



Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategy in Romania

*Assessing progress
in key policy areas
of the strategy*

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on implementation
of the national Roma integration strategy
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- Impreuna Agency for Community Development (responsible for development of **education** chapter),
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- HEKS/EPER Foundation Romania,
- Inter-active Community Development Agency,
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Although the Roma Civil Monitor pilot project, as part of which the report was prepared, is coordinated by CEU, the report represents the findings of the author and it does not necessarily reflect the views of CEU. CEU cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARACIP	Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education
CLLD	Community Lead Local Development
CoE	Council of Europe
DHP	Department of Public Health
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ESF	European Social Fund
ERRC	European Roma Rights Centre
EU framework	EU framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020
FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
GD	Government Decision
GEO	Government Emergency Ordinance
HCCJ	the High Court of Cassation and Justice
HCOP	Human Capital Operational Programme
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
MRDPA	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration
NEA	National Employment Agency
NCCD	National Council for Combating Discrimination
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHA	National Housing Agency
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategy
PES	Public Employment Service
ROP	Regional Operational Programme
SocioRoMap	Sociological Mapping of Roma Communities in Romania to Monitor Changes on Roma Inclusion at Community Level

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The present report is authored by a coalition of Roma and non-Roma NGOs active in the field of Roma programmes in Romania. It is the second report prepared by the coalition that is focussing on issues related to education, housing, employment and health issues.¹

Employment

In Romania, according to Eurostat data, there is a decrease in the unemployment rate, that reached 3.9 per cent in December 2018.² While data for the general population shows that self-declared “paid work” increased from 64 per cent to 66 per cent between 2011 and 2016, the same indicator remained at 28 per cent for the Roma population.³ More Roma men were employed according to the International Labour Organization statistics (from 37 per cent to 42 per cent), and fewer women (from 17 per cent to 14 per cent). Data for the general population shows there is a gap between the unemployment rate for women and the one for men, in the favour of women.⁴

Negative attitudes and behaviours towards the Roma population and its labour market participation are constantly encountered in the public sphere. According to the FRA report from 2018,⁵ Roma from Romania felt more discriminated against (in 2016 than in 2011) due to being Roma when looking for a job and at work in the past five years (from 33 per cent to 34 per cent while job hunting, and from 10 per cent to 19 per cent at work).

These could be interpreted as results of the official anti-discrimination discourse and due to the efforts made by NGOs active in the field. So, more and more employers are careful enough in advertising jobs and selecting candidates, but the harsh reality comes into play when Roma are employed and are facing the stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes of their co-workers.

Even if Roma and pro-Roma NGOs have been advocating for years for affirmative measures in employment, following the example of the disability quota introduced in 2006,⁶ there are still no quota measures implemented for Roma employment.

The Romanian NRIS⁷ states that “the low educational level, associated with discrimination, leads to very significant discrepancies regarding employment and

¹ The first report focused on governance and overall policy framework, antidiscrimination and antigypsyism, the impact of mainstream educational policies as structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the NRIS. The report is available at:

<https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/attachment/basicpage/3034/rcm-civil-society-monitoring-report-1-romania-2017-eprint-fin.pdf>

² http://www.insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/somaj_bim_decembrie18r.pdf

³ FRA, A Persisting Concern: Anti-Gypsyism as a Barrier to Roma Inclusion (FRA: Luxembourg, 2018), p. 34, online at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/roma-inclusion>

⁴ National Institute for Statistics:

http://www.insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/somaj_bim_decembrie18r.pdf

⁵ FRA, A Persisting Concern: Anti-Gypsyism as a Barrier to Roma Inclusion (FRA: Luxembourg, 2018), p. 19, online at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/roma-inclusion>

⁶ According to no. Law 448/2006 on the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, republished, amended by the Government Emergency Ordinance 60/2017, whereby private companies and other public entities with over 50 employees have the obligation to employ a certain minimum number of people with disabilities, according to the legislation in force. If they do not do so, they owe the state a monthly fine, an amount of money related to the gross minimum wage, the money thus raised being contributed to the state budget.

extremely low productivity rates". This constitutes an official recognition of the problem by the Romanian state, which means that measures should be taken, but discrimination is not considered when it comes to establishing the direction for action, nor is it well developed as a transversal measure. There are no anti-discrimination measures when it comes to employment (nor for housing).

Housing and essential public services

The housing conditions of Roma in Romania have slightly improved since 2011: more people have access to tap water, sanitary infrastructure, and electricity, but there are still big differences between the majority of the population and Roma, many of whom live in very poor conditions.

Spatial segregation of Roma remains a challenge. More than half of the Roma, as identified by the "SocioRoMap" research project, live in spatially segregated communities (with less than 150 people), situated on the outskirts of villages or towns, with primary school being more than 15 minutes away by foot, and inhabited by people living in large households, in overcrowded houses, and in poor conditions. Discrimination when accessing social housing is still present and there are very few initiatives to fight it. Forced evictions affecting vulnerable groups, mostly Roma communities, are still an issue in several parts of the country.

Little effort has been made by the government to improve the housing conditions of the Roma. Most public policies are targeting the middle class, while very few and poorly coordinated public policies are targeting vulnerable people. Since 2008, the programme for building 300 social houses for Roma is presented and praised on but has not yet been completed. Another program worth mentioning targets free property tabulation, but there are no updates on its implementation status. Efforts to promote integrated approaches to housing issues via ERDF and ESF are still limited. Only 70 municipalities have managed to access EU funds dedicated to Local Development Strategies (CLLD).

There is no legislation to prevent spatial segregation and discrimination when it comes to housing. There are no effective large-scale policies designed to solve the poor housing conditions of vulnerable people.

Impact of health care policies on Roma

Today, although there are programmes, projects, plans, measures, strategies, and institutions that respond to the health needs of the Roma population and vulnerable groups in general both at European and national level, these groups' access to health care services is still poor.

There are certain limitations to the accurate knowledge provided by some of the most important health indicators (e.g. life expectancy, healthy life expectancy, infant mortality rate, mortality rate below five years, morbidity indicators), especially in the case of the Roma population. Data on these indicators is mostly delivered by NGO reports, and estimating progress is difficult because there is no ongoing data collection process. These indicators, estimated in various studies, highlight big differences between the health status of the general population and the health status of the vulnerable Roma population (for example, the difference in life expectancy at birth mentioned in various studies is approximately ten years).

⁷ Romania, Strategy of the Government of Romania for the Inclusion of the Romanian Citizens Belonging to Roma Minority for 2015–2020 [*Strategia Guvernului României de Incluziune a Cetăţenilor Români aparţinând Minorităţii Rome pentru perioada 2015-2020*]. The Romanian version is available at: www.anr.gov.ro/index.php/anr/strategia; the English version is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_romania_strategy2_en.pdf.

There are deficits in Roma people's health literacy, which lead in time to harmful behaviour. There has been an increase in the level of knowledge, as well as an improved behaviour in communities where various health education activities were carried out by healthcare providers (in particular, health mediators, community nurses). Failure to allocate resources for the continued employment of community medical teams at the local level and to guarantee their activity has been identified.

Although there are improvements in terms of healthy lifestyle, prevention and health education programmes in schools and communities are segmented, resulting in limiting effects over longer periods.

The social determinants of health continue to be deficient for this population, with large groups of poor people living on a low or insufficient income, who are poorly educated and poorly paid. These factors are, in fact, indicators of social and health inequalities. There is also a decrease in confidence in prevention services (e.g. increased distrust of the population regarding vaccination), which leads to an increase in the number of preventable diseases of this population.

Lack of access to health services continues to be problematic for Roma people. The main cause for limited access to health care is the lack of medical insurance, while young adults are particularly affected by this. Roma people continue to face obstacles when accessing health services due to stigma and discrimination. Training programmes for health professionals on ethics and non-discrimination continue to be inadequate or sporadic.

Among the systemic health care issues that affect Roma people's access to such services are the following:

- lack of continuity in the supply of medicines and sanitary materials;
- making the medical examination process difficult at the level of primary health care services (family doctors, general practitioners);
- poor conditions in hospitals;
- the practice of informal payments for health care services in hospitals;
- the small number of doctors per inhabitants (one physician for 352 inhabitants);⁸
- unequal distribution of human resources between the urban and rural health sectors;
- discrepancies between the urban and rural areas, which affect vulnerable people in particular (low income, little education, low social status, etc).

Education

Enrolment of Roma children in education is still under the country's average and established targets, even if there is some registered progress. From a legal standpoint, progress has been made: ministerial orders in the field of education have been issued (e.g. providing education in one's mother tongue about language and literature, Romanian language and literature, the study of history and traditions of national minorities, as well musical education)⁹ and essential programmes like "School after school",¹⁰ "Euro200 Programme" and "Second Chance"¹¹ have been established, while

⁸ Eurostat database, <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

⁹ <http://www.dri.gov.ro/ordin-nr-5-6712012-pentru-aprobarea-metodologiei-privind-studiul-in-limba-materna-si-al-limbii-si-literaturii-materne-al-limbii-si-literaturii-romane-studiul-istoriei-si-traditiilor-minoritatilor/>

¹⁰ <https://www.edu.ro/scoala%20dupa%20scoala>

¹¹ <https://www.edu.ro/a%20doua%20sansa>

European funds are used for equipping and furnishing schools, reduce the school drop-out rate, teacher training, as well as making schools attractive.¹²

In the case of pre-school/kindergarten, the enrolment rate for Roma children between three and six years of age is below the rate for the majority population: 37 per cent for Roma children as compared to 77 per cent for non-Roma children,¹³ as in most cases the schooling costs of a child exceed the means of most Roma families.

The main support measure focusing on secondary education is the allocation of places for Roma students in upper secondary education.¹⁴ The special places for Roma students are allocated in addition to the regular number of places in upper secondary and vocational schools, with a limit of one to two places per class.

Although several programmes, projects and measures have been implemented to improve the educational system in Romania, Roma students face numerous problems: poor learning outcomes and the drop-out risk are widespread due to poor attendance rates, their family's low income, the absence of family role models, parents' inability to support the educational process, lack of awareness of the importance of education in one's life, lack of motivation, early marriages, parents' non-involvement in school, discrimination in grading students differently, lack of staff's inclusive educational skills, and Roma students' non-involvement in extra-curricular activities which could in turn contribute to an increase in self-esteem.¹⁵

Even though Romania promised to reduce the rate of early school leaving to 11.3 per cent by 2020, this seems to be unlikely as the early school leaving rate for Roma students in 2015 was 77 per cent of the total school leavers¹⁶ (the percentage of Roma women aged 18-24 years old who leave school early is 78 per cent, while for men it is 76 per cent).

One particular issue that limits the access of Roma students to vocational training programmes with high labour market demand is that the access to such programmes (i.e. vocational training courses and apprenticeship) is restricted by the mandatory successful graduation of certain formal educational levels (almost all such courses require the finalisation of lower-secondary education – ISCED2 level).

In Romania, educational segregation remains a challenge – a recent report monitoring the segregation phenomenon in 394 schools in the North-Eastern part of the country found out that in 20 per cent of the schools there was at least one form of segregation. Also, 50 per cent of the communities involved in the monitoring process (112) had at least one school where a form of segregation was identified.¹⁷

Case studies

The report is presenting three case studies, Târnăveni (Mureş County), Horgeşti (Bacău County), and Măreşesti (Vrancea County).

¹² Office of the Prime Minister, Integrated package for combating poverty, p. 10, available at:

https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/fi%C8%99iere/Minister/2016/strategii/Pachet_integrat_pentru_cmbaterea_saraciei.pdf, accessed on 19.10.2018

¹³ Strategy of the Government of Romania for the inclusion of the Romanian citizens belonging to Roma minority for the period 2012-2020, p. 11

¹⁴ Ministry of Education, Orders OM 4794/31.08.2017, OM 4795/31.08.2017, OM 4802/31.08.2010

¹⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/roma_romania_strategy2_en.pdf

¹⁶ <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/eumidis-ii-roma-selected-findings>

¹⁷ <http://scoalapentrutoticipiii.cado.org.ro/raportul-de-monitorizare-a-segregarii-scolare-in-regiunea-nord-est.html>,

The case study in Târnăveni is presenting a complex process of development of a local strategy for the Roma community targeting infrastructure, economic competitiveness and improved quality of life. It is important to mention that the development process was started through ROMACT,¹⁸ a programme of the Council of Europe and European Commission that generated a detailed local action plan, including budgetary provisions (local budget and external funding). A large-scale integrated project funded through ESF/HCOP is currently under implementation.

The case study in Horgești presents the intervention of the “Împreună” Agency for Community Development in the field of education, focused on promoting role models for Roma children, teacher training on non-discriminatory attitudes and diversity, but also integrated educational measures aiming at reducing the gap between Roma and non-Roma. It is also important to mention the role of UNICEF Romania, who developed in Bacău County an integrated services approach at the community level.

The case study in Măreșești also presents the results of two years of intervention through ROMACT programme, a comprehensive local action plan, focusing on education, employment, health, housing and infrastructure, culture and youth. The municipality was practically prepared for accessing European structural funding, a large project being implemented afterwards.

¹⁸ See <http://www.coe-romact.org/municipalities/tarnaveni>

INTRODUCTION

The present report discusses the stages of elaborating and implementing public policies for Roma in Romania in the field of education, health, employment, and housing.

The EU framework for national Roma integration strategies until 2020¹⁹ is the most ambitious EU initiative targeting the Roma, bringing to the attention of member states the challenges related to Roma inclusion. Essentially, the EU Framework:

- Encouraged Member States to make use of available EU funds to address the needs of Roma;
- Emphasized the importance of making European and national policies more sensitive to Roma needs, including through empowering civil society;
- Highlighted the need to put in place a robust monitoring system.

However, the adoption of the NRIS was just a stage of a much more complex public policy process that needs to be put into practice to make the necessary changes at the grassroots level. Adoption of the NRIS is, at the end of the day, a statement of intentions that has to be followed by the development of implementation mechanisms, changes in legislation, allocation of funds, assuming institutional responsibilities, monitoring and evaluation.

Within the framework of the Romanian Presidency of the European Council²⁰ (January-June 2019), the Roma issue is, indirectly, part of the suggested priorities through objectives, such as “promoting the efficient countering of racism, intolerance, xenophobia, populism, anti-Semitism and discouraging hate speech” or “promoting and supporting legislative initiatives focusing on social progress and reducing development gaps, equal opportunities between men and women, as well as ensuring access to education and training for disadvantaged categories”.

A high-level Conference on EU Framework on National Strategies for Roma Inclusion is going to be organized by the Romanian Government under the EU Presidency umbrella (4-5 March 2019, Bucharest) building on previous presidencies that managed to advance the Roma issue on the European agenda.

It is important to mention here the new initiative of the Roma NGOs alliance²¹ (*Adunarea Națională a Organizațiilor Neguvernamentale ale Romilor*) [The National Gathering of the Roma NGOs]) that is going to propose a new paradigm for the Roma policies in Romania, an evidence-based one, focused on developing national programs in the field of education, employment, health, housing etc.

Methodology

The present report is an alternative assessment of the status of governmental policies, programmes and initiative for Roma in Romania, but it also presents the most relevant initiatives of non-state actors in the field. The elaboration of the report followed a balanced use of theoretical and conceptual analysis, quantitative and qualitative data analysis, and critical social policy analysis. The evidence-based approach of this report was guaranteed through the collection of data from a mix of sources, including census, surveys, and interviews with relevant stakeholders, concrete case cases etc.

¹⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/social_determinants/docs/com2011_173_en.pdf

²⁰ <https://www.romania2019.eu/priorities/>

²¹ <http://agentiaimpreuna.ro/in-an-centenar-romii-cer-sa-fie-parte-a-politicilor-statului-de-modernizare-din-romania/>

The coalition agreed for the distribution of responsibilities for each topic to one NGO experienced in the field, supported by other coalition members, therefore a larger network of organisations was involved in the data collection process. As the coalition's decision was to write the initial texts in Romanian, more people were having access to the elaboration process of the report and ensured a unified writing style by translating the text from Romanian to English.

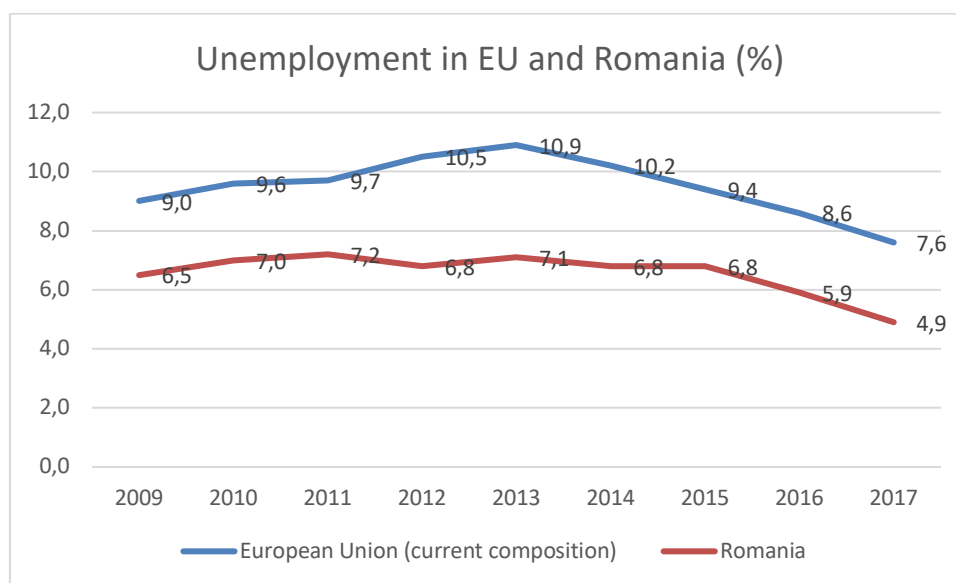
In terms of documents review, authors took into consideration the latest governmental policy and legal documents (decisions, ministerial orders, laws, EU documents, strategies, etc.), as well as non-governmental documents (surveys, programmes, projects, reports etc.).

Also, where recent information was not available, the authors used older studies relevant to the topic. Where necessary, interviews (in person, by telephone, or in writing) with relevant representatives (public figures, specialists, researchers, practitioners, etc.) of state and non-state stakeholders were conducted to add qualitative information on specific issues.

EMPLOYMENT

According to Eurostat data, since 2013, the rate of unemployment started to slowly decrease in Romania, following the EU pattern. As data shows, the unemployment rate did not fluctuate much in Romania between 2009 and 2015. A big improvement was registered in 2016 when the unemployment rate dropped considerably to 3.9 per cent in December 2018.²²

Figure 1: Unemployment in EU and Romania, Unemployment by sex and age - annual average²³



When it comes to Roma, the Fundamental Rights Agency report from 2018²⁴ stated (p. 35) that self-declared main activity “paid work” rate²⁵ remained the same in Romania between 2011 and 2016 (28 per cent) but increased for the general population from 64 per cent to 66 per cent. Regarding gender, the same source of information offers (p. 35) data on the registered evolution: more men were employed (according to International Labour Organization statistics) from 2011 to 2016 (from 37 per cent to 42 per cent), and fewer women (from 17 per cent to 14 per cent). Data for the general population shows there is a gap between the unemployment rate for women and that for men, in favour of women.²⁶

²² http://www.insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/somaj_bim_decembrie18r.pdf

²³ Eurostat: http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=une_rt_a&lang=en

²⁴ FRA, A Persisting Concern: Anti-Gypsyism as a Barrier to Roma Inclusion (FRA: Luxembourg, 2018), pp. 43-45, online at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/roma-inclusion>

²⁵ The „employment rate” refers to the share of people who declared their main activity status as being enrolled in „paid work” (including full-time and part-time work, ad hoc jobs and self-employment), household members, 16+ (per cent). “Main activity” asks all household members about their current status regarding employment. In this report, „employment rate” is used as a proxy of „main activity status – paid work” for the general population.

²⁶ National Institute for Statistics:
http://www.insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/somaj_bim_decembrie18r.pdf

Unemployment rate	2017	2018
Men	5.1 %	4.69 %
Women	4 %	3.45 %

Improving access to labour market and effectiveness of employment services

Roma in Romania is a much younger population (p. 20),²⁷ so there is a need to offer more employment services. The NEET rate²⁸ for Roma increased from 2011 to 2016 from 58 per cent to 64 per cent but decreased for the majority population from 18 per cent to 17 per cent (p. 37).²⁹ When it comes to NEET gender, data shows a higher increment for men than for women (p. 38).³⁰ Data from 2017 and 2018 for the majority of NEET shows that the gap is not very high³¹ (National Institute of Statistics).

Table 1: NEET unemployment rate

<i>Unemployment rate for Roma NEET</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>Unemployment rate for majority of NEET</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>
Men	71%	77%	Men	19.2%	16.6%
Women	48%	52%	Women	20.5%	16.4%

The Joint Employment Report 2018 pointed out that when it comes to equal opportunities and access to the labour market, "Spain, Malta, Portugal and Romania face a critical situation when it comes to early leavers from education and training", that "Greece, Italy, Malta and Romania critically score on the gender employment gap".³² One of the factors that influence the gender pay gap in Romania is that men hold most of the management and supervisory positions.³³ Consequently, women are promoted and paid less than men. Another important factor for the employment gender gap is the lack of public support services for families with children under three years old and an insufficient number of kindergartens. According to a study conducted by EJobs in Romania, only 31 per cent of women who work have found a balance between work and family.³⁴

"The situation regarding the risk of poverty or social exclusion is critical in Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania", and "Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, and Romania face a critical situation when looking at NEET" (data analysed is from 2016). The same document pinpoints the fact that data from 2015 and 2016 showed that Romania and Bulgaria were the member states with the highest share of the inactive population.

Considering the information from 2015 and 2016, the Joint Employment Report 2018 pointed out that Romania is focused on developing programmes aimed at reaching out to

²⁷ Împreună" Agency (2013). Romii din România. De la țap ispășitor la motor de dezvoltare. [The Roma from Romania. From Scapegoat to Development Engine]. Bucharest

²⁸ „NEET youth” refers to the share of young persons, 16-24 years old, with current main activity being neither in employment nor in education or training, household members (per cent). Based on the self-declared current main activity. It excludes those who performed any type of work in the previous four weeks to earn some money.

²⁹ FRA, A Persisting Concern: Anti-Gypsyism as a Barrier to Roma Inclusion (FRA: Luxembourg, 2018) at 43-45, online at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/roma-inclusion>

³⁰ FRA, A Persisting Concern: Anti-Gypsyism as a Barrier to Roma Inclusion (FRA: Luxembourg, 2018) at 43-45, online at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/roma-inclusion>

³¹ http://www.insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/com_presa/com_pdf/somaj_bim_decembrie18r.pdf

³² Joint Employment Report of the European Commission, 2018, pp. 22-23, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1519897788119&uri=CELEX%3A52017DC0674>

³³ Shadow report Coalition for Gender Equality for CEDAW session 2018, p. 14. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/ROU/INT_CEDAW_NGO_ROU_27790_E.pdf

³⁴ The short presentation of data is available at: <https://cariera.ejobs.ro/o-treime-din-mamele-care-lucraza-spun-ca-au-gasit-echilibrul-intre-job-si-familie/>

young people, encouraging them to register with Public Employment Services and receive adequate support.³⁵ Thus, in 2018, NAE launched new outreach measures (projects funded from ESF) to increase the number of young NEET registered with the NAE (PES) by 200,000 by means of preventive identification, information and awareness campaigns, support networks, and intervention teams involving PES, social care assistants, and education advisers.

EC's annual report, the Joint Employment Report 2018,³⁶ shows that wages remain low. Romania has more than doubled the salaries compared to 2010 and is targeting further annual increase by 2020. Since January 2018, the minimum wage has been 1,900 RON (approx. 400 EUR), and the government planned to raise it starting with January 2019, to 2,350 RON, equivalent to approximately 500 EUR. After taxes, employees receive a net amount of 1,413 RON, equivalent to approximately 300 EUR.

According to the Governmental Programme 2018-2020,³⁷ the main objective regarding employment is to reach the 70 per cent target in the employment rate for the 20-64 age group. Under the slogan "Romania is hiring!" (p. 56) it was promised that the government would "support investments to increase participation in the labour market (approximately 1.3 billion EUR) to increase the employment rate, targeting young people who are not professionally trained and who do not attend any education or training program and other vulnerable groups". Also, approximately "1.9 billion EUR will be dedicated to promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and discrimination by supporting disadvantaged people (including Roma) to access the labour market and improve their health and social condition".

Measures that need to be implemented, according to the document,³⁸ for stimulating the creation of new jobs are: strengthen the active role of the Public Employment Service (PES) in the relationship with employers (ESF-funded programmes for three years); organize relevant events for the labour market (two general job fairs, annually); reduce the administrative costs for employers; adopt and implement the National Strategy for Green Jobs; stimulate participation in the labour market for people who are able to work and at risk of social exclusion; deterring dependence on social assistance measures; design employee training programmes, correlated with the needs of the labour market. The same governmental programme targets young people as well: implementation of the Youth Guarantee Programme (legislative framework, a bonus for registering with the public employment services, 10,000 jobs in the public sector for disadvantaged young people, clear procedures for the recognition of volunteering activities). When it comes to the fight against poverty and supporting social inclusion, the Romanian Government wants to: modify the financial support programmes based on means' testing sources of income³⁹ by combining benefits in cash and in kind.

In the subchapter dedicated to national minorities, the Government Programme for 2018-2020 states that "The issue of the Roma community is a special area that requires both internal efforts and correlation with European efforts to eliminate such gaps in the society" (p. 255). The Government wants to focus more efficiently on the implementation of the NRIS, as well as "to re-orient this strategy towards specific programmes aimed at ensuring a substantial improvement of the Roma situation, with a

³⁵ Joint Employment Report of the European Commission, 2018, pp. 22-23, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1519897788119&uri=CELEX%3A52017DC0674>

³⁶ Joint Employment Report of the European Commission, 2018

³⁷ The Governmental Program 2018-2020 - Programul de guvernare 2018-2020, accessed on 28.01.2019, the link can be found at: http://gov.ro/fisiere/pagini_fisiere/PROGRAMUL_DE_GUVERNARE_2018-2020.pdf

³⁸ *Ibidem*

³⁹ „Means testing” method in social work – based on the total income and properties benefits, the social services will decide the level of social benefits that can be allocated to a certain beneficiary.

particular focus on the Roma communities living in extreme poverty". Regarding employment, the Government wants to have more efficient sectoral measures (access to the labour market, promotion of income-generating activities).

The Ministry of Labour and Social Justice is the one in charge of implementing the government programme in the field of employment and social justice. The National Employment Agency – NAE (*Agencia Națională pentru Ocuparea Forței de Muncă*, ANOFM) is the institution that implements policies and strategies on employment and vocational training for jobseekers designed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice and has the following main objectives: to boost employment; to stimulate the employment of young school graduates as part of a coherent process of transitioning from the educational system to the labour market; to prevent unemployment; to stimulate the participation of job-seekers in vocational training services and to assess competences achieved in ways other than formal ones; to increase employment opportunities and social inclusion of certain categories of people who face employment difficulties (through active employment services and measures⁴⁰); to protect people at risk of losing their job (support offered as part of the unemployment insurance system – unemployment benefits); to protect employees from insolvent employers; to facilitate the free movement of workers between the Member States of the European Union and between the states signatory of the European Economic Area Agreement, as well as between other countries with whom Romania has concluded treaties, agreements or conventions.

The NAE has 41 branches – one in each county, and one in Bucharest; eight regional centres for adult vocational training; 23 own training centres; the National Centre for Vocational Training of NAE, 94 providers of private employment services accredited under the law and spread across the country. At the local level, there are a total of 70 agencies and 141 working points, eight regional training centres for adults and a national training centre for NAE personnel.

The main measures implemented by NAE (according to law no. 76/2002 and law no. 116/2002) in 2018 were:⁴¹

- Mediation services (for permanent and fixed-term contracts);
- Information and professional counselling;
- Qualification training courses;
- Wage subsidies – subsidies for employees;
- Stimulation of re-employment – by providing allowances for unemployed people before the discontinuation of their unemployment benefits, thereby attempting to prevent long-term unemployment;
- Stimulating the employment of recent graduates;
- Stimulating the employment of unemployed people over 45 years old or single parents supporting their family.
- Stimulating employers to employ long time unemployed people, seignor persons (with less than five years until retirement), people with disabilities.
- Encouraging labour mobility by providing bonuses for moving (commute or relocate)
- Consulting services and assistance regarding self-employment or for starting an independent business;
- Custom assistance for youth at risk of social marginalisation;
- Subsidies for persons on temporary employment involved in public works of

⁴⁰ For more information on active employment measures, see:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/file_import/european-semester_thematic-factsheet_active-labour-market-policies_ro.pdf

⁴¹ Results of the National Employment Programme - December 2018:
<https://www.anofm.ro/post.html?id=4476&agentie=>

- community interest;
- Other active measures – for people on the verge of being fired or other specific groups;
- Stimulating internship programmes.

When it comes to other active measures for Roma, NAE (PES) is running the Job fair for Roma and the Programme for a number of certain communities with a high percentage of Roma (so-called "Programme 150" in 2016, "Programme 145" in 2017, and "Programme 140" in 2018).

Table 2: The results of the National Employment Programmes implemented by NAE (PES)

	<i>Total number of Roma, targets of the general PES programme</i>	<i>Total number of Roma, results of the general PES programme</i>	<i>Special programme, targets</i>	<i>Special programme, results</i>
2015 ⁴²	?	6,295	145 Programmes ?	2,654
2016 ⁴³	5,750	3,490	150 Programmes 2,300	1,825
2017 ⁴⁴	4,450	4,196	145 Programmes 2,400	2,614
2018 ⁴⁵	4,641	3,971	140 Programmes ?	2,250

OBS: In three cases, data was not available and was marked with "?"

Specialised services for employment stimulation (labour mediation on the internal labour market and information and professional counselling) may also be granted by other suppliers, provided they are accredited or subject to notification procedures under the conditions of Law no. 76/2002 with subsequent amendments and completions. In the NAE Annual report for 2017 it is mentioned that, during 2017, NAE has granted 122 accreditation certificates for specialized services for 80 suppliers from 24 counties and Bucharest.⁴⁶ There is no such information about private specialised services for employment in the 2018 report,⁴⁷ and the link to the National Registry of private employment services does not work anymore.⁴⁸

"The Joint Employment Report 2018"⁴⁹ signalled that in Romania the rate of the general population accessing these services offered by public employment services was 30 per cent (in 2016), a considerable decrease compared to 2013 (approximately 43 per cent), and not even half of the maximum registered in the Czech Republic (80 per cent). This low interest shown by people not willing to register with PES may reflect the difference in the quality of the services provided, particularly with regard to employment schemes used by employers, where improving access to formal early childhood education and

⁴² NAE annual report for 2015 - <http://193.169.6.21/raportul-de-activitate-al-anofm-%C3%AEn-anul-2015>

⁴³ NAE annual report for 2016 - <http://193.169.6.21/raportul-de-activitate-al-anofm-%C3%AEn-anul-2016>

⁴⁴ NAE annual report for 2017 - <http://193.169.6.21/raportul-de-activitate-al-anofm-pentru-anul-2017>

⁴⁵ NAE annual report for 2018, draft - <https://www.anofm.ro/post.html?id=4476&agentie=>

⁴⁶ NAE annual report for 2017 - <http://193.169.6.21/raportul-de-activitate-al-anofm-pentru-anul-2017>

⁴⁷ Results of the National Employment Programme - December 2018: <https://www.anofm.ro/post.html?id=4476&agentie=>

⁴⁸ <https://www.anofm.ro/registrul-na%C8%9Bional-al-furnizorilor-de-servicii-de-ocupare>

⁴⁹ Joint Employment Report of the European Commission, 2018, p. 54: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1519897788119&uri=CELEX%3A52017DC0674>

care is an effective tool to tackle employment barriers, especially among women and other disadvantaged groups.

In the field of employment, Romania's NRIS⁵⁰ aims at improving participation in the labour market for Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority. The directions for actions are the same as the ones that are implemented by the NAE.

(1) Providing information about the labour market and putting unemployed Roma into contact with employers:

- Free information and professional counselling services for people looking for a job;
- Free mediation services for vacancies or new jobs.

(2) Increasing employment opportunities for people belonging to the Roma minority by encouraging geographic mobility and by making the most of entrepreneurial skills:

- Stimulating labour force mobility by granting employment or installation allowances, where necessary;
- Free counselling and assistance services for people engaging in an activity in a self-employed capacity or a business start-up, in order to raise the employment rate by setting up their own businesses.

