



Slovak Republic

Promoting the Social Inclusion of Roma

A Study of National Policies

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July 2011



On behalf of the
European Commission
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

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Summary

According to the official estimations approximately 350-420,000 Roma live in Slovakia. The age profile of Roma population is significantly lower than that of majority. It is due the higher birth rate of Roma and their shorter life expectancy. The highest concentration of Roma communities is in the Košice and Prešov regions, where Roma represent 26.5% (Košice) and 32.8% (Prešov) of all inhabitants. Districts they mostly live have above the average unemployment, lack of vacancies, less developed transport infrastructure and other public services. Their education level and employment rate are exceptionally unfavourable. Housing conditions in separate and segregated settlements are substandard. Roma are underrepresented in the important statistics so we can only guess that risk of poverty and severe deprivation hits much greater shares of population than the Slovakia average.

Culture is the only domain where Roma activities are supported on the ethnic basis. Their support is almost prevailingly from central resources, municipal support is very tiny. Participation of Roma or people from socially disadvantaged environment (SDE) in sport and leisure time activities is not monitored at all. Moreover, proxy of SDE is not used in comparative school statistics what means that school results of pupils from SDE are not subject of any regular monitoring. Public opinion is very unfriendly to Roma and mass media and political discourse insensibly promotes negative stereotypes of Roma. These stereotypes are the source easy ranking Roma children as mentally retarded, of so called white flight from schools attended by higher number of Roma pupils, rejection of Roma application for job and ruthless behaviour to Roma on public places. Roma rights are defended mainly by international and domestic civil society organisations but the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights also does monitoring and advocacy. Roma do not have their significant political representation. The Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities (OGPRC) is only advisory body of the Government and his influence depends on personal relations with individual ministries. The budget of the OGPRC is limited and also hit by saving measures.

Slovak social protection system is a colour blind and neither of programmes understood by public opinion as Roma programmes (such as construction of low standard housing, community social work or free school meals in school) are designated only for Roma.

Since the new millennium the government approved several high quality strategic documents that recognise multiplied disadvantages of Roma and define policy objectives and measures for social inclusion and integration of Roma community. Comprehensive approach, tackling simultaneously several disadvantages was acknowledged as the most effective and in the 2007-2013 programming period the horizontal priority Marginalised Roma Communities (MRC) had been set as the fundamental tool for implementation of the comprehensive approach to regeneration and integration of MRC. The project of local strategies of comprehensive approach that should have been the main tool of implementation of the MRC priority seems to be uncertain now, partly due to the unsatisfactory coordination of structural funds and partly due to the lack of political confidence of the new Government (2010) in the projects launched by the previous one.

Slovakia's key challenges and goals and policies to bridge the gap among Roma communities and general population are similar to the challenges and goals identified on the European wide level. These challenges have been already identified and goals set up earlier and repeatedly in several strategic documents. These goals have been set up facilitating Roma access to

education; health, employment, housing and culture, including forming of Roma identity. Sensitising the general public awareness towards Roma rights and fight against stereotypes has also been set as the key challenge. The freshest Revised national action plan of the Decade of the Inclusion of Roma population 2005-2015 for the years 2011-2015 includes detailed list of goals, indicators of their fulfilment, related activities, responsible bodies and deadlines. However, planned activities and measures are more guided by the “budgetary constraints” than by the long-term consideration and the recognition of the need to invest substantially in equalising measures. Finally we recommend to use proxies instead (unsure) ethnic data and involve NGOs in evaluation of the national “Roma” strategy.

1. Description of situation

1.1. Demography of Roma population in Slovakia

According to the official estimations approximately 350-420,000 Roma live in Slovakia. There are four main Roma subgroups: Rumungros (further divided among Slovak and Hungarian Rumungros, Vlachika and Sinti. Rumungros constitute the largest subgroup and make about 90% of Slovak Roma. (World Bank – S.P.A.C.E 2002) According to experts, Rumungros tend to identify themselves with “average or typical Roma”. It is not case of Vlachika or Sinti who stress their group identity as they consider themselves to have higher social status than “average Roma.” (Rosinský 2006).

Age structure of Roma and that of majority population of Slovakia significantly differ. The present age structure of the Roma population resembles the age structure of the majority in the 1950s, when the proportion of children under 15 years of age was above 30% and the proportion of the population of 50 years of age and above was lower due to shorter life expectancy. In 2004, children under 15 years of age represented 17.1% of the general population of Slovakia and up to 39.4% of Roma households. Greater segregation of Roma settlement, higher share of children. (UNDP 2006: 10) At present, share of children under 14 years of age is about 25.5% in general population and about 43.6% in Roma population. Only 3.6% of Roma are older than 60 years (14.5% in general population)¹. It is estimated that one seventh of all pupils attending compulsory education in Slovakia are Roma children. (Marcinčin - Marcinčinová 2009)²

Table 1 Number of births among Roma women over 18 years of age living in separated communities

Number of births	% of women
None	9
1	6
2	14
3	13
4 – 5	25
6 – 10	26
More than 10	7
Total	100

Source: Ministry of Health SR 2008

¹ Presentation of the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities on High Level event on Roma Inclusion in Slovakia May 23, 2011 <http://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/data/files/7789.pdf>

² For more on demography of Roma in publications of Demographic Research Centre <http://www.infostat.sk/vdc/en/>

1.2. Geographic distribution of Roma in Slovakia

At least two thirds of Slovak Roma live in the Central and Eastern Slovakia. The highest concentration of Roma communities is in the Košice and Prešov regions, where Roma represent 26.5% (Košice) and 32.8% (Prešov) of all inhabitants. (OGPRC 2004) Districts with higher proportion of Roma have above the average unemployment, lack of vacancies, less developed transport infrastructure and other public services.

So called *Sociographic Mapping of the Roma population* (OGPRC 2004) documented 1,575 places (out of 2,928 villages and towns of Slovakia) as inhabited by Roma. In almost half of them (776 villages and towns) Roma live integrated and dispersed among the majority (though often in specific streets or blocks of flats). One third of Roma lives in separated or segregated settlements (*rómske osady*). This classification of is based on the settlement's spatial position in relation to village and its centre. Roma settlements are thus divided into the following types:

- *Urban or rural concentrations* (three or more houses inhabited prevailingly by Roma) located *within the main boundaries* of town or village. There are 168 such settlements with 32,281 inhabitants.
 - Larger concentrations located *on the margins* of village or a town; they are called separated settlements. There were 338 such settlements with 64,661 inhabitants.
 - Settlements located at some distance from town or village, often separated by natural or artificial barrier. There have been 281 such segregated settlements with 49,586 inhabitants in 2003. These settlements often lack some of basic infrastructure and amenities such as electricity, drinking water and sewage. Municipal waste collection does not take place in these settlements and this situation is thus posing an environmental risk. There are about 150 spatially segregated settlements deprived of basic infrastructure, such as roads, electricity, and running water; sewage removal according to the "mapping".

Proportion of undocumented dwellings built without official permit is high. The housing conditions in settlements are substandard or extremely substandard. The greater is the distance of settlement from town or village, the worse are living conditions of its inhabitants.

1.3. Description of poverty and social exclusion situation of Roma in relation to the population in general

1.3.1 *Relative income poverty and deprivation*

Insufficient coverage of Roma in the EU-SILC and underreporting of Roma ethnicity by Roma respondents leads to difficulties of comparison of relative income poverty and deprivation of majority and Roma population in Slovakia.³ Ethnicity of job-seekers and social benefit claimants is not collected at all. For that reason, it is hardly possible to compare the position of Roma in relation to Slovakia's Europe 2020 social targets (esp. in the fields of poverty, employment and education; indebtedness; persistent poverty). Comparing Roma subgroups is not possible at all.

Soma recent data on living conditions (dwellings, migration, health, education, social assistance, labour market status and subjective poverty) can be found in 2010 UNDP survey of Roma

³ We deal with this issue more in part 1.5.

households and general population living in close proximity. This survey builds on previous research conducted in 2006 and thus allows for comparison of development of their situation⁴.

One can expect however, that in Roma population three indicators (persons living in jobless households, severe deprivation and relative poverty), would reach much higher levels than their average values for Slovakia⁵. Illustration of the level of material deprivation of Roma households can be taken from the recent research in two districts with ethnically mixed inhabitants: Roma households were much worse equipped than non-Roma households.⁶ (Kusá et al 2010).

Problems of Roma households with arrears of various kinds and indebtedness were suggested by several surveys (e. g. UNDP 2006: 53) and are repeatedly reported by NGOs working in Roma communities. It is estimated that life of considerable number of Roma families is subordinated to the will of local usurers or loan companies. (Analyza 2004) Financial claims of service providers (such as suppliers of electricity, water, municipal housing administration, mobile phone companies or loan companies) might lead to execution or threat of salary seizure in case of formal job contracts. Since the Social Insurance Agency immediately informs creditors about a job contract of a debtor and thus activates execution process and impounding of income. As minimum income benefits cannot be impounded by execution, many debtors on purpose stay in the minimum income scheme to warrant their families' small but safe income.

1.3.2 Education

Data both from the Census and special surveys (e.g. UNDP 2006, REF 2009, UNDP 2011) suggest two critical facts: i) that achieved education of Roma population is significantly lower than of the general population, ii) there are significant gender disparities among Roma and women achieve significantly lower education than men.

According to 2006 UNDP survey 44% of inhabitants of Roma settlements had not finished primary education and next 37% only finished primary education. Among inhabitants of segregated settlements only 8% had obtained vocational certificate. (UNDP 2006) The 2001 Census shows similar facts and demonstrates divide between Roma the majority population (Table 2). There is continuing discussion among experts about the reasons for this situation.

⁴ Some data from UNDP 2010 survey are already available but analysis is still ongoing. Data on income and deprivation are not yet available. Moreover, according to available information, UNDP plans to do special household budgets survey in households living in separated and segregated settlements during the summer and autumn 2011.

⁵ Level of Roma poverty can be inferred from that of households with low work intensity and household with three and more children, which can serve as a proxy in this regard. Risk of poverty in households with three or more children is almost three times higher than in a general population and in jobless household even five times higher. 67.7% of people living in households with 6 and more children had income lower than 60% of median income in EU-SILC 2009.

