



Austria

Promoting Social Inclusion of Roma

A Study of National Policies

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1. Executive Summary

In Austria, Roma and Sinti comprise a rather small but at the same time rather heterogeneous group. Some problems apply for all of these groups, whereas some of them face rather specific challenges. At the same time living conditions apparently as well vary to a substantial degree within different subgroups.

The heterogeneity of different groups of Roma is – inter alia – caused by the fact that some of them have been present in Austria for a very long time (this group today is likely to amount to ca. 10,000 persons or less), whereas others have migrated to Austria more recently (ca. 45,000 to 60,000 persons; incl. children “of the 2nd and 3rd generation” born in Austria).

Within the group with a migration background differentiation again applies as people who came within earlier waves of migration are often Austrian citizens today or have a permanent legal residence status, whereas people who came later (especially if they do not come from EU Member States) often lack a persistent residence permit, but live here as asylum seekers or eventually without any official status at all. The latter two situations may especially apply for Roma who came to Austria from the Kosovo, from Bosnia and from Macedonia.

One other group, travelling Sinti and Roma from Western Europe, occasionally come to Austria during the summer months, however apparently in rather low numbers.

A last group that attracted considerable “public attention” in recent years are persons coming to Austrian cities mostly on a short- and sometimes medium-term basis performing “public begging” on streets and places, whereby many of them appear to be Roma from Eastern European countries.

Minority politics and policy in Austria generally does only address the so-called “autochthonous” groups, who have been present in Austria for a very long time. Of these groups, which comprise the Burgenland Roma, the Lovara and the Sinti, at least 90% were murdered during the Nazi regime in death camps. These “autochthonous” groups were given the status of a recognized national minority as from 1993.

Roma who have immigrated to Austria during earlier waves of migration (within and following the so-called “guest workers regime” introduced in the late 1960s) are rarely noticed as “Roma” in public and political debates. A related situation applies for other Roma immigrants with legal residence, whereas regarding asylum seekers and especially concerning “public beggars” their Roma descent is addressed upon more frequently.

Overall, information about living conditions of Roma and Sinti in Austria is extremely limited. More in-depth (but now outdated) analyses only exist for one autochthonous group, the Burgenland-Roma. For the other groups information is only available in the form of “anecdotal evidence” or “informed guess”, and from a very limited number of small-scale qualitative researches (often undertaken within diploma theses of university students etc.).

Overall, it appears that substantial variation in living conditions is present between and as well as within different groups of the Roma population. However, common features are a rather low educational attainment and – in case of dependent employment – a rather low occupational status. Within self-employment, which for a long time played a major role for most groups of

Roma, traditional market segments are dwindling. Heritage of low educational attainment is rather high (irrespective of gradual improvements made during the last two decades), resulting in above average labour market problems also for young people of Roma origin. The financial situation of many Roma may not be explicitly precarious (with the exception of asylum seekers and of people coming to Austria for short-term begging) in the sense of extreme poverty, but many of them apparently have to live from low or very low income. At the same time housing conditions of most Roma in Austria are rather favourable from an international comparative point of view, as segregated and marginalized Roma settlements (with one minor exception, where the situation improved as well to a large degree during the last decade) do not exist.

Public debate and discourse on social integration and social inclusion of Roma is extremely weak in Austria. Overall, the public and political awareness for respective challenges and problems appears to be very low, with the exception of the “problem” of public begging, which attracted considerable political attention during the last two years or so (resulting in bans on public begging in a number of federal provinces).

Associations of Roma and Sinti have been established in increasing numbers during the last two decades. These associations – amongst other things – try to lobby for an improvement of the social situation of Roma and Sinti in Austria, they offer advice to Roma and Sinti people, inform the majority population about the history and current situation of Roma and Sinti living in Austria and try to organise and to get public funding for specific programmes and projects likely to improve the social situation of their group. However, it seems fair to say that political response has – at best - been rather limited and that initiatives taken by public authorities themselves are even more rare.

Overall, this report highlights a wide variety of structural and specific problems and challenges, which should be addressed in the Austrian national integration strategy for Roma.

To make this strategy successful, it would have to enclose different pillars, address a rather large variety of policy areas, and apply different instruments and methodologies in implementation. Evidently a large variety of different actors would have to be engaged in such a strategy, whereas at the same time it appears to be vital to secure a high degree of “ownership” by Roma people themselves within different instruments applied.

More details on these points are given in the recommendations at the end of this paper. Overall, they indicate that the design and implementation of such a strategy is anything but trivial and that there is need for strong political support and compliance by different stakeholders.

2. Description of the national situation

2.1 The Roma population in Austria

2.1.1 General overview

Accurate data on the number of Roma in Austria and the size of their various sub-groups is still missing. It has been *estimated* that there are approximately 20,000 to 30,000 Roma living in Austria (Baumgartner/Freund 2007, p.10; Leoni 2004, p.2; Halwachs et al. 2001). However, some estimates even indicate numbers of 50,000 persons or more, including people who immigrated from the Western Balkans since the early 1990s as well (see e.g. Halwachs 2004).

According to estimates by the Roma Community (activists, Roma associations and interest organisations), the number of Roma in Austria may even lie between 80,000 and 120,000¹ – assuming that more than one quarter of all immigrants from former Yugoslavia have Roma roots. However, more detailed empirical evidence for this assumption is largely missing at the time of writing. In general, estimations suggest that the share of Roma in the population of Austria is likely to account for 0.3% to 0.6% of the total population. The highest estimate of 120,000 persons of Roma descent – as sometimes stated by representatives of the Roma community – would account for 1.4% of the Austrian population.

Official data on Roma living in Austria is extremely limited, as there are neither register nor survey data that provide more specifics on the Roma population. A partial exception is the last census of 2001, where for the first time Romani has been included as an own category in the section of colloquial language. Accordingly, 6,273 people declared Romani as their colloquial language. Of this group, 1,925 persons were of other than the Austrian Citizenship. However, the census did not ask for the ethnic background (only for country of birth and citizenship), therefore not providing data on the number of people with Roma descent but not speaking Romani as colloquial language. Furthermore, there are indications that many Roma “hide” their ethnic background vis-à-vis authorities in fear of discrimination. Other important official surveys like e.g. the Labour Force Survey or the so-called microcensus do not cover ethnic background either.

It is important to note that in Austria a distinction is made between the Roma as an “*autochthonous Austrian ethnic minority*” (see section 3.1 for more details on their status as a “recognized ethnic minority”), and the Roma who have settled in Austria more recently, representing a so-called “*allochthonous minority*”. Within this distinction several subgroups exist that are not only important in terms of self-perception and identity, but also correlate to some degree with actual living conditions, social inclusion and political representation (see also e.g. Leoni 2004, p.25).

The former group, the so-called *autochthonous Roma* are surviving victims of the Holocaust and their descendants. After 1945, the small group of Roma that survived the Holocaust mainly resettled in the federal province of *Burgenland* where most of them had lived before the Nazi Regime. Some also moved to other regions, especially to the urban areas of Vienna, Salzburg and Linz. The group of *autochthonous Roma* is currently estimated to include approx. 6,000 to 10,000 persons (see e.g. Kälin Schreiblehner/Schinnerl 2011, p.30; Die Presse, 16.09.2010²). It consists of three different sub-groups: the so-called Burgenland-Roma, the Lovara³ and the Sinti⁴ (see e.g. Halwachs et al. 2001; Leoni 2004; and below table 1 and chapter 2.1.2).

The *allochthonous Roma*, on the other hand, have immigrated to Austria over the past four decades from the Western Balkans (especially from Serbia and Macedonia) and more recently from Eastern Europe. Most of them have settled in the metropolitan area of Vienna.

¹ According to information provided to the author by Gilda Horvath.

² Estimate according to Rudolf Sarközi, the head of the “Roma Ethnic Group Advisory Council” (Roma Volksgruppenbeirat); see <http://diepresse.com/home/politik/innenpolitik/594929/Roma-in-Oesterreich-Zahl-kann-nur-geschaetzt-werden>

³ Additionally, a comparatively small number of Lovara immigrated to Austria during the “Hungarian uprising” of 1956. These persons and their descendants are not attributed to the group of “autochthonous” Roma.

⁴ Although the Sinti tend to emphasize their individuality, the term “Roma” is regularly used a generic term for all autochthonous groups of Roma and Sinti in Austria (see e.g. Leoni 2004, p. 35).

Sub-groups are, on the one hand, the Kalderaš and Gurbet (forming the so-called Balkan-Vlax Group) and the Arlije (Muslim Roma from the Balkan), coming to Austria since the mid-1960s as part of “organised” labour migration, where workers got pro-actively recruited by official Austrian institutions, and then by family reunion. Their number is usually estimated at 20,000 to 35,000 persons, with some estimates being much higher (see above).

A more heterogeneous group of Roma, on the other hand, came to Austria since the late 1980s from the Western Balkans and Eastern European countries against the background of the Balkan wars and the unfavourable living conditions of Roma in many countries of Eastern Europe. Estimations on the size of this group are rare, but e.g. Halwachs (2004) suggests that this group makes up for at least 25,000 persons (and probably more than that).

Table 1 gives an overview about basic demographic parameters about Roma living in Austria.

Table 1: Demographic parameters:

Group	Burgenland Roma	Sinti	Lovara		Balkan-Vlax-Group	Arlije	Various	
			Lovara I	Lovara II	Kalderaš Gurbet			
Country of origin and time of immigration	Hungary	South Germany Czech Republic	Hungary (Slovakia) Hungary		Serbia	Macedonia	Balkan Eastern Europe	
	15 th century	~ 1900		1956	since 1960s +		late 1980s +	
Settlement area	East Austria	Cities	Metropolitan area of Vienna					Cities
	Rural (urban)	Urban						
Religion	Roman Catholic (protestant)				Orthodox	Muslim	Various	
Socio-political Status	Autochthonous			Allochthonous				partly alloch- thonous; partly no clear legal residence status (?)
Number	up to 10,000			(very low)	ca. 20,000 to 35,000 (or more, according to some estimations)		ca. 25,000 (or more)	

Source: Halwachs et al. 2001, 32, with own additions on numbers (deriving from different sources).

Overall, it seems fair to say that Roma in Austria (when e.g. compared to Bulgaria, Romania or Hungary) comprise a comparably small but at the same time very heterogeneous group. To some degree the latter also applies for questions of living standards etc. (see chapter 2.3 below). Before addressing such questions, the following sections provide more detailed information – where available – on the different sub-groups of Roma living in Austria, including basic features of their history, questions of language, self-perception and perception by the majority population.

2.1.2 Roma Groups in Austria: more detailed information

Autochthonous Roma

As mentioned above, there are three sub-groups that are considered autochthonous Roma in Austria: the Burgenland-Roma, the Lovara and the Sinti, which are officially recognized as an autochthonous ethnic minority group.

The so-called *Burgenland Roma* have the longest history of settlement of all Roma groups on the territory of present-day Austria. They were first mentioned at the end of the 14th century living in Western Hungary (to which today's Austrian federal province of Burgenland belonged until the end of World War I). For centuries there has been a largely continuous settlement of Roma in this area – partly enforced by the authorities of the Habsburg Monarchy that forced nomadic groups to settle down and also brought Roma from other areas (e.g. Styria) to Western Hungary. Burgenland Roma often lived on the edge of society in so-called "gypsy houses" situated at the outskirts of towns or villages, practicing mobile jobs such as basket weaving or forging or working as knife grinders, broom- and brush-makers. Some made a living as professional musicians and seasonal field workers (Rombase, n. y.).

The Nazi era has been a major rupture for the Roma community living in Burgenland, as most have been deported to labour and death camps. Population numbers have decreased drastically: according to census data about 6,000 Roma were living in Burgenland in 1927, with 1,600 in the rest of Austria. Estimates speak of 7,000 to 8,000 Roma living in Burgenland in 1939, representing about 3% of the population of this federal province back then. During the Nazi regime almost all Roma were arrested and deported and in total about 8,000 to 9,400 Austrian Roma were murdered in the Holocaust. According to statistics of local security agencies only about 870 Roma returned to Burgenland after the Nazi regime (Leoni 2004, p.16).

The few survivors faced total ruin. Their settlements were destroyed and the little property once owned was lost. Furthermore, their entire social structure had been broken, and the end of the Nazi regime in no way meant an end to stigmatisation and discrimination (see below chapter 2.4). It is estimated that after 1945 about half of the surviving Burgenland Roma moved away – mainly to Vienna, in lesser numbers to Styria, Lower Austria and Upper Austria (Leoni 2004, p.33; Baumgartner/Freund 2002, p.97). Today the Burgenland Roma estimate their group to comprise about 2,500 and 5,000 persons (Rombase n. y.).

The second autochthonous Roma group belongs to the *Lovara* who came to Austria during the 19th century from Hungary and to a lesser degree from Slovakia – both Habsburg territories at the time. Traditionally they lived in the northern part of Burgenland, performing various mobile jobs such as horse trading. Since the early 20th century state authorities repeatedly attempted to force their settlement, yet with limited direct effect on the actual lifestyle of the Lovara.

As the Burgenland Roma, the Lovara faced increased stigmatisation and discrimination during the inter-war period, which finally culminated in Nazi genocide when most of the Austrian Lovara were murdered. The genocide has been a fundamental breaking point, where extended families and thus the group's basic social structure were destroyed (Rombase, n. y.). Only few returned from the death camps after the war, most of them settled in the cities of eastern Austria, primarily in Vienna. Some continued their practise of mobile trading, however now usually combined with a settled domicile.

A second (rather small) group of Lovara moved to Austria after the Hungarian uprising in 1956. Exact figures on the size of the Lovara group – both the autochthonous group and those coming after 1956 – are not available. According to estimations by Lovara activists, the autochthonous Lovara include around 5,000 persons.⁵ However, these estimations are probably too high, as the total number of autochthonous Roma in Austria is often estimated to be not higher than ca. 10,000 persons (see above), and that the Burgenland-Roma are usually considered to be the largest group of the autochthonous Roma population.

The third autochthonous Roma group are *Sinti* that came to Austria around 1900 from Bohemia and Moravia, some also from Germany. Traditionally, the Austrian Sinti performed various mobile niche jobs, working as travelling salesmen, makers of umbrellas, sieves, and musical instruments, or as acrobats, actors, and musicians. Up until the 1930s, they managed to carry out these professions in spite of police attempts to register them under various discriminating official orders (Rombase, n. y.). However, starting from 1940, the vast majority of Sinti were deported to labour and death camps as well. After the war, the few Sinti who survived the Holocaust tried to re-establish their destroyed social structure and often took up their former professions. Today, the great majority of the Sinti, often hardly noticed by the majority population, are said to live in the larger cities of all Austrian federal states except for Burgenland. Especially during the summer months, different mobile niche jobs are partly still practised (Rombase n. y.). Neither exact figures nor estimations of the number of Sinti living in Austria are available at the time of writing⁶, but the group appears to be rather small (when compared with other groups of Roma).

Allochthonous Roma

Belonging to the so-called allochthonous Roma groups are those coming to Austria with the waves of foreign labourers (as so-called “guest-workers”; *Gastarbeiter*) starting from the 1960s mainly from the Balkans: the *Kalderaš* and *Gurbet* from Serbia and the *Arlije* from Macedonia (mostly from Prilep).

It is worth noting that the first wave of labour migration was, according to the plans stipulated by an agreement between the Austrian social partners (i.e. trade unions and employers organisations), planned to lead to temporary labour migration only. In other words: the idea was that temporary “guest workers” should help to reduce actual labour shortage, but then eventually return to their home-countries in case that the overall labour market situation changes. This means that, according to respective regulation, “guest workers” at first were not given a long-term perspective of enduring migration to Austria, and in fact a rather large number of so-called “guest workers” were expelled in the middle of the 1970s on the background of economic problems after the first “oil-price shock”. However, in many cases the stay of “guest-workers” ended up to take longer than originally intended within the “guest-worker model” and often families of “guest workers” followed their “breadwinner” to Austria, in effect leading to permanent migration. Today, almost all of the *Kalderaš*, *Gurbet* and *Arlije*, who came to Austria within this type of labour migration during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, now hold the Austrian citizenship or permanent residence permits. They mainly live in urban areas, especially the greater Vienna

⁵ According to information provided by Gilda Horvath.

⁶ According to information by “Ketani”, an association especially trying to organize the interests of Sinti; see: <http://www.sinti-roma.at/>

region, but also in other towns. However, regarding living conditions and lifestyle there seems to be a considerable heterogeneity between these groups (see below chapter 2.3).