(3) Stimulating employment among unemployed people who receive compensation, before the end of the payment period of the unemployment allowance, by supplementing salaries;

(4) Developing and certifying professional skills:

- Organising professional training courses for people in search of a job;
- Free services for the evaluation and certification of skills achieved within the informal and non-formal systems;
- Enrolling in apprenticeship programmes at the workplace.

(5) Stimulating employers who employ persons belonging to disadvantaged categories by awarding them grants;

(6) Providing financial support for the start-up/development of new businesses: non-refundable financial support, as well as providing consultancy, mentoring and assistance services for engaging in an activity in a self-employed capacity or a business start-up, with the aim of raising the employment rate;

(7) Providing personalised supplementary measures for the young Roma at risk of social marginalisation by concluding solidarity contracts and providing specific services.

Table 3: Romanian NRIS – employment

<i>Romanian NRIS targets</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2020</i>	<i>Comments for the end of 2018 (previous table)</i>
Number of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority who have accessed active labour market	70,000	At least 75,000, 4,500 of employed persons after accessing active	Data presented by NAE does not allow for the identification of the number of Roma who

⁵⁰ Strategy of the Government of Romania for the Inclusion of the Romanian Citizens Belonging to Roma Minority for 2015–2020 [„Strategia Guvernului României de Incluziune a Cetătenilor Români aparținând Minorității Rome pentru perioada 2015-2020”]. The Romanian version is available at: www.anr.gov.ro/index.php/anr/strategia; the English version is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_romania_strategy2_en.pdf.

measures.		measures.	have accessed active labour market measures. This target was reached.
Number of Roma minority members informed and advised.	5,000.	At least 7,500	Data presented by NAE does not allow for the identification of the number of Roma who have accessed active labour market measures.
Number of mediated Roma minority members. Number of persons employed after mediation.	At least 5,000 mediated, at least 2,000 persons employed after mediation.	At least 7,500 mediated persons, at least 4,000 persons employed after mediation.	Data presented by NAE does not allow for the identification of the number of Roma who have accessed active labour market measures.
Number of Roma minority members to whom the following measure was applied: stimulating workforce mobility by awarding employment and installation allowances, where appropriate.	60 persons	At least 100	Data presented by NAE does not allow for the identification of the number of Roma who have accessed active labour market measures.
Number of Roma minority members trained for occupations/qualifications demanded by the labour market.	1,000	1,500	In 2017, ⁵¹ 438 Roma received training/qualifications.
Number of Roma minority members evaluated and certified for competences achieved on a non-formal basis.	100	100	No data
Number of people to whom the following measure was applied to: granting aid to employers for employing persons from disadvantaged categories or who have difficulty in accessing the labour market.	100	150	No data
Number of persons to whom the following measure was applied to: providing personalised supplementary measures for the young Roma at risk of social marginalisation by concluding solidarity contracts and providing specific services, including granting aid to employers who employ persons from this category.	50	100	No data

One important observation is that NAE does not make public tables with data that would allow someone a faster and clear analysis of the results they achieved. Also, NAE does not provide disaggregated data based on gender and ethnicity, not even based on counties.

A relevant recent legislative change is introduced by the Unemployment Act, as amended by the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 95/12.6.2017. Of the most relevant

⁵¹ NAE annual report for 2017 - <http://193.169.6.21/raportul-de-activitate-al-anofm-pentru-anul-2017>

changes, it is worth mentioning that employers who hire unemployed persons over 45 years of age, unemployed people who are single parents, long-term unemployed or young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)⁵² receive a monthly amount of 900 lei, for a period of 12 months, for each person belonging to these categories that they hire, provided that they maintain these working or service relations for at least 18 months. In 2018, the amount was significantly increased to 2,250 RON (approximately 490 EUR) which is very close to the minimum wage; starting from 2019 this amount is equal to 2,350 RON (an equivalent of 510 Euros).

Between October 2017 and September 2021, NEA together with the National Agency for Payments and Social Inspection, the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice are looking forward to implementing the INTESPO Project – “Youth Registration in the Public Employment Service Records”, funded under the Human Capital Operational Programme. The overall objective of the project is to increase the number of inactive young NEET registered with the Romanian Public Employment Service (SPO) in order to provide specialized support measures. Unfortunately, no information on the results of the programme implementation so far could be identified on NEA's website or on the partner's website.

According to Law no. 416/2001 on the Minimum Guaranteed Income, the beneficiaries of this social benefit have to certify, by providing evidence, once every three months, that they are registered with the Territorial Agency for Employment (PES), and did not turn down a job offer, nor benefited from services that stimulate employment and training provided by PES. Law no. 192/2018 for amending and complementing Law no. 416/2001 on the Minimum Guaranteed Income was adopted and entered into force in October 2018 and states that those receiving social benefits in 2018 are required to perform community service. Decisions on the community work to be performed are made by the local town halls. The amendments stipulate that those on social benefits must perform community service; if they and other members of the family, who are able to work, turn down a job offer three times, the guaranteed minimum income is automatically discontinued. Also, if a beneficiary of the guaranteed minimum income is caught working illegally, this will lead to the termination of this social aid.

Romania has also amended its legislation on undeclared work, has broadened the definition of “unofficial” work, and has introduced several measures that reveal a so-called hidden employment (employers declare, for example, only a small part of the contract in order to avoid paying all taxes). At the same time, different types of incentives and subsidies are used to promote the recruitment and activation of the long-term unemployed people. In Romania, employment subsidies have been extended to cover the long-term unemployed persons, but more than one-third (35.7 percent)⁵³ of the country's population is considered to be at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

During the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 periods, many projects dedicated to social inclusion (some of them were also dedicated to Roma) were financed by ESF. Projects funded by the first EU funding cycle were called “strategic projects”, with budgets up to 5,000,000 EUR, and were supposed to test interventions and develop successful mechanisms for social inclusion that would later be taken over by the state and continued as public policies. This did not happen as neither the municipalities nor NAE continued the interventions started by NGOs, even though some of them turned out well with good results. Unfortunately, there is no unified statistics that would allow drawing any conclusions based on the results of interventions funded by ESF in the field of Roma employment.

⁵² NEET is an acronym first used in the UK for youth not enrolled in the educational system, nor in employment or training (abbreviation of „Not in Education, Employment, or Training”).

⁵³ See: https://www.economica.net/eurostat-romania-a-facut-progrese-semnificative-in-reducerea-riscului-de-saracie-si-excluziune-sociala_159806.html#n

Still, considering the situation of Roma employment, as presented above, the targets of the Romanian NRIS and NAE (PES) are far from answering Roma needs. There is no real improvement when looking at the trend, nor when it comes to commitments from the Romanian state. Considering the targets and the results of the employment programme implemented by NAE since 2015, it is clear that the interest and investment in Roma integration on the labour market are decreasing. Also, the lack of disaggregated data, as well as the lack of open data (annual reports are just *pdf* documents with no tables), does not allow us to monitor the implementation of the Romanian NRIS targets.

Unfortunately, there is no recent study assessing the accessibility of PES services by Roma. The most recent one dates from 2010⁵⁴ and states that the effectiveness of Roma employment programmes (implemented by PES) is low due to certain factors:

- low interest shown by potential beneficiaries in such programmes;
- low level of education that does not allow them to enrol in qualification courses;
- long distance between Roma communities and the location of the qualification course or available jobs;
- limited free time of those working on the black market to participate in information campaigns or qualification programmes;
- the influence of formal and informal local leaders on the Roma community and stimulation of local solidarity or activism;
- Roma mentality and stereotypes regarding employers;
- Romanian authorities stereotyping Roma as people who do not want to work;
- weak communication between various social actors (county PES, local authorities, Roma representatives, Roma community).

Additionally, the following should be added to the list:

- low visibility of PES as it is considered more of a service that provides unemployment benefits to those who already have a job, so, in the large majority of these cases, these services are not for the Roma);
- low level of competencies achieved during qualifications courses;
- unrealistic offer of inclusion programmes on the labour market;
- lack of financial compensation for those attending qualification courses (they cannot support their families);
- lack of real monitoring of implemented programmes that would allow the evaluation and a real adjustment according to the needs.

The National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) report⁵⁵ includes EC references⁵⁶ to labour participation rates well below EU averages, especially in the case of women, the elderly, Roma, young people and people with disabilities. The same report draws attention to the fact that, compared to the rest of the population, Roma face a very high inequality of chances and poverty rates because of their low level of employment, poor training, low health insurance coverage, and discrimination at work, with a risk of living in poverty that is almost three times higher for the Roma than for

⁵⁴ Institute for Research on Quality of Life (2010) „Legal and equal on the labour market for Roma communities. Ed. Expert: Bucharest (p. 104).

⁵⁵ Source: Raportul Consiliului Național pentru Combaterea Discriminării (Report of the National Council for Combating Discrimination), website: www.cnc.org.ro, http://api.components.ro/uploads/1d3a0bf8b95391b825aa56853282d5da/2018/05/Activity_Report_CNCD_2017.pdf

⁵⁶ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Central Bank and the Eurogroup 2018, European Semester: Assessment of progress on structural reforms, prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances, and results of in-depth reviews under Regulation (EU) No. 1176/2011, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2018-european-semester-country-report-belgium-en.pdf>, accessed at 25.11.2018;

the rest of the population. The International Amnesty report 2017/2018 also draws attention to the fact that Roma continue to be discriminated against.⁵⁷

Fight against discrimination in employment and antigypsyism at workplace

Negative attitudes and behaviours towards Roma and labour market participation are constantly encountered in the public sphere. According to the Fundamental Rights Agency report from 2018,⁵⁸ Roma from Romania felt more discriminated against while job searching and at work in the past five years (from 33 per cent to 34 per cent in the first case, and from 10 per cent to 19 per cent at work). These could be due to the official anti-discrimination discourse and the efforts made by NGOs active in the field. So, more and more employers are cautious when advertising jobs and selecting candidates, but the harsh reality comes into play when Roma are employed and face the stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes of their co-workers.

The considerable lack of data and information on the phenomenon of lack of jobs for and among Roma, as well as the complexity of the problem, determine a certain number of public reactions in the media that draw attention to Roma families, especially to those who are socially assisted. The public debates over the amendment of Law no. 416/2001 on the Minimum Guaranteed Income by Law no. 192/2018 (*"Law against Laziness"* according to which those receiving social benefits in 2018 are required to perform community service, and if they and other family members who are able to work refuse a job offer three times, the guaranteed minimum income is automatically discontinued) gave rise in the public sphere (especially in the social media) to negative discourses against Roma.⁵⁹ The populist trend and the extremist discourse were embraced by many political parties in their quest of attracting voters.

The latest report of the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) has not been made public at the time of writing this report for 2018, but data for 2017 shows that approximately 8 per cent of registered complaints refers to the ethnic criterion, which has slightly decreased compared to 2016.⁶⁰ The report notes the persistence of negative attitudes and prejudices against Roma and anti-Hungarian attitudes. Despite the firm position of the NCCD, the rulings and statements of authorities, racist incidents continue to be reported.

Most of the complains (40 per cent) recorded by NCCD were filed regarding access to employment and qualifications. The rulings of NCCD in cases of ethnic discrimination involved 13 fines, three recommendations, three warnings and five publications of the decisions' summaries, with or without monitoring decisions. These NCCD rulings are outnumbered by rulings in relation to social categories and disability criteria.

⁵⁷ Report available at: www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol10/6700/2018/en/;

⁵⁸ FRA, A Persisting Concern: Anti-Gypsyism as a Barrier to Roma Inclusion (FRA: Luxembourg, 2018), p. 19, available at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/roma-inclusion>

⁵⁹ Examples: „The law against laziness has entered into force today” - <https://www.dcnnews.ro/legea-impotriva-lenei-a-intrat-azi-in-vigoare-619408.html>; „The law against laziness” leaves you with no social help” - <http://ziarero.antena3.ro/article/view/id/247627>; „Getting lazy on state's money! Those who refuse to work lose their social benefits” - <https://www.banatulazi.ro/gata-cu-lenevia-pe-banii-statului-cei-care-refuza-un-loc-de-munca-pierd-ajutoarele-sociale/>; „ALDE: „The law against laziness” came into force” - <https://www.mediafax.ro/politic/alde-legea-impotriva-lenei-a-intrat-in-vigoare-17566166>.

⁶⁰ Raportul Consiliului Național pentru Combaterea Discriminării [Report of the National Council for Combating Discrimination], website: www.cnc.org.ro

Report available at: http://api.components.ro/uploads/1d3a0bf8b95391b825aa56853282d5da/2018/05/Activity_Report_CNCD_2017.pdf;

Other indications regarding ethnicity are related to access to services and the right to human dignity. An example of a referral in the report is related to the right to human dignity, where the Active Watch Association complains about the www.corbiialbi.ro web site because of the article posted on 5 June 2016 titled "*The Romanian, the biggest enemy of the Romanians*" that contains defamatory statements about the Roma. This online article makes several discriminatory claims, such as, "*champions of school drop-out, unemployment and social aid, begging, delinquencies, fraud and other deeds of this sort, Gypsies not only did they preserve their identity over time...*"

NCCD ruled that this act is covered by "*the provisions of Art. 15 by O.G. no. 137/2000, which regulates and punishes publishing information such as assessments of the Roma ethnic group formulated and aimed at affecting human dignity, thus creating an atmosphere of intimidation, humiliation, and offending the targeted group. Therefore, NCCD found that the facts presented in the petition constitute discrimination under Article 2, paragraph 1, in conjunction with Article 15 of O.G. no. 137/2000, re-edited, and finds the defendant guilty and orders him to pay a fine of 2,000 RON (an equivalent of 435 EUR).*"

Some of NCCD's decisions have been widely discussed in the media and by society, thus contributing to a better understanding of discrimination issues and their harmful effects on society as a whole.

Since 2018, *Împreună* Agency⁶¹ has been implementing an anti-discrimination campaign promoting 100 Roma professionals (<http://likerom.ro/>). All of these people are telling their story about their educational and professional life and encouraging others to join them. This campaign is funded by ESF. Unfortunately, no state institutions have developed this kind of initiatives, nor are they supporting this one, or other similar ones. This campaign has not yet finished, so we cannot talk about its impact yet. The message of the campaign is designed more for social media than for mass media.

In Romania, there is no quota for Roma in employment (there are no affirmative measures implemented similarly to education). For years, Roma and pro-Roma NGOs are advocating for this purpose following the model of the disability quota that was introduced in 2006,⁶² but without any success so far.

The Romanian NRIS⁶³ (p. 13) states that "the low educational level, associated with discrimination, leads to very significant discrepancies between employment and extremely low productivity rates". It represents an official recognition of the problem on behalf of the Romanian state, which means that measures should be taken, but discrimination is not taken into consideration when it comes to establishing the direction for action, nor it is well developed as a transversal measure. There are no anti-discrimination measures when it comes to employment (nor in the case of housing).

It has been signalled many times by NGOs that the lack of comprehensive data on the Roma situation and especially on discrimination Roma are facing may result in poor

⁶¹ „Împreună” Agency - <https://agentiaimpreuna.ro/>

⁶² According to Law no. 448/2006 on the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, re-edited, amended by the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 60/2017, whereby private companies and other public entities with over 50 employees have the obligation to employ a certain minimum number of people with disabilities, according to the legislation in force. If they do not have the specified number of persons with disabilities hired, they owe the state a monthly tax, an amount of money equal to the gross minimum income for each person with disabilities that they did not hire, the money thus raised being discharged into the state budget.

⁶³ Strategy of the Government of Romania for the Inclusion of the Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for 2015–2020 [„Strategia Guvernului României de Incluziune a Cetăţenilor Români aparţinând Minorităţii Rome pentru perioada 2015-2020”]. The Romanian version is available at: www.anr.gov.ro/index.php/anr/strategia; the English version is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_romania_strategy2_en.pdf

design of public policies and poor implementation results. The collection and publication of qualitative and quantitative data would support the process of eliminating discrimination on the labour market against Roma (and other vulnerable groups), as well as the identification of solutions and measures appropriate for the employment and professional development issues persons of Roma origin face.

According to public statements made by Roma leaders,⁶⁴ Roma people do indeed face discrimination based on their residential area, physical aspect, etc., but these actions are not followed by complaints filed to the competent authorities, nor by public cases, etc. Access to employment and qualifications records most of the complaints.

Employment alternatives in areas with limited primary labour market demand

In accordance with the Romanian NRIS,⁶⁵ Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority will be able to benefit from the measures financed by the European Social Fund 2014-2020. Within the framework of the Human Capital Operational Programme, two axes are targeting Roma:

- "Priority Axis 4" - Social inclusion and combating poverty (one of the four objectives is to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in marginalized communities where there is a population belonging to the Roma minority through the implementation of integrated measures);
- "Priority Axis 5" - Local development under the responsibility of the community (one of the two objectives is to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in marginalized communities (Roma and non-Roma) in cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants, with emphasis on those belonging to the Roma minority, by implementing integrated measures/operations in the context of the CLLD Mechanism).

All of them aim at encouraging the entry or stay in the labour market for people from disadvantaged communities and vulnerable groups while ensuring the transition from the social protection system to the labour market. All operational programmes include target groups, actions and budget for the Roma ethnics/Roma communities, through integrated services, including employment measures.

Because the European Social Fund 2014-2020 funds vocational counselling and training for social entrepreneurs, social economy/social inclusion entities, as well as socio-economic integration measures for people from marginalised communities, including those with a significant share of Roma citizens, as well as the development of social services infrastructure in communities, a number of projects have also taken this into account, and most initiatives in the field of employment in the last years have been carried out by public authority institutions or non-governmental organisations, which implement projects funded by the European Social Fund - the Human Capital Operational Programme.

⁶⁴ Ciprian Neca - https://www.romaniatv.net/de-ce-sunt-discriminati-romii-de-cand-se-foloseste-cuvantul-rom-in-romania-analiza_279477.html; https://adevarul.ro/international/europa/adevarul-live-ora-1100-romii-dingermania-viata-mai-abuzarea-ajutoarelor-sociale-1_534648cc0d133766a8a7b099/index.html

Amnesty International, <https://www.aktual24.ro/acuzatii-externe-romii-din-romania-de-confrunta-cu-o-discriminare-sistematica/>;

⁶⁵ Strategy of the Government of Romania for the Inclusion of the Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for 2015–2020 [„Strategia Guvernului României de Incluziune a Cetăţenilor Români aparţinând Minorităţii Rome pentru perioada 2015-2020”]. The Romanian version is available at: www.anr.gov.ro/index.php/anr/strategia; the English version is available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_romania_strategy2_en.pdf

Moreover, Roma youth (between 16-24 years old) can benefit from measures targeting their integration into the labour market or the improvement of their skills, especially those who are not employed, enrolled in education or training, as well as from the "Youth Guarantee" measures included in the Romanian NRIS. Concrete actions targeting young people and encouraging them to access employment services adapted to current social changes, especially targeting young Roma women and men, are not relevant enough or they are not very well known, thus being isolated models of success.

Integrated services are also supported by the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme aiming at reducing economic and social disparities within the enlarged European Union, based on the Framework Agreement signed in Bern in 2010 between the Swiss Federal Council and the Government of Romania.⁶⁶ "Annex 4" of the Framework Agreement introduces the "Thematic Fund for the Inclusion of Roma and Other Vulnerable Groups" with a total budget of 14,000,000 CHF for a period of ten years, with the objective of supporting Romania in promoting social inclusion and participation of the Roma and other vulnerable groups in the country's socio-economic life. Although education and health are the priority areas of co-funded activities under "Line 1", the co-funded activities under "Line 2" aimed at supporting the economic empowerment of Roma and other vulnerable groups and included employment measures as well.

An important aspect of ensuring women's access to work is the availability of childcare services. The lack of childcare services, especially in small communities and the poor service quality makes it impossible for many parents, especially mothers, to get a job, limiting their daily activity to raising children. This reduces the chances for many Roma families of increasing their income and strengthening or developing the balance between their responsibilities as parents. In 2018, the NGO "Save the Children" Romania published the report titled "The Costs of Free Education"⁶⁷ which shows that in Romania public education is free only in theory, because in practice parents have to pay on average more than 3,000 RON for a child. The study concludes that children from families with reduced financial resources are more vulnerable and discriminated against.

Addressing barriers and disincentives of employment

There are no recent (in the last five years) researches and analyses of the labour market barriers Roma people face. The recent ones rather refer to the discrimination women face in the labour market, but with little to no emphasis on Roma women. Not NAE, nor the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice are interested in finding out what is keeping Roma away from the labour market, why they are confronted with such high unemployment rate, especially when it comes to legal working contracts.

When it comes to the issue of transition from social benefits to employment, we can only mention the recent increase of the monthly allowance of approximately 490 EUR for employers who hire unemployed people over 45 years of age, unemployed persons who are single parents, long-term unemployed or young people who are not enrolled in education, employment or training, categories that also suit Roma. So far, the impact of such a measure has not been measured yet.

⁶⁶ www.romainclusionfund.ro, accessed on 23.11.2018;

⁶⁷ „Save the Children” Romania (2018). „The Costs of Free Education” - <https://www.salvaticopiii.ro/afla-mai-multe/publicatii>

HOUSING AND ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES

The housing conditions of Roma in Romania have slightly improved since 2011: more people have access to tap water, sanitary infrastructure and electricity, but there are still big differences between the majority population and the Roma, many of the latter living in very poor conditions.⁶⁸

Spatial segregation of the Roma remains a challenge. More than half of the Roma, as identified by the *SocioRoMap* research project,⁶⁹ live in spatially segregated communities (with less than 150 people), situated on the periphery of villages or towns, with at primary school being located at a distance of at least 15 minutes by foot, and inhabited by people living in large households, in overcrowded houses, and in poor conditions. Discrimination when accessing social housing is still present and there are very few initiatives to fight it.⁷⁰ Forced evictions mostly affecting vulnerable Roma communities⁷¹ are still an issue in several parts of the country.

Little effort has been made by the government for improving the housing conditions of the Roma: those 300 social houses that were meant to be built since 2008 are still not finalised;⁷² the programme for free property tabulation is on-going, but there are no updates on its implementation status.⁷³ Efforts to promote integrated approaches to housing issues via ERDF and ESF are still limited. Only 38 municipalities have managed to access EU funds dedicated to Local Development Strategies (CLLD).⁷⁴

There is no legislation to prevent spatial segregation and discrimination in housing. There are no effective large-scale policies designed to solve the poor housing conditions of vulnerable people.

Access to basic amenities

The various versions of public policies promoted since 2015 (especially the National Housing Strategy 2016-2030, not yet adopted),⁷⁵ but still not adopted start from the premise that one of the significant challenges which should be pursued is to ensure access to "adequate housing conditions for all categories of people by 2030 by means of identifying measures and creating the necessary instruments". As the year 2020 is

⁶⁸ FRA, A Persisting Concern: Anti-Gypsyism as a Barrier to Roma Inclusion (FRA: Luxembourg, 2018) at 43-45, online at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/roma-inclusion>

⁶⁹ Socio-graphic mapping of the Roma Communities in Romania for a community-level monitoring of changes with regard to Roma integration (SocioRoMap) (2017) <http://www.ispmn.gov.ro/page/socioromap>

⁷⁰ Desire Foundation, the case brought to court by Desire Foundation. It challenged the discriminatory criteria laid down by the Cluj-Napoca City Hall for accessing social housing, which put vulnerable people at a disadvantage. <https://www.desire-ro.eu/?m=201807> (accessed on 18.10.2018).

⁷¹ FRA, Fundamental Rights Report 2017, FRA Opinions (FRA: Luxembourg, 2018) at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/fundamental-rights-report-2017-fra-opinions>

⁷² In 2008, the Romanian Government adopted the Governmental Decision no. 1237/2008 regarding the approval of the Social Housing Pilot Programme for Roma Communities, which aimed to build 300 units of social housing for Roma people, distributed in all 8 development regions, with the local authorities in charge of infrastructure work, land, building permits, technical approvals, etc. Recent information shows that the programme is on-going, but there are no updates regarding the number of units built.

⁷³ The Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration (MRDPA) is implementing the National Programme of Land Surveyors and Land Register that tabulates properties for free; no recent information is available.

⁷⁴ The list of the evaluation and selection process of Local Development Strategies is available at: http://www.fonduri-ue.ro/images/files/programe/CU/POCU-2014/2018/16.02/Rezultatele_finale_ale_procesului_de_selec%C8%9Bie_SDL_februarie2018.pdf

⁷⁵ Th „National Housing Strategy” Project for 2016-2030 available at: www.mmediu.ro/app/webroot/uploads/files/2017-01-13_Strategia_Nationala_a_Locuirii_2016-2030.pdf

getting closer, according to Europe 2020,⁷⁶ European institutions asked the Member States in 2010 to take measures to fight poverty and social exclusion; however, very few actions have been undertaken.

In 2017, Romania was, after Bulgaria, the country with the second biggest percentage of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU. The percentage of GDP for social protection is small: in Romania, the ratio of social benefits by the number of inhabitants is almost seven times lower than the EU average.⁷⁷ It should be noted that the little money allocated for social protection is used ineffectively, judging by the variations in the poverty rate after social transfers as compared to the rate prior to transfers, an indicator according to which Romania is the last in the hierarchy of EU countries.

Over half of the Roma (59.1 per cent) identified within the *SocioRoMap* research project⁷⁸ live in a compact Roma community⁷⁹ (of which only 6.9 per cent is made up of less than 20 households). The study conducted in 2015 identified eight compact communities with over 1,000 households, some considered to be inhabited exclusively by Roma people. Of the 2,225 compact communities, 987 are situated inside the locality

⁷⁶ Communication for the Commission. Europe 2020. A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth COM (2010) 2020 final - available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

⁷⁷ Eurostat database, online at: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/setupDownloads.do> for people at risk of social exclusion before social transfers. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=t2020_52&plugin=1 for people at risk of poverty and social exclusion after social transfers.

The analysis of the two indicators is available on the „Social Monitor” website: (<https://monitorsocial.ro/indicator/riscul-de-saracie-inainte-si-dupa-transferurile-sociale-2017/>)

⁷⁸ “Socio-graphic mapping of the Roma Communities in Romania for a community-level monitoring of changes with regard to Roma integration (SocioRoMap)” (2017) online at: <http://www.ispmn.gov.ro/page/socioromap> Horvath I. (ed) (2017).

The research was carried out using a questionnaire sent to all Romanian municipalities (3,182) with a response rate of 97.5 per cent. Consideration was given to R. Jenkins’ model (2008: *Rethinking Ethnicity, Arguments and Explorations*, 2nd Edition, London: Sage) regarding the construction of ethnic identity and the relationship between external categorisation and internal categorisation. The research also took into account the social contexts of classification. The survey „made a formal categorisation whereby a central institution surveyed local authorities about the presence of Roma communities. On the other hand, the investigation was obviously based on an external classification (or hetero-identification, according to the term in the literature on Roma in Eastern Europe)” (2017: 13).

Data was collected to carry out a comprehensive community census of the Roma communities in administrative-territorial units; a brief scan of specialised social service providers of the local public authorities, and the various social transfers provided at the local level; and multi-dimensional mapping/description of Roma communities characterised by compact housing, aiming to provide their structured description, as well as to identify the difficulties they face, including their state of marginalization and vulnerability.

The survey included filling out two questionnaires (A and B) by an employee of the designated city hall, preferably a social worker. Questionnaire A referred to the ATU and questionnaire B referred to each compact Roma group/community on the investigated territory. The focus was on the visible Roma communities, relying on the external perception (hetero-identification) of the town hall staff with responsibilities in the social field. The study took into account that „visibility” (i.e. the fact that a group of people are identified as Roma) is of several kinds: social „visibility”, in many cases the lifestyle perceived as characteristic of the Roma is associated with social marginality (and it is even the pretext of social exclusion); another form of „visibility” is the cultural one, which is not necessarily associated with social marginality (traditional Roma). From the outset, the researchers made the assumption that Roma people who are not identifiable and are not distinguishable by their way of life had little chance of being included in the investigation (2017: 14). Several data validation methods were used (2017: 17).

⁷⁹ The compact Roma community is a community of Roma people gathered in a space that reflects „the existence of a local stratification system, compact housing indicating an asymmetric way of inclusion at the local level and at the level of the territorial administrative unit, a marginal positioning of these communities”.

(44.4 per cent), while the rest are on the outskirts, outside or even within settlements inhabited exclusively by Roma.

Access to the community was reported in 35 cases, which means that there are walls or barriers on the shortest road between the community and the centre of the village, rivers without a bridge, fenced properties through which passage is forbidden. In these 35 communities, it is estimated that at the time of data collection there were 4,750 households with 14,218 people.

In 80 per cent of the compact communities, a grocery store can be reached by walking for less than 15 minutes. Only 56 per cent have a primary school nearby (accessible by walking for less than 15 minutes), while for the rest of the communities, children have to walk for over 15 minutes. It was found that in 135 compact communities, children are in a difficult or very difficult situation, as they have to walk more than 30 minutes to reach school. The City Hall is easily accessible to only 29 per cent, and the doctor's office to only 35 per cent.

The 2013 study quoted in the research report "Informal Housing in Romania"⁸⁰ points out that 1,198 informal settlements were identified in Romania (only half of the local public authorities responded to the questionnaire), in which 49,338 homes are occupied by 63,492 families. More than half (59 per cent) of those living in these informal settlements are Roma; the authors of the study estimated that in Romania over 60,000 Roma families "live in informal housing, on the outskirts of villages and towns, without having ownership documents for the land on which their house is built, without building permits and documents for their properties, and having limited or no access to basic utilities and road infrastructure, in many cases the position of the house endangering residents' safety and health" (2018: 6).

The living conditions of Roma in Romania have not improved considerably; they have not kept up with Romania's economic and social development. While in 1998 the average living area per person in the case of Roma was 8 m² (12 m² for the majority), in 2012 it went up to 13.16 m² but was two times less than for the majority population (26 m²).⁸¹ The same remark concerning the improvement of living conditions is identified in the FRA data:⁸² the room/person indicator (excluding kitchen) was 0.5 in 2011 and 0.7 in 2016.

In 2012,⁸³ three-quarters of the Roma used wood stoves for heating, while the same heating was used by 48 per cent of the majority population (a 27 per cent difference). It is very important to note that two per cent of Roma households have no heating at all (they cannot afford it) in the winter conditions of a temperate continental climate.

In 2012,⁸⁴ 22 per cent of households were without property ownership documents. This was an improvement compared to 1998 when 37 per cent of households were in this

⁸⁰ Locuire informală în România (2018) [Informal housing in Romania]. Fundatia PACT, Asociația Make Better, Asociația DEP - Bumbesti-Jiu, Grupul de inițiativă Valea Corbului, Grupul de Acțiune Local Resșița (Corbului Valley Initiative Group, Resita Local Action Group). Bucharest

⁸¹ „Împreună” Agency (2013). Romii din România. De la țap ispășitor la motor de dezvoltare. [The Roma from Romania. From Scapegoat to Development Engine]. Bucharest

⁸² FRA, A Persisting Concern: Anti-Gypsyism as a Barrier to Roma Inclusion (FRA: Luxembourg, 2018) online at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/roma-inclusion>

⁸³ „Împreună” Agency. (2013). Romii din România. De la țap ispășitor la motor de dezvoltare [The Roma from Romania. From Scapegoat to Development Engine]. Bucharest: Agenția de Dezvoltare Comunitară „Împreună”

⁸⁴ *Idem*

situation. But seven per cent of people in Roma households stated they had been evicted from their home or the land where they had lived in the past ten years.⁸⁵

Data gathered in 2011 indicated a 36 per cent employment rate⁸⁶ among Roma, of whom only 25 per cent said they had an employment contract. Based on this data, one can infer that most Roma cannot afford bank loans to purchase a house.⁸⁷

Regarding Roma people's access to housing, one must keep in mind discrimination. According to the FRA report (2018),⁸⁸ in 2011, 29 per cent of the Roma respondents in Romania stated that they felt discriminated on grounds of ethnicity when looking for housing. There is some improvement in this respect, as in 2016, only 13 per cent of the respondents gave the same answer to the same question.

In 2016, 68 per cent of the Roma (36 per cent of the majority population) had no access to water in the home.⁸⁹ Compared to 2011,⁹⁰ there was an improvement of 9 per cent for the Roma population and 8 per cent for the majority population. It should be noted, however, that in 2012,⁹¹ 26 per cent of the Roma did not have access to running water, and 17 per cent did not benefit from this service although it was available in the area. According to FRA 2018,⁹² the proportion of the Roma population with access to drinking water inside the house (32 per cent in 2016) was at the same level as in countries like Bhutan, Ghana and Nepal.