⁶ The variable "quality of housing" was constructed from these items: whether the flat/house has toilet, bathroom, density and heating. 41% of Roma households were very poorly equipped comparing to 12% of non-Roma households

Table 2: Highest education according to the 2001 Census	Women		Men	
	Roma	Slovak	Roma	Slovak
Primary and lower secondary (9 classes or less)	79.5	30	74.1	18.9
vocational	9.6	22.8	16.4	37.6
Upper secondary	1.9	36.4	2.2	30.2
University or college degree	0.2	9.2	0.4	11.6
No education	4.3	0.3	3.1	0.3
Data not available	4.5	1.3	3.8	1.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: UNDP 2010

The root of difficulties, which many Roma children experience, particularly when are entering the formal education system, is often attributed to language barrier. (e.g. REF 2009, NOS 2011) Both 2006 UNDP and 2010 UNDP surveys documented that Romany language is the mother tongue for majority of Roma. 2010 survey found that in 52% of Roma households' members speak Romany daily. Daily communication in Romany rises with level of segregation: while Romany is the daily communication language for 27.4 % of those who live mixed with majority population, it is main communication tool for 56.2 % living in separated settlements and for more than 70 % of those living in segregated settlements. In 2010, these shares are almost 6% higher than in the 2006.⁷ Results of 2001 Census indicate that 66% of persons who declared Roma ethnicity indicate Roma language as their mother tongue. (REF 2009: 60)

Despite these high shares Romany is not the language of instruction in any class of any mainstream school or kindergarten in Slovakia. According to the ministry's experts Roma parents seldom declare Romany ethnicity of their children when filling school forms and "do not express demand for instruction in Romany"⁸.

It is almost consensually agreed among experts and activists that attending kindergarten can be substantial instrument for overcoming the language barrier to education. However, Roma children have substantially lower enrolment rates than non-Roma children. We can infer this from the general statistical data showing that there are significantly less 3-5 years enrolment in kindergartens in the districts with higher share of Roma population and higher birth rates such as Michalovce, Rimavská Sobota, Košice – Okolie, Trebišov, Revúca, Lučenec, Spišská Nová Ves or Gelnica. In these districts less than 70% of pupils of the first class attended kindergartens. In Michalovce it is hardly 50% while Slovakia's average pre-school enrolment is 84%. (SGI 2011: 9) According to the data from school registers it is estimated that only 34% of first class pupils from

⁷ 2010 UNDP found that one third of Roma reported Slovak and 12% reported Hungarian language as their mother tongues. According to official estimations, 80% - 85% of the Slovak Roma who actively use Roma language, speak the eastern Slovak Roma language. For that reason Eastern Slovak Roma language has been codified in 2008. Roma living in southern parts of Slovakia speak the so-called A-HI dialect, which is close to Hungarian. Small groups of Roma living in eastern Slovakia, the so-called washtub makers, speak a Roma dialect with some Romanian mixed. Official data from school registers - based on parents' declaration of ethnicity - indicates that out of 134,335 children attending kindergartens by September 2010, only 552 were Roma. (UIPS website)

⁸ This explanation was given by the expert from the Ministry of education on February 2011.

“socially disadvantage environment”⁹ compared to the total 84% first class pupils have attended pre-primary education. In the district Spišská Nová Ves only 32% of pre-school age children from the households on material-need benefits are schooled in kindergartens. (Klein 2010b:12) Exact data are not available as the Institute for Information and Prognosis in Education (UIPŠ) does not seek the information about students’ social background in their statistics. In our opinion, these data and correlations shows that low pre-school enrolment of Roma and socially disadvantaged is caused by financial costs (and lack of places) incurred by kindergarten attendance.

The disproportionate high enrolment of Roma children in so called “special schools” has become a widely and sometimes heatedly debated issue. According to experts’ estimates, about 10,200 Roma children are placed in special schools (and 9,200 non-Roma children). Almost every eight Roma child is assessed as “mentally disabled” in the age when entering compulsory education. (e.g. Tomatová 2004; OSI 2004, REF 2009, Marcinčin - Marcinčinova 2009)

This situation with placemen Roma children in special schools is probably getting worse in time perspective. According to the UNDP 2006 report, based on the comparison of educational attainment among three generations, data shows trend that younger generation is more likely to have attended a special school (p. 62). There are more possible explanations of this trend: Responsibility is often attributed to diagnostic tests and procedures not enough sensitive to Roma language and cultural experiences¹⁰. (Ibid 2009, OSF, 2011) However, project ‘Integration of Roma children in to regular schools’ run by the Pedagogical Research Centre has found that parents sometimes insist on placing their children into special school. They have several reasons for that: they are themselves special school graduates; they think kids feel more comfortable in less competitive and more Roma-friendly environment; they like the partnership approach of school to children; children have good results in special school easily and are not forced to work hard. The greatest problem is seen, however, not in parents’ opinions but in children’s irregular school attendance and the selection of children for so-called transitive classes¹¹. (National Report 2005: 17) Structural reasons, e.g. so called “*normatív*” - financial allocations per/student - are also assumed to have impact: they are higher for special schools and thus (allegedly) motivating school headmasters to recruit as many children as possible, often using ‘soft’ methods of pressure on parents. Streaming Roma children into special schools is for decades lasting and internalised practise in some municipalities based on some rationalisation of reasons given – for example to prevent non-Roma children from hygienic “contamination” from Roma (see e.g. Scheffel 2005). Schooling prospects of Roma children are also affected by other peculiar features of Slovak education system. The enrolment in so called “zero” grade of primary school that is designated for pupils classified as not ready for school can lead to subsequent continuation of study in the same class. In this instance almost exclusively Roma classes are formed.

⁹ Category of pupil from socially disadvantaged environment is used in the school administration for identification of the need for special school social programme such as teacher assistant. More about the definition of this category see in the part 1.5.

¹⁰ However, diagnostic testing has been changed several times in the last two decades to respond the challenges of testing. In the framework of sustainability of the ‘Phare 2002’ project the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathologic Psychology has been testing new diagnostic methods to achieve greater objectivity in the process of evaluating Roma children in the early levels of special primary-level education and their abilities during enrolling in school.

¹¹ In the framework of the ‘Phare 2002’ project, so-called transition classes were established with the aim of preparing the ill-diagnosed Roma children to transfer from special schools to mainstream school facilities. Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic issued Regulation No. 11/2006-R from 25 May 2006 which provides for the establishment of specialised classes as the result of the above mentioned project, under condition of a primary school. At the same time on 19 June 2006, the Ministry of Education approved the two year experimental testing of the project called ‘Transitive classes in the primary schools’.

At the second stage of elementary education (in the 5th class) students are again sorted by their school results. While excellent students leave for more prestigious eight-year grammar schools, remaining ones are often sorted further into specialised language and Math/science classes and less demanding classes. Despite the finding that a majority of teachers support the principle of joint education of Roma and non-Roma and gifted and weaker students, almost all elementary schools implement this streaming. (Kusá et. al 2010) Concentration of less achieving pupils in one class means that most of the time, Roma pupils attend the class with non-Roma class-mates who also have poor results and low motivation and can hardly “pull them” (ibid).

Roma pupils are often overrepresented in village schools or schools in the outskirts even though Roma are not a majority of their inhabitants. This is consequence of so-called “non-Roma flight”, which is strategy of parents to enrol their children to another school if the number of Roma pupils in their current class or school is judged to be too high. This strategy is legal as schools’ catchment areas are not compulsory and parents can choose a school for their children elsewhere also in areas in which they do not have the permanent residence¹². As a rule, the right to choose a school for their children is mainly used by more educated, well-to-do and mobile parents. Surveys suggest that most of the Roma pupils attend schools that belong to “worse” schools according to local criteria and whose graduates continue to study at vocational or technical schools. However, only small parts of Roma finish secondary education. As a rule, they leave school in the age of 16 when they are out of the compulsory education age. According to recent research, about one third of the Roma pupils of 9th grade intended to leave school following year, mostly because of the necessity “to earn money” or “help to provide for family”. (Kusá et al 2010) Moreover, even those who enter secondary education often leave early. Despite this fact, there is no systematic attention given to causes and consequences of early leaving of secondary-schools by Roma and students from socially disadvantaged environment. Statistical data also show substantial gender gap here: Roma girls more often do not enter secondary education than Roma boys: 77% to 66%. (UNDP 2006)

Individual integration of pupils with health disabilities in standard schools is also possible and the numbers of individually integrated students have been growing¹³. (UIPŠ website) However, it seems that conditions of teaching in classes with individually integrated students are often not good. School headmasters admit that that these classes are often overcrowded with more individually integrated students than is allowed by regulations. Teachers in integrated classes do not have a special preparation (still not a part of the standard university curricula) and teachers lack supervision and assistance.

In 2008, Roma language was officially declared as codified and standardised language. The Eastern Slovakia Roma dialect was taken as the basis for codification as it is most frequently used in Slovakia. However, this act did not result in a process to establish the Roma language as a language of instruction. Ministry of Education is not aware how many schools do have Roma textbooks and use them in instruction as teaching tool¹⁴.

¹² On the other hand, the school in whose catchment area a pupil has permanent residence is obliged to enrol that child.

¹³ Individually integrated students are students with learning difficulties and or health problems that are taught jointly with students who do not have such difficulties.

¹⁴ According to experts from the Ministry of education, it is fully on the school discretion (and indicated interest of parents) is school would use Roma language primer or not, and it would be administrative burden to ask such information from schools.

While there are more barriers to use Roma mother tongue as a tool of integration (such as lack of Roma language competence on the side of teachers or lack of teaching materials in Roma language¹⁵), zero grades and teacher assistants were introduced to assist with overcoming initial barriers of access to education. According to opinion of some experts, the Slovak Republic in the mid-term perspective is not able to secure fully-fledged education system in Roma language since this would require enormous financial and human resources. Some experts also suggest that introduction of parallel schooling in Romany language could deepen the divide between Roma and majority population. Some also assume that copying of better-off Roma with structural marginalisation and discrimination leads to voluntary assimilation strategies for which is instrumental to undergo schooling in language of majority population.

1.3.3 Employment

It is estimated that Roma unemployment is severely high. Low economic activity is mainly regional problem: Many of Slovak districts with above the average concentration of Roma population are former agricultural and mining areas that have not recovered from the economic depression in the beginning of the 1990s. These districts have significantly higher registered unemployment rate and lower prospects for economic development. According to the district labour offices' statistics, the half of registered jobseekers has no education or elementary (lower secondary) education as the maximum; 60% of jobseekers is jobless more than one year and 44% are jobless longer than two years. Unemployment rate of Roma is approximately 46%. (Marcinčin – Marcinčinová 2009).

