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Government resistance towards equal access to higher education for Romas in Hungary

By

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Abstract:

In recent years, equal access to higher education has become a key area in the field of public policy and a very important sub area of equitable higher education both at the international and national level. For Hungary, one of the pressing concerns is increasing the access to higher education for the most visible disadvantaged group, the Roma population by the application of government policy instruments as recommended by various international key organizations, such as OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). This thesis asks *whether the Hungarian government has responded adequately to the OECD policy recommendations of 2005 on Roma's equal access to higher education in Hungary and accepted by Hungary in 2005*. Concerning the related methodology, OECD country notes of 2004 are used as a starting point for the exploration of the situation of higher education in Hungary in 2004, OECD policy recommendations of 2005 on more equitable higher education for Hungary is analyzed in harmony with the thesis question; finally policy recommendations are offered based on OECD new ideas of policy directions of 2008 by the thesis. The thesis reveals that the domestic government has not responded adequately to the accepted OECD recommendations since the government has constantly resistance to data gathering and effective monitoring of Romas, also their increment has not been fulfilled. Moreover, it has not encouraged special programs for Romas more equitable access to higher education. Finally the thesis provides policy recommendations for the new Hungarian government such as positive discrimination based on ensuring determined quotas for Romas at universities and the third way solution based on special preparatory programs targeting skill development of Romas.

Keywords: equal access, higher education, Romas, positive discrimination, merit system, third way solution, Hungarian government, OECD

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Introduction

Equal access to higher education has become more crucial than ever before in enabling students to become active citizens of the knowledge-based society in Europe including Hungary especially international organizations argues it in their studies¹. One of the pressing concerns is increasing the access to higher education for the most disadvantaged group², Roma youth by various government policy instruments in Hungary. Both the acknowledgment of the unavoidable problem of unequal access to higher education for Romas and the great demand for the advancement of their opportunities for access were expressed by many international key organizations especially OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2005), (OECD, 2004, 3.), European Commission³(European Commission, 2010, 97.) and World Bank (World Bank, 2010) in the past five years. The common feature of them is that they all acknowledge that Roma's access to higher education has to be developed in Hungary and it has to be the responsibility and expected duty of the domestic government by the implementation of offered policy recommendations such as OECD.

Roma population at international level

From a European aspect, equal access to higher education for Romas is one of the key areas in the field of equity at international level in recent years⁴. Many international organization such

¹ Studies were conducted and applied by OECD (2005), (OECD, 2004, 3.), European Commission¹(European Commission, 2010, 97.) and World Bank (World Bank, 2010)

² Romas are considered as the most disadvantaged or most visible group by OECD (2005, 11.), (OECD, 2004, 3.), European Commission²(European Commission, 2010, 97.) and World Bank (World Bank, 2010)

³ Defining the group who needs equal access to higher education in Hungary is the following according to the European Commission (2010):

'students with disadvantaged backgrounds; students with disabilities; Roma students and students from a large family.'

⁴ European policy documents of European Parliament or European Council use the term of Roma as an umbrella term in the context of social inclusion and non-discrimination, not referring to cultural identity (COM, 2008, 3.).

as European Commission (COM, 2008, 37.), (European Commission, 2010, 1-160.), OECD (OECD, 2005, 24.) and World Bank (World Bank, 2010), Council of Europe and the UN (Shishlov, 2005, 97-98) deal with the serious problems of most importantly the unequal access of Romas to higher education, ongoing discrimination and racism against them, and Roma's low attendance in higher education. These organizations acknowledge that the unequal access to higher education for Romas and their discrimination should be reduced by the implementation of government initiatives⁵. Hence these international policy recommendations based on previous international studies are considered by the above mentioned major European organizations as very important policy directions for the Hungarian government which should be implemented.

Concerning an example from the international policy recommendations targeting Roma's equal access to higher education is the 'Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005-2013'. World Bank, European Commission and United Nations Development Program supported it and adopted by 8 countries including Hungary. (World Bank, 2010) which main aim has been besides decreasing the existing human and economic disparities, poverty and Roma exclusion was the advancement of equity initiatives and support of the academic success of Roma students in higher education in Hungary⁶ (Government of the Hungarian Republic, 2007, 6.).

OECD policy recommendations is deeply examined in this thesis as a policy tool especially OECD country study (2004), policy recommendations⁷ (2005) and further policy directions

⁵ European Commission announced that the advancement of equal access to higher education for Roma students approved that is the responsibility of the national governments based on open method coordination (COM, 2008, 37.).

⁶ Government Regulation 1105 of 2007 on the governmental initiatives in connection with the Strategic Plan for Program of Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-

⁷ The OECD recommendations include that through effective monitoring the Hungarian government should provide financial support for disadvantaged students and those who identified themselves as Romas. Furthermore, special Roma programs should be advanced and targeted help for poor students should be initiated by the government. (OECD, 2005)

(2008) in the field of Roma's access to higher education for the Hungarian government. The main thesis question is **'Has the Hungarian government responded adequately to the OECD recommendations in the field of equal access to higher education?'** On the one hand, the related analysis has **important** role since according to my perceptions, related researches or monitoring studies did not evaluate the achievements on the OECD policy recommendations on the Roma's access to higher education in recent years and the government actions seems chaotic. On the other hand, here is the time for the change⁸ in Hungary with the help of newly elected government which makes the thesis issue more important. It is very **useful** to provide answer to the question in order to see whether the government responded adequately to the recommendations and enhanced the monitoring, increment of Romas access to higher education and encouraged programs in the recent 5 years. Ultimately, the **thesis argues** that the government has not responded adequately to OECD recommendations; the lack of measuring Romas, lack of separate category for Romas and non-adequate government programs constantly existed both in 2005 and in 2010. Therefore thesis will introduce policy recommendations (positive discrimination and third way solution) for the government to resolve the current problem.

Roma population in Hungary

For Hungary one of the most pressing concerns is the Roma issue. The Roma population being the 4-8% of the whole population in Hungary (World Bank, 2006.), has been facing discrimination in higher education system and with numerous disadvantages during their lives in Hungary such as low-income, low employment and most importantly low education

⁸ Fidesz won in recent elections in Hungary in the spring of 2010 and the new government program is approved on May 29, 2010. Seemingly, the new government intends to take actions towards Roma's equal access to higher education; however the Government Program does not include any concrete measurements on it yet. (MTI, 2010, May)

attendance (Forray, 2008, 1-8.), (Dudás, 2006). For instance, the Roma population has lower level of professional and educational skills (Kocze, 2002, 5.) and facilities for studying by being competitive in a merit higher education system. Moreover due to present political uncertainty and the impact of world economic crisis, the risk of the discrimination against Roma people has increased (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2009, 47). The Hungarian government tends to approach both the access to higher education for the Roma people and the Roma issue in general as an issue of either deep poverty or ethnicity (Járóka, 2009) by. Both data⁹ and comprehensive studies straightforwardly support that mixing up Romas with the category of poor is not beneficial government attitude (OECD, 2008, 98-119), Moreover, the Roma issue including the access to higher education seems more complex category¹⁰ influenced by plenty of factors like knowledge or perceptions, therefore it should be handled as a separate category¹¹ and within its complexity.

Concerning government systematic strategies particularly targeting Roma's equal access to higher education, between 1990 and 2006, comprehensive government strategies¹² were not implemented effectively in the past 5 years (Dudás, 2006.), (Havas, 2009, 173.). The government educational initiatives have been focused more on the primary and secondary education of Roma children (Kocze, 2002, 5.) by excluding the not less important field, the higher education. It seems problematic nowadays, the acknowledgement of Roma students as a complex category by the government, effective monitoring of Romas or increase their

⁹ From the estimated 250-300.000 is Roma from 750.000 marginalized people of the total population (app. 10 million) in Hungary and 250.000-300.000 Roma people live in deep poverty from the estimated 750.000-800.000 Roma population. (Járóka, 2009)

¹⁰ Interaction theory says that human capital, perception, interaction between parents, students and teachers are very crucial factor in the issue of access. (G. H. Mead and C. H. Cooley)

¹¹ Complex and separate category for Romas means that Romas should be handled separately from the poor and disadvantaged students. (OECD, 2005. 24-26) (OECD, 2008, 74.). In the US, black and poor students are also considered separate categories by the US government (Clarke, 2007, 61.).

¹² For instance, the Program of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. Short term and long-term government strategies including clear cut criteria and monitoring were not conducted. (Havas, 2009)

opportunities for gaining access universities by providing them targeted help in a consequent manner in the past 5 years.