In 2016, 95 per cent of Roma households had access to electricity.⁹³ In 2011, the percentage was 87, so there is an improvement. However, in 2012, seven per cent said they did not have access to electricity, although this facility was available in their area.⁹⁴

According to data on access to sewerage in 2012,⁹⁵ 16.7 per cent of Roma households did not have access to the sewage system, although this service was available in the neighbourhood. In the case of the compact (segregated) Roma communities identified in

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

⁸⁶ The category included every person who worked for at least one hour, whether paid or not, in the family or outside the family during the week prior to the interview. Employees on sick leave, child care, and so on were also included. (definition of the International Labour Organization)

⁸⁷ Tarnosvchi D. ed. (2012). *Romii din România, Bulgaria, Italia și Spania, între incluziune socială și migrație*. [Roma from Romania, Bulgaria, Italy and Spain, between social inclusion and migration] Fundația Soros România: Bucharest.

⁸⁸ FRA, *A Persisting Concern: Anti-Gypsyism as a Barrier to Roma Inclusion* (FRA: Luxembourg, 2018) online at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/roma-inclusion>

⁸⁹ FRA, *A Persisting Concern: Anti-Gypsyism as a Barrier to Roma Inclusion* (FRA: Luxembourg, 2018) online at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/roma-inclusion>

⁹⁰ FRA, *A Persisting Concern: Anti-Gypsyism as a Barrier to Roma Inclusion* (FRA: Luxembourg, 2018) online at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/roma-inclusion>

⁹¹ *Împreună* Agency (2013). *Romii din România. De la țap ispășitor la motor de dezvoltare* [The Roma from Romania. From Scapegoat to Development Engine]. Bucharest: Agenția de Dezvoltare Comunitară „Împreună”

⁹² FRA, *A Persisting Concern: Anti-Gypsyism as a Barrier to Roma Inclusion* (FRA: Luxembourg, 2018) online at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/roma-inclusion>

⁹³ FRA, *A Persisting Concern: Anti-Gypsyism as a Barrier to Roma Inclusion* (FRA: Luxembourg, 2018) online at: <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/roma-inclusion>

⁹⁴ *Împreună* Agency (2013). *Romii din România. De la țap ispășitor la motor de dezvoltare* [The Roma from Romania. From Scapegoat to Development Engine]. Bucharest: Agenția de Dezvoltare Comunitară „Împreună”

⁹⁵ *Idem*

SocioRoMap in 2015 (177,525 households inhabited by 722,844 people), only 14 per cent of the households were connected to the sewerage system.⁹⁶

There are no sanctions or incentives for local authorities to provide basic infrastructure (water, sewage, electricity, roads) for every Romanian resident.

In the years leading up to the economic crisis, but also after the recovery, Romania experienced a real estate boom, especially in the developed areas of the country that managed to attract investment. Despite legislation that states that local public authorities need to provide basic infrastructure when they issue a construction permit, legal solutions have been identified for LPAs to avoid consequences resulting from failure to comply. For the poor, marginal communities, data reflects the lack of interest and of public policies to address infrastructure access issues. Making efforts for informal communities is out of the question; there is a total lack of interest in this respect in most LPAs.⁹⁷

Access to secure and affordable housing

In the absence of a housing strategy, the Housing Act no. 114/1996 regulates the allocation of social housing. Granting social housing in Romania is unclear from a legal point of view, which results in the exclusion of disadvantaged people who truly need social housing.

According to Law no. 114/1996 (Article 42), social housing is “a dwelling whose rent is subsidized and granted to persons or families who based on their economic situation cannot afford to own or rent a dwelling under the existing market conditions.”

In 2016, a study analysing the legal framework and the process of granting social housing noted that a major issue with legislation was precisely the definition of eligibility thresholds for the beneficiaries, which covers just about the entire population.⁹⁸ The selection criteria are to be interpreted by town halls, each administrative unit being allowed to set their own criteria and award different scores.

The afore-mentioned study is not the only one that signals such distortions that lead to the fact that applicants in precarious economic conditions often score less than those with higher incomes. In October 2017, the Desire Foundation reported to the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) that the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca uses criteria for granting social housing that eliminates “applicants belonging to marginalized social categories, not awarding scores for chronic diseases or poor housing conditions in unconventional homes or to those who, due to economic conditions, did not have the chance to pursue university studies.” CNCD decided in favour of the Desire Foundation and set a 3,000 RON fine to be paid by the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca. The City Hall appealed the decision in court, but in June 2018, the Court of Appeal in Cluj-Napoca decided in favour of the Desire Foundation.⁹⁹

The 2016 report notes that the number of social housing units is very low (in the last census merely 28,000 social housing units were recorded) because it is difficult for a

⁹⁶ Socio-graphic mapping of the Roma Communities in Romania for a community-level monitoring of changes with regard to Roma integration (*SocioRoMap*) (2017) online at: <http://www.ispmn.gov.ro/page/socioromap>

⁹⁷ Interview with Bogdan Suditu, University Lecturer, Faculty of Geography, Department of Human and Economic Geography, former Head of Service in the General Directorate for Regional Development within the Ministry of Regional Development (2007-2013).

⁹⁸ Ghiță, A.F., Ciucu, C. (2016). *Locuire socială în București. Între lege și realitate* [Social housing in Bucharest. Between law and reality]. Bucharest

⁹⁹ All information is available on the Desire Foundation web site: <https://www.desire-ro.eu/?cat=146>

space to be identified as living space on account of legislative provisions imposing certain standards.¹⁰⁰

By Government Decision no. 1237/2008 regarding the approval of the Social Housing Pilot Programme for Roma Communities, the Government of Romania adopted the pilot programme "Social housing for Roma communities",¹⁰¹ which aims to build 300 social housing units for the Roma, distributed across the eight development regions, with local authorities in charge of infrastructure works, land, building permits, technical approvals, etc. According to the latest public data in 2016, 294 units were included in the programme out of 300, 42 had been completed by the end of 2015 and 49 in 2016. Unfortunately, there is no other more recent data on the website of the Ministry of Development and Public Administration.

Effectiveness of housing benefits and social assistance to maintain housing

Depending on the beneficiary, social benefits are grouped as follows:

1. Social benefits for families with children: These include child allowance, childcare allowance, financial incentive for parents' return to work after parental leave, family allowance, parental allowance for housing adopted children, family allowance/children living in foster families.

2. Social benefits for low-income people and families: These include social benefits for minimum guaranteed income, emergency aid, funeral aid, heating aid.

Government Emergency Aid - (Law 416/2001 on Minimum Guaranteed Income), upon the initiative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice, the Government can provide emergency aid to families and people affected by natural disasters, fires, accidents, as well as for other special situations due to the state of health or other causes that may lead to the risk of social exclusion, as well as in other situations established by Government's decision. The amount is set by the Government in a Government Decision. The maximum limit of this emergency aid granted by the Government was set in 2018 at 10,000 RON, depending on the emergency or the special situations faced. Emergency relief provided by the mayoralties is to support the family/person in need as a consequence of natural disasters, fires, accidents, as well as other special situations, established by local council decision. A person/family can benefit from both aids if they are granted complementarily so that each aid covers a part of the damage. However, this aid is granted on a one-time only basis.

Heating aid is granted to single persons and families who cannot afford to pay for heating during the cold season. Granting this aid is stipulated in the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 70/2011 on social protection measures during the cold season. The amount is granted from the local budget. During the cold season of 2018-2019, allocation of heating aid is stipulated in the Government Ordinance no. 27/2013 on social protection measures during the cold season, amending Emergency Ordinance no. 70/2011, as well as in the Emergency Ordinance no. 93/2016 and Government Decision no. 559/2017.

The heating aid is granted on a monthly basis (during the cold season) for heating, natural gas, wood, coal, and petroleum fuels and is calculated depending on the family

¹⁰⁰ Ghiță, A.F., Ciucu, C. (2016). Locuire socială în București. Între lege și realitate [Social housing in Bucharest. Between law and reality]. Bucharest

¹⁰¹ Governmental Decision no. 1237/2008 regarding the approval of the Social Housing Pilot Programme for Roma communities, available in Romanian at:
http://www.dreptonline.ro/legislatie/hg_program_pilot_locuinte_pentru_romi_1237_2008.php.

income and type of heating used. It is granted only if the family/person is a legal resident (owner or holder of a rent contract).

As of 1 April 2017, the minimum inclusion income was meant to come into force (Law no. 196/2016 on Minimum Inclusion Income), which was supposed to combine the provisions of the three current anti-poverty programmes - the guaranteed minimum income, family allowances, and heating aid – into a single programme. This programme aims to provide inclusion aid to cover daily living needs. However, by Government Emergency Ordinance no. 82/2017, the government postponed the entry into force of the Law 196/2016 until April 1, 2019. Initially, it should have entered into force on April 1, 2018, and it would have changed the scheme for granting subsidies for heating homes radically. The Government explained the delay by stating that the national IT system for social assistance needs to be set up first, as local authorities are not yet able to process the data on aid applicants.

In conclusion, heating subsidies are granted to everyone, according to the decisions taken by the local public authorities regarding the percentage by which they subsidize heating for buildings connected to the central heating system (GEO no. 115/2001 and Law no. 84/2002).

In 2015, based on responses received from social work offices in town halls (97.5 per cent response rate), *SocioRomap*¹⁰² found the following data:

	<i>Total families</i>	<i>Of which Roma</i>	<i>% Roma among the beneficiaries</i>	<i>% beneficiaries out of Roma families</i>
MGI	248,055	97,023	39.1	31.8
Family aid	320,446	76,642	23.9	25.1
Heating aid	692,761	133,898	19.7	44.7

At the national level, 25 per cent of Roma families receive the MGI.

3. Social benefits for people with disabilities: In addition to all these social benefits, people at risk of social marginalization could benefit from rent subsidies. Law no. 116/2002 on the prevention and fight against social marginalization stipulates that persons up to the age of 35, who are unable to afford a dwelling on their own finances, shall receive support from the county councils and the General Council of the Municipality of Bucharest: a) amounts or quotas set aside from the state revenues, established annually by the law of the state budget; b) a quota established annually from the own budget of the county council, and of the General Council of the Municipality of Bucharest; c) an annual fee established by law for individuals who own non-rented dwellings other than their home of residence; d) donations, sponsorships or other such sources, accepted in accordance with the law. According to the law, the county council, and the General Council of Bucharest Municipality shall cover the estimated amount of the advance payment to be paid for the purchase of a dwelling or the rent for a period of up to three years for a rented dwelling. Support is provided for the construction, purchase and rent of a dwelling. The hierarchy of beneficiaries is as follows: a) young people in foster care and in children's centres within specialized public services and private bodies authorized in the field of child protection; b) families up to 35 years of age with children; c) Families up to 35 years of age without children; d) other people under the age of 35 years.

The law defines social marginalization as the peripheral social position, the isolation of individuals or groups with limited access to the economic, political, educational and

¹⁰² Socio-graphic mapping of the Roma Communities in Romania for a community-level monitoring of changes regarding Roma integration (SocioRoMap) (2017), pp. 60-65, online at: <http://www.ispmn.gov.ro/page/socioromap>

communication resources. Marginalisation is construed as the absence of minimum social living conditions.

Unfortunately, there is no clear data on law enforcement. According to the interview with Bogdan Suditu,¹⁰³ there is a budget allocated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Justice to implement this law that is being spent, but there is no clear evidence and a clear report on how public money is spent. In an interview with one of the Directorates General for social protection in Bucharest, we learned that the subsidy for rent is granted only as emergency aid to those families that receive state protection.

Fight against residential segregation, discrimination and other forms of antigypsyism in housing

The project "Sociological Mapping of Roma Communities in Romania to Monitor Changes on Roma Inclusion at Community Level" (*SocioRoMap*) was implemented between November 2014 and April 2017 by the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, together with its partners, the Open Society Foundation - Bucharest and the Research Centre for Interethnic Relations – Cluj-Napoca, and with the support of the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union (FRA). The research aimed to map the segregated and poor Roma communities across the country. Data collection entailed collaboration with various networks of local specialists, alternative networks covering the localities at the national level. The research produced accurate maps with the location of segregated and marginalized Roma communities. The Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities is a public institution, a legal entity subordinated to the Government and coordinated by the Department for Interethnic Relations.

SocioRoMap was conducted by a consortium led by a Romanian state institution which aimed, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, at mapping segregated and poor Roma communities across the country in order to provide consistent data to state authorities in order to improve public policies for the social inclusion of Roma communities. The study included the production of maps with the accurate location of poor and marginal Roma communities and an aggregated index of the degree of marginalization and isolation of compact Roma communities. The index registers values between zero and eight, values between five and eight signalling a tendency to marginalization/socio-spatial isolation (segregation and isolation), values between 3 and 4 signalling a relatively peripheral position, values between one and two signalling early signs of socio-spatial differentiation. The index was calculated for 2,026 compact communities (96.2 per cent of all those identified). It has been found that there are 58 compact communities with the index value above five, which signals marginalization/socio-spatial isolation; 356 communities got an index value pointing at a relatively peripheral position; for 1,115 communities there is information indicating minor signs of socio-spatial differentiation; and for the rest of 697 communities, socio-spatial positioning does not seem problematic (2017: 99, 100).

Romania ratified the "International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination",¹⁰⁴ which states that racial segregation and apartheid have to be condemned and the state should prevent, prohibit and eliminate all such practices. Romania also ratified the "European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms"¹⁰⁵ and "Protocol 12 on the prohibition of discrimination".¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Interview with Bogdan Suditu, University Lecturer, Faculty of Geography, Department of Human and Economic Geography, former Head of Service of the General Directorate for Regional Development within the Ministry of Regional Development (2007-2013).

¹⁰⁴ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination:
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cerd.aspx>

¹⁰⁵ The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms:
<https://www.echr.coe.int/Pages/home.aspx?p=basictexts&c>

However, Romania has also ratified the "Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities", whose Article 16 states that "The Parties shall refrain from measures which alter the proportions of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities and are aimed at restricting the rights and freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present framework Convention."

In General Recommendation 19, "The prevention, prohibition and eradication of racial segregation and apartheid issued by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination",¹⁰⁷ it is stipulated that "The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination calls the attention of State parties to the wording of article 3 by which State parties undertake to prevent, prohibit and eradicate all practices of racial segregation and apartheid in territories under their jurisdiction. The reference to apartheid may have been directed exclusively to South Africa, but the article as adopted prohibits all forms of racial segregation in all countries."

According to the Romanian Constitution, treaties ratified by Parliament become part of the national legislation without the need for further legislation amendments. If these treaties concern human rights, they take precedence over national legislation. The Romanian Constitution¹⁰⁸ includes provisions for preventing and combating discrimination on grounds of race, nationality, ethnic origin, language, religion, sex, opinion, political convictions, property, and social origin. Also, article 16 states that "citizens are equal before the law and public authorities without any privilege or discrimination". Government Ordinance no. 137/2000 for the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination emphasises constitutional provisions on equality and the law is implemented by the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD).

The impact of the Race Equality Directive in the area of housing may be assessed by the number of cases brought before the relevant body and courts of justice that cite breaches of anti-discrimination legislation (Government Ordinance no. 137/2000)¹⁰⁹. According to an interview conducted with an NCCD member, in the last three years, only three complaints have been filed concerning evacuation, one case related to social housing allocation, and five related to renting (of which some cases were approached upon NCCD's own initiative).

However, in the Romanian legislation that regulates social housing and construction, there is no specific provision to prohibit segregation based on ethnicity.

According to Housing Law no. 114/1996, local public authorities are to decide on the number and location of social housing. If provisions of international treaties are not incorporated into the national law, most local authorities will ignore them. Results achieved so far indicate the following: social housing for Roma has been located far from public infrastructure and as far as possible from the localities (see below the cases of forced evictions and places of resettlement of evicted persons: Cluj-Napoca - Pata Rât,¹¹⁰ Baia Mare - Cuprom).

¹⁰⁶ „Protocol 12 on the prohibition of discrimination”: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/177>

¹⁰⁷ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, General Recommendation 19, The prevention, prohibition and eradication of racial segregation and apartheid (Forty-seventh session, 1995), U.N. Doc. A/50/18 at 140 (1995)

¹⁰⁸ Romanian Constitution, Art. 10 and Art. 20.

¹⁰⁹ Niță D. Housing Conditions of Roma and Travelers, (Bucharest: Center for Legal Resources, 2009), p. 15.

¹¹⁰ Dohotaru A., Harbula H., Vincze E. (2016). "Pata", Cluj, ed. Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene: Cluj

The National Housing Strategy 2016-2030, which has not been yet adopted,¹¹¹ refers to ethnic segregation. In a document made public by the Ministry of Development and Public Administration in 2015, it was acknowledged that more than half of the Roma households are located in settlements where the majority are Roma ethnics (unfortunately, the document does not refer to the source of the data used in the argumentation). The first objective of the strategy was to amend laws and institutions, which would have brought about changes in primary¹¹² and secondary¹¹³ legislation. The first step was to amend the Housing Law no. 114/1996 to be replaced by a general framework for clarifications. These would include the definition of spatial segregation, which is regarded to be strongly correlated with social segregation. According to the document that was sent to us for public consultation, "segregation refers to the territorial and implicitly social separation of different social categories with different racial, ethnic, cultural, socio-professional or income characteristics. This separation always involves a physical-territorial aspect". As mentioned, the document was not adopted, and the Ministry of Development and Public Administration does not seem to consider drafting a new strategic document in this area.

Another document that was adopted and put into practice is the Applicant's Guide to "Integrated Local Development" (DLI 3600) in marginalized communities with population belonging to the Roma minority, call for applications being funded under "Priority Axis 4 - Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction" within the framework of the Human Capital Operational Programme (HCOP) 2014-2020. This document clearly states that projects which "create segregated facilities (especially housing and school facilities) are ineligible".

The Applicant's Guide to "Implementing local development strategies in marginalized communities in rural areas and/or cities with a population of up to 20,000", for proposals financed under the Human Capital Operational Programme 2014-2020, "Axis 5 - Local Development under the responsibility of the community" has an enclosed Appendix 5. This document contains general information and examples on combating segregation that can be used in an integrated approach to segregated communities, where appropriate. Thus, the EC Guidance Note for Member States for the Use of Structural Funds and Investments in Combating Territorial and School Segregation¹¹⁴ and the Regulations on the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund, the Structural Funds and the Investment Funds cannot be used to generate or perpetuate segregation. The basic principles outlined in the EC Guidance Note are reiterated here: non-segregation (European funds cannot be used to lead to isolation) and desegregation (European funds must be used for the elimination and reduction of segregation).

¹¹¹ Draft - National Housing Strategy 2016-2030, available in Romanian at:

www.mmediu.ro/app/webroot/uploads/files/2017-01-13_Strategia_Nationala_a_Locuirii_2016-2030.pdf

¹¹² The Civil Code, the Fiscal Code, Housing Law no. 114/1996, Law no. 230/2007 regarding the establishment, organisation and functioning of owners' associations, OUG no. 40/1999 on the protection of tenants and the establishment of rent for residential purposes

¹¹³ The housing construction programme for young people to rent, carried out by NHA - Law no. 152/1998; The social construction programme for the Roma communities, carried out through NHA - GD no. 1237/2008; The programme for renting accommodation, made by attracting private capital - GD no. 352/2012; The programme „Romanian village revival - 10 houses for specialists” - GD no. 151/2010; The social housing construction programme for tenants evicted from nationalized houses - GEO no. 74/2007; Social housing construction programme - Law no. 114/1996; Programme on State Premium Insurance for Collective Savings and Lending - GEO no. 99/2006; Annual Action Programmes on the Design and Execution of Intervention Actions for Seismic Risk Reduction - GE no. 20/1994.

¹¹⁴

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/thematic_guidance_fiche_segregation_en.pdf

In 2015, *SocioRoMap*¹¹⁵ identified eight compact communities with over 1,000 households, some considered to be inhabited by Roma only (location: Mureş, Bihor, Satu Mare, and Sălaj counties).

According to the interview with an NCCD member, only three eviction complaints were filed in the last three years, one case related to the manner of granting social housing and five cases related to rents (some of the cases were investigated upon the initiative of NCCD). There are no decisions regarding these cases.

One important case with an outcome is the one reported to the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) by the Desire Foundation in October 2017. The argument of the case referred to the fact that the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca uses criteria for granting social housing which eliminates “applicants belonging to marginalized social categories, not awarding scores for chronic diseases or poor housing conditions in unconventional homes or to those who, due to economic conditions, did not have the chance to get college education.” NCCD decided in favour of the Desire Foundation and set a 3,000 RON fine to be paid by the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca. As it was expected, the City Hall appealed the decision in court. In June 2018, the Court of Appeal in Cluj-Napoca decided in favour of the Desire Foundation.¹¹⁶

No concrete measures have been taken to break down the wall built by the City Hall in Baia Mare to separate the Roma community from the rest of the locality under the pretext of ensuring the safety of those living in social housing buildings on Horea Street. The mayor declared that the wall would protect the inhabitants of the Roma community, especially children, from not being hit by the cars passing by the road nearby. Everybody considered it as a lame excuse.

The National Council for Combating Discrimination fined the City Hall of Baia Mare, decision that was appealed in court. The trial reached the High Court of Cassation and Justice, which gave the National Council for Combating Discrimination the right to appeal against the Mayor of Baia Mare, Cătălin Cherecheş. Thus, the High Court of Cassation and Justice (HCCJ) panel decided that the mayor should pay the 6,000 RON fine for the construction of the wall on Horea Street, which indeed was paid the very day after the fine was set. However, magistrates did not mandate the demolition of the wall, which is still standing.

According to the FRA report (2017),¹¹⁷ a small percentage (11 per cent) of Roma in Romania consider that they live in polluted, dirty and otherwise difficult environments, that are being affected by smoke, dust and bad smells or polluted water, as compared to their neighbours who belong to the ethnic majority (16.8 per cent). However, it should be pointed out that in some cases Roma are confronted with such situations.

In Baia Mare, some of the Roma who lived illegally on certain lands were moved by the town hall to the office building of the former Cuprom refinery. Some of the informal communities are located on the river bank, where they are at risk of flooding. Others are located under high-voltage wires, where no one should live.

¹¹⁵ Socio-graphic mapping of the Roma Communities in Romania for a community-level monitoring of changes with regard to Roma integration (SocioRoMap) (2017): <http://www.ispmn.gov.ro/page/socioromap>

¹¹⁶ All information is available on the site of the Desire Foundation: <https://www.desire-ro.eu/?cat=146>

¹¹⁷ FRA. (2017). Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II), *Roma – Selected findings*.

Improvement of housing conditions and regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods

The Ministry of Development and Public Administration carries out a series of programmes aimed at improving living conditions by ensuring access to decent housing for Romanian citizens. It aims to “develop social housing projects or social programmes to support especially young people with modest incomes, thereby assisting young specialists to settle down”.¹¹⁸

Housing for young people refers to newly built rental homes for young people under the age of 35 who cannot afford to buy or rent a dwelling on the free market. The amount of the rent is set by the local authorities, but as it is below the market price, the flat can be purchased by the tenants after one year of occupancy.

The mortgaged houses built within this programme can be flats or individual houses built on land provided to the National Housing Agency (NHA) by the local councils for the execution of the construction works. Local councils also provide the utilities for these neighbourhoods.

The programme named “Rebirth of the Romanian Village”¹¹⁹ targets teachers, doctors, nurses and police officers working in rural areas. The beneficiaries of this programme are specialists who do not own, individually or jointly with their spouses, a place to live in the commune where they work, regardless how it was acquired, except for the shares of housing acquired by inheritance.

Social housing for Roma communities. In the Government Decision no. 1237/2008 regarding the approval of the Social Housing Pilot Programme for Roma Communities,¹²⁰ the Government of Romania adopted the pilot programme “Social housing for Roma communities” which aimed to build 300 units of social housing for Roma people, distributed in all eight development regions, with the local authorities in charge of infrastructure work, land, building permits, technical approvals, etc. On 2 March 2016, the National Employment Agency published the information according to which, at that time, 231 residential units were in various stages of completion in five development regions: 49 in Arad County, 28 in Bihor County, 21 in Bistrița Năsăud County, 21 in Brașov County, 28 in Constanța County, 28 in Mehedinți County, 28 in Olt County, and 28 in Sibiu County.¹²¹ On 18 August 2016, MRDPA responded to our FOIA request¹²² that the National Housing Agency¹²³ is implementing the programme financed by the state budget. At the moment, 294 housing units are included in the programme out of 300, 42 were finished at the end of 2015 and 49 in 2016. In 2016, the Romanian Government allocated 22,947,000 RON for the programme, out of which 21,222,780 RON were

¹¹⁸ Ministry of Development and Public Administration in its presentation on its web page (Housing building programmes developed by the Ministry of Development and Public Administration) – at: <http://www.mdrap.ro/lucrari-publice/-1763>, accessed on March 14, 2019.

¹¹⁹ „The Rebirth of the Romanian Village” [„*Renașterea satului românesc*”] is a programme run by the National Housing Agency and its description is available at: <https://www.anl.ro/ro/renasterea-satului-romanesc/>

¹²⁰ GD no. 1237/2008 privind aprobarea Programului pilot „Locuințe sociale pentru comunitățile de romi” (GD. No. 1237/2008 on the approval of the pilot project „Social housing for the Roma communities”), available at: http://www.dreptonline.ro/legislatie/hq_program_pilot_locuinte_pentru_romi_1237_2008.php.

¹²¹ The press release containing this information is available at: <http://www.anr.gov.ro/index.php/anr/presedinte-a-n-r/comunicate-si-informatii-2/496-comunicat-de-presa-2-martie-2016-locuinte-sociale-pentru-comunitatile-de-romi>.

¹²² FRANET filed a FOIA request with MRDPA on August, 9 2016, asking for the results of the implementation of the Roma Strategy in 2016. MRDAP responded on August 18, 2016.

¹²³ Agenția Națională pentru Locuințe [National Agency for Housing] – ANL [NHA], more information available at: <http://www.anl.ro/en/>.

already allocated to municipalities for the construction of these housing units. All the housing units should have been finished by the end of 2016. There is no new data about the implementation of this programme.

The protection of tenants living on estates abusively occupied in the period between 6 March 1945, and 22 December 1989 (Law no. 10/2001) is granted in accordance with the provisions of Law no. 112/1995 on the regulation of the legal status of state-owned buildings (the Law on Nationalized Houses). The tenants (holders of a valid contract) are granted an extended term by which they must evacuate the estate, but they also benefit from the legal provisions in force concerning the construction of their own housing with support from the state or from being given priority in housing allocation from the units managed by the local public authorities. They also have priority in purchasing the place under certain special conditions.

According to the Housing Law no. 114/1996, local councils can build housing units financed from funds especially set up for this purpose, control the selling price in order to facilitate access to property for certain categories of people (young married couples under 35 years, heroes or their descendants, certain professional categories who establish their residence in rural areas and other categories of people decided by local councils), and can also build social housing.

The "First Home" Programme" (GEO 60/2009 and GD 717/2009) is the government programme launched in 2007 to help people who purchase their first home, and who have not previously had a mortgage. The Government guarantees 80 per cent of the loan amount necessary for the purchase of the house and sets the maximum amount of the loan. The programme is a form of subsidy but can only be accessed by those who can receive a loan from the bank, that is if they meet certain conditions (steady income, work contract, etc.). The programme has been very successful and is being used by those who want to buy a home.

The programme for state-paid bonuses for collective savings and lending (OUG 99/2006), also known as the "Housing Bank", was designed to stimulate savings. Those who enter into savings-lending contracts can receive a state bonus of up to 25 per cent a year, up to a maximum of 250 EUR, provided they can justify the use of the money for housing purposes. The programme benefits only those who can save for a minimum period of period years. The programme was very successful among those who decided to save. At the moment, the Court of Auditors has stopped granting state bonuses.

The thermal rehabilitation programmes for blocks of flats target residents' associations who want to increase the energy performance of their block-of-flats based on a project developed before 1990, regardless of their heating system. The Residents' Association pays 20 per cent of the total cost of the rehabilitation works, while the remaining 80 per cent being provided by the state and local budgets. If the association or one or more owners cannot pay their share, the local city hall may partially or fully take over the costs and decide how the money will be recovered. The programme is successful, which has led to the insulation of many buildings. Additionally, there is the programme of thermal rehabilitation of residential buildings financed by bank loans with government guarantee, which is totally unknown and unused.

The "Heating 2006-2020 Heat and Comfort" programme is for local authorities with centralized heating systems, which can receive non-reimbursable co-financing for investment projects provided they meet the conditions set out in the Programme Implementation Regulation.

The annual action plan for the design and execution of consolidation work in multi-storey residential buildings included by means of technical expertise in class 1 of seismic risk, and which are a threat to the public ("Red-dot buildings") aims to consolidate multi-storey residential buildings that are included in class one of seismic risk. The programme

proves very hard to implement: between 2001 and 2016, within its framework, only 26 buildings were consolidated in Bucharest (at this rate, it will take 208 years to consolidate all buildings with class one seismic risk only in Bucharest).

MRDPA also implements the National Cadastre and Land Register Programme, which tabulates properties free of charge. This includes Roma beneficiaries; the selection requires the eligible municipalities to have areas inhabited by socially vulnerable population that is Roma ethnics and disadvantaged groups.

Of the above-mentioned programmes implemented by the Government, but also those that could be carried out locally, very few aims to improve the situation of marginalized and vulnerable groups. We have rightfully chosen to present all programmes that aim to improve the living conditions and the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods because all government programmes have this goal. Nevertheless, it must be understood that most Roma, like most of the economically and socially vulnerable people, do not have access to these programmes and cannot benefit from them. Social housing schemes are rare, and the very low number of social housing units is distributed as previously mentioned, based on criteria that excludes marginal and vulnerable populations from the list of potential beneficiaries. Some programmes target those who can afford loans, but overall, MRDPA programmes are not aimed at improving the living conditions of vulnerable groups at all.

In the financial cycle of the European Funds 2014-2020, there was a commitment to use the European Social Fund to support integrated projects (e.g. education/training, employment, social activities/provision of social services, rehabilitation of housing/public spaces, volunteering, etc.) to address the specific needs of marginalized communities. Financing Axes 4.1 and 4.2¹²⁴ are meant to fund complex community analysis activities, facilitation and mediation for identifying and strengthening partnerships to tackle community issues through a participatory approach, providing integrated packages to support and increase access to and participation in early childhood/primary and secondary education and reduction of early school leaving; support for access to and/or maintenance on the labour market, as well as participation in apprenticeship and internship programmes of people in marginalized communities; provision of integrated services for children, youth, adults/parents through multi-functional centres/single access points; supporting entrepreneurship within the community; supporting the development/provision of social services/provision of services within the integrated medical-social community centres; information and awareness campaign/specific actions in the field of combating discrimination, as well as for active involvement/volunteering of community members to solve community problems. The document specifies that measures related to infrastructure (e.g. those related to the rehabilitation of housing/public spaces) are allowed only within the limits provided by Regulation 1303/2013 art 98 (2).

Community Led Local Development (CLLD) is applied in urban settings in small towns with more than 20,000 inhabitants, focusing on those cities where marginalized areas are identified, with populations at risk of social exclusion. This type of financing aims to also address, through CLLD, limited access or lack of access to decent living conditions. However, the process is an integrated one, so the whole community becomes the target of such interventions. The two funding axes, the Human Capital Operational Programme (Priority Axis 5 – Community Led Local Development) and the Regional Operational Programme (Priority Axis 9 – Supporting the Economic and Social Regeneration of Disadvantaged Communities in Urban Areas) are aimed at ensuring the financial allocations necessary for the implementation of integrated local development strategies for towns with a population of over 20,000 inhabitants. The final list of projects to be

¹²⁴ The link to the programmes is available here: <http://www.fonduri-ue.ro/pocu-2014>

financed includes 38 Local Action Groups¹²⁵ that will implement Local Development Strategies.

Efforts to promote integrated approaches in housing via ERDF and ESF are still limited. Only 70 municipalities were able to access EU funds dedicated to Local Development Strategies (CLLD).