According to the 2010 UNDP survey, the situation in 2010 was even worse than 2006: there was more than 54% of unemployed among Roma population older than 15 years of age but only 7.4% unemployed among the geographically close general population. If total employment rate was 50.5% in 2010 in Slovakia, it was only 13% among Roma and 44.4% among general population living in nearby areas (UNDP 2010)¹⁶. There was significantly less employment level among Roma women than among Roma men: 8.2% to 17.8%. Employment level of Roma also decreased with increased segregation of their place of living. The same survey shows that 46.8% of the Roma respondents older than 15 years have never had any paid work experience. (UNDP 2011) Big differences in experience with paid employment in case of persons on maternity and parental leave probably result from earlier parenthood in case of the Roma population, often immediately after finishing school. In this regard, attempts to condition the state parental benefits with previous work activity and participation in the insurance system (Deputy J. Kaník) are for this group of population highly discriminatory.

2010 UNDP survey documented that Roma have been engaged much more in activation employment programs, (so called *activation works*), than the geographically close non-Roma population. (46.6% of Roma participated at one time in the activation in comparison to 5.1% of

¹⁵ In 2002/2003, a new field of study was opened at the detached office of the Roma Culture Department (KRK) of Constantine the Philosopher University, where students could have studied social work focused on the Roma community and teaching the first grade of elementary school, specialising in Roma children. However, this specialisation ceased to exist. At present, such specialisation is not the part of curricula at any University or college in Slovakia.

¹⁶ Surprisingly low number of unemployed and employed among general population found in the 2010 UNDP survey might be caused by the wide age interval covered (from 15 and without limits on the second part of continuum). Significantly higher shares of students and pensioners among general population contribute to its significantly higher share of economically inactive population in comparison to Roma population: 47.9% and 35.8% (UNDP 2010).

geographically close general population). Participation in activation work is interlinked with the minimum income scheme and presents the “merit” part of the benefit. This condition explains more experiences with the activation programmes among those who face long-term unemployment.

Table 3: Structure of Roma population 15+ by a paid work last week and by place of living (in %)

Economic activity	Roma living in segregation	Roma living in separation	Roma living mixed with majority	Total
yes	10.7	13.4	14.8	13.0
no	78.1	78.5	81.2	79.2
Do not know, no answer	11.3	8.0	4.1	7.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

UNDP 2011: Survey of marginalised Roma households in Slovakia 2010, manuscript, preliminary findings

1.3.4 Health

Life expectancy is most eloquent indicator of health of Roma population. It is by 15 years lower than the life expectancy of general population of Slovakia: 55 for men and 59 for women¹⁷. The 2007 survey of the Ministry of Health (data were collected by the district health mediators) suggested that Roma living in separated and segregated settlements suffer in above-average rate by diseases that are typically related to unhealthy living conditions, bad and insufficient diet, etc. Worsened access to health services (territorial and financial barriers) also contributed to their poor health. Informative report of the same ministry from March 2011 however suggests that regular health mediator work in segregated communities – providing hundreds of health insurance cards, consultations, public education, vaccination and simple health care services – has improved access of their inhabitants to health care. (MH SR 2011)

Similarly, the 2010 UNDP survey, based on self assessment of respondents, brought more positive findings than the 2006 UNDP survey. It turned out that in comparison to the geographically close majority population, Roma suffer significantly less often by chronic diseases¹⁸. Roma, regardless their place of residence, have their chronic diseases diagnosed by a doctor to the same extent. Their geographically close population has its chronic diseases diagnosed more often however. The most frequent chronic diseases of Roma population are cardiovascular diseases (29.7%), respiratory diseases (14.3%) and diseases of joints and bones (12.5%). Chronic infectious diseases that are stereotypically linked to Roma concern only a small part of Roma population.

¹⁷ http://www.rokovania.sk/File.aspx/ViewDocumentHtml/Mater-Dokum-65835?prefixFile=m_

¹⁸ Explanation of this puzzling better health state of Roma population might be in different age structure of Roma and geographically close majority population. It can be that the majority population is significantly older and therefore more suffering by health problems.

Table 4: Taking prescribed medicines from pharmacy by Roma respondents by type of residence (in %)

Taking all prescribed medicines from a pharmacy?	Roma living in segregation	Roma living in separation	Roma living mixed with majority	Total
Yes, all	63.7	71.7	77.7	70.5
Yes, some	22.8	21.6	16.4	20.5
No	2.1	2.4	2.5	2.3
Do not know, did not answer	11.5	4.4	3.6	6.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

UNDP 2010: Survey of marginalised Roma households in Slovakia 2010, preliminary findings.

On the other hand, this survey revealed that chronic diseases have more devastating effect on Roma than on the geographically close population. They cause serious limitation of activity for 40% of Roma suffering by chronic disease but only for 27% of those who suffer by chronic diseases in majority population. In total, chronic diseases limit to a certain extent and to a great extent daily activities of more than 80% of Roma who suffer by some kind of chronic diseases.

Visiting doctor in case of health problem is common thing for Roma population, though not every health problem is consulted with a doctor. Contrary to expectations, in 2010, Roma living in segregation did not consult a doctor less often than Roma living mixed within majority population. In total, refusal to visit a doctor occurs as often among Roma as among the geographically close non-Roma population. However, Roma more often refuse to see a doctor due financial problems than the geographically close non-Roma population.

1.3.5 Housing and environment

Housing and environment is area of most striking differences between majority population and Roma, especially Roma living in separation and segregation. Overcrowded and poorly maintained flats, simple shanties assembled from various scrap materials are the most accurate evidence of neglected and short-sighted housing policy after the 1989. (Kusá 2011) Except the censuses and new housing construction, there is no central statistics of housing development in Slovakia. It is estimated that over 120,000 Roma currently reside in under-developed rural settlements and segregated urban slums in Slovakia, or are otherwise housed in substandard housing conditions. (SPACE 2006) Housing situation of Roma who lives dispersed among general population is also significantly worse comparing to general population.

Since 1989, both housing construction in total and public housing construction in particular have been restricted and even in the end of 2010s the yearly number of newly constructed flats was hardly the half of their pre-1989 level. Housing costs increased several times and became unbearable for jobless households. No counselling has been provided for tenants with rent payments debts. In the 1990s several town municipalities dealt with rent debtors or otherwise "inconvenient" tenants by moving them and concentrating them on one place. Neighbourhood Luník IX in Košice or Stará Tehelňa in Prešov can serve as examples of segregating municipal housing policy. Despite recognition that concentration and segregation brings about multiplied problems, evictions and concentrations continue.

Many jobless Roma families voluntarily or forcefully left their first category town flats they had got under the former regime and returned to the village settlements where housing costs were low. This migration and formation of new generation households has led to mushrooming of shanties

in rural areas usually on the outskirts of areas of municipalities. Local authorities as a rule have not cared about construction of undocumented shanties on removed parts of their territory. On the one hand, they have not forced their inhabitants to legalise construction their houses¹⁹. On the other hand, they have not felt any obligations to provide services for inhabitants of these formally non-existing dwellings such as construction of roads, help with drinkable water, waste collection, etc. It is estimated than in separated and segregated settlements, almost one third of dwellings are undocumented.

In the first decade of this century, evictions of rent debtors became more frequent. Cases of moving inconvenient tenants to another town or village (secret buying a house by municipality or mediator) regardless their will, their relative and social ties have been also numerous. Right to housing, forgotten in the 1990s media, has been rediscovered by the NGO and human rights organisations.

According to the Sociographic Mapping 2003, only 39% of Roma dwellings have connection to public duct and 13% to sewage. Overcrowding, lack of space for homework and lack of privacy are well-known troubles of poor households. The 2006 UNDP Survey of Roma households found that even 45.2% of all Roma households have the main source of water outside their dwelling. Approximately 17% of the respondents have to go more than 50 metres to get access to water (UNDP 2006: 61). Most of dwellings in the Roma settlements do not meet technical and hygienic standards. As a custom, the majority of apartments are resided by several families. According to the 2010 UNDP survey, only 68% of segregated households have access to water good for drinking. Most of dwellings in the Roma settlements do not meet technical and hygienic standards. As a custom, the majority of apartments are resided by several families.

Table 5: Evaluation of quality of water, that households have access (% households)				
	Roma segregated	Roma separated	Roma mixed	General living in proximity
Good for drinking	67.9	90.2	87.4	97.8
Sometimes good for drinking	18.8	4.9	8.4	1.1
Not for drinking but useful for other purpose	9.2	3.7	2.5	0.3
Unsuitable for any purpose	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Do not know	3.6	1.2	1.7	0.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: UNDP 2011

1.3.6 Sport, recreation, culture

Slovakia does not belong among the countries that massively support sport activities of socially disadvantaged youth as form of their social integration. Sport and recreation of inhabitants of Roma settlements is mostly organised by NGOs and charitable organisations that are struggling with lack of funds and fear of discontinuity. Some of these NGOs were initiated by foreign activists, such as Association SPOLU (Together) that is active in Kremnica or Chminianske

¹⁹ However, without legal construction permit, suppliers of electricity will not install electricity in a house. For that reason, despite all efforts, inhabitants of undocumented houses cannot have electricity installed legally and they are forced to its illegal taking or mediated taking through some of their lucky neighbour living in the house that was legally constructed and with the consent of the owner of the plot. As social field workers and local expert suggests, such "mediated taking of electricity" is very expensive and "mediator", often local usurer, forced other households to extremely high payments. (Komunitné ... 2010)

Jakubovany²⁰. As a rule, Roma households lack resources for pursuing sport and recreation activities. Roma children are however mostly excluded from sport and leisure activities, also because of their commuting to school and bad public transport connection. There is relatively good statistics on sport, extra-curricular education and leisure time activities that are organised by the leisure time centres or the school activity centres. This statistics however does not include information about the share of children from socially disadvantaged environment participating on these activities (UIPS 2011).

