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Country Report on Ethnic Relations: Hungary

ABOUT EDUMIGROM
Ethnic Differences in Education and Diverging Prospects for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe is a collaborative research project that aims to study how ethnic differences in education contribute to the diverging prospects of minority ethnic youth and their peers in urban settings. Through applying a cross-national comparative perspective, the project explores the overt and covert mechanisms in socio-economic, political, cultural, and gender relations that make ethnicity a substantive component of inequalities in social status and power. The project involves nine countries from old and new member states of the European Union: the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. EDUMIGROM began in March 2008 and will run through February 2011. The project is coordinated by the Center for Policy Studies at Central European University in Budapest, Hungary.

ABOUT THE PAPER
The first research phase of EDUMIGROM focused on background studies on education and ethnic relations in the domestic contexts of the project's target countries. During this phase, research teams gathered and processed macro-level data and information with three adjacent goals in mind: to supply the comprehensive country studies on education and ethnic relations; to inform cross-country comparisons on minority ethnic youth in education; to provide ample information for the multi-level selection of samples for surveys, community and school case studies. A total of 16 studies were prepared, and their publication is intended to share valuable knowledge and stimulate discussion on issues related to the education and integration of minority ethnic youth in Europe. These reports made available to the wider public may no longer contain specific information on the sites and schools selected for the EDUMIGROM field research. The relevant chapters have either been excluded or anonymised in order to protect the identity of the researched schools, communities and individuals.

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1. Mapping Ethnic Minorities in an Inter-ethnic Context

Among the currently recognised national and ethnic minorities in Hungary, the situation of Roma or Gypsies is conspicuous in several ways.[1] Estimates suggest taht this population of about 600,000 forms the largest ethnic minority in Hungary, constituting roughly six percent of the total population.[2] Thus the size of the Roma population is larger than the overall size of all the other nationalities in Hungary.

As a result of stigmatization, discrimination, and subjection to detrimental policies, the Roma are far less integrated and assimilated[3] into society than the other national and ethnic minorities. They live dispersed all across Hungary, yet concentrated in the economically most backward areas of the north eastern and western parts of the country (see Appendix 1). Eighty percent suffer from deep poverty, unable to get employment or proper education. They have extremely weak representation in democratic institutions. Given the absence of a mother state, the Roma – as a diasporic minority – do not enjoy the same kind of protection and support as other minorities. Thus, besides low socio-economic status, the lack of interest enforcing capacities makes them particularly vulnerable, restraining processes of emancipation.

1.1 Historical Dynamic of Inter-ethnic Relations: Roma in Hungary

In order to see how, after periods of relative social acceptance, alternating with periods of persecution, the Roma have been eventually pushed to the peripheries of society, let us take a brief detour in history.[4] The following historical account[5] demonstrates that in every era, the majority group's approach toward,

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1   'Historical nationalities' in Hungary include groups originally belonging to neighbouring countries, which became detached from their motherlands as a result of the peace treaties ending the two world wars. Jews, in turn, constitute primarily an ethnic minority, as many of the people of Jewish descent have gone through assimilation and do not wish to define themselves as Jews by nationality. A relatively recent immigrant group in Hungary, the Chinese, may also be defined in ethnic terms as they have not yet attained the status of nationality. The situation of Roma is ambiguous. They formally enjoy the same rights as national minorities and, indeed, they form one of the oldest historical ethnic minorities of Hungary. Nevertheless, they are defined as an ethnic group, which reflects the lack of a mother state in their case and also the ethno-racial traits of their social categorization. In accordance with the developing convention of a politically correct denomination, I will refer to this minority as 'Roma', though in discussing their history, I will also use the contemporary term 'Gypsy' that is still widespread today. The implications of the two ethnonyms will be discussed later, especially in sections 1.4 and 2.3.

2   The number of Roma and their rate in Hungarian population have been growing steadily until recently: 65,000 in 1893, 100,000 in 1930, 320,000 in 1971 (3% of the population), 482,000 in 1993 (5 percent) and about 600,000 in 2008 (6%). (Kemény et al. 1976; Kemény, Havas and Kertesi 1994; Hablicsek 2000, p. 245.; Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004) Roma living in Hungary constitute 12% of the more than 3 million Roma in Europe (whereas the total population of Hungary constitutes only 2.2% of Europe's total population). (Kocsis and Kovács, p. 13.) Given the uncertainties around the definiton of Gypsy/ Roma, estimations regarding the size of this population are, however, necessarily rough and contingent on the methods being used (see section 1.4 on the definition of ethnicity).

3   At the same time, Roma have become increasingly assimilated linguistically: in 2003, about 89% was native Hungarian speaker, while the rest were mostly bilingual. (Janky – Kemény – Lengyel 2004)

4   This section is based on interpretations of the relatively scarce written sources referring to Gypsies, like chronicles, letters of safe conduct, census records, professional reports (Fraser 1995; Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004; Kállai 2000, 2008). Such an approach implies an outsider perspective, which, however, suits our purposes here, as in concentrating on the Roma's collisions with their environment, conventional historical analysis allows for the reconstruction of inter-ethnic conflicts and tensions.

5   We do not cover here the entire history of the Roma; rather, we provide only relevant information on their pre-twentieth century history. We note that, according to linguistic research, the ancestors of Roma were Arian tribes, belonging to Indo-European peoples, who moved from the lands of Siberia to the Indian subcontinent in a vast migration wave in the second millennium BC, where they encountered settled cultures. The ancient language of Gypsies, Romani sid, is related to Sanskrit. The idea of Indian ancestry plays an important part in the construction of Roma ethnic identity, and it is a key element in the conceptualizations of the international Roma community on nationalistic premises.

and interest in, the Roma minority (i.e. their treatment as an ethnically or racially defined social group) is determined by economic factors as well as the character and purposes of the state. Thus, when the Roma are seen to fulfil some kind of economic or political 'need', they enjoy(temporary acceptance and are given a chance of relative integration. As soon as they become superfluous (or fulfil the perverted function of scapegoats) – such as in times of social, economic and political flux or crisis – they are subjected to social exclusion and maltreatment. This dynamic, kept in motion by the changing roles and functions fulfilled by Roma in society, is reinforced by the fact that so far, all attempts to manage the 'Gypsy question' have been proven to be ineffective or counter-effective throughout history, always generating new problems that require a response.

Given the need to defend against attacks and destructions wrought by the Turks, the Roma were more welcome in Hungary than elsewhere in Europe when they first arrived here in the 15th century.[6] Found useful in the manufacture of arms and doing repair works, Roma (called 'Egyptians' or 'Pharaunes' at the time) acquired a special status.[7] Although this privileged position did not protect them against the animosity of local populations, they were successfully adapting to the changing circumstances throughout the Middle Ages. As long as having their arts and crafts (especially as smiths, construction workers and musicians) recognised and needed as horse traders, messengers and spies – that is, while there was a demand for their labour and services as well as their tax contributions – the Roma managed to have their 'ancient freedoms' repeatedly renewed. Feudal lords and dignitaries were supportive, providing protection and money to Roma in exchange for their services. In order to create continuity of these services, some of the nobles attempted to settle them down, and so a great many families gave up their nomadic life style in favour of a more secure livelihood. Nevertheless, Roma suffered from poverty and hostility of local populations – several resolutions were passed to expel them, though no attempts were made to execute such orders.

The number of Roma was growing steadily due to increasing immigration for the following centuries. However, with the expulsion of the Turks in the late 17th century, the demand for labour related to war economy suddenly decreased, so a great many Roma suddenly had to find new ways of living. The still prevailing practise of having Roma do the most menial jobs, leading to their isolation and degradation, started in this period. The image of free, autonomous, and professionally apt Roma was replaced by a negative approach according to which they became seen as ignorant and idle people who live from theft and robbery.[8]

It was during the era of enlightened absolutism that the idea of disciplining Roma to make them loyal subordinates of the crown was first conceived. From the mid-18th century, several measures were taken to assimilate and make sedentary Roma.[9] Thus, discrimination against Roma people was raised to the level of national politics and became first institutionalized at a time when both migration and linguistic and ethnic plurality were otherwise customary and accepted. Despite the inconsistencies

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6   Unlike the rest of Europe, Hungary, Transylvania and Russia did not issue expulsion orders at the time of the early persecution of the Gypsies (Fraser 1995, 130.).

7   As serves belonging directly to the king, the employment of Roma on private land was possible only with royal permission, and, holding letters of safe conduct, they had free pass across the country. Initially, Roma also enjoyed exemption from paying taxes.

8   On this shift in the image of Roma see Szuhay 1999.

9   Under the decrees issued by Maria Theresia and Joseph II and targeting specifically 'itinerant Gypsies', estates were obliged to designate territories in their ownership for the permanent settlement of Gypsies, assist them in building accommodation, provide them with agricultural land and support in practising artisan trades, secure them access to guild membership, etc. Gypsies were prohibited from moving and travelling, begging, keeping horses, speaking Romani, marrying among themselves, wearing their traditional clothes and even from playing music. Gypsy children were to be taken away from their families and placed with peasants at the age of 4, and young men were obliged to perform military service. Gypsies were to be called 'new Hungarians' or 'new peasants', and the use of the ethnonym 'cigány' was to be fined. The institution of voivodes was abolished, and local judges took over the management of Gypsy affairs.

in the implementation of these policies, by the 19th century, the vast majority of Roma gave up their language and traditions and became settled and relatively integrated into surrounding society.[10]

The 'Gypsy issue' reappeared in Hungarian politics with the arrival of a new immigration wave after the abolition of Roma slavery in Rumania in the late 19th century. The newcomers caused alarm in the general population and were received with antipathy by the already settled Roma, too.[11] The rapid increase of the Roma population[12] and the general anxiety it caused led to the first Roma census in 1893, carried out with the stated objective 'to resolve the issue of vagrancy and to sedentarise itinerant Roma'. Importantly, the vast majority of Roma were found to be permanently settled, native Hungarian speakers, and living mostly in mixed communities.[13] During the economic boom of the late 19th century, Roma losing their traditional trades were still able to find new occupations. This situation drastically changed by the 1920s. The period between the two World Wars, characterised by economic crises, technical improvements and social transformations, saw the deterioration of the livelihood of Roma, who were unable to catch up with the rapid changes. Large-scale Roma immigration (from neighbouring countries after the Trianon treaty), the decline of traditional communities and trades (like blacksmithery),[14] and the permanent threat caused by the hostile political atmosphere of the Horthy era all contributed to the growing social distance between Roma and majority populations. Although the Gypsy issue was reintroduced to the political agenda, it was soon degraded to become an administrative matter. Suggestions to 'civilise' Gypsies were replaced by ideas of 'handling' this problem by the establishment of forced labour camps. As a result of harsh regulations and arbitrary measures, the Roma were prevented from receiving trade licences and became subjected to frequent police raids. "The relationship between Hungarian society and the Roma reached its lowest point" in this period (Kemény et al. 1976; Kemény, Havas and Kertesi 1994). After the Nazi invasion, Roma were deported and killed in massive numbers in the winter of 1944.[15]

The democratic spirit of post-War years established the principle of equality of rights concerning Roma just like any other citizens. At the same time, there were no political improvements in their regard,

10 Most worked in industry (especially as blacksmiths and construction workers), agriculture (as farm-workers and day-labourers), commerce, and in the service sector (as craftsmen and musicians). Blacksmithery provided material security for a great many Roma, while music-making offered steady livelihood and high respect only for the very narrow 'Gypsy aristocracy'.

11 Established Roma communities were afraid of losing their relative social acceptance – for good reason, since anti-Roma sentiments were now projected to all Roma, independently from their degree of social integration. By this time, skin colours became the key distinctive mark of Roma ethnicity.

12 Research shows that the number of Roma doubled between 1840 and 1893. (Kállai 2008)

13 The census of 1893 produced the first authoritative document to group people identified as Gypsies/Roma together. It established that 280,000 Roma people were living in Hungary at the time (65,000 on the territory currently belonging to the country), amounting to 1.8% of the entire population. 89.2% of the Roma population were permanently settled, 7.5% were temporary resident, and 3.3% were itinerant. Occupations of Roma included blacksmithery, construction work, commerce, farm work, day laboring, handicrafts, music-making and other services (also cf. Havas 2000, p. 88.). The rate of native Hungarian speakers (within the present borders of Hungary) was 80%, while the rest had Romani, Boyash, or some other language as their first language. (These data also suggest that the threefold classification of the Roma population started in this period.)

14 Nevertheless, we have evidence that traditional occupations survived to some degree. The parental questionnaires of the national representative survey of 1971 suggest that the economic activities of Roma were varied according to subgroups. Thus, horse-dealing and other commercial activities, agricultural work, metalworking, construction work and music-making characterized the Vlach Roma; the Boyash made wooden utensils and performed other handicrafts as well as agricultural jobs; while the Hungarian Roma were primarily involved in agriculture, construction work and music-making (Kemény et al. 1976).

15 There is no consensus about the number of Roma victims of Nazism: according to the estimations of the Victims of Nazism Commission, 28,000 Roma people were exterminated, while Hungarian historian László Karsai maintains that 5,000 perished in German death camps (Karsai 1992).

and they suffered serious losses in the economic field. The Roma did not profit from the distribution of land; on the contrary, they lost their previous employments in agriculture.[16] "The colossal and hard won historical capital of the Roma was destroyed" (Csalog 1979, 291). In a contradictory manner, the end of war "removed the immediate danger of extermination and brought emancipation but failed to establish opportunities for making a living" (ibid., 291).

State socialist methods of managing the situation of Roma – characterised by a great deal of institutionalized violence and best summarized by the term 'forced emancipation' – brought about ambivalent results. On the one hand, Roma were included in society (i.e. acquired full membership in the totalitarian state), which was effectively tied to the obligation to work. As a result, their levels of education and employment significantly improved.[17] Besides the presumption of equality, inherent in socialist ideology, and the political risks of neglecting the misery of masses of people, this development was prompted by an increased demand for industrial labour. On the other hand, since their economic function was primarily seen in performing unskilled labour, and also because of the covert survival of ethnic differentiation, discrimination and segregation,[18] Roma became confined to the lowest social status. In addition, given the ideological premise of uniformity, and hence the suppression of the expression of any cultural or ethnic differences, their claims to be recognised as an ethnic group were systematically denied.[19] On account of the encoded disadvantages and insults, Roma ethnicity became synonymous with poverty and second-rate citizenship (Szalai 2000b, 536).

Officially, the 'Gypsy issue' became defined as a social problem, manageable merely by means of social policies.[20] The main political objectives were to extend rights and duties implied in the contemporary notion of citizenship to the Roma, and to create the necessary political, economic and cultural conditions to practise these rights. In reality, this approach amounted to "assimilatory efforts under the cover of social crisis management," and thus the solutions to problems proved to be partial, ephemeral, ambiguous or utterly detrimental (Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004; Kállai 2008).[21]

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16 After the Second World War, the large estates belonging to the aristocracy, capitalist land-owners and the Catholic church were parcelled out among the peasantry. The Roma, however, though many of them had been traditionally working in agriculture, were excluded from this process. As a result, they did not benefit from the production of socialist cooperatives in the same way as other agricultural workers, and when cooperatives were dissolved after 1989 they, again, were left without land property.

17 By 1957, 90% had some education, while before the war the rate of those never attending school was about 50%. (Kállai 2000, 2008)

18 As argued by Szalai, because of the reluctance to articulate the ethnic dimension of the "Gypsy question" at a state level, inter-ethnic conflicts were relegated to the sphere of local institutions. (Szalai 2000b)

19 Collective rights as such were alien to socialist ideology and potentially dangererous to the system. Nevertheless, the Cultural Association of Gypsies in Hungary [Magyarországi Cigányok Kulturális Szövetsége] and the Association of Gypsies [Cigányszövetség], both created in the late 1950s as institutions managed from above and functionally submitted to the government, allowed for some degree of voluntarism. However, the activities undertaken by these organisations (concerning the protection of tradition and language, the creation of jobs, the improvement of education and health condition), ultimately aiming at the recognition of Roma as a national minority, were watched with increasing distrust by the central power. Eventually, the associations were abolished in the early 1960s, and there were no organisations representing the Roma until the foundation of the National Gypsy Council and the re-establishment of the Cultural Association of Gypsies in Hungary in 1985 and 1986.

20 The significant turn in the state's approach towards Roma is marked by the famous resolution issued by the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party in 1961. Denying the political relevance of ethnographic characteristics, this document defines the Roma minority in terms of its 'unique social position'. This step had important consequences reaching beyond the state socialist period. Szalai, for instance, explains the present confusion characterizing Roma policies as a backlash of socialist politics, responsible for the conflation of social and ethnic aspects of the problem. While today ethnicity prevails as the dominant frame of reference, subsuming social issues, previously the ethnic aspects of the problem were suppressed or dissolved in the social dimension (Szalai 2000a, 2000b).

21 To illustrate this with a famous example: As prescribed in the 1961 resolution of the state party, a campaign started in

The results of the first representative national survey on the Roma in the 20th century, carried out in 1970-1971, show that in some respects – especially regarding employment rates[22] – the situation of the Roma minority was similar to that of the general population. However, "the apparently small difference between the Roma and non-Roma populations was, in fact, quite significant" (Kemény et al. 1976, 53). The lower social status of Roma was explained by the researchers with reference to their relatively low level of education,[23] comparatively low rate of female employment (owing to the greater number of children per family), poor health conditions, and few opportunities to rely on social benefits.[24] Segregation – partly a result of conscious policies carried out by authorities and reinforced by the ill-considered methods of an extensive campaign to eliminate colonies – was already a major problem at this time. Forced industrialisation led to the proletarisation of Roma, the dominance of the family pattern of absent fathers (who earned their living as commuting workers) and the fall of the status of musicians and merchants (Kemény et al. 1976, 66-67).[25]

Owing to positive social and economic processes and the general rise in the standard of living, the Roma saw improvements in their living and housing conditions over the next decade. By the 1980s, opportunities of upward social mobility had opened up for many Roma, and thus the first generation of Roma intellectuals appeared on the scene. However, the bases of emancipation proved to be very unstable. The lack of proper education and training to meet the demands of the times severely confined the chances of a real break-through and worked as a bomb ready to explode.

