

**MUTUAL LEARNING PROGRAMME:
PEER COUNTRY COMMENTS PAPER - SLOVAKIA**

How to combine the mainstreaming and targeting of Roma?
Lessons learned from Slovakia.

Peer Review on “Supporting the Labour Market Integration of the Roma Community
in the Czech Republic”

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A paper submitted by Michal Vašečka, PhD.

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1 LABOUR MARKET SITUATION IN THE PEER COUNTRY

1.1. Labour market situation in Slovakia

Since its acceptance into the EU in 2004, Slovakia displays one of the highest unemployment rates within the EU (almost 13% at the beginning of 2010). The registered unemployment rate has been systematically declining since 2000 (18.2 %) until Slovakia was severely hit by the economic crisis at the end of 2008. Due to robust economic growth the unemployment rate dropped to 9.4% in 2008. Year by year decline in registered unemployment was recorded in all regions of Slovakia until 2008; however, regional disparities in unemployment remain. According to the available data, pre-crisis positive economic developments are not benefiting unemployed people with only elementary school education; such people accounted for 20% of all unemployed people in 2001, and 39% in 2006¹². Roma are significantly over-represented among the long-term unemployed in Slovakia and there has been no significant progress in reducing their unemployment since instigating economic reforms in 1990.

Table 1: Structure of unemployed according to targeted workforce surveys - 2001-2006 (in thousands).

	3Q 2001		3Q 2006		Change
Total number of jobless	505.6		341.4		-32.5%
By age	Number	Share	Number	Share	
15 – 24	165.5	32.7%	83.8	24.5%	-49.4%
25 – 49	289.5	57.3%	199	58.3%	-31.3%
Over 50*	50.6	10.0%	58.6	17.2%	15.8%
By education	Number	Share	Number	Share	
Elementary	100.6	19.9%	99.7	29.2%	-0.9%
Vocational	206.8	40.9%	124.2	36.4%	-39.9%
Secondary without A levels	14	2.8%	9.2	2.7%	-34.3%
Vocational with A levels	22.7	4.5%	17.5	5.1%	-22.9%
Complete secondary general	24.2	4.8%	10.3	3.0%	-57.4%
Complete secondary vocational	120.4	23.8%	65.8	19.3%	-45.3%
Higher vocational	2.1	0.4%	0.5	0.1%	-76.2%
University	14.7	2.9%	13.4	3.9%	-8.8%
No education	0.1	0.0%	0.8	0.2%	700.0%
By length of unemployment	Number	Share	Number	Share	
Less than 1 month	22.8	4.5%	17.3	5.1%	-24.1%
1 – 3 months	37.6	7.4%	22.1	6.5%	-41.2%
3 – 6 months	48.5	9.6%	15.7	4.6%	-67.6%
6 – 12 months	107	21.2%	39.2	11.5%	-63.4%
1 – 2 years	105.7	20.9%	48.7	14.3%	-53.9%
Over 2 years	179.6	35.5%	198.1	58.0%	10.3%
Unidentified length	4.5	0.9%	0.3	0.1%	-93.3%

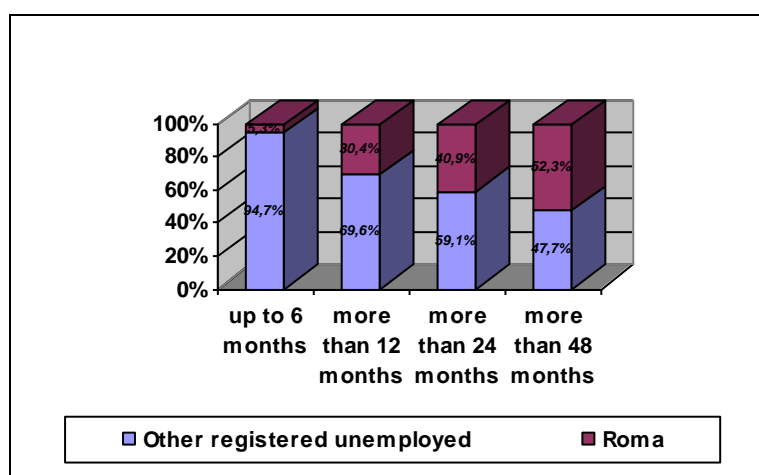
Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

¹ Internet: (<http://www.statistics.sk>).

² A closer look at the structure of unemployment according to education reveals that the greatest decline since 2001 until 2008 was seen among unemployed people who have completed secondary school or higher vocational courses. Another category of unemployment that saw a significant decline (by 42 %) was that of people with vocational training, which is the largest group of jobless people in Slovakia; the improvement was due largely to foreign investment (Internet: (<http://www.statistics.sk>)).