Rather little is known about the most recently arriving Roma group, coming to Austria from former communist and Yugoslavian territory since the late 1980s. A considerable share of this group probably lives in Austria without a permanent valid residence permit (but e.g. with an on-going asylum procedure). Although it might be a rather large group, there is hardly any information available, except from some from sporadic research on specific groups or within specific regional entities, mostly based on qualitative interviews. So for example Kälín Schreiblehner/Schinnerl (2010), who investigated the living situation of a group of about 1,000 Bosnian Roma living in and around the village of Eibesthal in Lower Austria (most of them coming from the small town of Bijeljina). Overall, research results indicate rather problematic living conditions of these recently immigrated groups (see below chapter 2.3).

Finally, a last group that attracted considerable public attention in recent years are persons coming to Austrian cities (especially of Vienna, Graz and Linz) on a short- and sometimes medium-term basis performing “public begging” on streets and places. Many of them are Roma from Eastern European countries. Exact figures are not known, but despite its “visibility” the phenomenon seems to be of rather limited scope (see below chapter 2.3 and 3.1 for details).

2.1.3 *Language*

Autochthonous Roma

The older generations of the autochthonous Roma groups are often still bilingual, i.e. speaking German and Romani (or “Roman” or “Romanés”) while many Roma children now grow up with German as their first language, leading to a gradual decrease in the knowledge of Romani (see e.g. Leoni 2004a, pp.45 ff.). However, respective practises show a wide degree of differentiation (between families etc.) and some attempts have been made to contribute to persistent Romani language skills. Based on a research project at the University of Graz a standardised variant of the Burgenland Romani has been published in 1998 and introduced as teaching language in several schools in Burgenland in order to improve Romani language skills of Roma children (Halwachs 2001, p.35 f.).

Allochthonous Roma

Older generations of allochthonous Roma who migrated to Austria as from the 1960s often tend to be trilingual. They speak a specific type of Romani (see below), the main contact language of their country of origin and German. However, with the descendants of these people language skills in Romani and the contact language of the country of origin tend to get increasingly lost. Again, that there are large differentiations according to the degree of assimilation.

In general it should be stressed that Romani (Roman or Romanés) has never been universally standardised and there is a quite broad linguistic diversity of Romani dialects. According to Halwachs et al. (2001, p.35 f.) there are variants of all four Romani variants (as classified e.g. by Bakker 1999) in Austria: the Burgenland-Romani belongs to the Vend-Group of the South-central

group of Romani. The Romanés of the Sinti is part of the Sinti-Manush-Subgroup of the Northern Romani-Variant. The Romani variants of the Lovara and Kalderaš belong to the northern Vlax-group and the Romani variant of the Gurbet to the southern Vlax-group – with considerable influence by the Romanian language. The Arlije speak a (South-)Balkan Variant of Romani.

2.1.4 Perception and self-perception: affiliation and romanipe

It is worth noting that Roma in Austria are far from being a homogenous community. The relationships between the Roma groups themselves are said to be shaped by a net of feelings of superiority and delineation. It is not a main task of this report to go into details here, but it should be stressed that mutual identification and co-operation between different groups of Roma and Sinti appears to be rather limited (see e.g. Halwachs 2004). Hereby, distinctions are not only made between “autochthonous” and “allochthonous” groups, but as well between the different subgroups mentioned above. Different interpretations of “romanipe” – the originality of Roma culture – appear to play some role, whereby some groups tend to be criticized for having departed from “romanipe” and assimilated to the lifestyle of the majority population to a too large degree. These distinctions do not only play a role in inter-personal relations, but also for attempts of political organisation of the interests of the Roma (see below chapter 3.1 and 5).

Another important instance is that today many Roma appear to have a somewhat dialectic perception of their own ethnical background and that large differentiations seem to be present in this respect. Some pro-actively emphasise their ethnical roots and try to pursue with specific cultural traditions of the Roma. Many others, however, stress that their ethnical background is not of substantial importance in their day-to-day life and there should not be too much significance attributed to this topic. The latter seems mainly to apply for those Roma who immigrated to Austria as so-called “guest workers” from former Yugoslavia (and their descendants) and to some degree as well for Roma who settled in Austria after emigrating from Eastern European Countries during the last two decades. Furthermore, according to different sources there appears to be a tendency to hide Roma origin (both within autochthonous and allochthonous groups), and especially within younger generations self-perceived Roma identity seems to be waning (see e.g. Kälin Schreiblehner/Schinnerl 2010, pp. 75 ff.; Halwachs et al. 2001).

2.2 Geographic distribution

In general, the density of Roma population in Austria shows an east-west and an urban-rural decline. Most Roma live in the metropolitan area of Vienna, as well as in other cities, mostly in the eastern parts of Austria.

However, the political district with the largest relative density of Roma population is said to be *Oberwart* in the federal province of Burgenland, which borders Hungary, and where the first historical Roma settlements took place centuries ago (for a history of Roma settlements and migration movements in Austria see Leoni 2004). The Burgenland Roma are also the only autochthonous group that still lives in rural areas and villages in larger numbers, although many of the Burgenland Roma have as well moved to eastern Austrian cities including Vienna since the 1950s, often to a considerable degree leaving their Roma background behind.

Most Lovara, Vlach Roma and Arlije as well as most of those arriving after 1980 live in the metropolitan Area of Vienna, while Sinti also often live in other cities, again mostly in the eastern area of Austria (Halwachs et al. 2001, p.33).

Information on the geographical distribution of Roma who immigrated to Austria since the early 1990s on the background of the Balkan wars and from Eastern European countries is very limited. Most of them are likely to live in the larger area of Vienna. According to Kälin Schreiblehner and Schinnerl (2010) a considerable number (approx. 1,000) of Roma who fled from Bosnia during the Balkan wars now live in an semi-rural area north of Vienna, called the *Weinviertel*.

2.3 The social situation: poverty and social exclusion

2.3.1 General overview

Quantitative data on the social situation of Roma living in Austria is largely missing, with the exception of data deriving from a research project conducted by the Austrian Institute of Economic Research (WIFO) during the first half of the 2000s (see Leoni 2004a; Biffl et al. 2005). However, this research project only dealt with the group of Burgenland Roma in the area of Oberwart, which means that apart from the somewhat outdated respective results no general conclusions on the living situation of Roma in Austria can be drawn from these results.

One other research project worth mentioning is currently completed by L&R Social Research. It deals with the labour market situation of different groups of people with migration background in the area of the federal province of Vienna.⁷ Within this project, interviews have been conducted with Roma people who have a migration background and are in gainful employment or registered unemployed (not self-employed or inactive persons, as these are not members of the Austrian Chamber of Labour who commissioned the project). This means that the results of this research project will provide information on a specific group of allochthonous Roma and not on the *overall* social situation of Roma living in Austria. The results of this research project are not available at the time of writing, but are expected to be published in December 2011.

As quantitative data on the social situation of Roma living in Austria is largely missing, and given the likely differentiation between different groups of Roma, we start our assessment with an overview on the more general situation and living standard of different Roma groups, as stated by experts, especially within the Rombase-project.⁸ Wherever available we will supplement this information with findings from other sources as well as with suggestions from a number of qualitative interviews that we conducted with activists and representatives of different Roma communities.

We want to stress that respective information is likely to enclose a large amount of over-generalisation. It should be treated with caution, as most of it seems to be based on “anecdotal

⁷ See <http://www.lrsocialresearch.at/content.php?pg=archiv&aid=529&lng=en>

⁸ Rombase has been carried out with the support of the European Community in the framework of the Sokrates programme (87757-CP-1-2000-1-AT-Comenius-C2) and in cooperation with the Phonogrammarchiv, Austrian Academy of Sciences. The Austrian activities were financed by the programme “Measures for the advancement of minority groups” by the Federal Chancellery. See: <http://romani.uni-graz.at/rombase/>

evidence” and not on empirical research in the more narrow sense. Furthermore, the necessary differentiation between different groups of Roma in turn leads to a rather complex overall picture.

The following presentation of general findings is structured as follows:

- We first deal with autochthonous Roma groups, who have been living in Austria for a very long time (Burgenland-Roma, Lovara and Sinti).
- We then turn to different allochthonous groups, who immigrated to Austria more recently:
 - Roma who came to Austria within the regime of “guest-worker” labour migration as from the late 1960s;
 - Roma who came to Austria as from the beginning of the 1990s following the Balkan wars and from Eastern European countries, with the aim of permanent immigration;
 - Roma who visit Austria on a rather short-term basis, trying to earn some funds by begging (and sometimes other activities like public music performances etc.).

a. Autochthonous Groups:

a.1. Burgenland Roma:

According to the Rombase-project, at least three different groups within the Burgenland-Roma have to be distinguished regarding their social situation:

- Those who have become assimilated and no longer consider themselves to be Roma, having dissolved into the majority population. This group mostly lives in the cities of eastern Austria and their living standard is likely to equal the average majority population.
- Those who have become emancipated to some degree, pro-actively living their ethnic identity. This group is said to live fairly well and to have become socially and economically integrated to a certain extent.
- Those who are still living "at the edge of society" as a rather stigmatised and discriminated (social) minority.

In his assessment of the social Situation of Roma living in Oberwart in the province of Burgenland, Leoni (2004a) concluded that large share might still belong to the third group⁹ According to him, no less than two thirds of the sample were unemployed, they heavily relied on social benefits and transfers (only 24.6% of the respondents in the survey received an income from regular employment) and were indebted (78.8% have responded that they are in debt).

⁹ The research did not include those that have left Oberwart (often to move to Vienna). Therefore no detailed information is available on their current living conditions etc.

a.2. Lovara:

According to information by the Rombase-project, Members of the Lovara are generally doing rather well in economic terms. After the Nazi Regime some found economic niches like trading carpets that have provided a relatively secure standard of living. According to anecdotal evidence, some members of the Lovara group even managed to accumulate considerable assets, but it is said that revenues from their trading activities somewhat declined during the last decade or so. The younger generation is said to perform an increasingly wide variety of jobs, but self-employment still plays a considerable role. However, it should be stressed that no more detailed accurate data and hard information about respective questions are available at the time of writing and that the actual social situation of the people of the Lovara group is likely to show a considerable degree of differentiation.

a.3. Sinti:

According to information provided by the Rombase-project, the Sinti are the least visible Austrian Roma group. They live in the larger cities and often still hold mobile niche jobs such as e.g. different semi-mobile trading activities. However, as within the group of the Lovara, the younger generation is said to be increasingly engaged in a growing variety of different jobs. Austrian Sinti frequently tend to maintain social ties with Sinti in neighbouring countries. In general, they are not considered to be an economically marginalised group, with their economic situation hardly differing from the average Austrian citizens (Rombase, n. y.). However, e.g. Kücher (2006) – based on qualitative research – report that travelling Sinti (and Roma) face increasing problems in earning income with their traditional trading activities selling carpets, cutlery and tools (especially to small and mid-sized enterprises). The same appears to be true for sedentary Austrian Sinti, but more detailed information is missing.

b. Allochthonous groups:

b.1. Roma, who immigrated to Austria within the regime of “guest workers”:

b.1.1. Gurbet and Kalderaš:

According to information provided by the Rombase-project, the Gurbet and the Kalderaš, who immigrated within the regime of “guest workers” as from the late 1960s, and who today are often Austrian citizens, are relatively well established in social and economic terms. They are said to have the same living standards as other persons who came as so-called “guest workers” from the Balkans as from the 1960s. When coming to Austria, with their traditional occupation of tinkers, many Kalderaš at first found work in the metal industry, but the significance of this form of employment is likely to have been declining in the meantime (see below).

At the same time, it is said that Gurbet and especially Kalderaš usually prefer self-employment to dependent employment, and that many have opened restaurants or flower shops or engage in second-hand dealing, clearing-out and/or flea-markets.

b.1.2. Arlije:

According to information provided by the Rombase-project, members of the Arlije do not have a bias against dependent employment. In the first generation immigrating to Austria, men mostly took up unskilled jobs in factories and construction sites while women often worked as household or kitchen help or as cleaners. However, the majority of their children are said to have received rather good education and training and it appears that many of them found jobs as skilled workers.

Overall, the estimations given in the Rombase-project indicate that Roma who came to Austria during early phases of labour migration are doing quite well in social and economic terms. However, this information seems to derive from a kind of “informed guess” and information provided within expert interviews by Roma activists suggest a less favourable situation (see below and chapters 2.3.2 ff.).

b.2. Roma who immigrated from South Western Europe as from the 1990s:

Not much is known about the living conditions of Roma who immigrated to Austria from the Balkans during the wars of the 1990s and for Roma who emigrated from eastern European countries more recently.

Evidently, a crucial question is whether these persons managed to attain a legal status of residence. Here, anecdotal evidence indicates that (contrary to other refugees) many Roma fleeing to Austria during the early phases of the Balkan wars did not formally apply for asylum in Austria, thereby missing this “window of opportunity”.

People without legal residence (or pending asylum procedure, which sometimes takes several years in Austria) are not allowed to perform gainful employment on the official labour market, thereby facing a considerable barrier in earning a living.

There are indications that Roma of different origins tried to get political asylum in recent years, many coming from the Kosovo, some also from Serbia and Macedonia. In 2010, 622 persons from Kosovo, 350 persons from Serbia and 194 persons from Macedonia applied for Asylum in Austria (BMI 2011). Although no statistics are available on the ethnical background of these persons, estimations by staff of NGO-run advice centres indicate that at least 20% of these asylum seekers are of Roma origin. However, chances of obtaining political asylum for persons coming from these countries are generally extremely limited, with recently no more than approx. 3% of respective asylum seekers obtaining such a status (ibid.).

Asylum procedures tend to have a rather long duration in Austria causing asylum seekers – prohibited from taking up formal employment – often live in a situation of persistent legal and economic insecurity often for several years. Although a considerable number of them still manage to achieve some kind of social and economic integration (e.g. with children attending Austrian schools) this usually does not prevent eventual deportation or other kinds of “forced return”. According to media reports, e.g. during the first ten months of 2010 about 200 persons were deported to the Kosovo, and about 700 were said to have

returned “voluntarily”.¹⁰ However, most of the latter only returned in the light of threatened sanctions, like a deportation and a subsequent exclusion order. Such procedures are often even applied on persons who have been living in Austria for several years, during which their asylum procedure is dealt with at different levels of judicial authorities, and who in the meanwhile have managed to live a rather socially integrated life in Austria – with e.g. children attending Austrian schools etc., but often facing the problem that they are not permitted to take up regular employment in Austria. It is not known what share of people deported to the Kosovo or forced to return “voluntarily” are actually Roma, but according to anecdotal evidence they make up for a substantial share of this group.

Deportations or “forced returns” of Roma to the Kosovo have repeatedly been criticized e.g. by social NGOs (see e.g. Klien 2010), by the Green Party in opposition as well as by Thomas Hammarberg, the Commissioner for Human Rights within the Council of Europe,¹¹ with however limited effects on respective practices. On the contrary, the former Minister of interior affairs, Maria Fekter, signed an “agreement on repatriation” with the Kosovo in late September 2010, in order to facilitate the deportation of people coming from the Kosovo (even in the case of missing identity documents etc.).¹² Kosovo had been declared as a “secure third country” by Austrian officials in 2009, making deportations to the Kosovo even more likely.

Evidently, obtaining legal residence is very crucial to securing a decent living standard for every immigrant. But even when attaining legal residence permit, those Roma who immigrated from the Western Balkans more recently appear to face substantial problems of finding a job. Kälin Schreiblehner/Schinnerl (2010) report in their study on Bosnian Roma living in semi-rural areas north of Vienna that most of them live in rather precarious financial conditions, where continuous earned income from gainful employment is the exception rather than the norm. However, overgeneralisation should be avoided as positive examples of labour market integration and some economic upward mobility do exist.

Overall, empirical evidence about the living conditions of Roma who have immigrated to Austria is rather limited, but the valuations as presented within the Rombase-project seem to be too optimistic. Information provided to us within expert interviews points to the direction that educational attainment of immigrated Roma often is very low, which in turn contributes to an above average risk of unemployment, a rather high level of non-standard forms of employment, a rather low level of occupational positions reached and often to comparatively low earned income from gainful employment.