The area of culture seems to be much better supported.²¹ In the area of cultural activities, there are NGOs, voluntary organisations and even institutions such as Roma theatre in Prešov, Roma conservatory in Košice, regular Roma broadcasting in Slovak Radio and Slovak Television, etc.²² Support for Roma culture is limited by general condition that amount of funds for minority culture depends on number of inhabitants who have declared given ethnicity in the last Census. Funds for Roma cultures are significantly lower than for instance funds for Hungarian minority culture as only a smaller part of Roma declare Roma ethnicity in the Census. On the other hand, since 2004 and the first *National Action Plan on Social Inclusion*, the Ministry of Culture also supports culture of disadvantaged groups. Cultural activities with Roma living in segregation can also be supported from this “box” (MK SR 2010). Table 5 based on the statistics of Ministry of Culture suggests that despite the “Census criteria”, the central government was much more generous to Roma culture in 2009 than the municipal level. If the Ministry’s support for Roma culture was four times less than support of Hungarian culture, local level’s support for Roma culture was fourteen times less.

Table 6: Support of cultural activities of selected ethnic minorities by type of sources in 2009 (in euro)

	Number of registered members	Number of activities	Amount of contribution in 2009 in EUR				
			State budget	Self-government		Sponsors/ projects	
			Ministry of Culture	Regional	municipal	From Slovakia	From abroad
Hungarian minority	610,245	5,897	2,034,580.00	1,657,471.64	523,079.78	322,398.40	1,005,991.61
Roma minority	5,564	1,026	505,305.01	322,681.54	35,808.90	123,327.87	54,032.00
Disadvantaged groups	431,235	2,788	282,895.00	19,394.00	31,385.40	193,473.48	68,104.00

Source: Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic 2010

1.4. Extent and nature of discrimination experienced by Roma

There is general agreement among experts that the majority’s negative stereotypes about Roma, blaming and “criminalisation” of Roma by part of mass media represent stubborn barrier to equal treating of Roma in all domains of life in Slovakia. Stereotypes function as self-fulfilling prophecy: Roma are easily marginalised (from participation on the life of society) and *discouraged* e.g. in looking for jobs as they do not believe that chain of rejection can break and they would be

²⁰ <http://www.zdruzeniespolu.sk/>

²¹ However, in this place, it is important to note that the term “Roma culture” is often used as an instrument both for empowerment and marginalisation of Roma. Call for the support of the Roma population as a distinct cultural group often appears in the debates on the multiculturalism in society (see e.g. Škobla, D, 2011).

²² More about infrastructure of Roma culture can be found in (Šilanová-Hivešová 2003 and Magdolénová – Hriczko 2003).

accepted for job. Negative stereotypes contribute to low ambitions and early resignation of Roma in many areas as they have very little reason to believe that they would be let in.

Media and most of political parties, mainly before the elections, articulated the idea that enormous money has been spent for Roma communities and (by substituting the cause with the consequence), they concluded that not Roma but majority population is insufficiently protected and even discriminated in Slovakia²³. In election campaign (2010) programmes of major political parties were full of promises for “enforcement of law” (in the meaning of greater control and disciplining Roma that are violating the regulations and threatening of majority population). Programmes were clearly slanted in direction of “blaming the victim” and there was clear tendency towards the mentoring and patronising of the marginalised and poor Roma. (Skobla: 2011)

Discrimination – unequal treatment can be observed in many areas: however, organisations that are supposed or can perform monitoring and advocacy are not numerous. Boom of monitoring activities appeared only during the EU-Accession process. For instance, after the 1998-9 reduction of social benefits and discriminating between objective and subjective reasons of material need, NGO InfoRoma foundation launched a project to provide economic and legal help to the Roma in two villages in Prešov district in Eastern Slovakia. In the course of the projects, InfoRoma submitted 29 complaints for suspected incorrect application of the law (welfare unjustly cut in half) and the Regional authority acknowledged 23 of them as justified. (Puliš 2003: 270-271) Overrepresentation of Roma in special schools and fight against educational segregation is considered to be discrimination of Roma children in their access to quality education. Numerous campaigns against special schools and documentation of erroneously classified children have been run by various NGOs, including People against Racism, Amnesty International, European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), Open Society Foundation (OSI), Governance Institute, etc. The result of these efforts and the Phare assistance for the diagnostic reassessment projects, the quality of school readiness and psychological testing a has substantially improved in the beginning of the century²⁴), Roma Rights Centre in Košice or publishing *White Book by Good Roma Fairy Kesaj* Foundation, and Office for the Legal Protection of Ethnic Minorities in Slovakia, 1997 fulfilled an important monitoring mission in the fight with discrimination in Slovakia.

At present, these are mainly NGOs such as Amnesty International (with focus on unrightfully placement of Roma children into special schools), Advisory Centre for Human and Civic Rights (issue of sterilisation of Roma women), Milan Šimečka Foundation (housing rights)²⁵ or People against Racism (various subjects) and Slovak AntiPoverty Network (social rights). There are also the public or governmental institutions such as Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (SNCHR), Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities and (occasionally) Public Defender of Rights that document cases of discrimination, advocate their victims and try to make public agenda from Roma discrimination. However, systematic monitoring of Roma discrimination

²³ In the 2010 Parliamentary elections almost all major political parties propose to cut “too much generous benefits” for jobless people. Slovak National Party has run a patently racist billboard campaign in the run-up to the 2010 elections depicting Roma as parasites and abusers of the state welfare system. There were two penal bills for inciting inter-group hatred in the billboard case. However, the result of the policy investigation concluded that was that there was no offence and the billboard did not break law.

²⁴ Despite the substantial improved testing situation has not changed however and share of Roma children in special schools and classes has not declined. It is mainly because the testing is just one of many factors that cause this situation. More on this issue can be found in the part 1.3.2, especially on p. 6 and footnotes 10 and 11.

²⁵ Discrimination of Roma in the domain of housing (mainly evictions of tenants) and advocacy of Roma housing rights has been the mission of Institute of Roma public policy that is their daughter NGO of Milan Šimečka Foundation.

is missing. In 2010 new ominous forms of discrimination has been on upsurge in Slovakia: namely, building walls separating Roma and non-Roma population: "In 2010, every third month new wall – functioning as a barrier to free movement of Roma – has been built in a Slovak town or village" (SNCHR 2011: 3).

1.5. The main data gaps in relation to Roma.

Statistics on unemployed and minimum income recipients does not survey their ethnicity. Reporting ethnicity of unemployed and minimum income recipients (based on attribution of ethnicity by officials) was prohibited in the late 1990s due to the pressure from human rights organisations and Council of Europe and this condition has been supported by the new anti-discrimination legislation of the first half of 2000s. In effect, collection on ethnicity is considered to be 'prohibited' by most of governmental bodies nowadays.²⁶ According to many experts, there is unintended but systematic exclusion of Roma communities living in segregated rural areas and destitute urban concentrations from representative surveys, such as Labour force Survey and EU-SILC.²⁷ Thus, these key social surveys are not fully representative for poorest population living in destitute neighbourhoods that are often separated or segregated from the majority population. Levels of poverty and deprivation in Slovakia, particularly in eastern-southern Slovak regions are most likely (significantly) higher than are the levels indicated by the EU-SILC. Special representative surveys in Roma communities have been conducted by UNDP in 2005 and 2010 (UNDP 2006, 2011) however, these are not done on regular, yearly base. The main source of information about 'human geography' of Roma marginalised communities has been so called Sociographic Mapping of Roma communities held in 2003. This mapping was based on local experts' identification of *Roma dwellings, description of housing infrastructure and estimations of number of their inhabitants*.

Lacking custom or unwillingness of Roma to declare Roma ethnicity²⁸ complicates and devalues comparisons and conclusions made on the basis of all public registers collecting data on ethnicity²⁹. There is serious debate among the experts in this area both about the pros and cons of ethnic data collection and (possible) de-ethnicisation of Roma public policies (Škobla et al 2008, Škobla, D. 2011). In some situations, especially in the domain of education, the use of proxy seems to be viable way out of the ethnic data collection dilemma. Since 2006, the Ministry of Education (MEYSSR) has used the indicators for identification of pupils from a socially disadvantaged environment (SDE). Directive No. 19/2006 defines pupils from SDE as pupils with language and social barriers who 1) are in material need and live in segregated settlements 2)

²⁶ Recently, there have been important critical voices risen in support of methodologically and ethically correct ethnic data collection for the purpose of monitoring of living conditions and discrimination of minority groups such as Roma. The proponents of data collection on ethnicity are some divisions of the central Government – e.g. Office for Government, Office of the Roma Plenipotentiary, as well as international organisations UNDP, WB, CoE and human rights organisation such as European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) or AI. For more on this subject see (Skobla, 2007).

²⁷ Limits of coverage of Roma communities in the EU-SILC were described by Ivančíková (2004) and Džambazovič (2007) for instance. Insufficient coverage of Roma communities has also been approved by several survey agencies in personal debate with me (Z. Kusá). This has impact on all main poverty indicators including severe material deprivation (11.1% of population) and households with low work intensity (5.6%). Sample extension, doubling the interviewers and their better payment (covering the travel costs) is possible way to a better coverage of Roma population. However, it is not feasible solution for the major surveys of the Statistical Office as this institution has also been struggling with budgetary cuts.

²⁸ It is important to remind that the share of those who declared Roma ethnicity in the 2001 Census was the four times less than the research estimates of the share of Roma in population of Slovakia.

²⁹ Ethnicity is examined solely on the basis of self-declaration and most of public registers do not record information on ethnicity.

live in unsound household environments, those with unhygienic conditions and a high number of household members per dwelling, and in household environments where doing homework is not feasible, 3) do not speak the language of instruction, 4) are in material need and did not attend kindergarten and 5) are in material need and whose parents did not finish the 9 classes of compulsory education. (MEYSSR 2006) Unfortunately, the indicator has only been used in a limited way, practically only for estimation of the conditions for the involvement in teacher assistant programmes. In our view, it might have wider use in the statistics of school results, dropouts, participation on sport, leisure and cultural activities, summer recreation, etc.

2. Assessment of existing policy and governance framework

2.1. Current overall policy framework and governance arrangements

The democratic system of political representation allows for the emergence and operation of ethnic-based political parties. Passing the 5% quorum is necessary condition for election in the Slovak Parliament however. Electoral success requires the strong capability to address the wide public with convincing and unifying message. The largest Hungarian minority benefits from this setting and is represented by a politically relevant Hungarian minority party which articulates and pursues various issues and claims considered necessary for the further advancement of the minority. The situation of Roma is radically different.