¹²⁵ Local Action Groups are set-up as legally registered associations, consisting of local stakeholders - non-governmental organizations, companies and local institutions (1/4 of total membership). It was requested that the decision board be gender balanced, but to reflect as well the target groups – balanced representation of youth, Roma, and other vulnerable groups. For more details, see: <http://www.fonduri-ue.ro/images/files/programe/CU/POCU-2014/30.10/cld.5.1.pdf>

IMPACT OF HEALTH CARE POLICIES ON ROMA

In 2013, the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union on measures for the effective integration of Roma in the Member States (2013/C 378/01) referred to increasing Roma access to healthcare, namely taking “effective measures to guarantee equal treatment of Roma in access to universally available medical services on the basis of general eligibility criteria”.¹²⁶ Measures to achieve this target related to the health status of the Roma include: removing obstacles to accessing the health system by the general population; improving access to medical check-ups, prenatal and postnatal care and family planning, as well as sexual and reproductive healthcare, generally provided by national healthcare services; improving access to free vaccination programmes for children and vaccination programmes targeting, in particular, those that are groups most at risk and/ or people living in marginalised and remote areas; promoting health and healthcare awareness of.¹²⁷

On the other hand, in the framework of the Romanian Government’s Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2014-2020, effective measures that can guarantee Roma access to health services include: improvement of the legal framework regulating the operation of community healthcare, establishment/extension to the national level of the network of community centres providing integrated basic services, prioritising rural Roma communities when hiring Roma community nurses and health mediators, support for scholarship programmes for young Roma to facilitate their access to medical schools at post-secondary and university levels, support the employment of Roma medical school graduates (including in Roma communities) under the conditions of the current legislation, counselling Roma people on their right to a minimal health services package even if they are not registered in the social health insurance system, registration of the Roma with family doctors, monitoring the access of uninsured Roma people to a minimal healthcare package, developing vaccination programmes for vulnerable children, including Roma, implementing programmes on primary prevention and early detection of chronic prevalent diseases in the Roma population, improving the capacity of staff in community reproductive health, maternal and child health, introducing the concept of anti-discrimination in the training programme of basic community core service providers, implementation of primary prevention programmes and early detection of prevalent chronic diseases in the Roma population, etc.¹²⁸

Between 2010-2017, developing public policies for the Roma was no longer a priority for the government: the previous policies were maintained in the given social and political contexts, each government committing itself only to new programmes that responded to the same – more acute or somewhat subsided – needs of vulnerable groups. In fact, the impact of public policies on Roma population, especially in the health sector, cannot be assessed coherently and correctly because of lack of data collection and qualitative and quantitative monitoring of activities in this field, although the EC points out that Member

¹²⁶ Council Recommendation of 9 December 2013 on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States (2013/C 378/01) section 1.5 Access to healthcare, available at:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013H1224%2801%29>

¹²⁷ Council Recommendation of 9 December 2013 on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States (2013/C 378/01) section 1.5 Access to healthcare, available at:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013H1224%2801%29>

¹²⁸ Strategia Guvernului României de Incluziune a Cetătenilor Români aparținând Minorității Rome pentru perioada 2015-2020 [Strategy of the Government of Romania for the Inclusion of the Romanian Citizens Belonging to Roma Minority for 2015–2020], available at:

http://www.anr.gov.ro/docs/Site2014/Strategie/Strategie_final_18-11-2014.pdf

States have taken steps to monitor national Roma integration strategies. The Ministry of Health's solutions to use Norwegian, Swiss or European Social Fund funds to implement limited-term intervention programmes to meet short-term needs do not reflect a strategic vision: they are merely compromising solutions that respond to situations brought to the attention of the Government by European fora, institutions, and NGOs concerned with Roma health

Although Romania has increased the share of health spending as GDP share from 3.7 per cent in 2007 to 4 per cent in 2014,¹²⁹ and advances in the medical field have made some of the population feel safer and consider access to new, extremely beneficial medical technologies, the poor, marginalized, segregated groups at risk of social exclusion still find it difficult to access high-quality costly health programmes and services, and face increased social inequalities.

The 2014 NAR report on the analysis of the implementation of the Romanian Government's Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens belonging to the Roma minority¹³⁰ emphasised that "the lack of references in the monitoring report of the Ministry of Health to the plan within the Government's Strategy for 2011, the chapter on Health, the lack of indicators regarding their campaigns and the need for them, as well as failure to show the results and indicators for both the campaigns and actions foreseen in Chapter VIII of the Government's 2011 Strategy, reflect a certain tendency to embellish the actions of the Ministry of Health and its lack of concern for achieving the objective of increasing Roma life expectancy, which is an objective set in the Government's 2013 Strategy. No information was provided regarding the establishment of the Technical Assistance Unit, nor about whether or not the number of health mediators increased or diminished".¹³¹

In 2017, the Ministry of Health, in accordance with its mission stated at the beginning of that year's activity report, in relation to actions foreseen within health strategies, made reference to the development of "*a modern and accessible healthcare sector that covers effectively and fairly the health needs of the Romanian citizens and leads to the improvement of the population's health*".¹³² The report outlines the activities undertaken in this respect: interventions for a healthy lifestyle and assessment of the general health status of the population, including interventions for the promotion of health in vulnerable communities and groups. The report also mentions a tobacco use prevention and control sub-programme, a national mother and child health programme,¹³³ a neonatal screening programme, a programme to prevent unwanted pregnancies by increasing access to family planning services, a child nutrition and health sub-programme, etc., all of which are, at first glance, very firm responses to improving the health of the population. However, when one analyses the achievement indicators for these programmes, one finds that some of them are merely on paper, or that there are real difficulties in collecting and processing the information needed to evaluate these programmes, ensuring the necessary human resources, etc. Given the situations presented, in 2017, the National Agency for Health Programmes suggested to the Minister of Health

¹²⁹ <https://econ.ubbcluj.ro/fisierevenimente/BURCA%20Anca%20Meda.pdf>, p. 4

¹³⁰ Decision no. 1221/2011 approving the Strategy of the Romanian Government for the Inclusion of the Romanian Citizens belonging to the Roma minority for the period 2012-2020

¹³¹ Analysis of the Implementation of the Government's Strategy No. 1221/2011, p. 24, available at: <http://www.anr.gov.ro/docs/Site2014/Strategie/Analiza%20implementarii%20strategiei%20Guvernului%20nr.%201221%20din%202011.pdf>

¹³² 2017 Annual Report, <http://www.ms.ro/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Raport-de-activitate-MS-2017-.pdf>, p. 3

¹³³ 2017 Annual Report, <http://www.ms.ro/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Raport-de-activitate-MS-2017-.pdf>, pp. 196-205

measures to remedy the malfunctions found in the implementation of the national public health programmes, as well as to improve their performance by “*amending the technical norms for the implementation of the national public health programmes for 2017 and 2018 [...] It is necessary to extend neonatal screening to the national level, given the Romanian Government’s commitment as stated in the Government Programme approved by Decision no. 1/2018 of the Parliament of Romania.*”¹³⁴

At both national and international levels, the most relevant measure in the field of health services for the Roma is the promotion of the health mediator, an initiative started in 1993, which is considered to be a successful practice that should be continued by both increasing the number of mediators and by improving the quality of their services through their continuous training.¹³⁵ The main proposal for the National Strategy for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2014-2020 is the development of community-based intervention teams to provide social services for education, employment, health, community-based social mediation and facilitation, especially in poor and marginalised, Roma and non-Roma-inhabited rural and urban areas. In addition, the same strategy aims to develop multi-functional community centres in marginalised areas to provide integrated services to families in extreme poverty.¹³⁶ The same strategy in the Health chapter states the objective to increase national coverage with community primary healthcare services (family doctors, community nurses, Roma mediators) for the implementation of screening, TB, and vaccination programmes.¹³⁷

Also, the training of social and healthcare staff and the development of tools and protocols to support the beneficiaries who approach social workers requires investment in community-based services. In addition, given that the Romanian Government has committed itself to improve the health status of the Romanian population by ensuring access to preventive, emergency, therapeutic, and quality rehabilitation services, as provided for in the National Health Strategy 2014-2020,¹³⁸ and for better healthcare provisions for the population through community healthcare, in 2017, the Government approved GEO no. 18/2017, which aims to regulate community-level healthcare, as well as the establishment, organisation and functioning of integrated community centres to facilitate and improve the access, in particular of vulnerable groups, to integrated social, educational, and health services in the community. According to the *Sastipen* Health Policy Centre database, 436 health mediators are active in Romania and are working in compact Roma communities or in urban areas. However, it should be underlined that no health mediator was hired in 2017. Although mayors of some communities filed a request to the Department of Public Health, the Ministry of Health did not allocate funds to increase the number of health mediators. Advisers on Roma issues at the Prefect’s level¹³⁹ point out the usefulness of health mediators, stating that it would be necessary

¹³⁴ Amendment of World Health Organization 377/2017 – www.ms.ro, http://www.ms.ro/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Referat-de-aprobare-modificare-OMS-377_27.08.2018.pdf

Considering the provisions of Article 18, paragraph (1) lit. g) of the Order of the Minister of Health no. 377/2017, with the subsequent amendments, according to which the National Agency for Health Programmes proposes to the Minister of Health measures to remedy the malfunctions found in the implementation of the national public health programmes, as well as to improve their performance, we seek your approval for the modification of the technical norms for the implementation of the national public health programmes for 2017 and 2018.

¹³⁵ <http://www.anr.gov.ro/docs/Site2014/Strategie/Analiza%20implementarii%20strategiei%20Guvernului%20nr.%201221%20din%202011.pdf>, p. 22

¹³⁶ National Strategy for social inclusion and poverty reduction (2015-2020), p. 12

¹³⁷ National Strategy for social inclusion and poverty reduction, p.13

¹³⁸ Government Decision no. 1.028/2014, published in Monitorul Oficial al Romaniei [Romanian Official Gazette], Part I, no. 891 of 8 December 2014.

¹³⁹ Interview with Rozalia Bondrea from Satu Mare Prefect’s Office at Radio Cluj

to have a health mediator in every community where the number of Roma people exceeds 700. The lack of health mediators of the same ethnic background is one of the reasons why Roma women do not go to the doctor when they have health issues. Roma ethnics have certain customs, among which is that they accept medical care provided by medical staff of the same sex, and this is most of the time the case of communities where health mediators are active, communities characterised by poverty and low education level.¹⁴⁰ Findings of the studies conducted so far on health mediators indicate that in the communities with health mediators, the percentage of people accessing primary health services is higher than in communities without a health mediator. Also, in the "Public Health Initiative" Programme of the Ministry of Health alone, the percentage of people who participated in information, education and awareness raising sessions and campaigns was high, in 650 campaigns community medical teams targeting vulnerable populations in particular.¹⁴¹

The primary health and community service network is an effective and tested model for the efficient implementation of measures to improve health in vulnerable groups. Family physicians, general practitioners, community nurses and Roma health mediators, together with social workers and school mediators, are key actors who ensure access to health services for vulnerable groups and poor communities.¹⁴²

It should be pointed out that access to adequate health services is still difficult for rural residents, particularly those in isolated villages, who are confronted with geographical barriers and obstacles to obtaining health insurance. Vulnerable people in rural areas are typically poorer, less educated and less informed than the urban population. In a similar situation, sometimes even worsened by discrimination, are rural Roma with a poorer state of health than the non-Roma population. The community assistance system is the most powerful "equaliser" in the health system.¹⁴³

General features of the Roma population's health condition

To understand the references and measures outlined in the above-mentioned Council Recommendation, when talking about Roma and their health, the first thing to note is that this population is young and with a large number of new-borns,¹⁴⁴ while the under 15-years of age group making up to almost one-third (29.3 per cent) of the population,¹⁴⁵ but with a gradual decrease in life expectancy as they age.¹⁴⁶ The decrease in life expectancy is estimated differently in different studies: 16 years less than the majority population, according to the report of the European Roma Rights Centre on Romania - ERRC, 2013;¹⁴⁷ 15-20 years lower than the majority population according to the study in 2012 by the *Amare Rromentza Centre* in collaboration with

¹⁴⁰ <http://www.radiocluj.ro/2017/09/20/comunitatile-de-romi-fara-mediatori-sanitari/>

¹⁴¹ 2017 Annual Report of the Ministry of Health.

¹⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 62

¹⁴³ National Strategy for social inclusion and poverty reduction, p. 63

¹⁴⁴ The World Bank (2014). *Viață lungă, activă și în forță. Promovarea îmbătrânirii active în România* [Long, active and fit life. Promoting active aging in Romania], p. 37, available at: http://www.seniorinet.ro/library/files/raport_banca_mondiala_viata_lunga_activa_si_in_forta.pdf, accessed on 23/09/2015.

¹⁴⁵ Save the Children, *Alternative Report - Bucharest, 2016, to the 5th Periodic Report submitted by Romania to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2008-2015*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁶ Institutul pentru Politici Publice, *Accesul echitabil al copiilor romi la servicii de sănătate, o condiție fundamentală într-o societate nediscriminatorie* [Equal access of Roma children to health services, a fundamental condition in a non-discriminatory society], December 2015

¹⁴⁷ ERRC, *Raportul Centrului European pentru Drepturile Romilor privind Romania* [Report of the European Roma Rights Centre on Romania], 2013

UNICEF;¹⁴⁸ up to ten years lower in a document published by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011: 26), citing the “Health of the World Roma population” report; six years lower according to the National Report on Roma Inclusion in Early Childhood Services (IRSRTC) for Romania in 2010,¹⁴⁹ which urges investigation of what causes this phenomenon.

Roma people in vulnerable communities perceive health as the absence of a disease, this perception being held especially by people with a low level of medical information. Thus, if they have not been in hospital recently, respondents tend to say that their health is good. In a survey conducted by the Roma Centre for Health Services *Sastipen* in 2017 in 45 vulnerable communities, 49 per cent of respondents rated their health as good and very good,¹⁵⁰ compared to 70.9 per cent of respondents aged over 16 years of the general population.¹⁵¹ The fact that the Roma population has a worse health status than the majority population was emphasised in a study of the *Împreună* Agency in 2013, which pointed out the higher rates of prevalence and incidence of transmissible and non-transmissible diseases among the Roma population, especially of cardiovascular diseases, TB, liver diseases and certain chronic diseases.¹⁵²

The health determinants of Roma in Romania are mainly the social and economic factors that act both on individual and group level, to which one should add cultural factors for a small part of the traditional Roma, especially the elderly, who continue to believe in the power of divinity or exorcism, when it comes to health.¹⁵³

Poor living conditions – poor and unhygienic houses, lack of electricity, lack of toilets and bathrooms, inadequate heating, improvised stoves, roofs made of easily degradable materials, settlement in hard-to-reach areas or near contaminated wastewater, social segregation, lack of income, unaffordability of medication, lack of identity papers and social security – determine researchers to enlist those living in such poor conditions in the category of “disadvantaged groups”, people who cannot choose a healthy lifestyle, but merely adapt so they can survive.

Poverty affects Roma communities in urban and rural regions of Romania, with the poorest being regrouped especially in middle-sized cities and major cities. What characterizes the situation of Roma in the urban environment is the separation between them and the rest of the population and the fact that they actually live in “ghettos”. This issue of “ghettoization” is a clear physical manifestation of their exclusion, says Eugen Crai, former Executive Director of the Roma Education Fund, Romania. In the absence of policies to promote their integration, many of Roma settled on the outskirts of cities, mainly on unused land, where they remained isolated, are not connected to public services. In addition, he says, the lack of permanent housing associated with lack of

¹⁴⁸ Amare Rromentza Centre, UNICEF Evaluarea politicilor publice educaționale pentru romi [UNICEF, The Evaluation of Education Public Policies for Roma], Editura Alpha MDN, 2009

¹⁴⁹ Bennet John, National Report on Roma Inclusion in Early Childhood Services (IRSRTC) for Romania, Open Society Foundation, Roma Education Fund, UNICEF, 2010

¹⁵⁰ Evaluarea performanței programului de asistență medicală în 45 de comunități de romi, [Evaluation of the Performance of the Community Medical Assistance Programme in 45 Roma Communities], April 2017, Research Project Report „Strengthening the National Roma Mediators Network to Improve the Health of the Roma Population, financed by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014.

¹⁵¹ Eurostat, Self-perceived health by sex, age, and educational attainment level, available at: <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

¹⁵² Duminică, Gelu, Ivăsiuc, Ana (coord.): Romii din România. De la țap ispășitor la motor de dezvoltare. [Roma in Romania. From scapegoat to development engine], Agenția de Dezvoltare Comunitară „Împreună”, pp. 89-90

¹⁵³ Information gathered from focus groups and discussions of Sastipen with Roma parents in traditional communities,

identity documents can greatly limit access to care, education and work. Evacuations, often without notice, intensify this segregation.¹⁵⁴

On Health and Medical Services, the 2016 report of the Save the Children Organisation shows the persistence of inequalities in accessing health services, the health network being poorly represented in rural areas; home visits are practically absent, less than half of the hospitals have a social worker, and the sale of breast milk substitutes is not regulated.¹⁵⁵ Also, it is important to mention that public authorities are able, according to the existing regulations, to provide milk substitutes only for the first 12 months, While the only substitute milk powder available is a general type as result of public tender acquisition, in certain cases, a special type of milk needed is not available and parents need to buy it themselves.

According to OMS and UNICEF,¹⁵⁶ Romania is on the last place in Europe at breastfeeding with a 12.6 per cent rate within the first hours of a baby to 16 per cent of the babies being breastfed during the first six months. This is due to many reasons that involve, among others, the lack of support from medical personnel to teach women how to correctly breastfeed, to avoid misinterpretation of lactation, as well as the lack information for women in hospitals.

In fact, in the 2013 study "The hidden health crisis" (ERRC), the same explanation is provided for the social determinants that influence behavioural choices: "while disadvantaged groups sometimes tend to adopt a more health-harming behaviour in terms of smoking, eating, lack of exercise and limited understanding of preventive healthcare, there are reasons behind this behaviour that can be explained by socio-economic circumstances. Those with lower incomes can only afford the cheapest goods, which are less healthy."¹⁵⁷

In the (April) 2015 *Sastipen* study titled "Assessing Needs and Health Risks in 45 Roma Communities", 47 per cent of the respondents said they smoked more than the general population over 15 years of age with a smoking prevalence of 26.7 per cent, according to data from the first 2011 Global Adult Tobacco Survey, and only 22 per cent according to data provided by the Pulmonology Institute in 2011. The prevalence of smoking is significantly higher for men (62 per cent) than for women (40 per cent). The prevalence of smoking for men is 60 per cent higher for Roma than for non-Roma (37 per cent), and for women it is two times higher than for non-Roma (17 per cent). For alcohol consumption, as with other studies regarding the Roma population, the results of alcohol intake are not conclusive and should be interpreted with caution. Although 70 per cent of respondents say they have never consumed alcohol (during the last year or over their lifetime), they, later on, list what types of drinks they have had. Only 17 per cent of respondents report regular consumption of alcohol.¹⁵⁸ According to the World Health Organization (WHO), after smoking and high blood pressure, alcohol is the third risk factor for diseases and premature death for the overall population in the European Union

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.mediafax.ro/social/unicef-copiii-romi-din-orasele-romanesti-traiesc-in-izolare-si-nu-au-acces-la-serviciile-de-baza-9352140>

¹⁵⁵ Raport alternativ – București, 2016 La cel de-al 5-lea Raport Periodic înaintat de România Comitetului ONU pentru Drepturile Copilului 2008-2015 [Alternative Report - Bucharest, 2016 To the 5th Romanian Periodic Report to the UN Committee on Children's Rights 2008-2015], p. 69.

¹⁵⁶ UNICEF and OMS report "Early initiation in breastfeeding: the best start for every newborn" 2018: https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF_WHO_Capture_the_moment_EIBF_2018.pdf

¹⁵⁷ Criza ascunsă din Sanatate, Un Raport al Centrului European pentru Drepturile Romilor [The Hidden Health Crisis, A Report of the European Roma Rights Centre], p. 57

¹⁵⁸ Evaluare de nevoi și comportamente la risc pentru sănătate în 45 de comunități de romi [Evaluation of Needs and Risky Health-related Behaviours in 45 Roma communities], April 2015, Sastipen and INSP: <http://www.reteaua-amc.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Rezumat-raport-cercetare-17-04-2015-v2.pdf>

(EU). (WHO, 2014:3, Lammerich & Kullas, 2015: 4). According to an INSP study, in Romania, the prevalence of alcohol-related diseases is 2.4 per cent and of alcoholism is 1.3 per cent, as compared to 7.5 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively, in the EU.¹⁵⁹

Regarding exercising, 85 per cent of Roma responded that they walk every day. The average length of walking time per day is less than 30 minutes for 29 per cent, less than one hour for 21 per cent, between one to two hours for 14 per cent, between two to three hours for 12 per cent and over three hours for 22 per cent. Regarding cycling, most of the Roma surveyed (81 per cent) said they did not cycle at all. Among the 126 Roma who said they do cycle, most do this for less than one hour a day (77 per cent), and only a very small proportion (3.2 per cent) exceeded three hours a day.¹⁶⁰ As for the general population, 60 per cent of Romanians do not do any sports or exercise at all, according to the "Special Eurobarometer. Sport and Physical Activity" published in 2014. With ageing, both women and men exercise less; while no disaggregated data is available on the Romanian situation, at European level men are doing more exercise than women.¹⁶¹ Until 2010, the physical education curriculum in Romania included guidelines and recommendations on practising various sports specific for girls and boys. After 2010, the curriculum eliminated these recommendations, in order to be in line with the European education and sports requirements.¹⁶²

Health determinants also include environmental factors. As most of the Roma-inhabited areas are on the outskirts of localities, most of the times the city's landfill is located in the same area (e.g. Glina, Ilfov County), which sometimes causes people in these areas to have serious health problems. In urban areas, the situation may be different, with vulnerable Roma communities living in the centre of the town. Unfortunately, the nationalised houses they received during communism are unhealthy, and their renovation would be costly, which Roma cannot afford. Other Roma groups live either in polluted urban areas (Baia Mare) or directly on landfills (Pata Rât, Cluj). These polluted areas, especially Pata Rât, are areas that "aggregate the effects of a polluted environment, geographical isolation, social-territorial segregation, housing deprivation, and cultural stigmatization".¹⁶³ The 2016 study *"Local engagement for Roma inclusion. Local study in Cluj-Napoca (Romania)"* points out that *"local authorities refused to legalise these dwellings because they were too close to the polluted areas of the landfill and the chemical waste disposal site. As a result, dwellings could not be connected to basic utilities, such as sewage, running water or electricity, nor could they benefit from subsidised heating during the cold season. In addition, people living there did not stand any chance of accessing social housing in Cluj-Napoca"*.¹⁶⁴ Regarding the health status of people living in such areas, one can quite confidently conclude from the above that it can only be precarious.

¹⁵⁹ Luna națională a informării despre efectele consumului de alcool. Analiză de situație [National Information Month on the Effects of Alcohol Intake. Situation Analysis], July 2018, available at: <http://insp.gov.ro/sites/cnepss/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ANALIZA-DE-SITUATIE-ALCOOL-2018.pdf>, p. 5

¹⁶⁰ Evaluare de nevoi și comportamente la risc pentru sănătate în 45 de comunități de romi [Evaluation of Needs and Risky Health-related Behaviours in 45 Roma communities] April 2015, Sastipen and INSP, <http://www.reteaua-amc.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Rezumat-raport-cercetare-17-04-2015-v2.pdf>

¹⁶¹ <https://www.edumedical.ro/60-dintre-copiii-de-pestre-11-ani-nu-mai-fac-activitati-fizice/>, „Special Eurobarometer. Sport and physical activity” Report, 2014. See also: <https://www.edumedical.ro/comisia-europeana-60-dintre-romani-nu-fac-deloc-miscare-fizica-sau-sport/>

¹⁶² <https://www.sportrevolution.ro/sunt-justificate-problemele-de-gen-in-domeniul-sportului/>

¹⁶³ https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/local-engagement-roma-romania-cluj-napoca_en.pdf, p. 5

¹⁶⁴ Enikő Vincze, Angajament local pentru incluziunea romilor. Studiu la nivel de localitate Cluj-Napoca (România) [Local engagement for Roma inclusion. Local study in Cluj-Napoca (Romania)], 2016, p. 14

An analysis of the health mediators' 2014 reports¹⁶⁵ highlights the fact that people in the community describe their health as good when it allows them to work, study or carry out their activities in harmony with the minimum requirements of the society, their daily behaviour and the values of their accepted life, which are often not at high standards, statements such as *"if we have food for our children and we have a roof over our head, we do not ask for anything more but good health from God!"* frequently appearing during discussions with Roma living in vulnerable communities.

In vulnerable communities, there is a direct link between people's state of health and the poverty they face. Marginalisation and social exclusion influence the values of the health indicators for Roma people, which are significantly different from those for the majority population. Improper living conditions in vulnerable communities often lead to insufficient intake of vitamins, minerals, enzymes and good bacteria for the body. Combining nutritional deficiency with other health problems fuelled by improper living conditions, education and employment lead to the emergence of transmissible diseases and chronic diseases that these people accept as the norm, although they are associated with the individual's reduced work capacity, reduced work productivity and low-quality of life.

The 2013 ERRRC study titled "The Hidden Health Crisis" highlights that in the 35-44 years old age group, 2.7 per cent of the Roma population was diagnosed with a form of cardiac disease, while for the general population the figure was 0.3 per cent. Among the non-Roma, 17.8 per cent were diagnosed with hypertension, compared to 10.1 per cent of the Roma population. Hypertension is a major risk factor for several life-threatening conditions such as heart attack, heart failure and renal failure.¹⁶⁶ With regard to diabetes, the situation is complex, with 4 per cent of the general population reporting that they are currently affected by this condition, compared to 2.4 per cent of the Roma population.

The SEPHAR III study was conducted regarding the general population in 2016; it revealed a 45.1 per cent prevalence of hypertension in the adult population. Relative to the population of Romania, it means that in 2016, an estimated 7.4 million people had high blood pressure - the main risk factor for cardiovascular diseases, responsible for most deaths, both globally and in our country.¹⁶⁷

Tuberculosis (TB) is one of the transmissible diseases present at an alarming level in Romania, but also in the Roma communities in Romania. In 2016, 13,617 cases of TB were notified, with the highest incidence among countries in Southeast Europe.¹⁶⁸

The National Tuberculosis Control Programme Manager stated in an interview that "the most affected are people in isolated rural areas, the poor, and the Roma."¹⁶⁹ In the case of the Roma population, because "it is disproportionately poorer than most Romanians,

¹⁶⁵ Centrul Romilor pentru Politici și Servicii de Sănătate Sastipen, Raportul Unității de Asistență Tehnică, Monitorizare și Evaluare [„Sastipen” Roma Centre for Health Policies and Services. Technical Assistance Unit Report, Monitoring and Evaluation], 2014, www.sastipen.ro

¹⁶⁶ Criza ascunsă din sănătate. Inegalități în domeniul sănătății și date dezagregate [The hidden crisis in health. Health inequalities and disaggregated data], October 2013 - ERRRC, pp. 32-34, after World Health Organization, Writing Group of the International Society for Hypertension, World Health Organization (WHO) / International Society for Hypertension (ISH) 2003 Declaration, available at: http://www.who.int/cardiovascular_diseases/guidelines/hypertension_guidelines.pdf

¹⁶⁷ Analiză de Situație – HTA - 2018 [Situation Analysis AH – 2018], available at: <http://insp.gov.ro/sites/cnepss/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2.-ANALIZA-DE-SITUATIE-HTA-2018.pdf>

¹⁶⁸ INSP, Analiza de situație TBC 2018 [2018 TB Situation Analysis], <http://insp.gov.ro/sites/cnepss/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/analiza-de-situatie-tbc-2018-final.pdf>

¹⁶⁹ <https://evz.ro/tuberculoza-ataca-saracii-si-romii.html>

so 75 per cent of Roma live in poverty, compared to a total of 32.2 per cent of Romanians (source: Amnesty International), TB prevalence was 27,000 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, according to a survey of prevalence in two rural Roma communities.¹⁷⁰ As a consequence, putting “an end to the TB epidemic is among the health objectives adopted under the Sustainable Development Objectives (2016-2030) and among the objectives of the Tuberculosis Strategy developed by the WHO (2016-2035)”.¹⁷¹ In 2018, the Ministry of Health announced that it would double the budget of the National Programme for Tuberculosis Prevention, Supervision, and Control.¹⁷²

Ensuring that poor or vulnerable groups have access to good quality health services and measures to improve the provision of health services in intervention areas relevant to poor or vulnerable groups is the goal of the Government in SNISRS. Given that the Strategy underlines the fact that “infectious diseases, especially tuberculosis (TB) and HIV/AIDS are particularly prevalent among vulnerable groups, including the Roma, TB remains a critical issue in Romania, affecting mainly adults in the second half of their life. Although TB treatment is free, while undergoing it patients often give up work or school, they need money for transport to the medical facility to collect their medication for other non-TB treatments. According to WHO estimates, on average, during their treatment, a TB patient loses between three to four months of work and reduces their household’s annual income by approximately 30 percent. In response to this, in terms of policy, in September 2014 the Ministry of Health launched a draft National Strategic Plan for Tuberculosis Control 2015-2020.”¹⁷³

Ensuring equal access to public healthcare services

Community healthcare services generally respond to health education and community prevention measures, but diagnostic and treatment services are provided by GPs. Although coverage of the Roma population by family doctors appears to be good enough, 81.19 per cent¹⁷⁴ of the respondents claiming to have a family doctor, the level of access to services provided by the family doctor remains low. Failure to access medical services is mainly due to the lack of medical insurance; in vulnerable communities, the proportion of uninsured persons is extremely high – 46 per cent of respondents to the Roma Centre for Health Policies survey in 2017 stated that they had no health insurance.¹⁷⁵ It should be noted that uninsured patients have to pay for services and prescribed treatments; only life-threatening emergencies are accessible free of charge.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ Analiza de situație TBC 2017 [2017 TB Situation Analysis] – INSP - <http://insp.gov.ro/sites/cnepss/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/analiza-de-situatie-tbc-2017-modificata-2.pdf>

¹⁷¹ http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/tb_facts/en/index1.html

¹⁷² <http://www.ms.ro/2017/11/22/toti-pacientii-cu-afectiuni-tb-vor-fi-tratati-in-cadrul-programului-national-de-prevenire-supraveghere-si-control-al-tuberculozei/>

¹⁷³ Strategia națională de sănătate 2014-2020 „Sănătate pentru prosperitate” [National Health Strategy 2014-2020 „Health for Prosperity”] SNISRS, p. 62

¹⁷⁴ Centrul Romilor pentru Politici și Servicii de Sănătate Sastipen, Evaluare de nevoi și comportamente la risc pentru sănătate în 45 de comunități de romi [Evaluation of Needs and Risky Health-related Behaviours in 45 Roma communities]. February 2015, Research Report of the project “Întărirea Rețelei Naționale de Mediatori Romi pentru îmbunătățirea stării de sănătate a populației rome”, [Strengthening the National Network of Roma Mediators for the Improvement of the Roma Population’s Health”, financed by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014].

¹⁷⁵ Centrul Romilor pentru Politici și Servicii de Sănătate Sastipen, Evaluarea performanței programului de asistență medicală în 45 de comunități de romi, [Evaluation of the Performance of the Community Medical Assistance Programme in 45 Roma Communities]. April 2017, Research Report of the project “Întărirea Rețelei Naționale de Mediatori Romi pentru îmbunătățirea stării de sănătate a populației rome”, [Strengthening the National Network of Roma Mediators for the Improvement of the Roma Population’s Health”, financed by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014].