Regarding the methodology, study is conducted on Hungary of which basis (starting point) is the country study of OECD (OECD, 2004), the OECD policy recommendations ¹³ (OECD, 2005, 24-26) and further recommended policy directions (OECD, 2008-b.) in the field of Roma's access to higher education. OECD documents are used as policy tools for the examination of Hungarian acts, policies and programs between 2005 and 2010.

The thesis consists of the following chapters: **Chapter 1** provides a comprehensive picture on the issues around equality of access to higher education both at international and national level as well as on existing approaches to achieving broader equality access such as positive discrimination¹⁴, merit based system and 'third way solution'. This means preparatory courses and counseling services in secondary education for Romas based on such elements especially skill developments, encouragement and awareness on university requirements, students' policies and rights. The analysis of the situation of higher education in Hungary of 2004 in the light of OECD country study of 2004 is included **Chapter Two**.

Chapter Three presents OECD policy recommendations of 2005 for Hungary and here we will see whether the Hungarian government has responded adequately to these recommendations. For instance it reveals that neither in 2005 or 2010, the government did not ensure measuring and monitoring Romas, did not handle the Romas as a separate category from either poor or disadvantaged and did not guaranteed support special programs for Romas to fulfill the goal of more equal access to higher education. The main answer to the thesis

¹³ (OECD, 2005, 24-26)

¹⁴ Ensured extra scores and/or reserved places at universities by the government.

question is that the Hungarian government has not responded adequately to the OECD policy recommendations of 2005, the problems remains, especially lacking implemented initiatives on their measurement, monitoring and effective supports therefore the implementation of new polices is recommended. The policy recommendations (positive discrimination and thord way solution) are presented in **Chapter Four**. Finally, **Chapter Five** covers the main conclusion.

CHAPTER 1: The equality of access



In this chapter, different approaches and issues around equal access to higher education are explained especially first by showing the debate between promoter of universal access versus opponents believing in competitive merit system. Further section explains the term of disadvantaged group who needs equal access to higher education by introducing the economic (poor) approach used in Europe and the economic and minority (black) approach applied in the US to be convinced of the need for placing Romas under a separate category instead of poor. After it, sections are devoted to the analysis of the approaches regarding government actions such as positive discrimination based on extra scores and quotas, merit system based on competition and third way solution based on skill development through complex preparatory course for Romas.

In recent years, equal access¹⁵ to higher education, other words ‘the process of enabling entry to higher education’ (Clarke, 2007, 59.) has become a key area ¹⁶ in the field of public policy

¹⁵ Access is ‘the proportion of the equity group among commencing domestic students’. (OECD, 2008, 81.)

¹⁶ Higher education not only prepares the society for the labor market, but it also contributes to personal and national economic growth. (Nyborg, 2003, 356.).

and a very important sub area of equitable higher education¹⁷. Governments consider the issue of access as a pressing concern both in Europe and in the U.S. for example in Estonia, Bulgaria and in the U.K. (Eggins, 1999, 565.) also in Germany (Rudder, 1999, 567) as well as in the U.S. (Clarke, 2007, 60-61.). Equal access to higher education meant to be more than an only pure economic issue not only in plenty of countries but also in cross-border commitments.

1.1. Universal equal access to higher education

‘Higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the bases of merit’

(Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Neave, 2000, 179.).

More and more international commitments supporting universal equal access have appeared such as Bologna Process, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and UNESCO convention, Lisbon Recognition Convention¹⁸. These frameworks of which many countries are the members acknowledge that governments have major responsibility¹⁹ in guaranteeing equal access to higher education by the application of access policies and student finance policies (Nyborg, 2003, 355). It supports that governments have to be seriously engaged with this particular issue.

¹⁷ ‘Equitable tertiary systems are those that ensure that access to, participation in and outcomes of tertiary education are based only on individuals’ innate ability and study effort. They ensure that educational potential at tertiary level is not the result of personal and social circumstances, including of factors such as socioeconomic status, gender, ethnic origin, immigrant status, place of residence, age, or disability.’ (OECD, 2008, 74.)

¹⁸ Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region was worked out by the UN and Council of Europe in 1997. The convention was signed by forty countries including Hungary in 2005. The convention’s guidelines says ‘no discrimination shall be made in this respect on any ground such as the applicant’s gender, race, colour, disability, language, religion, political opinion, national, ethnic or social origin’ (Shishlov, 2005, 97-98).

¹⁹ Experts also agree with the approach that government has the main responsibility for ensuring equity in higher education, but she underlines that political will is needed. (Woodrow, 1999, 340-342)

However, the opponents of the notion of universal access believe in the economic nature of higher education and exclude the idea of government's responsibility (Woodrow, 1999, 340-342). They think that it is a natural phenomenon that universities have to select their own students on a competitive basis and they formulate the selection procedure as they wish (Tight, 2004. 289-291), (Scott, 1995, 79-91). This pure economic view is very dangerous since it advantages top scoring students from better off families and excludes the disadvantaged students from higher education. The government's responsibility in guaranteeing equal access can not be questioned, since the application of the pure economic view could increase the unequal access to higher education in democratic countries and the reproduction of inequities. Ensuring equal access to higher education has great importance since it supports the economy in the long-run and individuals could reach better income and social level as both economic and social studies have already proofed it²⁰. (OECD, 2008-a, 75-77), (Riba, 2010, 13.).

Concerning the reproduction of inequities, there is a strong relationship between the accessibility of higher education and the economic growth of a state such as the economic theory of human-investment says (Andorka, 2000, 376-401). Michael Rutter, James S. Coleman, Paul Willis as well as Bourdieu support the idea that the social and economic inequities are reproduced in the higher education, if there are not taken place governmental policies and affirmative actions targeting disadvantaged groups (Giddens, 1997, 407-421). In the long run, without taking any actions towards more equitable access to higher education, inequities between advantaged and disadvantaged group will remain in social and economic sense which influence the overall state economy and social welfare in severe way, therefore

²⁰ Equal access to higher education contributes to income-mobility, social mobility; the social welfare and the economic efficiency could be raised through it. (OECD, 2008-a, 75-77-).

first, the examination of the group of disadvantaged as well as the possible actions play key roles.

1.2. Who needs equal access to higher education?

The **term of disadvantaged group** is used very differently by educational experts, policy makers and it also varies in many systems of higher education too²¹. In the U.S., poor students and separately minorities (black) are often considered as disadvantaged group (Clarke, 2007, 61.), meanwhile in Europe disadvantaged groups due to economic reasons are considered as disadvantaged. For example, underrepresented groups considered as disadvantageous generally in Europe (Woodrow, 1999, 337.). In Germany refugees and lower middle-class (Rudder, 1999, 568-570.) meant to be disadvantaged groups, meanwhile in the U.K., working-class (Tight, 2004, 33.) is a classical category for describing disadvantageous.

As the above mentioned examples show, there are various ways for using the term of disadvantaged students, but it also demonstrates the complexity of the issue. For instance, equal access is not the only problem of low-income, not only the poor (who are not in all cases minorities) needs access.

Comparing two countries, in the U.S. there is more developed approach regarding disadvantaged groups by handling minorities/black students (Ballantine, 2001, 295.) and poor in a different category, meanwhile in Hungary, the economic approach is typically used for

²¹ OECD categorizes disadvantaged groups in the following way:

- Family socio-economic background (*e.g.* parental education, income);
- Gender;
- Immigrants;
- Minorities (*e.g.* cultural, ethnical);
- Place of residence (*e.g.* remote locations);
- Age (*e.g.* mature students);
- Disability.' (OECD, 2008, 74.)

defining disadvantaged groups such as Roma students²² are considered as disadvantaged and being part of the category of poor or ethnicity. (European Commission, 2010, 97.) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, 2004, 1-12). However the factors influencing student success in admission seem to be more complex, like the 'economic approach'. The lack of basic skills or facilities (e.g. computer), lack of awareness, lack of information and limited support by school teachers are seen affecting social and economic factors²³ both in the case of U.S. (Ballentine, 2001, 295.) and in the case of Hungary (Havas, 2009).

What we can learn from the best practices of the US and OECD, is that Romas have to be treated in a separate category in order to provide effective targeted help them. But what can be done to help disadvantaged groups to gain better access to higher education?