1.2 The Socio-economic Status of Roma

It has become commonplace that Roma are the primary victims of the post-socialist regime change.[26] This general observation is supported by comparative survey data, revealing that the disadvantages of the Roma population – with regard to unemployment, the lack of education, poor living and health conditions, shorter life expectancy – have dramatically increased and, despite the undeniable improvements in residential and housing conditions, their segregation has been further reinforced in

1965 to eliminate the about 2100 Roma colonies. The residents of such places became eligible for loans with low interest rates in order to buy new "reduced-value" buildings in the outskirts of big cities or abandoned old peasant houses in small villages. As a result, despite the undeniable improvement in living conditions, segregation was recreated in new forms, and the enclosure of many Roma in impoverishing neighbourhoods led to ghettoisation and social immobility on the long run.

22 85.2% of Roma men (close to the 87% general male employment rate) were in jobs. The majority worked in the industry – which, in contrast to agriculture, provided a relatively secure income and equality for workers – over 50% of them as assistant workers. The employment rate of Roma women was 30%, which, considering their relatively larger number of children compared to Hungarians, is not surprisingly low, either. Nevertheless, it may indicate the prevalence of traditional gender norms and refer to the fact that the Roma population was concentrated in regions where unskilled women had little chance to get employment. Subsequently, female employment rate reached 50% among Roma by 1980 (Kemény et al. 1976; Kemény, Havas and Kertesi 1994).

23 While the educational level of non-Roma populations were rapidly growing during the 1950s and 1960s, this process was much slower in the Roma population. At the time of the survey, only 26 to 27% of young Roma (aged 20-24 and 25-29) completed 8 grades, that is, their 73-74% were practically illiterate (Kemény et al. 1976; Kemény, Havas and Kertesi 1994).

24 Lacking the necessary service time, Roma were often not entitled to receive disability or old-age pensions.

25 Traditional trades survived to some extent, occasionally in new forms. For instance, horse trading was replaced by the selling and buying of old cars. This kind of activity had a dual reason: it brought both prosperity and respect (Stewart 1994). However, "Roma with such life styles live necessarily and permanently on the margins of illegality, and thus the group is subject to persecution" (Havas 2000).

26 The present plight of Roma people is also regarded as the most recent episode in a series of 'modernization crises' characterising their history, manifested in the massive loss of employment and livelihood as well as in the transformation and reinforcement of the forms of social exclusion (Kállai 2008).

the past two decades.[27] The situation has been worsened by general social insecurity, expressed in growing intolerance and hostility against the Roma, who have become the main target of scape-goating mechanisms.

Employment rates began to fall during the economic crisis of the late 1980s, and this process accelerated due to privatisation, the deterioration of outdated branches of industry, the growing chaos in agriculture, and the loss of external markets after 1989. With the collapse of state socialism – and the closing of large industrial enterprises – masses of Roma, characteristically employed as unskilled workers, lost their jobs and, therefore, often their apartments, too.[28] As the employment opportunities created by the "distorted modernization of socialism" proved to be unstable, the assumed integration of Roma into Hungarian society turned out to be a mere illusion (Kertesi, 2000, 425, see also Appendix 2).[29] This negative tendency intensified during the employment crisis of the early 1990s and has stabilised due to discrimination.[30] Roma suffer disadvantages also in terms of managing this difficult situation.[31] At best, they are hired casually as temporary labourers in construction industry or agriculture, providing unstable employment and little or no security. By 2003, only 28 percent of Roma men aged 15-54 had formal jobs; among Roma women, the employment rate was 15 percent (Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004, see also Appendix 3). What is more, among those in jobs only 60 percent were employed full-time, while the rest worked irregular hours or illegally. The social problem caused by the massive loss of employment was aggravated by the peculiar demographic characteristics of the Roma population. The comparatively greater number of children (3.5 as opposed to 1.5, see also Appendix 4), coupled with traditional family pattern, results in large households with a higher rate of dependants and a lower rate of active or inactive earners as compared with the Hungarian average (Mészáros and Fóti 2000, 305.; Babusik 2004; see also Appendix 5). Alongside the growth of social and economic disadvantages of the Roma minority and the widening of the income gap between them and the rest of society, a process of internal differentiation started within the Roma population, whereby a small group of entrepreneurs and intellectuals developed facing masses living in despair and dependent on the welfare system (Appendix 6).

Residential and housing conditions represent a critical factor in the fate of Roma, who characteristically live in low-quality dilapidated buildings situated in segregated colonies, slums or settlements in economically disadvantaged areas with no perspective of employment or upward social mobility. While urbanisation was significant during the last decades of state socialism, with the majority

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27 The data referred to in this section were collected mainly during two nation-wide Roma surveys, both led by Kemény, in 1993 and 2003 (Kemény, Havas and Kertesi 1994; Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004).

28 In 1993, the employment rate of Roma men was 30.8% (compared to 85% in 1971 or 63.4% of the general population), and of women it was 17.5% (compared to 63.1 of the general population). (Sources: Employment survey, HCSO, 1994.1. and National Roma survey by Kemény, Havas and Kertesi 1994)

29 The growth of unemployment does not only imply the deterioration of livelihoods but, given the previous attachment of these people to the labour market, also means that a large number of Roma who had been previously integrated into society became excluded (Kertesi, 2000, pp. 428-429.).

30 Demographic factors, coupled with disadvantages in education and residetial conditions, can not fully account for the fact that a Roma person is more than three times more likely to be unemployed, or that his/her average wage is 20% less, compared to a non-Roma person. These 'residual effects', immeasurable by standard economic methods, should be attributed to discrimination (Kertesi 2000a, pp. 442-443.).

31 While the rates unemployed applying for benefits did not significantly differ in Roma and non-Roma populations (in both cases it was around 70%, and 40% among the passive unemployed), there was a significant difference considering the types of provisions already in 1993: the percentage of recipients of unemployment benefit was lower (54 vs. 81%), and the percentage of recipients of income supplement was higher (42 vs. 14%) among the Roma (Kertesi 2000a, pp. 430-431.). It should also be noted that, due to the decentralization of the welfare system, decision-making about individual claims has become the responsibility of low-status officials (the administrators of social departments at local self-governments), which has not only given way to subjective, arbitrary and often prejudiced decisions but has also resulted in the institutionalization of the anti-egalitarian ideology of supporting only those who 'deserve' social assistance. (On the dysfunctions and injustices of the current welfare system cf. Szalai 2000a, 2005.)

of colonies eliminated and housing conditions greatly improved, these positive tendencies stopped and were even reversed somewhat during the 1990s, when new forms of segregation started to emerge (see also Appendix 7).[32] As a result of 're-ruralisation', most Roma are now populating small villages in the North East and the South West, while the rest are concentrated in the urban slums of deteriorated industrial areas in the North East and in the capital (see Appendix 1). Roma-populated settlements are characterised by accelerated out-migration of non-Roma and, therefore, rapid impoverishment. As a result of this process of *spontaneous segregation*, 72 percent of Roma lived in more or less segregated circumstances by 2003 (Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004).[33] Growing social distance and the irresponsibility of politics also induce *direct segregation* which, in turn, is not tied to regional or residential characteristics: in our days, the majority population of any town or village has recourse to methods – even means of power and the assistance of local authorities – to use in order to visibly and explicitly confine the Roma in separate living quarters and institutional facilities (Szalai 2000b, 531.).

Paradoxically, under-education became a major factor in the exclusion of Roma from the labour market right when their previous educational disadvantages had been mostly eliminated. This is because the demands and requirements characterising the new labour market involve new types of challenges, producing a shift in the issue of Roma educational disadvantages from primary to secondary education. In other words, although young Roma have had better chances to complete primary education since the 1990s,[34] they have been lacking opportunities to receive higher education, which has become the critical factor concerning employment opportunities. At best, young Roma continue their studies in vocational schools, contributing to the growth of a redundant workforce.[35] As the system of vocational training in Hungary has not been restructured yet according to the exigencies of a transformed economy, it is still based on old methods and offers out-dated skills to students. In addition, a young Roma holding a degree from such a school has far less opportunities than his/her non-Roma fellow students in obtaining a job.[36]

Under-education and unemployment are intricately related, mutually reinforcing one another. On the one hand, when looking at the levels of education, the fact that the degree of employment-dependency (that is, the rate of those previously employed on a relatively permanent basis) shows little difference between the Roma and the general population suggests that the role of a significantly lower

32 The comparison of data taken in 1970 and 1993 shows a marked shift in the territorial distribution of Roma: while less than 8% of the entire Roma population (25,000 people) lived in Budapest in 1970, their percentage increased to 9.1 (44,000 people) in 23 years. In 1971, 14% of the Roma population (45,000 people) lived in country towns, which rate was almost tripled by 1993 when 40% of Roma were urban residents in the countryside. (This figure, though, still falls behind the national average, as by 1993 the majority of Hungarian population lived in towns.) It should also be noted that this significant increase in the rate of urban residents was only partly due to migration, since often it was the result of the reclassification of the given settlement. As for the elimination of Roma colonies: 65.1% of Roma lived in colonies in 1971, while this percentage was only 13.7% in 1993 (Havas and Kemény 1995; Kertesi 2000a, p. 433.). During the 1990s, the number of Roma living outside of settlements decreased, which, however, does not mean at all that segregation was reduced to the same extent. In 1993, nearly 30% of Roma lived in quasi- or fully Roma environment, and a further almost 30% in ethnically mixed environment (Havas and Kemény 1995, pp. 9-10.).

33 Six percent of Roma families were living in isolated/segregated Roma colonies, 2% were living outside such colonies but away from other villages, 42% were living on the outskirts of villages, and 22% were living inside villages or towns but in areas inhabited mainly by Roma (Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004, p. 66.).

34 Seventy-five percent of Roma aged between 25 and 29 had completed primary education in 1993, while the same rate for the 50 to 54 age group was only 28.9%. Though the percentage of Roma completing primary school increased to 82% by 2003, only 5% received secondary education, and just 1.2% attended university or college (Havas and Kemény 1995; Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004, p. 67.).

35 The number of young Roma completing their studies at a vocational school is rapidly growing, as indicated by a comparison of distinct age groups: in 1993, their percentage was 7.4 (aged 35-39), 17.2 (30-34), 13.2 (25-29), and 15.6 (20-24) (Havas and Kemény 1995).

36 Such a relatively educated Roma person is more than twice as likely to become permanently unemployed as his/her non-Roma counterpart (Kertesi 2000a).

educational level (here, among Roma) is a determining factor with regard to employment opportunities (Kertesi 2000a, 428, see also Appendix 8).[37] On the other hand, the parents of Roma children who are starting school today belong to the generation that is likely to never have been permanently employed in their life, and this circumstance heavily influences these children's opportunities of further education (Kertesi and Kézdi 2005). Thus the grasp of the vicious cycle of poverty, lack of education, unemployment, poverty is becoming more and more powerful, and the social distance between the Roma minority and the social majority constantly increases (Kertesi 2000a, 425).

1.3 Political and Cultural Participation

In addition to unfavourable socio-economic factors, the growing intolerance and anti-Roma attitudes of society have imposed restrictions on the integration and social mobility of Roma.[38] With privatisation and the decentralisation of institutions, discrimination has become an everyday reality.[39] Anti-Roma sentiments, coupled with the excesses of (typically misunderstood) civil liberties regarding the free public expression of views, have led to the rise of racism, which is often supported by legitimate political forces, proliferating inter-ethnic conflicts, and the further degradation of the Roma as a collective group.[40] This situation imposes serious challenges to the participation of Roma and the articulation of Roma identity in cultural and political spheres, where the enforcement of legitimate rights and interests is constrained by both internal and external factors (i.e. weakness of Roma civil society and adverse institutional mechanisms and attitudes). Roma – although formally part of the same structure of ethnic representation as the other minorities[41] – suffer serious disadvantages not only in terms of the promotion of culture and identity, but also with regard to *recognition as an ethnic minority* (Szalai 2000b, 548). Actual practises do not match theoretic possibilities implied in legal formulations: in other words, there is a huge gap between the *de facto* and *de jure* minority rights of Roma.

The roots of Roma social movement go back to the 1970s and 1980s, when self-organisation and the expression of cultural difference became allowed as long as related activities were devoid of any manifest political content. With the introduction of the rule of law, minority identities started to enjoy (some degree of) protection, which gave new impetus to self-organising and made Roma culture and identity more visible in society.[42] This novelty, however, should not be regarded as the automatic manifestation of some latent 'ethnic essence' in response to the removal of restrictions imposed from above. As a matter of fact, the formation and representations of a 'Roma' community suggest that 'ethnic

37 Besides the lack of education, the comparatively less willingness of Roma women to take a job because of the greater number of children and the powerfulness of traditional gender norms represent additional disadvantaging factors. These two issues – the number of children and under-education – are closely related: it has been proven in general that as women's educational (and employment) opportunities improve, they tend to have their first child later, which results in a smaller number of children per family.

38 It should be noted that, despite all disappointments and frustrations, integration as such has not become less wanted by Roma. For instance, as opposed to the widespread assumption that 'they are reluctant to send their children to school' because 'education has no value in their eyes', in fact, an increasing proportion of Roma sees education as the main route to integration and emancipation. If the educational system fails to perform its duty in this regard, it is because of structural deficiencies, coupled with negative attitudes towards the Roma (Havas and Liskó 2005, 2006; Zolnay 2005).

39 Kertesi argues for the primacy of 'statistical discrimination', motivated by considerations regarding the cost-efficiency of this method in filtering potential workforce. This from of discrimination is supposed to be even harder to remedy than direct discrimination caused by the subjective hostility of employers (Kertesi 2000a, p. 444.).

40 See Chapter 4 on inter-ethnic relations and conflicts.

41 See sections 2.1 and 2.2 on legal and institutional arrangements regarding political participation and representation.

42 By the end of 1996 there were 96 registered Roma organisations. It was during these years that the term Gypsy, loaded with negative connotations, became replaced by Roma, expressing political consciousness as an ethnic group.

renaissance'[43] in this case should be considered as an essentially *political* phenomenon, conditioned on a series of social, economic and political factors.

Roma as a collective identity did not emerge out of nothing. The germs of self-organising, taking the form of cultural associations, were present already in the 1980s, when, alongside official organisations,[44] relatively autonomous fora could develop with the objectives of promoting traditions and expressing cultural identity. These organisations, however, had an implicit political agenda: while they "appeared to be concerned with culture, in reality, it was all about politics. However, we had to avoid the risk of proscription on political grounds."[45] After the regime change, recently acquired liberties opened up the way in front of the development of ethnic self-consciousness among large masses of Roma.[46] Nevertheless, the cultural and political presence of Roma is really 'devised' by a handful of Roma intellectuals and artists, involved in a struggle to obtain public acknowledgement and a share from limited resources, who have managed to gain prominence due to their personal talents and – to a significant degree – lucky circumstances. Given the previously denied alternative to succeed *as* a Gypsy (instead of assimilating to the majority), a distinguished elite of public intellectuals and politicians – and thus a Roma public sphere – has been formed.[47] Initially – in conformity with the pre-1989 pattern – cultural and political concerns were intermingled in the activities of these people. While this characteristic of Roma civil enterprises and entrepreneurs has not disappeared altogether, the spheres of cultural and political activity are clearly distinct today as a result of processes of institutionalisation and professionalisation.[48]

Roma interests and concerns are expressed at three levels: that of national politics, local administration and civil society. The first democratic Parliament included three self-consciously Roma MPs. However, this number has never increased, nor have there been any improvements in terms of securing the appropriate political representation of Roma at the national level.[49] After an initial fascination with Roma, political parties soon lost interest: they no longer include related issues in their election agendas and disregard the Roma minority as a potential constituency. Neglect on the part of power-holders is undoubtedly responsible for the misconception of the Minorities Act of 1993,[50] serving as the legal basis of the system of minority self-governments established in the following year. The law provides

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43 Ethnic 'renaissance' or 'revival' is often explained by the previous suppression of cultural and ethnic identities. In contrast to this view, we suggest that the change in the patterns of identification and the formation of a 'Roma' community are to be seen as the product of newly emerging interests and opportunities.

44 For example, the National Gypsy Council (established in 1985) and the Cultural Association of Gypsies in Hungary (recreated in 1986).

45 Quoted from an interview with a key figure of the Roma social movement (Vajda 2005).

46 In the 1990 census an unprecedented number of people identified themselves as Roma (based on nationality, language or culture). In 1980, 0.06% (6,404 people), while in 1990 1.38% of the population (142,683 people) declared their Roma identity. A slower increase took place during the next decade, so that by 2001 1.86% of the population (190,046 people) identified themselves as Roma. These census data reflect intensifying Roma identification, as opposed to the effects of migration. (At the same time, this number still amounts to only about the third of the estimated number of the Roma population by sociologists.) The highest rates of increase were observed in the Northern and Eastern counties (Kertesi 2003, p. 426.; Kállai 2003b).

47 Some of these public intellectuals were active already in the 1970s and 1980s, openly assuming a Roma identity and often working in collaboration with non-Roma sympathizers and experts. These people (as well as their younger counterparts), having proved their commitment, certainly have more credibility than those who joined in lured by the assets provided by the so-called "ethno-business". Nevertheless, the appearance of this latter type of politicians represents, in itself, a significant step in the development of the Roma public sphere.

48 A good example of the combination of cultural and political concerns is provided by Jen Zsigó who established and manages two noteworthy institutions: the Roma Parliament, a civil organisation that functions as an important forum of the Roma public sphere, and Romano Kher, a community centre that pursues cultural objectives.

49 On political representation see section 2.1.

50 Act No. LXXVII of 1993 on National and Ethnic Minorities.

only for the possibility of establishing minority institutions (schools, cultural associations, etc.), without guaranteeing the necessary public funds to realize this purpose – the main stated objective of the minority self-government system. This comes especially hard on the dispossessed Roma minority. As for the civil organisations started by Roma, these are also struggling with financial problems and uncertainties of operation. In addition to the notorious dependence of the Hungarian civil sphere on public funds, the problems of Roma organisations are made even more acute by the absence of a mother state that could provide moral and financial background support – a deficiency that has been somewhat balanced by the European Union and the international network of Open Society Institute. Nevertheless, the financing of Roma organisations primarily comes from, or via, the state. This situation severely curtails the autonomy of Roma initiatives, imposing boundaries on the free expression of identities. Applications must conform to the official institutional framework, distinguishing Roma and non-Roma programmes, which represents one type of limitation (cf. Majtényi and Majtényi 2005). In addition, content-wise, they need to comply with some externally determined image of 'Romaness' in order to become eligible for support.