Gaspar (2009) comes to largely similar conclusions stressing the problem of low educational attainment of Roma who immigrated from the Western Balkans and from East European Countries, often leading to problems regarding labour market integration. Furthermore, she emphasises the problems of young Roma, highlighting that problems of educational attainment are often not overcome within the second generation of Roma immigrants. Gaspar, herself being a Roma who originally immigrated from Romania,

¹⁰ See http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/politik/europa/48297_Roma-Abschiebungen-in-den-Kosovo-loesen-Kritik-aus.html

¹¹ http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/Viewpoints/100222_en.asp; APA0395 AA, CA 09.12.2010

¹² <http://derstandard.at/1285199661904/Leichtere-Abschiebungen-Fekter-schloss-Rueckfuehrungs-Abkommen-mit-Kosovo>

reports that many young Roma have not managed to attain formal school graduation, and even in cases where they managed to do so, they often have not found a job afterwards (ibid., p.67 ff.). This often leads to declining self-confidence, isolation and a lack of perspectives (ibid.).

b.3. Excursus: Roma from Eastern European countries and with repeated short-term stay in Austria:

One other group of people, which attracted considerable public attention during recent years, are persons coming to Austrian urban areas (especially Vienna, Graz and Linz) on a short-term and sometimes medium-term basis performing “public begging”, sometimes combined with making music, in public places. These people are often Roma from eastern Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and in some cases from Serbia and Macedonia. The exact number of this group is not known, but the phenomenon remains to be rather limited.

However, as already noted above, it is this group of Roma, which recently attracted considerable public attention. A number of federal provinces enacted bans on “public offensive” or “organised” begging more recently (see below chapter 3.1). An increasingly widespread statement in related public and political debates has been that this kind of “public begging” takes place within organised criminal networks and that it even may take the form of “forced begging” and that human trafficking (e.g. of disabled people etc.) may play a role here. However, there are strong indications that such structures and manifestations are exceptional cases, whereas in most cases no criminal network or related organisational structure exists (see e.g. Lendjel 2007; Zettelbauer et al. 2011).

Roma people from Slovakia and Hungary begging on streets and places mostly come to Austrian urban areas for one to two weeks, return home to their families, and then come back again after some weeks. If they come from Bulgaria or Romania, they sometimes stay for longer periods in Austria, given the higher travel costs in these cases.

Overall, the social situation of these people and of their families appears to be very unfavourable. Coming to Austria to “earn” money in the described way appears to be an exit strategy from unemployment and discrimination on the labour market at home. However the “income” that may be reached by begging (even if combined with publicly performing music) appears to be very limited, often not exceeding 20 EUR a day (see Lendjel 2007).

2.3.2 *Relative income poverty and deprivation*

No data is available on income poverty and deprivation of Roma in Austria. More general findings (see above) suggest that the respective situation is likely to be very heterogeneous.

Generally, it is likely that *autochthonous Roma* groups today face more favourable social and economic conditions than *allochthonous* groups, however probably with the exception of parts of the Burgenland Roma, of which many still appear to face severe economic and social problems (see above and Leoni 2004a). But at the same time it should be stressed that social differentiation is likely to be rather high within the groups of the Lovara and Sinti as well, with some doing rather well in economic terms and some facing substantial problems.

Within *allochthonous groups* differentiation again appears to be rather high, but – according to information provided by us within expert interviews – their overall social situation appears to be even less favourable than the one of most other groups with a migration background.

Data from EU-SILC does not provide enough information on relative income poverty and severe material deprivation according to ethnic background in order allow for an assessment of the specific situation of Roma. However, respective data disaggregated by citizenship shows that people with a migration background show a higher share of being at risk of poverty (see table 1 below). A similar picture applies for severe material deprivation. According to data provided by EU-SILC 2009, about 3.7% of all Austrian citizens recently faced severe material deprivation in Austria. The respective number for EU-27 citizens (without Austrian citizens) is 3.3%, while it is 17% for citizens of other countries (which is higher than the respective number at average of all countries of EU-27, amounting to 15.4%). These data indicates that substantial challenges of material deprivation are especially faced by people who immigrated to Austria from outside the EU-27. It is unclear if and to what degree such a situation applies e.g. for Roma who recently immigrated from the Kosovo, Serbia or Macedonia, but anecdotal evidence and results deriving from rather small-scale studies (see especially Kälin Schreiblehner/Schinnerl 2010) indicate that many members of this group face a rather precarious financial situation.

Table 2: Poverty rates and poverty gaps according to citizenship; EU-SILC 2009

Citizenship	Persons affected by risk of poverty	At-risk-of-poverty rate	Poverty gap
	N	%	%
TOTAL	993	12	17
Austrian since birth	729	10	17
Austrian naturalised (non EU/EFTA)	51	25	19
EU/EFTA	56	20	26
Former Yugoslavia (excl. Slovenia)	55	17	24
Turkey	35	29	(13)
Other	66	44	36

Source: Statistik Austria (2010); EU-SILC 2009.

2.3.3 Education

Evidence from different research studies (of which many are, however, somewhat outdated; see e.g. Leoni 2004a; Samer 2001; Halwachs 2004, Eisenhut 2008; Gaspar 2009), as well as information provided within expert interviews suggests that low educational attainment of many Roma is one of the most important barriers for achieving the goal of social inclusion of this group. This problem both applies for autochthonous Roma and Sinti and as well for Roma with a migration background. Overall, it is said that today about 90% of all Roma children manage to graduate at a level of ISCED 2 and that a rising number of children as well obtain vocational education of ISCED level 3b. However, graduations above this level appear to be rather rare, although some positive counter-examples exist, which may serve as positive role models for the wider Roma population. Within most groups of Roma in Austria, the problem of illiteracy today appears to be limited to the ones in the age-group 50 and above. However, parents are said to often feel overburdened when trying to help their children with homework etc., given their rather low own educational attainment.

Not surprisingly, there seems to be a wide consensus among experts as well as political activists of Roma descent that education is one of the most important areas of intervention in order to improve the labour market situation and living standard of the Roma in Austria.

Apart from the phenomenon of discrimination of Roma children in the education system (see below chapter 2.4.3), another cause for low educational attainment might be a rather negative attitude of some Roma groups towards education – as suggested by Halwachs (2004). His attempt to outline different attitudes among various Roma groups is likely subject to substantial oversimplification, but may still give some basic insights to the respective situation:

- According to Halwachs (ibid.), attitudes towards education are somewhat split within the Burgenland Roma, where socio-economically higher standing families have a more positive attitude. On the other hand, those feeling marginalised are said not to have high hopes that education would help their advancement in society, and children of this group are mostly only completing compulsory school.
- Attitudes among the Sinti are said to be similar to those of the majoritarian society with differences according to the educational level of parents.
- Coming to Austria as labour migrants, according to Halwachs (ibid.) for most Vlax-Roma education has not been an important goal for their children. In this context, it is said that many of them consider the “Gadze” education system as a threat for their cultural identity. In contrast to this, it is said that the Arlije generally have a positive attitude towards the education of their children (ibid.).

This valuation evidently provides a largely oversimplified picture, but our interviews with experts of Roma descent to some degree also indicated that the heredity of low educational attainment is a major problem within different Roma groups, and that attitudes towards education are a subject which should be given special attention (irrespective of some recent positive developments). However, we would like to stress that we have the impression that attitudes towards education do not at first instance derive from different cultural patterns, but that they may be better explained in socio-structural terms (see as well below chapter 3.3.2).

Some attempts have been made in Austria to improve the participation of young Roma in standard education, with the goal to improve their overall educational attainment. In Oberwart respective measures led to a steep increase of participation of Roma children in standard education instead of special needs schools (where their assignment has been a widespread practice before; see Eisenhut 2008; Kasper 2009). In Vienna, some programs, like “Learning aid for Roma children” and “Roma school assistants”, have been applied to improve educational outcomes of Roma children with migration background, showing rather convincing results (see below chapter 3.4 and 5; see as well Gaspar 2009 and Gneisz 2010). Hereby, one important success factor appears to be the involvement of teachers and/or school assistants who are themselves from Roma descent or who at least speak Romani language.

2.3.4 *Employment*

Sound empirical and recent data on the employment conditions of Roma and Sinti living in Austria is largely missing.

Overall, the situation seems rather heterogeneous, with the Lovara, some parts of the Sinti population and some parts of the Burgenland Roma (of which many have moved to the greater Vienna region) probably showing the highest degree of labour market integration (see as well above chapter 2.3.1).

Within the groups of the Lovara and the Sinti, self-employment, especially different trading activities, still appears to be an important source of income. Women are still often found in trading of textiles, whereas men are increasingly engaged in trading used cars. Furthermore, it appears that “new” professions within self-employment gain increased importance, e.g. in the area of web design and graphics. But also jobs within dependent employment are said to have gained increasing importance more recently, especially within the younger generation. Here, it is said that young Roma often follow the same patterns as the majority population: girls tend to try to find an apprenticeship as hairdresser or within the gastronomic sector (as cook or waitress), whereas boys often aspire vocational education as car mechanic.

More detailed data and information regarding Burgenland Roma outside the area of Oberwart (see below) is not available, but it appears that many of those who have left the Burgenland towards the greater Vienna area are nowadays showing a labour market attachment comparable to the one of the majority population. However, valid quantitative information on this issue is missing and historical research suggests that many only managed to improve their respective situation under the condition of rejecting their Roma origin (see Leoni 2004, p. 33).

Regarding Burgenland Roma living in the southern region of this federal province in the area of Oberwart, earlier research conducted by Leoni et al. (2004) indicates extremely unfavourable employment conditions. Throughout the 20th century, a large share of Burgenland Roma has been working as casual labourers in the agriculture. In the area of Oberwart, unstable, low-qualified and low-paid work remained a common pattern until recently (ibid., p.30 f.). Accordingly no less than two thirds of the sample analysed were unemployed and the surveyed population relied heavily on social benefits and transfers (only 24.6% of the respondents in the survey received an income from regular employment). The respective situation remained to be rather problematic, inter alia because the southern area of the Burgenland is especially weak in economic terms, with substantially above average overall unemployment rates. However, it appears that Roma in this region are still affected to a much higher degree by unemployment than people of other ethnical background. For a long time, it was not only low educational attainment of Roma being likely to explain this phenomenon, but also a widespread practice of discrimination. There is some evidence that the latter declined to some degree during the last 15 years. However, respective information derives from rather small-scale and qualitative research only (see e.g. Kasper 2009), whereas e.g. no quantitative surveys etc. have been conducted on this issue.

Regarding Roma with migration background, quantitative information on employment conditions is again largely missing. Whereas e.g. information provided by the Rombase project (see above chapter 2.3.1) draws a rather positive picture for those who immigrated during the early waves of migration (within the regime of so-called “guest workers”), anecdotal evidence provided to us within expert interviews shows a much less favourable picture for this group and as well for Roma who immigrated later on.

It is said that Roma with migration background are often employed in low wage sectors like tourism (often as cook maids), as cleaners or in retail (as shop assistants). With men, the construction sector appears to play some role as well. A common feature of Roma with migration

background who are in dependent employment, appears to be their often low occupational status, with many of them performing unskilled labour. Furthermore, non-standard forms of employment like marginal part-time employment¹³, so-called freelance contracts (*freie Dienstverträge*)¹⁴, and temporary agency work appear to play a rather important role (when compared to other groups of the population). More details on these issues will be available when the above-mentioned study conducted by L&R Social Research on behalf the Vienna Chamber of Labour will be presented (which is planned to be the case in December 2011).

Very little is known about the living conditions of Roma with a migration background engaged in self-employment, who probably constitute a large group. Related gaps of information exist for Roma who do not hold an employment permission, for which – according to general terms – a status of legal residence is a precondition. Here, undeclared work may be a substantial phenomenon, but sound empirical evidence is missing on this issue.

2.3.5 Health

To our knowledge, only one relatively recent study exists that explicitly deals with health issues of Roma people: the investigation of Leoni et al (2004a) on the population of Burgenland Roma living in Oberwart. Their findings highlight considerable challenges, such as very high shares of overweight and obese persons, of smokers, of persons suffering from at least one chronic illness, a low number of people reporting regular visits to the dentist and very high shares of persons judging their health status as only mediocre, poor, or very poor (see *ibid.*, p.48 ff.).

Leoni et al (2004a, p.54) conclude that “health is a very serious issue for the Roma community and one that must not be overlooked. The poor health status of the Roma can be partly explained by their low educational level and extremely precarious income situation. There is ample evidence that also in majority society socio-economic indicators are a significant explanatory variable for health problems and health-related behaviour. At the same time, in the case of the Roma unhealthy behaviour, acute health problems and the perceived health condition point at a malaise that goes beyond socio-economic factors, and is the expression of social exclusion.”

As already mentioned above, respective assessments are missing for other groups of Roma, but it is likely that the overall health situation is better for groups living in more advantageous social-economic conditions than the Burgenland-Roma did when the above-cited study was conducted.

2.3.6 Housing and environment

As with income and employment conditions, housing conditions of Roma and Sinti in Austria appear to vary to a rather large degree. Commonly, most Roma and Sinti with enduring residence in Austria are sedentary. Travelling is a rare phenomenon today, apparently only practised by a very limited number of Austrian Sinti families and Roma and Sinti from other countries (e.g. France and Germany), who visit Austria on a temporary basis.

¹³ Defined as part-time employment with a monthly earning below EUR 374.02 per month.

¹⁴ For freelance contracts, large parts of labour law are not applicable.

There are also no segregated and marginalized Roma settlements to a similar extent as in other middle and eastern European countries. Although many Austrian Roma live in rather disadvantaged neighbourhoods and districts with a higher density of people with low income, such areas (like e.g. Viennese districts Nr. 2, 15, 16, 20, 21 and 22 or the larger area of Oberwart) in fact show a rather high variance of different social strata and ethnic backgrounds (including rather large shares of people without a migration background). Overall, such areas and districts are not considered as real “problem areas” or “social ghettos”.

Some exceptions existed up to the late 1990s, e.g. the Roma settlement (called “am Anger”)¹⁵ in Oberwart, whose unfavourable housing conditions came to public attention in 1995 when a pipe bomb deposited there killed four young Roma men. Subsequently, attempts have been made to renovate this Roma settlement and a considerable number of former residents moved away to other dwellings, often provided by public or social housing. Overall, it appears that the housing situation of Roma in Oberwart improved to substantial degree after the midst of the 1990s (see as well: Leoni 2004a; Kasper 2009), although the settlement “am Anger” still appears to represent a somewhat marginalised settlement (see Kasper 2009). However, this settlement appears to be an exception from the norm.

Although there is no structural housing problem for Roma comparable to other middle and eastern European countries, there are specific cases of Roma facing housing problems e.g. through overcrowding – a problem common in households with migration background, which not only affects Roma. In the area of Vienna this problem may have been softened to some degree during the last years as access to municipal housing has been opened for people without Austrian citizenship in 2006. However, it is unclear to what degree immigrants of Roma origin have been benefiting from this reform. At least, there are no reports indicating that Roma would explicitly be discriminated in the access to public housing in Vienna. However – from a more general point of view – housing in Austria is to some degree a problem for households with low income, as access costs in many cases appear to be rather high and rather low-priced housing facilities are getting increasingly rare. Furthermore, there is (anecdotal) evidence that people with migration background and minorities get discriminated regarding access to housing (especially on the private market) and that they are often charged higher rents than people without migration background (see e.g. Perl 2008; below chapter 3.3.5).

Another aspect worth mentioning, although not affecting the majority of Roma in Austria, is that there are only two official and publicly authorized campsites for travelling Sinti and Roma in Austria: one in Braunau am Inn and one in Linz. As travelling Sinti and Roma are often said to be rejected in normal campsites, they are often left with “wild camping” as their only option, without access to water or electricity and often entailing problems with residents and state authorities.¹⁶ Roma and Sinti associations have been trying to organise official and authorized campsites for travelling Roma and Sinti, but municipalities are regularly opposed to such requests.

2.3.7 Sport, recreation, culture

Regarding sports and recreation, no specific information on the Roma population is available in Austria. Questions of culture appear to play a major role in the activities of different Roma associations and some Roma are rather well known writers and especially musicians. However,

¹⁵ In the middle of the 1990s, about 120 people lived in this settlement.

¹⁶ See e.g. http://diepresse.com/home/panorama/oesterreich/589065/Lokalausgleich_Die-Roma-von-Linz

public support for such activities appears to remain rather limited, deriving from funds granted according the status of autochthonous Roma as an “officially recognized minority” (since 1993, see below), and within other punctual public funding for cultural purposes.

