypsies/Roma of the region would identify themselves as national-cultural communities – as it can be observed in the case of several countries of the Balkan (language teaching, multilingualism, ethnographical research) – or as a political entity, such as in Hungary although this is the only perspective that can ensure a throughout background for selecting the most appropriate policies that support the inclusion of the Gypsy/Romany communities into the societies of the region.

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