1.3. Positive discrimination

One of the most commonly used affirmative action is **positive discrimination** for disadvantaged students to access to higher education which is strongly supported by various international commitments such as International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by the UN (Human and Constitutional Rights Documents, 2010). Positive discrimination being a government policy, ensures extra points in the selection process or reserved quotas at universities on the basis of ethnicity, income-level or gender. 'Positive Discrimination is a process that seeks to temporarily redress a specific inequality by focusing on the rights of the discriminated individuals or groups in society, in a particular

²² Roma population in the issue of access to higher education in the EU is a big challenge (EUMC, 2006, 7-17.). Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU ensures rights to equality for the Roma and protection against 'discrimination on grounds of ethnic origin based on an individual-rights-based approach' (COM, 2008, 6.).

²³ In complexity, there are numerous factors influencing the whole equity in the access to higher education and government policy responses such as 'Funding-related factors', 'Family background', 'School factors', 'Peer effects', 'Articulation between secondary and tertiary education', 'Organisation of tertiary education', 'Selection procedures', 'Factors impacting on the participation of students with disabilities' (OECD, 2008, 98-119).

setting and in an enforceable way'. (European Student Union, 2003). The purpose of positive discrimination is to form equal conditions and equal starting points to achieve equal outcome between the students by acknowledging the existing discrimination (Rees, 1998, 34-40.). The action is also strongly considered as 'morally justifiable' and important tool of the democratic society according to Hodapp Anderson and Gutmann (Moses, 2010, 223.).

Opponents of positive discrimination believe that disadvantaged students receive unearned scores (Scott, 2009, 19) and could gain access by occupying reserved places at universities; in addition to, the action is believed to be against the merit system and competitive environment (Moses, 2010, 222.). Favoring disadvantaged students by positive discrimination is used in the U.S. and also in the EU (Martiniello 1999, 6.) which indicated many political and legal debates ²⁴. To conclude, the application of positive discrimination could raise the increment of disadvantaged students to some degree for which wide political agreement is needed, but this affirmative action does not directly deal with the question of students' degree of talent and their skill improvement.

1.4. Merit system

Merit based actions promoted by various actors too such as OECD (OECD, 2005, 24.) and the UN, means that students gain access to higher education according to their merit, talent and performance (Andorka, 2000, 376-401.). Merit-based scholarships advantage is that

²⁴ DeFunis case in the U.S. was brought to the court in 1970 since the white student was refused to be admitted to the Washington Law University, since lower scored students from black minority group was favored and gained access to reserved place due to positive discrimination. From 1996, the existing affirmative actions have changed in many states due to the ongoing debate. (Ballentine, 2001, 87.)

students are graded according to their achievements and educational performance. However it expects straightforwardly the absence of non-discrimination against disadvantaged students which can be questioned by meritocracy theory too. (Andorka, 2000, 376-401.).

Its main disadvantage is that mostly only those students have better grades and can access to merit-based scholarships who are coming from a 'better-off family' with better studying facilities. (Orfield, 2002, 12). For example, it is a common policy practice in the U.S. that top universities intend to attract and award talents on merit in order to raise the reputation of the universities (Clarke, 2007, 62.). The main finding is that merit-based approach excludes disadvantaged groups from top universities as well as assumes non-discrimination which is an impossible practice as the sociological theory on meritocracy says (Andorka, 2000, 376-401.). Since both the pure positive discrimination as well as the merit system do not focus on the needs of disadvantaged groups (including separate categories such as Romas) especially the degree of handicap in their skills and knowledge of students, therefore a third way solution is recommended to be explored.

1.5. The third way solution

Concerning **third way** solutions, alternative special supports, preparatory programs are considered as third way solution which combines the strengths of positive discrimination, merit-based system and complex tutorial help for disadvantaged students such as preparatory of students for merit system by skill improvements (OECD, 2005, 24.) (OECD, 2008).

The variety of supporting instruments is enormous in different countries (Shishlov, 2005, 97-98). Governments have the responsibility to form effective policies and it shall encourage

special programs for disadvantaged groups to fill the gap related to lack of information, skills and awareness, to prepare the disadvantaged group for the merit system since only the scholarship or quotas are not alone enough.

To conclude, according to the thesis view, equal access to higher education is the main responsibility of national governments since it contributes strongly to the overall state's economy and social welfare and individual's income and social level. The formation of separate category for Romas in Hungary is essential learnt from the good practice of the US and OECD. We saw equity actions such as positive discrimination based on score and quota system demands wide political acceptance and does not focus on skill development, therefore it is not a full solution. The approach of merit system excludes disadvantaged groups from the possibility of equal access, therefore it is not an adequate solution. The third way solution (preparatory course) appears the best option which offers more complex help for disadvantaged students focusing on their needs and level of skills and knowledge. The above mentioned approaches are very important, but how are these working in the practice? The next chapter examines that what happened in Hungary between 2005 and 2010, based on the OECD policy recommendations (OECD, 2005).

CHAPTER 2: OECD policy recommendations for Hungary and their background



International actors have viewed Roma's opportunities to equal access to higher education as a very important goal in the European Union including Hungary. For the purpose of the deep understanding of the situation of higher education in Hungary in 2004 from public policy aspect, the thesis uses a first country studies presented by OECD as starting point. OECD being an influential international actor created a country report on the situation of equity education in Hungary in 2004 and one year later published their Thematic Review (OECD , 2005, Thematic Review: Equity in Education) on the same issue including country note , legal framework and recommendations.

The above mentioned documents are used in the following parts of the thesis in order to get an insight what was the situation in 2004 (see this chapter) and what has been changed until 2010 regarding equal access to higher education for Roma people to answer the thesis question (see chapter 3).

OECD has already reviewed many countries (e.g. Finland, Spain or Norway) in terms equity in education such as primary, secondary and tertiary education. The main focuses of the OECD study of 2004 and 2005 related to Hungarian education are the early childhood and

secondary²⁵ education as a fundamental basis of tertiary education and labor opportunities for Romas. The general education is examined deeply as a whole by also referring to tertiary education too in some sections. We use the most suitable and concrete recommendations on tertiary education which are seen in below section.

2.1. OECD Policy Recommendations (OECD, 2005, 24.)

(1) ‘Ensure through effective monitoring that the recent (2005) incentive programme to admit and provide financial support and scholarships for disadvantaged students achieves its goal of increasing the number of disadvantaged students and those self-identified as Roma participating in tertiary education.’

(2) ‘Special programs should be encouraged....Romaversitas Invisible College, the Roma studies programmes in Pecs and at the Central European University, and scholarship support from philanthropies such as MACIKA, a public foundation to support Roma tertiary education.’

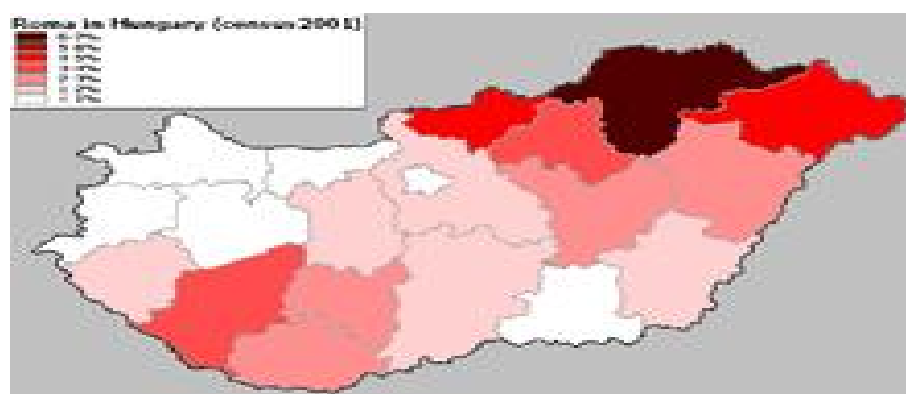
(3) End the ad hoc two-tiered system of providing free tertiary education to some students and not to others; ensure that there are common arrangements for all admitted students (whether grants, loans, means-testing or full state support), allowing for targeted help for poorer students.’

²⁵ Early childhood and education care, achieving fairness across the lifespan, Improved educational options for low-skilled adolescents and adults, Data on the education system, Selection and choice in the school system

2.2. Situation of the higher education system in Hungary in 2004 by

OECD:

(OECD, 2004)



Hungary and Romas ²⁶

Concerning the situation regarding access to higher education in Hungary, the main characteristics of the system of higher education in 2004 are written in below section. It is based on the country report of OECD of 2004 and the document of OECD of 2005 which also refers back to the situation of 2004 and includes policy recommendations. In both comprehensive studies which are linked together, underlines the problems of the entire education of Hungary in a holistic way including higher education. However for the thesis the most suitable facts related to higher education are introduced in harmony with OECD recommendations of 2005 as monitoring and government attitude (encouraging programs for Romas)

²⁶ Roma population in Hungary in 2001. Latest Data of Central Statistic Office published in 2001 (Wikipedia). The darker red color shows the higher rate of Romas in the counties of Hungary. The picture is used as a symbolic illustration.