2.4 Extent and nature of discrimination experienced by Roma

2.4.1 Long history of discrimination

Discrimination against the Roma in Austria has a long history. Already during the so-called “Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation”, numerous edicts were issued allowing for the unequal treatment and even persecution of Roma. Although there have always been times and areas with more or less peaceful relationships between the Roma and the majoritarian society, persecution has in general increased over time and with the development of the modern state’s attempt to manage and control social relationships. In the late 18th and early 19th century, attempts were made to assimilate Roma, with an emphasis on forcing them to become sedentary, conscripting men into the army, putting children in school or to foster parents, forbidding Roma language and marriages between Roma etc. (however with mixed “success”). During the 19th century intentions changed from forced assimilation towards expelling Roma and preventing new immigration. Finally, widespread discrimination and stigmatisation over decades culminated into the deportation to labour and death camps and near extinction of Austrian Roma during the Nazi era (see e.g. Leoni 2004, p.4-8; Karoly 1998).

2.4.2 Discrimination against victims of the Holocaust

For those few Roma who survived the Holocaust, repossessing their houses and land has been extremely difficult. Prior to their deportation they often had property rights over the houses, but not over the land they were built on. During their absence many communes had destroyed the houses and sold the land. These material losses have not been compensated.

Compensation for the suffering during the Nazi era has also been very difficult to achieve for Austrian Roma. Restrictive legal regulations prevented their sufferings from being recognised and compensated (as e.g. “labour camps” were not recognized as “concentration camps”). Furthermore, often the same personnel that had been in place during the Nazi era administered the respective applications. Additionally it was often impossible for Roma to prove their citizenship and property of land or houses property, as documents were lost during their deportation. Obtaining compensation for the sufferings during the Nazi regime has therefore been an important issue for many Roma associations founded in the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1990s and 2000s, compensations could be claimed for the (however limited number of) direct victims that were still alive (Kücher 2006, p.56; Baumgartner/Freund 2007; Leoni 2004, p.18; Kasper 2009).

2.4.3 Current instances of discrimination

The formal recognition of three of the “autochthonous” Roma groups as an official Austrian ethnic minority group has brought some recognition in the public sphere and in politics. However, this only applies to the autochthonous groups and it appears that discrimination has not stopped completely (see e.g. Baumgartner/Freund 2004; Kasper 2009).

The most drastic example of rejection of Roma has been the assassination of Oberwart in 1995, where a pipe bomb killed four Roma men (the bomb was hidden under a sign stating "Roma back to India"). It has been the first racially motivated murder in Austria since 1945, leading to an (at least temporary) wave of solidarity affirmation in the public and politics. Leoni concludes that "although the policy-makers did not live up to the promises they made in the wake of the bombing, a sort of spell had been broken, and the Roma had become a more visible entity within the social and political sphere" (Leoni 2004, p.37).

This – inter alia – led to increased attempts regarding projects and measures to increase educational attainment of Roma or to improve their housing conditions, especially within the area of Oberwart.

At the same time, the actual impact of more subtle forms of discrimination in everyday life is hard to assess. The latter is true both regarding autochthonous Roma as well as allochthonous Roma. Overall, anecdotal evidence suggests that discrimination nowadays is likely to be less widespread than in the decades directly following the Nazi regime, but that respective practises may still play some role, e.g. regarding access to housing (especially by private landlords) or regarding the hiring of employees or workers by employers. The latter might especially apply to Roma with a migration background, although it remains rather unclear if such discrimination is mostly based on a general negative attitude against immigrants, or if an ethnic background as Roma is of special significance here.

Another point worth mentioning is the question of equal treatment and discrimination within public education. There is evidence, e.g. from the area of Oberwart, that for a long time Roma children have been assigned to special needs schools in very high numbers and it has been claimed by a number of different sources that these practises often did not follow objective reasoning at first instance, but that discrimination played a major role as well. In the area of Oberwart, this practise largely changed following public and political discussions after the bomb attack of 1995, whereby different projects and programmes have been introduced to improve overall educational outcomes of Roma children within this area as well (see Eisenhut 2008 for a detailed discussion). However, no sound empirical is available regarding the significance of related problems outside the area of Oberwart, but anecdotal evidence indicates that discrimination of Roma and Sinti children at schools still may play some role.

More recently, a gradual degradation of the connotation of the term "Roma" in public and political discourse is evident. This applies especially to the context of the phenomenon of publicly begging Roma coming to Austria mostly on a short-term basis as well to the context of the political problematisation of the phenomenon of Roma (reportedly especially from Kosovo) living in Austria without valid residence permit. In many federal provinces of Austria bans on "public" or "offensive" begging have been enacted recently and the Ministry of Interior increased attempts to "repatriate" people without valid residence permit. Within respective debates and discussions repeated emphasis has been given to the fact that these people "are Roma". For instance, the former Minister of Interior Affairs, Maria Fekter proposed that asylum seekers should be obliged to stay in the so-called "initial admission centres" (*Erstaufnahmezentrum*) for asylum seekers, to make sure that the "basic maintenance" (*Grundversorgung*) provided to asylum seekers does not turn out to be a temporary pocket money for Roma from South-East European Countries".¹⁷

¹⁷ Maria Fekter cited by the Daily „Der Standard“, see: <http://derstandard.at/1282273790313/Roma-in-Oesterreich-Asyl-Hausarrest-gegen-Roma-Zuzug>

It is unclear if and to what degree these developments will lead to an adverse change in public attitudes towards the group of Roma in general. Up to now, it appears that a distinction is made between the “official Austrian ethnic minority group” of autochthonous Roma, who have been living in Austria for a long time on the one hand, and Roma without legal permission of residence, current asylum seekers and “Roma beggars” on the other hand. Interestingly, Roma who immigrated to Austria from the Western Balkans between the 1960s and 1990s are rarely addressed in political debates on the Roma topic at all.

2.5 Main data gaps in relation to Roma

As already indicated above, data gaps regarding Roma and Sinti living in Austria are substantial. Regarding their number and composition according to different groups, only estimations exist (which show a considerable degree of variance). Furthermore, no reliable data is available on the income situation of Roma and Sinti, about their situation in terms of employment issues, housing or education. Most information derives from rather small-scale qualitative studies, from “anecdotal evidence” or from “informed guesses” of experts or political activists.

Most of the information available is on Burgenland Roma living in Oberwart, who have been subject to a number of research studies and are probably the publicly most visible group of Roma in Austria. However, most of the respective information is somewhat outdated, deriving from research undertaken in the early 2000s. Living conditions might have changed in the meanwhile.

More detailed information about the labour market situation of a specific subset of Roma with migration background will be made available in a study conducted by L&R Social Research on behalf of the Chamber of Labour (announced to be presented in December 2011).

Information is also very insufficient regarding Roma who migrated to Austria more recently (often seeking political asylum in Austria) and on the group coming to Austrian cities (especially of Vienna, Graz and Linz) on a short- and sometimes medium-term basis performing “public begging” on streets and places. Regarding the latter group, different “theories” exist. Some argue that criminal organisations and even human trafficking plays a role here, whereas others argue that respective people come to Austria on an individual basis.

3. Assessment of existing policy and governance framework

3.1 The overall policy framework

In Austria, no holistic or encompassing approach is in place, dealing with the question of the social inclusion of Roma and Sinti (and the respective problems and challenges) in more general terms. Policies addressed towards the Roma population often differentiate between so-called autochthonous Roma on the one hand, and Roma who came to Austria more recently, whereby especially people without legal permission of residence, current asylum seekers and “Roma beggars” attract public and political attention. Interestingly, the Roma population which immigrated during earlier times of labour migration (i.e. especially between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1990s) appears to be rarely perceived as being of Roma origin by the majority population and by policy makers alike. Only recently this group has explicitly been

addressed by specific policy measures, e.g. within learning programmes in the federal province of Vienna.

3.1.1 Recognition as an ethnic group

Probably the most important recent political step regarding Roma issues has been made in 1993, when the autochthonous Roma groups had been recognized as an official “ethnic (minority) group”. The 1976 law on ethnic groups had only recognized Croats, Hungarians and Slovenians as official ethnic minority groups, fulfilling the criteria of a) being resident and settled on national territory for a sufficient time, b) speaking a non-German native language and c) having their own folklore. Although the enduring settlement of Roma in Burgenland has been proven by historians, their sedentariness has been not officially been recognized for almost two decades (Baumgartner/Freund 2007, Leoni 2004, p.35).

After founding two Roma associations in 1989 and 1991 (Association “Roma Oberwart” and “Cultural Association of Austrian Roma”), lobbying for recognition and support by national and international minority associations and experts, the official recognition finally followed in 1993 (under the term “Ethnic group of Roma”, “*Volksgruppe der Roma*”) (Leoni 2004, p.35).

Benefits related to the status as “ethnic group” are access to some (however rather low) public financial support for ethnic minorities and their interest groups, and the entitlement to form an officially recognized Ethnic Group Advisory Council (*Volksgruppenbeirat*) that represents the cultural, social and economic interests of the ethnic group. This council must be consulted by the government on (legal) activities of their concern, usually topics such as education in the mother tongue, legal regulation of use of minority languages, broadcasts in mother tongue in public television and yearly financial aid for minorities (Baumgartner/Freund 2007, Leoni 2004, p.35).

It seems fair to say that the Roma Ethnic Group Advisory Council is a rather narrowly designed institution. According to general rules, associations of the autochthonous Roma can nominate four members of the Council and political parties represented in the National Assembly of the parliament (Nationalrat) may nominate one member each (whereby the latter have, however, no vote within the Council). The members of the Council are then appointed by the Federal Government for two years.

Currently¹⁸, it consists of four members coming from Roma associations (“Romano Centro”, “Kulturverein Österreichischer Roma”, “Verein Roma Oberwart” and “Roma-Service”; see chapter 5), the mayor of Oberwart (where many Burgenland Roma live; nominated by the Social Democratic Party - SPÖ), a district chairperson (*Bezirksvorsteher*) of a Vienna district¹⁹ (nominated by the Austrian People’s Party – ÖVP), a person working for the department for ethnic groups within the Roman Catholic diocese of Eisenstadt/Burgenland and a publicly well know Roman Catholic priest (who in the first half of the 1990s was president of Caritas Austria as well).

¹⁸ See <http://volksgruppen.orf.at/volksgruppen/stories/104063/>

¹⁹ The “district chairperson” is a political function only existing in Vienna. It best may be described as a kind of deputy mayor, dealing with a large number of administrative tasks in one of the 23 districts of Vienna. The district chairperson being member of the Roma Ethnic Group Advisory Council holds this position in the 4th district of Vienna (Wieden), which is – however – not known to show an especially high density of Roma population.

Financial support for activities of associations of the Roma and Sinti, provided according to their status as a “recognized ethnic group” by the federal state amounted to EUR 385,020 in 2010 (BKA 2011, p.63).

The recognition has brought official status and more acceptance from the public, and apparently stopped many Roma from hiding their ethnic background, e.g. visible in the rise of people declaring Romani as their colloquial language in the census (with a rise from 122 persons in 1991 to 6,273 in 2001).

However, this recognition evidently came very late and it created a new “official” division between the autochthonous and allochthonous groups, granting official status only to a minority (not more than ca. 5,000, according to estimations) of the Roma in Austria.

This division appears to be pursued in different areas of policy-making, making a distinction between “legitimate” interests of autochthonous groups of Roma, for whom it is assumed that the Austrian state and society has some kind of historically rooted responsibility, given the history of the Holocaust, and other Roma groups for whom such a responsibility is not evident for many political actors. Especially Roma who came to Austria more recently, many of them without legal permission of residence, current asylum seekers and so-called “beggars” from eastern European countries and the Balkans belong to the latter group. Their interests are largely considered as illegitimate by political decision makers, as evident from recent bans on begging, increasingly restrictive asylum rules for people from the Kosovo and reinforced attempts to repatriate persons in case of lacking or unproven legal residence (see as well chapter 2.3.1 above).

The political perception of Roma who came to Austria during earlier waves of migration appears to lie somewhere in between these two poles. It seems fair to say that for a long time these persons have hardly been noticed as “Roma” at all. The “official” interpretation of their identity has mainly been “immigrants from former Yugoslavia”, without explicitly addressing their more specific ethnic Roma background. Only through the activities of interest organisations of migrant Roma, like “Romano Centro” (introduced in 1991)²⁰ or “Romani Union” (not active anymore), public attention for this group of the Roma population has been increased to some degree.

3.2 The national policy framework and poverty/social exclusion of Roma

In Austria, no explicit targets exist for reducing poverty and social exclusion of Roma. Even more, no attempts have been made in the past years to analyse the respective situation from an encompassing perspective (which would be necessary to provide the basis for respective targets, strategies and measures).

3.3 The Austrian NRP and poverty/social exclusion experienced by Roma

The recent Austrian NRP (dating from April 2011; see NRP 2011) does not address the specific situation of Roma in Austria in an explicit way.

²⁰ Romano Centro appears to be only interest organisation of Roma in Austria which explicitly follows the goal to represent the interest of all Roma living in Austria, i.e. both of allochthonous and autochthonous Roma.

Overall, the current Austrian NRP frames the problem of poverty/social exclusion as a problem of unemployment or insufficient labour market participation at first instance. Major challenges announced are (see NRP 2011, p.31 ff.):

1. compatibility of family and job;
2. combating long-term unemployment and improvement the participation in the labour market of groups at risk of poverty at a working age;
3. improvement of the participation of women in the labour market and better income opportunities for women;
4. reduction of child poverty and the inter-generation heredity of poverty, improvement of the later career opportunities of children;
5. prevention measures for good health in working life, and improvements in the opportunities in the labour market for persons with a handicap;

All of these are general challenges of the Austrian labour market, and regarding measures a rather general approach appears to be envisaged, where specially targeted measures are rather rare. However, the Austrian NRP announces a number of strategies and measures which could be especially relevant for the Roma population:

Active labour market policies (ALMP) and quality of work:

The Austria NRP announces within the *employment chapter* that measures of ALMP should have a special focus on "(employment) participation of juvenile persons, persons with a migration background and low qualified persons" (NRP, p.15). This would, evidently, benefit the Roma population. But the measures listed under this heading in the Austrian NRP are to the greatest extent already in place and not structurally new. Furthermore, what is completely missing in the Austrian NRP is a statement regarding the development of the funds made available for respective strategies (which mostly take the form of ALMP measures and personalised services and support). Here, the Austrian NRP falls short to mention that spending for ALMP has been reduced repeatedly from the year 2011, and no additional funds are planned to be made available for the following years. Spending for standard ALMP measures (without apprenticeship grants) amounted to approx. EUR 1.131 billion in 2010, whereas it is expected that for 2011 only EUR 1.074 billion will be available. This equals a reduction by about 5%. However, it should be noted that respective spending has been raised by approx. 20% during the financial and economic crisis, and that recent reductions are lower than earlier increases.

Another point addressed within the chapter on employment, which could be especially relevant for the Roma population, is the question of "*quality of work*" (NRP, p.18). It is worth noting that this problem area has not been mentioned so pro-actively within the draft NRP of October 2010, and that adding this point to the main challenges is a positive step (especially given the fact that in-work-poverty is a substantial problem in Austria, as it is the case with low-wage employment). However, the Austrian NRP to a large degree falls short regarding new measures and strategies to deal with these problems (see Fink 2011, p.19f.).

Reduction of heredity of poverty via reforms in the educational system:

The goal and challenge of a "reduction of *child poverty* and the *inter-generation heredity* of poverty [and] improvement of the later career opportunities of children" (NRP, p.31) clearly is of major importance for the Roma population. However, no specific measures are announced regarding this policy area in the chapter on social inclusion in the Austrian NRP (NRP, p.34), but cross-reference is made to the challenge regarding "compatibility of family and job" (see below) and the chapter on education within the NRP (NRP, p.29f.).

Regarding the latter, the main focus appears to be on the implementation of the so-called "New Middle School" (or "New Secondary School"; *neue Mittelschule*). Respective reforms have been discussed in Austria for quite a while on the background that in the Austrian system of initial education, a first round of selection takes place at a rather low age. After four years of primary school (i.e. at the age of ten) traditionally two options apply: The lower grade of the secondary academic school (*Gymnasium Unterstufe*) or the lower secondary school (*Hauptschule*). Access to the lower grades of secondary academic school is only possible for pupils with very good or at least rather good marks in the last year of primary school, whereas other pupils have to attend lower secondary school. Especially in urban areas (where both types of schools exist) this tends to go ahead with a kind of development of two categories of quality of lower secondary education (higher in lower grade of secondary academic school and lower in lower secondary school). Many experts criticised that this type of selection, taking place at a rather early age, contributes to problematic educational outcomes (especially in lower secondary schools) and to intergenerational transmission of inequalities in educational levels as well (as many children of parents with lower income or lower employment status tend to attend lower secondary schools). On this background, reform of lower secondary education is a long-standing issue in Austria, where some political actors (amongst others the Social Democratic Party/SPÖ ruling in a coalition government together with the Austria People's Party/ÖVP) repeatedly called for one "common school" for all pupils in the age from 10 to 14. However, the ÖVP repeatedly refused such plans, and the "compromise" now going to be implemented is a renaming and gradual reform of the "lower secondary school" (*Hauptschule*), to be termed "New Middle School" (*Neue Mittelschule*) in the future. At first instance, respective reform steps enclose changes in didactical concepts, which allow for more individualised training and support, as well as some upgrade regarding resources (in terms of the ratio of teachers per pupils).