Though since 1990 till 2002 twenty Roma political parties had been registered by Ministry of Interior, they do not exert any political influence and gained only negligible support. Except the first general elections after the systemic turn in 1990, when Roma Civic Initiative was coalition partner of the strongest Public against Violence, Roma community did not have their representatives in the national parliament. (Šebesta 2003) Situation on local and regional level is only slightly better. In the 2010 communal elections candidates claiming Roma ethnicity (and representing Roma organisations) gained 23 mayor seats. (Webnoviny 2010) In spite of gradual progress (in 2002 it was only 10 mayor seats), it is still less than 1 % of the 2,928 mayor seats in Slovakia.

The Office of Governmental Plenipotentiary for Roma communities

The Office of Governmental Plenipotentiary for Roma communities (OGPRC) and Social Development Fund (SDF) are two governmental institutions that should ensure that more attention is devoted to the interests of Roma community in situation of missing political backing of their rights.

The OGPRC has longer history and wider mission than SDF. It was founded in September 1995 firstly without having Roma in its name. The Plenipotentiary was put in charge for “dealing with problems of citizens who need special assistance”. Its mission was inter-departmental coordination of preparation of proposals, regulations and financial spending concerning citizens who needed special assistance. In the 1999 the Office was re-established with the present name. Its development was supported by financial assistance of the Phare and World Bank and its main mission was to prepare the Strategy of the Government for solving problems of Roma ethnic minority. Besides the preparation of strategic materials and fulfilling inter-departmental coordination role, the Plenipotentiary administers educational fund providing scholarships for Roma students and the funding schemes for Roma grass-root initiatives. The Plenipotentiary is the advisory body of the government and his entitlements are limited. Scope of its action is

defined by the Programme Manifesto of the Government. At present state of affairs, "great part of his real influence depends on his personal relations with individual ministries". (Mušinka 2010: 1) The OGPRC has obligations in relation to the horizontal priority RMC. Calls and annual monitoring reports are published on the Office website.

The budget of the OGPRC is limited and was also hit by governmental austerity measures. 2011 budget is by € 60,000 less than the 2010 and by 360,000 less than the 2009 budget. Its significant part (€ 844,000) is allocated for social and cultural projects. Financial support is provided in form of grants on the application basis. Funding go to projects that "promote cultural or social aspects of life of Roma communities or increase their living standards"³⁰ but they often simply address various emergency situations such as roof repair or replacement of windows.³¹

Social Development Fund

SDF was established in 2004 with the aim to secure more targeted social services for the population living in the most disadvantaged regions and to involve regional and local stakeholders in dealing with poverty and social inclusion issues. SDF runs two programmes on project basis: 1. local social inclusion partnerships (LSIP) and 2. Programme in support of the development of community social work (named also field social work) in municipalities.³² The main aim of the programme of LSIP is to establish partnerships between public, private and third sector to deal with an issue of social exclusion of socially marginalised groups. The LSIPs have implemented local micro projects that had to be prepared with participation of groups they had been designed for. Their activities have been aimed at increasing employability and improvement of social inclusion at the local/regional level, the support of community-based action and the development of the social economy. (NAP/inclusion 2004 - 2006)

Social field work programme has created hundreds positions for social workers and their assistants, working in Roma communities. Social field workers and their assistants provide to clients in more than 200 municipalities daily consultations, advices, mediation of information or of contacts to various institutions³³. They are often accompanying them while calling at municipal and other offices, and assist them in any interventions which are vital to marginalised Roma. Social field workers cooperate mainly with municipal representatives (mayors, town council, and clerks) and NGOs. Social field work is consensually considered by the experts and most of policy-makers as highly important, inevitable and successful programme³⁴. Despite general positive assessment of the programme field social work has suffered by discontinuity, uncertainty and irregular financing. (Hruštic et al. 2009) At present, however, there is considerable effort to stabilise community field work from the side of SDF. SDF has managed to extend the project period and anchor programme's financing for 3 years continuously (1 year up till now), co-financing condition has been abolished and supervision of social field work has been

³⁰ One criterion for receiving a grant is to demonstrate that at least 5% of the project is covered by co-financing. The projects can be on a wide range of subjects, from education, culture, setting up social or community centres or paying for building repairs or other enhancements Government Earmarks EUR 844k for Roma Projects. The Daily News – Slovakia <http://www.thedaily.sk/2011/06/07/current-affairs/government-earmarks-eur-844k-for-roma-projects/#ixzz1P9c1mSyA>

³¹ See the list of applications for 2011 <http://www.romovia.vlada.gov.sk/data/files/5520.pdf>

³² Programme of community social work has started, as a pilot, already in 2002. SDF took over responsibility for methodical supervision of the project.

³³ In 2009/2010 project period, 346 field social workers and 397 assistants of field social workers were engaged in 229 community projects. More at http://www.fsr.gov.sk/external/37/vyskum_tsp_kvantita.pdf

³⁴ For instance: <http://www.mecem.sk/rpa/?id=projects&lang=slovak&show=20441>

reintroduced.³⁵ The weak side of the new terms of reference is that the financing is fully covered from the structural funds. Promised transition to state budget financing that is believed to secure the project stability and continuity has been postponed to indefinite future.

The most important strategic documents

The EU Accession process induced the Slovak governments to make new and more thoughtful efforts toward creating Roma policies. During the accession period Government prepared several strategic documents that have not lost their importance up till now. Moreover, they have still waited for their full implementation. A document entitled *Basic Positions of Slovak Government's Roma Communities Integration Policy* was adopted in 2002. It recognised the generally disadvantaged status of Slovak Roma. It also asserted that the protection of minority rights is necessary but insufficient for stable integration and therefore called for an adoption of the comprehensive approach to marginal Roma settlements and temporary positive discrimination for disadvantaged groups in order to equalise their opportunities.

Proposal of the support of the construction of lower-standard municipal tenancy apartments designed for citizens in material need and the construction of technical infrastructure in the Roma settlements (Resolution of the Government No. 1154/2001) and Long-term Concept of housing for marginalised groups of citizens and the model of its financing (Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 63/2005) are important and still valid strategic documents in the domain of housing. The latter document was considered as an example of good practice of anti-racism and anti-discrimination proceeding in housing. Concept and following legislation sets the still valid rules that that 80% of the lower-standard housing costs will be covered by the state subvention and remaining 20% can be covered by non-financial investment of municipality, such as value of the plot and value of the labour.

The document *Comprehensive Development Programme for Roma Settlements* (2003) is of fundamental importance. It recognises that poverty and social exclusion are multidimensional phenomena and that they could be tackled only by parallel changes and improvements of several aspects of situation in marginalised communities. The, the basic idea is to combine several resources and activities to get the synergetic effect. This document has become the base for the horizontal priority of Roma marginalised community in the 2007-2013 programming period.

In 2008, the Slovak authorities adopted a *Medium-term Concept of the Development of the Roma National Minority in the Slovak Republic for the Period 2008-2013: Solidarity – Integrity – Inclusion*. This document incorporates and develops the priorities of the preceding strategic documents. (More in the part 2.3)

Horizontal priority Marginalised Roma Communities (programming period 2007-2013) with allocated 200 million euro has been intended to support local strategies of comprehensive approach in marginalised Roma communities. In 2010, more than 150 local strategies have been approved. Up till now, structural funds drawings for these projects have been very limited and there is the risk that the allocated amount could be used for different projects without direct impact on the marginalised Roma communities such as reconstruction of communal facilities in municipalities with Roma population.

³⁵ There are also next improvements of the project. More at <http://www.zakon.sk/Main/lwDefault.aspx?Template=lwTArticles.ascx&phContent=lwArtShowTasr.ascx&ArtID=32586&CatID=189>

In 2010, as a commitment of Slovakia in the year of its presidency of the Roma Decade, the government initiated revision of goals of the Decade of Roma inclusion that was launched in 2005³⁶. The objective has been to make (rather vague) objectives of the Decade more concrete and to add clear commitments, measures and indicators of their fulfilment. In preparation of more concrete revision of goals of the Roma Decade in Slovakia, as well as indicators of their fulfilment, facilitated by the UNDP experts, NGOs, Roma activists and experts from various ministries worked for several months. However, there are indications that the final version of the manuscript coming out of the working groups might be amended and changed by the governmental line ministries (making the goals and commitments less 'ambitious'). The revised Decade is now prepared for its approval by the Government.

New Government (2010) and representatives of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MLSAF), has been consulting quite intensively with some of NGOs working with Roma communities (e.g. State-secretary's semi-institutional Roma activists 'consultation' board). Recent call of the SDF for submission of proposals of the partnerships for the *National project Standardisation of services and extension of the network of Community Centres – for marginalised Roma communities emphasises the cooperation with and use of experiences of NGOs, municipalities and next subjects with direct experiences of work with marginalised Roma communities*.

In January 2011, Section for socially excluded communities has been founded at MLSAF with the mission to prepare *legislative design of act on socially excluded communities* (SEC). However, this initiative generates some controversies and discussions among the experts and informed public. Some view it as a positive, de-stigmatisation approach conducive to solving the problems of concentrated poverty. On the other hand, some experts are afraid that this is step that can diminish prospects for affirmative action in favour of Roma and contribute further to general marginalisation of poor Roma. Act on SEC is nowadays in a form of a legislative proposal and has already undergone the comment procedure. Intended act should serve as the legal warrant and support of necessary and for a long time delayed comprehensive intervention into the areas of concentrated poverty. The document deals with the definition/indicator issues (applies strictly non-ethnic approach, using proxies such as level of education, share of children in community, unemployment rate and housing quality), provides brief overview of international agreements and legal arrangement of positive discrimination (equalising measures) in several EU countries, justification of the proposed legal norm and then deals more specifically with the four crucial areas of comprehensive intervention: education, employment, housing and health. Important thing is that the document comprises intent to set legal commitment to allocate fixed percentage of public budget for this target. The document has also some problematic features: one of them is that it almost fully relies on existing domestic good practice examples and learning from the good practices of other EU countries is more than limited. Limited learning from others is the weak point of the document. Next problem is that the argument in favour of positive discrimination is not enough strong and this put the proposal in risk of refusal (as several previous proposal of positive discrimination measures).

³⁶ The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 is a political commitment by European governments to improve the socio-economic status and social inclusion of Roma. The Decade is an international initiative that brings together governments, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations, as well as Roma civil society, to accelerate progress toward improving the welfare of Roma and to review such progress in a transparent and quantifiable way. The Decade focuses on the priority areas of education, employment, health, and housing, and commits governments to take into account the other core issues of poverty, discrimination, and gender mainstreaming.