Political pressures and interests represent a determining factor in 'constructing' Roma culture(s). Nevertheless, the sphere of culture allows for a relatively free play of identities. While the 'ethnic revival' of the late 1980s and 1990s favoured representations of *authenticity*, suggesting a self-enclosed conception of culture based on nationalistic premises, more recent cultural expressions make use of the intermingling of styles and genres, coming from a variety of sources, and thus emphasize the *hybridity* and constant changing of identities and cultural formations. At the same time, the efforts to find some overarching idea or image of a unified, even pan-European, Roma culture have not been given up; on the contrary, this kind of endeavour is manifested in emphatically modern and progressive and politically self-conscious forms.[51]

Such attempts related to collective representations as well as more individualistic cultural manifestations strive to attract the attention of non-Roma audiences as well. Nevertheless, these recent developments have not yet reached the broader public. In failing to recognise its dynamism and creative versatility, Roma culture is still conceived of in terms of traditionalism – partly determined by ethnographic constructions, and partly influenced by the stereotypical notion of a degraded 'Roma way of life'. Alongside the direct promotion of artistic and cultural projects, this distorted image could be reversed by decent media representations as well as through multicultural education. However, as of yet, Roma-related contents in the media are mostly built on stereotypes. In school curricula, at all levels of education, Roma are scarcely mentioned, and when they are, the information provided only tends to reinforce prejudice (Terestyéni 2004). Given the decentralization of the education system and the power of (negative) stereotypes, breaking through the wall of ignorance and animosity will not be an easy task.

1.4 Definitions and Methodologies

The issue of the representation of ethnicity directly leads us to the problem of how to conceptualize and measure Roma ethnicity for the purposes of data collection. The "statistical chaos" (Kocsis and Kovács 1999, 13) caused by the legal prohibition of the registration of ethnicity, concerns related to the free

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51 The Roma Pavillon at the Venice Biennale of 2007 stands for an outstanding example of a politically sensitive and progressive (re)presentation of Roma culture. The exhibition was curated by Tímea Junghaus, a Roma art historian, as the head of the office of Roma Cultural Initiative at the Open Society Institute in Budapest. In conformity with up-to-date theories on culture and ethnicity, Junghaus tries to validate a non-conventional and anti-nationalistic vision of Roma culture and, in order to free it from ethnographic ghettos, she insists on the necessity to secure mainstream fora for the representation of Roma art. Thus while previous simplistic representations and, importantly, codifications of Roma history, language and traditions may be regarded as political acts standing for claims for recognition of a specific Roma identity, Roma cultural enterprises of our days are characterized by a more refined art political strive for the canonization of Roma culture that, through efforts to break into mainstream fora, reveals the wish to have the creative work of Roma artists and manifestations of Roma culture recognised according to more generally validated categories of artistic and cultural expression, while also influencing and transforming these very categories. Thus (non-essentialised) particularity becomes the basis of claims for universal legitimacy.

assumption of identity as a basic individual right, and the methodological difficulties of defining "who is a Gypsy"[52] create serious difficulties for research and policy-making.[53] This section provides a few points to consider while contextualising and interpreting the facts related to the socio-economic status and social inclusion of Roma (as presented above) and Roma political participation.

While in the case of other minorities self-identification is less problematic and represents an adequate indicator of national/ethnic belongingness, Roma surveys must resolve a series of problems, for two main reasons. First, there are *no objective criteria* to determine Roma ethnicity, not only because culturally this population is very heterogeneous, but also because the group has lost most of its distinctive anthropological characteristics.[54] Second, since statistics of the Roma population must serve the purposes of policy-making – that is, address the problems arising from discrimination, segregation and poverty – the use of methods relying on ascription by outsiders, though problematic methodologically as well as ethically, is highly relevant.[55]

Thus there are two fundamental approaches of Roma ethnicity, resulting in partly incomparable findings. Strictly speaking, the Roma minority is composed of those who identify themselves as Gypsies/Roma ('census-Roma'); the broader concept, in turn, embraces all those considered Roma by outsiders ('ascription-Roma') (Mészáros and Fóti, 309).[56] This latter group – actually including the part of the population suffering from some form of discrimination due to presumed Roma ethnicity – is invariably larger than the former. Besides the complexity of self-identification related to cultural pluralism and multiple loyalties, this is a result of the reluctance of many 'Roma' to reveal their ethnic belonging in front of an official person – a fact rooted in discrimination that forms the very basis of defining Roma ethnicity in terms of ascription.

In national censuses, Roma ethnicity has been determined by the declaration of native language (since 1880) and nationality (since 1941).[57] Ascriptive methods were used in the first and so far only attempt to generate detailed census data of the Roma population in 1893, just like in subsequent special examinations realized by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO), data collections commissioned by the Council of Ministers, and the national surveys carried out by the research team led by István Kemény at the Sociological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS). A key difference between the methods used by HCSO and HAS is that while the former draws on the opinion of interviewing officers,

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52 The debate around this question unfolded in the mid-1990s, with the participation of outstanding sociological experts in this field of study (Ladányi and Szelényi 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Havas, Kemény and Kertesi 2004; Kertesi 2004). This section will discuss their contrasting points of view with regard to the scientific and political implications of defining Roma identity. I will also draw on the methodological considerations exposed in studies on the socio-geographic and demographic characteristics of Roma (Kocsis and Kovács 1999; Hablicsek 2000; Mészáros and Fóti 2000; Neményi 2000).

53 Act LXIII of 1992 on the Protection of Personal Data and the Publicity of Data of Public Interest explicitly prohibits the registration of ethnicity and the collection of ethnic data. As a result, comprehensive research on the Roma stopped for a decade and surveys were not conduced until new, legally compatible and empirically sound methodologies were worked out.

54 The heterogeneity of Roma culture is indicated by the large variety of ethnonyms with reference to Roma living in Hungary (including Romungro, Vlach Roma, Boyash and a host of other denominations the use of which often depends on situational factors) and other European countries.

55 Paradoxically, while the objectives as well as the ethical norms of research are supposed to ascertain the implementation of the anti-discrimination principle and fight stigmatization, such unwanted consequences can not be avoided as long as 'Roma' as a collective group defined in terms of social status that, in turn, is a consequence of discrimination constitutes the subject of research and policy-making.

56 Ascriptive methods – i.e. the registration of ethnic identity – may be used for statistical purposes only, and never to discriminate between people. Nevertheless, there is a tradition of taking into account Roma origin at the local level by the representatives of public institutions (e.g. welfare agencies and schools) whose activity is heavily influenced by such informal knowledge.

57 Language is losing its relevance as Roma people are increasingly becoming native Hungarian speakers.

Kemény and his team relied on the judgment of service providers (teachers, local administrators, etc.) constituting the social environment of the households representing the subject of study.

This ascriptive method, forming the conventional approach in Roma surveys, provoked a heated controversy on the scientific and political implications of ethnic classification among some of the most distinguished scholars in this field of study (Ladányi and Szelényi 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Havas, Kemény and Kertesi 2000; Kertesi 2000b).

Two contrasting standpoints were articulated during the debate. In the eyes of the challengers of the objectivity of ethnic ascriptions, social scientists – as well as any other agents involved in classification – are suspect because they unavoidably, though maybe unselfconsciously, represent particular interests. With reference to the circumstantial aspects of the construction of Roma identity, they maintain that it is ultimately not scientific means (i.e. objective criteria) but political power by which Roma ethnicity is defined. In defense of the possibility of conducting empirical research on the Roma population that produces positive (i.e. useful) results, the other party argues that traditional survey methods (e.g. those applied in calculating the size of the Roma population) are reliable as long as the objective of research is accurately defined. Therefore, given that the effects of prejudice and discrimination – and thus the comparative examination of the populations that end up on the two sides of the social divide – constitute distinguished subjects of research, theoretically, it is possible to arrive at a consensus in this matter.

In the meantime, alongside the welfare-oriented approach characterizing both parties, a third methodological strand has been developed (represented by scholars like Júlia Szalai and Mária Neményi) that experiments with a combination of the two schemes: ascription and self-definition. Importantly, in bridging the two paradigms, this approach is considered conclusive, since the researchers understand the political implications of research objectives and methodologies in a recognition perspective – that is, they insist that everyone has the right to decide upon their own identity.

However, all these considerations concern theoretic issues and do not resolve the practical policy dilemma of how to address discrimination effectively.[58] Social policies targeting parts of the population that live below a certain standard, or are concentrated in especially disadvantaged areas, seem to be insufficient in themselves in solving the problem. In this context, stigmatized social groups distinguished on ethnic – or some other – grounds, and suffering discrimination on this basis, have comparatively less access to support than equally poor but not stigmatized parts of the population. In order to effectively reach these groups so that they have truly equal access to social support, they ought to be defined. This, in turn, is practically impossible by any means defensible from an ethical point of view – that is, using the method of self-declaration of ethnic identity. Besides, such definition procedures would entail the risk of reinforcing the social divide along ethnic lines. As we will see (esp. in section 4.2 analysing strands of policy-making) this central political problem has not been effectively addressed so far. What is more, government responses tend to only exacerbate the problem (as claimed in section 4.1 discussing public discourse on the Roma issue). In the last analysis, Roma facing intense discrimination are lacking the support of powerful and effective policies and a strong civil sphere.

2. Minority Rights and Issues of Representation: The Legal and Institutional Framework of Roma Politics

Facing the unresolved question of minorities, suppressed for several decades during state socialism, the newly elected democratic Parliament and the first government were immediately driven into action after the regime change. The first task to deal with in the early 1990s was the (re)creation of the legal and

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58   Chapter 3 discusses the policy implications of the problem of targeting Roma.

institutional framework of minority politics. In this initial period, lasting until about 1995, the fundamental principles of minority rights were developed, together with the chief mechanisms to implement these rights. During this process, unfortunately, claims and demands coming from the civil society under reconstruction, and specifically from Roma organisations, were not acknowledged by those in power.

The first comprehensive programmes designed to improve the situation of Roma were started after 1995. However, concerns related to discrimination appeared only much later on the agenda. It was not until the new millennium that the plight of the Roma population became recognised as a key issue, both in terms of the international reputation of Hungary and as a serious risk factor for national politics, leading to the restructuring and empowering of responsible institutions. This advance was accompanied and supported by the institutionalization of the principles of equal treatment and equality of opportunities. Along with the inflow of EU funds, all these developments laid the basis for the launching of a concentrated and long-term integration campaign that has been especially conspicuous and effective in the field of education.

Nevertheless, the commitment of governments remains questionable – or, at least, unstable. Since Roma themselves do not represent a significant political pressure group, the career of Roma politics has always been strongly determined by outside pressures and exigencies: namely, the requirements related to legal harmonisation representing a condition of accession to the European Union, and the political capital and regional influence expected from promoting minority rights, especially with regard of the Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries.[59]

2.1 Legislation on Minority Rights and Mechanisms of Enforcement

Thus, the Roma issue played a secondary role in the creation of the legal background of protecting the individual and collective rights of minorities. The fact that the main motives behind legislative efforts were related mostly to foreign politics resulted in certain anomalies. Nevertheless, in the process, the major instruments and institutions serving the interests of the Roma minority have been created, including an act on the rights of minorities,[60] a system of minority self-governments, an Ombudsman office of minority rights, anti-discrimination legislation, and several government bodies responsible for managing and coordinating minority issues in general, and Roma affairs in particular. At present, the main challenges consist in the effective utilisation of existing opportunities and in the thoughtful transformation of the legal and institutional structure.

2.1.1 Act on the Rights of Minorities

Hungary was the first country in the Central and Eastern European region to introduce comprehensive legal protections of minority rights. The aforementioned *Minorities Act* of 1993 represents a major step with respect to promoting the interests of ethnic and national minority groups. Importantly, it confers public rights to minority organisations, especially regarding the establishment of educational and cultural institutions; prescribes the development of a network of minority self-governments; includes provisions related to educational rights; and determines the creation of the institution of a Parliamentary Commissioner (or Ombudsman) of minority rights (to be discussed). As for the Roma minority, its status as an ethnic minority became recognised for the first time in this act. Thus, Roma came to share both the individual rights and the opportunities of collective self-organisation provided by the legislation on minorities.

However, some of the merits of this legislation have remained mainly symbolic, especially from the point of view of the Roma population. In practical terms, the act disregards the peculiar situation

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59 Since the regime change the issue of Hungarian minorities living in neighbouring countries has represented a characteristic political concern, used and abused in national politics.

60 Act No. LXXVII of 1993 on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities.

and specific needs of the Roma that are dissimilar compared to those of the other minorities subject to the legislation:[61] it is concerned merely with the protection of language and culture, leaving the acute problems (social deprivation, discrimination, racial persecution) of Roma unacknowledged. The crucial problem to be solved is that of political participation, keeping the issue of parliamentary representation continuously on the agenda. It has been repeatedly proposed that seats for minority candidates should be reserved in the national Parliament (Kállai 2008). This idea has become the subject of impatient demands when it turned out that the public rights conferred to minority self-governments actually worth nothing in political terms (Szalai 2000b, 569). Strictly speaking, claims to introduce this measure are legitimate since the Minorities Act does include such a provision.[62] Thus, with the adoption of the act, the duty of the government in securing the appropriate political representation of minorities became an absolute urgency. However, there is considerable controversy around this specific solution that is seen to be contradicting to the principles of proceduralism and suspicious for reifying ethnicity. The opponents of the idea of reserved parliamentary seats claim that – being incompatible with the principle of democratic representation – this institution would undermine the entire structure of the democratic state. Moreover, this kind of positive discrimination is expected to reinforce the ethnic divide of the population without securing legitimate and effective representation for minorities.

While the issue of the parliamentary representation of minorities remains undecided, there have been significant improvements regarding the most critical deficiency of the act concerning political representation. Until recently, Hungarian citizens having the right to vote could cast their ballot to elect the representatives of minorities. In this way, the outcome of minority elections was effectively determined by the majority population on the basis of sympathy as well as local interests, asserted by means of "ethno-business" (Halász and Majtényi 2003; Rátkai 2003). With the modification of the legislation on minority rights in 2005,[63] the legitimacy of minority self-governments has been finally secured by the introduction of registers of voters. Today those who want to participate in minority elections must openly declare their ethnicity in front of the local notary. This significant political victory is owing to the persistent advocacy work of civil organisations and experts in eliminating the abusive elements of the system.

2.1.2 Minority Self-governments

Established in 1994 to implement the relevant provisions of the Minorities Act, the system of *minority self-governments* has been long seen both as an important step towards autonomy and political participation and as a missed opportunity, representing the subject of heated debates ever since its conception (Szalai 2000; Kállai 2005). These controversies, involving Roma civil leaders as well as outsider experts, evolve around the issues of representativity, legitimacy and power.

Criticism was launched first against the unfair rules of election that resulted in a distorted representation of minorities up until the latest elections of minority candidates in 2007. The resolution of the legitimacy issue, provided by the modification of the Minorities Act in 2005, is a major step forward, yet it does not settle all problems – not even those concerning legitimacy.[64] While it is too early to assess its impacts,

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61   The list of national and ethnic minorities mentioned in the Minorities Act include, besides the Roma, the German, Romanian, Slovakian, Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Bulgarian, Greek, Polish, Armenian, Ukrainian and Rutherian minorities.

62   This provision, as pointed out by critics, is not appropriately elaborated or contextualized (Szalai 2000b).

63   Act No. CXIV of 2005 on the election of representatives of minority self-governments and on the modification of specific legislation concerning national and ethnic minorities.

64   First of all, the entire system favours candidates who are ready to make compromises with power-holders of the majority society. Another problem is rooted in the electoral system: while local representatives are elected directly by the inhabitants, the members of national bodies are selected by electoral votes. Given the winner-takes-all system (as opposed to proportional representation), the legitimacy problem recurs at the national level. In 2002, for instance, none of the Roma parties managed to obtain sufficient support to form the national body, which raised attention to a structural deficiency of the minority self-government system. Nevertheless, the "scandal" was represented in the national media as a specifically

we do know that, in spite of worries that the obligation to register beforehand would restrain inclinations to vote, the turnout at the latest elections was exceptionally high, and the outcome was particularly favourable for the Roma minority. Thus, Roma were able to form the greatest number of regional self-governing bodies, ascertaining representation of Roma in every county, and to delegate more representatives to the national body (the National Roma Self-government) than any other minorities. This indicates that minority organisations were successful in *mobilis*ing the members of their communities, and that Roma people consider the minority self-government system an important means of interest representation.[65]

Secondly, the network of minority self-governments was originally designed with the intention to enhance the protection of culture and to perpetuate minority traditions and languages. It secures minorities only a marginal opportunity to contribute to national politics. Regional bodies may interpose veto in 'affairs concerning minorities,'[66] while national bodies have only consultative powers. Other than that, minority representations are not invested with political rights and may not participate in decision-making processes, including matters concerning redistribution. As for those belonging to the Roma minority, their particular problems (as regards poverty, social exclusion, or the protection of human rights and dignity) are not addressed at all in this framework. Thus, although forming a subject of public rights and representing the main structure of interest promotion – which, as it is often claimed, has displaced and debilitated already existing civil organisations composing the Roma public sphere – minority self-governments lack in any real powers, being thus unable to contribute to collective deliberations or to defend the Roma minority against unlawful actions.[67]

Thirdly, their unique situation makes Roma less able to effectively utilize even the existing opportunities. In contrast to more established national minorities the members of which have a higher socio-economic status in general – not only in comparison with the Roma but also with the general population[68] – Roma actors have little chance to generate the necessary funds for educational and cultural investments – though this would be essential given the rather meagre financing of minority self-governments from the central budget.[69] Besides, due to their generally lower educational level, Roma representatives are not well-equipped to fulfil their tasks or to elaborate long-term strategies. At the same time, the extra duties (not specified in the law) Roma minority self-governments are forced to undertake because of the general helplessness of this population (assisting local Roma in obtaining their due benefits, protecting them against discrimination, segregation and racism), drain their existing financial and human resources. The lack of clarity about the scope of action and the lack of secure funding – as in-built structural deficiencies – result in financial dependence from, and frequent collisions with, 'majority' local self-governments. This makes the actual implementation of the relevant provisions of the Minorities Act contingent on continuous negotiations, and forces Roma self-governments to make use of the awkward elasticity of its formulations in trying to better serve their communities.

Roma affair. Elections of the National Roma Self-Government are generally accompanied by great publicity, and the media notoriously describes these often conflict-laden events as the manifestations of natural inclinations of quarrelsome and restless Roma.