The length of unemployment is inversely proportional to the educational attainment of job seekers.³ Between 2001 and 2008, a substantial decline was recorded in all categories based on the duration of unemployment - the only exception was the category of people who had been jobless for over two years. In that category, an increase of 10.3% was recorded. Despite the growth in this category, the overall long-term unemployment rate (i.e. the ratio of people who have been jobless for longer than 12 months) fell below 10% in the third quarter of 2006, for instance, the first single-digit figure recorded since 2000. In other words, and as exemplified by the situation in Slovakia, systematic and robust economic growth helped reduce the unemployment rate and the labour market swallowed part of the long-term unemployed (approximately one quarter of them)⁴. However, even the spectacular performance of the Slovak economy has not been able to secure the inclusion of long-term unemployed people who did not finish primary education into the labour market. According to the former governmental plenipotentiary for Roma communities Klára Orgovánová, Roma have been over-represented among this group, and neither economic growth nor reforms of the social system have been able to secure employment of long-term unemployed Roma.⁵ In other words, economic growth helps in tackling unemployment, but it does not help those who are socially excluded, their situation can be even worse.

Graph 1: Percentage of Roma out of the numbers of unemployed according to the period of registration (1999)⁶.



Source: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak republic, 1999.

1.2. Unemployment of Roma

Roma living in marginalized communities in Slovakia did not benefit in any way from the robust economic growth. Since the beginning of the transformation process in the early 90's, no other group in Slovakia has been witnessing such a significant over-proportional decline of opportunities in comparison with the Slovak majority population. However, we do not have data that would allow assessing the scope of such decline. Indeed, there are no reliable statistics on Roma unemployment, non-employment, or the inactive. The only data on Roma unemployment, which nevertheless cannot be considered complete and representative, are the unofficial data provided by the National Labour Bureau (NLB) and the Ministry of Work, Social Affairs and Family (MWSAF). Such data were produced by the Labour Offices by writing down on all files of Roma job applicants the letter "R". However,

³ In 2005, approximately half of all jobless people had completed elementary education only (Beblavý - Senaj, 2006).

⁴ Interview with Miroslav Beblavý, former vice-minister for labour, social affairs, and family. Author of the reform of the social policy system in 2002-2006 (October 5, 2010).

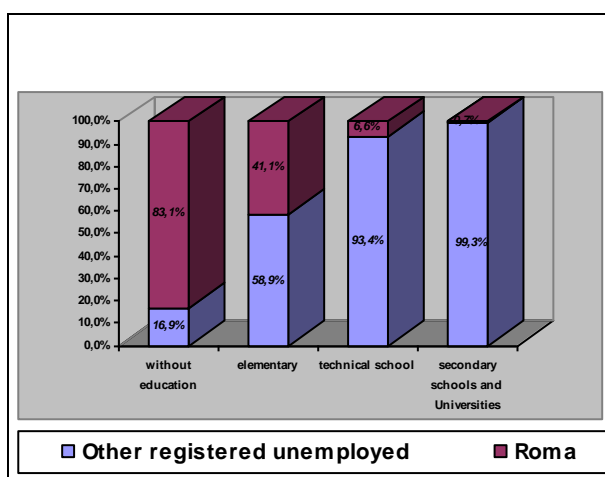
⁵ Interview with Klára Orgovánová, former governmental plenipotentiary for Roma communities (October 9, 2010). Klára Orgovánová suggests, that

⁶ These data are only data available on Romany unemployment, which still cannot be considered fully representative. Collection of these unofficial data coming from Labour Offices is illegal and considered discriminatory since 1999. According to Klára Orgovánová, former governmental plenipotentiary for Roma communities, situation has been worsening since 1999 dramatically. Sociographic Mapping of the Roma Communities (Atlas of Roma Communities, 2004) showed that locally Roma unemployment is as high as 100 %.

this procedure was not backed by the law and it disadvantaged the Roma in the labour market⁷. The collection of this information stopped in 1998, and since then labour bureaus do not follow the ethnic affinity of job applicants (the privacy protection legislation even forbids collection of most of ethnicity related data). Therefore, data on Roma unemployment are completely absent. Based on previously mentioned Roma unemployment it is clear that the number of unemployed Roma in Slovakia is systematically growing.

The Roma unemployment in Slovakia is characterised by a very long average duration, i.e. continuous and uninterrupted unemployment lasting longer than four years. Roma represent a high proportion of the long-term unemployed. Long-term unemployment is burdensome from a social and political angle as it has many negative consequences. Generally speaking, the longer they are unemployed, the lower the chances of finding a job. Unofficial data on Roma unemployment, based on experience of Labour office counsellors and on unlawful counts of Roma unemployed, showed that people who were unemployed for more than fifteen months had three times lower chances of finding a job than those who were unemployed only for three months.⁸

Graph 2: Percentage of Roma out of all registered unemployed according to structure of education (1999).



Source: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak republic, 1999.