The system of higher education is increasingly decentralized, no obligations for equity policies

This means that in the overall education system including universities, university leaders have increasing role and responsibility in the management of universities in the age of expansion of private universities (OECD, 2005, 25.). In details, both the government does not have obligations for equity policies (OECD, 2004) within universities and university leaders do not apply the principle of equity as a fundamental element for supporting equal access to higher education. The challenge is here that there is a general lack of routine on practicing equitable tools for admitting students especially due to lack of leader trainings and outdated competences. The main root of the problem is that government did not encourage/facilitate universities in the direction of change of attitude of university managements in terms of equity by the application of government obligations or sanctions.

Hungarian political attitude is resistant to gathering data on ethnicity (Romas). (OECD, 2005., 13.).

The main background of the problem of the lack of data and monitoring on Romas was due to fact that the central government has no intention towards policy-making and policy implementation²⁷. Creating policies on data collection was refused by the government referring to such excuse that there is a legal prohibition on it.²⁸. The government did not place Romas in a separate category, Romas are considered poor or ethnicity. The thesis argues it has been an outdated and very weak protection against the implementation of data gathering by

²⁷ Bálint Magyar, former Minister of Education has admitted that the equity mechanisms in the entire education system in Hungary is underdeveloped. (OECD, 2005, 13.)

²⁸ Hungarian government refers to the prohibition of data collection (1992 Act) as an excuse due to historical background (e.g. communism). (OECD, 2005. 14.)

the government. The thesis argues that without data gathering - as a first step - policy recommendations on equity could not been implemented adequately.

There is a big difference between the social groups within the higher education.

It means that the gap between the low- and high income classes are straightforwardly appear in the Hungarian higher education system too and it makes the system discriminative (OECD, 2004), (OECD, 2005, 15.). The result of PISA 2003 survey ²⁹ supports also that the there is a strong relationship between the socio-economic background of students and the performance of students at schools (e.g. matriculation at secondary school) which has affects on the performance on the success of entrance examinations too. Hence, continuing the severe effects, the unequal access to higher education could also worsen the situation of the remaining differences between Romas and non-Romas such as decrement in social and economic level (OECD, 2008-a, 75-77), (Andorka, 2000, 376-401), (Riba, 2010). It is also harmony with that view that **cultural or human capital** is very additional crucial factor in terms of the achievements of students in admission in the access to higher education. With other words, the basic skills, studying facilities (e.g. computer) the information, the awareness, the perceptions of the Roma students are very influencing factors in the issue of access to higher education³⁰.

²⁹ (OECD 2005, 15)

³⁰ The factor of human capital was also supported by other scholars too (Ballentine, 2001, 295.), (Havas, 2009), OECD, 2005)

2.3. Self-identification of Romas in Hungary

There is an unavoidable aspect in the field of equal access for Romas in higher education which is the self-identification of Romas or with other words the question about who the Romas³¹ are. One of the biggest problem of access is the lack of data on who Romas are and how many of them manage to access to higher education in Hungary.

The Hungarian approach towards the visible acceptance of Roma's in higher education was lacking from both legal and statistical aspects in 2004. This situation is true for 2010 too. In Hungary, the acts on higher education³² only take into account disadvantaged groups referring to socio-economic background by avoiding the usage of the term of Roma. This refers to that the government includes Roma under the umbrella of disadvantaged background which is not a fortunate solution. However the inclusion of the term of Roma as targeted group in acts and regulations is not prohibited by the EU law. Moreover, Hungarian country statistics also ignore measuring the Roma population in the access and participation in the higher education (Forray, 2008, 7.), (Kemény, 2004, 74.), so their proportion in higher education (access, participation, graduation in higher education) has not been monitored (Forray, 2008, 7.), (OECD, 2005, 14.). OECD has already acknowledged the importance that poor, disadvantaged group and Romas are separate categories. The recommendation was accepted by the Hungarian government; however the domestic attitude was the same in 2004 and 2010.

Concerning an existing non-governmental a semi-governmental method for self-declaration of Romas, Roma scholarships such as MACIKA being a non-governmental agency requires a

³¹ There is a strong debate who Roma people are. Surrounding community considers that those are Romas whose skin is darker and their origin is Roma. Often half Romas are also considered as Romas by the community in Hungary. (Kemény, 2004, 74.)

³² Act CXXXIX of 2005 on Higher Education, Government Act 237 of 2006 on the selection process of institutions in higher education and Act 51 of 2007 on student grants in higher education.

certificate on self-declaration from Roma students which is usually approved by the legal employee of the Roma Local Government. This solution is not nationally and officially accepted and applied practice, it is just a tool which was widely spread in the Hungarian practice with its strengths and weaknesses. For instance, the abuse of self-declaration has been an every-day practice, non-Roma students gained financial support.

Hiding Roma people by the Hungarian government could not be an effective attitude; in addition to, the non-officially declared certificate-method with its ambiguous conditions could exclude Romas from the benefit of equality. Therefore Roma's inequity in access to higher education would not decrease, rather than the problem would grow; for instance other neighboring countries (Czech Republic) have already realized the importance of measuring Romas³³.

All in all, the problems are clear in 2004, lack of recognition of Romas in a separate category, lack of data gathering on Romas, lack of monitoring combined with discriminative higher education. In next chapter, we present how responded the Hungarian government to the OECD policy recommendations for changing the situation until 2010.

³³ The Czech government approved to collect anonymous data on Roma in higher education (EUMC, 2006, 7., 17.)

CHAPTER 3: What happened between 2005 and 2010?

In this section the steps taken by the Hungarian government towards equal access to higher education are examined in the light of OECD policy recommendations (2005). The analysis of the (1) increment of Roma's access, (2) encouraging special equity programs and (3) targeted help is essential in order to see the government respond to these recommendations.

Concerning the methodology, in order to have relevant information on this particular issue, I contacted to state institutional actors involved in higher education and numbers of groups concerned as key actors by telephone and e-mail on 14 Apr, 2010: Roma Education Fund, Department of Equal Opportunities of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Office of Ombudsman for Minorities, Central Statistical Office and Romaversitas. Further institutions were interviewed on 20 Apr, 2010: Equal Treatment Authority, Department of Access to Higher Education of the Office of Education. The result was that the main actors of the higher education answered that they do not hold any studies or statistical database on the equal access to higher education in Hungary from the past 5 years.

3.1. The increment of Roma's access (2005-2010)

OECD policy recommendation (1):

‘Ensure through effective monitoring that the recent (2005) incentive programme to admit and provide financial support and scholarships for disadvantaged students achieves its goal of increasing the number of disadvantaged students and those self-identified as Roma participating in tertiary education.’ (OECD, 2005, 24.)

Analyzing the first part of OECD recommendation (1), **‘Ensure through effective monitoring’** to guarantee financial support for disadvantaged students, the initiative of the tool of monitoring seems immediately a problematic factor.

Concerning the past five years in this regard, very few studies and government reports were written on this issue by experts and no systematic data collection was conducted by the government. In some sociological studies, authors already raised their voice on the problem of lack of statistical data dissemination and monitoring on the access (and participation) of higher education for Roma population in Hungary in the past 5 years (Forray, 2008, 7.), (Havas, 2009, 123.), (Civishir, 2009). Putting additional evidence into the light, the key actors (see in above section) were also not able to provide data and reports when they were asked in telephone interviews³⁴. The everyday-practice of nation-wide monitoring of the access of Romas, by the government (and therefore by non-government) actors meant to be straightforwardly a serious failure by the government. Thus answering to the OECD recommendation, the financial supports for disadvantaged students has not been monitored

³⁴ In the interviews, the general practice was that the institutions intended to offer information on primary and secondary education related to Roma children, however they all expressed their concerns that they do not hold statistical data on Roma's access to higher education. The majority of the institutions acknowledged that ‘the lack of data on this particular issue is a real problem in Hungary.’

effectively by the Hungarian government in the past five years, therefore the government respond was not adequate in terms of monitoring.

Concerning the ‘increment of the number of those self-identified as Roma gaining access to higher education, there are assumptions that through the expansion of higher education in the past years, the rate of access to higher education by Roma students in Hungary has increased (Havas, 2009, 123.). However due to the lack of monitoring the increment (mentioned above) can not be proofed.