Other measures are the expansion of all-day school models and other forms of all-day care for children in school age. Here, the number of places is planned to be increased from currently 120,000 to 200,000 over the next few years (other sources²¹ say that currently only 105,000 places are available). This would clearly improve the respective situation to some degree. Yet, it should be mentioned that the overall number of pupils is much higher, currently amounting to approx. 755,000 in the age up to fourteen.

Apart from this, the Austria NRP (NRP, p.30) announces that measures are planned within the educational system to be taken for "lowering early drop-out, including early promotion in language skills" and for the "promotion of migrants". Here, it is announced that "a comprehensive

²¹ The number of 105,000 has repeatedly been used in official press releases etc. by the Austrian Federal Government (see e.g. http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20110530_OTS0299/regierungsklausur-iii-spindellegger-massnahmen-werden-zukunft-in-oesterreich-erfolgreich-gestalten-foto). It is unclear why the NRP indicates different numbers.

concept to form a base and to acquire basic competencies of migrants" should be enacted "in cooperation of the federal government and the provincial governments" as from 2011. However, it remains largely unclear what this "comprehensive" concept should be about and this question is also not subject of public political debates. Furthermore, it is announced that there are plans for "further development of low-threshold information and education/framing options in adult education for migrants", but again no more concrete information is given regarding respective plans. In a related way, the NRP (NRP, p.30) also mentions the "National strategy for life-long learning", which has been subject to negotiations between the federal government and other players, but where the finalisation and presentation of this strategy is still pending.

Improvement of the participation of women in the labour market and better income opportunities for women:

Measures and strategies within this area could again be especially relevant for the Roma population. However, the scope of actual measures envisaged appears to be rather limited.

Most of the respective measures listed in the Austrian NRP have been in place for quite some time (like reforms mentioned in the NRP regarding childcare allowance or special training schemes), or are more "soft" policies, like "information offensives" or the introduction of "income reports" to be made public by companies (which, however, may not be sanctioned if they refuse to do so). Other measures, like a new law on minimum quotas of women in company boards (companies where the federal state holds more than 50% of the shares) appear to have a very limited direct effect on the overall labour market situation of disadvantaged women. The question of childcare is also mentioned here, however without announcing any concrete measures on this point.

Overall, it seems that the Austrian NRP correctly addresses a number of challenges that are especially relevant for social inclusion of different groups from a more general point of view, which are of special importance for the Roma population as well (given their often low educational attainment, problems with labour market integration or problems of early school leaving of the younger generation).

However, at the same time it appears that many of the strategies announced do not contain substantial innovative elements, and in other areas concrete plans for reform are largely missing or appear to be rather half-hearted (as regarding reforms within the educational system).

At the same time the Austrian NRP does not (or only rudimentarily) address a number of challenges and policy areas which would evidently be of special importance when it comes to the social inclusion of Roma (but as well of other groups) (see Fink 2011 for more details). Relevant points are for example:

- A (likely) high rate of non-take-up within minimum income schemes;
- low benefit levels in unemployment insurance for former low-wage earners,
- a strong incidence of sector-specific low wage employment,
- limited access to health insurance or specific health services for specific groups of the population (especially in case of unclear residence status),

- limited access to gainful employment within the official labour market for asylum seekers or other persons with unclear or limited residence status,
- problems regarding access to and affordability of long-term care,
- housing problems.

Furthermore, the question of specific measures aiming to reduce discrimination of especially vulnerable groups is – in a broader sense - not explicitly addressed in the Austrian NRP at all. The NRP only states that “equal conditions in the labour market and with wages and salaries for women and other discriminated groups (e.g. disabled persons)” should be secured.

3.4 Main strengths and weaknesses of existing policies and programmes from the perspective of promoting Roma integration

3.4.1 Income (tax and welfare policies)

In Austria, people with low incomes from gainful employment do not have to pay wage tax. This applies for employees as well as all other forms of income from gainful employment (i.e. also for the self-employed and for people with so-called freelance-contracts etc.). A tax reform was put into effect in spring 2009. Hereby, from a social inclusion perspective, the most important measure was the raising of the tax exemption limit (“*Steuerfreigrenze*”) from EUR 10,000 per year to EUR 11,000 per year. Income taxes are paid according to a progressive tax formula, and special tax credits are available for families with children (see Fink 2010, pp.26 ff. for more details). Overall, the tax system has a progressive impact, but if social insurance contributions are taken into account as well, this impact is largely minimised. The latter is caused by the fact that most social insurance contributions are paid according to a fixed percentage, whereby – however – an upper earnings limit exists. The distributional impact of the Austrian system of taxes and social insurance contributions is therefore very limited (some estimations even conclude that it has a regressive impact). This means that respective benefits for low-income groups are extremely limited, if they exist at all.

At the same time, Austrian welfare policies appear to have a strong distributional impact, e.g. reducing the rate of people with income below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold to a considerable degree (see Fink 2011 for more details). However, a number of problems are evident, which may also (and depending on the respective sub-group especially) hit Roma people (see Fink/Grand 2009; 2010; Fink 2011 for more details):

- A (from an international comparative point of view) rather low wage replacement rate in unemployment insurance for former low-wage earners (even if additional means-tested benefits are taken into account),
- a rather high non-take-up rate regarding means-tested social assistance (here, it remains to be seen if this situation changes due to the recent replacement of social assistance by the so called Guaranteed means-tested Minimum Income scheme (GMI; *Bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung*),
- an old-age pension system which reproduces preceding income inequalities during working life to a rather large degree.

On the other hand, the rather generous universal cash family benefits can be considered a specific strength of the Austrian welfare system, as they reduce child poverty to a considerable degree (whereas at the same time – given their universal character – their distributional impact appears to be somewhat sub-optimal).

More specifically, asylum seekers in Austria have – as a basic principle – access to the so-called “provision with basic supplies” (“*Grundversorgung*”), but not to social assistance or no GMI, which is restricted to Austrian citizens or EU citizens with long-term residence status in Austria (of normally at least 5 years).

Although the respective rules on “provision with basic supplies” vary to some degree between federal provinces, the scheme generally encloses housing, food, health insurance, some small subsidies for expenses on schooling material for children, clothing or some small financial subsidies for clothing costs, travel costs (for pupils and for asylum seekers to attend appointments with public authorities), a small budget for recreation activities (paid to the NGO looking after the respective asylum seeker, usually about EUR 10 per month) and a small pocket money (usually not more than ca. EUR 40 per month). Overall, the maximum amounts appointed to these purposes are very low. For example, in the federal province of Upper Austria, if asylum seekers live in a facility run by a social NGO, this NGO gets EUR 17 per person per day for food and housing. If asylum seekers opt for organising food and housing by themselves, they get EUR 110 per person or EUR 220 per family per month for housing costs and EUR 180 per adult and EUR 80 per child for food. However, in practice asylum-seekers have to live in an “organised shelter” for at least one year, before they may opt to organise housing etc. by themselves (see on the case of Upper Austria Hörfarer 2010 for more details). At the same time asylum seekers are not allowed to be engaged in official gainful employment (with some minor exceptions)²². Overall, these regulations evidently **do not guarantee material well-being** of asylum seekers in Austria, **nor** do they **promote overall social inclusion** in the wider sense (see Hörfarer 2010 for a detailed assessment).

3.4.2 Education

From an international comparative point of view, the Austrian educational system shows about average general performance (when applying e.g. PISA indicators).

The share of early school leavers (8.7% in 2009) is below EU-27 average (14.4%). This derives mainly from the (still) rather well-established system of apprenticeships in Austria. During recent years the government introduced a “youth training guarantee” whereby – apart of other things – publicly organised apprenticeships are offered to young people who could not find a respective opportunity within a market-based firm.

However, a number of specific problems remain. One of these problems is the very unequal distribution of early-school leavers between different groups, notably regarding the question of migration background and concerning the educational level and labour market status of parents. Respective findings (see Steiner 2009 for more details) are presented in table 3 below. They indicate a considerable heredity of educational attainment and intergenerational transmission of inequality.

²² See <http://www.ams.or.at/docs/Asylwerber.pdf> for more details.

Table 3: Early school leavers by socio-demographic groups

	Early School Leavers %	
	2008	2004
Migration background		
Born in Austria	4.5%	5.5%
2 nd Generation	20.8%	27.1%
Migrants	30%	27.6%
Educational attainment of parents		
Low	19.6%	18.5%
Middle	7.1%	6.9%
High	3.9%	4%
Labour market status of parents		
Employed	7%	7.4%
Unemployed	25.4%	21.7%
Inactive	14.5%	13.4%
Occupational status of parents		
Low	11.9%	13%
Middle	5.8%	6.2%
High	3.3%	2.4%

Source: Steiner 2009.

According to interviews with experts of Roma and Sinti descent, this general problem also applies to a very large degree to Roma and Sinti living in Austria. The overall educational attainment of the younger generation does only improve very slowly, and very often they do not manage to reach an educational graduation higher than ISCED level 2 or 3b. However, there are evident signs that attitudes towards education are changing towards a more pro-active perception of respective problems and challenges within the Roma population and especially activists within the Roma community in Austria stress the importance to improve the respective situation.

Hereby, one structural problem of the Austrian educational system appears to be the first selection at a rather early age within standard initial education (i.e. not taking into account special needs schools, see above chapter 2.4.3), namely at the age of 10. Especially in urban areas (where two different types of schools for lower secondary education exist) this tends to go ahead with a kind of development of two categories of quality of lower secondary education (higher in “lower grades of secondary academic school” and lower in “lower secondary school”). The above-mentioned introduction of the “new middle school” does not overcome this problem in more structural terms, but the envisaged reform of teaching methods etc. may benefit children with comparatively lower educational performance.

However, it appears that more specific additional programmes and projects would be necessary to improve educational outcomes of Roma and Sinti children. Here, “learning aid programmes”, implemented in Oberwart and as well in Vienna have shown very good results. The same holds true for “school assistance”, which is to some degree in place in Vienna. These programmes are co-organised by interest associations of the Roma community, and have partly worked with “learning aid teachers” of Roma descent. It appears that especially the latter helped to guarantee

the acceptance and backing of respective programmes by parents of children, and thereby contributed to rather favourable overall outcomes.

a. Language classes

Language classes in schools in Burgenland

The amendment of the Minority School Law (Minderheiten-Schulgesetz) in Burgenland in 1994 (BGBl. Nr. 641/1994) and various implementation laws enabled the introduction of Romani classes within the public school system, provided that enough demand can be raised. In 1995, codification of the Burgenland variant of Romanés (Burgenland Romani) started at the University of Graz in collaboration with the association Roma Oberwart, elaborating also curricula and teaching material later used in language classes.

The first experimental language classes in Burgenland-Romani has been held in 1997 within the learning aid initiative at the association Roma Oberwart, provided by two native speakers (with some pedagogical training) once a week. Finally, in 1999 the first official language classes within the formal education system were introduced at the primary school in Oberwart, supported by the association Roma Oberwart, the Romani-Project of the University of Graz and the education authority of Burgenland. The class has been introduced as a so-called “unverbindliche Übung”, a non-obligatory class without grades. The class is held for 1h per week by a native speaker and is based on oral communication (as the children in this grade are only about learning to write). In the school year of 2000/2001 14 children (only Roma) took part. In the following years, other schools followed: in 2004 voluntary Romani classes were introduced at the lower secondary school in Oberwart (Europäische Mittelschule Oberwart) and the primary school in Unterwart, and in 2005 also at the bi-lingual secondary school in Oberwart (Zweisprachiges Gymnasium Oberwart).

However, language classes in schools were often discontinued over the years due to shrinking numbers of participating children. For example, since 2007/08 no language classes could be organised at the primary school in Oberwart anymore, and during the past three years (2007/08 to 2009/10) there was only one Romani language class in total (at the primary school in Unterwart). See table 4 for the exact numbers of participating children²³.

Table 4: Number of children participating in Romani language classes in Burgenland:

	1999/ 2000	2000/ 2001	2001/ 2002	2002/ 2003	2003/ 2004	2004/ 2005	2005/ 2006	2006/ 2007	2007/ 2008	2008/ 2009	2009/ 2010
Primary School Oberwart	14	14	9	8		10	5	3			
Primary School Unterwart						5	4		5	5	5
Lower Secondary School Oberwart						9	9	9			
Secondary School Oberwart							9				
Total	14	14	9	8	0	24	27	12	5	5	5

Sources: Landesschulrat Burgenland

²³ See also: Wogg 2007, radio feature of Radio Burgenland 1.3.2010 <http://volksgruppen.orf.at/roma/aktuell/stories/120623/>, websites of the associations Roma Oberwart <http://burgenland-roma.at/>, the Roma-project at the University of Graz <http://romani.uni-graz.at/romani/teaching.de.shtml>

Roma School Assistants in Vienna

Since 2000 the Viennese Roma association Romano Centro uses so-called Roma assistants in selected primary schools with a high percentage of Roma children (currently only in 4 schools due to financial restraints). Roma assistants are intended to be native speakers with a good knowledge of Roma cultural background and a positive attitude towards the Austrian education system. Their main tasks are to mediate between teachers, pupils and parents, support the children during classes and facilitate access to school for the parents (see www.romano-centro.org/ for further details).

Language courses for adults

Information on the exact number of Romani language courses provided for adults are hard to come by. However, such courses exist in a formal way since the spring term of 2000 when the adult education centre of the Burgenland Roma (Volkshochschule der Burgenländischen Roma), that has been founded the year before, organised beginner and advanced courses in Oberwart and in Eisenstadt (today the courses are taught in Oberwart and Mattersburg, see <http://www.vhs-roma.eu/>) for further details).

Since its foundation in 2004 the association Roma-Service in Kleinbachselten organises language classes in several locations – based on respective demand (e.g. Vienna, Graz, Oberwart, Deutsch-Kaltenbrunn, Schwechat, Mattersburg etc.). On average there are 3-4 classes per semester, in the summer term of 2011 two classes were held in Deutsch-Kaltenbrunn and Graz (with final exams).²⁴

Romani classes within the higher education were held since the winter term 2004 at the University of Graz.

b. Learning aid programmes

Burgenland

In 1990 the association Roma Oberwart started the first learning aid initiative for Roma children in order to prevent their assignment in *Sonderschulen* (i.e. special needs schools). On average 30 Roma children participate in daily lessons and homework assistance in groups as well as ad-hoc individual training before exams. Gradually, the use of electronic media and new topics such as political education and Roman language instructions were introduced. According to the association's homepage, the number of Roma pupils in secondary schools could be increased due to the initiative.

Vienna

Since 1995 learning aid is also available for Viennese Roma children, organised by the association Romano Centro. Individual lessons take place at the children's homes, in order to include the parents developing a new learning practice and attitude, going beyond the transfer of specific skills. Learning aid is usually provided by students (mostly social anthropology and education students) and supported by educationalists. In March 2010, 32 learning assistants attended to 126 Roma children in almost all districts of Vienna and in some nearby municipalities of Lower Austria. Due to financial restraints, only one hour per

²⁴ Telephone enquiry, 17/08/11

week and child is possible, demand is said to be higher. Until Autumn 2008 learning aid has been free of cost for the parents, since then they have to pay 3 Euro per hour (with exceptions).

In 2005, Verein Roma-Service started to organise the so-called „RomBus“, a mobile room for learning aid, language classes, information etc. that will be on tour for three days a week visiting more than 20 Roma villages in Burgenland and Lower Austria.

The largest initiative of learning aid ("Projekt der außerschulischen Lernhilfe für SchülerInnen") started in 2005 in collaboration between several Roma Associations (the number of participating associations changed over the years²⁵ and the City of Vienna (MA 17)²⁶.

The project is based on the principles of cooperation, with a strong role model function. Learning aid is provided in different subjects (mostly German, Mathematics and Accounting) for pupils of primary, lower secondary and higher secondary commercial schools. Every group is attended by an educationalist (Roma or non-Roma) and one person with Roma background. Additionally parents or young adults from the Roma community with a positive relationship towards the Austrian education systems serve as coordinators responsible for cooperating with the parents. In 2009 the project has been evaluated by the Department of Education of the University of Vienna showing overall good results, with stabilising and improving learning effectively and grades. The number of Roma children in special needs schools has been decreasing over the years. Demand is said to be rising and the number of participating children has been increased (BKA 2010, Fragebogen Ausschuss der Regionen²⁷, Luciak/Kramann 2009 – not publicly accessible).