There are several reasons behind these findings: Firstly, long-term unemployment affects work ethics and unemployed individuals lose the motivation to look for a new job, which finally completely excludes him/her from the labour market. Secondly, it devastates the human capital of the unemployed. Thirdly, people lose their working skills, their daily routine and schedule, as well as the social networks related to employment. And lastly, they become socially isolated and experience feelings of psychic deprivation and stigmatization.⁹

Even when the Roma do participate in the official labour market, they are still often employed only in the secondary labour market, which is typical for the instability of employment positions - they remain under constant threat of unemployment, inferior working conditions, lower wages, etc. Employed Roma operate mostly in badly paid professions such as forest workers, unqualified workers on construction sites, cleaners, etc. There are different barriers between the primary and secondary labour market that prevent, to a large extent, workforce transition. Such barriers include differences in required qualifications [and therewith related differences in the cultural and social capital of workers] and discrimination due to racial prejudices or social stereotypes, among others. Subsistence activities outside the official labour market are usually more intense than the official market oriented activities. Of course, it depends on what informal work the Roma are

⁷ Due to high social distance toward Roma, entrepreneurs did not want to hire people who were identified as Roma by Labour offices.

⁸ Vašečka, 2002.

⁹ UNDP, 2002.

offered. Considering the absence of tax obligation and social insurance contributions, the illegal work is much more attractive than formal employment for both the employees and the employers. However, the Roma from geographically isolated and segregated territories, especially in Eastern Slovakia, have generally less opportunities to find a job in the informal sector. Their communities are isolated from the outside world by both visible (lack of infrastructure) and invisible borders (having a “bad” address). Activities in the secondary labour market can hardly compensate for real jobs in a long-term perspective.¹⁰

2 ASSESSMENT OF THE POLICY MEASURE

2.1. Greatest problem of policy measures in Slovakia - lack of data

Slovakia and the Czech Republic share, as far as the approach toward Roma communities is concerned, a common past. Therefore, many problems are similar and, due to similar policies in the past, are even interconnected. Both countries have recently struggled to re-conceptualize their approaches to marginalized Roma communities. The governments realize that targeting Roma cannot be done because data on the Roma is lacking. But at the same time, previous misguided policies showed that mere mainstreaming is not helpful. Social system reform in Slovakia from 2002 until 2006 clashed with the non-ethnic approach and showed clearly that implicit targeting of Roma (while explicit targeting is on long-term unemployed, socially excluded, or spatially marginalized communities) will not secure better involvement of Roma in the labour market. In order to reconcile these approaches, Slovakia should re-conceptualize its approach to the collection of ethnic data.

All experts assume that the number of Roma living in Slovakia is higher than presented by official statistics. At present, the official estimates range between 480.000 to 520.000.¹¹ These numbers are recognized by the Government of the Slovak Republic as well as in official documents of the European Union, the Council of Europe, UN, and OSCE. These estimates are inaccurate since there is no politically correct methodology to gather data on Roma without revealing their identity. Most of the data used in this report are based on statistics gathered by various governmental, international, non-governmental, or research institutions analyzing anthropological features of Roma. The vast majority of the most vulnerable Roma groups live in so-called Roma settlements. Although Roma settlements are inhabited by the minority of Slovak Roma, it is exactly this group that is a target group for social assistance programs. The reason is simple - these data do not clash with the principles of the Slovak Constitution, they are allowed to be collected also by governmental plenipotentiary for the protection of personal data, and they provide even more valuable information for social assistance projects than data on ethnicity themselves.

Problems with statistics on Roma arise from the incongruity between data on ethnicity (gathered before 1989 on the basis of people’s anthropological characteristic, affinity towards a certain type of settlement, and even an evaluation of preferred lifestyle) and data on nationality (gathered on the basis of self-declaration in population censuses after 1989). Throughout the transformation period, statistics on the number of Roma has originated from three sources, all of which are inaccurate and potentially misleading¹²:

1. Statistical data from the 1991 and 2001 population censuses. In these official counts, only a small percentage of Roma living in Slovakia declared Roma ethnicity; consequently, all analyses of the Roma population based on these data capture only a small part (probably less than a quarter) of the actual Roma population.
2. Statistical data from various head counts of Roma done for the needs of state administration. These data are inherently incomplete and inaccurate because they are based on arbitrary decisions about how ethnicity is reflected in life style and settlement. These data include all statistics on Roma prior to 1989.

¹⁰ Radičová, 2001.

¹¹ This represents about 10% of the Slovak population. For the list of all estimations on numbers of Roma in Slovakia see Marcinčin, 2010.

¹² Vašečka, 2002.

3. Statistical data from academic experts, Roma leaders and politicians. The inaccuracy and methodological flaws are usually apparent at first glance.

However, without knowing the structure of the targeted population any policy aimed at social inclusion runs into many problems stemming from the inability to quantify relevant needs.¹³ Two major problems in connection with lack of data can be identified:

1. There is no consensus in Slovakia as to whether various measures aimed at improving the socio-economic situation of the Roma are to be aimed at the Roma population as a whole or only at its segments in the state of social need. In this context, questions arise whether the Roma can be viewed through an ethnic definition - as an ethnic minority suffering discrimination compared with the rest of the population - or through a social definition - as the poorest group within the population.