Another very important problem appears in the issue of measuring (increasing) the Roma population in the issue of access. Who is disadvantaged student and who is Roma? Roma students do not appear in the higher education acts³⁵ at all; therefore they fall under the only broad category of disadvantaged group today in Hungary. Besides it, governmental regulations³⁶ targeting particularly Romas do not determine directly the term of Roma and the clear-cut use the term of disadvantaged consciously. Moreover, being Roma is based on self-identification as OECD says ‘those who indentifies themselves Romas’, but to change the attitude towards policy-making based on self-identification. Therefore the number remains hidden in 2010 too within thanks for the ongoing government resistance to data collection and monitoring.

All in all, the increment of Roma’s increment in access to higher education through effective monitoring due to the lacking government legal steps was not fulfilled until 2010, therefore the government respond was not adequate to the OECD policy recommendation in this regard.

³⁵ Act CXXXIX of 2005 on Higher Education, Government Act 237 of 2006 on the selection process of institutions in higher education and Act 51 of 2007 on student grants in higher education.

³⁶ Government Regulation 1105 of 2007 on the governmental initiatives in connection with the Strategic Plan for Program of Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 (Government of the Hungarian Republic, 2007, 1-16)

3.2. Government encouragement towards special programs for Romas (2005-2010)

OECD policy recommendation (2):

‘Special programs should be encouraged....Romaversitas Invisible College, the Roma studies programmes in Pecs and at the Central European University, and scholarship support from philanthropies such as MACIKA, a public foundation to support Roma tertiary education.’ (OECD, 2005, 24.)

In this section the degree of the advancement of special programs recommended by OECD in relation to access to higher education is analyzed such as what the government has done for the ‘encouragement’ such as financial or non-financial support. Special programs in connection with access will be analyzed such as MACIKA and Central European University mentioned by OECD; and Katapult, SZMI and Roma Decade Program not mentioned by OECD³⁷. It will help to answer to the thesis question whether the Hungarian government responded adequately to the second OECD recommendation.

3.2.1. Programs mentioned by OECD:

MACIKA scholarship program (Semi-governmental)

Concerning the explanation of the scholarship, this financial support (scholarship) for Roma students both in secondary and higher education from the Public Foundation for the Hungarian Roma Community was available (Havas, 2009, 126.) in the past 5 years. Concerning government financing of the organization, despite of the challenges of lack of

³⁷ These programs appeared after 2005 and targetting Roma’s equal access to higher education.

published data³⁸ on financing, it is true that the government has been ensured fund for MACIKA. The trend shows that dramatically decreasing fund for the Foundation in the recent 5 years³⁹ (Fidesz.hu, 2009) were given by the government, which can be interpreted as weakening encouragement of this program by the government.

Concerning the achievement of the scholarship in the access to higher education, the increment of recipients in the past 5 years) is assumed to be less (Tamas Bod, 2009) due to the above mentioned decreasing government fund. The problem of exclusion of Romas due to the abuse of self-identification of Romas⁴⁰ rooted in non-monitoring and no category for Romas appeared around MACIKA several times (Fidesz.hu, 2009). Another weakness of the scholarship is that the amount is very low, less than the average minimum wage (Havas, 2009, 127.) and new non-financial encouragement were not initiated with the contribution of the government. Overall, the thesis argues that Roma's equal access to higher education with only financial support is not enough alone since it does not offer improvement of their skills and preparatory for the competitive tertiary education system. The problems existing around MACIKA lead the thesis to answer to reflect partly to the thesis question.

Since the government has not taken steps towards encouraging or facilitating MACIKA scholarship such as visible financial support or additional help, therefore the government response to the OECD recommendation in the context of MACIKA can be evaluated as non-adequate.

³⁸ MACIKA does not publish any report on its financing.

³⁹ One third of the fund of 2004 was given to MACIKA by the Hungarian government in 2009. (Fidesz.hu, 2009)

⁴⁰ Many non-Roma students became recipients without any control. (Tamas Bod, 2009).

Central European University: Roma Access Program (RAP)

Central European University's Roma Access Program is a perfect example for widening opportunities for access to higher education for Roma students in a complex way (e.g. third way solution).

Explaining the essence of its complexity, the special program provides both direct financial support and non-financial support for Roma students planning to access to Master program at the university. The direct financial support includes tuition, housing, travel and living stipend (Central European University, 2010). The non-financial support of the preparatory program consists of the following special courses: (1) tutoring on specific disciplines such as Law, Public Policy or Sociology, (2) Academic Courses, (3) English Language Training for the TOEFL entrance examination of CEU and (4) Academic Writing Classes (Central European University, 2010), (HVG, 2010). Overall, the main disadvantage of the program, that students are prepared for the merit system with the help of targeted skill developments.

The program constantly gave support for approximately 10 students⁴¹ in each year between 2004 and 2010, and the majority of the RAP students are successfully admitted to CEU after the preparatory course. These demonstrate their success; articles were written on the unique benefits of the course and the successful careers of Roma students thanks for the program (HVG, 2010). But what did the government for them?

⁴¹ Source based on the Roma Access Program donor reports, Special Projects Office, Central European University provided by Celine Barlett in May 2010.

2004: 109 applications /15 students accepted and enrolled

2005: 47 applications /13 students accepted and enrolled

2006: 55 applications /11 students accepted and enrolled

2007: 41 applications /8 students accepted and enrolled

2008: 49 applications /10 students accepted and enrolled

2009: 48 applications /9 students accepted and enrolled

Concerning the support provided by the Hungarian government, despite of the fact that the Ministry of Education and Culture was approached by few times by Lajos Bokros (professor of CEU), the government refused to provide any kind of help or cooperation in terms of financial and non-financial support in recent years⁴².

To conclude, despite of the fact that Central European University's Roma Access Program has been very successful, the Hungarian government has failed to show an openness and contribution to this program by providing financial or non-financial support, so the government has not responded adequately in this context.

3.2.2. Programs not mentioned by OECD

Katapult Program (semi-governmental)

Concerning the main elements of Katapult established in 2005, it is a complex program targeting disadvantaged students including Roma students too in the field of access to higher education. Three pillars are included in the program: 1, Positive discrimination: extra points are ensured in the selection process of universities for the 'disadvantaged' participants of Katapult, 2, special mentor program (sessions) are provided for the persons become students in higher education in the first academic year. 3, special trainings, courses are provided during the academic years. (Havas, 2009, 131.). Hence, the program is based on complex approach by providing alternative support with the combination of positive discrimination (to support

⁴² It was informally told by a professor of the program.

equal access) and tutorial help for disadvantaged students including Romas (to support participation). But what did the government do for it?

In terms of the advancement of the financial support provided by the government, reports of monitoring of Katapult financing were not provided in any year by the government. According to political articles, there was a dramatic decrement in the annual amount of government fund such as 51 million HUF was given to Katapult in 2007 and approximately 30 million HUF was provided in 2008 (Bogár, 2009), (Katapult Mentorprogram, 2010). The related problem of lacking effective monitoring⁴³, the exclusion of Romas from the program popped up also around the issue of Katapult. (Bogár, 2009) (Katapult Mentorprogram, 2010). For instance, according to the estimations, only approximately 15% of the participants were Roma meanwhile the majority of the students came from families with middle-class (Havas, 2009,141.), (Bogár, 2009). Further data on the numbers of Roma participants in each year, their rate in university admission are also not available; therefore we assume that there has not been great advancement in terms of increment of students due to also the decline with its funding in the past five years. Moreover, no studies show that the government contributed to the program by facilitating new program elements or monitoring.

Summarizing the government responses in relation to the support for the program, decreasing financial support and non-financial support was given to Katapult which is considered as a non-adequate respond by the Hungarian government for the second OECD policy recommendation in context of Katapult.

⁴³ . Legal scandals such as money laundering appeared around Katapult. (Bogár, 2009) (Katapult Mentorprogram, 2010).

SZMI preparatory program for Romas (Semi-governmental)

SZMI preparatory program initiated by the government institution, Institute for Social Affairs and Labour existed until 2008. The main goal of the program was to prepare Roma students for the multilevel system matriculation (as a third way solution based on special tutorial session) being the main entry to the higher education (Havas, 2009, 146-147). The strengths of the program were that the students were prepared for the examinations of the matriculation and for the special entrance examinations of universities and colleges for free. According to the available and limited data in each year, more than the half of the participants of the program was admitted⁴⁴ (Havas, 2009, 147.).