In 2008 27 courses for approx. 250 children were provided, in 2009 there were 23 courses for 230 children (Stadt Wien 2010). However, more detailed information on the respective courses provided by the individual associations is rather sketchy. For example, the association Vida Pavlovic states to organise learning aid in German and Romanes with assistants with Roma background in the 16th Viennese district, providing 2x2 hours per week in the subjects of German, Mathematics and English. According to the association, regular participation of children leads to a regular performance of homeworks, better contacts with schools and better grades²⁸.

3.4.3 Employment

Strengths and weaknesses

Standard quantitative labour market indicators (unemployment and employment rates. etc.) indicate that the overall labour market performance is rather favourable in Austria from an international comparative point of view. Unemployment rates are amongst the lowest of all EU Member States, long-term unemployment (defined as unemployment lasting more than 12 months) – amounting to 25% of total unemployment in 2010 – is lower than the average of

²⁵ In 2011 the following associations took part: Bahtalo Rom, Kultur Verein "Vida Pavlovic", Roma Kulturzentrum Wien

²⁶ Funding amounts to about 200.000 Euro per year (BKA 2010)

²⁷ <http://portal.cor.europa.eu/subsidiarity/Observations2011/08/02/1749c662-2620-4206-82f8-6f17efdf0c6.docx>

²⁸ <http://vida-pavlovic.com/wienverein.html>

EU-27 (39.9%)²⁹ and overall employment rates have only slightly decreased during the financial and economic crisis.

However, risks and chances within the labour market appear to be rather unequally distributed between different groups, as especially people with low education, persons with a migration background and young people face special problems of labour market integration (see table 4 below). At the same time Roma are evidently overrepresented within the former two groups, and the same is likely to be true regarding their share in young people.

Table 4: Unemployment rates 2010

	Unemployment rates 2010		
	Men	Women	Total
TOTAL	4.6	4.3	4.5
Educational attainment			
ISCED 0-2	10.0	7.4	8.7
ISCED 3-4	4.2	3.8	4.0
Age			
15-19	9.2	12.2	10.5
20-24	8.7	7.1	7.9
Nationality			
Austrian	4.1	3.7	3.9
Extra EU-15	10.0	10.0	10.0
Extra EU-27	11.0	9.6	10.4
Country of birth			
Austria	3.8	3.6	3.7
Extra EU-15	9.8	8.3	9.1
Extra EU-27	10.4	8.1	9.4

Source: Eurostat Database

As noted above, data on long-term unemployment looks rather favourable at first sight from an international comparative point of view. However, according to the methodology applied by Eurostat, even very short-term gainful employment leads to a new cycle of counting. Within national data sources, besides of data on “long-term unemployment”, there is also data available on so-called “long-term inoccupation” (*Langzeitbeschäftigungslosigkeit*) (no stable integration into the first labour market within the last 365 days, see BMASK 2011 for more details and respective data).

Within this concept, short term breaks of unemployment (by gainful employment or education measures) are not taken into account and respective figures show that there is a considerable stock of people where enduring integration into the first labour market is not reached. In 2010, the number of respective people amounted to approx. 77,000 persons, whereas the stock of all registered unemployed was ca. 250,000 at yearly average. This means that about 30% of all registered unemployed are affected by “long-term inoccupation”. During the last years (i.e. even

²⁹ Source: Eurostat Database.

before the economic and financial crisis) the number of people facing long-term inoccupation was never lower than about 50,000, which indicates long-lasting problems of labour market integration for specific groups of the unemployed even in times of favourable macroeconomic performance.

One other problem, which is also likely to affect Roma people to a considerable degree, is labour market segmentation and low-wage employment. According to the Structures of Earnings Survey (2006; more recent data is not available), approx. 14.5% of all employees received an hourly wage below two thirds of the median wage, i.e. less than 7.65 EUR gross per hour. This performance is only slightly better than the average of EU-27 (17.59%), falling clearly behind the European top performers that show a much lower incidence of low-wage employment (e.g. Belgium 7%, Finland 6%, Denmark 8%, Sweden 10%). Furthermore, the share of low-wage employment is much higher for women (24.2%) than for men (5.1%) and this phenomenon is especially widespread in part-time employment (23.6%) and in case of temporary contracts (27.0%). At the same time, low-wage employment concentrates in specific branches, like e.g. "tourism" (more than 50%), "trade" (more than 20%) and "services for enterprises" (see Geisberger/Knittler 2010). As noted above (chapter 2.3.4), employment of Roma (especially with migration background) appears to be especially widespread within these sectors. Roma with migration background also appear to be overrepresented in non-standard forms of employment like so-called freelance contracts and especially within temporary agency work, where employment conditions are often rather unfavourable when compared to standard employment.

Special problems exist regarding mobile trading activities, where regulation is apparently especially strict in Austria. As a general principle, offering goods or services to end-users by "moving from place to place and from house to house" is forbidden.³⁰ Exceptions may only be granted for selling a) different food products or b) goods of own production, where respective traders need a respective general trading license, and in the latter case a special license issued by local authorities as well. Furthermore, local governments may prohibit all such activities, if such a "measure is necessary for public security, public health, youth protection or for protecting the local population from excessive harassment" (GewO §35). Somewhat less strict regulations apply for activities called "collecting orders for goods" in private households. People doing such business must have a general trading license, but they must additionally be licensed by the respective district administration authorities (Bezirksverwaltungsbehörden).

Overall, these regulations undermine the practicability of mobile or semi-mobile trading with private households, which is a traditional profession of many Roma and Sinti (and still plays some role today), to a considerable degree. Furthermore, these rules more or less prohibit mobile trading by Roma and Sinti travelling to Austria from abroad, as for them it often would be rather difficult and too time-consuming to get licensed according to the rules in place. Rules are somewhat less rigid regarding offering goods and services to companies and firms, and Roma and Sinti engaged in mobile trading often use this "exit option" (and probably also ignore the above mentioned regulations to some part).

One other problem worth mentioning are the rigid regulations which apply in Austria regarding employment permissions for people who are not EU citizens, which affects especially asylum seekers. As a general principle, they are not allowed to perform gainful employment as long as their asylum procedure has not come to a positive end (i.e. being granted the status of a

³⁰ See http://portal.wko.at/wk/format_detail.wk?angid=1&stid=449378&dstid=940

recognised refugee under the UN Refugee Convention or at least the status of a being in need of (temporary) “subsidiary need for protection” (“*subsidiär schutzbedürftige Person*”). Only some minor exceptions from this general rule exist³¹, implying largely reduced opportunities of labour market and social integration during the asylum procedure, which (as already sketched out above) in some cases may take rather long in Austria.

Policies

Overall, it is fair to say that active labour market policy – aiming to improve the employment chances of unemployed people – has been substantially expanded in Austria during the last two decades (see e.g. Grand 2009, Atzmüller 2009, BMASK 2009). However, one group that has traditionally not been very well covered by active labour market policy in Austria are (sole) recipients of social assistance, i.e. persons without access to benefits from unemployment insurance (although sole recipients of social assistance would in principle have access to ALMP measures provided by the PES, the PES de facto concentrated to a large degree on recipients of unemployment insurance benefits,). This is to be changed via the introduction of the Guaranteed Minimum Income scheme (GMI; replacing Social Assistance as from September 2010), that foresees improved access of sole recipients of GMI to ALMP measures and to personalised services and support. However, the actual development of respective programmes varies between federal provinces and respective outcomes have still to be awaited.

ALMP programmes especially targeted at Roma are very rare in Austria. Exceptions have been the projects “Thara. Amaro trajo” (in Vienna) und “Mri Buti” (in the federal province of Burgenland) (see Gneisz 2010 for a detailed assessment). Both projects started within the EQUAL framework and were continued with national funding for some years. However, the project “Mri Buti” has been terminated in spring 2008, as no sufficient funding has been made available by the PES and other possible sources. Similarly, as from the summer of 2010 the project Thara has been downsized to activities of advice and counselling and does not offer educational or employment programmes any more.³²

In the area “quality of employment” several attempts have been made during the last 15 years to improve employment conditions and integration into social insurance of people engaged in so-called non-standard forms of employment, like e.g. freelance contracts and temporary agency work (see Fink/Grand 2010 for more details). Roma with migration background appear to be overrepresented within such forms of employment and might therefore have been benefiting from respective reforms. However, temporary agency work, irrespective of the reform steps being taken, still offers below average employment conditions in many cases, with above average risks to become unemployed and often rather low wages paid (see. e.g. Kaupa et al. 2006; Riesenfelder/Wetzel 2010).

Regarding the question of low-wage employment, problem awareness and willingness for reform seem to be rather limited. Austria does have a very high coverage rate of collective agreements (more than 99% in the private sector), which however did not prevent a large incidence of structural segmentation and inequalities. It is important to notice that all relevant political actors (political parties and the employer’s organisations *and just as well* the highly centralised trade unions) were part of the governance structure that brought up such a model even before de-

³¹ See http://www.ams.or.at/_docs/Asylwerber.pdf

³² See <http://www.volkshilfe.at/1235,,,2.html>

industrialisation (starting in the late 1970s/early 1980s) even increased respective challenges. For a long time the trade unions, irrespectively of their official statements signalling that they are for “solidaristic” wage policies, in fact implemented a sectoral approach, whereby minimum wages were often set at a very low level. According to the dominant interpretation, their goal has been protecting jobs with lower productivity from being removed (especially at small- and medium-sized enterprises and in sectors with lower overall productivity) (see Hermann 2009).

More recently, it appears that attitudes of trade unions have changed to some degree and they now tend to be more active in addressing the problems related to low wages and in-work poverty. However, actual reform in this field remains limited. It is however worth mentioning that the national-level social partner organisations signed an agreement in July 2007, enclosing the goal of introducing a minimum pay rate of EUR 1,000 gross for full-time employment in all collective agreements, to be implemented by the sectoral bargaining parties by January 1st, 2009 at the latest. This minimum wage evidently benefits some employees in those branches paying the lowest wages. However, according to estimations, this new minimum threshold came along with a direct effect only for 30.000 to 50.000 wage earners in Austria, as many collective agreements already stipulated minimum wages above or just below this level. Moreover, the trade unions had started to lobby for a minimum wage of EUR 1,000 as early as 2003, but did not adjust this claim to the development of prices or wages over the years. However, they recently started a new campaign for a minimum wage of EUR 1,300 gross per month, but it is rather unlikely that they will succeed with this in the near future.

The above mentioned problems concerning regulation on mobile trading do not appear on the broader political agenda at all. The problem is addressed by Roma and Sinti interest organisations or activists from time to time, but has not been picked up by relevant political decision makers.

3.4.4 Health

Social health insurance in Austria is – in principle – organised as a compulsory insurance for people in gainful employment and for people receiving cash benefits from systems of social protection (like pensions or unemployment benefits). However, in addition to the directly insured parties, health insurance in Austria also covers dependent members of their families. About one third of the persons covered by the statutory health insurance are co-insured family members who do not pay contributions of their own (e.g. children, housewives/househusbands). Generally periods without insurance appear to be a short-time phenomenon (but see for more details Fuchs 2009, p.329), and people who are not covered by health insurance may opt into the system at their own expense (however, some waiting periods may apply here). The overall coverage rate of health insurance in Austria is estimated to amount to about 99% of the population (see Fuchs 2009a).

No information is available regarding coverage rates of health insurance within the Roma population, but the coverage rate is likely the same as for the majority population. Asylum seekers are covered by regular health insurance, but people without legal residence in Austria do not have access to health insurance. However, “emergency medical treatment” has to be provided by public hospitals even if someone is not covered by health insurance.

Overall, it seems that the Austrian health system provides rather equal access to health services. The latter appears to be true irrespective of a rather high share of private co-payments,

as people with low income are exempted from them in a number of cases and as the system offers a wide range of standard high-quality services available without co-payments (for most parts of the insured population) (see Fink 2011a for more details). However, an important weakness of the Austrian health system is its strong focus on curative treatment, whereas health prevention is underdeveloped (see also e.g. Aiginger 2011).

Leoni (2004a) reported in his study on Roma living in Oberwart that their health status is – on average – by far worse than the health status of the average population, and that this should be interpreted as a socio-structural (not socio-cultural) problem (see also above chapter 2.3.4). No related information is available for other Roma groups living in Austria. From a more general perspective, more detailed assessments about the interdependency between material inequality, health inequality and access to preventive and curative health services are largely missing for the case of Austria and these issues are only rarely addressed in public and political debates.

3.4.5 Housing

Standard quantitative indicators (like data on overcrowding or housing cost overburden) indicate that the housing situation in Austria is rather favourable from an international comparative point of view. This may – inter alia – be caused by the fact that that “social housing” by the municipalities and dwellings offered by “Limited Profit Housing Associations” (LPHAs) contributes to a rather large share of total housing (about 20% in total).

However, a number of general challenges still exist (see e.g. Perl 2008; Fink/Grand 2009a; Amann/Mundt 2009):

- Access costs in the private market are quite high (rents, security deposit, brokerage fees).
- Access costs are often also high regarding public dwellings and especially LPHAs, as the tenant has to pay an amount for ground- and building costs as a down payment. Subsidies in the form of assisted loans exist, but as it is a loan it increases the monthly payments after all.
- According to Perl (2008, p.12) “the access to the private housing market is hindered by sometimes massive discrimination against migrants and minorities. NGOs (...) report that migrants have to pay more for the same quality of housing. They often have to follow a discriminating and humiliating screening procedure by brokers and owners before they will get a lease contract.”
- Such discrimination may apply regarding public housing as well. In principle, social housing is open to everybody with permanent residence in Austria. However, as Perl (2008, p.13) writes, independent organisations of the third sector dealing with housing services “report a different handling in different municipalities and institutional discrimination against immigrants in some municipalities”.
- For the private housing market regulations exist regarding maximum rents (via the so-called *Mietrechtsgesetz*). These regulations do not apply for all kinds of rented dwellings (e.g. not for rental apartments in buildings that have been built after 30.06.1953). On the whole, the share of dwellings for which regulation for maximum rents is applicable is likely to be shrinking.

- Questions of housing and especially homelessness are generally not perceived as a national issue of social inclusion in Austria, as many (but not all!) competencies within this area are located at the level of the federal provinces and the municipalities. Overall, no integrated approach exists to co-ordinate or streamline the strategies and measures decided by the federal provinces and the municipalities.

A special situation applies for homeless people who are not Austrian citizens. If they do not have a status as asylum seeker, they have, as a general principle, no access to services like temporary accommodation and not even to night-shelters, as such services are mostly only accessible for persons receiving social assistance or now GMI (which is restricted to Austrian citizens or EU citizens who have been living in Austria for at least five years). In Vienna, it was only in November 2010 that the first night-shelter for persons without Austrian citizenship has opened, initiated by the NGO "Vinzenzgemeinschaft".³³ It is unclear how many people of Roma origin and without Austrian citizenship are homeless in Austria. However, qualitative research undertaken e.g. by Lendjel (2007) indicates that many Roma coming to Austria for public begging (however mostly in a short-term basis) do not have access to whatever kind of housing, but tend to sleep on the street, in parks, at train stations or in their cars.

It has already been sketched out above that so-called "Roma settlements" are a very rare phenomenon in Austria. An exemption from this is a settlement called "am Anger" in Oberwart, which, however, mainly consists of public housing. But here the situation improved during the last 15 years due to renovation (mainly financed by public authorities) and decreasing overcrowding, whereby a considerable number of people moved to other public dwelling within the area (see chapter 2.3.5)

One other topic relevant within the area of housing, also already mentioned above, is the one of campsites for travelling Roma and Sinti (see chapter 2.3.5 above). Only two "official" campsites for travelling Roma and Sinti exist in Austria, and reportedly they are often rejected by the operators of normal campsites. One of the two official campsites for Roma and Sinti has recently (in summer 2009) been established in Linz following an initiative of the Roma and Sinti association "Ketani", which today is looking after the site to prevent any eventual problems. Evidently, this model provides an example of good practice, but other municipalities appear to be extremely reluctant to follow it.

3.4.6 Other policy areas: Sport, recreation and culture, anti-discrimination

Issues of sport and recreation are rarely addressed from a perspective of social inclusion in Austrian politics and there exists a lack of knowledge regarding social stratification within these areas. At the same time, basically nothing is known about the specific situation of the Roma population regarding this topic.