2.2. Existing targets set for reducing poverty and social exclusion of Roma.

Objectives of the Medium-term Concept of the development of Roma national minority (2008) represent still valid targets of Roma social inclusion policy. It is because the Medium-term Concept builds on the priority areas (housing, employment, health and education) of Roma Inclusion Decade and also on the four priority areas of the horizontal priority – Marginalised Roma Communities in the 2007-2013 programming period. The document identifies five priority areas:

(a) Upbringing and education; (b) Health, hygiene, healthcare education and prevention; (c) Employment and other social activities; (d) Housing and (e) Culture, forming of Roma identity, sensitising the general public awareness toward Roma, gender equality, etc.. (Medium-term 2008: 6)

The Medium-term Concept differentiates between two sets of objectives targeted on two groups of marginalised Roma communities that should be approached in a specific way: 1. the population living in Roma settlements on low social and cultural levels, 2. the population living in municipalities and towns on an average level (with a focus on supporting their efforts to educate their children, find jobs and raise their standard of living, with a particular emphasis on acquiring or regaining social skills). (Medium-term 2008: 5)

The document specifies larger list of strategic steps and practical measures that should be implemented in each domain. Part of them has been incorporated into the recently revised National Action Plan of Roma Decade Strategy (2011). Part of them has been refused due to budgetary restraints. Revised NAP (still in the form of non-official manuscript) deals with the four fields: housing, education, health and employment. Each of these fields has its objectives, specific goals, and activities. In practice, education and employment are the most stressed conditions of Roma integration.

2.3. Strengths and weaknesses of Slovak National Reform Programme

The strength of the Slovak NRP is the will for social innovation. Active employment policy, minimum income scheme and the labour code are going to be innovated to tackle long-term unemployment and increase employment. New approaches to social exclusion of marginalised Roma communities such as preparation of legislative proposal of the act on socially excluded communities, reform of minimum income scheme and reform of active employment policy, programme of community centres, intermediary labour market³⁷ included are explicitly mentioned in the NRP. On the other hand, Slovak NRP does not have social and economic dimensions well balanced. Economic perspective, emphasis on labour flexibility and understanding that having a job is the main tool and form of social inclusion prevails. Labour Code reform that has made hiring and firing of workers easier, is believed to encourage employers to create more jobs for less qualified labour force and thus increase marginalised group (Roma) employment. It follows however that these new jobs will be less secure and probably of low quality.

Social protection system is seen as problem of budgetary sustainability and partly as the obstacle for more intensive labour involvement by the NRP. There is intention to make minimum income

³⁷ According to the information from the MLSAF (June 2011), elaboration and implementation of intermediary labour market ideas has been postponed to an indefinite period. The legislative intend of Act on SEC does not include the idea of intermediary labour market as well.

benefit more conditional by activity and motivation and to decrease its basic unconditional part. Adequacy of the minimum income scheme for living in dignity is not taken in regard and there is no commitment to deal with adequacy of social protection during the planned reform of minimum income scheme.

Education, and especially regional education system (compulsory education) has received much more adequate attention in the present NRP than it was in past. There is explicit reflection that the present education system is not capable to tackle disadvantages of pupils' social origin and that *"children from socially vulnerable groups, socially excluded communities in particular, have only a minimum chance to obtain education"*. (NRP 2011: 20) Proposed tools for dealing with this situation are reassessment of importance of special schools, strengthening measures to prevent possible segregation of children on grounds of ethnicity, and the increase of the number of special teachers, pedagogical and psychological counsellors and assistants at schools. Further, reinforcement of the zero-year system at primary schools for the six years olds who have yet not attained the necessary level of school readiness is envisaged. New (though realised as necessary a long time ago), measure will be provision of auxiliary Slovak language programmes for children who would complete zero class programmes (and were enrolled in this programme due to insufficient mastering of language of instruction). Next important thing is that *"a pilot project for educating the Roma minority in their native language will be prepared"*³⁸. (ibid)

It is necessary to point out that these important commitments are not accompanied with allocation of necessary funds for their implementation. Planned inter-year budgetary increase for education system is negligible and insufficient for meeting these commitments³⁹. Budgetary considerations and austerity measures can also explain why the NRP does not make any commitment to promote access to pre-primary education despite its generally recognised positive impact on future school performance and its special importance for children whose mother tongue differs from language of instruction. The goal to reinforce the zero class system at primary school seems to serve as partial, but cheaper substitution of the 2010 Government manifesto' objective to make the last year of pre-primary education compulsory.

Important aspects of disadvantaged situation of Slovak Roma are not dealt with in the NRP. The NRP does not pay sufficient attention to social economy and there is neither attention given to housing nor to public housing construction. The NRP does not reflected need of investment in pre-school education and regional schools that are fundamental for integration of Roma children. There is also problem of discontinuity in policy making (local strategies of comprehensive approach that should have been the main form of implementation of the horizontal priority Roma marginalised communities in the 2007-2013 programming period programme are not even mentioned).

³⁸ There are several organisational features of schooling that should be changed to improve the capacity of education system to equalise chances of pupils from disadvantaged environment: insufficient access to pre-primary education, early tracking children according to their school results, high number of pupils per one teachers, low number of teacher assistants and next support programmes, to name at least some.

³⁹ This fact has been admitted by the Ministry of education itself during the consultation procedure (Consultation: .27)

2.4. Main strengths and weaknesses of existing policies and programmes

2.4.1. *Income (tax and welfare policies)*

Universal programmes such as child allowances, birth contribution and parental allowance are important strength of Slovak social protection system. Despite its modesty, parental contribution and birth contribution improve living conditions of families with smallest children⁴⁰.

Strength of Minimum income scheme (MIS) that seems to cover considerable part of Roma population in Slovakia is that benefit taking is not time-limited. However, it does not provide sufficient protection against destitution. Social assistance only suffices for food and households dependent on benefits suffer by multiplied deprivation. Though large parts of allowances are preconditioned by activity (such as participation in activation work, training programme, etc.), there are not enough warranted opportunities for activity. Some allowances, such as housing contributions, are not available for households living in temporary shelters or undocumented dwellings. Fact that the MIS benefits are tied to household complicates job migration of family members⁴¹.

Weakness of welfare system is its insufficient grounding in human rights awareness, its insufficient linking to Constitution right to dignity and insufficient public support. It is subject of persistent attacks and attempts to reduce level of protection.

2.4.2. *Education*

Increase of education of Roma population is identified as the crucial precondition of their employability and social integration in all policy documents. Recognition of this objective is however not sufficiently reflected in philosophy and organisation of education (Slovak education system requires cooperation of parents on preparation for school) and budgetary funding of education. Lack of resources reflects negatively in the lack of education facilities, low remuneration of teachers, modest funding of social inclusion programmes for pupils, etc. Large classes hamper individual approach and force to frontal teaching that is not sensitive to different abilities of pupils and does not promote cooperation among them.

Strength of social inclusion policy in education is existing programmes of teacher assistants that are available for kindergarten too and school meals and school supplies programmes for pupils from the families with income lower than the subsistence minimum. Positive is also growing understanding of the importance of individual integration of pupils with health disabilities into the standard school and improvement of psychological tests for diagnosing learning capacity of pupils and decision-making on recommending pupil for special schools.

However, the strengths comprise weak points too. For instance, mastering Roma language is not the precondition for the position of teacher assistant in kindergarten and schools. Funding for

⁴⁰ Recently PMs Kaník, Krnáč, and Kužma have submitted proposal of amendment of act no. 271/2009 on parental contribution. Its aim is to limit the universality of this allowance and decrease its amount for those parents who do not have work record or who have not studied during the last three years.

⁴¹ Jobless singles under 25 are not entitled to benefit if they live in their parents' household. Benefit is cut off if any of the household members leaves Slovakia. All merit allowances are cut off for six months if beneficiary does not fulfil some of her/his duties

teacher assistant programme does not suffice for teacher assistant presence in every class with pupils from socially disadvantaged environment⁴².

Despite of recognised importance of preschool education for Roma children, there is no systematic support for enlarging kindergarten capacities. It is estimated that if the present level of attendance of 3-5 years old children in kindergartens (about 71% in 2009) should be preserved and at the same time, 100% of attendance of 5 years old children should be reached, the capacity of pre-primary education should increase by almost 15,000 new places, that is to construct at least 100 new kindergartens. (SGI 2011) It is apparent that budgetary constraints would not allow setting this target.⁴³

At present, none of Slovak universities and colleges work on curricula of university study programmes "Roma language, life and institutions" though according to Midterm Concept of development of Roma ethnic minority: (2008), four Slovak universities should be involved.

Municipal policies for prevention of so called white flight do not exist. Local plans of economic and social development rarely deal with the issue of social inclusion programmes for children from socially disadvantaged environment (such as access to sport, culture and leisure time activities, participation on school events, etc.).

They are mainly some NGOs that run low threshold centres for children and youth and provide special tutoring and inclusion programmes for disadvantaged children. These are for instance Škola dokorán, Člověk v tísni, Spolu and ETP Slovakia.

2.4.3 *Employment*

Slovak labour market does not provide enough openings and ratio between the number of disposable jobseekers and available jobs is very unfavourable (more than 40 jobseekers per one opening in average). Situation is considerably worse in the districts inhabited by more numerous Roma populations. Various important efforts of the Governments to promote employment (such as investment in high way infrastructure, attraction of foreign investments) would have effects only in a long run and do not help with the acute lack of jobs, Active employment policy has been insufficiently funded and in present it is subject of the budgetary cuts instead of increased support. Promotion of social economy is limited and measures that are intrinsically linked to social protection system such as activation work (merit part of benefit) are proposed to end. (COLSAF 2011)

2.4.4. *Health*

Slovakia has universal system of health care based on general compulsory health insurance. The state contributes to health insurance for children, pensioners, persons on parental leave, family carer and jobless. As a part of saving measures, the state contributions for its insured have been lowered in 2011. This step has deepened financial problems of health care facilities, mainly

⁴² As a rule, there is one teacher assistant for all classes (from first to fourth years) of the first stage of elementary school. There are 740 teacher assistants in elementary schools and 200 teacher assistants in special elementary schools. On the other hand, there are only 50 teacher assistants in Slovak kindergartens. (Klein 2010: 25)

⁴³ There is effort to involve NGOs in assistance with pre-school preparation of children in families. NGOs such as Škola dokorán, Člověk v tísni are currently working on such project. (SGI 2011)

regional hospitals. Information about closing regional hospitals or their departments despite the protests of patients have become frequent. This development might negatively influence access to health care services in regions and districts of Slovakia.