2. Various assessments that provide estimates of Roma population size have different meanings. It is therefore methodologically flawed to combine them – while some give estimates of all ethnic Roma regardless of socio-economic status and degree of integration, others present Roma population figures covering mainly the socio-economically marginalized portions of the community.

2.2. Data on marginalized communities

The vast majority of the most vulnerable Roma groups live in the so-called Roma settlements. Although Roma settlements are inhabited by the minority of Slovak Roma, it is exactly this group that is a target group for all social assistance programs. Data on Roma settlements are based strictly on the non-ethnic approach. Data on communities do not clash with the principles enshrined in the Slovak Constitution, they are allowed to be collected also by the governmental plenipotentiary for the protection of personal data, and they provide even more valuable information for social assistance projects than data on ethnicity themselves.

The last statistics on Roma settlements were collected during the former communist regime and date back to the end of 1988 when there were 278 settlements in Slovakia. Out of the then 278 settlements, 230 were located in the then designated Eastern Slovak Region. Since the early 90's, the need to comprehensively map the situation of Roma in Slovakia has been articulated for many years by various actors including state and non-state actors as well as international institutions which provide funds for the solution of the unfavourable socio-economic situation of the Roma in Slovakia. In general, the socio-graphic mapping of the Roma communities may be characterised as basic research with the objective of acquiring data on all Roma settlements in Slovakia. This means that settlements in which the Roma live dispersed among the majority population should be also included into the research¹⁴. One may object contending that this group of people should not be subject to a similar type of survey because their situation is completely different than the situation in settlements where the Roma live in much more concentrated numbers. Settlements in which the Roma live dispersed among the majority population have been included in the mapping for two basic reasons:

1. Even though the situation of these people with regard to their socio-economic position can be deemed comparable with the situation of the majority population, these people frequently face various discrimination practices, which means that they need a little bit different form of assistance than the Roma living in more homogenous communities.

2. Knowledge of the share of Roma who live dispersed among the majority population helps destroy the myth about the impossibility to resolve the problems of the Roma and about the general perception that any effort to integrate the Roma into the majority population is doomed to failure.

¹³ Škobla, et al, 2008.

¹⁴ Based on experiences from Slovakia, socio-graphic mapping has been conducted also in the Czech republic and became the most important source of information for targeting Roma in the Czech republic (see Agency for Social Inclusion in Roma localities). Internet: (<http://www.vlada.cz/cz/ppov/zmocnenec-vlady-pro-lidska-prava/socialni-zaclenovani/agentura-pro-socialni-zaclenovani-v-romskych-lokalitach-40435/>)

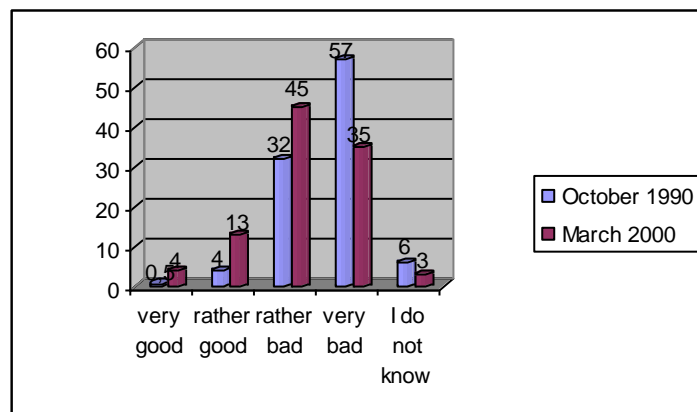
All Roma settlements can be divided into four basic groups in the *Sociographic Mapping of the Roma Communities*¹⁵ as follows - a settlement in which the Roma are dispersed among the majority population; village and town concentrations; settlements localized on the margin of the village/town; and settlements beyond the village/town.

Although the socio-graphic mapping¹⁶ provides information about the overall situation - e.g., number, regional distribution of the Roma population and typologies of the individual settlements, the mapping results provides detailed information about every Roma settlement separately. In this respect, it is important that the data on the individual Roma settlements are compared with the data on the majority population. The comparison will help identify whether the given case can be considered to be a case of social exclusion of the Roma or a generally unfavourable situation in the given region (in such a case the information about the Roma settlements does not differ in any way from the information about the majority population). Such data can support the formulation of public policies in various areas. Precisely because these data do not violate the Slovak Constitution, governmental bodies use the data frequently and they have become also an invaluable source of information on the target group for various programs financed both by the domestic and international bodies, as well as for EU structural funds, such as ESF, or EQUAL.