65 Opinions expressed by Orbán Kolompár, head of the National Roma Self-Government, and Antal Heizler, head of the Bureau of National and Ethnic Minorities (Népszabadság March 5 and 6, 2006; Népszava March 6, 2006; Communications of the Bureau of National and Ethnic Minorities issued on 17 July, 2006).

66 What 'affairs concerning minorities' actually stand for is not specified in the act. In practise, the opinion of minority representatives is solicited, for instance, in case the national educational curricula is to be modified.

67 Minority self-governments are not invested with more rights than any civil persons. All these organisations (only local ones) can do is submitting a complaint to state bodies in any matters concerning the local Roma population. What is more, the Act specifies international law as the only field of action in cases involving discrimination (Szalai 2000b, p. 565.). This legal context has changed with the introduction of the Act on Equal Treatment in 2003.

68 cf. Szalai 2000b, p. 546.

69 The public funds received by local bodies barely cover their maintenance costs.

Thus, as a matter of fact, the system of minority self-governments warrants neither meaningful political participation, nor the effective protection and promotion of identity and culture for the Roma. This latter aim is often claimed to be of secondary importance in the case of Roma. Such problems make the system appear not only ineffective but also detrimental for diverging and dissipating the (already meagre) political power of Roma as well as for consolidating inappropriate patterns of organisation. Yet, when viewed as contributing to a form of 'politics of recognition', its personal/identity-related and collective/political stakes are revealed.[70]

2.1.3 The Ombudsman of Minority Rights

The constitutional protection of minority rights is supervised by a relatively recent democratic institution: the *Parliamentary Commissioner of the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities* (or Ombudsman of minority rights). When this office was established in 1995, the problems it had to deal with and its scope of action were unclear.[71] The legal bases of its operations were provided by the Minorities Act, which, however, left too much space for interpretations and disputes. This situation compelled the staff to first create the profile of the institution. As a result, the group of classical minority rights, manifested in concrete issues, was formed to include affairs related to minority self-governments, language use and the education of minorities. In the meantime, the main legislative initiatives of the office, concerning the system of elections and parliamentary representation, were also formulated. An important duty undertaken by the Ombudsman's office is mediating between plaintiffs and authorities or public services in conflict situations. Besides the management of individual affairs, the institution may start comprehensive investigations regarding problematic issues in order to formulate general statements and recommendations, thereby contributing to legislative processes.[72] The need to respond to violations of rights concerning human dignity, personal safety or political participation implied the extension of the scope and, therefore, the legal bases of the Ombudsman's activity. Thus, the institution became an important actor in developing the framework of the legal prohibition of discrimination, culminating in a comprehensive draft legislation in 2000 that introduced the principles of relevant EU-directives. Although the draft was dismissed then by legislators, the Ombudsman's contribution in this field, leading to the 2003 adoption of the Act on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities, is undeniable.[73]

Since the issues concerning the Roma minority spill over the category of classical minority rights, and the Minorities Act obviously fails to address many of the problems faced by the Roma population, the institution of the Ombudsman is of great import in filling this gap. However, its advocacy function can not be performed in a satisfactory manner lacking the support of civil movements and appropriate legal instruments. Thus, in its lonely mission, the Ombudsman must make the best use of his political skills. Jeno Kaltanbach, the person who previously fulfilled this office from 1995 to 2007, was successful in creating and maintaining a balance between official bodies and minority groups. Nevertheless, the issues of minorities were being treated unfairly by those in power, pushed to the background of national politics. Therefore, Kaltenbach's successor, Erno Kállai, is determined to restructure the office of the Ombudsman, giving new impetus to the accomplishment of its most pressing tasks. In contrast to his predecessor who adopted a moderate judiciary role, Kállai conceives of himself as a more rebellious defender of rights.[74]

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70 Cf. Szalai's analysis of the system of minority self-governments in this theoretical framework (Szalai 2000b).

71 Cf. Kállai 2008. The following discussion of the activities of the Ombudsman of Minorities is based on this analysis, provided by the person presently holding this office.

72 These investigations have mainly covered cases of educational and residential segregation.

73 On the anti-discrimination legislation see next section (2.1.4).

74 The programme of the present Ombudsman includes: extension of the validity of anti-discrimination legislation and of the scope of the Ombudsman's authority in a determination to effectively address widespread discrimination in the private sphere; establishment of close contacts with minority communities and becoming a fervent spokesperson of their members; promotion of the issue of the parliamentary representation of minorities; adoption of a new kind of communications strategy

2.1.4 Anti-discrimination Legislation

The compound legislation prohibiting discrimination and promoting equal opportunities[75] was born as a result of legal harmonization, i.e. the process of adopting European standards in legislation, as set by the requirements of accession to the European Union. The *Equal Treatment Act* stands today as the most important tool of anti-discrimination efforts, complementing and reinforcing previous legislation, in particular the relevant clauses of the Constitution, the modified labour law and the modified Act on Education. The act also provides for the establishment of an independent body supervising compliance with the law: the *Equal Treatment Authority,* that started its operations (with significant delay) in 2005, is a public administration body investigating individual cases mainly at request and, to a lesser extent, on its own initiative. In case it ascertains that the incidence in question involves discrimination, it can order the elimination of the unlawful condition, and is also authorized to enforce sanctions (by imposing fines). The work of the Authority is assisted by a network of local offices, created by the government, to record and forward individual complaints to be judged.[76]

Besides difficulties of implementation, the Equal Treatment Act has several conceptual weaknesses, and therefore the issue of the legal prohibition of discrimination is kept on the agenda by civil actors as well as some public officials. First of all, the current legislation focuses on public institutions, regulating only particular legal relations in the private sphere. Consequently, the Equal Treatment Authority has limited power to start proceedings in cases involving private enterprises, even though presently these represent a highly critical field in terms of discriminatory practises (Kállai 2008). As a result, in the private sphere, the enforcement of the anti-discrimination principle largely depends on the skilful use of indirect legal means.[77] Another conspicuous problem regards the fact that the act does not recognise educational segregation as a form of discrimination, and therefore the Authority is virtually incompetent regarding such incidents. A further issue often raised is that, as against to what is suggested in its title, the act is primarily concerned with anti-discrimination and pays relatively little attention to the promotion of equal opportunities. Only public institutions are obliged to design 'equal opportunities plans'. Ideas related to positive discrimination and the introduction of affirmative (or positive) actions are encountered by a great deal of reservation by society, and thus – in the absence of external pressures[78] – this alternative of resolving systematic disadvantages suffered by discriminated minorities gets easily dropped. Critics also complain about the 'piecemeal' character of the legislation that brings different kinds of problems together as it is designed to protect and support women and the disabled as well as the Roma population. It is often claimed that treating various forms of discrimination together is harmful and ineffective: as the underlying causes of discrimination – and, therefore, its nature – are different in the three cases, the application of a unified framework, in disregarding specific circumstances, only neutralizes the problem. As a result, those in charge of the implementation of anti-discrimination policies get virtually exempted form any responsibility (Neményi 2005).

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in order to cease the isolation of the Ombudsman's office and make it known to the wider public; support of large-scale scientific research to help the Ombudsman's work.

75 Act No. CXXV. of 2003 on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities.

76 The National Network of Equal Opportunities is often deemed ineffective. As a matter of fact, the uncovering of incidents involving discrimination is generally very difficult since victims, as a rule, do not seek legal remedies: they are either ignorant about them, reluctant to expose their problem in public, or do not even realize that they have suffered unlawful treatment. Acknowledging these difficulties, some civil actors have lately assumed an active role in resolving this deadlock and promoting the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation (see section 2.3 on civil movements and initiatives).

77 The previous Ombudsman of minority rights, Jen Kaltenbach, attempted to control the private sphere by scrutinizing responsible public institutions (Kállai 2008).

78 Positive discrimination is considered a possibility in levelling social differences by the EU, however, it has not become a strong policy requirement.

2.2 The Institutional Structure of Official Roma Politics

The development of the institutional framework and the entire career of official Roma politics after the regime change are characterized by *ad hoc* decisions and political negotiations determined by particular interests. The mismanagement of the serious problems of unemployment and under-education has ultimately led to the institutional segregation of the Roma, paradoxically urging the introduction of a Roma-specific system of support according to a growing number of critics. (Wizner 2005, SAO 2008, Varró 2008)

In democratic Hungary, there have been altogether six ministries and governmental offices responsible for the management of Roma affairs, and four organisations dealing with coordination (Appendix 9). Shortly after the political change, the *Bureau of National and Ethnic Minorities* (BNEM) was established in 1990 as the main government body to deal with minority issues, while the financing of minority inititives became the task of public foundations.[79] The most important duties of BNEM included: outlining the theoretic approach to minority issues; preparing government decisions related to minority politics; coordinating these policies; and liaising with the representatives of minorities. From the mid-1990s, it had a major role in developing and coordinating short and medium term programmes concerning the Roma population. The office had a convulsive career: first subordinated to the Office of the Prime Minister, and later to the Ministry of Justice, it went through several administrative restructurings and name changes until it ceased functioning in 2007.[80]

Thus BNEM had primarily a coordinating role in the implementation of policies, which it could not fulfil in reality because of its lack of powers.[81] Moreover, the intermingling of the ethnic and social aspects of the Roma issue, determining policies since the 1995 adoption of the first government resolution[82] related to the improvement of the situation of the Roma minority, imposed extra burdens on the office in terms of coordination. It was not until 2004 that the separation of policy-making and coordinating functions ended, and both roles became undertaken by the same government body: the *Directorate of Roma Affairs*. This body was invested with significant authority and a considerable budget to effectively influence political decisions.[83] The head of the office, Viktória Mohácsi (later EP representative of the liberal party, Alliance of Free Democrats) as ministerial commissioner, launched an intensive integration campaign to eliminate discrimination and foster the equalality of opportunities in primary education.

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79 The Public Foundation for National and Ethnic Minorities of Hungary, created in 1995, distributed funds among civil organisations active in promoting identity and culture, while the Public Foundation for Roma in Hungary was created in 1996 to support livelihood and foster (in 80-90% agricultural) productivity as well as the educational attainment of Roma students (by scholarships), in order to reduce the inequality of opportunities.

80 The legal successor of BNEM is the Department of National and Ethnic Minorities, operating within the State Department Responsible for Minority and National Politics, itself subordinated to the Office of the Prime Minister.

81 Other coordinating bodies, like the Coordinating Committee of Roma Affairs established in 1995, were not more successful, either. This Committee was created also to harmonize the activities of different ministries and other state bodies, and develop medium and long term programmes to reduce the inequality of opportunities. Its members included members of responsible ministries, delegates of the National Roma Self-Government, representatives of civil organisations and experts. The Roma Programme Committee, headed by the Prime Minister, was established in 1996 (and later recreated as the Roma Inter-Ministerial Committee). This body had only one meeting during its first year of operation and did not survive beyond the next general elections.

82 The government resolution No. 1125/1995 prescribes the definition of the most urgent tasks of the government and the development of an action plan by ministries with respect to the situation of the Roma minority.

83 The intentions of the social-liberal government to take the Roma issue seriously were reflected – besides legislative innovations like the modification of the Act on Public Education or the adoption of the anti-discrimination legislation – in the creation of other government offices as well. The State Department of Roma Affairs, established in 2003 and operating under the minister without portfolio of equal opportunities, was first headed by a Roma politician (László Teleki). The responsiblilities of the department include the development of medium-term programmes and action plans as part of the politics of equal treatment and equal opportunities. The Prime Minister also appointed a personal consultant of Roma affairs in the person of a respected Roma politician and civil activist (Aladár Horváth).

In spite of these achievements, Roma politics is still dominated by a host of loosely connected offices with unclear responsibilities and untraceable activities. Due to this disorganisation and disunity, even good-intentioned legislative and policy initiatives tend to fall short of producing valuable results, and often lead to awkward outcomes that only aggravate the situation. Thus the overall evaluation of official Roma politics is rather negative, which is due, to a large extent, to the deficiencies of institutional design that prevent the effective coordination of policies.[84] The framework of minority politics has been developed under external pressure (represented by the European Union), without a real understanding and acknowledgment of the problems to deal with. The survival of institutions, in turn, is largely conditioned by national power relations and political manoeuvres. The representations of minority communities, and in particular their self-governments, have only formal rights to influence policy-making. As a result, official minority politics is often criticized for being concerned merely with appearances, and characterized as a kind of 'politics on display'. The way out from this thwarting situation is conceivable only by fostering collective deliberation with the participation of minorities, implying their political empowerment and the creation of the conditions of social dialogue.

2.3 Civil Movements and Initiatives

The self-representing ability of the Roma minority as an *ethnic* group has acquired critical importance not only due to the complex transformation of the power structure (i.e. the challenges posed by democratic transition and multiculturalism in the contemporary sense) but also because of the intensifying grievances suffered by the Roma on grounds of their ethnicity.[85] Therefore, whether or not the Roma minority forms a single ethnic or national group in the ethnographic sense, it is compelled to promote its interests as such.[86] This gives way to a kind of 'politics of recognition' that seeks to empower the community by creating the bases of claims for social respect (especially of cultural achievements) and political participation (by developing a competent and committed Roma elite that enjoys the support of the Roma community).

The first significant step in this direction was represented by the formation of a collective 'Roma' identity shortly after 1989, encompassing the plurality of Gypsy cultures and identities.[87] The mere fact that this collective denomination has been adopted by many or most Gypsies who make their voice heard in the public sphere, suggests the potential of this social group to enter into negotiations for the sake of obtaining and exercising political power. Gypsy ethnicity has been imagined, by outsiders, with reference to romanticizing and at the same time degrading notions, including the view of Gypsies

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84 See section 4.2 on the strands of policies and the evaluation of results.

85 Many of the points in this section are drawn from a study on the contemporary trends of Roma politics (Vajda 2005).

86 It has been already pointed out that the Roma population of Hungary is classified into three main subgroups (the Romungro, the Vlach Roma and the Boyash), distinguished by ethno-cultural characteristics, language use, and prior history (the route of migration and the time of arrival in Hungary). Yet even this classification system is too robust to grasp the plurality of identities, resulting from the deterioration of historical Roma communities as well as the situational, transitional and hybrid characteristics of contemporary ethnic identification, especially of marginalized people. In the face of fragmentation, a kind of 'unorthodox' nationalism or supra-nationalism has started to develop among the Roma in the early 1990s, both in the national and the international arena. This phenomenon is scarcely discussed in scholarly literature (Csongor and Szuhay 1992; Vajda 2005).

87 The reason why I use 'Gypsy' here is to indicate that, in spite of the negative connotations conveyed by this term, not all Gypsies were and are ready to call themselves 'Roma'. This latter term (meaning 'man' in Romani) was originally used only by Vlach Roma (many of whom still speak Romani) in referring to themselves. The replacement of 'Gypsy' by 'Roma' should therefore be regarded as the result of negotiations whereby a collective political Roma identity is adopted by more and more Gypsy people. The fact that Roma is increasingly recognised as the politically more correct term is also reflected in official usage. However, most recently the denomination 'Gypsy' has gained grounds again, as a result of both the spread of self-consciously anti-PC discourse and the acknowledgment by some leading Roma public figures (like Jen Zsigó) of the fact that social distinctions and their consequences impact the members of this disadvantaged social group as "Gypsies". The implication in both cases is that renaming this minority does not drive us any closer to solving its problems.

as an essentially archaic people, unable to live up to the standards dictated by modernity (and therefore insignificant and negligible as political actors). In contrast, self-identification as Roma should be regarded as the manifestation of an (emerging) *political identity*, constructed from within the Roma community in order to respond to contemporary challenges, and standing, in itself, for a claim to be recognised as equal partners. In the present political context, still determined by the presence of nation states besides supra-national organisations like the European Union, Roma identity expresses some kind of pseudo-nationalistic sentiment as well. This kind of nationalism though allows for multiple loyalties (i.e. also attachment to home countries and nations) and international or regional coalition building (particularly among Roma organisations). The construction of Roma nationalism is modelled on traditional patterns of nation building, however, the resulting 'imagined community' does not involve any political claims derived from a strictly speaking nationalistic agenda. Therefore, this phenomenon should be regarded as an essentially cultural product, contributing indirectly to Roma identity politics.

The Roma still do not represent a well-organised and politically potent community: there are few competent and committed persons suitable for leadership, and their relations with the people they are supposed to be representing are rather tenuous. The formation of a Roma middle class is an extremely slow process, and thus the few Roma people who manage better than the rest of the community and gain prominence usually loose their original ties. Nevertheless, there have been important improvements in this regard, leading to the formation of a Roma civil rights movement. The history of this movement goes back to the anti-ghetto civil demonstrations of the 1980s, in which Roma and non-Roma activists were fighting side by side. With the establishment of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation by Aladár Horváth and a network of local agencies across the country in the 2000s, the civil rights movement has gained new impetus. More recently, the collaboration and unified interest promotion of Roma civil actors are concentrated in the Roma Directing and Monitoring Committee that, as part of the Roma Integration Council, has been established in order to control government actions carried out within the framework of the inter-governmental programme Decade of Roma Integration (2005-2015).[88] The current aims of Roma civil activity include the elimination of discrimination in the fields of education, employment, housing, and access to public services.

As for the cultural initiatives of Roma since 1989, these have been mainly concerned with reinforcing Roma ethnic identity and enhancing its social recognition, the inter-cultural education of Roma and non-Roma populations and, last but not least, promoting the formation of an educated Roma middle class. Some of the main achievements so far include, in the field of education, the Invisible College Romaversitas that provides grants to Roma students proving outstanding performance and the foundation Gandhi high school that offers competitive education for Roma students while also reinforcing their ethnic identity; a developing Roma media including several cultural and political periodicals (like *Amaro Drom* or the already ceased *Cigányfúró* [Gypsy Drill]), the Roma Press Center providing coverage of Roma-related issues in mainstream media, a radio station (Radio C) and a couple of television magazines and radio programmes; an increasingly renown mass of artwork (pertaining to music, literature and theatre) that has reached majority audiences as well; research projects and the establishment of cultural institutions to collect, publish and interpret Roma cultural products (including galleries, research enterprises, collections of folk tales, ethnographic and historical studies, etc.). The list of enterprises and institutions never actually realized or operating in adverse circumstances because of the lack of (promised) resources would be equally long, suggesting that Roma cultural initiatives are still marginalized and unstable (Neményi 2005).