There is the programme of health care mediators working in the most deprived regions that is funded from the budget of Ministry of Health. Programme has clearly positive impact (MH SR 2011). The programme is underfinanced and there are only 30 mediators however (Beyond 2011).

2.4.5. *Housing and environment*

Housing policy represent one of the weakest public policies in the country in terms of funding and capacity to warrant basic rights. Short-sighted privatisation of municipal housing, limited housing construction and deplorable practice of concentration of trouble some tenants on one place (example: Lunik IX in Košice or Stará Tehelňa in Prešov) are the greatest shortcomings that still persist. Despite recognition that concentration and segregation brings about multiplied problems, evictions and concentrations continue⁴⁴. Since the late 1990s, the State supports construction or reconstruction of apartments by way of the State Housing Development Fund (SHDF) and the Housing Development Programme implemented now by the Ministry of Transport and Construction. Since 2003, there is programme of social housing for marginalised groups. It was estimated (by the Long-Term Housing Plan for Marginalised Groups of People) that construction of adequate housing for inhabitants of separated and segregated communities would have cost euro 300 millions and will last 20 years (Mačáková 2007). However, the pace of housing construction, including construction of lower standard housing for low-income families, is too slow to reach this aim in the estimated time frame. Since 2006, the amount of resources for construction of lower-standard flats has been decreasing. (Mušínska 2010)

Lack of public housing construction and affordable housing contributes to overcrowding of households (both those of general population and of Roma) and growing number of undocumented substandard. There are attempts to demolish such houses despite the fact that they were built many years ago such as in Plavecký Štvrtok (Gális 2010). Recently there are also "successful" demolitions of Roma housing such as those in the settlement Demeter in Košice in May 2011. (Matová 2011) Inhabitants of undocumented dwellings that were demolished are not entitled for municipal assistance with housing.

Property rights settlement of land on which Roma settlements are located is perceived as the crucial problem and barrier for improvement of housing standards in these communities (Mušínska 2010) Despite this issues were dealt with already in the pre-accession period (Phare projects), a little progress has been done. The legislative intent of the Act on SEC (2011) devotes large space to the issues of legalisation of land ownership and building permits for dwellings in areas of concentrated poverty. However, it is still not clear whether and how it will be possible to persuade landowners to sell their land to those who have built their dwellings there without their consent and building permit. At present, bulldozing of undocumented housing is considered legal and assistance of police is promised by the Minister of interior⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ The first 88 apartments were built in the locality Stará Tehelňa in Prešov for rent defaulters and allegedly "socially inadaptible" citizens in 2001. Despite confine space around the block (no playgrounds for children, no trees, no benches) the town council in Prešov plans to erect six "container" housing units in this locality. Link: http://www.romea.cz/english/index.php?id=detail&detail=2007_2440

⁴⁵ http://www.malacky.sk/index.php?page=monitoring_cely&id=145

Moreover, austerity measures hit public support of housing significantly and inter-year decline by more than 8% is planned in 2011 and 2012.⁴⁶ According to the recent information, Ministry of Finance has totally cut finances for public housing construction for 2012 except construction of housing replacement for tenants in building returned to their original owners (in so called restitution).⁴⁷ In such situation, 180 housing units that are planned by Pilot Approach to Supporting Housing from EU Structural Funds that has been approved by the Government recently, is only the drop in the bucket. Though this pilot is focused on young families in risk of poverty and marginalisation, eligibility conditions are set in the way that would exclude the most disadvantaged communities. Not only the selected municipality should have existing active community centre and field social worker programme, but eligible tenants will have to prove existing labour relation (e.g. minimum 15 months duration) of one member of households at least, required amount of family income, regular school attendance of children (no unjustified absences), limited number of members of the household, positive evaluation of the family by the social workers, positive evaluation by employer or positive evaluation by the municipality following the activation works, no criminal record, etc.⁴⁸ Such extremely strict conditions suggest that the purpose of the project is to pursue creaming policy of social inclusion: to assist with housing needs only to those most deserving.

2.4.6. Sport, recreation, culture

Areas where Roma live usually lack any infrastructure for sport and recreation. As public transport is not enough dense and affordable, Roma youth are dependent on local opportunities. Lack of meaningful activities and boredom are often typical aspects of their daily situation.

Present system of housing construction support does not consider construction of playgrounds, community centres or clubs as the legitimate target for funding.

National programme of Multifunctional Community Centres (under preparation) is to support establishment of community centres in socially excluded communities that do not have such facilities. This programme thus can improve the access of Roma communities to meaningful leisure time activities and culture.

2.4.7 Antidiscrimination

The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights (SNCHR), the Public Defender of Rights (2001) and the Anti-Discrimination Act (passed in 2004) are fundamental institutional tools for monitoring and dealing with discrimination. SNCHR publishes annual report on observing human rights in Slovakia. In 2005, SNCHR has published special report on rights of children in Roma communities. (SNCHR 2005)

ECRI 2009 report notes that the Antidiscrimination Act is “broadly in keeping with international and European standards concerning the protection against racial discrimination”. The School Act (2008) that prohibits discrimination and segregation and the Concept of Education and Training of Roma Children and Pupils, including the Development of High School and University Education

⁴⁶ <http://www.ihp.sk/newsletter/IHP%20Newsletter-2011-0708.pdf>

⁴⁷ http://byvanie.pravda.sk/mesta-nedostali-dost-penazi-na-nahradne-byty-f32-/sk-bpeniaze.asp?c=A110822_091642_sk_ekonomika_p01

⁴⁸ <http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=19825>

(2008) are also important pillars of the fight against discrimination⁴⁹. One of the objectives of the latter document is to decrease the number of Roma children attending Special Elementary Schools for disabled children and to integrate them into mainstream education. (ECRI report 2009).

According to the Act establishing the office of Public defender of rights (section 11), anyone can turn to public defender who believes that by the activity or inactivity of a public administration body his/her fundamental rights and freedoms were violated. (Puliš 2003) Interpretation of this article is however not clear. For instance, recently, Public defender of rights has recently refused to deal with the case of Roma families from Plavecký Štvrtok, their dwelling are threatened by the planned demolition. That is intended to be done without compensation.

NGOs point out that the causes of discriminations are often in insufficient and not well-thought public policies (for instance, unsuitable testing in diagnostics of school maturity and cognitive skills, non-compulsory school catchment areas and early streaming of pupils, insufficient funding of public services, or severely set thresholds for entitlements for benefits, etc.). However, the dominant opinion is that the roots of discrimination are in insufficient education and particularly neglected education of human rights. Education to human rights is also considered to be “the main instrument of the fight against discrimination”.

2.5. Structural funds

Slovak public has been repeatedly suggested that there have been hundred millions invested in Roma communities in this country and often with a small effect⁵⁰. However, as the analysis of the NGO Friends of Earth – CEPA reveals, such statements are not well grounded. Pre-EU-entrance support has not been assessed properly. Similar monitoring problems relate to the 2004-2006 programming period. In this period, seven measures were related to Roma communities, but there were unclear and diverse criteria for identification of the project as one that is supporting Roma communities. In the 2004-2006 period, 88 projects (four of them were national projects) in the operation programmes SOP Human Resources, OP Employment & Inclusion were directly supporting Roma communities. Total contracted sum was 3,478 million SK (app. 115.4 million euro) out of this 23.8% was designated for demand-driven projects. However, the analysis reveals that 61 out of these projects did not monitor their outcomes and impacts on Roma communities. (Grambličková 2010: 4) Several operation programmes indirectly supported Roma communities.

Marginalised Roma Communities (MRC) is one of the horizontal priorities of the programming period 2007-2013. The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the government is responsible for its coordination. 200 million euro has been allocated for this priority and intended to support local strategies of comprehensive approach in marginalised Roma communities⁵¹. Besides, declared contribution of any demand driven project to support of MRC means better assessment of given project.

⁴⁹ All strategic documents and concepts concerning Roma community are available at <http://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/1799/vladne-materialy.php>

⁵⁰ Recently for instance former EP member Zita Pleštinská in her blog.

⁵¹ Comprehensive approach is interconnection of several mutually linked activities in one location/community to tackle simultaneously several dimensions of social exclusion of Roma communities. The call for support of preparation of local strategies of comprehensive approach was launched only in 2009 due to lack of coordination and protracted preparation of call.

Table 7: Allocation of finances for the MRC in the operation programmes of the 2007-2013 programming period

Operation programme	Allocated resources for horizontal priority MRC in (million euro)
Regional OP (minimum)	85.00
OP Environment	22.94
OP Competition and economic growth	14.00
OP Health service	10.00
OP Education	17.00
OP Employment and social Inclusion	26.50
OP Bratislava Region	3.44
Total (minimum)	178.88

Source: Grambličková 2010

In 2010, more than 150 local strategies of comprehensive have been approved and calls for the demand driven projects (planned activities) have had to follow. Instead, due to various suspicions the new Government started to assess the strategies se projects and several discrepancies were found (some of approved projects have been identical, some were submitted by municipalities that do not have Roma communities, projects for some of the planned activities have been already submitted in earlier calls, etc.) NGO Friends of Earth also see as the serious problem that in local strategies of comprehensive development “a great part of the project budget is allocated to preparation of strategy and consultation services”. (Grambličková 2010: 8) This analysis suggests that large sum of the finances designated to marginalised Roma communities might not be consumed by the target group.

Calls for the planned activities of the approved local strategies of comprehensive approach that are the core project of the horizontal priority of MRC seem to be uncertain. Ministry of Agriculture that is responsible for the Regional operation programme (that is expected to contribute to the horizontal priority of MRC in the greatest extent out of the all operation programmes of the National Strategic Framework) has recently submitted the analysis of the contracted demand driven projects in the ROP. Table 8 informs about the contracted demand-driven projects that also declare contribution to the MRC priority. Total amount of these contracted projects turns to be higher than the amount planned for the projects of local strategies of comprehensive development from the ROP. This findings together find findings of duplicities of the projects submitted by the municipalities that are to implement local strategies, lead the Ministry to the conclusion that „ because of over-approval“ of disposable financial allocation it is not possible to expect announcement of next calls for the domains 1.1 Infrastructure of education ROP, 4.1.a Regeneration of settlements – independent demand-driven projects ROP and 4.C Regeneration of Settlements – projects of development of villages with Roma settlements in rural area ROP. (UV 1050/2011) On the basis of this information, the Government has assigned the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities to do analysis of feasibility of approved local strategies of comprehensive approach. Though the analysis should have been made till March 31, 2011, it is still not available. It seems that the new management of the MLSAF (Ministry secretary Nicholsonová) has been considering new possibilities of use for the resources originally allocated for local strategies of comprehensive approach. National project of the community centres that are intended to provide counselling services, activation youth activities and (possibly) child care seems to candidate for these resources, similarly as the project of e-pay cards for benefit recipients.