Generally, municipalities as well as private associations and clubs offer a rather wide variety of opportunities for sports and recreation in Austria. However, especially in urban areas, public green space is often limited, and people of lower social strata, where overcrowding of dwellings is also an issue, may face problems to organise proper recreation or sport opportunities (especially for children).

³³ See http://diepresse.com/home/panorama/wien/609195/Wien_Erste-Notschlafstelle-fuer-Auslaender-eroeffnet

One other topic worth mentioning are excursions organised by schools for their pupils. Respective activities are e.g. “country weeks”, “sport weeks”, “skiing weeks” or “Vienna weeks” organised during the normal school year (i.e. not in holidays). Usually the parents have to cover the respective costs. If parents cannot afford to cover the respective costs, there are funds available in most schools for financial subsidies in such cases. However, according to anecdotal evidence, parents often do not apply for such subsidies for reasons of possible social stigmatisation and instead opt not to let their children take part in those activities. It is not known if such problems especially apply for persons of Roma origin, but teachers frequently report that this phenomenon rather often occurs for pupils with a migration background. Such activities organised within the educational system are evidently important transmission belts for social integration, and social stratification within this area clearly is opposed to such goals.

Roma and Sinti interest organisations and associations are to some limited degree engaged in the area of sports and recreation, e.g. the Roma and Sinti organisation Ketani in Linz, which has its own football team, and which tries to organise for football matches with teams of the majority population, e.g. as well from municipalities or villages, where Sinti have been living before the Nazi regime. Here, sport is also intended to provide a kind of door-opener function for mutual exchange and interrelation.

Roma and Sinti interest organisations and associations are at the same time especially active in the area of culture in a wider sense. Here, important activities are mainly aiming at improving and pursuing skills of Romani language (including attempts to codify different types of Romani existent in Austria) or e.g. projects where the history, culture and current situation of Roma and Sinti is presented and discussed in schools etc. However, it should be stressed that Roma and Sinti organisations do not appear to understand themselves as cultural organisations in the first place (in sense of folklore), but as institutions of interest representation, as facilitators of concrete projects, and sometimes also as mediators between Roma and the majority population.

Regarding policies and measures aiming to reduce practises of discrimination, no clear-cut proactive strategy is noticeable in Austria. Respective strategies could e.g. encompass campaigns for awareness-raising or information campaigns etc. (both addressing the public and e.g. persons working in public administration etc.), such attempts are largely lacking in Austria.

4. The role of Structural Funds and ESF

As already mentioned above, two projects specifically addressing Roma were implemented within the EQUAL framework, but one of them has been terminated in the meantime and the other one has been downsized to a considerable degree.

It is also unclear to what degree the Roma population of Burgenland benefited from the substantial resources which have been made available for this federal province by the Structural Funds, as no respective assessments exist.

Furthermore, it appears that currently no specific project targeted at the Roma population is financed via Structural Funds and ESF.

At the same time, general qualification programmes etc. co-financed by ESF are likely to benefit the Roma population, as well as other groups. But again actual outcomes and impacts regarding the specific group of the Roma are unclear.

5. Role of civil society organisations and international organisations

Following similar attempts in Germany, initiatives for interest organisation were started by Roma from Vienna and from the Burgenland in the late 1980s.

The declared goals were, at first instance, to reach political recognition as officially recognised ethnic minority, to keep culture and heritage – including language skills – alive, to re-assess the own history, to improve the situation regarding “compensations” for the victims of the Nazi regime and also to improve the education and labour market situation, and by this to improve overall living standards.

Overall, respective political and cultural activities led to increased self-esteem, whereas before the denial of Roma descent for many seemed to be the only way out of rather unfavourable living conditions. Overall, it was (and still is) the main aim of respective interest organisations to revive Roma identity, but at the same time to improve living standards of Roma and Sinti.

Important associations of Roma and Sinti in Austria are e.g.:

- “Verein Roma Oberwart” (Association Roma Oberwart). This was the first association of Roma in Austria, established in 1989. It was engaged in political lobbying for the recognition of Roma as official ethnic group and e.g. provides advisory services, extracurricular learning aid for school children and leisure activities for young persons.³⁴
- “Kulturverein Österreichischer Roma” (“Cultural Association of Austrian Roma”) was established in 1991. This association was also very much engaged in work leading to the recognition of Roma as Austrian ethnic group. Other main goals and activities are the strengthening of Roma self-esteem, improvement of political and social integration, fostering art and culture, research of history and culture, assistance with applying for compensation for NS victims, information of the public, publication of information material and of a magazine called *Romano Kipo* (see Gaspar 2009, pp.29 ff. for more details).³⁵ One important instrument run by the Kulturverein Österreichischer Roma (in co-operation with the Verein Roma Oberwart) is the so-called “Roma Fonds”. This trust fund provides subsidies for costs of extracurricular learning aid, for apprentices and for further education measures within universities and for adult education. It is financed by money from the Kulturverein Österreichischer Roma and the Verein Roma Oberwart, by public subsidies and by donations (see e.g. Baumgartner/Freund 2007). The Kulturverein Österreichischer Roma also runs a centre for documentation and information on the Austrian Roma.
- The “Verein Roma Service” (“Association Roma Service”) is located in the Burgenland. Its main aim is to “foster, safeguard and document the culture of the Burgenland Roma”. In the centre of the activities is the preservation of the language “Roman”, which is the Romani dialect of the Burgenland Roma. Verein Roma Service is, apart from other things, engaged in the promotion of education of Roman language in schools, as well as in translation to Roman and the publication of bi-lingual literature.³⁶

³⁴ See <http://www.verein-roma.at/html/verein.htm>

³⁵ See <http://www.kv-roma.at/>

³⁶ See <http://www.roma-service.at/index.shtml>

- “Verein Ketani für Sinti und Roma” (“Association Ketani for Sinti and Roma”) was established in Linz (province of Upper Austria) in 1998. Ketani is – inter alia – engaged in advisory services for Sinti and Roma, it informs about the history and current situation of Sinti and Roma in Austrian schools, conducts cultural and sport activities, acts as a mediator between the majority population and Roma and Sinti, and looks after one of the two officially recognised campsites for Roma and Sinti in Austria (which was established following an initiative by Ketani). It should be noted that the “driving forces” within this association are of Sinti origin, but that Ketani – according to its’ self-perception – wants to represent interests of both Sinti and Roma.³⁷
- “Romano Centro – Verein für Roma” (“Roma Centro – Association for Roma”), located in Vienna, was founded in 1991. It appears to be the only association of Roma in Austria which explicitly tries to represent different groups of Roma, including the Vlax groups, who immigrated to Austria from the Western Balkans since the 1960s. Furthermore, membership with Romano Centro is also possible for persons of the majority population. The main goals of Romano Centro are to improve the living conditions of Roma and to engage against discrimination. Main areas of activity are education and culture. Romano Centro runs projects like e.g. “learning aid for Roma children”, “Roma school assistants”, where persons speaking Romani act as a mediator between teachers/schools, children and parents and provide further assistance. Furthermore, Romano Centro recently established a musical school („Vienna Gipsy Music School”). Apart of that, Romano Centro also offers advice in different areas on a regular basis.

Apart of these interest organisations and associations a number of others exist, dealing with different issues and having different focuses. Such associations are, amongst others: “Romanodrom”, running the „Theatro Rota” (a Roma theatre), “Gipsy – Info”, “Romani Dori”, “Gipsy Music”, “Kulturverein Romalen”, “Romano Phralipe”, “Romano Kham” – engaged at first instance in learning aid for Roma children, “Baro Ilo”, “Vida Pavlović” and “Bahtalo Rom” all three – apart of other things – also engaged in learning aid for Roma children or “E.R.O – Europäische Roma Organisation” (see Gaspar 2009 for more details on these associations). All of them are located in Vienna. Overall, 18 active Roma associations currently exist in Austria.

It seems fair to say that representatives of Roma organisations and associations are in frequent contact to each other, but that mutual co-ordination and information could be further improved. Divisions between different associations and groups may be caused by a multitude of different matters, but – amongst other things – the very limited public funds and subsidies available for such interest organisations appear to play a major role here as well.

Interestingly, other civil society organisations, like the “*Armutskonferenz*”, which is the Austrian member organisation of EAPN, rarely explicitly deal with questions of social inclusion of Roma in Austria from a wider perspective. At the same time, no Roma organisation is member of the *Armutskonferenz*, which is in fact an umbrella organisation of different social NGOs.

A recent attempt to organise interests within civil society is the so-called “Bettelobby” (begging lobby), which has been established against the background of the bans on public begging which were introduced in a number of federal provinces in 2010. However, the Bettelobby apparently does not address the issue that many public beggars may be of Roma origin in more detail, but

³⁷ See <http://www.sinti-roma.at/ketani.htm>

is opposed to bans on public begging for more general reasons. At the same time, it does not appear that well-known representatives of the Roma community or Roma interest organisations play an important role within the Bettelobby. On the contrary, Austrian Roma associations seem rather reluctant to comment on topics like bans on begging or deportation/forced “repatriation” of Roma from other countries.

Similarly, other interest organisations, e.g. trade unions, address the question of social inclusion of Roma in Austria only rarely, if at all. It was only recently that the Austrian Trade Union Federation announced that it took part in a trilateral conference on labour market integration of Roma (together with trade unions from Slovakia and the Czech Republic). However, and most interestingly, in its related press release the Austrian Trade Union Federation only stresses the bad employment situation of Roma in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, but does not comment on the respective situation in Austria.³⁸

International organisations are practically of no significance regarding debates and strategies concerning the topic of social inclusion of Roma in Austria. It was only when Thomas Hammarberg (Commissioner for Human Rights within the Council of Europe) warned that forced repatriation of Roma to the Kosovo is not acceptable from a human rights perspective and explicitly mentioned Austria – apart from Germany and Macedonia – that Austrian media and opposition parties took up this issue.³⁹ As already sketched out above (see chapter 2.3.1), Austria did not stop its practice of deportation and forced repatriation to the Kosovo, whereby – however – not detailed information is available how many Roma have been affected by this.

Roma associations are apparently hopeful that the current EU initiative on social inclusion of Roma will have some positive effects in Austria. However, some of them also fear that the national action could turn out to be “just another report”, without much actual impact.

6. Recommendations

We think that **the national integration strategy**, aiming to bridge the gap in living conditions and life chances between Roma and the “general population”, has to take into account the following **general considerations**:

- 1) Some **problems** faced by Roma are **on the one hand** caused by **structural problems** within the **Austrian welfare state** that have problematic effects for different groups and not only for the Roma population. At the same time **Roma on the other hand** also face more **specific challenges**, with problems in a distinct way or at first instance being evident for them or one of their subgroups.
- 2) At the same time attention should be given to the fact that **Roma** in Austria are a rather **heterogeneous** group, enclosing autochthonous Roma, who have been living in Austria since many generations, immigrants with permanent residence status or Austrian citizenship, to some minor degree traveling Roma and Sinti from other EU Member States, asylum seekers, people with unclear residence status as well as Roma who come to Austria on a short-term basis as “public beggars”. These persons

³⁸ See OTS0173 II, CI 21.06.2011 12:30:03

³⁹ http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/Viewpoints/100222_en.asp; APA0395 AA, CA 09.12.2010

- a. have **different objective living conditions** and respective **variation even** appears to be considerable **within** some of these **subgroups** and
- b. at the same time **self-perception** of a “**Roma identity**” is likely to **vary** to a considerable degree, with some pro-actively living this identity, whereas others follow strategies to leave their Roma descent behind and others being rather indifferent on this point.

This **implies** that a national integration strategy for Roma, if results should be enclosing and sustainable, would have to **enclose different pillars**, **address** a rather large **variety** of policy **areas**, and follow **different instruments**, **methodologies** and **governance modes** in **implementation**.

Ideally, such a strategy would **a)** enclose some **overarching reforms**, dealing with **structural problems** within different policy areas, which lead to sub-optimal outcomes for different groups of the lower socio-economic stratum. At the same time **b)** **more targeted instruments** and more **specific measures** appear to be crucial, dealing with **particular problems** of different groups of the Roma population and contributing to the goal that these **target groups** are actually reached.

Regarding the latter point, we however think that special **caution** is necessary. **Targeted measures** specifically addressing Roma can be suitable in a number of cases. However, a sole concentration on specific programs and measures **may** at the same time also **convey adverse attributions**, by **signalling** that **Roma** are in need of “**special treatment**”. For this reason, we think that it should also be examined if and to what degree **special needs** of Roma people could be **incorporated** to a wider degree into **existing general strategies** and **measures** (e.g. in measures of active labour market policies and in the school system).

Yet, **specific targeted measures do not have to be problematic** per se in a sense of conveying negative attributions. This e.g. holds true for strategies that **make positive role models** of the Roma community more **visible** or for the **facilitation** of **Romani language education**, signalling **social** and **public recognition** of the **ethnic group** and appreciation of their history and identity.

In more **general terms**, pro-active **political decision making** and **design** as well as **implementation** of such strategies and measures rests on a number of **preconditions**, which – however – only exist to some degree in Austria. Such preconditions – amongst others – are:

- a) **proper information** about the actual living conditions and respective challenges of/for different groups of Roma living in Austria,
- b) **political awareness** about these problems and a **political debate** about how to solve them,
- c) **political will** by a **large number of different actors and decision-makers** (at different levels of decision-making and implementation, in different ministries etc.) to co-operate and to deal with respective problems in a pro-active way (including willingness to invest additional funds etc.).

In order to make a national strategy for the social inclusion of Roma successful, political awareness for respective problems would therefore have to be considerably raised in a first step.

It is important that this process builds on a **sound knowledge-base**, which implies the necessity of increased efforts to collect respective information, going beyond anecdotal evidence (e.g. by commissioning respective research).

The **following recommendations** are **very preliminary**, they should be **read** in the light of the general **considerations** given above, and they evidently **would have to be discussed in more detail with different stakeholders and actors**.

6.1 Key challenges, national goals and policies

6.1.1 Education

Many Roma experts, interest organisations and Roma activists whom we spoke to signalled that **education is one of the most crucial single factors** for problems of social inclusion of Roma in Austria. Within the area of **education**, **rather large structural** as well as **specific challenges** are evident.

Structural challenges:

- One major structural challenge is the **overall high heredity of educational attainment** in Austria, along with a high heredity of socio-economic stratification. This phenomenon is – according to schooling experts – inter alia caused by specific **structural features** of the **Austrian educational system**, most importantly by a first selection according to “learning ability” at a very early age (i.e. of 10 years). To reduce heredity of educational attainment it would therefore be necessary to re-design the structural features of the Austrian schooling system. The recently decided reforms regarding the “new middle school” appear to be a step in the right direction, however without addressing the main structural point (i.e. selection at a rather early age).
- One other structural problem derives from **deficits in pre-school education** (a lack of places for children in the age below 3 or 4 years; deficits regarding places for day care; many childcare facilities are closed during summer holidays etc.). Here, some positive measures have been decided more recently, e.g. making the last year of kindergarten obligatory (at least in a part-time basis). Currently political debates take place regarding expanding obligatory kindergarten attendance to two years, but respective plans are currently blocked by funding problems.
- Large deficits are evident regarding **all-day care for children in school age** as well. Here, a gradual expansion has been decided more recently, which however will not completely solve respective problems, as the potential target group is much larger than the available places envisaged.

More specific challenges for different groups of the Roma and Sinti appear to be:

- A very low overall **educational attainment**;
- **Attitudes** towards formal **education** are not always very positive;

- Irrespective of improvements within the last 15 years, there still appears to be a rather high share of **young Roma** (up to 10% according to estimations) who **do not** manage to **graduate** from **compulsory schooling** (i.e. ISCED level 2);
- Very **few** manage to graduate at a **higher level than ISCED 3b**, and positive **role models** are therefore rather **rare**;
- **Parents** are often **overburdened** when trying to help their children with homework etc;
- **Discrimination** against Roma may still play a role within the Austrian **educational system**, although it appears that the respective situation improved during the last 15 years or so;
- **Illiteracy** is likely to still play some role within the **older Roma population**, especially in the age group over 50.

When trying to **deal with these specific challenges**, it obviously appears to be a good idea to **proceed with** and **further expand instruments** which turned out rather successful in the recent past:

- models of “**learning aid**” for children;
- models of “**school assistance**” (including expanding the model of “school assistance” to “**assistance in vocational education**”);
- special **opportunities of adult learning for Roma**, probably especially targeted at **parents of school children**, **older illiterate persons** and persons who want to **make up** for **missing school graduation** (positive examples exist in context of the adult education centre of the Roma in Burgenland).