2.3. Roma as the most hated group in Slovakia

By far the greatest barrier to labour market integration of Roma is the very negative attitudes of the Slovak majority population towards Roma. The way of life of the Roma is perceived negatively by the majority population, where the prevailing opinion is that most of the Roma do not want or do not know how to adapt to the general social standards. These perceptions widen the social gap between the majority population and the Roma. According to all sociological opinion polls (see, for instance, surveys of IPA¹⁷, GfK¹⁸, or ÚVVM¹⁹) analyzing the attitudes of the majority population on minorities, the social gap or "social distance" is the largest between the majority and the Roma population. In the long term, the relationship and attitudes of the majority population towards the Roma are significantly worse than the relationship towards the other groups of inhabitants. On the scales of social distance the Roma usually rank first, even if the respondents can also choose other highly unpopular groups, such as alcohols or drug addicts.²⁰

Graph 3: Evaluation of the relationship between the Roma and the rest of population (1990 and 2000).



Source: The Center for Research of Social Problems, October 1990; IPA, March 2000.

¹⁵ Atlas of Roma communities, 2004.

¹⁶ Atlas of Roma communities, 2004.

¹⁷ Internet: (<http://www.ivo.sk>)

¹⁸ Internet: (<http://www.gfk.cz>)

¹⁹ Internet: (<http://www.statistics.sk>)

²⁰ Vašečka, 2002.

Every opinion poll dealing with this issue since 1990²¹ confirmed that the social gap is equally large among all classes of people regardless of age, sex, education, nationality, political inclinations or size of the municipality and remains basically constant over time. A large portion of the majority population perceives the presence of the Roma as a burden, and this feeling is even more intense when they think of Roma being in their close proximity. The proportion of people refusing the Roma as their neighbours remained basically constant during the 1990s - throughout the examined period it was more than three quarters of respondents.

People living in close contact with Roma usually have a less negative experience. For example, among the respondents living next to a Roma family, 27% indicated positive experience, 32% mixed and 39% negative experience. On the contrary, among the respondents not living in proximity of a Roma family, only 14% indicated positive experience, 26% mixed and 43% negative experience. Among the people working with Roma, 29% have had positive personal experience with Roma, 36% a mixed experience and 33% a negative experience. The relationship between the Roma and non-Roma population is assessed as bad not only by people who have had a negative personal experience with the Roma (91% of them state that the relationship between the Roma and non-Roma is bad), but also by a majority of those having had positive personal experiences with the Roma (78%).²²

2.4. Barriers that Roma encounter when searching for jobs

The majority of Roma in Slovakia cumulate different handicaps and their position in the labour market is also influenced by several factors leading to their marginalized positions.

1. The permanently declining level of education and qualification seems to be the major handicap causing the Roma to lose jobs and sources of income. It is also a legitimate reason for discharging the Roma from work and for preventing them to take even vacant jobs.

2. Unreliability cliché - for a long time the Roma have had the reputation of being unreliable workers lacking working moral, discipline and motivation. Even though this reputation is partially based on the experience of employers, it is largely just a part of a stereotype and statistical artefact and most of the Roma suffer from it.

3. Presence of latent, statistical discrimination against the Roma from the side of some employers. Roma always find themselves to be the last in the imaginary queue of job claimants with a certain employer who follows the market principles.

4. Permanently high incidence of (long-term) unemployment and therewith related devastation of human capital and loss of working habits.

5. Low quality of housing, poor living conditions and health status - the Roma dwellings, besides being overcrowded, are often absolutely inadequate in terms of hygiene and their sanitary equipment is equally insufficient. This impairs, to a large extent, the health of the people living in these dwellings and their ability to work.

6. During the previous regime, the majority of Roma worked in heavy industry which faces a radical reduction at present;

7. Disintegration of agricultural cooperatives, which too employed a significant number of Roma;

8. Decreasing demand for unqualified workforce in the labour market;

9. Growing competition in the form of a cheap workforce from abroad - research shows²³ that employers prefer foreigners, especially from the former Soviet Union when filling employment positions requiring low qualification. The reasons are clear - low wage requirements, higher qualification, and better working discipline;

10. Partial breakdown of the economy in some of the marginalized regions in Slovakia;

11. Adverse incentives of the social welfare system.

²¹ For instance, according to the repeated opinion polls conducted by the FOCUS agency since 1990 the degree of social distance (measured by the percentage of people refusing to live next to a Roma) developed as follows: 80% in October 1990, 80% in May 1991, 82% in January 1992, 94% in March 1993, 79% in October 1993, 78% in May 1994, 76% in December 1994, 80% in October 1997, 76% in January 1999 and 78% in March 2000.

²² Vašečka, 2002.

²³ Divínsky, 2009.