Table 8 Present contribution of demand-driven projects of ROP to the horizontal priority of MRC					
Measure of Regional Operation Programme ROP	Number of contracted projects	Total amount of contracted sums in € (source: ERDF)	Number of contracted projects contributing to HP MRC	Total amount of contracted sums of projects contributing to HP MRC in € (source: ERDF)	% of contracted amounts that contribute to HP MRC from total amount of contracted resources
Infrastructure of education	747	518,410,441.38	465	326,905,344.99	63%
Social infrastructure	117	144,816,171.94	78	107,297,482.06	74%
Cultural potential of Regions	31	38,342,627.21	10	5,804,420.33	15%
Regeneration of neighbourhoods	421	259,862,411.50	106	86,304,043.50	33%
Non-commercial emergency services	109	33,122,267.91	25	6,179,132.80	19%
Total	1,425	994,553,919.94	684	532,490,423.68	54%

Source: Steering Body for ROP, situation on 30 November 2010.

2.6. Role of civil society organisation and international organisations

Civil society organisations and international organisations plays important role both as service providers in Roma communities and as Roma human rights defenders. It can be said with certainty that Roma interests have been much more supported by non-government organisations than by political parties. One reason is also that NGO are less dependent on general public opinion in which negative attitudes to Roma prevail. According to the OSF data, during the EU-Accession period, there were 264 non-government organisations, which fully or partially deal with Roma issue in their programmes. First Roma NGOs founded in early 1990s focused mostly on cultural events or publishing newspapers, journal and books. These activities were financed by grants from Ministry of Culture. Number of Roma NGOs increased rapidly in the end of 1990s. For example, between 1999 and 2000, 79 new Roma organisations were founded and their activities started to cover also other spheres, such as: education, health care, social work, labour market consultation or advocacy. Growing number of organisations may be partly related to new financial resources, including EU Funds (i.e. PHARE), after the launch of accession process. "Roma projects" became very popular and favourable commodity and establishment of NGO was for many Roma representatives the one of few opportunities how to escape from unemployment (Repová – Harakal' 2002: 315). Today, situation of NGOs is much more complicated. The most systematic monitoring and advocacy work is pursued by international organisations (Amnesty International, OSI) or organisations that have good international footing. NGOs also belong to important service providers in Roma communities. The present government (MLSAF) quite intensively cooperates with the NGOs (mainly services providers) and draws on their experiences during preparation of new employment and social inclusion measures, including new act on socially excluded communities. However, there seems to be an increasing opinion divide among services providing NGOs that are much closer to the government and human rights NGOs.

3. Recommendations

3.1. Key challenges and the national goals and policies

Slovakia's key challenges and goals and policies to bridge the gap among Roma communities and general population are similar to the challenges and goals identified on the European wide level. These challenges have been identified and goals set up already before and repeatedly in several strategic documents. These goals have been set up as the priority areas in the mentioned Mid-term Concept of development of Roma national minority (2008) as facilitating Roma access to education; health, employment, housing and culture, including forming of Roma identity. Sensitising the general public awareness towards Roma rights and fight against stereotypes has also been set as the key challenge. The freshest Revised national action plan of the Decade of the inclusion of Roma population 2005-2015 for the years 2011-2015 includes detailed list of goals, indicators of their fulfilment, related activities, responsible bodies and deadlines for the same four priorities as are the agreed four EU Roma integration goals: education, employment, health and housing.

In the following Recommendations we also draw on the above mentioned revised NAP of the Decade but without the "budgetary constraints" many participants from public administration have imposed on the selection of the activities of NAP in the process of the NAP revision⁵². We will also take in regard Recommendations (very similar) of the recently published Roma Integration Roadmap for 2020. Our own research and analytic expertise will be fundamental too.

3.1.1 Access to education

- Improve substantially participation of 3-6 years old children from socially disadvantaged environment on pre-primary education by
 - defining pre-primary education as the original responsibility of the state;
 - increasing funds for establishing and running pre-primary education in rural areas with lower than 70% share of 3 – 5 years old children in kindergarten;
 - Securing teacher assistants mastering Romany language to all kindergarten with more than 10% of children from socially disadvantaged environment;
 - securing free of charge pre-primary education since 3 years of age (at present: since 5 years of age);
 - securing extra-funding for kindergarten attended by ethnically mixed children or children from various social strata (middle class and socially disadvantaged) to make such kindergartens particularly attractive and rewarding.
- Improve substantially integration of pupils during the compulsory education by
 - repeating testing procedures for diagnosis retardation;
 - limiting early streaming of pupils;
 - supporting team work (group teaching) instead frontal teaching;
 - making leisure and free time activities free of charge for all children and monitor participation of pupils from SDE on these activities;

⁵² They managed to persuade the majority of present experts, including those from NGOs that NAP should not have gone beyond the aspiration of the programme manifesto of the present government despite the fact that the NAP covers wider period than the election term of the present government.

- securing free school meals for all pupils (to prevent feelings of injustice, stigmatisation of those who “eat due our taxes”, pupils’ and parents’ cleaves and promoting equality relations and equality culture instead).
- Improve school attendance, school results and prospects for continuation of children from SDE in education after the end of compulsory school attendance by
 - increasing substantially funds for regional schools to secure teacher assistants in every class with 3 and more pupils from SDE or individually integrated pupils during the whole school attendance;
 - introducing the whole day schooling and decrease reliance on parents’ collaboration and assisting with homework;
 - monitoring school results of pupils from SDE;
 - increasing financial support of students from low income families to make leaving school and doing odd job far less attractive;
 - supporting NGO programmes such as mentoring, social work with families;
 - requiring that plan of improving educational prospects of children from SDE should be the part of local plan of social and economic development.
- Improving access to right to being educated in mother tongue in case of Romany language.

3.1.2. *Employment*

- Increase resources for active employment policy and especially for social economy programmes;
- Introduce positive discrimination and quota for employees declaring Roma ethnicity (e.g. in state-commissioned constructing works);
- Make communication in Romany language precondition of employment as teacher assistant, field social work and in next professions of public administration;
- Increase funding for agencies of supported employment, especially for those organising within the country job mobility with secured housing, transport and other services;
- Allow concurrent benefit taking and income from job (at least 50% of income from job do not include in calculation entitlement to benefit);
- Promote development of public and social services in the area with high unemployment;
- By one-shot general pardon free poorest households (households from SDE) of excessive debts (mainly due to excessive interests, penalties) in order employment would not mean risk of impounding their salary and worsening their situation comparing to their safe social benefit income. If such measure would be taken, it should be colour-blind and associated with commitments to pay rent in time, take part in financial counselling programmes, micro-saving programmes etc.

3.1.3. *Healthcare*

- Continuously support and scale up the project of health assistants/mediators in districts with high share of socially excluded population;

- Support projects of sport and leisure activities promoting healthy life style in separated and segregated communities;
- Support regeneration of living environment of Roma communities.

3.1.4. Housing and environment

- Increase substantially public support of public housing construction;
- Increase support for standard housing construction in blocks of flats on 80% of construction costs provided that tenants will be from different socio-economic and ethnic groups;
- Support municipalities' agreement on job migration of inhabitants (securing lower costs rents in municipal apartments in the migration target municipality;
- Redefine public housing as the part of social economy.

3.1.5. Transport

- Make regional and local public transport part of the social economy and its funding.

3.1.6. Anti-discrimination

- Support electronic media and film projects fighting against ethnic stereotypes and for "normalising" Roma as a part of "our" community;
- Support the presence of Roma in all kinds of public presentation;
- Regular monitoring of press and electronic media and publication of "white books of media stereotypes".

3.2. Methods for evaluation of the adaptation of the national Roma integration strategy

Soundness of the methods of evaluation of the adaptation of the Slovak Roma integration strategies assumes improvement in the two domains: improvement of and widening the use of indicators and improvement of participative evaluation methods, that, involvement of civil society organisation, particularly of Roma organisations. In the case of former, it does not seem efficient to deal further with unsolvable dilemma how to collect ethnic data if ethnicity is solely the issue of personal declaration according to Slovak law and Roma population mostly does not tend to declare Roma ethnicity. Instead of wasting time looking for new indicators it would be clever to use the already available proxy and extend their use to other areas of interest. For instance, excellent proxy is the indicator of socially disadvantaged environment in case of pupil. Similar proxy, concerning place of residence, level of attained education, can be used instantly in other important areas of public policy.

3.2.1. Cooperation with Roma civil society, regional and local authorities and other relevant bodies

authorities and other relevant bodies

Cooperation with Roma civil society, regional and local authorities and other relevant bodies is the key methodological requirement for evaluation of the adaptation of the national Roma integration strategy. It is necessary to calculate with this participation and its support during the planning of this project. It is necessary to incorporate new democratic institutes in the evaluation process such as public hearings (ideally broadcasted by electronic media), support of work on parallel (shadow) evaluation reports, etc.

3.2.2. Use of EU Structural Funds

Structural funds are very important source of funding of social included projects. For that reasons, their use should be better monitored by civil society organisations too. This monitoring work should be rewarded. At the same time, structural funds should not be the only source for funding programmes of lowering regional disparities.

3.2.3. Better reflection of the integration of Roma in Slovakia's Europe 2020 national targets and NRP

Social inclusion of the most disadvantaged groups should be promoted among Slovakia's Europe 2020 national targets. Securing equal access to education (pre-school education, system of compulsory education) should be recognised as being of paramount priority of Slovak society. It should be also recognised that the present indicators are based on the database in which Roma are not sufficiently covered and steps should be taken to improve and secure regular monitoring of poverty, deprivation, early school leaving and next important indicators of Europe 2020 targets for the most excluded population.

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