¹⁷⁶ Decision no. 140/2018 of 21 March 2018 for the approval of the service packages and of the Framework Contract which regulates the conditions for the provision of medical care, medicines and medical

Under these circumstances, although the family doctor is very much trusted by the Roma communities, in the case of health problems considered to be less severe, the Roma prefer to use self-medication, in fact non-prescription drugs, or to use traditional methods instead of seeing the doctor, even if the medical issue in question would require a visit to the doctor. In addition, only a very low percentage of respondents state that they access primary healthcare (family doctor) for preventive medical check-ups if they do not show signs of illness.¹⁷⁷ The main reasons invoked for failing to access primary healthcare services in case of need are: lack of financial resources, inadequate behaviour of medical staff who have discriminatory attitudes and cannot overcome language barriers, long distance to the doctor's office (e.g. between Ocolna, where the Roma community is located, and the centre of Amărștii de Jos (Dolj)), it is a 10 km distance. This is one of the reasons why Zefir Consortium set up a Community Centre for social and medical assistance in the community, a centre that mainly provides health education; however, family doctors have their offices in the centre of the commune, and the distance is still to be covered for prescriptions and check-ups).¹⁷⁸ All these and other reasons were identified in 2011 in a study by Daniela Tarnovschi: *"Lack of medical information, lack of medical services, difficulty in accessing medical services, low income and extremely poor living conditions. These are added to communication issues due to the linguistic and cultural differences between the Roma and the staff providing medical services. In addition, there is discrimination that acts as a barrier to accessing effective and quality medical services"*.¹⁷⁹

After 2013, in line with the above-mentioned Council Recommendation, the Romanian Ministry of Health managed to introduce "Health for Prosperity" in the 2014-2020 National Health Strategy and several measures "to improve Roma access to health services". Thus, in the Annual Reports of the Ministry of Health (2015-2017) on the implementation status of the National Health Strategy, regarding the Roma population, we find the description of the projects "RO 19 - Public Health Initiatives" in response to the Council Recommendation to "guarantee equal treatment of Roma in accessing the available medical services". Thus, the project RO 19.03 "Strengthening the National Roma Mediators' Network to Improve the Health of the Roma Population" funded by Norwegian Grants 2009-2014, for which INSP was a Project Promoter and Roma Centre for Health Policies and Services "Sastipen" was a Partner, the indicators achieved and the activities carried out by the community healthcare service providers responded to the identified health needs in 45 vulnerable Roma communities in six counties of the country. Following the implementation of the project, there was a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who reported having heard of tuberculosis (from 88.7 per cent during pre-intervention survey to 97.4 per cent in post-intervention, $P < 0.001$), and also of those who say they have been examined for this infection (from 2 per cent to 6.25 per cent, $P < 0.001$). Another effect among the beneficiaries was the change in smoking and nutrition behaviours. Also, respondents' behaviour in terms of dealing with family health issues, such as symptoms like the cough of a family member, was also assessed. It has been found that there is a significant difference in seeing a doctor if the

devices within the health insurance system for 2018 - 2019, Monitorul Oficial [Official Gazette] no. 270, 27 March 2018 <http://www.casan.ro/cassam/post/type/local/contract-cadru-si-norme-de-aplicare-2018.html>

¹⁷⁷ Centrul Romilor pentru Politici și Servicii de Sănătate Sastipen, Evaluare de nevoi și comportamente la risc pentru sănătate în 45 de comunități de romi [Evaluation of Needs and Risky Health-related Behaviours in 45 Roma communities]. February 2015, Research Report of the project "Întărirea Rețelei Naționale de Mediatori Romi pentru îmbunătățirea stării de sănătate a populației rome", [Strengthening the National Network of Roma Mediators for the Improvement of the Roma Population's Health], financed by the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014

¹⁷⁸ <http://www.zefirincomunitate.ro/comunitati/amarastii-de-jos/>

¹⁷⁹ Daniela Tarnovschi, Situația romilor în România, 2011. Între incluziune socială și migrație. Raport de țară [The Situation of Roma in Romania, 2011. Between Social Inclusion and Migration, Country Report], p.40

symptoms do not subside after a while, with a higher proportion of respondents doing this after the intervention (21 per cent after the intervention as compared to 11 per cent before the intervention, statistically significant difference, $P < 0.001$). Regarding women's health and the use of reproductive health services, there is an increase in the share of women who say they have heard about the Smear Pap test (known as the "Babeș-Papanicolau" test in Romania)¹⁸⁰ from 57 per cent at the outset of the programme to 75 per cent afterwards, and the share of women who had the test done (from 15 per cent at pre-intervention to 27 per cent at post-intervention, including in Căldărari and Neo-protestant communities).¹⁸¹

In the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the Implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the Council Recommendation on Measures for Effective Integration of Roma in the Member States - 2016 it is stated that "Member States have taken steps to develop the monitoring of national Roma integration strategies. However, further efforts are needed to assess the results of the specific and general Roma integration measures that Member States have reported to have adopted, including the impact of these measures on segregation trends, school leaving and levels of Roma employment, access to housing and health services within an integrated framework."¹⁸²

Health of Roma women as a group with specific vulnerabilities

Roma women's health is affected by inequalities entailed by the additional presence of health risk factors among them: low education, low incomes, low employment, low social status, poverty.

According to the 2013 study of the *Împreună* Agency, "About a third (32.4 per cent) of non-Roma women say they have poor and very poor health compared to 21.6 per cent of non-Roma men who have responded the same. As for Roma women, 34.5 per cent of them consider that they have poor and very poor health compared to Roma men, of whom 30.1 per cent think the same."¹⁸³ "The data does not show a very big difference in terms of negative perceptions regarding the health status between Roma and non-Roma women, but in the case of Roma women, in addition to their failure to access health services, other reasons are the long distance to the nearest doctor's office and ignoring "signs of disease" because "we are not accustomed to go to the doctor until we practically collapse. For our children and men or for our parents and siblings we do go, but not for ourselves. The road is long to the dispensary or the hospital. We do not have the time because there is a lot to do in the house and we hope that God will not abandon us!" (I.C, 48 years, Dolj)

Another important health problem is maternal mortality, which in Romania was 14.4 per cent per 100,000 live births in 2015 compared to Europe with 4.7 per cent;¹⁸⁴ in

¹⁸⁰ See: <http://www.acta-cytol.com/historicalperspective/BabesPapanicolaou.pdf>

¹⁸¹ Sastipen - Evaluarea performanței programului de asistență medicală în 45 de comunități de romi, [Evaluation of the Performance of the Community Medical Assistance Programme in 45 Roma Communities], April 2017

¹⁸² Comunicare a Comisiei către Parlamentul European, Consiliu, Comitetul Economic și Social European și Comitetul Regiunilor. Evaluarea punerii în aplicare a cadrului UE pentru strategiile naționale de integrare a romilor și a Recomandării Consiliului cu privire la măsurile de integrare efectivă a romilor în statele membre - 2016 [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Assessing the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States] - 2016, <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/reqdoc/rep/1/2016/RO/1-2016-424-RO-F1-1.PDF>, p. 10.

¹⁸³ Gelu Duminiță, *Romii din România. De la țap ispășitor la motor de dezvoltare* [Roma in Romania. From scapegoat to development engine], p. 86.

¹⁸⁴ https://insmc.ro/uploads/documents/Mortalitatea_materna_Servicii_medicale_pentru_gravida.pdf

addition, there is information that the maternal mortality rate is 15 times higher in Roma women¹⁸⁵ (Vincze 2013: 8).

Moreover, in 2015, the Sastipen-INSP study highlighted that “the proportion of pregnant Roma women who did not see a doctor about their pregnancy prior to delivery is 14 per cent, compared to 30 per cent found in the Reproductive Health Survey in 2000. Another 10 per cent of the women stated that they went to see a doctor when they needed it, without specifying when and how many times”.¹⁸⁶

Worrying data on maternal and neonatal mortality, even in 2018, is connected to the absence of sex education, the poor functioning of family planning services in the country, or the lack of community medical teams in many communities in Romania: “The most affected are women in rural areas where prenatal care is poor. In addition, in these areas, seven out of ten deaths caused by direct obstetrical risk in 2016 were not monitored by a physician during pregnancy, whereas in 2018 one out of five rural mothers did not have any gynaecological examination during pregnancy”.¹⁸⁷

In spite of these alarming indicators, in the Ministry of Health’s 2017 Activity Report, within the Women’s Health Sub-programme section, no actions are reported for the objective “Preventing Maternal Morbidity and Mortality by Increasing the Access, Quality and Efficiency of Medical Services for Pregnant and Women and Women in Postpartum Period”.

Starting this year, the National Mother and Child Health Institute (INSMC) will coordinate the Women’s Health Sub-programme. According to the information published on the website of this institution, causes of worrisome levels of maternal mortality rates include: insufficient pro-active community support for people with low levels of education may be a cause of insufficient prenatal surveillance. Also, barriers including financial ones to access specialist services may be a cause of inadequate care.¹⁸⁸

Another series of worrying data on women’s health is about the incidence of cervical cancer. Every year, 4,343 new cases of cervical cancer and 1,909 deaths caused by this disease are recorded in Romania. Of all cases of cervical cancer diagnosed annually in Europe, 7.5 per cent are in Romania.¹⁸⁹ Romania ranks first among the European Union countries in terms of cervical cancer mortality (14.2 per cent per 100,000 women).¹⁹⁰ Seven out of 10 women in Romania have not been screened for precancerous lesions or for HPV detection in the last three years (2013-2016), the Smear Pap test (known as the “Babeş-Papanicolau” test in Romania), nor the HPV-DNA test.¹⁹¹

In Romania, participation in the national screening program is low, with less than one-fifth of the total eligible population being screened (European Commission, 2014). A study carried out before the establishment of the national cervical cancer screening

¹⁸⁵ Eniko Vincze (2014), Faces and causes of Roma Marginalization. Experiences from Romania.

¹⁸⁶ Sastipen, Evaluare de nevoi și comportamente la risc pentru sănătate în 45 de comunități de romi [Evaluation of Needs and Risky Health-related Behaviours in 45 Roma communities]. <http://insp.gov.ro/sites/2/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Rezumat-raport-cercetare-17-04-2015-v2.pdf>

¹⁸⁷ <https://blog.worldvision.ro/category/mame-pentru-viata-viata-pentru-mame/>

¹⁸⁸ https://insmc.ro/uploads/documents/Mortalitatea_materna_Servicii_medicale_pentru_gravida.pdf

¹⁸⁹ Bruni L., et al., ICO Information Centre on HPV and Cancer (HPV Information Centre). Human Papillomavirus and Related Diseases in Romania. Summary Report 2016-02-26.

¹⁹⁰ European Cancer Observatory; <http://eco.iarc.fr/EUCAN/CancerOne.aspx?Cancer=25&Gender=2>, accessed on 15 September 2016

¹⁹¹ GfK Study, September 2016, Omnibus type, representative urban and rural sample, 515 women aged 18+

programme by the Ministry of Health shows that only 20 per cent of Romanian women and 5 per cent of Roma women living in Romania were examined. Hence, the need arises to study the barriers to accessing organised cervical cancer screening programmes, particularly among the Roma population and other disadvantaged communities.¹⁹²

Thus, the Oncology Institute “Prof. Dr. Ion Chiricuță” in Cluj-Napoca, in collaboration with the Norwegian Cancer Registry (Universitetssykehus HF/Kreftregisteret), Oslo, Norway, carried out the project titled “Cervical Cancer Control among the Roma population and other disadvantaged groups in Northwest Romania”, where women from disadvantaged areas and Roma communities were tested using a mobile unit to increase accessibility to screening. The project demonstrated that ethnicity and education were not associated with participating in screenings within the project. Findings regarding the lack of association between ethnicity and participation in screening are supported by other studies. The most important barriers to screening were lack of knowledge about such programmes and lack of money, even if the screening programme should be free.¹⁹³

Health promotion initiatives and solutions seem to continue to come from the non-government sector. Thus, in March 2016, the World Vision Foundation Romania, within the framework of the global initiative Merck Sharp and Dohme MSD for Mothers launched the project “Mothers for Life. Life for mothers” aimed at developing an integrated intervention model to improve maternal health and reproductive health services in rural areas, with the goal of reducing maternal mortality, as well as the number of unwanted pregnancies and abortions in minors.¹⁹⁴

Fertility model in the Roma communities continues to be a controversial topic with no data to support it. According to Dr. Cezara Bucur (Columna Medical Center), one of the most experienced doctors in the field of in vitro fertilization in Romania; “No month goes by without having the visit of a Roma couple. They face the same problems as all of us.” With regard to the diseases that lead to infertility, she stated: “There is no difference in terms of urban, rural, ethnicity, development, country, we all face the same problems. Maybe etiopathology, i.e. the causes may be different, for example, I did not see much endometriosis in Roma people, but I see more endometriosis in younger urban patients. In contrast, I see a lot of micropolycystic ovaries and a lot of male pathology among the Roma.”¹⁹⁵

The health of Roma children as a group with specific vulnerabilities

Children face additional health risks due to age-specific factors such as increased vulnerability to environmental factors and poverty (48.9 per cent of children aged 0-17 live in households at risk of poverty or social exclusion,¹⁹⁶ and 80 per cent of Roma people are affected by poverty).¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² <http://www.research.gov.ro/uploads/aa-see-grants/proiecte/finantate/rapoarte/ro/06-see-ro.pdf>

¹⁹³ <http://www.research.gov.ro/uploads/aa-see-grants/proiecte/finantate/rapoarte/ro/06-see-ro.pdf>

¹⁹⁴ <https://blog.worldvision.ro/category/mame-pentru-viata-viata-pentru-mame/>

¹⁹⁵ Drumul de la Infertilitate la familie [The Road from Infertility to Family], <https://cmed.ro/drumul-de-la-infertilitate-la-familie-ii/>, April 2013

¹⁹⁶ Eurostat (2015).

http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion accessed on 23 September 2015.

¹⁹⁷ EU Agency for Fundamental Rights; IOM Romania, Equal Health Project (2014) Romania. A multi-stakeholder perspective report on 2005-2014 developments, p 15. Available at: http://equi-health.eea.iom.int/images/NRIS_Romania_Final.pdf

It is estimated that the risk of infant death among the Roma is four times higher for the urban population, according to Roma Early Childhood Inclusion Report, 2012.¹⁹⁸ According to the INSMC, in 2015, the mortality of children under five years of age was 9.2 per cent of live births. In terms of deaths per area of residence, the values are 6.3 per cent in urban areas, and 10 per cent in rural areas.¹⁹⁹

In addition, from INSMC, we find that 20 per cent of women with children under one year of age did not have any prenatal control. Another cause of infant deaths is the prematurity of children, which in turn is due to precariousness and the unwillingness to spend on prenatal medical checks: "If we doubled the number of those in the first trimester, I guarantee that the number of premature births would decrease by half. I would like to involve the family doctors' network more closely. Let's convince the patients to register in the first trimester of pregnancy and have investigations that can predict premature birth. Some are in a bad condition, they can have anything from local infections to maternal morphological conditions, and last but not least, many mothers share their time between service, housekeeping and overworking".²⁰⁰

Similarly, the "Save the Children" Association report (2016) highlights that "infant and child mortality below five years continues to have alarming rates, and disparities between urban and rural areas in terms of access to health services, poverty and education levels are reflected in the higher prevalence of these phenomena in rural areas as well."²⁰¹

From the perspective of access to health services, the group with the highest vulnerability is Roma children. "The mortality rate in children under ten is more than three times higher in the Roma population"²⁰² and access to preventive measures is much lower than in the general population: four times more Roma children were never vaccinated compared to the general population, and the number of Roma girls who have never been vaccinated is 11 times higher than that of girls in households of the general population"²⁰³, according to the "Save the Children" report.

A problem specific to children's health is vaccination, with Roma children at risk of not being vaccinated. The Institute of Public Health shows that the percentage of measles immunization has fallen from over 95 per cent in 2005 to less than 70 per cent in 2016,²⁰⁴ and the media indicates that measles outbreaks are mainly found in Roma communities where the vaccination rate is below 4 per cent.²⁰⁵

¹⁹⁸ Open Society FoundationS, Roma Early Childhood Inclusion – Overview Report, 2012

¹⁹⁹ https://insmc.ro/uploads/documents/Mortalitatea_copilului_sub_5_ani.pdf

²⁰⁰ <https://www.agerpres.ro/sanatate/2014/08/08/nicolae-suciu-polizu-trebuie-realizat-un-program-national-unitar-de-diminuare-a-nasterilor-premature-14-56-03>

²⁰¹ Raport alternativ – București, 2016 La cel de-al 5-lea Raport Periodic Înaintat de România Comitetului ONU pentru Drepturile 2008-2015 [Alternative Report - Bucharest, 2016 to the 5th Periodic Report by Romania to the UN Committee on Children's Rights]

²⁰² Criza Ascunsă din Sănătate - Inegalități în Domeniul Sănătății și Date Dezagregate [Hidden Health Crisis - Health Inequalities and Disaggregated Data] (București: European Roma Rights Center, 2013) <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/criza-ascunsa-din-sanatat-october-2013.pdf>

²⁰³ Salvati Copiii - Raport alternativ – București, 2016 La cel de-al 5-lea Raport Periodic Înaintat de România Comitetului ONU pentru Drepturile 2008-2015 [Alternative Report - Bucharest, 2016 to the 5th Periodic Report by Romania to the UN Committee on Children's Rights], p 36

²⁰⁴ Institutul National de Sănătate Publică, Analiza evoluției bolilor transmisibile aflate în supraveghere, Raport pentru anul 2017 [National Institute of Public Health, Analysis of the evolution of transmitted diseases under surveillance, 2017 Report]

²⁰⁵ <https://evz.ro/ministerul-sanatatii-tigani.html>

According to RECI (Roma Early Childhood Inclusion) Overview Report from 2012, almost half (45.7% per cent) of Roma children do not benefit from free vaccination provided by the Ministry of Health within the National Immunization Programme, because they either refuse vaccination, mothers are poorly informed/educated on this issue, or because of shortcomings in primary care.

According to the 2012 UNDP report, Roma interviewees reported low rates of childhood vaccination. In this regard, the authorities informed ECRI that there were vaccination campaigns for a total number of 1,323 Roma children.²⁰⁶

The data published by the National Institute of Public Health shows how serious the situation is and how much the percentage of immunization in Romania has decreased. RRO vaccine was introduced into the national immunisation calendar in 2005, over 95 per cent being vaccinated. Since 2010, the rate has fallen steadily and in 2015 it reached 85.8 per cent (dose I) and 67 per cent (dose II),²⁰⁷ and even less than 70 per cent in 2016.²⁰⁸

The issue of reducing the rate of immunization comes amid the lack of education and health information. According to information from the Roma community survey, "68 per cent of the respondents with vaccinated children said they had vaccinated their children but did not know very well what type of vaccine the children were given by the doctor".²⁰⁹

The problem of early pregnancy among young Roma girls persists, as Romania is still on the first place at teenage pregnancy (one in ten mothers is minor), three times higher than the EU average and second in teen birth. Romania also has the highest rates at abortion (9 per cent of the total annual abortions are among women under 19), which is still seen as contraceptive because of the lack of information about reproductive rights and health education. Some of the causes are related to the lack of mandatory sex education in schools²¹⁰ and the non-use of contraceptives".²¹¹ The direct experience of Sastipen with teenage abortion situations shows that most of the time the reasons are related to the incorrect use of contraceptives, unprotected sex or the incorrect use of the calendar method.

Although progress has been made within the Roma communities and mobility in Europe has altered mentalities and even changed the pattern of early marriages in some communities, in others it still persists, and low education and the traditional role of girls and mothers in caring for the home still prevails in the community. At national level there is no data to support the phenomenon of early marriages. Pre-18-years of age (the legal age for marriage in Romania) pregnancies in Roma communities occur frequently

<http://www.ms.ro/2018/07/18/campania-de-informare-si-vaccinare-ror-organizata-de-ministerul-sanatatii-a-continuat-astazi-la-buhusi-judetul-bacau/>

²⁰⁶ The Health Situation of Roma Communities, UNDP/World Bank/EC Analysis, Regional Roma Survey Data. Policy Brief by Dotcho Mihailov, <http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/the-health-situation-of-roma-communities.html>, p. 40

²⁰⁷ Săptămâna Europeană a Vaccinării, 23–29 aprilie 2018, Analiză de Situație [European Vaccination Week, 23–29 April 2018, Situation Analysis. http://insp.gov.ro/sites/cnepss/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Analiza_SEV_2018.pdf

²⁰⁸ <https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/sanatare/ce-spune-biserica-romana-despre-vaccinarea-copiilor-dupa-ce-ministerul-sanatatii-a-anuntat-ca-este-epidemie-de-rujeola.html>

²⁰⁹ IPP, p. 43

²¹⁰ Shadow report complementing the Romanian Government's report to the CEDAW - Coalition for GenderEquality, session 2018, p. 14, available at:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/ROU/INT_CEDAW_NGO_ROU_27790_E.pdf

²¹¹ <https://blog.worldvision.ro/category/mame-pentru-viata-viata-pentru-mame/>

within wedlock (most of the times not legally registered) with the consent of the family, although sometimes adolescents are not really mentally prepared: having a child, taking on the role of mother, of a grown-up, is quite sudden. The mother role implicitly accepted along with the marital status results from living in residentially segregated Roma communities, which reproduce the traditional family pattern. In communities that are not compact and are under the influence of other cultures, including in terms of marital and sexual behaviour, one can see that acceptance of marriage and the mother role occurs after 18 years of age. Reducing the phenomenon of teenage birth can be supported by involving community medical teams who can organize educational activities to support a better understanding of contraceptive methods and the benefits of family planning for the child, the woman and the couple.

Of course, as a result of various studies (including Eurostat) that highlight the subject of adolescent mothers in Romania, there have been civil society voices who see it as a necessity to introduce sex education classes in schools to stop this phenomenon, but noted that this solution can work for some of the adolescents whom the lack of information, the social environment or some negative influences have pushed them to have a baby or an abortion, but for Roma teenagers there may be a need for a different approach as their experience may differ from that of other non-Roma teenagers. Any solution should be matched by information sessions for the adolescent's family and their partners who should understand what adolescent pregnancy involves, what are the risks and what it can mean for the psychological development of an adolescent couple.

Fight against discrimination and antigypsyism in health care

In addition to the systemic health inequalities the population faces in general, the Roma population also faces discrimination. The Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – Report on the Implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, underlines that "13 years after the adoption of the EU flagship directives on combating discrimination, Roma discrimination is still widespread. It must not exist in the European Union. The situation of Roma women is often heavier than that of Roma men, as they face multiple discrimination. The situation of Roma children often gives rise to additional concerns."²¹²

Roma women, especially those coming from communities, face serious discrimination when addressing paediatricians and gynaecologists. They are placed in special wards for Roma women in both maternity and paediatric units, usually by the head nurses who organize the hospital wards according to their own preferences.²¹³ They silently bear the degrading treatment they are subjected to because "our lives and our children's lives are in the doctor's hands".²¹⁴ Romani CRISS and the ECPI have produced the Human Rights Monitors' Guide to Discrimination in Access to Health Services for Roma,²¹⁵ where the issue is mentioned. Also, in another report from 2011, Romani CRISS is presenting

²¹² Comunicare a Comisiei către Parlamentul European, Consiliu, Comitetul Economic și Social European și Comitetul Regiunilor . Raport privind punerea în aplicare a cadrului UE pentru strategiile naționale de integrare a romilor [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Assessing the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies], available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52014DC0209>

²¹³ Conclusions of discussions between the Sastipen team and Roma mothers experiencing such treatment in hospitals, without any registered complaints.

²¹⁴ *Ibidem*

²¹⁵ <http://www.romanicriss.org/PDF/Ghid%20monitori%20sanatate.pdf>

situations of placing Roma in separate wards, while a complaint to NCCD was not finalized with a sanction.²¹⁶

Also, people without insurance often say that without the health mediator's support they would never have received the advice they needed and that the contempt they face is sometimes harder to bear than the wrong medication.

Upon sending a petition to the National Council for Combating Discrimination requesting some data related to the activity of this institution, namely the number of complaints/petitions filed with the NCCD by the Roma about the violation of their right to public health services in the period 2016-2018, what were the claims and how many were investigated and sanctioned, we received the following answer: six petitions whose object was "the defamatory and discriminatory refusal to consult the children of the petitioners because they are of Roma origin, discriminatory attitude in the granting of medical treatment, the petitioner being refused and sent away because of his/her ethnicity, some Roma people were refused access to public health services, the refusal to admit to hospital a mother with her child because they were of Roma origin and because the child had no birth certificate, and after controversial discussions they were admitted to a ward which did not meet the minimum accommodation requirements, the eviction of the petitioner's relatives from the hospital after an appendicitis surgery and insulting them on account of their ethnicity, the segregation of Roma children and the conditions provided for them in hospital." Regarding the sterilization of Roma women, there is no current data for Romania, thus it has been documented in different parts of Europe.²¹⁷ In Romania, this has been the topic of public hate speech²¹⁸ used by different extremist organisations or public politicians such as Rareș Buglea (National Liberal Party) and Traian Basescu (Romanian President 2009-2014). Only Buglea was sanctioned by the National Council for Combating Discrimination.²¹⁹

Enquiring about the mechanisms for filing, investigating, and concluding complaint cases about violations of the right to public health services, including cases of discrimination or anti-gypsy manifestations in the healthcare field with NCCD, the institution's response was that "all complaints filed with NCCD are according to the provisions of Order no. 144/2008 on the approval of the Internal Procedure for Solving Petitions and Notices submitted to NCCD." At the same time, the question regarding the existence of NCCD initiatives to provide health professionals with training programmes that recognize and avoid discrimination against the Roma or anti-Gypsy manifestations, the institution's response was that "there are no such initiatives at the moment".²²⁰

A significant initiative to condemn Roma discrimination is belonging to UNICEF Romania, which draws attention to the issue of discrimination against Roma or those from poor environments by launching short films,²²¹ one of which is specifically aimed at warning and raising awareness of how to act in the face of discrimination when accessing healthcare services.

²¹⁶ <http://www.romanicriss.org/PDF/Report%20access%20to%20healthcare.pdf>

²¹⁷ European Roma Rights Center, 2016 http://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/coercive-and-cruel-28-november-2016.pdf

²¹⁸ Position paper prepared by a group of feminist (Roma and non-Roma) about forced sterilisation in Romania with links to politicians who declared themselves in favour of this practice.

https://fia.pimienta.org/weblog/uploads/ladyfest-ro/2013/11/sterilizarea_femeilor_rome.pdf

²¹⁹ <https://www.mediafax.ro/social/rare-buglea-care-a-propus-sterilizarea-femeilor-rome-va-contesta-in-stanta-amenda-primita-11552244>

²²⁰ NCCD's reply to the petition submitted by Sastipen, no. 6597/29.10.2018.

²²¹ <http://www.unicef.ro/media/unicef-oricine-poate-discrimina-oricine-poate-fi-discriminat-discriminarea-afecteaza-in-primul-rand-copiii/>

"The three films help us realize that anyone can discriminate and that anyone can be discriminated against, and that children are the most affected. It is very important for professionals interacting with children – teachers, doctors, social workers – and for the general public to know the effects of discrimination and how they can fight it", said Sandie Blanchet, UNICEF Representative in Romania.

The films promote social inclusion and prevention of discrimination. An essential step in this direction is to develop the capacity of local professionals (social workers, community health assistants, school counsellors, health and school mediators) to understand the consequences and recognize and prevent any form of discrimination.²²²

"Save the Children" Association stated in the Alternative Report (2016) that "while discrimination continues to affect important categories of children in Romania, Roma children, children with disabilities, etc., it is particularly worrisome that the regulations governing the functioning of the National Council for Combating Discrimination²²³ prevents the direct access of children to this body, which is defined by the law as the state authority in the field of discrimination."²²⁴

The phenomenon of Roma discrimination in the medical system is meant to be monitored and countered by the National Agency for Roma. The agency's 2017 report includes activities to develop public policy recommendations for healthcare in order to help improve Roma access to public health services and reduce the risk of diseases caused by the lack of health education; development and transmission to the Ministry of Health of NAR proposals in the field of community healthcare, and of the methodological norms for programme implementation in communities; organising a conference on "Community healthcare and Roma health", providing support to and collaboration with county institutions to organize anti-rabies vaccination campaigns in marginalised and socially vulnerable Roma communities; meetings and debates on "The role of the health mediator in facilitating Roma people's access to public health services".²²⁵

Based on *Sastipen's* work with community teams, physicians, PhD representatives, and medical students in various workshops, we are aware that they recognize the phenomenon of discrimination in the healthcare system and believe that it negatively affects access to healthcare for vulnerable groups and especially for the Roma.

In order to reduce the phenomenon of discrimination in the health system, starting with 2010, Association for Development and Social Inclusion ("*Asociația pentru Dezvoltare și Incluziune Socială*") participated in the development, introduction and teaching of an Ethics and Non-Discrimination Course for medical students. The course teaches medical students notions of ethics, the phenomenon of discrimination and the Roma minority, in order to help them develop a non-discriminatory attitude towards vulnerable groups, especially the Roma minority. In three years, the course was extended to five Romanian state universities (the Medical and Pharmacy Universities in Iasi, Tirgu Mures, Cluj-Napoca, Bucharest and the University of Sibiu), demonstrating its usefulness in medical higher education; the course is welcomed and recommended by both the academia and civil society. "Universities must equip graduates not only with medical deontology,

²²² <http://www.unicef.ro/media/unicef-origine-poate-discrimina-origine-poate-fi-discriminat-discriminarea-afecteaza-in-primul-rand-copiii/>

²²³ Government Ordinance no. 137 of 31 August 2000 (republished) on the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination

²²⁴ Salvati Copiii - Raport alternativ – București, 2016 La cel de-al 5-lea Raport Periodic Înaintat de România Comitetului ONU pentru Drepturile 2008-2015 [„Save the Children” - Alternative Report - Bucharest, 2016 to the 5th Periodic Report by Romania to the UN Committee on Children's Rights]. 2008-2015], p. 10

²²⁵

http://www.anr.gov.ro/docs/Site2017/Rapoarte/raport%20anual%20de%20activitate%20ANR_2017.pdf

knowledge of ethics and legal issues but also with information on the tradition and culture of vulnerable ethnic groups, this being the first step towards understanding and tolerance”.²²⁶

In addition, in 2013, the Inter-organisational Network²²⁷ “Social Partners for Health without Discrimination”, a network of 11 members (universities, non-governmental organisations and public institutions), was established to explicitly promote non-discriminatory treatment in accordance with the needs of all patients belonging to vulnerable groups. The members of the network believe that it is necessary to continue organising professional training courses for medical professionals regarding the non-discrimination of Roma in accessing health services, as well as introducing the discipline of ethics and non-discrimination of vulnerable groups in the health system in the national curriculum of residency training”.²²⁸

Addressing needs of the most vulnerable groups among Roma

In order to meet the specific health needs of vulnerable groups in Roma communities, within the project “RO 19.03 - Strengthening the National Roma Mediators’ Network for the Improvement of the Roma People’s Health” (2014-2017) implemented by the National Health Service Institute and Sastipen, 45 locations were rehabilitated to house community teams, consisting of community nurses and health mediators in 45 communities in six counties. Currently, 43 of the 45 vulnerable rural communities have access to community healthcare services, prevention and health education services, and health information campaigns. Within the same project, an effective health promotion toolkit has been developed that can be used by community teams in their fieldwork. Refresher training curricula for Roma health mediators and training curricula for community nurses have also been updated and complete training courses have been delivered. This project is mentioned in all three Annual Reports of the Ministry of Health in 2015-2017, which is the only effective measure to respond to the needs of prevention in vulnerable Roma communities and to the European recommendations received.

Other initiatives that responded to the health needs of vulnerable people were: the organisation of community health and social care centres by Sastipen and the *zefiR* Project Consortium “*zefiR*. Together for Empowerment”, by UNICEF through the implementation of the project “Social inclusion through the provision of integrated social services in communities in Bacau County”, by the Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme “Integrated health and social services in the community”, all aiming at increasing access to public health services for the Roma and other disadvantaged groups in the communities.

Within these centres, health education is the main activity and this implies the responsible involvement of community medical teams in organising awareness and behavioural change campaigns aiming at improving the health of the general vulnerable population, including the Roma.

The organisation of community-based medical and social centres, for concrete grassroots level support, and health education in accordance with the values of the target groups, is a response of the Romanian NGOs and institutions to the poor living conditions of the Roma, which frequently lead to health problems in the communities, ranging from simple

²²⁶ <https://www.comunicatemedicale.ro/comunicate-oficiale/2503-comunicat-de-presa-etica-si-nondiscriminarea-in-sanatate-incepe-in-scoala/>

²²⁷ The network is part of the project „Social Partners for Health without Discrimination” implemented by the Association for Social Development and Inclusion [Asociația pentru Dezvoltare și Incluziune Socială] in July - December 2013 with the financial support of the Civic Innovation Fund, a programme funded by the Trust for Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe, sponsored by Raiffeisen Bank, managed by Fundația pentru Dezvoltarea Societății Civile[Civil Society Development Foundation].

²²⁸ <https://www.amosnews.ro/adis-etica-si-nondiscriminarea-sanatate-incepe-scoala-2014-01-25>

vitamin deficiencies to malnutrition, anaemia, dystonia and rickets, especially when it comes to one of the most vulnerable groups - the children. These living conditions affect Roma children at a disproportionately larger scale compared to children in the majority population. For this reason, UNICEF representative, Sandie Blanchet, pleaded in an interview "to raise the investment in children, which is an investment in Romania's future". She stated that all studies show that the most vulnerable children in Romania are in rural areas, in Roma families, in poor communities and children with disabilities. In order to improve their lives, UNICEF works with the Romanian authorities and civil society to ensure that each child has access to basic quality services in health, education and child protection.²²⁹

In addition, UNICEF's studies show that an additional year of school increases a person's income by 8-9 per cent and it reduces the risk of becoming unemployed by 8 per cent and the occurrence of serious health problems by 8.2 per cent.²³⁰

The fact that in Romania children receive social services and free healthcare services meets the needs of vulnerable families who, at least from this point of view, consider themselves to be safe and, in the event of an illness, they have access to health services.