In all three areas, and especially regarding “school assistance”, it appears to be vital that people engaged in respective programmes as **teachers/school assistants** are of **Roma descent** and/or at least **speak Romani**. The latter especially appears to be vital for the **acceptance** of respective **programmes** by parents and pupils alike. Furthermore, the “Roma community” should be involved to a large degree in the design, implementation and guidance of respective programs (probably in co-operation with different public institutions and as well other NGOs etc.), to guarantee for positive effects of “**ownership**” by the group(s).

Some **other new measures** could be introduced to improve **incentives for vocational training** and **higher education**:

- special **scholarships** for **vocational education**;
- special **scholarships** for **upper secondary education** (ISCED 3a);
- special **scholarships** for **higher education** (ISCED 4 and above).

Such scholarships would evidently imply “**positive discrimination**” of the Roma, but they would likely help to “produce” **positive role models**, by this improving overall attitudes towards education within the Roma population.

Furthermore, besides such specific and “targeted” measures, it appears to be necessary to improve the **knowledge** on the **history** and the current situation of **Roma** both within **teachers** and **pupils** (also in the **majority population**), to **reduce** practices of **discrimination** and **stigmatisation** within school routine.

6.1.2 Employment

As with the area of education, both **structural** and **specific problems** and challenges do apparently exist in the area of employment, again **requiring** a **mix** of **different strategies** and **measures**.

Structural challenges are:

- High labour market risks (i.e. largely **above average unemployment** rates) for people with **low formal qualification**, **migration background** and to some degree also for **young people**.
- A considerable degree of **segmentation** of the **labour market**, with a high incidence of **low-wage employment** in specific **sectors**.

These problems require **further attempts** to improve the situation of people affected in **more general terms**. Measures could enclose a further **expansion of ALMP**, increased efforts to make sure that **LLL-measures** to a larger degree reach **persons with low formal qualification** as well, and measures also allowing people of lower social strata to **make up for missed formal qualification**.

Regarding **labour market segmentation** and **low-wage employment wages policy** should give more emphasis to respective problems. However, to break respective path-dependencies is evidently more of the type of a mid-term project and not easy to be achieved.

More **specifically**, regarding **Roma**, following **challenges** appear to be evident:

- Roma appear to be more often affected by **unemployment** than other groups;
- Regarding **dependent employment**, Roma often appear to be engaged in **low-wage sectors**;
- Specific groups of Roma (especially those with a migration background) appear to work in **non-standard forms of employment** more often than other groups;
- **Discrimination** by **employers** or **colleagues** may still play some role;
- Traditional forms of **self-employment** (in different areas of trade), still often performed by Roma, tend to show decreasing profitability;
- **Mobile and semi-mobile trading** is subject to very strict **regulation** in Austria;
- People without a standard **legal residence status** in Austria are **not allowed** to be engaged in official **gainful employment** in Austria, which is especially **problematic** for **asylum**

seekers (of which a considerable number are said to be Roma from e.g. the Kosovo, Serbia and Macedonia) and partly also for people who managed to get access to **humanitarian residence allowance**;

- **Public begging** has been **banned** in a number of federal provinces more recently, obstructing people to perform this kind of activity, often representing a “profession of last resort”.

On the one hand, higher **educational attainment** (see above) would evidently help to improve the labour market situation of Roma, both in terms of being at risk of unemployment as well as regarding employment chances in more favourable sectors of the labour market.

Information campaigns and **campaigns for awareness-raising** could help to prevent discrimination. Such measures could not only address **employers**, but also **trade unions**, which up to now appear to have been rather reluctant regards dealing of problems of Roma more explicitly.

Regarding **self-employment**, specific measures could be introduced to **guide** Roma and **help** them to **set up businesses**, also outside their traditional areas of business. One of our interview partners within the group of Roma activists mentioned that there is a tendency that young Roma try to establish businesses in areas like graphics/web design, and that eventually instruments like microcredits could further support such attempts.

Strict **regulation** regarding **mobile** and **semi-mobile** trading could be **liberalised** or at least be **modified** to some degree, as respective regulation, when compared to other countries (like e.g. Germany) **appears to be excessive**.

Regarding **asylum seekers**, it appears that Austria more or less follows a strategy of **muddling through**, inter alia concerning people who have been living in Austria for quite some time and where asylum procedures are still pending. Furthermore, even if people manage to gain access to the so-called “**humanitarian residence allowance**” (*Humanitäres Bleiberecht*), they often **do not have unrestricted access** to the labour market.

Overall, a new **open and unbiased broad discussion** on **questions of asylum procedures and conditions**, about access to **humanitarian residence allowance** and **labour market access** would be necessary. Different **NGOs** have **proposed a series of measures** that would possibly provide more practicable solutions for respective problems (see e.g. Plattform Bleiberecht 2010). However, **political decision-makers** appear to be **reluctant** to change the given regime substantially or even to start a broader debate on the subject. However, at the same time we **want to stress** that the **Austrian integration strategy** should evidently give an **emphasis to respective problems and challenges**, as a considerable share of respective persons are likely to be of Roma origin.

In other words: the **Austrian integration strategy** would **ignore** one of the **most evident problems** of Roma in Austria by **not addressing** the **question of asylum seekers** and **persons with insecure residence**.

The **phenomenon** of people of Roma origin **begging** on streets and public places (whereby many of them appear to stay in Austria for a rather short time), has to be seen in context of their **unfavourable situation** in their **home countries**. In other words: this **phenomenon mirrors** the

fact that the question of the **social inclusion of Roma** has a strong **international dimension**, and **Austria should** evidently play a more **pro-active role** when trying to find a solution for respective problems at **European level**. **Bans on public begging** clearly do **not bring** any **solution** to structural problems, but only **reduce** the public **visibility** of social **problems**.

6.1.3 Healthcare

Compared to employment and education, **healthcare** appears to be a **less pressing** issue in Austria as access to rather high-quality curative health care is de facto guaranteed in almost any case. However, **health prevention** appears to face rather substantial challenges in Austria contributing to the phenomenon that persons of **lower socio-economic strata** – at average - **live a less health-oriented** life. However, we suppose that such problems should be dealt with within **mainstreamed strategies** and **programmes** primarily, and not within “Roma-specific” programmes.

6.1.4 Housing and environment

Compared to many other Member States (especially in Eastern Europe), **housing conditions** of the Roma population in Austria appear to be **rather favourable**. However, **discrimination** may be of some significance in **the private housing market** and **some sorts of social housing** imply rather **high access costs**. However, the latter is a general problem, and does not specifically apply for Roma.

More **specific problems** are apparently evident **regarding Roma (and other people)** who come to Austria – often a **short term basis** – to earn some money by public **begging**, as most **night shelters** only **accept people** receiving **social assistance** (or now GMI), where **Austrian Citizenship** or **EU-Citizenship** plus long-term legal residence is a pre-condition for access. Other problems apply for **travelling Roma** and **Sinti** (often coming from other Western European countries), as there **are only two** officially recognized **special campsites** for **Roma** and **Sinti** in Austria and as normal privately run campsites often do not accept Sinti and Roma.

Rough-sleeping of foreign citizens has – up to recently – **not been on the political agenda** at all. This situation **should at least be assessed** in more detail, **with further measures** eventually **to follow**.

Regarding **recognized campsites** for Sinti and Roma, Austrian Roma and Sinti organisations report that they have repeatedly tried to organize for additional facilities, but that **municipalities** are extremely **reluctant to co-operate** in this issue. At the same time it is somewhat unclear, how large the demand for such facilities would actually be. **Howsoever**, **experiences** with the two existing recognized campsites are **largely positive**, suggesting that **more attempts should be made** to follow these examples.

6.1.5 Culture and language

Cultural activities clearly contribute to a (positive) **public visibility** of the group of the Roma and Sinti population and by this **contribute** to the **social integration**. Therefore, **public support** for such activities is apparently **important**, but we want to stress that a national strategy for the social integration of Roma should go far beyond such measures.

Proper **knowledge of Romani language** is likely to be an important **source** of **identity** and **self-esteem**. During the last decade progress has been made in codifying Romani language and a (limited) number of **teaching** and **learning programmes** for Romani language are in place. Such attempts should be supported further, thereby – amongst other things – signalling **social** and **public recognition** of the **ethnic group** and appreciation of their history and identity.

6.1.6 Anti-discrimination

Overall, it seems fair to say that **Austria does not show** a **strong tradition** of **explicit anti-discrimination policies**. For example, **trade unions** and the **Austrian Chamber of Labour** run **respective programmes** and projects, but their **public visibility** is apparently rather **low**. **NGOs** like **Zara**⁴⁰ document cases of racist discrimination, provide advice for victims and witnesses of discrimination or as well anti-discrimination trainings and counselling for employers.

Roma associations are engaged in **awareness-raising** and providing **information** about the history and current situation of Roma and Sinti in Austria to the wider **general public** but also in **schools** or to **university students**. However, these projects, important as they may be, are of rather **small scale**, given the very limited public funding for such activities.

Overall, **further initiatives should be taken** in this area, **raising awareness** for different forms of **discriminating practices** and **making** the overall **population** (and **political decision makers** alike) more **familiar** with the **history** and **current situation** of Roma and Sinti in Austria and in Europe.

6.2 Monitoring methods to evaluate the impact of Roma integration actions and to establish a review mechanism for the adaptation of the national Roma integration strategy

Information about the overall social situation of Roma in Austria **currently** derives primarily from “**anecdotal evidence**” or “**informed guess**”, as hardly any specific data are currently available about the living conditions of the different groups of Roma and Sinti living in Austria. Regarding the few exemptions (as on the Burgenland Roma in Oberwart), information is deriving from the first half of the 2000s and **outdated**.

On this background, **monitoring** ideally should **enclose** a **more in-depth analysis** about the current **overall social situation** of **Roma** and **Sinti** in Austria, where the only applicable way appears to conduct a **larger number** of **qualitative** or **semi-structured interviews** with members of different Roma and Sinti groups. Such a study could then be **repeated** at a **later**

⁴⁰ See <http://www.zara.or.at/>.

time, thereby assessing the impact and outcomes of specific measures and eventually changes in the challenges faced by Roma as well.

Secondly, an **accompanying (self-)evaluation** should be established for the **overall integration strategy**, with **representatives** of all **relevant actors** meeting e.g. once per quarter, reporting about steps taken, discussing a possible adaptation of the strategy and adjusting activities and strategies. This process should be **mediated** by **external professionals**, and members could e.g. be representatives of the federal chancellery, of different ministries, of different Roma associations, of civil society organisations working in the area social inclusion and on refugee problems in a more general sense, of trade unions and employers' organisations and also of the federal provinces and municipalities that show a rather large Roma population.

Apart from this, more **specific projects** and **measures** should be **monitored** and **evaluated** by standard methods of **accompanying and ex-post evaluation**.

Regarding the **design** of the overall **integration strategy**, it should be **made explicit** right from the beginning **what impacts** on **social inclusion and social integration** are **expected** by **which measure**. Here, instruments like "ex-ante poverty and social impact analysis" (PSIA) could be used, but one could deal with respective questions also in a less formalised way.

6.3 Strengthening continuous dialogue with Roma civil society, regional and local authorities and other relevant bodies

Dialogue between **Roma civil society** and national, regional and local **authorities** currently takes place via **different formal and informal channels**. Here, one of the (at least formally) most important institutions appears to be the **Roma Ethnic Group Advisory Council** (*Volksgruppenbeirat*), which was established at the Austrian Federal Chancellery after the Roma were recognized as official ethnic group in Austria in 1993 (see above chapter 3.1.1). This council must be consulted by the government on (legal) activities of their concern, usually topics such as education in the mother tongue, legal regulation of use of minority languages, broadcast in mother tongue in public television and yearly financial aid for minorities.

It seems fair to say that the **Roma Ethnic Group Advisory Council** is a rather narrowly designed institution, as **Roma with migration background** are **not well represented** within this institution and the **overall tasks** and **scope** of the Advisory Council are very limited.

Overall, when **designing** and **implementing** the **Austrian national Roma integration strategy**, **new forms** of **dialogue** and **mutual information** and **cooperation** should be established. This could, at the national level, be done in a **semi-institutionalised way** within **accompanying (self-)evaluation**, enclosing a large variety of different actors (as proposed above in chapter 6.2) and related practices could be **established at regional level**. In all cases, it seems crucial that **different groups** of **Roma** and their interests are well represented within respective institutions and procedures. Furthermore, measures and steps to **increase mutual trust** between the different actors, and a **high degree of "ownership"** by the **different Roma and Sinti groups** appear to be key factors for the success of such a national strategy.

6.4 EU Structural Funds and ESF

At the moment apparently **no project specifically targeted** at Roma is (co)financed by Structural Funds and ESF. **Roma** and **Sinti** may evidently **benefit** from **projects** which address people with a migration background, young unemployed or more generally people with low formal qualification in more **general** terms.

However, it seems obvious that **more attempts** should be made to use respective funds also for more **specific programmes**, dealing with problems that especially apply to Roma people. According to interviews conducted by us with Roma activists, **knowledge** on **how to apply for EU funds** and on the specific rules and procedures within **accounting** etc. are rather **limited** within existing **Roma associations**. But at the same time respective organisations – in principle – appear to be prepared to enter **new co-operations** with other actors who are more familiar with this issues. Yet, such **attempts** would probably have to be **promoted** by some sort of “**external facilitator**”, as **Roma** and **Sinti associations** within their day-to-day work and given their limited resources seem to be somewhat **overburdened** in implementing such ideas on their own.

At the same time **more emphasis** on **Roma** and **Sinti** should be given **within mainstreamed programmes** and **projects**. As a starting point, **managers** of such **programmes** or e.g. **trainers** engaged in them should be **made familiar** with the **history** and culture of **Roma** and **Sinti** and with the **problems** they face in terms of social inclusion.

6.5 Europe 2020 national targets and the NRP

The **integration** of **Roma** and **Sinti** is **not at all reflected in an explicit way** in the Austrian **Europe 2020 targets** and in the **NRP**.

If the **goal of integration** of Roma and Sinti is taken **seriously**, the starting point would have to be a **more in-depth analysis** of the respective situation including the specific problems and challenges faced by Roma in Austria, going substantially beyond this report. Hereby, it is especially important that such an analysis does **not only** cover the **autochthonous** groups, but also the different groups with a **migration background** (where living conditions and causal factors of problems are somewhat different). In a next step the **most pressing problems** (for **different groups**) should be identified, which would then lead to recommendations for possible **strategies** and **measures**.

Such strategies would then have to be **incorporated** into **existing plans** within the context of the NRP and EU-2020, where respective questions are **currently** only covered in an **implicit way**, i.e. in form of outcomes of **rather general measures** from which Roma eventually may benefit as well.

In this context it is worth mentioning that the Austrian “**Integration Report**” recently presented by the State Secretary of Integration and dealing with the integration of **people with migration background**, does only **rudimentarily address Roma** in an **explicit way**.⁴¹

⁴¹ This report consists of three parts. Within the first part, on 53 pages a programme of 20 measures are presented, which should help to improve the integration of people with a migration background (BMI 2011a). The terms “Roma”, “Sinti” or “ethnic minority” are not used in this report. Interestingly, the report does not make

Overall, it appears that questions of **social integration** of **Roma** and **Sinti** did **not play a major role** within the **public** and **political agenda** up to recently. **Political awareness** for respective challenges clearly has been **rather low** up to now and the **topic** therefore has **not been addressed** more specifically within **EU-2020 targets** and the Austrian **NRP**.

use of the terms “discrimination” or “anti-discrimination” either. This part of the report was compiled by an “Expert Council for Integration” (see http://www.integrationsfonds.at/nap/innenministerin_praesentiert_expertenrat_fuer_integration_und_dessen_arbeitsprogramm/)

The second part of 108 pages presents statistical data on living conditions etc. of people with a migration background, compiled by statistics Austria (Statistik Austria 2011). The group of the Roma is not explicitly addressed within this report.

The third part, called “Integration as a cross section topic – record of earlier measures” (“Integration als Querschnittsmaterie - Bilanz bisheriger Maßnahmen”), in an analytical chapter deals with competencies of different actors and layers of the state regarding integration (ca. 10 pages), and then – on nearly 500 pages presents measures undertaken by different actors (i.e. the federal state, the federal provinces, interest organisations of employers and jobholders and a number of NGOs) (BMI 2011b). Roma are not mentioned in the analytical chapter and of the several hundred measures listed in the report, less than 10 explicitly deal with Roma.

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