2.5. Policy measures of Slovak administration to decrease Roma long-term unemployment

The “new social policy”, a term introduced by the Mikuláš Dzurinda’s administration between 2002 and 2006, has been introduced by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family with clear goals to decrease unemployment in Slovakia. Its goals were rather simple - to activate the unemployed, to motivate job searching, to limit system abuse, and to bring effectiveness to the functioning of the administration.²⁴ Principles of the reform were based on four notions - the work should pay off, a view into the future instead of judging the past, a basic social minimum guaranteed, and effective social help to job search and increase employment.²⁵ Dzurinda’s government (2002-2006) defined the principles of a social system as a trap for the poor and the government tried to improve the social situation of Slovak citizens by thoroughly reforming the social security system. Although there was a notable decline in unemployment during 2006 - 2008, the Roma have not benefited from this positive trend - most Roma still face long-term unemployment after the reform.

The reform has been harshly criticized by the opposition that started to change some of its aspects after Robert Fico created government in 2006. In its program manifesto, the new government indicated it would not continue in its predecessor’s footsteps, and would abandon the hard path of necessary but imperfect reforms. The document abounds in formulations such as “adequate social security for inhabitants”, “introducing a greater degree of solidarity”, “new definition of the subsistence level”, “social economy” etc.

However, both Dzurinda’s and Fico’s governments failed to secure employment opportunities for the Roma. The status of the Roma in the labour market has deteriorated rather than improved, mostly because the incidence of long-term unemployment of Roma increased, and also because the Roma continue to face discrimination in the labour market, and make up a disproportionately large share of the long-term jobless in Slovakia²⁶. According to Klára Orgovánová, reform measures have been focused too much on work incentives and simply cut the social benefits of the long-term unemployed, mostly Roma. After alternating approaches based on social programs and reliance on economic growth, it is obvious that socially excluded Roma communities found themselves in a trap of social dependency and have problems finding a way out. By far the greatest problem for policy-makers is the absence of precise data on the number of unemployed Roma, which makes it impossible to assess the impact of the government’s employment policies.

It is very likely that the governments of Slovakia therefore will also display in the future, in the long-term, an inconsistent approach towards the most marginalized group of people in the country. The robust growth clearly divided employable and unemployable parts of the long-term unemployed. Dzurinda’s government relied on economic growth that clearly did not secure the inclusion of all long-term unemployed, marginalized groups. The Fund for social development (Fond sociálneho rozvoja) has been set up by Dzurinda’s government as a major tool of inclusion of marginalized groups into the labour market and it relies, to a high degree, on the EU structural funds. Funds for social development, however, suffer from inconsistency in their strictly non-ethnic approach towards the group that - in fact - exhibits very clear ethnic specificities. The policy packages have been focused on poverty, and although job creation subsidies have targeted Roma, the whole system suffered by implicitly combining mainstreaming and targeting of Roma. The Slovak experience, therefore, clearly shows that social work cannot be separated from ethnically defined Roma issues.

²⁴ Beblavý - Senaj, 2004.

²⁵ Interview with Miroslav Beblavý, former vice-minister for labour, social affairs, and family. Author of the reform of the social policy system in 2002-2006 (October 5, 2010).

²⁶ Interview with Klára Orgovánová, former governmental plenipotentiary for Roma communities (October 9, 2010).

3 ASSESSMENT OF THE SUCCESS FACTORS AND TRANSFERABILITY

3.1. Strategies to tackle Roma issues - similarities of the Czech Republic and Slovakia

Based on the experiences of Slovakia in tackling the so-called Roma issue, basic policy measures or principles can be used for the purpose of assessing the success of governmental policies towards socially excluded Roma. Firstly, the principle of de-stigmatization allows overcoming the social dependency on benefits and it requires individual assessment of each individual case of social exclusion and social dependency. It, therefore, does not allow confirmation of the stereotypes of Roma. Secondly, the principle of de-segregation allows a reduction in the spatial segregation of Roma families and settlements. It requires the use of adequate standards of social housing in relation to particularly excluded families and adequate standards of infrastructure quality for the whole excluded community. The first step is to build and connect the infrastructure in the locality. The help for a community should be secured, however, both at the level of a family and community. Thirdly, the "principle of de-ghettoization" allows increasing social cohesion in a locality; it means removing, in line with the principles of de-stigmatization and de-segregation, social isolation of Roma who live in Roma settlements. In order to achieve this goal it is necessary to build and use services and facilities together and to cooperate in solving social problems.

3.2. Lessons learned from Slovakia - conceptual level

Based on the previous misleading policies, or partially unsuccessful policies in Slovakia, one can draw lessons learned from the Czech Republic:

1. The Roma issue represents a combination of ethnic and social problems, which must both be taken into account when preparing public policies. A strictly non-ethnic approach will not secure better involvement of the Roma in the labour market and their integration into society in general. Social work cannot be separated from so-called Roma issues. The example of Slovakia shows that there are clear limits of the non-ethnic approach.

2. The approach taken towards Roma should be based on desegregation of the Roma. Segregation is clearly a factor that deepens the social dependency of marginalized groups in the social system and segregation is also to be blamed for certain social pathologies in the most marginalized communities.