Indeed, according to UNICEF's 2016 Children's Global Report, achieving equity for all children is a matter of priority, and one of these priorities is to translate commitment into action through equity policies, programmes, and budget allocations that aim at improving the lives of the most disadvantaged categories, such as children with disabilities, children in Roma families, and children from poor families.²³¹

Because the resources invested in health, education and social protection prove to be inadequate almost all the time, in the 2016 "Save the Children" report, in the Allocation of Resources section, it is noted that: "The insufficiency of resources allocated centrally for education, health and safety makes the children in disadvantaged areas extremely vulnerable – by the nature of the funding formulas, the budgets for these areas are strongly influenced by the goodwill of local authorities or their financial capacity, and not by the needs felt in the community. The decentralization of budgetary resources has accentuated the differences between the sums per capita at local level in these areas, which shows that in Romania, children are not granted equal opportunities in accessing education, health, and protection services".²³²

Vulnerability also affects adolescent health: health education, including reproductive and mental health education, is not part of the compulsory curriculum, medical school services are underdeveloped and under-represented in rural areas, and free access to family planning services and contraception is not possible.²³³

²²⁹ Unicef, <http://www.unicef.ro/media/unicef-guvernele-ar-trebui-sa-faca-astazi-investitiile-potrivite-pentru-a-schimba-viitorul-celor-mai-vulnerabili-copii/>

²³⁰ UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.ro/media/unicef-guvernele-ar-trebui-sa-faca-astazi-investitiile-potrivite-pentru-a-schimba-viitorul-celor-mai-vulnerabili-copii/>

²³¹ UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.ro/media/unicef-guvernele-ar-trebui-sa-faca-astazi-investitiile-potrivite-pentru-a-schimba-viitorul-celor-mai-vulnerabili-copii/>

²³² *Raport alternativ – București, 2016 La cel de-al 5-lea Raport Periodic Înainte de România Comitetului ONU pentru Drepturile 2008-2015* [Alternative Report - Bucharest, 2016 to the 5th Periodic Report by Romania to the UN Committee on Children's Rights]. 2008-2015, p. 68.

²³³ *Raport alternativ – București, 2016 La cel de-al 5-lea Raport Periodic Înainte de România Comitetului ONU pentru Drepturile 2008-2015* [Alternative Report - Bucharest, 2016 to the 5th Periodic Report by Romania to the UN Committee on Children's Rights]. 2008-2015, p. 69.

Within the National Strategy on Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2014-2020, there is a list of interventions that may, among others, become national priorities for certain sectors over the period of 2015-2020. One of the key intervention proposals for poverty reduction and the promotion of social inclusion is the redesign of the M/XDR-TB National Programme to include targeted social support and interventions with an earmarked budget addressing poor and vulnerable populations (drug addicts, street children, homeless people, prison fellows, Roma, and other groups).²³⁴

A problem addressed mainly by civil society is the drug use associated with the transmission of infectious diseases via bloodstream due to drug use by injection. According to the country's report on drugs, in Romania 3.9 per cent of young people aged 15 to 34 used drugs at least once in the previous year, 3.3 per cent of them saying they used cannabis. At the same time, the document mentions that in 2015 (the last one analysed), there were no fewer than 10,053 drug law violations, most of them being associated with heroin.²³⁵ Among the concerns about drug use is the fact that young people are affected, with nearly 50 per cent of the overdose victims being aged between 25 and 29 years old.²³⁶

Regarding the number of HIV-AIDS cases, the European Commission report indicates a downward trend over a five-year period, an outcome of a national distribution of more than 1.4 million disposable syringes. These figures, however, indicate a rate of 7.1 per cent cases of illness per million inhabitants, one of the highest in Europe.²³⁷

The emergence of drug prevention programmes for adolescents and young people at the national level shows the involvement of non-governmental organizations and sometimes state institutions in directing drug users to socialisation, integration, and adaptation programmes.

Among the initiatives in this field, we mention the publication in 2018 of a UNICEF Methodology for engaging adolescent drug users and at-risk adolescents, which pursues the goal of "teenagers receiving timely treatment and all other services they need".²³⁸

Given that there are not enough incentives to reduce drug use and associated risks, in 2017, the Carusel organization in Bucharest, along with other organisations, pleaded for a draft law to amend Law no. 143/2000 on the prevention and combating of illicit drug trafficking and consumption, with a plan to set up the Chambers of Drug Advice and Controlled Consumption. The signatories motivated their initiative by stating that "these facilities will considerably reduce the risks associated with drug use (for the general population and those directly affected by it) and will thus reduce the costs allocated from the state budget for the treatment of associated diseases."²³⁹

Unfortunately, in 2017, the Carusel organisation was faced with the 5th District City Hall's decision to evacuate the Caracuda Centre, although it was the only centre dedicated to drug-related harm reduction services for drug-addicts in Ferentari, a residential area inhabited largely by Roma people and despite the fact that the results obtained in recent years recommended the continuation of this service.

In addition, the same association, together with the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD), the University of Bucharest and the Faculty of Sociology and

²³⁴ SNIRS, p. 13.

²³⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/romania/news/20170706_raport_tara_romania_droguri_2017_ro

²³⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/romania/news/20170706_raport_tara_romania_droguri_2017_ro

²³⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/romania/news/20170706_raport_tara_romania_droguri_2017_ro

²³⁸ UNICEF, Monica Dan, Metodologie de lucru cu adolescenții la risc și consumatori de droguri [Methodology for working with adolescents at risk and drug users, Ed. Alpha MDN, p. 7]

²³⁹ <http://carusel.org/blog/category/droguri/>

Social Assistance (SAS), each year organizes a Summer School on "Risk Groups and Social Support Services. The right to non-discrimination".²⁴⁰

Starting with 2014, the non-governmental organization BADD – the Drug Activists Brigade has been operating in Bucharest. It is an informal group of former and current drug users and specialists advocating respect for human rights, for increasing drug users' access to medical, psychological and social services and for promoting harm reduction services to mitigate the negative consequences associated with drug use.

Also ALIAT – the "Alliance for Fighting Alcoholism and Drugs Addictions" (*Alianța pentru Lupta Împotriva Alcoolismului și Toxicomaniilor*) is operating in Romania since 1993, the main area of work being the prevention of alcohol and other drugs use and abuse, treatment for addicted people, training for professionals working in the addiction field and advocacy regarding public policies and national legislation in the field of addiction.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ <http://carusel.org/blog/category/droguri/page/3/>

²⁴¹ See: <https://aliat-ong.ro/>

EDUCATION

Access to quality early childhood care and preschool education

Pre-school is currently not compulsory in Romania; however, the draft bill for the amendment of Article 16 of the National Education Law no. 1/2011 proposes the extension of compulsory education so that by 2020²⁴² it includes the last two years of pre-school education as well. According to the rationale, lower preschool participation in rural areas may cause inequalities in school readiness and, implicitly, increase the risk of school drop-out as early as zero grade for children who do not attend kindergarten (over 25 per cent in rural areas).²⁴³ The Government asked for the revision of this legal initiative, aiming for the incremental generalisation of this type of education (compulsory education would include the oldest kindergarten age-group beginning in 2020, and the middle kindergarten age-group in 2023). The Government has laid out the challenges that the system is faced with related to space – availability and quality, costs – facilities provided for children in the compulsory education system.²⁴⁴

The Government has won the elections by mentioning that they will build 800 schools and kindergarten during their mandate, according to their political platform, but so far very little has been done in this regard. Moreover, since the Romanian president was elected, he launched a national program called “The Educated Romania” – which represents a large public consultation regarding the educational system, in which all relevant stakeholders are included, in order to reform the education system (the final document will be launched on 5th December 2018), in which the results and findings of the three-year public consultations will be presented.

In 2014-2017, the participation of old children in kindergarten between the ages of four to six years old increased from 86.4 per cent to 88.2 per cent. However, it is still under the level targeted for 2020, which is 95 per cent.²⁴⁵ The kindergarten enrolment rate for old Roma children between 3-6 years old is much under the rate for the majority population: 37 per cent for Roma children as compared to 77 per cent for non-Roma children. The most frequently invoked reason for non-participation is the lack of financial means.²⁴⁶ As for the children’s participation in crèche (between zero to three years old), the rate of participation is low in Romania (17.4 per cent in 2016) as compared to the European average (32.9 per cent)²⁴⁷ although, at least in large cities, there is a very high demand from the parents (for instance, in Bucharest, there are 19 public crèche summing up to 4,000 places, which is ten times lower than the demand.²⁴⁸ In Cluj-Napoca, in 2018, there were 580 children in crèche and 905 children who were

²⁴² Legal initiative to amend Article 16 of the Law of National Education no. 1/2011, available at:

<http://www.cdep.ro/proiecte/2017/400/40/7/pl559.pdf>, accessed on 19.10.2018

²⁴³ Rationale (for the Legal initiative to amend Article 16 of the Law of National Education no. 1/2011), available at: <http://www.cdep.ro/proiecte/2017/400/40/7/em559.pdf>, accessed on 19.10.2018

²⁴⁴ The Government’s perspective on the legal initiative to amend Art.16 of the Law of National Education no. 1/2011, available at: http://www.cdep.ro/proiecte/2017/400/40/7/pvg447_2017.pdf, accessed on 19.10.2018

²⁴⁵ European Commission, Education and Training Monitor 2018, vol. 2, p. 239

²⁴⁶ Strategy of the Government of Romania for the inclusion of the Romanian citizens belonging to Roma minority for the period 2012-2020, p. 11

²⁴⁷ European Commission, Education and Training Monitor 2018, vol. 2, pg. 242

²⁴⁸ <https://observator.tv/social/o-suta-de-euro-atat-costa-sati-inscrii-copilul-la-o-cresa-din-capitala-269667.html>, accessed on 19.10.2018

rejected²⁴⁹. Children's participation in preschool education is under 34 per cent even if we extend the age interval up to four years of age: 344,460 children aged between zero and four years of age were in crèche or in kindergartens in 2016, out of a total number of 1,021,038 children.²⁵⁰ The causes of low pre-school participation are: the shortage of space, lack of parents' financial means, social and conceptual preferences for child-rearing.²⁵¹

The major sources for increasing the number of schools, for the rehabilitation and equipping the existing ones, and for the training and professional development of human resources for early childhood education (prior to kindergarten) are the European funds – a synergy of HCOP-ROP-RDNP²⁵² and Norway funds:

- 1) HCOP 6.2 and 6.6 "Quality education in crèche at the national level": the period for submitting proposals is 20 August 2018 - 30 December 2019. According to the guidelines for applicants, the eligible applicant is the Ministry of National Education, and the minimum target group is 2,600 people: early childhood teachers and experts involved in curriculum development, textbook authors and authors of learning materials (including in digital format) for early childhood education. The allocated funding is 4,000,000 EUR.
- 2) ROP 10.1 "Increased participation in early childhood education and in compulsory education, especially for children at a high risk of early school leaving": the period for submitting proposals was 4 January 2018 - 5 July 2018, and the allocated funding was 110,245,477.44 EUR.
- 3) RDNP 7.2 "Support for investments in building and modernisation of small-scale basic infrastructure in the educational and social domain": during the period 2015-2017, there were three calls for proposal. Within RDNP, investments were contracted for 277 kindergartens/crèche and upper secondary agricultural vocational schools, of which the contracts were signed for 165 units in the course of 2017.²⁵³
- 4) Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014, Poverty Alleviation Programme in Romania (RO25 Programme)²⁵⁴: the "Ready Set Go!" Project constituted itself as an integrated approach to enhancing the quality of early childhood development (ECD) services in Romania - it started from renovating/rehabilitating 14 kindergarten places and additional rooms for Toy Libraries; it continued with establishing quality ECD services for children in 11 localities (kindergarten programme for 14 kindergarten groups), being accompanied by innovative means of developing children's learning outcomes (Toy Libraries and Community events). And it also correlated the development of learning outcomes for children with the improvement of parenting

²⁴⁹ <https://www.clujmanifest.ro/stiri/social/905-copii-au-ramas-fara-locuri-in-crese/>, accessed on 19.10.2018

²⁵⁰ National Institute for Statistics, Urban audit 2018, p. 27, available at: https://media.hotnews.ro/media_server1/document-2018-09-10-22694071-0-audit-urban-2018.pdf, accessed on 19.10.2018

²⁵¹ *Idem*, p. 29

²⁵² Office of the Prime Minister, Integrated package for combating poverty, p. 10, available at: https://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/fi%C8%99iere/Minister/2016/strategii/Pachet_integrat_pentru_combat_era_saraciei.pdf, accessed on 19.10.2018

²⁵³ Government of Romania, 2018 National Reform Programme, April 2018, p. 69, available at: http://frds.ro/uploads/files/RO99_Cadru%20strategic/14.%20Programul%20national%20de%20reforma.pdf, accessed on 19.10.2018

²⁵⁴ <https://eeagrants.org/programme/view/RO25/PA40>

skills and practices (involving caregivers in reading sessions - Your Story, and Educator-for-a-day sessions - Home School Community Liaisons).²⁵⁵

In the 2013-2014 academic year, in pre-school education, 96.9 per cent of the teaching staff had proper qualifications, with a slight difference between rural and urban areas: 96.1 per cent in the former and 97.3 per cent in the latter.²⁵⁶ In the same academic year, the average teacher-child ratio in pre-school education was 16, with some differences between rural and urban areas favouring the latter: 18 children per teacher in rural areas as compared to 15 in urban areas.²⁵⁷

According to Article 45 of the National Education Law:²⁵⁸ "Persons belonging to national minorities have the right to study and train in their mother tongue, at all levels, in all types and forms of pre-university education, under the terms of the law". In 2014-2015, most children (92.5 per cent) were enrolled in kindergartens with instruction done in Romanian, 6.2 per cent in kindergartens with instruction in Hungarian, 1.0 per cent in German, and 0.3 per cent in other national minority languages (Serbian, Ukrainian, Slovak, Czech, Bulgarian, Croatian, English, and Romani).²⁵⁹

The teachers' in-service training is both a right and an obligation according to the current legislation; this training entails professional development and career advancement.²⁶⁰ General school inspection is carried out by the Ministry of National Education and the county school inspectorates in all pre-university schools within the national education system. Subsequent to the inspection, a final written report is produced, including an executive summary, which is to be shared by the head teacher of the school with the council of the school's teaching staff in a meeting attended by representatives of the parents, the students, the auxiliary teaching staff and the non-teaching staff.²⁶¹

In practice, the most significant challenges in terms of ensuring that students develop their full potential in the current education system and pre-service training are²⁶²:

- Insufficient initial and continuous teacher training in the field of working with children who are at high risk of exclusion (for example, those coming from low-income families in rural areas, children with special educational needs, Roma children) and in adapting the current curriculum to the students' needs;
- Insufficient financial allocations through the current mechanism; per capita funding covers the core needs of schools but fails to provide additional support to schools with a high number of students at-risk.

The costs entailed by participation in pre-school education are:

²⁵⁵ <http://www.readysetgo.ro/about-the-project?lang=en>, accessed on 5.12.2018

²⁵⁶ Institutul de Științe ale Educației (2015), Analiza sistemului de învățământ preuniversitar din România din perspectiva unor indicatori statistici. Politici educaționale bazate pe date, [Institute of Educational Sciences, An analysis of the pre-university education system using statistical indicators. Evidence-based educational policies], p. 11

²⁵⁷ Idem, p. 15

²⁵⁸ Romania, National Education Law no. 1/2011

²⁵⁹ Institutul Național de Statistică (2016), Sistemul educațional în România - date sintetice - Anul școlar/universitar 2014 - 2015, [National Institute of Statistics, The education system in Romania - brief data - 2014-2015 academic year], p. 23

²⁶⁰ Romania, National Education Law no. 1/2011

²⁶¹ Romania, Regulament de inspecție a unităților de învățământ preuniversitar, aprobat prin OMECTS 5547/2011 [Rulebook for school inspection, approved by OOMECTS 5547/2011]

²⁶² Romania, Strategia națională pentru protecția și promovarea drepturilor copilului 2014-2020 [National strategy for the protection and promotion of children's rights 2014-2020], p. 14

- In crèche (from 0 to three years old): parents pay a monthly contribution, the value of which is set by mayor's order, according to the number of children in the family and parents'/legal representatives' cumulative monthly gross average income calculated over the last six months prior to the child's enrolment, verified by a certificate. The contribution is set by taking into account the actual number of days the child attends school and may not exceed 20 per cent of the average monthly maintenance cost in the pre-school education provided by public institutions.²⁶³
- In kindergartens (from three to years old): in full-day kindergartens (ten hours/day), cooked lunch is available for the children which parents have to pay for. There are no subsidies for children from disadvantaged families, but social vouchers are provided for the purchasing food, hygiene products, clothing and/or goods, provided that children attend kindergarten.²⁶⁴ This initiative has not yet reached its target of 110,000 (the equivalent of nearly one in five children in kindergarten). In 2018, 47,000 children were included in the programme, of which only a small part had not attended kindergarten before. This highlights the marginal impact of the measure on kindergarten enrolment rate, rather than indicating an increase in daily attendance.²⁶⁵

In the education system, in general, parental involvement – especially parents of children at-risk – continues to be challenging for most schools. The low value attached to education, school and school actors (teachers, mediators, school administration) often makes it difficult for the school to communicate and collaborate with the parents. However, inclusive practices have spread across many schools and parents, and currently, there are many successful projects within which parents of SEN children, of children from low socio-economic status families or of Roma children, get directly involved in the child's education and even in solving problems the school faces.²⁶⁶

Most of the NGOs that are implementing ECD project activities in the Roma communities are always involving Roma communities and families in the relation with the kindergarten. Unfortunately, there is nothing done by the public institutions in order to attract Roma mothers and get them closer to the kindergarten, no public policies being identified in this regard.

Improving quality of education until the end of compulsory schooling

According to the 2018 Report of the European Commission, one of the major challenges Romania is still facing is related to the equal access to education, with significant differences between rural and urban areas, and also between Roma and non-Roma.

From a legal standpoint, progress has been made: ministerial orders in the field of education have been issued (e.g. study in mother tongue and of mother tongue language and literature, of Romanian language and literature, the study of history and

²⁶³ Government of Romania, Hotărâre nr. 1252/2012 privind aprobarea Metodologiei de organizare și funcționare a creșelor și a altor unități de educație timpurie antepreșcolară [Decision no. 1252/2012 for the approval of the methodology for the organization and operation of creches and other early childhood education and care units]

²⁶⁴ Romania, Legea nr. 248/2015 referitor la stimularea participării la educația preșcolară a copiilor din familii dezavantajate [Law no. 248/2015 for incentivising preschool participation of children from disadvantaged families]

²⁶⁵ European Commission, Education and Training Monitor 2018, vol. 2, p. 242

²⁶⁶ Romania, Strategia națională pentru protecția și promovarea drepturilor copilului 2014-2020 [National strategy for the protection and promotion of children's rights 2014-2020], p. 15

traditions of national minorities and Musical Education in the mother tongue).²⁶⁷ The following types of education programmes have been established: "School after school",²⁶⁸ "Euro200 Programme" and "Second Chance".²⁶⁹ Several programmes have been implemented using European funds for equipping and furnishing schools and for reducing the drop-out rate, as well as for making schools attractive (e.g.: "*Educația copiilor romi – calea spre un loc de muncă stabil*" – "Roma children's education – the path to a stable workplace" and "*Școala – o șansă pentru fiecare*" – "School – a chance for everyone").²⁷⁰

Naturally, schools ensure that all children are enrolled in the mainstream education system, motivated by the way in which the education units are financed, i.e. *per capita*/per pupil. There have been several programmes involving teachers in schools with a high percentage of Roma students for a fair approach, but the results only showed on paper. There are no highly qualified teachers in Roma schools; on the contrary, they are legally hired with tenure, but merely use the (largely urban) schools as launch pads for pre-transfers to other schools in the city, and sometimes untrained substitute teachers replace them in the schools with numerous Roma students.²⁷¹

Although several programmes, projects and measures have been implemented to improve the education system in Romania, Roma students face numerous problems: poor learning outcomes and the drop-out risk are widespread due to poor attendance rates, their family's low income, the absence of role models in the family, parents' inability to support the educational process, lack of awareness on the importance of education in one's life, lack of motivation, early marriages, parents' non-involvement in school, discrimination in terms of different grading of students, lack of staff's inclusive educational skills, and Roma students' non-involvement in extra-curricular activities that could contribute to increased self-esteem.²⁷²

The cost of schooling a child exceeds the means of most Roma families. The results of a 2011 survey highlight the disadvantaged situation of Roma children: participation rates for preschool children are between 4 per cent (for children aged three years) and 23 per cent (for children aged six) (UNICEF 2011). Only 82.4 per cent of school-age Roma children attend school, 6.9 per cent dropped out and 8.9 per cent were never enrolled in school (the early school leaving risk is higher for girls).²⁷³

Among the specific measures the Romanian state took in order to ensure the inclusion of Roma students in compulsory education (up to the 10th year), the most relevant one is the establishment of the school mediator position. The school mediator's primary responsibility is to support the involvement of every child in the community in compulsory education by encouraging parents' involvement in their children's education and school life and by facilitating cooperation among families, the community and the school. One of the challenges faced by this public policy is the insufficient number of school mediators. According to the Roma Inclusion Strategy, in 2016 there were 600 school mediators hired in educational establishments that require school mediation.

²⁶⁷ <http://www.dri.gov.ro/ordin-nr-5-6712012-pentru-aprobarea-metodologiei-privind-studiul-in-limba-materna-si-al-limbii-si-literaturii-materne-al-limbii-si-literaturii-romane-studiul-istoriei-si-traditiilor-minoritatilor/>

²⁶⁸ <https://www.edu.ro/scoala%20dupa%20scoala>

²⁶⁹ <https://www.edu.ro/a%20doua%20sansa>

²⁷⁰ Interview with Micuță Ion, president of the Association „Cine suntem” [„Who Are We”]

²⁷¹ *Idem*

²⁷² https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/roma_romania_strategy2_en.pdf

²⁷³ http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:fpSIC6Dlk6AJ:www.unicef.ro/wp-content/uploads/Costul-investitiei-insuficiente-in-educatie_2014.pdf+&cd=10&hl=ro&ct=clnk&gl=ro&client=firefox-b, p. 39

However, in the official statistics for the 2015-2016 academic year, only 413 school mediators are reported.²⁷⁴ The target indicator for 2020 is to hire a school mediator in each of the 1,680 schools where Roma students make up at least 15 per cent.

More or less complementary to public initiatives, the Roma and pro-Roma civil society have launched a series of projects and initiatives aimed at supporting Roma children's access to quality education. Three of the pilot projects that pursue access to quality inclusive education are:

- 1) The pilot project implemented in Bacau County by UNICEF in Romania, in partnership with public institutions and NGOs: "*Incluziune socială prin furnizare de servicii integrate la nivelul comunității*" [Social inclusion through integrated community services]".²⁷⁵
- 2) The project "*Inclusive schools: making a difference for Roma children*" (INSCHOOL)²⁷⁶ implemented by the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and the UK.
- 3) The project "*Ready, Set, Go!*" implemented by the Roma Education Fund Romania with the support of Norway Grants – RO25 Poverty Alleviation Programme, with additional support from the Open Society Foundations and technical assistance from the World Bank. From November 2015 until June 2017, "*Ready, Set, Go!*" has provided quality early childhood education for 570 children, 530 parents, with five kindergarten spaces built and five more refurbished.²⁷⁷

In recent years, a series of measures have been initiated to help reduce educational gaps and, implicitly, inequity. However, these were social measures that in the long run failed to contribute to reducing the targeted gaps, and instead led to the dependence of parents, students and schools on limited material resources such as social vouchers, bread rolls and milk, etc., and the quality of education these children have access to virtually stayed the same.

Romania does not have accurate data on grade retention, even though it is admitted that the phenomenon is widespread across the country. The Strategy for Reducing Early School Leaving emphasises that grade repetition is one of the most relevant predictors of school drop-out, especially for boys and for lower secondary students in rural areas.²⁷⁸

Roma girls are usually the ones most affected by educational issues and part of them drop out of school before reaching upper secondary school. There is no official data on early marriages, but the grassroots NGOs are aware of this phenomenon. Studies²⁷⁹ have estimated that between 25 per cent and 35 per cent of Roma girls aged between 15-19-years old are married without legal papers. The legal age for marriage in Romania is 18. Another study from 2013 revealed that the average age for the first pregnancy was 19.5 years old in the case of Roma women and 22.5 years old in the case of non-Roma

²⁷⁴ http://www.educatiefaradiscriminare.ro/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/normare_recomandari-politica-publica.pdf

²⁷⁵ <http://www.unicef.ro/media/incluziune-sociala-prin-furnizarea-de-servicii-sociale-integrate-la-nivelul-comunitatii/>

²⁷⁶ <http://coe-romed.org/articles/inschool-%E2%80%93-new-project-european-commission-and-council-europe-inclusive-education-roma>

²⁷⁷ <http://www.romaeducationfund.org/videos/ready-set-go-0>

²⁷⁸ In the previous report (2017), we mentioned data on grade retention from the National Institute for Statistics and „Împreună” Agency for Community Development. No new data has been reported since then.

²⁷⁹ Early and Forced Marriages in Roma Communities, Romania Country Report 2015, CoE - CAHROM, (Crai, E.)

women.²⁸⁰ Also, 4.1 per cent of the non-Roma women had their first child when they were aged between 14 and 17 years, comparing to 32.7 per cent of Roma women. For the cohort of 18-21-year-olds, the difference between Roma and non-Roma is insignificant (almost 46 per cent for both).

The rate of early leavers from education and training (youth aged 18-24 years) is still high: 18.1 per cent in 2017 in Romania compared to the EU average of 10.6 per cent.²⁸¹ According to the same data, the rate of early leavers has not decreased since 2014: it remained virtually the same. Even though Romania promised to reduce the rate of early school leaving to 11.3 per cent by 2020, this seems to be unlikely taking into consideration the current situation. From the total number of early school leavers in 2015, 77 per cent were Roma.²⁸² The difference between Roma women and men was quite small: the percentage of Roma women aged 18-24 years old who leave school early is 78 per cent, while for men it is 76 per cent.

Thus, the figures from 2011 from the National Institute for Statistics look different for illiterate Roma women and men.

	<i>Level of education among Roma</i>	<i>Superior</i>	<i>Post high school</i>	<i>High school</i>	<i>Primary education</i>	<i>No literacy</i>
Total Roma	477,715	3,175	994	23,259	170,465	96,511
Male	242,209	1,528	521	13,238	90,023	41,404
Female	235,506	1,647	473	10,021	80,442	55,107

Source: INS, Romanian census data from 2011

In Romania, the existing evaluation framework for schools has several gaps, especially due to different external school evaluation bodies being involved in the process. At the moment, the County School Inspectorates and ARACIP (The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education) use different criteria for evaluating schools. For this reason, OECD²⁸³ recommends the following: (1) develop a common definition of "good school" to ensure all evaluators have the same understanding and expectations and (2) diminish duplication of school evaluation by reframing ARACIP's activity as the main responsible body for school evaluation. Another problem identified by the same report was the accountability focus of the schools' evaluation without enough feedback and follow-up support in order to improve the quality of education. *"The full evaluation reports are made publicly available on the ARACIP website. If the recurrent evaluation found that the required standards have been met, ARACIP issues a 'quality certificate' to the school".*²⁸⁴

There are two types of teacher training: initial or pre-service training and continuous or in-service training. Initial training is offered by Pedagogical High-schools or by the Teacher Education Departments in universities. There is however very little focus in the curriculum on teaching children from vulnerable groups. A Masters Programme in teaching was launched in 2016 as a pilot project by the University of Bucharest, although the 2011 National Education Law already made provisions for this programme.

²⁸⁰ Gelu, Duminičă and Ana Ivăsiuc. (2013). Roma in Romania. From Scapegoat to Development Engine

²⁸¹ https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/et-monitor-factsheet-2018-romania_en.pdf

²⁸² <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/eumidis-ii-roma-selected-findings>

²⁸³ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264274051-en.pdf?expires=1542317199&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=BF9F6A3FE942EE60C4EB422AD053AD7A>

²⁸⁴ *Ibidem*

Continuous teacher training in Romania is provided by educational institutions, non-governmental organizations or other legal entities, private or public.²⁸⁵ In practice, the main providers of accredited teacher training are the County Teacher Training Centres.

Accredited training for teachers is compulsory, as teachers should achieve 90 credits every five years.²⁸⁶ This means that teachers should complete training courses that are accredited by the respective County Teacher Training Centre.

The accredited training courses have to be paid for by the teachers, except for courses that take place within externally funded programmes (most of the time from EU funding) and teachers interested in a course have to wait for enough applicants to enrol in the training.

Courses are free when teachers are required to prepare their examination in order to be promoted to the next career level (2nd degree, 1st degree, end of induction period).

Some training centres provide training courses on topics such as Intercultural Education, Inclusive Schools or specific teaching methods for children with special educational needs, but there are no general applying requirements for topics to be covered during in-service teacher training.

In addition to the fee factor, there are other difficulties that teachers face when accessing accredited training courses, especially for teachers in rural communities. Training is usually organised within the county's capital city, which means that teachers have to spend a lot of time travelling to/from the training location.

Another type of training course is that which is not accredited by state institutions. These courses are usually provided by different NGOs for free and they are targeted directly at teachers within different projects implemented by the NGOs (who use external funding).

Even though they are not accredited, and teachers do not receive credit points, these courses do count for the personal file of each teacher, as they help teachers gain points in their annual evaluation. This reflects on bonuses, career advancement, transferring to another school or for obtaining tenure. Especially in schools serving disadvantaged areas, where a lot of the teachers do not have tenure and have to renew their contract each year, there is a high demand for this type of training.

Parents should be a social partner of the school, according to the 2011 National Education Law. Officially, each school should have a Parents' Committee. This year (2018), the Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations for Children together with UNICEF Romania launched a debate to draft proposals for the development of a Parental Education Strategy. The proposal was withdrawn after NGOs that fight for "family protection" protested, who complained that the strategy goes against the traditional family by promoting diversity and gender equality.

An important aspect is very much related to the fact that during the 2018/2019 school year, according to national statistics, nearly 3,900 units (schools) do not have a sanitary permit, this represents about 20 per cent of the total buildings. Moreover, the same number of schools are not having the fire safety authorization, according to a press release by the National Fire Department that centralized the information, 3,892 buildings must obtain the fire safety authorization. A large number of them are situated in the rural areas, but over 500 are in Bucharest. Another statistic, revealed by the Ministry of

²⁸⁵ National Education Law no. 1/2011

²⁸⁶ Minister's Order 4476/ 2016 concerning teacher training, available at: <http://www.edu.ro/formare-continua>

Education,²⁸⁷ refers to the fact that there are 2,418 schools in Romania with outdoor sanitary groups. All this information contributes to the lack of school infrastructure, especially in rural areas.

Support of secondary and higher education particularly for professions with high labour market demand

Overall, within the EU, Romania has one of the highest rates of 15-year-old students underperforming in reading (37.3 per cent), mathematics (40.8 per cent) and science (37.3 per cent), as shown in the OECD PISA study.²⁸⁸ Almost 25 per cent of Romanian students are underachieving in all three domains.

The main support measure with a focus on secondary education is the allocation of places for Roma students in upper secondary education.²⁸⁹ Special places for Roma students are allocated in addition to the regular number of places in upper secondary and vocational schools, with a limit of one to two places per class. From the point of view of secondary schools, vocational schools and NGOs working with them, this affirmative action is an important policy to improve the inclusion of Roma youth in secondary education, together with the changes in the National Education Law extending the compulsory education cycle up to 10th grade ten. However, the inclusion of girls is still lower than that of boys due to many factors that include: stereotypes regarding gender roles within the school and community/family, early marriages and economic reasons being some of the root causes in this regard.

Scholarships are another important inclusion tool. Students attending vocational schools receive a monthly scholarship of 200 RON (the equivalent of approximately 42 EUR).²⁹⁰ However, this amount is not sufficient to cover the necessary expenses, especially since after the 8th grade students are not receiving support for school supplies anymore.