Sympathetic non-Roma experts are also active in promoting Roma interests. Distinguished areas of their contributions include: legal defense (especially by the Office of Protecting the Rights of Nationalities and Minorities), the promotion of autonomy and private economic enterprises (Autonomy Foundation), anti-racist campaigns (e.g. Programme R) and scientific research (primarily at the Institute of Research of Ethnic and National Minorities and the Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy

88 See more on the Decade of Roma Integration in section 4.2.4.

of Sciences). Moreover, some very influential initiatives enriching the Roma media have also been started and managed by non-Roma experts (Radio C, Roma Press Center), who stepped down after a while so as to avoid legitimacy problems and the danger of paternalism.

As a result of new opportunities opened up by the regime change and utilized by the Roma civil movement, particularly regarding its achievements in the fields of culture and education, a professionally well-prepared group of intellectuals has started to arise, claiming the political right to influence legislation and policy-making. The potentials of this developing Roma elite were proved already in the early 1990s, during the discussions of the draft legislation on minority rights that led to the creation of the so-called 'Round-table of Minorities' with the participation of Roma civil actors. Although representing only a small minority within the Roma population at present, it is becoming increasingly difficult to exclude this elite from decision-making processes (Kállai 2008).

3. Issues of Ethnicity in the Context of the Welfare State

3.1 Welfare rights and social justice

Until the system change Hungary was characterized by nationalized economy with an extensive social policy system and full employment. Practically, all families had a share in some kind of state expenditures (besides the general subsidizing of prices), meanwhile about 70 percent of families had some kind of market income. After the system change, property relations transformed radically, while the degree of state redistribution remained almost as high as before. In 2005, about a quarter of the income of an average household came from employment, another quarter from market activity, and *about half of all income* derived from welfare redistribution (Szalai 2007, 151). The rate of welfare benefits was more than 21 percent even in the case of households pertaining to the top 10 percent in terms of income, that is, twice as much as in 1992. This index, in itself, shows the most important tendency of the restructuring of welfare expenditures: the rate of subsidies proportional to (former) wages is very high (and constantly growing). Meanwhile, the rates of budgetary subsidies received by families and of unemployment benefits decreased to six percent (2004). The significance of municipal aids increased so that these amounted to more than 10 percent of the entire welfare expenditure in 2004 (Szalai 2007, 142).

With the unfolding of market economy, not only incomes but also employment opportunities became differentiated: the number of jobs decreased by 25 percent. Exclusion from the employment market especially affected Roma. While the level of Roma male employment approached that of the general population during the 1970s (85 percent of Roma men in the active age had employment), a few years after the system change (in 1993) this rate was only about 28 percent (Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004, 101.).[89]

It would be an understatement to say that social policies could not really handle the social disaster of Roma. It is often argued that the system of social policies, in itself, is part of the problem. That is to say, some of its tools are not only unhelpful in lessening poverty and discrimination, but they also contribute to maintaining and reproducing detrimental mechanisms.

3.2 The Problem of Targeting

One of the symptoms of dysfunction in the social policy system is manifested in the difficulty of 'catching' the Roma. The problems concerning the definition of Roma for the purposes of scientific study has been

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89 For more data see section 1.2 on the socio-economic status of Roma.

discussed above.[90] As we have seen, some researchers employ the ascriptive definition – that is, consider those people Roma who are regarded as such by their non-Roma environment. This definition contains racial elements, however, *precisely because of this,* it may be relevant for social scientists studying racially excluded and marginalized people.

At the same time, *for the very same reason,* the actors of social policy may *not* use this definition. Considering merely the human rights aspects of the problem of approach and its implications on personal dignity, self-identification emerges as the only possible means to define the targets of policies. However, in this case (1) a significant number of 'ascription Roma' will remain unreachable and/or (2) some non-Roma may identify themselves as Roma when this suits their interest.[91]

> *An example to illustrate the difficulties of definition/targeting*: in the greater part of the last 18 years, the communication of the Ministry of Education has emphasised the desegregation specifically to support the participation of Roma children in the public school system. However, the current text of the Public Education Act mentions 'Roma' only once, 'Gypsy' also once, while 29 times it uses the expression 'multiply disadvantaged' in referring to the target group of related policies. The occurrence of these terms in the last modification of the Act made in 2007 is even more indicative of misleading terminology (0-0-19).

3.3 Welfare Provisions and Inequalities

It seems useful to draft a spectrum of welfare provisions on the basis of targeting: universal social expenditures are located at one end, while subsidies expressly meant for Roma are found at the other end of the scale. Provisions on the basis of social needs, as we will see below, are located in between: Roma are overrepresented among beneficiaries, but often underrepresented among those entitled for benefits.

3.3.1 Universal welfare provisions

The rate of universal welfare provisions have been continuously decreasing during the last one and a half decades. This tendency is, in itself, disadvantageous to the Roma, which implies institutionalized discrimination even though the deliberate relationship between the two phenomena cannot be proved. Nevertheless, in some cases there are traces of direct discrimination as well.

> A good example of this is the case of *family allowance*. This kind of provision used to be due to all children until, in 1995, the socialist-liberal government took it away from families pertaining to the highest income levels. In response, the right-wing opposition of that time invested this measure with ideological significance, presenting it as the symbol of the insensibility of the political left and the liberals towards national interests.
>
> When this right-wing opposition became the governing party ruling the country between 1998 and 2002, it immediately reintroduced family allowance as a universal provision. The official argument stated that it was the symbol of the government's pronatalist commitment since increasing the birth rate is a 'national priority'. However, (1) the Roma were not applauded in this campaign,

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90 See section 1.4.

91 The election of the Roma minority self-government in Jászladány in 2002 proved that this was not only a theoretic possibility. The report of the Ombudsman of minority rights stated that the new election rules, in force since 2006, cannot eliminate the possibility of such abuses.

although their 'achievement' in terms of childbirth is the highest in contemporary Hungary[92]; (2) the absolute value of family allowance remained the same, while its purchasing power significantly decreased during this governmental cycle; and (3) the right-wing government had many family-supporting provisions built into the tax system, thereby making them accessible only for middle and high income social groups. The government did not make too much effort to provide reasons for these arrangements. However, some right-wing politicians occasionally appealed to some kind of 'soft social Darwinism', saying that "families that are able to bring children up 'normally' should be entitled to benefits."

The leftist-liberal government that came to power again in 2002 cancelled tax allowances and raised the amount of family allowance. However, it did not touch the regulations concerning non-specific entitlement.

3.3.2 Provisions on the Basis of Social Needs

In defining its target group by socio-economic characteristics as people in "multiply disadvantaged situation" (MDS), the system of social policies includes the majority of Roma (see appendix 6 on the income relations of Roma). However, there are a lot of non-Roma poor classified in the MDS category whose support is obviously an absolutely legitimate policy goal. At the same time, (1) in every socio-economic category Roma in general are poorer than non-Roma in the same category; and (2) Roma are struck by prejudice and discrimination, whether or not they are poor.

One of the typical examples for this kind of provisions is represented by governmental employment programmes. Related projects, *in theory,* claim to assist the unemployed in reintegrating into the labour market. However, *in practise,* these projects provide help in the form of minimal and temporary provisions to participants.

In 2001, employment projects designed specifically for Roma were estimated to have reached about 5,000-6000 persons. Meanwhile, more than 15,000-20,000 Roma participated in non-specific programmes. In other words, these programmes reached one third of registered Roma unemployed (Lukács 2005, 116). In the same year, 17.2 percent of registered unemployed, while only 12.5 percent of the participants of employment projects were Roma (ibid, 112-116). In addition, Roma are very likely to be overrepresented among the non-registered unemployed as well.

The most depressing fact with respect to employment projects concerns their inefficiency. In 1993, 22 percent of Roma between the ages of 15 and 74 were unemployed. In 2003, this rate was 21 percent (Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004).

3.3.3 Municipal Aids

As mentioned above, Roma are usually poorer even when compared with non-Roma belonging to the same socio-economic category. We might add that not only they are poorer, but also more in need of municipal aids.

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92 See chapter 1 for demographic data.

Table 1: Income Structure of Households Belonging to the Bottom 10% of Society in Terms of Income 2005 (%)					
	Incomes from				Municipal aids
	employment	market activity	social security	budget	
Roma households (bottom 10%)	7.8	20	29.3	18.1	24.8
Non-Roma households (bottom 10%)	18.9	26.7	29.5	14.1	10.8

Source: Szalai 2007, 151

Classifying municipal aids is problematic in a rigorous taxonomic sense: in theory, this is the most targeted provision since the clerks of local governments 'know the local situation well' and "maintain regular contact with their clients'. Theoretically, this newly emerged 'aid industry' (a term coined by Júlia Szalai) could correct the disadvantages arising from being Roma. In practise, however, one may discern the patterns of institutionalized discrimination in its operations:

- though Roma families lived on significantly less income than non-Roma ones, they received significantly less support (Szalai, 2007, 178.);
- diverging rules hold for Roma and non-Roma: in the case of non-Roma, the more children, the more support by capita; in the case of Roma, the more children, the less support by capita;
- requests for aid by Roma were significantly more often rejected than in the case of non-Roma; furthermore, the more children in the family, the greater prospect it had for rejection (Szalai 2007, 178). In addition, Roma were more often persuaded by the clerk that there were no ways to apply for support. The official argument for rejections made reference to "the financial situation of the local government," in the 49 percent of cases involving the rejection of Roma, while this rate was only 21 percent in the case of non-Roma poor people (ibid., 197.).

As the employees of local governments deciding about municipal aids are predominantly non-Roma, it can be assumed that they are not free from the prejudiced attitudes characterizing the non-Roma majority population. Nevertheless, the main reason of institutionalized discrimination lies in a specific feature of the 'aids industry' that appreciates *the display* of the neediness as well as 'worthiness' of applicants. Display does not altogether mean the same as the mere fact of neediness or worthiness. Meanwhile, an investigation proved that the most important factor in the decision-making process regarding aids is the intensity of connection between clerks and clients (see Table 2). Even without evidence one may conclude that Roma people are disadvantaged in this 'display-race'.

Table 2: Effect of the Intensity of the Connection between Clerks and Clients (i.e. the frequency of personal meetings) on the Amount of Given Support in a District of Budapest, 2002				
	1–4 times/year	5–12 times/year	13–24 times/year	>25 times/year
average aid for a month per capita (HUF)	535	1,829	3,472	5,330
average aid for a month (HUF)	1,684	6,139	11,917	18,295
average incomes per capita before aiding (HUF)	10,254	10,549	10,596	11,464
Source: Szalai 2005, 82.				

3.3.4 Targeted Roma programmes

Designing targeted provisions for Roma involves struggling with similar dilemmas to what has been described above in connection with the definition-problem: beneficiaries must declare themselves Roma but it is very likely that not all 'Roma' would do this. These programmes, however, could work in tandem with similar programmes for MDS people (for examples see the Education Report).

Growing residential segregation also provides a 'solution' to some of these problems: in ghettoized villages, districts, or regions the largest part of provisions necessarily go to Roma. (At least formal logic dictates this conclusion, though the practical 'logic' of Hungarian reality is not in full accordance with this presumption.)

(1) There are always non-Roma, though not in the area populated by Roma but in its immediate neighbourhood, who are not negligible for practical or policy reasons ("prioritising Roma may generate new tensions," as politicians like to put it). These circumstances implicate the possibility that Roma will be underrepresented among beneficiaries, which may just as well become a source of new tensions. Thus, on this basis, the stated objective of programmes may easily dissolve.

> According to the bulletin of the project, the coordinators of the 'Social integration and habitability model programme for the residents of Roma settlements' explicitly warned concerned people that *not only the Roma residents* of the participating villages will be affected. Thus all the inhabitants of the 9 villages (4,500 people) benefited from the investments of the programme. This means that in average 151,000 HUF per capita (about 640 Euro) was spent for 'development of habitability' during the one and a half years of the programme. According to a report, in certain places "the sums received for the elimination of colonies are called 'fence-money', referring to the fact that the majority of people used the money to build fences, and sometimes they even managed to spare some of it so as to repaint their houses (Varró 2008).

(2) The disadvantages of Roma form a complex system in which the effects of poverty, under-education, underemployment, prejudice and discrimination are mutually reinforcing one another. The elimination of under-education is unimaginable without the elimination of poverty, while the elimination of underemployment is unfeasible without the elimination of under-education, and the elimination of poverty presumes the elimination of underemployment. Any real progress in these domains is impossible without diminishing discrimination; however, without such progress, discrimination can not be diminished. In addition, residential segregation makes all these problems especially grave and difficult to solve.

There might be brilliant solutions to break these 'vicious circles' up. However, so far, none of the experts have come forward with such creative ideas. Such a comprehensive undertaking quite probably necessitates, first of all, a broad consensus: the general acknowledgment of the fact that the social inclusion of masses of Roma living in segregation and deep poverty requires huge investments in terms of time and money. Hungarian society considers itself (partly rightly) deficient in material resources, yet not deficient in human resources, which are also indispensable to accomplish such a task. However, this view is self-cheating: in reality, resources provided by society to promote the integration of Roma are sufficient only for alibi activities on the part of the government.

> The above-mentioned 'Social integration and habitability model programme for the residents of Roma settlements' *probably* (the official account is not always clear) helped 41 families to move into new houses (most likely to flats subsidized by municipalities), financed renovations in 25 cases, and 'provided against life danger' in 23 occasions. Further accomplishments include other kinds of renovations, road constructions, and the building of public utilities.

3.4 The Welfare Functions of Schools

Some of the expenditures inside the educational system have welfare functions as well. "Some people say that we allocate greater part of the GDP for education purposes than in France or Germany. However, in this country, such expenditure includes welfare costs as well involving, for instance, free textbooks or meals…" argued a teacher trade union leader last year (Árok 2007). In fact, these spendings look minimal with view of the entire educational expenditure. In 2004 the cost of free textbooks came to 0.32 percent, and the cost of meal-support came to 1.81 percent of the total municipal and state expenditures related to education (Halász and Lannert 2006, 438-443.).

Stipends form another typical type of educational/welfare expenditure. Scholarships provided by the Public Foundation for Hungarian Roma are reserved for Roma students only. Applicants must declare their Roma identity and prove good former school achievement. The *Útravaló* (Set-up) scholarship programme, targeting disadvantaged students without considering their ethnic background, pays stipends on a monthly basis (although sometimes with striking delays, cf. Bákonyi 2007), as long as students are inside the educational system. This form of support effectively makes some teachers interested as well: students must apply together with a mentor-teacher who receives part of the support. In the school year 2005/2006, the Public Foundation for Hungarian Roma awarded 23,598, and the Set-up scholarship programme awarded 18,757 scholarships (Messing and Molnár, 2008).

4. Inter–ethnic Relations and Conflicts in Light of Public Discourses and Policy–making

4.1 Representation of Inter–ethnic Conflicts in Public Discourse

In Hungary of 2008, semi-military troops *mobilis*ed by the extreme right-wing and openly racist party *Jobbik*, the so-called Hungarian Guards gather in big cities and smaller settlements to demonstrate against 'criminals terrorizing Hungarians'. The webpage of the organisation offers an explanation: "We welcome compatriots trying to find a way out from the pitfall of Gypsy criminality". The organisation intends to participate actively in the support and organisation of social and charity missions as well as in providing against catastrophes, protecting the safety of citizens and supporting national self-defence. The graduation of the first officers, wearing black and white uniform displaying the symbol previously used by the Hungarian fascist party called Arrow Cross at the time of the second World War, took place on the square in front of the office of the President of the Hungarian Republic in August 2007, with the contribution of Lajos Für ex-minister of national defense. Since then, the guards have interfered in several inter-ethnic conflicts involving Roma and held demonstrations on the spot, attended by a significant part of local majority populations, demanding the segregation of Roma to ward off dangers to public order. Roma people sometimes assemble on the other side of the police line that insures the peaceful course of the event (it is unclear whether they are protecting Roma or the demonstrators) and are watching on in silence. According to Ernő Kállai, the Ombudsman of minority rights, the eruption of massive violence is only a matter of time: at some point, Roma will not be able to restrain themselves any longer in the face of continuous provocations and attrocities. Flórián Farkas, president of *Lungo Drom*, a large Roma party allied with *Fidesz*, the major right-wing opposition party in the Parliament, thinks that the dike is burt: Roma ethnic radicalism has already emerged against extreme right radicalism, suggesting that violence breeds violence. Parliamentary Commissioners issued a common statement at the end of 2007 to express their distress caused by the 'intensification of racism in Hungary', followed by the statements of the Prime Minister and other political dignitaries condemning (more or less powerfully) the guardist movement. The position of the conservative opposition party *Fidesz* remains ambiguous concerning the issue, and its leadership is reluctant to distance itself clearly from the guards and the extreme right. At

present, court proceedings are under way against the organisation on grounds that its activities violate the rights and freedoms of other people. The Forum of Hungarian Roma Organisations and its coalition partners, currently leading the National Roma Self-Government, have announced the greatest ever demonstration of Roma organisations to take place on September 20th 2008, in order to show Roma power and the ability of Roma to defend themselves against political extremism.

In considering the antecedents, one finds that it is not so much events but recurrent topics of public discourse that have finally led to the appearance of the guards. To be more precise, the escalation of hate speech, tolerated and even encouraged by legitimate political forces, is the determining factor behind the emergence of open forms of racism. Specific incidents are used by racist organisations to gain validity to certain prejudiced formulations in order to *mobilis*e support, which is seen as coming handy by the political right. Although leftist parties refrain from abusing racism for political purposes, at the level of individual statements both sides are implicated in reinforcing a simplistic and negative view of the Roma population as such.[93] Obviously, the media (especially tabloids and right-wing publications, including an important daily newspaper and a television channel broadcasting mainly news programmes) should also be condemned for communicating false and biased information. Even though contents are scrutinised by a supervisory board (the National Board of Radio and Television) to see if they are conform with the provisions of ethical codes (contained in the Media Act[94]), deficiencies of professional journalism, ignorance, and outright anti-Roma hostility still heavily influence media coverage and responsible for the distorted media image of the Roma population. A part of scientific society involving scholars who fail to adopt the norms of political correctness and the ethical standards of research methodology is to be blamed not only for the spread of prejudiced notions but, indeed, for legitimising these in a scientific cloak. In short, while deeply ingrained and traditionally held stereotypes represent a kind of constant 'infrastructure' of anti-Roma sentiments, it is owing to the active contribution of politics, the media, and even social sciences – complemented by a socio-cultural environment, economic condition and political atmosphere favouring xenophobia and prejudiced thinking – that discriminatory and racist views are kept alive.