3. Lack of coordination between administrative bodies responsible for the inclusion of marginalized Roma into the labour market proved to be of major importance. In the case of Slovakia, cooperation between the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family, Ministry of Education, and Governmental Office (Governmental Plenipotentiary for Roma communities) has been insufficient or in some periods missing completely.²⁷ Various failures of programs targeting Roma communities clearly indicate that coordination and mutual awareness are a necessary prerequisite when public policies are prepared.

3.3. Lessons learned from Slovakia - what strategies to undertake to lower the incidence of long-term unemployment among Roma

To increase the proportion of retraining programs for Roma as one of the tools of active employment policies (ALMP) and for branches of industry where there is lack of workforce.

1 To support community work in districts with high Roma unemployment and no other job opportunities. The Fund for Social Development (Fond sociálneho rozvoja)²⁸ in Slovakia is, in spite of problematic management in last years, a well-designed tool about how to tackle Roma poverty and social exclusion.

2 To provide suitable support to Roma entrepreneurs, to establish and operate small and middle-sized companies - administration can use existing credit and loan programs for

²⁷ Interview with Klára Orgovánová, former governmental plenipotentiary for Roma communities (October 9, 2010).

²⁸ Internet: (<http://www.fsr.gov.sk>)

small and medium entrepreneurs. Even critics of the social system reforms suggest that support for Roma entrepreneurs could work very well as a tool to tackle Roma unemployment.

3 To prepare temporary measures ensuring advantages to entrepreneurs employing long-term unemployed Roma (e.g. tax brakes). For a long time, Slovakia has been reluctant to introduce these measures in spite of the good performance of Roma entrepreneurs, in employing Roma.

4 To increase the proportion of Roma working as job counsellors in labour offices in order to remove one of the barriers. In the case of Slovakia, the Fund of Social Development has been especially successful in hiring Roma social assistants; although especially during the Fico's government (2006-2010) the system has not been fully able to utilize their potential.

5 To break up the dependency cycle of Roma in the social system. Slovakia has not been so far successful in tackling the dependency trap of many Roma communities. Social system reform, however, did activate many of the marginalized and long-term unemployed people. Social programs, secured mostly from EU structural funds, have had only a small impact on these communities, but activation as a first prerequisite of a success has been in place.²⁹ The dependency trap is one of the biggest obstacles for many of the marginalized Roma communities in the Czech Republic.

6 To find balance between active labour market policies and support for economic growth. Experiences of Slovakia show that economic growth clearly has limits in its strengths to improve the standard of living for all. It can decrease the long-term unemployment of Roma, but at the same time, active labour market policies cannot substitute for a business environment.

7 ALMP in Slovakia have been evaluated only very rarely. It is important to mention methodological problems with any Roma program impact evaluation. Not only that we are not able to identify costs of various programs, but even target groups of those programs.

8 ALMP do not take into account that Roma live in the most marginalized regions without much potential of starting any significant growth. In other words, active labour market policies should be focused on tackling the "double marginalization" of Roma and eventually create social service provisions in Roma settlements. In the case of the Czech Republic, the situation is different, but during the last few years the processes of pushing Roma communities into the margins of cities and municipalities has continued.

9 The anti-discrimination effort is too often a missing component of ALMP. It is clearly more important to Roma than among any other groups.

3.4. Lessons learned from Slovakia - Policy recommendations:

1. Policies and interventions to improve the living conditions of Roma in the Czech Republic need to balance three objectives - 1) increasing economic opportunities by expanding employment; 2) building human capital through better education and health; and 3) strengthening social capital and community development through increased empowerment and participation of Roma.

2. The Czech Republic should connect policies toward vulnerable groups cross-sectorally even more than it has been happening up to now. Educational programs should be designed to address health issues, housing projects can provide employment opportunities, and social assistance programs can be designed to support school attendance.

3. Social protection system should be focused on "main-streaming" the Roma population, but at the same time on targeting the Roma population - these two processes should go hand-in-hand. In other words, to have a Roma aspect of ALMP is important, but targeting Roma cannot be forgotten.

²⁹ Interviews with Klára Orgovánová, former governmental plenipotentiary for Roma communities (October 9, 2010), and with Miroslav Beblavý, former vice-minister for labour, social affairs, and family. Author of the reform of the social policy system in 2002-2006 (October 5, 2010).

4. Evaluation of ALMP is of a crucial importance. In order to be able to evaluate active labour measures there must be a change of ethnic data collection and of their utilization.
5. Government, NGOs, and entrepreneurs themselves should enhance CSR that can help to sufficiently include marginalized Roma into the labour market. The example of the US Steel Košice, that has been developing its CSR program, also focused on employment of marginalized Roma and is an example to be followed.