Dual training in cooperation with private companies, though still at an early stage, seems promising for the improvement in educational and labour market inclusion of vulnerable youth. In this case, students receive another 200 RON monthly support from the company that co-organises the training.

A large-scale project is currently being implemented by the Ministry of Education, in which in 2017, 271 upper secondary schools received grants within the ROSE Project²⁹¹ in order to reduce the drop-out rate and improve school-leaving results, by means of remedial/tutoring classes, career counselling and by improving school infrastructure. This was the first round of grants within the project that lasts until 2022 and is funded from a 200,000,000 EUR loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Pending on school policies and staff availability, remedial classes are organised voluntarily by teachers for students who prepare for graduation examinations, but there is no data on the availability or efficiency of these activities.

Most of the other forms of support, such as mentoring and counselling, life-skills training, extra-curricular and non-formal education, are provided by different NGOs that access either external public funding (Swiss, Norwegian, and EU funds) or private funds.

²⁸⁷ <https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-22246256-liviu-pop-2-418-scoli-din-romania-2018-toaletele-curte.htm>

²⁸⁸ OECD, (2016) PISA 2015 results

²⁸⁹ Ministry of Education, Orders OM 4794/31.08.2017, OM 4795/31.08.2017, OM 4802/31.08.2010

²⁹⁰ H 1062/2012 on social benefits (support for vocational training)

²⁹¹ <https://www.edu.ro/271-de-licee-beneficiaz-%C4%83-de-granturi-%C3%AE-cadrul-proiectului-privind-%C3%AE-env-%C4%83-%C8%9B-%C4%83m-%C3%A2ntul-secundarromania>, accessed on 07.11.2018

Scholarships for Roma students are also provided as financial support. One of the oldest scholarship programmes are the ones supported by the Roma Education Fund: REF Scholarship Programme (REF SP), "Roma Memorial" (RMUSP)²⁹², Pedagogical Scholarship Programme supported by Roma Education Fund Romania²⁹³ aiming at supporting high-school and faculty students to continue their studies and to increase their ethnic self-esteem.

Another scholarship programme is "Livia Plaks Roma Rights Scholarship" provided by the "Uniunea Civica a Tinerilor Romi din Romania" (The Civic Union of Young Roma from Romania) and Romani CRISS Organisation;²⁹⁴ the programme also aims at increasing the number of Roma students in tertiary education.

There are also few training programmes: Forumul Tinerilor Romi din Romania (Roma Youth's Forum from Romania)²⁹⁵ and YOUTHFirst²⁹⁶ developed by the Civic Union of Young Roma from Romania with the objective of increasing the voice of Roma students.

Official Romanian statistics do not allow for comparisons between Roma and non-Roma children and youth in terms of completion of vocational education, upper secondary education, and higher education. The most reliable data on this topic is available in the EU-MIDIS II survey (FRA 2016)²⁹⁷. Nonetheless, even in this report, the reported data shows enrolment levels and not completion rates, and only provides information on the ISCED3 level (which includes vocational training and upper secondary education). Notwithstanding, the EU-MIDIS II data (FRA 2016, p. 31) shows overwhelmingly lower levels of total enrolment for Roma students (34 per cent) compared to the general population (87 per cent).²⁹⁸

One particular issue that limits the access of Roma students to vocational training programmes with high labour market demand is that the access to such programmes (i.e. vocational training courses and apprenticeship) is restricted by the level of already completed formal education (almost all of them require the finalisation of at least lower-secondary education – ISCED2 level). The EU-MIDIS II data (FRA 2016, p. 31) also shows lower enrolment rates for Roma children compared to the general population at the ISCED1 and ISCED2 levels; the differences in completion rates are possibly even larger, thus limiting the access of Roma to the most relevant vocational training programmes.

Besides the commitment to support affirmative measures for access to education, the National Roma Inclusion Strategy (NRIS) provides no concrete measure for increasing the participation of Roma students in vocational, upper secondary or higher education. Moreover, the proposed strategic action for increasing the participation of Roma students in professional education takes a rather assimilationist perspective, traditional Roma occupations being described as "outdated, unprofitable and anachronistic".

²⁹² <http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/instructiuni-de-aplicare-rmusp-0>

²⁹³ <https://romaeducationfund.ro/programul-de-burse-in-pedagogie-velux/>

²⁹⁴ <http://uctrr.ro/programul-de-burse-livia-plaks/>

²⁹⁵ www.uctrr.ro

²⁹⁶ See: <https://www.facebook.com/962946527148393/photos/a.1192201774222866/1192201784222865/?type=3&theater>

²⁹⁷ See: <https://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2015/eu-midis-ii-second-european-union-minorities-and-discrimination-survey>

²⁹⁸ Also, see p. 66 for figures related to Roma women and men enrolled in different levels of education according to national statistics available.

Although the NRIS repeatedly mentions the importance of professional training, the focus is not on increasing access to vocational training provided through the formal education system, but on immediate measures for improving access to the labour market (mainly professional orientation sessions and short-term training courses). This was also the approach adopted by most of the projects focusing on Roma inclusion covered by EU structural funds. By ignoring the macro-level dynamics on the labour market, the fact that formal education still functions as one of the most important credentials on the labour market, the societal discrimination of Roma workers, and other structural factors, this rather simplistic approach adopted by EU funded projects has not limited the Roma workers' vulnerability on the labour market. In qualitative discussions about the impact of EU projects in Roma communities, respondents seldom exemplify projects that led to better Roma integration on the labour market. Moreover, the often too short training courses do not even allow for the development of the intended skills.

In 2016, the Ministry of National Education issued Framework Order no. 6134/21.12.2016 on the prohibition of school segregation in pre-university education establishments prohibiting school segregation on grounds of ethnicity, disability or special educational needs, socio-economic status of the family, residence or school performance. This order established the so-called "National Commission for Desegregation and Educational Inclusion and School Boards" to eliminate violence, acts of corruption and discrimination within the school environment and to promote interculturalism for preventing and eliminating all forms of school segregation. At this stage, the Ministry of National Education is accepting applications from the Roma civil society for the position of a member of the National Commission. The process started at the end of November 2018 and is expected to be finalized by the end of December 2018. The Ministry of National Education has released a call for accepting applications, which was posted on its website.

Refugee children are also affected by forms of school segregation: they are not fully enrolled in the first year of education but have permission to attend classes. According to the National Education Law, the principle is that funding follows the child, provided s/he is enrolled in school. For refugee children, there is no allocated budget (for teachers, manuals, and other expenses). Also, children are not enrolled in the Integrated Information System for Romanian Education and do not benefit from any student support programmes (social scholarships, merit-based scholarships, the bread roll and milk programme, etc.). The lack of budget allocations prevents public schools from taking on refugee children, forcing them to go to schools that are not in their neighbourhood or to private schools. Migrant families often complain of discrimination by teachers or other parents against their children on grounds of religion, ethnicity, race, socio-economic status etc.

Fight against discrimination and antigypsyism in education

Educational segregation is still a challenge; a report of the European Commission pointed out that "despite some progress, it is estimated that around 27 per cent of Roma children receive education in *de facto* segregated schools".²⁹⁹ More recently, an NGO (Centre for Advocacy and Children's Rights) monitored the segregation phenomenon in 394 schools in the North-Eastern region of the country. One of their findings was that in 20 per cent of the schools there was at least one form of segregation. Also, 50 per cent of the communities involved in the monitoring process (112) had at least one school where a form of segregation was identified.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁹ European Commission (2016). Education and Training Monitor 2016, Romania. https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/monitor2016-ro_en.pdf, p. 5.

³⁰⁰ <http://scoalapentrutoticiopiii.cado.org.ro/raportul-de-monitorizare-a-segregarii-scolare-in-regiunea-nord-est.html>.

According to a recent study,³⁰¹ 42.5 per cent of the teachers would not want a Roma person as their neighbour. Also, 13.1 per cent of the teachers declared Roma should learn in separate (segregated) classes; when asked why Roma should study separately, most of the teachers (70 per cent) believe they have special educational needs that could be better addressed in segregated classes and because their behaviour gets in the way of teaching in class. The study identified that it is most probably that the teachers who would not want Roma as their neighbours would believe Roma should be in separate classes in school.

In 2016, the National Education Ministry issued a Framework Order banning segregation in pre-university schools.³⁰² The Framework Order has an action plan which has as its main objectives: (1) to amend the legal framework on school desegregation in Romania; (2) to increase the quality of educational provision in the Romanian pre-university education system; (3) to train teachers; (4) to incentivise and attract high quality teaching staff. Because of political changes, the implementation of the plan was postponed until 2018.

It was only in 2017 that the National Education Ministry accepted the compulsory study of Roma slavery and the Holocaust of Roma and Jews (as a case study), within the 8th-grade History curriculum. Even though this is a big step forward, at the moment there is no control over the messages the teachers send to the students regarding these sensitive topics (slavery and the Holocaust). According to a recent study, more than 47 per cent of the teachers said they could not evaluate Antonescu's activity (the person bearing the most responsibility for the Holocaust in Romania).³⁰³

³⁰¹ Bădescu, G. et al. (2018). Education for Democracy in Romanian schools

³⁰² Ordinul Cadru privind interzicerea segregării în unitățile de învățământ preuniversitar [Framework Order on the prohibition of school segregation and the improvement of quality in pre-university education]. The document is accessible at: <https://www.edu.ro/ordin-cadru-nr-613421122016-privind-interzicerea-segreg%C4%83rii-%C8%99colare-%C3%AEn-unit%C4%83%C8%9Bile-de-%C3%AEnv%C4%83%C8%9B%C4%83m%C3%A2nt>.

³⁰³ Bădescu, G. et al. (2018). Education for Democracy in Romanian schools

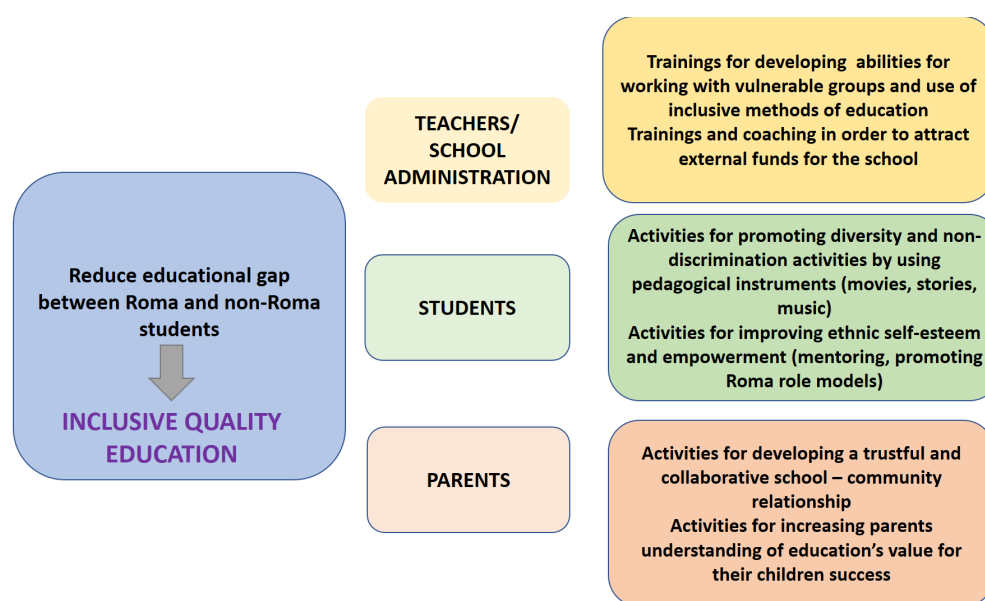
COMPREHENSIVE LOCAL CASE STUDY

Educational Interventions in Horgești, Bacău County

Previous research³⁰⁴ indicates a consistent gap between Roma and non-Roma regarding social inclusion indicators; for instance, in education, the gaps between Roma and non-Roma are significant regarding enrolment rates, with 78 per cent of Roma children enrolled, compared to 95 per cent of their non-Roma neighbours.³⁰⁵ Also, research³⁰⁶ shows that the quality of educational services provided to schools with a high percentage of Roma students is lower than in schools with few or no Roma children.

In recent years, “Împreună” Agency has worked in Bacău County implementing several projects and initiatives aiming at reducing the educational gap between Roma and non-Roma. One of the schools where it contributed to achieving this goal is Horgești School.

Even though projects were different, they represent pieces of the puzzle presented below.



Methodology

“Împreună” Agency for Community Development (Roma NGO) had several educational interventions in Horgești, Bacău County.

(1) Initially, under the umbrella of the “School Attendance/Let’s go to school” Campaign (initiated by UNICEF Romania and implemented in partnership with different NGOs and public institutions between 2010 and 2015), “Împreună” Agency developed the campaign titled “What do you want to be when you grow up?”. its main purpose was to promote Roma role models to students and their teachers in order to raise ethnic self-esteem and reduce stereotypes and prejudices.

³⁰⁴ Duminică, G., Ivăsiuc, A. (2013). The Roma from Romania. From Scapegoat to Development Engine. Bucharest: Agenția de Dezvoltare Comunitară „Împreună”.

³⁰⁵ UNDP/World Bank/EC Regional Survey, 2011.

³⁰⁶ Duminică, G., Ivăsiuc, A. (2011). One School for All? The Access of Roma Children to Quality Education. UNICEF. Bucharest: Vanemond.

Vincze, E., Harbula, H. (2011). Strategii identitare și educație școlară. Raport de cercetare despre accesul copiilor romi la școală. [Identity-Related Strategies and School Education. Research Report on the Access of Roma Children to School]. Cluj: EFSE.

(2) Afterwards, UNICEF Romania started a pilot project in Bacău county named "Social inclusion through the provision of integrated services at the community level" – "Community-based child services" (2016 to present). "Împreună" Agency continued the intervention on promoting Roma role models and training teachers on non-discriminatory attitudes and diversity values.

(3) In 2017, "Împreună" Agency brought to Bacău County a new project aiming to address the educational gaps between Roma and non-Roma ("Integrated educational measures for 100 Roma students in Bacău County").

These projects are interrelated and complementary. The data presented in the following pages were collected during project implementation, as part of the monitoring and evaluation activities. The analysis focuses on the educational changes for creating an inclusive school, which occurred in Sohodor school system from 2012 to present.

Introduction

Horgești commune belongs to Bacău County (North-East of Romania) and includes seven villages. According to the 2011 Census, the total number of inhabitants is 4,583, 94 per cent of them self-declared Romanian, while 5.82 per cent did not declare their ethnicity at all.³⁰⁷ Even though they do not self-identify as Roma, Sohodor, one of the seven villages, has mostly Roma population, according to the Roma leaders and NGOs that worked there. Most of the inhabitants are not officially employed, part of them working seasonally in agriculture (viticulture) or migrate to Western Europe for work.

Horgești School is one of the two schools in the commune and it includes the central school in Horgești and two other school buildings under the same legal entity – Horgești kindergarten and Sohodor School. Here the total number of students enrolled in the 2017-2018 school year is 548. Out of the total number of students enrolled in Horgești school, 338 are studying in the Sohodor school building.

According to the school representatives, the main educational issues faced by Sohodor students are school drop-out and absenteeism. The school further explains that these phenomena are influenced by their families' disadvantaged socio-economic status (part of the parents take their children to work either within the country or abroad) and also by the lack of teachers' capacities and abilities to work with disadvantaged children. The school representatives also mentioned the issue of early marriages for girls, starting with the 6th grade.

Addressing major challenges in education

Starting with 2010, the school was part of the national UNICEF campaign "Let's go to school!"³⁰⁸. "Împreună" Agency for Community Development was responsible for the "What do you want to be when you grow up?" component that directly addressed the promotion of positive, successful role-models among the Roma minority. Indirectly, the project also addressed early school leaving and attempted at increasing Roma children's participation in higher education by means of disseminating motivational messages and life stories of successful Roma, as well as increasing their participation in inter-cultural education by means of promoting Roma role-models who contradict the majority's negative stereotypes about Roma. Horgești school was part of the campaign. One of the main results of the project "What do you want to be when you grow up?" was the documentary movie with the same name. The movie captures the professional and

³⁰⁷ National Census (2011)

³⁰⁸ The objectives of the campaign were to increase participation in education and reduce school drop-out by promoting community educational interventions based on the EPZ model (Education Priority Zones) in disadvantaged communities with the highest rates of school drop-out. The interventions took place on several levels – school, family, and community. More information on the campaign can be found at: <http://www.unicef.ro/ce-facem/initiative/hai-la-scoala/despre-campanie/>

educational evolution of young Roma people in order to dismantle the myths and stereotypes about the Roma population according to which they are not capable of being successful.

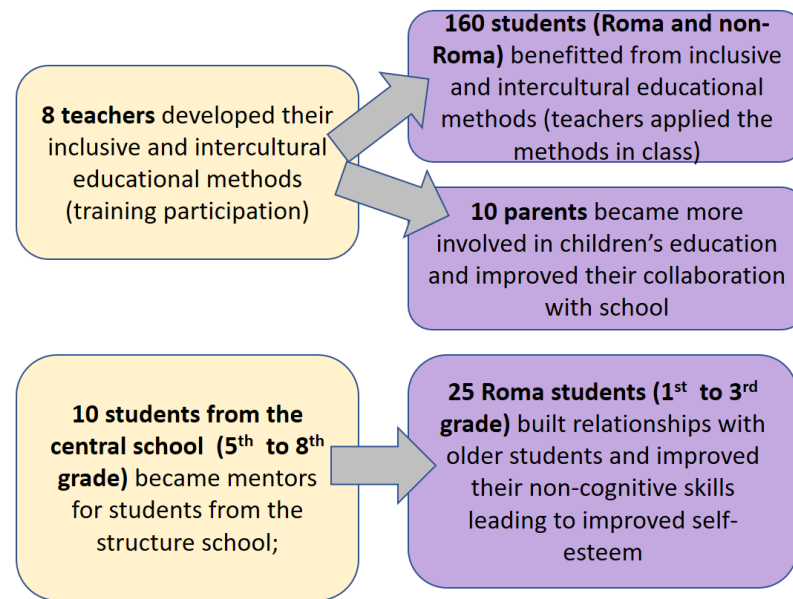
After 2015, UNICEF continued the initiative to reduce school drop-out and increase school attendance by developing a pilot project called "Social inclusion through the provision of integrated services at the community level"– "Community-based child services", implemented in Bacău County.³⁰⁹ Through an integrated approach, professionals working at community level ensure the delivery of a minimum package of services to all children in the community. In addition, this type of intervention supports the access and participation of all children and youth in quality education. Within this model, "Împreună" Agency continued its activities to increase self-esteem and promote inclusion by using the teaching kit developed along with other teaching materials (movies, books, and an online platform). Based on the needs identified in the school, the activities targeted three groups:

1. Teachers and school management – the training pursued two goals: (1) teaching them how to use the pedagogical kit; promoting methods of working with children from vulnerable groups, methods of promoting diversity among children, Roma history, the impact of role models, discrimination, stereotypes, or informal motivational methods and (2) training in project writing and implementation in order to support the school in attracting external funds in order to improve the quality of the education it provides.
2. Students - The multicultural activities with Roma and non-Roma school children aimed at promoting diversity and education among students through two open lessons in each school for each of the four years of lower secondary school (such lessons were based on real-life stories about Roma people who succeeded in life through education).

Approximately 25 parents participated in discussions regarding school relevance for their children's success and methods for supporting their children's learning activities, resulting in a better understanding of the importance of school for their future.

In 2017, Horgești school was part of the project "Integrated educational measures for 100 Roma students in Bacău county" that aimed at raising Roma students' self-esteem, increasing parents' participation in their children's education and increasing the quality of school education by training teachers in intercultural education.

³⁰⁹ <http://unicef.ro/serviciicomunitarepentru copii/en/about>



The major changes that were registered in Sohodor school, starting with 2012, according to the school representatives:

- The number of students in Sohodor who graduated the 8th grade has increased in the last years. The increase was influenced by the cumulated effect of our programs and intensification of awareness campaigns that were targeted on bringing children closer to the school. A part of this success was also triggered by several small grants awarded to the school in the period 2015-2018. In the 2017-2018 school year, 30 students from Sohodor successfully graduated the 8th grade and all of them enrolled in high schools.
- The educational gap between the Sohodor structure and the central school has diminished. The passing rate in the Romanian language and literature examination in the National Evaluation was 100 per cent in 2017-2018 school year, and 83 per cent in the 2016-2017 school year. Evaluation in Mathematics is still a challenge. In the 2017-2018 school year, 28 per cent of the students passed this exam, compared to 20 per cent in the 2016-2017 school year.
- Roma role models started to become visible. Five former students from Sohodor have gone to University since 2012 and one of the Roma girls from Sohodor who completed lower secondary school in 2017-2018 had the highest grades in the entire school and she enrolled in one of the best high schools in the county. These students are permanently involved in current school activities inspiring other students to be like them.
- The relationship between teachers, parents, and students has improved. Some of the parents stated that they understood the necessity for investing in their children's education after they watched the movies promoting other parents who supported their children to continue school despite poverty and family difficulties. The relationship between teachers and parents has started to become more symmetric and both sides are trying to understand and trust each other. A relatively small percentage of the parents, around 20 per cent, still have low confidence in school and in the opportunities, education could offer to their children. The percentage shrunk in the last few years but there is still a lot more to be done in order to determine parents be more involved in the schools' activities and guide their children to continue school.

One of the issues the school is facing at this moment is migration. In the last year, approximately 180 students have left Sohodor School and moved with their parents to

England. Thus, the number of students has dropped significantly. Still, the space in Sohodor School is insufficient for all the students and this situation generates difficulties in the educational process.

Conclusion and recommendations

Horgești School and its structure, Sohodor, are representative for many other schools in Romania. One of the villages of the commune has mainly Roma population, and they all learn in the same school, not the central one.

Before the interventions, the issues that created the exclusion cycle came from two sides. (1) Families in the village were vulnerable, without stable employment or income; this situation led to difficulties related to ensuring the basic needs, limited role models in the families or in the community and parents' limited involvement in their children's education caused by failure to provide for basic needs. (2) On the other side, some of the teachers were not prepared to work with such vulnerable students and not motivated enough and they started to strengthen their prejudices about Roma based on this specific situation.

The relationship between the two parties, teachers and parents, was marked by distrust on both sides and this worsened children's low self-esteem and low levels of aspiration, generating absenteeism, poor school results and even drop-out.

In Sohodor School, the educational gap has been reduced in the last six years through integrated and sustainable educational approaches.

In order to reduce the educational gaps between Roma and non-Roma students, the educational measures should be integrated and address three target groups: teachers/school representatives, parents and students.

Recommendations for integrated educational measures:

- Teacher trainings for developing abilities to work with vulnerable groups and use inclusive methods of education;
- Teacher trainings and coaching on how to raise external funds for the school;
- Educational activities promoting diversity and non-discrimination towards students by using diverse tools (movies, stories, music);
- Activities to improve the ethnic self-esteem of Roma students and empower them (mentoring, promoting Roma role models, both men and women);
- Activities to increase parents' understanding of education as an asset for their children's success;
- Activities to develop a trustful and collaborative school – community relationship.



The ROMACT approach in Mărășești community

Introduction

Mărășești is located in the North-Western part of Vrancea County, covering an area of 87.1 km², the third largest city in the county, with a total of 10,671 inhabitants including the localities of Siretu and Tișița, and the villages Călimănești, Haret, Modruzeni, and Pădureni. According to the Atlas of Marginalized Urban Areas in Romania,³¹⁰ the city was classified as marginalised, requiring strong and integrated measures to develop the local economy and raise attractiveness and competitiveness for its revival.



The local economy is dominated by service provider companies and public administration institutions. Agriculture is important, though not very productive, as it consists mostly of subsistence agriculture. The local industry is not adapted to the specific conditions of the town, its natural resources and environment, and it is becoming less and less visible.

Context – description of the community

According to the data provided by the National Institute of Statistics after the Population and Housing Census in 2011, 750 Roma people were registered in Mărășești. Local Roma leaders estimate that there are 4,000 Roma people living in the town out of a total of 10,671 inhabitants.



In preparation for accessing European Social Funds under Human Capital Operational Programme HCOP, the study titled "Analysis of the Marginalised Community at At-Risk of Poverty" was carried out in Mărășești with a view to start the project named "Strategic actions to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in Mărășești, Vrancea County". As a result of the study, three compact communities inhabited predominantly by Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma ethnic group were identified, as follows:

- "Cartier Nou" Area, comprising the following streets: Orhideelor, Toporașilor, Câmpului, Cartier Nou, Lalelelor, Putnei, Plevnei, Zăbrăuți, Islaz, Democrației, Independenței, Muncii, Nicolae Bălcescu - a "mahala" (poor neighbourhood) area 20 minutes away from the centre, with precarious houses without bathrooms and kitchens, with small and overcrowded living space. 85 per cent of the area's inhabitants are Roma.
- "AEIV" Area, comprising of Siret street – a ghetto-type area, a block of 20 flats, the building is in a derelict state, requiring consolidation work. The living area is about 40 sqm, the number of people per dwelling ranging from three to ten. The

³¹⁰ Elaborarea strategiilor de integrare a comunităților urbane marginalizate – Atlasul zonelor urbane marginalizate din România, (Strategy development for the integration of marginalised urban communities - Atlas of marginalised urban areas in Romania), available at: <http://www.inforegiro.ro/images/Publicatii/Atlas%20zone%20urbane%20marginalizate.pdf>, p. 7

school is 1.2 km away, the medical dispensary 2.5 km away; 55 per cent of the tenants are Roma.

- "Crângului" Area, comprising of the following streets: Crângului, Negropontes, Garoafei – a historical area, located on the outskirts of the town, but within its limits with overcrowded houses in a precarious condition. In the proximity of this community, there are two schools - School no. 2 and Kindergarten no. 3.

According to the Mayorality,³¹¹ the problems faced by the majority of Roma in Mărașești at the time of signing the partnership for the ROMACT methodology implementation (24 November 2016) were the following:

- a) poor access to health services, along with socio-economic, cultural or environmental aspects, which affect the health of the population. The quality of healthcare services in Mărașești is still conditioned by the specific infrastructure and the number of specialized personnel. Access to medical services is uneven due to economic differences among the Roma. In Mărașești there are not enough facilities (buildings) to support the provision of medical services. There is no private or public hospital in the town; the Mărașești City Hospital was closed and turned into an elderly people's home. In Mărașești, medical services are provided in a dispensary, a doctor's office in the school and in five family doctors' offices, two dentists' offices and two pharmacies.
- b) lack of access to full public utilities. There are homes in the communities inhabited predominantly by Roma ethnics who are not connected to the sewage system. Coverage of the natural gas network in Mărașești is 82 per cent and is considered to be acceptable as compared to national standards, but the above-mentioned communities do not have access to the network. There is no central heating system in Mărașești, and some of the dwellings are not connected to the electricity grid.
- c) insufficiently developed infrastructure. The length of the public roads in Mărașești is 41 kilometres, of which only 23 kilometres are modernized roads (56 per cent), which places Mărașești at the bottom of the national hierarchy. As for the improvement of the educational infrastructure, this should ensure a minimum standard of functioning through modernization, rehabilitation, consolidation of existing school buildings and related infrastructure.
- d) issues related to the right to ownership of land and housing held by the Roma in Mărașești. Some of the Roma live in houses for which they have no property documents.
- e) the extreme poverty of the Roma communities;
- f) the absence of birth certificates, of identity cards and of marital status documents for some of the Roma population;
- g) insufficient income and dependence on social benefits;
- h) lack of jobs and qualifications - there are 250 employed Roma in town. In the last five years, approximately 300 people in the communities have gone abroad, some of whom help their families remain in the country. There is no information about the source of funds sent home
- i) extremely poor housing conditions with poor hygiene.

³¹¹ As resulting from the Letter of Interest sent to the Council of Europe in order to become a partner within ROMACT programme – Address no. 16764 from 29th of September 2016.

The participation of Roma children in education in Mă răș ești was below the national average. An estimated 400 Roma children go to school, according to the records of the institutions responsible for education - Ecaterina Teodoroiu Secondary School, Siret School, School no. 2 Mă răș ești. In the case of Roma, there is a clear lack of preschool education services, lack of financial and intellectual support from families and there are prejudices against the Roma children in the education system.

In order to interrupt the vicious circle of social exclusion and poverty in Mă răș ești, the City Hall and the Local Council have proposed a community-based, integrated and community-driven approach, which is why they have requested support from ROMACT for developing and implementing policies and public services addressing both the majority population and Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority in order to find solutions for integrating vulnerable groups, including the Roma living in Mă răș ești.

Roma inclusion at the local level through romact approach

Mă răș ești joined ROMACT on November 24, 2016. During this period until September 2018, the main activities carried out were as foreseen in the ROMACT methodology and aimed in particular at developing the capacities of local authorities and the Roma community regarding:

- mapping local actors to support the ROMACT process;
- setting up a Local Working Group on Roma Inclusion;
- setting up the Community Action Group;
- facilitating dialogue between the community and the local public authorities;
- assessing the capacity of the municipality and providing support for improvement and development;
- assessing community needs and drafting the list of priorities;
- designing concrete measures and projects starting from the list of community priorities;
- implementation of the Local Action Plan for the inclusion of the Roma minority in Mă răș ești 2017-2020;
- implementation of short- and medium-term actions aiming at improving the situation of the disadvantaged people in town;
- funding and implementing the measures of the Local Action Plan for Roma Inclusion in Mă răș ești 2017-2020.

Concrete results obtained in Mă răș ești under ROMACT framework

- free participation in ROMACT trainings, in order to contribute to the development and human capacity building of the City Hall and of the subordinated institutions (courses certified by the National Authority for Qualifications):
 - Project manager: five people from Mă răș ești City Hall
 - Public procurement expert: two people from Mă răș ești City Hall
 - European and Cohesion funding expert: ten people from Mă răș ești City Hall and partner units
 - development and implementation of projects funded through Regional Operational Programmes: ten people from Mă răș ești City Hall
- development and implementation of projects funded through the Human Capital Operational Programme: three people from Mă răș ești City Hall
- information and training sessions for the community in:
 - communication with local authorities;
 - community development and civic participation;
 - campaign for the prevention of school drop-out;
 - campaign for health and immunization;
 - campaign for reproductive health;
 - campaign for employment and work relations;
 - campaign for book collection for the local library; campaign for replacement of the heating system in Siret School.

- on-going information and support regarding access to funding, grant proposal writing, public consultations for developing applications, implementation, public procurements, etc.:

Expert support for the public administration in order to apply/implement EU and World Bank funded projects aimed at improving the life of disadvantaged population in Mărașești (Roma included) under ROMACT framework:

- Human Capital Operational Programme 4.1 – “Strategic actions to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the marginalized community in the town of Mărașești, Vrancea County”. Beneficiary: “Asociația PRO Societate Sf. Ciprian”, Partners: Mărașești City Hall, “BPI Management Consulting România S.R.L.”, “Asociația Profesională a Formării în Administrația Publică CINAQ”, School no. 2 Mărașești. Budget: 10,719,709.14 RON;
- Human Capital Operational Programme 4.2 – “Be Mărașești!”. Beneficiary: Mărașești City Hall, Partners: “S.C. CERTIO CONCEPT S.R.L.” Bucharest, School no. 2 Mărașești, Vrancea County, South East Regional Development Agency, Budget: 9,718,454.25 RON;
- Human Capital Operational Programme 6.1 – ViaEdu – “A Better Future through Education”, Beneficiary: “Asociația Pro Societate Sf. Ciprian”, Partners: “County Resource Centre for Educational and Assistance” Vrancea, “Eremia Grigorescu” Technical Secondary School Mărașești, Vrancea County, Mărașești City Hall, Budget: 6,597,934.79 RON;
- World Bank under “Integrated control of nutrient pollution” Programme – “Investments in the local community for the reduction of nutrient pollution in Mărașești, Vrancea County”. Beneficiary: Mărașești City Hall, Budget: 2,975,686 RON;
- Expertise on the Regional Operational Programme Axis 3.1.B – Increasing energy efficiency in residential buildings, public buildings and public lighting systems, especially those with high energy consumption
- Expertise on the Regional Operational Programme Axis 10 – Improvement of educational infrastructure;
- Legal expertise regarding the existing waste-sorting station;
- Expertise regarding public procurement.

Expert support for the Local Action Group under ROMACT framework:

- Training for the financing line StartUpNation;
- Coaching for accessing micro-grants;
- Community - local public authority partnership for the Local Action Plan for Roma Inclusion in Mărașești 2017 - 2020 and its adoption by the Local Council on November 23, 2017.