Concerning the government contribution to the program support, due to the very limited available data (Havas, 2009, 148.) very few can be said on empirically on the annual change of government fund. But it is true that the annual financial support given by the government was constantly uncertain and was based on ad-hoc decisions (Havas, 2009, 148.). Seemingly, the government did not offered enough financial support for SZMI which led to the complete end of the program in 2008.

Concluding, SZMI program belonging to third way solution disappeared very rapidly thanks for the decrement of government support which is evaluated as a non-adequate response to the OECD recommendation (2) in the context of SZMI program

⁴⁴ For instance in the 2003/2004 academic year from the 62 Roma participants of SZMI program, 44 were admitted, while in the year of 2005/2006 from the 90 participants, 64 became students in the higher education. (Havas, 2009, 146-147).

Program of Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015⁴⁵

The Regulation being a Strategic Action Plan specifies those governmental projects, priorities, actions related to Roma's higher education which should be conducted by the Hungarian government until 2015. In the chapter of actions related to education, there is one section⁴⁶ on the advancement of government initiatives for ensuring the access and participation of multiple disadvantages groups in higher education which defines access policies in the following way: Equity initiatives should be enhanced; the academic success of disadvantaged students in higher education should be supported; and residence places for them should be guaranteed (Government of the Hungarian Republic, 2007, 6.).

Concerning the governmental attitude towards the Program, from the above mentioned policy it reveals that there is a lack of concrete priorities and actions related to Roma's equal access⁴⁷ such as clear criteria, evident requirements and straightforward methods. Seemingly the domestic government intends to generalize the access policy and hiding the problem in this case too. In 2010, the official Monitoring Study of the Program of Decade of Roma Inclusion also argued that the program was not successfully achieved its goals due to the lacking understandable criteria and indicators.⁴⁸ (Kurt Lewin Foundation, 2010, 1-77). Furthermore, the Monitoring team also expressed their non-satisfaction towards the Hungarian government in their report, like the government did not contribute effectively to the program by providing

⁴⁵ Government Regulation 1105 of 2007 on the governmental initiatives in connection with the Strategic Plan for Program of Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 (Government of the Hungarian Republic, 2007, 1-16)

⁴⁶ Section 8

⁴⁷ Very few projects are closely related to equal access to higher education for Roma; the Regulation's main focus is on public education including primary and secondary education. (Government of the Hungarian Republic, 2007, 1-16)

⁴⁸ The Monitoring team also expressed their unsatisfaction towards the Hungarian government

cooperation, coherent strategy assessment and systematic policy background between 2007 and 2010. (Kurt Lewin Foundation, 2010, 61.).

From the aspect of Roma population, it was also turned out that both the discrimination and the exclusion of the Roma population in all areas (e.g. higher education) did not decreased, rather than increased until 2010.

To sum up, in the implementation period of 2007-2010, the government's contribution to the Roma Decade Program constantly weaken both financially and non-financially, therefore the government's respond was not adequate in relation to the requirement of the OECD policy recommendation (2) in the context of Roma Decade program.

Generally, between 2005 and 2010 there was a very weak encouragement of special programs targeting Roma's equal access to higher education by the Hungarian government in terms of increasing financial or non-financial support for them. The main characteristics of the government attitude towards these programs were the decrement of contribution such as lack of real actions and lack of monitoring⁴⁹. Therefore the government's overall respond to the OECD policy recommendation (2) (encouraging special programs targeting Romas) is evaluated as non-adequate.

⁴⁹The financial and non-financial support given for the advancement of the equity of Romas decreased and the monitoring of they were completely lacking. This debate appeared in the Parliament too. (Hungarian Gipsy Local Government, 2010), (Bogár, 2009).

3.2.3. Targeted help? (2005-2010)

OECD policy recommendation (3)

End the ad hoc two-tiered system of providing free tertiary education to some students and not to others; ensure that there are common arrangements for all admitted students (whether grants, loans, means-testing or full state support), allowing for targeted help for poorer students.’ (OECD, 2005, 24.)

In this section, ending ad-hoc two tiered system and the advancement of targeted help for poorer students are analyzed in order to help to form the answer to the thesis question related to the adequacy of the domestic respond to OECD recommendation (3). Seemingly, it is connected to the previous two OECD policy recommendations, such as (1) the effective monitoring is essential element of (3) ending ad-hoc two-tiered system and the (2) encouragement of special scholarships is considered almost (3) synonym of targeted help by the thesis.

Concerning the end of the ad hoc two-tiered system, on the basis of previous findings of the thesis (e.g. resistance of the government to data collection and monitoring) the higher education system remains still ad-hoc and not consequently systematic in terms of government initiatives and special scholarships. (Forray, 2008, 7.), (Havas, 2009, 123.), (Civishir, 2009). (Hungarian Gipsy Local Government, 2010), (Bogár, 2009). In previous sections, it was also shown that programs (e.g. Roma Decade Program, SZMI program or MACIKA) were financed based on ad-hoc decisions by uncertain decreasing amounts. Also the problem with the exclusion of Romas from the opportunities of scholarships and special programs was remained until 2010 (Havas, 2010, 172) which was shown in previous sections.

The ad-hoc two tiered system was not ended in Hungary in 2010, the government respond to this part of the OECD recommendation (3) has been failed.

Focusing on targeted help for poorer students, from the perspective of acts, generally, disadvantaged students have the right to receive financial support based on their financial and income situation from 2005. (Act 139 of 2005 on Higher Education, Section 46). The following grants can be given for students: (a) Social grants (b) Performance-based grant (c) University special scholarship programs for students according to the university regulations and their available financial resources (Act 51 of 2007 on student grants in higher education, Section 6.). Positive discrimination for disadvantaged students is also guaranteed in the selection process by providing extra points for them from 2006 (Government Act 237 of 2006 on the selection process of institutions in higher education Section 21). These acts of 2005, 2006 and 2007⁵⁰ show government step (e.g. partly solution such as positive discrimination) towards the policy advancement in targeted help for poorer students on the one hand. However the empirical advancement (e.g. change in numbers of the recipients annually) is not visible data and there is a lack of equitable criteria for Romas too to get free tuition or financial support guaranteed in the acts. Hence, Romas have been remained hidden in these acts since 2005 due to the previously revealed problem of lacking data and lacking separate category on them.

Hence, overall, by positive discrimination the government ensured targeted help for disadvantaged students (including Romas), but anybody does not know the change in Romas numbers related to access and who they are in 2010. Therefore the general government respond to OECD policy recommendation (3) is evaluated as non-adequate.

⁵⁰ Act 51 of 2007 on student grants in higher education

3.4. Status quo

In the scenario of status quo, we assume that the Hungarian government would continue that inadequate respond to OECD recommendation what were analyzed in previous sections such as lack of data dissemination and monitoring on Romas, absence of the separate category of Romas, decreasing government support towards programs targeting Romas's access and absence of policies on ensuring equal access to higher education for Romas.

In **terms of advancement of policies**, perpetuating the phenomenon of **lack of data collection** on the access to higher education for Romas and the lacking proper policy conditions could be evaluated as the failure of policy gaps (COM, 2008, 25). Excuses can not be accepted like the 'measuring Romas would be the direct result of the abuse of personal data protection'. Since like other countries managed to take important steps towards the monitoring Romas such as Czech Republic, hiding the numbers of Romas in the tertiary education (and in general too) would meant to be non-consequent and non-adequate attitude of the government. It would directly mean non-advancement of policies by maintaining the problem hiding the annual number of Romas in the higher education

Regarding of **advancement of policies**, maintaining the **non visible category of Romas** as special targeted group could be also examined as a zero progress in the field of policy-making towards the acceptance of Romas by the domestic government. Also the remaining policy gaps by hiding the problem would not seem to be a sustainable long-term government strategy since it could also have severe affects on the increment of inequity in higher education, racism and discrimination.

From the perspective of **governmental financial support** for Romas developing equal access to higher education, the existing governmental equity programs⁵¹ and newly initiated programs meant to be very costly for the government without maintaining serious monitoring system could measure the increment of the Romas in higher education with the help of financial support. Moreover, the programs could not be able to achieve their hoped goals without creating clear-cut criteria, requirements and monitoring system with the main assistance of policy makers.

From the aspect of **non-financial support**, if there is no governmental intension for encouraging both universities and special preparatory programs for the better access as OECD recommended, therefore it is expected the number of accessed Romas would dramatically decrease.