4 QUESTIONS

1. So-called *Bratinka's Report*, highly comprehensive document on the situation of the Roma in the Czech Republic, revealed that 68% of social workers find the current system of welfare benefits de-motivating for the Roma, as it enables them to live a relatively comfortable life by not being employed. Therefore, according to the report, there has been at least two levels of minimal standards of living instead of one and the law on social assistance was adopted in accordance to it. In Slovakia, a similar law is in place which defines three different levels of life minimum (životné minimum). The group of long term unemployed in Slovakia is more active as a result of this law. Could this model be applied to the Czech Republic and if not, why?
2. How is mainstreaming defined in the case of the Czech Republic? Based on the experiences of Slovakia it is clear that the system of mainstreaming should be precisely defined. According to the Constitutional Provisions in Slovakia, programmes cannot directly target Roma, mainstreaming does not seem to be understood by all in the same way. Implicit targeting can work only when all involved understand and define the needs of marginalized Roma communities in the same way.
3. The problem with employment of Roma in Slovakia is also connected with position and reputation of foreigners in the labour market. Especially in Western Slovakia, where most foreigners live, local workers - regardless whether ethnic Slovak or Roma - have become too expensive for their employers compared to foreigners and at the same time - foreigners are considered to be more reliable and less problematic than Roma. What are the policies of the Czech Republic in order to avoid the backsliding of Roma from recent positions?
4. Serious analyses of the position of various vulnerable groups in the labour market do not exist and gathering information on their ethnic character would be unconstitutional in Slovakia and the situation of the Czech Republic is similar. Policy making processes, however, cannot follow generally accepted consensus about the state of the situation. What are the plans of the Czech Republic in this respect, in a short-term and in a long- term perspective?
5. How do you secure communication and cooperation between Ministries that are responsible for particular aspects related to the employment of Roma?

ANNEX 1: SUMMARY TABLE

Labour market situation in Slovakia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since its entry into the EU in 2004, Slovakia display one of the highest unemployment rates within the EU. • Roma are significantly over-represented among long-term unemployed in Slovakia and there has been no significant progress in lowering their unemployment since the economic reform began in 1990. • The example of Slovakia shows that economic growth helps in tackling unemployment, but it does not help those who are socially excluded, their situation can be even worse. • In Slovakia, there are no data that would allow assessing the scope of this decline - there are no reliable statistics on Roma unemployment. • Even when the Roma do participate in the official labour market, they are still often employed only in the secondary labour market, which is typical for the instability of employment positions.
Assessment of the policy measure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The targeting of Roma cannot be done in Slovakia due to the lack of data on target group, but at the same time previous misleading policies showed that only mainstreaming is not helpful. • Social system reform in Slovakia 2002-2006 clashed with non-ethnic approach. • The problem in Slovakia is underlined by a lack of policy data on the target group. Throughout the transformation period, statistics on the number of Roma has originated from three sources, all of which are inaccurate and potentially misleading. • Data that are not clashing with a Constitution of the Slovak Republic, those on marginalized Roma communities. Slovak governmental bodies do use the data frequently and they also became invaluable source of information on target group for various programs financed both by the Slovak Republic and international bodies. • Governments of Slovakia used an approach (toward the most marginalized group) which is inconsistent in the long-term. Robust growth clearly divided the employable and unemployable parts of the long-term unemployed.
Assessment of success factors and transferability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on experiences of Slovakia in tackling the so called Roma issue, basic policy measures principles can be used for the purpose of assessing the success of governmental policies toward socially excluded Roma - principle of de-stigmatization, de-segregation, and de-ghetoization. • There are various lessons to be learned from Slovakia, often based on failures and inconsistencies of policies - the Roma issue represents a combination of ethnic and social problems; the approach on Roma should be based on desegregation of the Roma; and lack of coordination between administrative bodies responsible for the inclusion of marginalized Roma into the labour market proved to be of major importance. • Roma unemployment is neither a racial nor an ethnic problem; it is a structural problem where the state has the greatest and expectedly most influential means and possibilities to change it.

- Lessons learned from Slovakia shows that there is a need to find balance between active labour market policies and support for economic growth. Economic growth clearly has its limits in its strength to decreasing the long-term unemployment of Roma, at the same time, active labour market policies cannot substitute for a business environment.
- Policies and interventions to improve the living conditions of Roma in the Czech republic need to balance three objectives - increasing economic opportunities by expanding employment; building human capital through better education and health; and strengthening social capital and community development through increased empowerment and participation of Roma.

Questions

- Could the model of three different levels of the life minimum be applied to the Czech Republic and if not, why?
- How is mainstreaming defined in the case of the Czech Republic?
- What are the policies of the Czech Republic in order to avoid backsliding of Roma from recent positions, bearing in mind influx of foreigners into the labour market?
- What are the plans of the Czech Republic in overcoming the non-existence of reliable ethnic data on a target group in a short-term and in a long -term perspective?
- How is secured communication and cooperation between Ministries (that are responsible for particular aspects) connected to employment of Roma?

ANNEX 2: REFERENCES

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