Support for the implementation of the Local Plan of Measures for the inclusion of the Roma in Mărașești 2017-2020

The measures and activities included in the ROMACT Local Action Plan, which was developed in a participatory manner by the Community Action Group and City Hall under the facilitation of CoE expert Poliana Cătălin based on the ROMACT methodology, are designed to ensure an integrated approach, avoiding disparate, mono-sectoral measures whose effectiveness could be diminished in the absence of effective accompanying measures to the main measures – the intention is to avoid the shortcomings related to insufficient adjustment to the specific local needs of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the marginalized community.

During the implementation of the programme in Mă răș ești, with the direct involvement of the members of the Community Action Group and the Local Working Group, some of the proposed activities have already been implemented (listed below), and there is an agreed timetable for further implementation for the rest of the measures until the year 2020.

Implemented measures under ROMACT framework

Chapter on Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing “School after School” and “Second Chance” programmes • Continuation of affirmative measures (subsidies and special places for young people to attend upper secondary/vocational school and/or higher education) • Information campaign on the consequences of absenteeism and school drop-out and monitoring drop-outs (school - local action group partnership) • Information campaign on social assistance provided to minors
Chapter on Employment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information campaigns about employment • Consultancy and free assistance for starting self-employed activities or starting a business
Chapter on Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing community members on the law regarding patients’ rights, and minimum medical services which insured people are entitled to • Mobilising community members to take part in public health actions: vaccination campaigns • Identification of sustainable solutions for the two medical centres in the Roma community • Taking legal action to establish an additional health mediator position and two new community nurse positions
Chapter on Housing and small infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting housing rehabilitation/sanitation projects • Segmentation and registration of at least 250 lots for disadvantaged families • Paving local public roads • Repair of the lighting system for 300 households
Chapter on Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and funding from local sources for Roma cultural events – the International Day of the Roma, 8th of April • DocuArt Caravan in Mă răș ești – documentaries with and about Roma people
Youth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of young people in associative and volunteer activities • Allocation of funds by local authorities for youth activities (contests, shows, sports competitions, etc.). • Rehabilitation of a multifunctional sports ground within the school in the community.

Difficulties encountered

Difficulties encountered in working with local government were mainly related to the inexperienced staff working on European funded projects (writing/implementation/management/reporting, etc.). Some of these difficulties were partly removed through the ROMACT training courses. In the training courses for Project Manager, Public Procurement Expert, Expert in Accessing European and Cohesion Funds, Writing and Implementation of Projects Funded under the Regional Operational Programme and the Human Capital Operational Programme, the Projects Department of the City Hall received training that developed the department’s capacity to write and

implement projects aiming at improving the situation of the people targeted by the ROMACT Programme.

Of the difficulties faced by the community, the most serious was related to the volatility of the local action group - some of them left the country, some found jobs in another county. During the agricultural season, many left for the day or for the entire week, so their attendance in the ROMACT meetings was limited. However, a core group of four to five people came together regularly. Relations with the City Hall and other local institutions have improved and have been consolidated. Participatory community involvement through the Community Action Group has led to increased confidence in the process and increased the accountability of the community.

Conclusion and recommendations

The implementation of the ROMACT methodology in Mărășești can be considered a good practice and a model for other localities with a high number of disadvantaged people because of the manner in which the local public authority collaborated with the members of the community for the objective evaluation of the problems the latter faces, the way of analysing and designing interventions together with those concerned and translating these projects into concrete measures.

The working method, although centred on the inclusion of marginalized Roma, is equally relevant to other vulnerable people, leading to a positive change not only for local Roma people but for the entire town.

Integrated action in Târnăveni Municipality

Târnăveni is a city in Mureş County in central Romania. It is the administrative centre for three villages as well: Bobohalma, Botorca and Cuştelnic. Upon the discovery of natural gas reserves in the early 20th century, Târnăveni had a history of economic growth; however, the city declined sharply after the fall of communism in 1989. Today, there are chemical, textile and construction materials industries in the city.

Târnăveni is known as the city with the largest Roma population in Mureş County. According to the 2011 census, the population of the municipality is made up of 22,075 inhabitants. In Târnăveni Municipality, after the 2011 Population and Housing Census, they recorded 1,977 absentees, out of whom 22 per cent had been away for a shorter time and 78 per cent for a long time. In the category of shorter-term absentees (who had been gone for less than 12 months), most of them (73.3 per cent) had gone abroad, and most were male, exceeding the number of short-term female absentees by far. Târnăveni Municipality's Development Strategy³¹² is the outcome of a complex process, started in November 2015 within the ROMACT programme.³¹³ This local development strategy is related to ROMACT Programme. The strategy development process took into account the current policies, strategies and programmes at the European, national and regional levels. For the development of Târnăveni Municipality, a medium-term strategy is in place for a six-year period up until 2020.

The strategy establishes a strategic objective and draws three major development directions for its achievement: infrastructure, economic competitiveness and improved quality of life, setting development priorities, projects to be achieved, targeted beneficiaries, outcomes and indicators to achieve. Objectives set out in the Local Development Strategy of Târnăveni Municipality, with the incidence in improving the conditions of the Roma communities are:

- Objective 1: Urban development, technical and social infrastructure
- Objective 2: Increase economic competitiveness, stimulate research and innovation
- Objective 6: Developing Resources, Increasing Social Inclusion "The vision for Târnăveni's development in 2014-2020 focuses on the growth of businesses through knowledge, innovation and technological progress, closely linked to better living standards.

Municipal development must be done in a well-balanced manner to eliminate disparities between different urban areas; there should be a focus on attracting new investments capable of generating sustainable local economic growth, thus ensuring the emergence of an attractive and competitive labour market. At the same time, with better livelihood, the emphasis should be on urban regeneration that will meet the need for rapid urban development in terms of infrastructure and increasing living standards.

To develop the present case study, our analysis was based on information collected from multiple sources by applying a variety of research methods, as follows:

- household survey, carried out earlier this year by a team of the Town Hall composed of four social workers and two health mediators in order to prepare the intervention within the project "NOW FOR THE FUTURE – A social partnership for sustainable development in Târnăveni, Mureş", financed by HCOP

³¹² See: <https://primariatarnaveni.ro/docs/ANUNTURI/2014/2014.10.30-dezbatare%20publica/Strategia%20de%20dezvoltare%20a%20serviciului%20de%20iluminat%20public%202014.pdf>

³¹³ See: <http://www.coe-romact.org/municipalities/tarnaveni>

- meetings of the local action group members organized and carried out by themselves (local action group set up in the ROMACT programme, financed by the Council of Europe and the European Commission)
- interviews/discussions with members of the project team "NOW FOR THE FUTURE – A social partnership for sustainable development in Târnăveni, Mureș": employees of RCRC Foundation, Târnăveni City Hall, Buckner Foundation and School No. 3
- on-site visits to Roma communities located in marginalized urban areas carried out by the Roma councillor hired by the Social Assistance Directorate, employment agents, entrepreneurship mentors, and ROMACT team members, who had informal discussions with residents of these areas, and carried out observations of housing and infrastructure.

According to the Atlas of Marginalized Urban Areas,³¹⁴ as well as on the Urban Marginalized Area List in the 20,000+ cities in Romania, Târnăveni Municipality has nine marginalized urban areas with 3,409 inhabitants, of whom 2,297 are Roma, according to the Census of 2011.



According to the information provided by the health mediators and the local Roma expert of the City Hall, the number of Roma is double as compared to the census data, i.e. there are 5,150 people.

These marginalized urban areas include Avram Iancu St., Plugarilor St., Câmpului St., Dezrobirii St., Macului St., Cerbului St., 1 Iunie St., 13 Mai St., Fagului St., Pinului St., Toamnei St., Cart. Livezii St., Măceșului St., Melodiei St., Cart. Dâmbău St. The share of people aged 15-64 who have completed a maximum school cycle of eight grades (gymnasium) is 35.20 per cent (i.e. above the minimum threshold of 22 per cent). The share of people with disabilities, chronic diseases or other illnesses that limit their daily activities is 3.50 per cent (below the minimum threshold of 8 per cent). The share of children and young people (0-17 years old) of the total population is 25.60 per cent (i.e. above the minimum threshold of 20.5 per cent).

As for the indicators of the housing criterion, we have the following data:

- The proportion of overcrowded homes (<15.33 m² per person) is 61.70 per cent (i.e. above the 54.7 per cent threshold);
- The proportion of homes not in private ownership is 10.80 per cent (below the 12.3 per cent threshold).

Since November 2015, Târnăveni Municipality has been one of the largest beneficiaries of the ROMACT programme, funded by the Council of Europe and the European Commission. One of the major activities of the programme is the development and implementation of a local action plan for Roma communities. The steps and the methodology of the ROMACT programme, in the process of developing the local action

³¹⁴ World Bank, Elaborarea strategiilor de integrare a comunităților urbane marginalizate. Atlasul zonelor urbane marginalizate din România [Elaboration of Integration Strategies for Urban Marginalized Communities. Atlas of Marginalized Urban Areas in Romania], p. 236. Available in Romanian at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/857001468293738087/pdf/882420WP0P1430085232B00OUO0900Atlas.pdf> and available in English at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/668531468104952916/pdf/882420WP0P1430085232B00OUO0900Atlas.pdf>

plan,³¹⁵ led to the emergence of a functioning, lasting local action group. This community action group represented the voice of the Roma communities in the process of negotiating and preparing the action plan. The ROMACT methodology is asking for a balanced composition on the community action groups, including gender, age, occupation etc.

Within the ROMACT programme, meetings were held with representatives of the Roma communities, which resulted in setting a local community action group (CAG). The CAG had meetings with representatives of local authorities to approve the local action plan. The members of the CAG were supported by ROMACT community facilitator (they met with a frequency of two meetings per month for two years) and the experts contracted under the programme. During the community facilitation period, the following community actions were organized and carried out: trench design, ditches and community docks, garbage bins and pubs, cleaning and sanitation actions, motivation and stimulation of Roma adults to join the Second Chance programme, Motivating and Encouraging Students to join the "School after School" programme implemented by Buckner Foundation, Support from Authorities for identity documents, organizing three job fairs.

ROMACT aims to empower local authorities in Târnăveni, in particular, elected officials and senior civil servants, in order to respond more promptly and with greater responsibility to the needs of marginalized Roma communities. The programme focuses on generating a sustained commitment to policies, which will lead to sustainable plans and measures for Roma inclusion. ROMACT supports the mechanisms and processes of good governance in line with principles of good local governance of the Council of Europe. Thus, the programme promotes cooperation and partnership between local authorities and Roma communities on the basis of jointly established working strategies, as well as shared processes and results. It is also based on a common commitment to an open dialogue between the majority and the minority. ROMACT provides local governments with the methods and tools to effectively reach the communities where the most vulnerable people live and to assess their needs. A major priority of the programme is to facilitate the strengthening of the local authorities' capacity to design and implement Roma inclusion plans and projects. ROMACT also helps them develop project proposals to get support from European and national funds.

Through the ROMACT Programme, within the local action plan, the local stakeholders' team together with the local community representatives decided on the following measures to improve the situation of the Roma in the marginalized communities of Târnăveni:

- Facilitating access to a social, public, private dwelling, land allocation for housing construction according to Law no. 15/2003;
- Support for the Roma to start a business and obtain the necessary documents, granting permissions for organising and doing trade (e.g. street trade) based on the free initiative for the Roma people selling flowers and other traditional craft items
- Support for Roma communities affected by natural disasters or in situations of extreme difficulty by: purchasing of building materials, restoration of drinking water sources or their construction where they do not exist; development of emergency support projects for families with very low income (food, clothing, school supplies, etc.);
- Consolidation of derelict and high-risk dwellings (building materials, infrastructure restoration)

³¹⁵ See:

<https://primariatarnaveni.ro/docs/sedinte/2016/Convocator%20si%20materiale%20de%20sedinta/2016.07.28-PHCL/20160728-009.pdf>

- Building 50 social houses to benefit, among others, Roma families with many children and very low income, inhabitants of the *Combinatul* area, *Livezii* neighbourhood, *Dambau* Colony and *Rândunelelor* St.
- Ensuring normal living conditions in Roma-populated areas by connecting their homes to services such as electricity, drinking water, sewage, methane gas, sanitation;
- Granting ownership to people living on the streets: *Dezrobirii*, *13 Mai* neighbourhood, *Livezii* neighbourhood, *Dambau* Colony, *Piața Obor*, *Rândunelelor* St.
- Building green areas and playground in the area *Combinatul Chimic*, *Livezii* neighbourhood, *Dambau* colony, *Mihai Eminescu* St.
- Rehabilitation and repairs of "Smoky" block-of-flats located at *4 Dezrobirii* St, where all flats are social homes, populated with Roma families. Construction of a new toilet, near the old one, with five compartments for the tenants at *4 Dezrobirii* St.
- Paving the street with stones in the following areas inhabited by the Roma: *Dezrobirii*, *13 Mai* neighbourhood, *Pinului* St., *Fagului* St., *1 Iunie* St., *Dealului* St., *Livezii* neighbourhood, *Colonia*, *Dambau*, *Piața Obor*, *Plopilor* St., *Mihai Eminescu* St.
- Extending the sewerage network and asphaltting to the following streets: *Livezii* neighbourhood, *Combinatul Chimic*, *Plopilor* St., *Mihai Eminescu* St., *Piața Obor*, *Rândunelelor* St., where most of the Roma population live.
- Development and implementation of programmes using external non-reimbursable funds to ensure minimum economic and social living conditions in disadvantaged Roma communities, using the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Starting from the action plan developed for the municipality, the Resource Centre for Roma Communities in Cluj-Napoca, the Buckner Foundation and School no. 3, together with Târnăveni Town Hall developed the project called "NOW FOR THE FUTURE – a social partnership for sustainable development in Târnăveni, Mureș",³¹⁶ a project funded through the Human Capital Operational Programme (HCOP).³¹⁷

With the support of the ROMACT programme, the Roma communities of Târnăveni applied for and were granted European funds (Human Capital Operational Programme) amounting to over 13,000,000 RON (equivalent of approximately 3.8 million EUR), which will be invested in the following components: COMPONENT 1 – social-medical services, documents, housing; COMPONENT 2 – employment and entrepreneurship; COMPONENT 3 – education; COMPONENT 4 – anti-discrimination campaign. The main applicant is the Resource Centre for Roma Communities, and the partners are: Târnăveni Municipality, School No. 3, Buckner Foundation.

The decision on the structure of the proposal including these four interconnected components within the project implementation strategy emerged during the eight-month process including needs-analysis and integrated action planning for the target group of the project, built on the thorough understanding of their real needs; the recommended actions emerged from the research carried out during the project development period.

³¹⁶ ACUM PENTRU VIITOR – parteneriat social pentru dezvoltare durabilă în Târnăveni, Mureș [NOW FOR THE FUTURE – social partnership for sustainable development in Tarnaveni, Mures] (SMIS Code 101455, contract POCU/18/4/1/101455), a project co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Human Capital Operational Programme 2014 – 2021. See <https://www.facebook.com/Acum-pentru-viitor-Tirnaveni-1905679102798822/>

Education

The main objectives for closing the gap in educational outcomes between the majority population and the marginalised urban population, which the local authorities have committed to pursue, are:

- Expanding, developing, monitoring and publicising support programmes aimed at stimulating school attendance, reducing absenteeism and achieving school success in pre-university education;
- Ensuring the equal, free and universal access of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority to quality education at all levels of the public education system through the continuation and development of programmes such as "School after School", "Second Chance" and other drop-out correction programmes for children and young people who left school before completing compulsory education.



Thus, within the project entitled "NOW FOR THE FUTURE - social partnership for sustainable development in Târnaveni, Mureş", the Buckner Foundation (Partner 2) is involved in the remedial education process of 120 preschool and school children (gender balance to be expected, depending on the situation at the local level). Given the importance of the children's socio-emotional learning and development, for 30 preschool-aged children, the foundation provides such educational activities. The "School after School" programme responds to the needs of 90 primary and secondary school children from disadvantaged and vulnerable families who unfortunately cannot afford to support their children's education, which could lead to drop-out.

The "Second Chance" programme implemented by School no. 3 (Project Partner 3) aims to support 40 people over the age of 14 (gender balanced) who have not completed primary and lower secondary school (1st to 4th grades and 5th to 8th grades) to complete basic compulsory education, as well as train for a job. People who complete all levels of the programme have the same rights as those who complete regular compulsory education: they get a personal portfolio for permanent education and a matriculation sheet. Still, there are no supplementary resources to be allocated for scholarships or food, so the participation is rather weak, the adults being responsible for their own families' wellbeing.

Specifically, the support provided for the project beneficiaries consists in:

1. Support for increasing access to and participation in early childhood education – pre-school education – the project serves 30 preschool children. Buckner Foundation's project team (consisting of an education coordinator, education assistant coordinator, two teachers, a medical nurse, and a psychologist-teacher) implements early childhood education activities within the Day Centre located in the Roma community, 50 meters away from School Nr. 3 (Partner 3); formal and non-formal education activities are adapted to the needs of the 30 preschool children to improve the development of their self-image and prepare them for school education. Children are given breakfast and lunch and receive a grant provided they participate in at least 80 per cent of the extracurricular activities developed and organised within the project, and provided they make progress. In order for the children to acquire basic knowledge and to broaden their horizons, the project includes three educational camps for the beneficiaries

accompanied by the project team. Children will pay visits to various educational and cultural locations which will enhance their educational and social experiences.

2. Support for the reduction of early school leaving by school-after-school programmes for 90 primary and secondary school students. The SaS (school after school) activity will be implemented by a team of 12 teachers, a medical nurse, and a psychologist-teacher. The strategic priority and the innovative approach within this sub-activity is to assist students in doing homework, as well as activities to enrich their general knowledge and enhance their skills to prevent them from dropping out of school. During the implementation of these educational activities, the 90 children enrolled in remedial education activities will receive subsidies of 1,700 RON per year (approximately 400 EUR per year). For 40 of these children, a bonus/prize of 400 RON per year (approximately 90 EUR per year) is set aside to reward them for outstanding learning outcomes.
3. Second chance programmes for 40 people managed by the implementation team set up at School no. 4 (including a coordinator, a primary school teacher, three secondary school teachers, one school mediator). Activities will be taking place in two classrooms in this school located in the Roma community in the area called "*Combinat*", using a specific methodology.³¹⁸ Two groups will be organized as follows:
 - Group 1 for grades 1-4 including 20 people with one teacher;
 - Group 2 for grades 5-8 including 20 people with three teachers.

The school mediator will be liaising between the community and the school.

Employment – competence-development for the human resources in the community

A set of measures are implemented locally to achieve the following objectives:

- Promotion of entrepreneurship in the local communities with a significant percentage of the Roma population as a solution to mobilise local partners and find solutions to the complex problems of the communities.
- Identification of employment opportunities for vulnerable groups, especially for Roma women (flexible employment but with paid social insurance), income-generating small businesses for families, apprenticeship or tutoring programmes, combined with support for children's access to early childhood education and care services in nurseries and kindergartens, and "school after school" programmes.

Over the course of the project, approximately 376 people will be trained to develop skills to access employment, information, counselling, and mediation. A balanced gender approach is promoted, and different courses will be organized in order to promote the participation of Roma women. Entrepreneurial training sessions will be organised for 120 people. Of these, 50 of the most motivated and engaged people will be selected and supported to develop a business plan each. Subsequently, out of the 50 business plans, ten will be selected by a specialised committee, and six business plans will be supported by business development mentors and grants of up to 25,000 EUR for setting up, developing and running the businesses.

So far, the following measures have been carried out to address the problems identified by the community and local public authorities in the field of employment:

- Holding job fairs at the Târnăveni Work Point, for all categories of job seekers,

³¹⁸ Order of the Minister of Education no. 5248/2011 regarding the Second Chance programme framework methodology

including Roma, whenever there is a demand on the labour market. Matching the training courses provided by the training centres within the AJOFM structure to the needs of the labour market. Identification of ways to recognise professional competences of Roma citizens, obtained outside the formal education system, in order to facilitate their inclusion on the labour market.

- Delivery of professional counselling services to people in difficulty, including the Roma, aiming at their social reintegration: identification of funding sources for self-employment, support for preparing their CVs and for preparing for a job interview and finding a job.
- Selection, counselling and guidance of Roma job-seekers who have not completed primary or secondary education to look for school education programmes
- Information, professional counselling and mediation activities for people registered with the Agency by including Roma people in consultancy and assistance services so they can start a small business as self-employed or otherwise; meetings with representatives of the Roma, and meetings in the Roma communities in Târnăveni with Roma citizens to inform them about employment and training, as well as about the organization of job fairs.
- Support for the Roma to start a business and obtain the necessary documents, authorisations for organising and carrying out small businesses (e.g. street trade, etc.) for florists and sellers of other items resulting from traditional crafts.
- Granting facilities for entrepreneurs and businesses employing Roma citizens, under the conditions of the law.
- Carrying out awareness-raising programmes to make employers aware of the phenomenon of workplace discrimination, equal opportunities, psychological harassment and social dialogue.
- Organizing courses whereby people belonging to the Roma minority are taught how to develop a business plan and start a business, including the provision of training in business management.
- Development of a mechanism for monitoring the inclusion of the Roma on the local labour market.
- Support for Roma-owned SMEs through granting favourable loans, under the conditions of relevant legislation in force.
- Incentives for the involvement of representatives of the Roma in the local development strategies of Târnăveni municipality.
- Organising and carrying out campaigns to stimulate the registration of unemployed Roma with the relevant offices, and to raise awareness among employers.

Healthcare

The project partnership and local institutions aim at delivering social and healthcare services at home and at the integrated centre that will be set up during the implementation of the project for 750 people (about 150-200 families/households).

In addition, within the project, a physician, a nurse and physical therapist will provide social and medical services to children participating in the Buckner Foundation's educational programme, carrying out a series of activities each within their area of expertise (performing epidemiological check-up, recommendations on the menu - portions per child, carbohydrates, lipids, proteins for all children, informing children about personal hygiene).

In the epidemiological check-up, the beneficiaries were weighed, their height and thoracic circumference were measured, their skin was examined along with their upper limbs and scalp. The experts found that the people had not undergone medical checks for a long time, they were not used to using hygiene products, and were not aware of what a healthy lifestyle is. Below-standard living conditions take a toll on people's health, which is why many children have been found to have pediculosis.

Other measures that are being implemented include:

- Identification of solutions for the inclusion of Roma people in the health insurance system, their registration with the family doctor, compensated medication, etc.
- Extension of the network of community assistants and health mediators to work in the Roma communities in Târnăveni.
- Periodic health information and education activities in the Roma communities in Târnăveni:
- Health education campaigns to raise awareness about STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) among the Roma;
- Health education campaigns for the healthy nutrition of the Roma;
- Health education campaigns for the use of water and soap in the Roma communities;
- Health education campaigns for raising awareness of TB among the Roma;
- Health education campaigns for raising awareness regarding the general principles of health education for the Roma;
- Identification of children and families in difficulty and their inclusion in the social care system;
- Annual campaigns in collaboration with NGOs and local authorities to inform and raise public awareness of the rights of the child, as well as of the issues faced by families in difficulty, in order to prevent child abandonment, abuse and neglect;
- Provision of family planning services;
- Setting up social baths in the following communities inhabited by Roma: *Livezii* neighbourhood, *Combinatul Chimic* and *Rândunelelor St.*;
- Setting up a launderette in the *Combinatul Chimic* area;
- Setting up a medical dispensary to serve the entire area adjacent to the *Combinatul Chimic*.
- Regular campaigns for vaccination of the Roma in accordance with the NHP;
- Hygiene and health education campaigns and premarital counselling for young Roma families;
- Registration and monitoring of young mothers and their infants aimed at assisting them to raise and provide care for their children according to common modern societal standards;
- Mobile information campaigns among Roma women on the risks associated with early marriages, prevention and combating domestic violence and trafficking of human beings in the context of free movement within the EU Member States;
- Updating the occupational standard of health mediators, developing a permanent monitoring programme and periodic evaluation of the health mediation programme.

Housing and small infrastructure

Within the project, 38 families are being selected to receive legal assistance to clarify the situation of their estate ownership. The project team also provides support for people accessing legal assistance to secure their identity papers, civil status documents or due social assistance (social benefits).

With the completion of the technical documentation, the project will support the rehabilitation of a block-of-flats consisting of 60 homes, 99 per cent of them housing Roma families (approximately 300 people). This block is in an advanced state of degradation, it is generically called the "smoky block" (located at 4 *Dezrobirii* Street), because the inhabitants use wood for heating and the chimneys of the improvised stoves stick out of the walls of the building. This building is in the immediate vicinity of School no. 3 and the Buckner Foundation offices. It is owned by the City Hall and many of the families that live here have rental contracts.

The rehabilitation of this 60-flat building will consist of: 1. insulation work, 2. Window installation - PVC joinery with thermal insulation glass, 3. Waterproofing, 4. Repair and installation of toilets and baths on the five storeys, 5. Putting in interior doors, 6. Repair of staircase and interior stairs, putting in a ramp for people with disabilities, 7. Interior design – floor tiles, painting, electrical wiring - 60 rooms, 8. Use of renewable energy by installing solar panels for hot water provision, 9. Building vertical chimneys.

In the rehabilitation of the building and implicitly the improved living conditions, the builders will use green and sustainable alternatives: the building will be insulated on the outside, and solar panels will be mounted for hot water preparation so that the number of wood-stoves for heating will decrease and this will reduce greenhouse gas emissions; environmentally-friendly materials will be used in the rehabilitation/upgrading process.

Anti-discrimination campaign

A campaign titled "Now for the Future – Equal Chances for All Locals" was launched within the project. The results foreseen in "NOW FOR THE FUTURE" project was an anti-discrimination campaign titled "NOW FOR THE FUTURE" – equal opportunities for all locals". Sending friendly messages which aim at drawing attention to the fact that discrimination and racism have no place in Târnăveni and that these forms of non-communication are harmful. Challenging and organizing five local debates on issues related to combating discrimination, equal opportunities, gender equality and promoting sustainable development. In these debates, the topics will also be addressed as being part of the preparation for the process of desegregation and integration of the marginalized group into society (especially those aimed at school desegregation and the one related to housing). Develop a local strategy to eliminate all forms of discrimination and complement the local development strategy with the key elements of the anti-discrimination strategy. Developing ten local partnerships to promote good practices for local cohabitation.

Difficulties

Most of the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the project are related to the level of the targeted group's mobilization and involvement (members of the marginalized communities), such as:

- The low level of education among the Roma in marginalised communities makes it impossible for them to meet the conditions for enrolment in a qualification course (minimum eight years of education needed);
- Seasonal migration abroad to work in agriculture and construction, without a contract or insurance;
- Difficulties related to staying in a job for a longer time;
- The poor appreciation of education: the drop-out rate in marginalised areas is high.



Other difficulties are related to the capacity of the local institutional structures to respond in an integrated manner to the challenges of marginalized communities, the lack of material and human resources, the self-sufficiency and low motivation of the staff in the public institutions involved.

Conclusions

In the case of Târnăveni municipality, the newly started integrated interventions have a positive medium- and long-term perspective. With small steps, the local community

together with the local public authorities and other relevant institutional structure, manage to solve the identified problems.

The local action plan, meant to accomplish the local development strategy, was the key element in building a comprehensive project and is a tool for monitoring and evaluating the outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Employment

1. Link the targets of the National Agency for Employment (NAE) in the annual Programmes for labour market activation to the size of employment-related concerns. Increase the number of Roma jobseekers through services offered by NAE in order to reach the targets set for 2020, i.e. achieve an increase of 60,000 in the number of employed Roma.
2. Restructure and reconsider NAE's interventions aimed at activating Romani jobseekers, based on the evaluation and monitoring of interventions of employment-related services offered by NAE aimed specifically at Romani communities, including direct services offered on the ground.
3. Introduce affirmative actions in public sector employment aimed at Roma citizens, including other services, e.g. on-the-job training, apprenticeships and tutoring.
4. Link training and qualifications to real employer demands and ensure employment at the end of the training and qualification programmes. Provide means-tested financial compensations for the duration of the training and qualification programmes.
5. Provide training courses for women and assistance in accessing jobs. Provide complementary interventions supporting Romani women who wish to create and occupy jobs through the creation of day-care centres, multifunctional centres and after-school programmes.
6. Provide information about the risks and consequences of undeclared employment. Provide information about the benefits associated with social insurance. Provide information to and stimulate the registration of inactive persons. Encourage individuals to obtain permits for engaging in certain professional activities.
7. Develop the position of employment officer/employment mediator and incorporate it into the civil service. Promote activation programmes more effectively with the help of employment mediators. Provide professional career counselling programmes through employment officers/employment mediators.

Housing and essential public services

8. In order to achieve the social inclusion of vulnerable people, it is more than necessary to ensure that they live in decent conditions with access to infrastructure (drinking water, sewerage, electricity, heating, decent access roads). Local public authorities should be bound by the legislative framework on housing (containing clear and precise penalties, applicable) to ensure all these facilities are met within the municipality. Spatial segregation on ethnic and socio-economic criteria must be defined and sanctioned negatively. Still, it is also important to have programmes at the national level to address the problems of segregated and discriminated Roma communities with little or no access to infrastructure.
9. The disinterest for and discrimination of Roma communities when it comes to the development of infrastructure projects by local authorities must be sanctioned in a negative way. Both national and European funding programmes must make access to finance conditional on the development of primarily marginalized and vulnerable areas of the municipality.

10. Inclusion policies/social benefits should not be directed to the middle class, but they must target vulnerable beneficiaries. A new design of inclusion/integration policies for vulnerable groups is needed, an integrated approach that is funded not only from European funds but primarily from state funds.
11. The legislative framework for housing needs to be revised:
 - for the creation of a single class of housing owned by state authorities - public housing (this will include social housing, but also other categories of housing programs), which would impact the immediate increase in the stock of housing for vulnerable people;
 - for clarifying and standardising criteria for granting social housing/public housing;
 - for increasing the focus on awarding social housing/public dwellings for vulnerable people/families;
 - for increasing the stock of social housing/public housing through a budget distribution to the construction and acquisition of social housing (facilities for developers, budgets for local public authorities, etc.).

Impact of health care policies on Roma

12. Initiate public debates to complete the implementation of the Government Emergency Ordinance 18/2017 on community health care with the inclusion of adequate mechanisms for funding, monitoring and qualitative assessment of the work of the community health team, proposals for continuing professional training of these teams and planning annual increase in the number of community medical teams employed in vulnerable communities with Roma.
13. Introduction of "health education" in schools, through community medical teams, considering the existence of a protocol concluded between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education.
14. Implementation of prophylactic programmes/actions and community health campaigns to reduce the risks associated with illnesses through community medical teams.
15. Involve and support the participation of non-governmental organizations in the monitoring of community health care programmes, in order to improve the quality standards provided by the health services at the community level.
16. Carry out health assessments of vulnerable Roma populations at the local and national level, with the involvement of non-governmental organizations in making these assessments, based on health mediators' medical cartography.
17. Development of screening programmes for cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cervical cancer in vulnerable communities with Roma.

Education

18. Comprehensively address quality inclusive education for all children and provide an equitable educational system by supporting schools that are in real need (disadvantaged schools) of financial and human resources.
19. Improve the initial and lifelong learning teachers' training with a focus on non-discriminatory and inclusive attitudes in order to develop their abilities to understand and work with diverse types of children (including Roma and others from disadvantaged groups). A bonus system can be introduced if teachers participate in training courses according to the needs of the children in the schools where they have tenure.

20. Improvement of manuals, especially for primary education, to include characters that are portrayed in a non-stereotypical fashion and promote diversity and gender equality like children of different races and ethnicities and parents with non-stereotypical jobs.
21. Setting-up an independent and participatory evaluation system with greater involvement of pupils and parents, in addition to the classical evaluation of teacher portfolios and open lessons.
22. Integrated approach of educational services to other types of existing services for vulnerable groups (social and medical), in particular by covering the necessary school mediator positions and the establishment of a functional coordination mechanism at local and county level for the multidisciplinary team composed of a school mediator, social worker and community health nurse/health mediator.
23. Financing the "School after School" programme for children in vulnerable situations (Roma and other vulnerable groups), with a clear methodology on how to access funds and with NGOs being able to initiate, implement and get financing for such programmes if the school has no resources or is not willing to do it.
24. Ensuring seats for Roma in high-schools and universities in the second round of admission as well (not only in the first one as it is the case in the present).

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