4.1.1 The Political Background of Stereotypes

Anti-Roma sentiments in Hungary are maintained and occasionally *mobilis*ed by a limited set of key phrases implying the dehumanization of Roma and suggesting that they are a burden or danger to society. One of the oldest notions of this kind is that of 'Gypsy criminality', i.e. the presumption that Roma have a natural or cultural inclination to aggression and delinquency. This concept has traditionally formed an integral part of the policing approach of the state towards the Roma, and in socialist times the formulation was explicitly employed in criminal investigation. Although the phrase was discarded in official terminology in the early 1990s, the underlying belief still holds in public thinking, incidentally influencing practises of the police as well. The idea of Roma criminality has recently gained vigour and mobilising force, after a misfortunate event,[95] while its persistence also reveals the responsibility of scholars supporting this view.[96]

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93 Here are a few examples to illustrate the prejudiced public statements of politicians: "Due to overpopulation, Roma thrust themselves back both in a material and intellectual sense" (Chief official at the Office of the Prime Minister, 2000) "They have no place among humans, since parasites are outcast even in the animal world." (Mayor of a country town, 2000) "I don't think that maintaining that ethnically based criminality exists means, in itself, discrimination and prejudiced thinking" (MP, 2000). "The grave social problems of the Gypsies are caused primarily by poverty, under-ducation, and often their inherited lifestyle that lacks in any emancipatory intent. (Ambassador in Washington, former Minister of Exterior Affairs, 1999). "Oh my God, they are so numerous! What a shame Hitler did not start it with them" (Deputy Notary of a village).

94 Act I of 1996 on Radio and Television.

95 In October 2006 a Roma girl was hit by a car in Olaszliszka, a small Hungarian village. Although she was not hurt seriously, the enraged family attacked the non-Roma driver, causing his death.

96 This is especially true for Szilveszter Póczik, historian and senior member at the National Institute of Criminology (cf.

The image of Roma as 'parasites' abusing welfare assistance is also an old stereotype. Although the dependence of Roma on welfare is factually true in general, simplistic interpretations of this fact disregard the circumstances leading to this situation as well as the dimensions of the burden the support of Roma means to society: public opinion is generally uninformed about the lack of opportunities suffered by Roma in the fields of employment and education; it often denies the existence of (direct and indirect forms of) discrimination, or even accepts these as a legitimate policy tool; and, finally, it is at a loss as to how to interpret the seemingly huge funds (i.e. estimate their absolute value based on the calculations of lay people) invested in programmes improving the social status of Roma.

Although the system of childcare assistance primarily supports the middle classes, while the majority of Roma children suffer from extreme poverty, the topos of 'bringing up children as a means of subsistence' – i.e. the assumption that the great number of children in 'certain social groups' is motivated by the universally available forms of family assistance – has become a typical element of public discourse and publicityy. Those supporting such views obviously refer to Roma and condemn the phenomenon. Research on prejudice as well as everyday experiences suggests that most people are convinced that Roma take an excessive share from family assistance. (For a deeper analysis of the problem and related data, see subsection 3.3.1.)

Since 2008, a strand of political discourse has been developing at the initiative of certain local self-governments,[97] bringing some deeply rooted anti-Roma prejudices to the surface: a particular version of the topi 'they do not want to work' and 'intend to live from our money'. It was suggested that social benefits should be tied to (communal) work, so that only those 'deserving' it would be eligible for this kind of support. At the same time, the discourse failed to include the scandal around 'soc-pol' housing that burst out in the same region when it was explicitly proven that the officials of local self-governments and their clientele had profited from grants provided on the basis of social neediness (especially to Roma) to build new houses. It is particularly worrisome that the policy initiative of local mayors was received quite favourably by politicians, including the governing party and the Prime Minister himself. As for public opinion, it was also revealed that the question 'whether communal work is a means of integration or a type of social assistance' would be answered by most people like this: 'Neither this, nor that. It is a form of punishment, or a means of surveillance.'

Alongside the (re)emergence of prejudices, other currents of public discourse have led to more substantial discussions about the ills of discrimination, segregation and racism. These debates, unfolding in the liberal media, have also been channelled by a series of scandalous occurrences that provided them with actual contents. (The counterpart of this 'human rights discourse' is represented by manifestations of anti-Roma sentiments surfacing in conservative media that, capitalizing on the same events, accuse Roma and sympathetic advocates for 'betraying the country'.) Such incidents concern primarily educational and residential segregation, indirectly revealing other disadvantages Roma suffer from (regarding employment, health condition, etc.), that is, call attention to their discrimination in general.[98] In the 1990s, scandals widely covered by the local and national media and causing great

Póczik 2003). Social psychological studies on prejudices are also often suspicious. Most recently, a survey conducted by Néz pont Intézet [Viewpoint Institute] at the request of the right-wing magazine Heti Válasz in August 2008 included this issue in the questionnaire, and found that 91% of respondents agreed that "Gypsy criminality" exists, and 77% thought that Roma are exceptionally inclined to criminality. Orbán Kolompár, president of the National Roma Self-Government criticized the manipulative and hostile implications of the inquiry itself, and the National Police Headquarters affirmed that "Gypsy criminality" is unknown in policing practises.

97   Originally, the idea was presented by the mayor of Monok.

98   To name just a few incidents: The evacuation of Roma and their attempted ghettoisation in metal containers at the outskirts of Székesfehérvár in October 1997, followed by demonstrations of local inhabitants, often led by mayors, against Roma trying to move into neighbouring villages and towns; the separate graduation ceremony organised for Roma students in Tiszavasvári in 1997; the "pilgrimage" of the Roma of Zámoly who, recognising that the Hungarian state fails to protect them against discrimination, eventually sought justice in Strasbourg. The prolonged conflict involving the exclusion of Roma students from a private school receiving public funds and using the buildings of the local public school in Jászladány in

fervour faded away soon, without prompting any changes in policies. This situation changed in the early 2000s when the potential of otherwise misfortunate events in provoking meaningful political responses was disclosed. Besides the worsening of the conditions of Roma, which must have been worrisome for national politics, this shift was instigated by personal changes in the government. Importantly, educational segregation became a hot issue and gained 'good PR' at this time.[99] As revealed by surveys on the media coverage of particular episodes concerning inter-ethnic conflicts, the approach of the press has also been transformed: newspaper coverage improved both quantitatively and qualitatively, and so the presentation of incidents has become more balanced.[100] The drafting and introduction of the anti-discrimination legislation and the institutionalization of its principles[101] certainly represent important factors in the background of all these changes, with respect to the improving quality and increasing political potentials of public discourse.

Education is still a leading subject of public discussions. Its appeal arises not so much from solidarity with Roma than from worries that the integration programme collides with majority interests.[102] While this might be true in some sense (but false in connection with other, also frequently emphasized aspects of integration[103]), the other side of the story – namely the role of the education system in the career and fate of Roma people – definitely remains unclear in public opinion. The fuzziness of theoretical and policy constructions shaping scientific and public discourse about educational integration prevents society from really seeing the stakes in this struggle. Although it is apparently not prejudiced, the terminology regularly employed in policy-making nevertheless conveys a distorted image of Roma. Paradoxically, this is largely owing to its enforced colour-blind nature: the formulations in question do not even concern directly the Roma minority, and it is precisely because of their evasive nature that Roma become equated with the poor or the mentally disabled. In addition, references to individuals or groups as people in a 'multiply disadvantaged situation' (MDS), or as students 'needing special education' (NSE) are misleading and ineffective in many policy contexts.[104] In the last analysis, these currently used official terms obliterate causal distinctions, suppressing the fact that discrimination and segregation represent the main sources of problems relating to the educational disadvantages of Roma students. Thus professional terminology may become both a manifestation and a cause of the confusion of the ethnic and social aspects of the 'Roma issue'. In other words, strands of discourse invested with legitimacy by scientific authority or political power are especially prone to function as self-fulfilling

2002-2003 is particularly noteworthy since it directly influenced state policies regarding educational integration. The case of Jászladány is significant, furthermore, because of its complexity: the scandal around the illegitimacy of minority self-governments that used to be easily appropriated by the social majority also burst out here. Jászladány is renowned due to a local Roma leader (formerly the head of the minority self-government), László Kállai as well, who successfully politicized the problems of Roma, skilfully employing the media, liaising with government officials and mobilising the Roma community.

99 See section 4.3 on the prominence of education in policy-making.

100 For analyses of the media coverage of two significant inter-ethnic affairs see Bernáth and Messing 2000; Kende and Kerényi 2000; Messing 2005.

101 See section 2.1.

102 The Hungarian Report on Education discusses the conflict between the right of free choice of school and educational desegregation as well as other factors explaining the reserved or hostile attitude of a significant part of the majority population towards integration programmes in education (see chapters 4.1, 4.2, and 4.4 of the report).

103 A frequent charge laid against integration programmes is that, by favouring the disadvantaged, they actually hinder the development of other students. As against this presumption, as mentioned in section 4.3 of this report, recent educational reforms have actually led to the improvement of educational standards in general, i.e. influenced the performance of both minority and majority students in a positive way.

104 For a discussion of these expert formulations (MDS and NSE) see chapter 3 of this report as well as chapter 4 of the Hungarian Report on Education.

prophecies.[105] This potential of discourse in transforming reality has been recognised by Roma civil actors who reject the underlying hypocrisy of such recent policy terminology, claiming that – just like the euphemisms used in the past, from 'new Hungarians' and 'new peasants' to 'special social group'– it is not just misleading but also stigmatizing.[106]

4.1.2 The Discursive Background of Roma Politics[107]

Roma politics since the regime change is best characterized as representing a backlash caused by the assimilationist politics of state socialism (Szalai 2000a, 2000b). Government approaches to the Roma issue during the past two decades have been framed by a single concept – *integration* – which has become invested with magic powers, especially with the adoption of European norms. However, as it turns out, there is a great deal of uncertainty and confusion regarding both the content of this term[108] and the means conducive to the ideal state it signifies, which is primarily due to the lack of public debates concerning integration policies.[109] Integration, in its actual Hungarian interpretation and related practises, has little to do with multicultural values: as a result of the overlapping of ethnicity and social issues, government policies tend to be reduced to handle social problems, while cultural issues are pushed to the background.[110] In addition, the prevailing notions of cultural diversity are usually distorted, only feeding prejudices and leading to abusive practises and misconceived projects.[111] The formulation of the integration agenda is mainly conditioned on the experiences of social exclusion (educational and residential disadvantages, unemployment, child poverty, etc.), however, it is not governed by comprehensive and consistent strategic thinking.[112] Therefore, its translations into policies are characterized by a great deal of experimentalism and – all too frequently – failures. Ultimate results (stagnation, exclusion, segregation, the reinforcement of the ethnic divide) often turn out to contradict stated aims.

In contrast, the civil initiatives of Roma are driven by some notion of *ethnic separation*, either acknowledged bitterly as a fact, or supported as a political imperative. The experiences of stigmatization, racial discrimination and subordination represent the foundations of the currently organising Roma civil rights movement that may be regarded as a form of identity politics. As opposed to the nationalistic

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105   Fieldwork experiences suggest that when the representatives of institutions talk about "multiply disadvantaged" people, they actually mean 'Roma', which is often made explicit in their responses. (This situation was revealed to me by Ágnes Kende, an expert in the management of European programmes in the field of education who is also conducing fieldwork studies.)

106   Opinion of Jenő Zsigó, the President of Roma Parliament, quoted in Varró 2008.

107   The analysis of current trends in Roma politics presented here is primarily based on Vajda 2005.

108   On the hollowness of 'integration' and the lack of public debates in determining its actual contents cf. Vajda 2005.

109   A telling example of the haphazard nature of policy-making is provided by the approach to educational integration in the 1990s, based on "catch-up" programmes, i.e. forcing low-performing Roma children in specialized classes in order to first eliminate their educational disadvantages. This method turned out to reinforce segregation instead of eliminating it. A more elaborated and systematic approach was introduced only recently, compelling schools to adopt the integration agenda and also making them interested in achieving measurable results. (See chapters 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 of the Hungarian Report on Education for details of the programme.)

110   Cf. Wizner 2005.

111   For instance, in the field of education, ideas about the cultural difference of the Roma population are generally translated as their disinterest in school achievements, or equated with the condition of poverty that prevents better educational performance. Therefore, Roma children easily become labelled as in need of specialized education simply because of their low social status. Roma ethnicity, in general, tends to be understood in a simplified and culturalist sense. This is revealed by projects generating jobs for Roma, which are often devised having traditional Roma occupations in mind. Thus, for instance, trainings are offered in basket-weaving, whether or not there is any demand for such products.

112 This is meant by Jeno Zsigó, the head of Roma Parliament, in claiming that there is no Roma politics developed by the government at all.

trend focusing on cultural specificity, the advocates of human and civil rights emphasize the political aspects of ethnic difference. However, ethnic radicalism has not yet appeared on the scene; ethnic consciousness is becoming an important source of political *mobilis*ation and expression, supporting the empowerment of the Roma who still have confidence in the viability of a moderate political agenda. Just like official Roma politics, the Roma movement also adopts integration as its long-term objective, and strives to realize this goal by its own, more flagrant, means: demonstrations, activism, protests and lobbying. From this perspective, cultural productions serve as a basis of claims for recognition.

4.2 Strands in Policies and Evaluation of Results

In considering policy approaches, it is worth bearing in mind that, during the transition period, there has been a significant shift in the interpretation of the "Roma question" (and thus in inter-ethnic relations): while during state socialism it was conceptualized as a *social question*, in the new era it has become defined as a *minority issue*. Thus injustices and atrocities are now suffered by Roma on account of ethnicity, that is, they are subjected to ethnic discrimination (which, of course, does not imply that their ethnic identity was recognised during socialism, or that their social status has been improved by today). In other words, "the social aspect of the problem has been dissolved in the minority dimension", which "is likely to determine the profile and everyday use of the emerging minority institutions on the long run" (Szalai 2000b, 532.).

4.2.1 Government Programmes Promoting the Integration of Roma

Since institutional discrimination is a major factor behind the disadvantages of the Roma population, any improvement of their situation is primarily the responsibility of the state. In addition, given the lack of political power and influence of the National Roma Self-Government and the weakness of the Roma civil society, these actors do not have any real agency. Thus changing the social status of Roma largely depends on government efforts. It is a promising fact that the currently ruling socialist-liberal coalition appears to be more inclined to undertake this duty than previous governments.

As for the nature and structure of government programmes, the improvement of the situation of the Roma population represents a horizontal objective. In other words, following the dominant European model, Roma people generally do not represent the subject of specific policies. (Exceptions to this rule include the employment-generating programmes of the National Public Foundation of Employment that target specifically Roma people, and scholarship programmes intended for Roma students who prove outstanding educational performance.)[113] Instead, Roma are targeted by colour-blind programmes designed to recuperate a region or improve the situation of social groups characterized by substandard living conditions. At the same time, as suggested by the principle of mainstreaming, all development projects are supposed to be examined from the point of view of whether they potentially engender positive changes in the conditions of the Roma population. This consideration is included in the system of evaluation of EU-financed programmes, so that the success of a given project proposal partly depends on its potential merits for the Roma. The members of the National Bureau of Development are responsible for negotiating the comparative value of this aspect of submissions.

The system of financing projects concerning national and ethnic minorities is complicated and bureaucratic.[114] This is especially true in the case of Roma. There is still no transparency as to the use of funds since no means of accountability have been elaborated so far to control whether investments really benefit Roma. Between 1996 and 2006, the total investments in Roma programmes are estimated

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113 For more examples of targeted policies see section 3.3.3 of this report as well as chapter 4.3 of the Hungarian Report on Education.

114 Evaluative remarks in this section are based on the 2008 report of the State Auditing Office (SAO), expert studies on the effects of particular programmes, and newspaper articles and interviews discussing the overall achievements of public investments allocated for the integration of the Roma (SAO 2008; Varró 2008; Kállai 2008).

to have reached 120 billion Hungarian Forints, amounting to the double of total welfare expenditure per year.[115] However, more telling than numbers is the fact that 'Roma budget', as a rule, is largely created retrospectively: i.e. by including items invested in various developments concerning (among others) Roma people as well, and presenting them as specifically Roma-related expenditures.

Before the first short-term government programme was introduced in 1995, the problems of Roma were addressed by isolated policy measures. In the meantime, the Coordinating Council of Roma Affairs was created to harmonize the activities of ministries and develop medium- and long-term programmes to promote equal opportunities. The preparation of the first package of policies aiming at integration (and encompassing several fields, from education and child protection to employment, housing, healthcare, legal defense, the study of the exigency of anti-discrimination legislation, and the training of the representatives of majority institutions) was finalized by 1997. The (approaching) accession to the European Union speeded up the process, securing the framework as well as the financial resources of programmes. The socialist-liberal government, currently serving its second cycle, has repeatedly emphasized its commitment to solve the problems of Roma as a (or the) major social question. Public expenditure on this issue was rapidly growing between 1998 and 2006 (especially after 2004), however, with little avail. Hesitation over the nature of the central problem, inconsistencies of approach, and inadequate mechanisms of implementation have added up to an utter blunder, questioning the competence and commitment of political actors. While several Roma leaders expected a change of perspectives when the present Prime Minister occupied his office in 2004, their optimism was soon gone.[116] Seeing that current distributive mechanisms tend to reinforce the exclusion of Roma populations, they are now anxious that the disadvantages of Roma will only grow, and the social divide between the Roma and non-Roma populations will become impossible to cut across.[117]

In recent years, several government programmes, largely funded by the European Union, have been launched to eliminate segregation, combat discrimination, and enhance equal opportunities. The Phare programmes, the National Development Plan and the Development Plan of New Hungary deal primarily with employment, housing, education and community-building. As revealed by expert reports and studies, related initiatives have brought only meagre results.

4.2.2 Examples: Desegregation and Employment

Information on the deficiencies of implementation and monitoring of programmes as well as the persisting, or even deepening, plight of Roma have recently created alarm among interested observers with regard of the inadequate usage of "Roma funds". Experiments with (1) de-segregation and (2) the improvement of employment opportunities of Roma provide two cases in point.[118]

> (1) Efforts to *reduce residential segregation* failed partly because professional standards were given up due to insufficient funding, and partly as a result of local opposition (the racist attitudes of administrators). The use of drastic means in eliminating colonies were discarded by the group of experts, who suggested instead the enhancement of the social inclusion of people living in colonies as the key objective, and argued that local self-governments should be the main actors

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115 The nature of programmes and the structure of budgetary proposals allow only for estimations as to the size of the share of Roma from public funds.