Focusing on the externalities of status quo, it could lead negative results such as most importantly the increment of unequal access to higher education, the growth of discrimination and decline of educational attendance of the Roma population of Hungary.. Therefore the reproduction of inequities would show increasing tendency by severely affecting other important areas such as labor market, income level, school attendance and living standards of the Roma community. Furthermore, the reliability and the trust towards the Hungarian government would decline both nationally and internationally. All in all this policy option would meant to be not only costly for the government and socially non acceptable, but also the conservation of the remaining huge problem of the issue of access of Romas to higher education in Hungary.

⁵¹ such as the program of Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2013.

CHAPTER 4: Policy recommendation for achieving equal access in Hungary

4.1. Policy recommendations and conditions for implementation:



In order to find the best way to change the current situation revealed in the thesis in the field of Roma's access to higher education, this chapter provides first a baseline for the policy options and examine alternative solutions (positive discrimination and third way solution) for the problem resolution. In this chapter the new policy directions of OECD is also considered (OECD, 2008-b). The thesis argues that the legal framework on data collection, monitoring, encouragement of equity programs for Romas must be the work and responsibility of the government as international organizations claimed it ⁵² and consider the following conditions before starting policy implementation.

1, Romas must be treated separately in the frame of policy advancement

⁵² Therefore political will is needed for the implementation. (Woodrow, 1999, 344.)

Consciously a complex approach⁵³ for Roma people in higher education by the acknowledgement of Romas as a separate category must be seriously taken by the government such as the institutions of the European Union, OECD and US have already applied it in the practice. The complex approach also requires switching to special complex support (e.g. preparatory course) for Romas from the government; by changing the current approach based on positive discrimination or costly money-transferring in the frame of scholarships. The tool is here policy-making.

2, Data gathering and monitoring Romas in the frame of policy advancement

Particular attention is called for the approval of systematic data collection and monitoring on the Roma's access (also participation and outcomes) in higher education. Studies and examinations are needed to be conducted with the principal leadership by the government in order to see the following: (1) the degree of the problem related to Roma's access to higher education as a consequence of inequity social cohesion and in the economy. (2) The exact demand for new policies on the Roma's access to higher education should be articulated with the help of screening cases on policy-implementation (mechanisms) from other states. (3) Finding out the best policy option and its assessment in terms of financing, timing, criteria and indicators based on data and demand. Since the lack of official data limits the creation of new policies and the documentation of inequity in the access process (e.g. discrimination).

3, Financing Romas by the government

Special Fund and the application (sell) of best practices should be set up for the effective financing of especially optionally positive discrimination (reserved places at universities) and

⁵³ The Hungarian government should acknowledge 'that access to, participation in and outcomes of tertiary education are based only on individuals' innate ability and study effort... ..The educational potential at tertiary level is not the result of personal and social circumstances, including of factors such as... ethnic origin...' (OECD, 2008-a, 74.)

preparatory courses for Romas. The exact amount of financial support and the numbers of financed programs should be selected by the government on the basis of previous studies mentioned above. The estimation of the resource (e.g. input: labor, equipment and technology) should be based on previous studies of budgets of best practices. The political willingness to invest in this issue is essential.

4, Non financial support for Romas by the government

Encouraging universities and preparatory courses have to be ensured by the government on the basis of conscious cooperation with the key actors of higher education such as universities, organizations and Roma Local governments. Government has to handle with special attention the enhancement of the spread of best practices in universities which are less costly than the establishment of new preparatory courses. The government have to provide assessment, guidance, dissemination of good practices to support the spread of special equity preparatory programs.

4.1. Policy option on Positive discrimination

The policy option of positive discrimination is already partly included in the Hungarian higher education act of 2005 which could be maintained in the future by the government on the basis of guarantying extra scores for Roma students in the entrance examination in higher education. Besides it, in the direction of widening the opportunities for Romas to access to universities and colleges further steps could be taken in the frame of positive discrimination by the application of reserved quotas in higher education as Romanian government has applied it since 1993 (Kocze, 2001, 9) . Especially determined number of places at different universities could be ensured by the Hungarian government for Roma students in higher education.

In terms of financing, in this scenario the government has to ensure a separated fund for ensuring the quotas for Roma student at universities or colleges in each year. The number of places could be also increased annually which measurement could be evaluated as the advancement of government financing since the increment of the place numbers are straightforwardly bring evidence for it.

Regarding, **non-financial support**, the government could provide special support such as facilitating (1) preparatory courses, (2) universities for the inclusion and (3) advertisement of reserved places for Romas with the help of universities, key actors of higher education in Hungary and Minority Local governments. It requires great level of cooperation, ongoing communication and good management. The success of the policy alternative could be measured with (1) the increment of number of universities involved in the quota-system and (2) the increment of number of actors involved in the advertisement of such affirmative action. The (3) advancement of supported preparatory courses for Roma students could be seen in every year by the increment of the number of students involved and the rate of admission.

In terms of the **advancement of policies**, in this case, the government has the major responsibility to design and implement policies on the separate category of Roma students in higher education by legislative instruments. The related acts would acknowledge that discrimination shall not be taken on the basis of origin and ethnicity; moreover it shall determine the separate category for the term of Roma and their monitoring by avoiding the approach of generalization of deep poverty. It would require a social dialogue between the

governmental and non-governmental actors; however the advancement can be detected easily by the appearance of such policy and the existence of the system for measuring them.

Concerning the disadvantages of this policy option, positive discrimination and ensuring places at universities demands high expenditure from the Hungarian government since the admission fee and the education fee shall be provided by the government. Moreover, extra apparatus including extra employees is needed to assist the work on facilitating universities, maintaining database on measuring Romas, implementing events such as social debate and advertisements. Regarding moral issues, the government be blamed that positive discrimination for Romas are not based on merit and therefore more clever students could be excluded from the top universities.

The main advantage of this policy option is that the measurement of Romas as well as the increment of their numbers at universities ensured by the government would lead to wider opportunities for Romas to gain access to higher education. Their living conditions, their opportunities for their future careers would be supported and could result in lower disparities between Romas and non-Romas. All in all, concerning both the strengths and weaknesses of positive discrimination seem to be a partly solution in long-term, more complex targeted support have to be also considered by the government.

4.1.2. Policy option on Third way solution

Special preparatory courses have to be conducted which assist to Roma students in developing their skills and practical knowledge needed to their success in admission to universities or colleges. For instance, preparatory courses are very useful solution which

combines special elements such as improving skills (e.g. academic writing, language, computer skills) ensuring targeted tutorial support on particular subjects required at the entrance examination.⁵⁴ Besides them, the social and informative elements of the programs are crucial in the success of access especially raising awareness, encouraging, providing essential information on the admission process (e.g. rights and obligations related to higher education). Concerning an additional strength of these special programs, it could directly prepare Roma students for the merit-based higher education system characterized by ongoing competitions until the end of the graduation. It also helps students before the admission to get used to the conditions of competitions, obligations and respond to them in a most adequate way on the basis of their knowledge and skills.

Focusing on another policy direction, **special counseling services** including career guidance could be very fruitful in the secondary education by constructing a bridge between secondary and higher education. The early awareness of choice-making is very influential factor for students to the successful application to universities. This service would provide a particular help by providing relevant information on the application and admission procedure of universities and colleges on the bases of both the tastes and skills of the students. It would also contribute to fill the gap of lack of information owning Roma students on the higher educational possibilities. Furthermore, the service could strongly assist to students in finding not only suitable universities, but also special preparatory courses in order to raise their chances in the admission.

⁵⁴ Special preparatory courses were initiated by OECD too. (OECD, 2008)

In terms of financing, the government is needed to ensure annual separate fund for implementing preparatory courses and/or special counseling services organized by either the governmental or non-governmental organizations. The planned amount of the fund should be in the harmony with the measured demand, data, already applied budget of such best practices (e.g. CEU program), available capacities.

The setting preparatory courses or counseling services seem costly, however it has the most advantages both in the short and long-term. The advantages are that this option has potential benefits such as positive effects on crime data, social services system, health conditions, housing, policy-making, and on the both overall state's economy and social welfare.

Recommended option for less expensive implementation of preparatory courses is the application (buying) best practices (e.g. CEU Roma Access Program)

From the aspect of non-financial support, the government has the major responsibility to guarantee the framework on data collection, recognition of Romas and monitoring them. Also universities and NGOs have to be obliged for monitoring Romas in their institutions. The government has to facilitate universities and other actors for the implementation of the preparatory courses throughout campaigns by emphasizing the overall benefits of the preparatory programs.