116 At the discussion of his government programme, the Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány addressed the Parliament in Lovari language (a dialect of Romani) and talked about Hungary as a country shared by Roma and non-Roma.

117 Among others Jen Zsigó, the President of Roma Parliament, and Aladár Horváth, consultant on Roma affairs of the Prime Minister for many years and head of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation, agreed on this point at a discussion concerning the results of the first National Development Plan at Roma Café, a civil forum of Roma intellectuals (Varró 2008).

118 Education-related examples are described in chapters 2.2 and 4.3 of the Hungarian Report on Education.

in this process. However, their recommendations remained unacknowledged. The winners of the tender were rather small settlements, some of which enjoyed the support of the local representative of the managing authority who had arranged for their inclusion in the programme, while the relatively larger, real ghettos remained untouched. Desegregation, in some places, was impossible to begin with due to the ethnic composition of the local population: i.e. in hundred percent Roma villages. The funds here were spent on renovating houses. Given the lack of employment opportunities, sustainability as such was generally out of question.

(2) Billions were spent on Phare Roma programmes between 1999 and 2003 to *generate jobs*. Yet Roma employment rates have only further decreased. It has been shown in an evaluative study issued by the National Development Agency in 2008 that the programmes failed to reach their intended targets: the residents of isolated and disadvantaged settlements. Neither the needs of individual settlements, nor the marketability of the planned professions were taken into account when designing the projects. Most of the winners came from places lacking in potential economic actors (in particular, entrepreneurs) due to the out-migration of middle-class people. That is, owing to the distorted structure of these settlements, it was clear already at the outset that their continued employment was insecure or even impossible. In addition, all too frequently it was not even considered an objective: Roma tend to be employed at public works or tied to traditional and outdated occupations. As a result, the programmes failed to bring about any changes in the employment rates of the given settlements. What is more, in creating new kinds of dependencies from local power-holders, the projects were often actually counter-effective: instead of widening the circle of participants, self-governments tended to favour particular individuals, some of whom had employment already before the start of the programme. The general pattern of projects has remained unchanged even though it was pointed out years ago that the billions spent on employment-generating programmes had "absolutely no measurable effects on the employment situation of Roma" (TÁRKI 2006).

Some data related to the above includes:

- although the political secretary of Roma affairs of the previous Prime Minister promised to eliminate (or, at least, start to eliminate) 50 percent of the about 770 colonies in the country, only 29 were tackled at all by the socialist-liberal government between 2002 and 2006.
- the government promised to invest 10 to 15 billion Forints (mostly from CEB support) for this purpose – in the end, the amount was reduced to about 1.8 billion Forints to be spent in three years.
- 5.6 billion Forints were spent on the three Phare programmes enhancing employment. By comparison, the National Employment Fund distributed only 2.1 billion Forints on three very similar programmes in the same period.
- from the 3,000 participants, just over 1,000 actually received training in the Phare Roma programmes. At present, none of them is employed legally: they are either working illegally, or living on welfare again.

4.2.3 Problems of Implementation

At an operational level, the main problem identified by experts regarding implementation is the inadequacy of coordination among ministries that would be required for the management of complex programmes.[119]

119 The elusive formulation of the objectives of government programmes has already been discussed above in section 4.1.2.

Ministries enjoy complete autonomy as to the interpretation of tasks, the kind of programmes to be realized, and the allocation of funds. At the same time, they are lacking in instruments to manage and coordinate multi-faceted programmes, or to influence the implementation of shared undertakings by financial means. Taking complex measures would require up-to-date project management, involving the explicit definition of resources and the clear determination of responsibilities. Instead, confusion, opacity, and lack of continuity prevail. As a consequence, the vast majority of programmes have a simplistic design, although it is widely recognised that effectiveness and progress may be expected only from complex programmes.[120]

Abuses of regulations and unfair treatment of the participants of programmes create further obstacles at the local level. Follow-up procedures are also lacking. Many pilot projects have never been evaluated, and instead of disseminating good practises, newly conceived projects were launched over and over again. As a result, programmes are characterized by imprudence and discontinuity, lack of financial resources, inadequate coordination of measures, and too general objectives that make accountability unfeasible.

The implementation of programmes is frustrated by more fundamental factors as well, related to the misconceived approach to target groups. Resources fail to reach the people they are meant for primarily because the lack of interest-enforcing capacity of the groups in question remains unacknowledged. One of the main methodological problems is represented by the increasing use of tenders. Experts consider this way of distributing funds inadequate when targeting disadvantaged groups for two major reasons. On the one hand, helping people under the presumption of knowing what *should* be good for them inevitably implies a paternalistic attitude that, in turn, provokes 'disobeyance' or passivity among the concerned populations.[121] On the other hand, the people in question (naturally) lack the necessary capacities to participate in tenders, so the funds tend to go, instead, to more apt (generally non-Roma) organisations.[122]

The other basic problem of approach relates directly the social situation of the Roma population in a structural sense. Due to the multi-dimensional nature of disadvantages suffered by this group in terms of discrimination, one-dimensional programmes are necessarily ineffective in this case. The underlying procedural issue, again, concerns the appropriate definition of target groups. Partly given the prevailing socialist liberal agenda, emphasizing the primacy of colour-blind measures, and partly because ethnicity cannot be easily registered under Hungarian law, Roma remain out of focus, difficult to grasp by policies. For the same reason, it is impossible to assess the actual effectiveness of the programmes.

4.2.4 Proposed Solutions

The inherent deficiencies of the institutional design of Roma policies will not disappear simply as a result of growing investments. In order to eliminate them, significant reforms are necessary, requiring some

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120 An ambitious exception is represented by the Cserehát programme, actually a long-term pilot project, intended to recuperate one of the most disadvantaged areas in the North East with a predominantly Roma population. The programme aims to improve employment and education as well as facilitate access to social services (Ladányi and Szelényi 2005).

121 Given the absolute misery of these people, it is not at all surprising that a kind of "take the money and run" type of attitude should determine their reactions to policies. Their primary concern being day-to-day survival prevents strategic thinking and the assumption of responsibility in relation to any long-term undertakings in their case (verbal communication with Ágnes Kende).

122 In the absence of the necessary capacities for interest promotion through civil organisations or self-governments, disadvantaged people have limited access to resources. In the event of winning a tender, their lack of expertise in managing funds and complying with complicated administrative regulations causes problems. Therefore, the government now sponsors training programmes to prepare organisations representing Roma to participate in tenders (Klecska 2008). The fact that tenders primarily tend to increase the wealth of people implementing and assisting programmes (i.e. members of the non-Roma middle class) was pointed out already in 2005 (TÁRKI 2006). Thanks to the structure of European programmes, in which large amounts can be spent on developing expertise, coaching has become a very profitable profession. Organisations – whether or not they have any background in the substantive matters in question – use every opportunity to organise training programmes preparing experts, i.e. people not directly concerned by the programmes. (I owe this point to Ágnes Kende.)

degree of consensus among interested partners – which, however, is probably not going to be realized in the near future (Wizner 2005). Nevertheless, some of the notorious problems of Roma programmes are addressed in a promising way by the Decade of Roma Integration (2005-2015), a currently running complex international initiative of private and public actors. Calling for joint efforts by governments to effectively improve the situation of Roma, the Decade represents an important step forward in terms of restructuring the system managing Roma integration. Its strategic plan is particularly inspiring because of the duration of the programme: earlier experiences suggest that any meaningful results can be achieved only by long-term and well-coordinated developments. In addition, related governmental undertakings involve concrete measures with fixed deadlines and the clear definition of resources, and prescribe the elaboration of a monitoring system in collaboration with the Roma Integration Council and its affiliate organisation, the Roma Directing and Monitoring Committee. However, the standpoint taken in the Parliamentary resolution on the undertakings related to the Decade[123] does not reveal much progress with regard of the framing of the Roma issue: the social and ethnic aspects of the problem are simply separated (by distinguishing fields to be handled by social policies, on the one hand, and the sphere of culture where ethnicity is to be emphasized in a positive way, on the other), while the central dilemma (i.e. the definition issue implying the difficulties of addressing discrimination) remains unresolved. The resolution promotes specifically Roma programmes in the fields of anti-discrimination and culture, while it proposes the consideration of social and residential factors in determining tasks concerning education, employment, housing and healthcare. Thus the complexity and internal dynamics of discrimination are not tackled by this approach, and therefore people suffering from multiple disadvantages – primarily those of Roma ethnicity – will most probably continue to have comparatively less access to public resources in the near future.

By means of auxiliary measures (trainings, etc.), it is possible to enhance the equality of opportunities within programmes where target groups are defined in terms of residential and social conditions. This method, however, might not be very effective in guaranteeing participatory parity as it leaves structural differences among disadvantaged populations untouched. Therefore, the authors of the report issued by the State Auditing Office in 2008 argue for the introduction of specifically Roma programmes. Their claim is based on the consideration that the disadvantages of Roma are partially grounded in ethnicity (i.e. discrimination on ethnic grounds), which should be reflected in remedies as well. In addition, they maintain that the systematic supervision of whether programmes really reach, and are utilized by, Roma people to an appropriate degree presumes the collection of ethnic data. This solution seems compatible with the standpoint shared by the most prominent Roma leaders who repeatedly claim recognition for the "special situation of Roma" resulting from racial discrimination. They argue that "as long as funds are distributed among 'disadvantaged populations', they will never really reach the Roma."[124]

4.2.5 The Social/Ethnic Dilemma Revisited

The financing, regulation and supervision of government measures raise, once more, the dilemma: should the problems suffered by Roma be addressed by means of social policies, or as an ethnic/minority issue requiring an entirely different approach? The confusion created by the "dual perspective" of state policies have produced partial and ephemeral results, and implicated the lack of continuity, sustainability and efficiency of programmes (Szalai 2005b; Wizner 2005). Yet none of the governments have been able to provide adequate responses to this problem so far.

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123 Parliamentary resolution 68/2007 outlining the undertakings of Hungary for 2008-2009 in relation to the Decade of Roma Integration.

124 Viktória Mohácsi, once the head of the Directorate of Roma Affairs but still active in educational desegregation, proposed that the management of funds should become the responsibility of Roma civil organisations. She also added that "the presumption that they would steal the money is severely prejudistic since every other alternative high school for disadvantaged students is already managed by local Roma self-governments" (Varró 2008).

At present, even many of the proponents of the social paradigm tend to acknowledge the increasing relevance of the ethnicity dimension, and there is a growing support for affirmative action-type of solutions (Vajda 2005).[125] At the same time, there is considerable reservation against the introduction of specifically ethnic policies and programmes not just among traditional liberal sociologists but also among Roma civil actors and government officials, who fear that parallel structures would only intensify ethnic tensions and lead to distributive injustices. They claim that, given the internal differentiation of the Roma population, ultimately the most disadvantaged populations would become excluded.

At the governmental level, the issue has been (temporarily) settled: current programmes running under the Development Plan of New Hungary principally target 'multiply disadvantaged populations', making only casual references to the Roma. As indicated in the discussion on the implications of this terminology, it does not only risk effectiveness but also might involve disrespect.[126] Therefore, the issue at stake is more than just distributive justice: policies, whether they are framed in ethnic or social terms, affect the social recognition – and thus the human dignity – of their subjects.[127]

4.3 Educational Policy on Ethnic Minorities in a Broad Context

Education represents a distinguished area of policy-making where investments in energy and funds have been far greater than in other fields. In contrast to residential segregation or unemployment, the problem of educational disadvantages of Roma has been addressed systematically by concentrated policies, backed by (changing) theoretic considerations, ever since the regime change. The prominent status of education in government policies can be explained as the result of several disconnected and often incidental factors. The most significant among these is that the urgency represented by the rapid growth of educational segregation of Roma students during the 1990s was recognised by Bálint Magyar, member of the liberal party (Alliance of Free Democrats) and minister of education between 2002 and 2006.[128] Right after his appointment, Magyar launched a powerful integration campaign, starting with legislative changes, generation of funds, and the establishment of the position of a ministerial commissioner (first fulfilled by Viktória Mohácsi) invested with a great deal of authority. This was made possible by the commitments of the liberal party concerning human and minority rights. Magyar's individual motives can be explained also by his desire to make up for earlier failures: he served as minister of education already in the previous cycle of the socialist-liberal coalition between 1994 and 1998, during which period the educational problems of Roma were totally mishandled.[129]

The stress upon education may also have to do with the 'PISA-shock', i.e. when it was revealed by subsequent PISA surveys that the Hungarian education system is the most ineffective in all Europe in terms of fulfilling its social mission regarding the improvement of social status. This potential function of education, in turn, has apparently been recognised by Roma themselves many of whom, as demonstrated by research, want their children attend high school, since secondary school degree is currently indispensable in the job market (Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004; Havas and Liskó 2005). Education has also been in the focus of the Roma movement since the early 1990s, as the major concern

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125 Ethnicity is more emphatic in the latest research by Kemény and his team compared with their previoius work (Kemény – Janky – Lengyel 2004). Other prominent representatives of the social paradigm, like Zsuzsa Ferge, are still vehemently against the idea that poverty should in any way be considered a Roma issue. (On the overall shift within the classical social liberal approach towards including the dimension of ethnicity cf. Vajda 2005.)

126 See section 4.1.1.

127 On the recognition dimension of Roma politics see Szalai 2000b. For a theoretic discussion of the recognition effects of policies cf. Fraser 1997.

128 In 2000, the number of ethnically homogeneous Roma classes was 770, and more than a third of Roma students attended classes where the majority of students were Roma.

129 This earlier approach to the educational disadvantages of Roma is represented by the so-called "catch-up" programme that, contradicting its actual objective, only led to the intensification of the segregation process.

of old-time leaders is to ensure that part of the rising generation should be included in the middle-class and able to form a competent Roma elite.

The characteristics of institutional structures represent yet another reason why education has become a dynamic field of policy-making. The decentralization of the education system and the slackening of the National Basic Curricula has entailed the intensification of selective mechanisms prevailing in the education system. Thus the need to find a solution as to how to regain central control has become even more acute. Another institutional factor lies in the fact that EU-tenders related to education allow somewhat more flexibility in terms of using funds than other programmes.

The present integration agenda involves a system of constraints and supports to ensure that Roma and non-Roma students are taught together.[130] Most importantly, legislators intended to limit the right concerning the free choice of school, since this effectively induces spontaneous segregation: students whose parents can afford to send them to better and more distant schools, effectively leave the local public school behind for Roma (and other poor) children. Another recent policy priority concerns the prevention of qualifying Roma children as 'needing specialized education' on the basis of their social background. In other words, the intricate mechanisms of professional institutions determining the fate of Roma children must be scrutinized because an excessive number of Roma primary school students are categorized as (mildly) disabled, ultimately on an ethnic basis (Kende and Neményi 2005). This latter effort is supported by a new focus on enabling preschool education for Roma children. The quality-control of primary schools, the mechanisms of which are currently being introduced, is expected, in turn, to enhance secondary school attendance of Roma students.

Unfortunately, good intentions, large investments and the development of an extensive institutional framework have not yet brought about any tangible results. The few studies on the effects of educational programmes come to dismal conclusions: segregation steadily increased between 2000 and 2004; the majority of schools applying for integration support had already taught children together before the start of the programme; and a significant part of the money intended for this purpose was spent on infrastructural developments (Havas and Liskó 2004; Liskó 2007).[131] Thanks to the introduction of new regulations, systemic dysfunctions and failures are being constantly eliminated, although new measures are also easy to circumvent (Varró 2008). Efforts to increase equal opportunities in education are considered to have been completely ineffective so far, due to the lack of evaluation of educational programmes and control of their implementation, in other words, the excessive liberalism of educational policies.[132]

The main challenge at present with respect to educational integration consists in making schools and maintaining authorities (local self-governments) interested in the implementation of relevant policies and, in the meantime, in enhancing an attitudinal change among teachers so that they understand and appreciate this goal. The lack of interest on the part of institutions is indicated by the fact that an increasing number of Roma pupils are encouraged to become private students who study at home. Unfortunately, the training of pedagogues have been unsuccessful so far: most of the participants still blame bad educational performance on Roma children and support educational segregation (Liskó 2007). The fact that private and church schools absorb middle-class students creates further obstacles to integration. As a matter of fact, both Roma children (who are virtually invisible due to the colour-blind nature of policies) and an increasing segment of the educational system (i.e. private and church schools) tend to be unreachable by integration programmes.

Some optimism, though, may be drawn from the results of the first comprehensive research on the effects of integration programmes, which showed that – as opposed to widespread worries – the

130 For details of the integration policies see chapters 4.2 and 4.3 of the report on education.

131 Between 2000 and 2004, the number of homogeneous Roma classes increased from 770 to 1,200.

132 This negative evaluation of education policies was shared by the members of the Round-table of Education at a session in 2007 (Varró 2008).

introduction of integration programmes have not deteriorated the educational performance of non-Roma students; on the contrary, both Roma and non-Roma have profited from the educational reform (Kézdi and Surányi 2007). Another pushing factor behind potential changes has to do with the recognition by responsible persons in the Ministry of Education concerning their own influence in terms of deciding how to spend EU-funds flowing into the country until 2013.[133] Besides the tightening of rules related to expenditure (integration support may no longer be used for infrastructural developments), the major novelty in terms of implementation consists in the prescription to prepare comprehensive "equal opportunities plans" by self-governments applying for EU-funds in order to improve educational standards. In practise, this means ensuring their accountability, which thus generates self-interest, too: local institutions receiving support to eliminate segregation but failing to do so will have to pay the money back.

5. State of the Art in Research on Inter-ethnic Relations and Minorities

This chapter discusses research and publications not mentioned elsewhere in this report.

For the most part of the 19th and 20th centuries, 'inter-ethnic relations' in Hungary focused mainly on conflicts between ethnic Hungarians and the other state-forming ethnicities of the Carpathian basin. Only the Roma minority, living in Hungary since the Middle Ages, is regarded as having a radically different culture. Other non-European immigrants started to come to the country in significant numbers only in the 1990s. Research on the relations with these new groups in general stresses two special aspects: (1) the rate of non-European immigrants in Hungary is definitely low in comparison with other European countries; (2) the level of intolerance against new immigrant groups is definitely high, though not as much as against Roma people (Enyedi, Fábián and Sík 2004).

The relationship between Roma and non-Roma populations has always been loaded with heavy problems. After the Second World War the Roma became the most populous minority in Hungary. At the same time, the attention paid by social scientists to this group has been extremely uneven. Though there was a wave of interest in the last decade of the 19th century, the Roma almost vanished from social scientific discourse after the turn of the century. In the early 1970s, a new wave of professional interest emerged, which, however, remained quite moderate until the concern for Roma issues really started to increase in late 1990s.

Table 3:
Number and Rate of Publications Including Keywords *'cigányság'* ('Gypsies') or *'romák'* ['Roma'] in Bibliographical Database SzocioWeb

	1955–1970	1971–1975	1976–1980	1981–1985	1986–1990	1991–1995	1996–2000	2001–2005
number of publications	11	117	155	263	323	620	989	918
rate of publications	0.95	1.15	1.22	2.0	1.54	2.64	4.4	5.35
Source: Karbach 2007								

In the second half of the 20th century, there was a great change in the domains of the theoretical *and* political attitudes towards the Roma. Until the early 1970s almost all researchers of Roma applied a deviation-oriented approach: that is, they implied that, mostly or entirely, Roma people bear the responsibility for their own social condition. Nowadays Roma research is dominated by the descriptive

133 Thus while the money available during the First National Development Plan was spent on programmes resulting in the segregation of schools and settlements, the Ministry of Education seems to be more alert today as to the use of funds in the framework of the Second National Development Plan (Varró 2008).

and/or critical approach, implying a shift of this responsibility onto the non-Roma majority society. At the same time, there is a gap today between everyday discourses and social scientific discourses regarding this crucial question. The quantitative increase of studies is accompanied by thematic and methodological specification.

Comprehensive investigations. István Kemény and his team carried out a large-scale national investigation on the Roma minority in 2003. In the course of this multi-field survey, researchers selected a representative sample of Roma using the "ascription-Roma" definition.[134] Earlier investigations by the Kemény-team in 1971 and 1993, applying similar methodological principles, facilitate temporal comparisons. According to their most important observations, the exclusion of the majority of Roma from the labour market has proven to be a chronic problem; as a consequence, the welfare situation of most Roma has become grievous; and residential segregation has attained similar proportions to what it had in the 1970s, although in a different setting (see section 1.2). Despite the disputable principle of defining ethnicity, so far this research has provided the most reliable estimations about the number of Roma in Hungary (see the comparative summary of the investigations of 1971, 1993, and 2003: Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004).

Other investigations intended to be representative of the entire Roma population were conducted by János Ladányi and Iván Szelényi (2002, 2005) in the framework of international comparative research (*Poverty, ethnicity and gender in transitional societies*, Ladányi and Szelényi 2004). While their methodological priciples were close to those employed by the Kemény-team, the two research groups engaged in an especially fierce debate about the methodology of sampling (Havas, Kemény, and Kertesi, 2000; Kertesi, 2000b; Ladányi és Szelényi 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; see section 1.4). The results of Ladányi and Szelényi were similar to those of the Kemény-team: the great majority of Roma in Hungary are poor, and a significant part of the population has arrived in an "underclass" situation. The use of the notion "underclass" provoked sharp criticism on the part of the anthropologist Michael Stewart (Ladányi and Szelényi, 2001; Stewart, 2001).

Economic situation. Gábor Kertesi employed mathematical models used in economics to find an explanation for the lower unemployment rates of Roma. There are several factors behind this phenomenon: the under-education of Roma (see the Hungarian Report on Education); their overrepresentation in the Northern and Eastern regions of the country, especially struck by the structural transformation of economy; their overrepresentation in villages with scarce employment opportunities; the former integration of Roma into heavy industry and mining that collapsed after 1990. Nevertheless, Kertesi claims that taking all these factors into account he can explain only half of the differences in the unemployment rates between Roma and non-Roma. It is hard to reject the interpretation that the reason for this residual difference lies in the discriminatory tendencies of the manpower market. The research revealed similar 'residual differences' in the domain of employment (Kertesi 2005, 34 and 117).

Research on prejudice. The extent of anti-Roma prejudices in public opinion was somewhat reduced at the turn of the millennium. However, it is questionable whether this was the effect of a real decrease of prejudices, or prejudices have become latent to some degree, as it commonly occurs in Western societies. Yet even if this process actually took place, it must have characterized only the very beginning of the 2000s, because later on a shockingly large number of people agreed with anti-Roma statements (Eros, Fábián, and Sík 2004; Eros and Fábián 2005). Two public opinion research projects on prejudices, conducted in the first half of the present decade (Vásárhelyi 2004; Babusik 2005), provoked (sometimes politically loaded) attacks coming from several social groups and institutions. Based on everyday experience, the authors of the present report assume that anti-Roma sentiments have gained vigour again in the past two to three years, even though this presumption has not been verified by reliable investigations.

Media. There has been a dual tendency in the media since the mid-1990s: on the one hand, the presence of Roma has increased, while, on the other hand, the tone of the articles about Roma

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134   See section 1.4 for the definition issue.

has changed. Although Roma appeared almost always in the contexts of 'poverty', 'Gypsy culture' and 'delinquency' in the last decade of the past century, the rate of occurrence of the topic of 'discrimination against the Roma' significantly grew in news releases over the following years, while the rate of articles in which Roma appeared as a faceless and voiceless crowd decreased (Bernáth 2003). In comparing two paradigmatic debates of the 1990s and 2001-2002, Vera Messing revealed a change of contexts as well, stressing that in the latter debate Roma were treated more favourably than before by the leading dailies, both on the left and on the right (Messing 2005, 326.). At the same time, the principal right-wing daily has since become the main forum of the most extremist forms of anti-Roma instigation (HVG 2008).

Social policy. In a research on the welfare structure, Júlia Szalai (2007) describes the situation of Roma people within the social policy system, also demonstrating that, in spite of the drastic socio-economic changes, the degree of social redistribution has remained almost unchanged in the last two decades. According to her main thesis, the reason of this astonishing structural continuity does not lie in the "premature welfare state" (coined by János Kornai); the real reason is the not always verbalized, though generally accepted, view in Hungary that social provisions constitute civic rights. The majority population tries to exclude citizens who are in greater need (namely the Roma people) from welfare provisions not because of the scarcity of resources but as a result of the influence of this pervasive view.

Police and jurisdiction. A part of the media and public opinion frequently refers to the fact that Roma are overrepresented in the prison population. However, it is less known that the high criminal rate is related to poverty and not ethnicity, even though the attitude of authorities is very strongly defined by ethnicity. For instance, on the basis of (officially non-existing) 'ethnic profiling', the police demands Roma persons to prove their identity much more often than non-Roma, and it is also more ready to carry out home-raids in Roma homes (Farkas et al 2002; Pap 2006). In addition, Roma in general are more defenceless during procedures, therefore they are sentenced to prison with a greater likelihood than non-Roma (Loss and H. Szilágyi 2001).

Health service. Researchers agree that the state of health of Roma people is much worse than that of non-Roma (for example, their average life expectancy is significantly shorter). The staff of health-care institutions demonstrates prejudicial opinions and sometimes has recourse to discriminative actions. However, the real source of the problem is that health service teams and Roma belong to two separate worlds. The Hungarian health service system is accustomed to 'domesticated' clients and, until recently, Roma represented the last great social group that was reluctant to fulfil the expectations of doctors and nurses (Neményi 1998; Szuhay, 1999, 120-121.; Gyukits 2000; Babusik 2005).

History. Until the end of the 20th century, the majority of historians tended to regard the Roma minority as a 'people without history', supposed to be studied by ethnologists and sociologists. Nowadays some historians started to stress that Roma have a history of their own, and that the fact that they had not produced written records themselves should not cause more serious methodological problems than, for example, the study of some heretic sects of the Middle Ages or the historical investigation of the peasantry (Pomogyi 1995; Nagy 1998, 2000; Márfi 2005). It is typical that, for example, the history of the Roma Holocaust, or Porrajmos, was underinvestigated until recently (Bernáth, 2000; Bársony and Daróczi, 2004; Purcsi 2004).

Anthropology. The first anthropologist to live, together with his family, amongst Roma in Hungary for several years was a British researcher, Michael Sinclair Stewart (Stewart 1994). The training of cultural anthropologists at Hungarian universities started in the second half of the 1990s. Some of the graduates are committed to the study of Roma by means of anthropological field work (Prónai 2006). 'Roma' is an abstract category, constructed by non-Roma who are under-informed about the inner differentiation of the Roma population – this old but too general observation has been filled with content by anthropological case studies (for example Durst 2001; Fleck and Virág 1998; Hajnal 1999; Fleck, Orsós, and Virág 2000; Szuhay and K szegi 2002).

Under-investigated issues. Further case studies, first of all, are greatly needed in order to investigate particular segments of the Roma population. It should not be forgotten that 'Roma' as a category constructed by the majority society embraces an extremely heterogeneous social group.

Research so far has revealed puzzling differences among communities demonstrating identical socio-economic characteristics on the macro-level. Related issue include the 'functioning' of Roma culture in the field of everyday strategies of survival as well as the continuous changing of this culture. It is an interesting question, for instance, how this culture reacts to new forms of segregation, or the transforming media representations of Roma in given small-scale communities. In the meantime, one must give up or undermine the old stereotypical notion that Roma culture is an "archaic" one that has remained the same over the centuries and cannot be changed.

In the midst of the debate on welfare provisions, we have no reliable data regarding the income and livelihood of Roma families, nor information concerning the degree to which welfare policies are targeted to reach Roma.

For the particularly large-scale literature on education see the Hungarian Report on Education.

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Selected acts, decrees and resolutions concerning the Roma minority

Government resolution 34/1990 on the Bureau of National and Ethnic Minorities

Act LXIII of 1992 on the protection of personal data and the publicity of data of public interest

Act LXXVII of 1993 on the rights of national and ethnic minorities

Government resolution 1120/1995 on the establishment of the Coordinating Council of Roma Affairs

Government resolution 1125/1995 on the most urgent tasks concerning the Roma minority

Act I of 1996 on radio and television

Act LXII of 1996 on the license of national and local minority self governments to establish and maintain institutions of public education

Decree 32/1997 of the Ministry of Culture and Education on the guidelines of institutional childcare and education concerning national and ethnic minorities (laying down the principles of the 'catch-up' method designed for Roma children)

Government resolution 1093/1997 on medium-term action plan (based on government resolution 1125/1995)

Government resolution 1047/1999 on the medium-term action plan concerning the improvement of the living conditions and social situation of Gypsies (revision of government resolution 1093/1997)

Government resolution 1048/1999 on the abolition of the Coordinating Council of Roma Affairs and the establishment of the Interministerial Committee of Roma Affairs

Act LXVIII of 1999 on the modification of Act LXXIX of 1993 on public education

Government resolution 1078/2001 on the acceptance and social debate of the paper containing the guidelines of the long-term strategy concerning Roma social and minority politics

Government resolution 1186/2001 on the guidelines and institutional framework of governmental cooperation promoting the social integration of Roma

Decree 58/2002 of the Ministry of Education on the education of minorities (redefined the concept of minority education contained in Decree 32/1997)

Act CXXV of 2003 on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities

Act LXI of 2003 on the modification of Act LXXIX of 1993 on public education

Act LXXIX of 2003 on public education

Government decree 289/2004 on the scope of responsibility and authority of the minister of youth, family and social affairs and equal opportunities

Government resolution 1021/2004 on the government programme and related actions concerning the promotion of the social integration of Roma

Act CXIV of 2005 on the election of representatives of minority self-governments and on the modification of certain acts concerning national and ethnic minorities

Decree 2/2005 of the Ministry of Education on the issuing of guidelines concerning the education of children with special needs

Decree 16/2005 on the modification of decree 32/1997 of the Ministry of Culture and Education on the guidelines of institutional childcare and education concerning national and ethnic minorities

Act LXXXVII of 2007 on the modification of Act LXXIX of 1993 on public education

Parliamentary resolution 68/2007 outlining the undertakings of Hungary for 2008-2009 in relation to the Decade of Roma Integration

Appendices

1. Regional Distribution of the Roma Population: The Rate of Roma in relation to the Total Roma population of Hungary (%)

	1971	1993	2003
North (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Heves and Nógrád counties)	20.4	24.3	32.3
East (Szabolcs-Szatmár, Hajdú-Bihar and Békés counties)	23	19.8	19.7
Central Hungary (Bács-Kiskun, Csongrád and Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok counties)	16	12	9.4
Budapest industrial zone (Budapest, Fejér, Pest and Komárom counties)	19	18.2	17.8
South West (Baranya, Somogy, Tolna, Veszprém and Vas counties)	20	22.8	17.5
West (Gyor-Sopron-Moson and Vas counties	1.4	2.9	3.5

Source: Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004

2. Attachment to the Labour Market before and Exclusion after Regime Change

| Group	People of active age previously employed (%)		People of active age excluded from the labor market (%)	
	Roma	Non-Roma	Roma	Non-Roma
Male	76.1	84.6	37.7	9.7
Female	42.5	72.8	41.7	11.8
Together	60.2	78.9	39.1	10.7

Source: Survey on employment by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO), September-November of 1993.

3. Employed People among Roma aged 15–49 (%)

Year	Male	Female	Together
1984	95	61	77
1989	85	53	67
1993	39	23	31
2003	38	20	29

Source: Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004

4. Live Births per 1,000 persons, 1945–2004
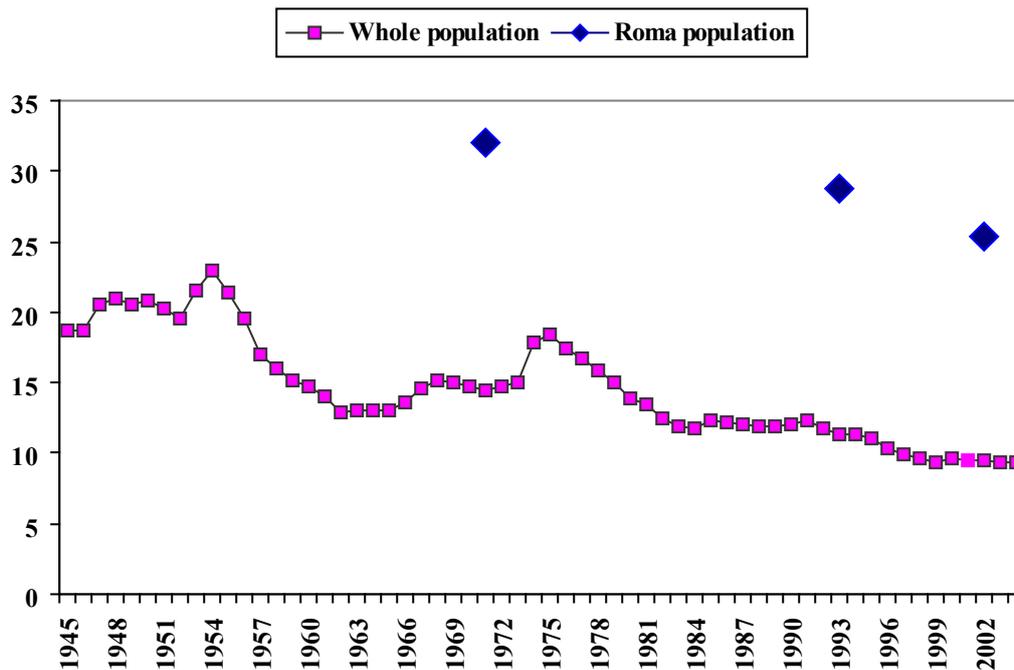
Source: HCSO and Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004, 17.

5. Economic Activity of the Population, 1990–1993

Economic activity	Census of 1990		General population	Evaluation of 1993	
	Gypsy population			Gypsy population	General population
	Acc. to nationality	Acc. to native language			
Active wage earner	25.7	27.7	43.7	18.3	35.2
Inactive wage earner	10.6	11.7	25.6	12.7	21.7
Unemployed*	6.7	7.1	1.2	10.2	4.8
Dependant	57.0	53.5	29.5	58.5	38.1
from this: Student	22.9	20.2	17.4	18.3	16.7
other depandant	34.1	33.3	12.1	40.2	21.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* Rate of unemployed seeking employment plus people looking for a job for the fist time
Source: Mészáros and Fóti 2000, p. 297.

6. Income of Roma and Non–Roma Families, 2003

	HUF/cap
In 41.5 % of Roma families	below 14,999
In 20.2% of Roma families	15,000–19,999
In 19.6% of Roma families	20,000–29,999
Average income of Roma families	*20,852*
Below minimal subsistance level*	
In 18.8% of Roma families	over 30,000
Average income of the general society	*60,000*

* According to the calculations of HCSO
Source: Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004, 119–120.

7. Quality of Housing Conditions 1971–2003

	hovel, shanty	brick, concrete, stone	electricity	sewerage	dirt floor
1971	66	33	56	8	61
1993	6	80	98	65	10
2003	5	77	98	72	4

Sources: Kemény, Rupp and Csalog 1976; Kemény, Janky and Lengyel 2004; Kemény, Havas and Kertesi 2005

8. Degree of Attachment to the Labour Market According to the Highest Educational Attainment

Educational attainment	Formerly employed population			
	Among people in the active age (%)		Distribution	
	Roma	Non-Roma	Roma	Non-Roma
0-7 grades	38.9	37.5	18.3	1.4
8 grades	62.2	67.3	49.0	25.5
Vocational school	80.0	86.6	18.6	28.8
High school	80.5	83.4	10.2	30.2
College	91.1	90.5	3.9	13.8
Together	60.2	78.9	-	-
Total	-	-	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey on employment by HCSO, September–November, 1993 In: Kertesi 2000a, 428.

9. Government Bodies Responsible for Managing and Coordinating Roma Integration Since the Regime Change

	1990–1994	1994–1998	1998–2002	2002–2006			2006–
Policy-making	Office of the Prime Minister	Office of the Prime Minister	Ministry of Justice	Office of the Prime Minister	Office of the Prime Minister	Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Healthcare	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Coordination and implementation	Bureau of National and Ethnic Minorities	Bureau of National and Ethnic Minorities	Bureau of National and Ethnic Minorities	Office of Roma Affairs	Office of Ethnic Minorities	Ministry of Youth, Family and Social Affairs and Healthcare	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

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