Expected results of the third way solution

The thesis argues that this complex policy option would mean fruitful alternative solution for the Hungarian government from the aspect of finance, government and society.

From financial aspect, third way solution is cost-efficient for the government, since the preventive⁵⁵ initiative could save more money for the government than the perpetuation of the entire problem (e.g. social benefits and unemployment benefits). Also in the mid and long-run, the solution could increase the number of successfully accessed Roma students in universities and colleges, decrease the discrimination against them as well as increase the chances for better living standards and their income-level. It would have positive affects not only society such as better housing, health status, income-level, crime data and labor, but also on the overall domestic economy.

By the serious engagement of the issue of third way solution by the government, the accountability of the government would raise, since with the obligation of data report and record on the Roma's access to higher education could become more transparent (e.g. government failure or success would be more visible). It is connection with the trust towards the government with the society, people could trust more in a responsible government.⁵⁶

To sum up, under current circumstances, the Hungarian government main duty⁵⁷ is to design a governmental framework including initiatives regarding preparatory courses focusing on Roma's access to higher education that is enough to serve as a basis for real actions and beneficial results. According to the analysis of status quo, positive discrimination a third way solution, it revealed that the most appropriate solution is the third way solution.

⁵⁵ Interaction theory says that the period before the admission is very influential for the success of access to higher education. Especially students' perceptions, values, information on the university opportunities, the level of knowledge and skills have crucial affect on the further process of admission in universities. Therefore the preventive intervention at early stage is recommended.

⁵⁶ Criteria can be set up on the basis of pest practices of countries. Especially in the U.S. there are indicators on the proportion of black students accessed to universities, proportion of black students participating in universities, proportion of clack students as doctorates. (Ballentine, 2001, 292-296.)

⁵⁷ It was approved by studies that government has the main responsibility to initiate framework and policies for equal access to higher education. E.g. it is beneficial for the economy and society.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

Equal access to higher education for Roma students is a pressing concern in Europe including Hungary. This thesis has argued that the main responsibility in acting towards more equitable access to higher education for Romas belongs to the government. It was revealed that allowing broader access for Romas in higher education has clear political, social and economic benefits such as the advancement of the overall state's economy and social welfare. However it demands fundamental conditions from the government such as recognition of Romas as separate category and their monitoring. Approaches like positive discrimination, merit system and third way solution (complex preparatory courses for entrance examination of universities) were considered in the light of OECD country study of 2004, OECD policy recommendations of 2005 and further policy directions of 2008. It was found that most benefit can be gained by use third way solution.

For the thesis question, 'Has the government responded adequately to the OECD policy recommendation between 2005 and 2010?', the answer would be given shortly as 'No'. In details, (1) the government has not taken step towards the data collection and monitoring of Romas from 2005 onwards as OECD recommended. Also the straightforward increment of those who identified Romas in the higher education until 2010 was not achieved. In the context of the first recommendation, the thesis revealed that the government did not respond adequately. In addition, (2) the encouragement of special programs by the government failed in terms of financial or non-financial contribution until 2010. Therefore the thesis argues that the government has not responded adequately to the second OECD recommendation too. While (3) the government has taken steps towards targeted help for poorer students with the

inclusion of legal sections on the guarantee of financial and social support for students on the basis of income-level and disadvantaged; the level of help for Roma remains unclear and many of them were excluded as they have not been monitored as a separate category. It revealed that the number of the Roma recipients and a separate category of Romas are lacking therefore this does not convince the audience on how Romas benefited from targeted social support under the chaotic legal circumstances. Here again, the government's response to the third OECD recommendation is considered non-entirely adequate.

In connection with the result of the above non-dequate responses of the government, it can be summarized that government has not changed its attitude towards Roma's equity in the issue of access to higher education since 2005 despite of the pressure of OECD recommendations. Problems like government resistance towards data gathering, monitoring; recognition of Romas as a separate category and the decrement of government support on programs remains by worsening the situation of Romas in the present economic crisis.

In the scenario of status quo, it turned out that the perpetuation of current situation would result in increasing trends in the inequity in the access to higher education for Romas, discrimination, racism and would have severe affects on the social and economic status of Romas (e.g. health, housing and labor). Therefore the thesis argued the need for change by offering policy options such as positive discrimination (extra scores and quotas) and the third way solution (complex preparatory courses). While the option of positive discrimination to increase the number of Roma students to higher education can be achieved; the option has two main disadvantages: the implementation could cause serious legal and political debates on

‘unearned quotas’ and it neglects the need for skill development of Roma students which is included in the third way solution.

Seemingly, the third way solution is that policy alternative which combines the strengths of positive discrimination, merit system and complex skill- and knowledge development of Romas. The thesis presented the most advantages in this scenario, such as potential political, social and economic benefits especially cost efficiency, increment of Roma students in access to higher education, housing, health status, income-level, crime data and labor and overall economic and social growth. Therefore as a result of the analysis, the most appropriate policy option is the Third way solution.

Finally, further studies are highly welcomed to be conducted on Romas on the issue of higher education such as participation of Romas in higher education, the promotion of equitable selection procedures of universities or the assessment of complex preparatory courses. This thesis should be a message for the new recently elected government to reconsider the issue of Roma’s equal access to higher education and start progressive steps towards more equitable higher education for Roma people in Hungary.

Appendix

Higher Education Act

Act CXXXIX of 2005 on Higher Education

Section 9 (1) Persons engaged in the organisation, governance, operation and the execution of the tasks of higher education shall be obliged to adhere to the requirements of equal treatment in making decisions and taking actions affecting students, lecturers and staff employed in higher education. (Ministry of (Education and Culture, 2008, 17.)

Section 22

(2) For the promotion of equality, the higher education institution shall, by means of the services it provides, contribute to ensuring housing facilities for students, a healthy lifestyle free of addictions, and with its information system and guidance services shall assist with the integration of students during the terms (27.)

Section 39

(7) The Government may order preferential treatment

- a) for disadvantaged student groups,
- b) for those on unpaid leave for childcare purposes, or in receipt of pregnancy-maternity benefits, childcare allowance, child-rearing allowance or childcare benefits,

c) for those termed disabled applicants

provided that preferential treatment may only be granted with respect to the condition justifying preferential treatment, and may not result in exemption from the fulfilment of basic academic requirements that are requisite to the granting of professional qualifications certified as Bachelor or Master degree, or the vocational qualification (53.)

Section 46

(5) The student has the right to receive financial or in-kind benefits relative to his/her financial standing, income situation, and academic performance,

in particular

- a) to be provided dormitory placement or to receive an accommodation grant,
- b) to receive a maintenance grant and other bursaries (thus, in particular, a study grant, a doctorate bursary, or the Scholarship of the Republic of Hungary), social and textbook grants [hereinafter: the facilities listed under paragraphs a)–b) jointly referred to as ‘student bursaries’],
- c) to be granted exemption from, and deferment to their payment obligations or allowed to make instalment payments in compliance with the conditions and rules defined by the Government,
- d) to receive a student pass, and have access to associated services and benefits,
- e) to work in the higher education institution and to receive a student salary in consideration thereof, (61.)

Section 61 (1) Disabled students shall be offered convenient circumstances for preparation and examination, and shall be assisted in their fulfilment of obligations arising from their student status. Where appropriate, they should be exempted from the obligation to take certain course-units or certain parts thereof or to undergo assessment. If necessary, such students shall be exempted from the language examination or a certain part thereof, or the level related requirements of such language examinations. Disabled students shall be given more time to prepare at the examination, and shall be afforded the opportunity to use aids at the written test (typewriter, computer, etc.), or if necessary, to have, in the case of such students, a written test instead of an oral test, or an oral test instead of a written one. The exemption under this subsection shall exclusively be granted in the context of the condition justifying such exemption and may not result in exemption from the fulfilment of basic academic requirements that are requisite to the award of the professional qualification certified by the Bachelor and the Master degree, or of the vocational qualification evidenced by the certificate of higher-level vocational training.

(2) The principles governing the studies of disabled students, the criteria for preferential treatment and the relevant rules of procedure shall be

defined by the Government. Higher education institutions shall determine in their statutes the rules of executing institutional tasks concerning disabled students. (76.)

Government Regulation 1021 of 2004 on the Government programs for the Advancement of Roma integration

The Regulation specifies that each ministry is obliged to work out Roma integration Programs in their fields. In the issue of higher education, the section 36 underlines that the scholarship system should be developed to support Roma students including the Mentor Program. Moreover, poverty should be taken as the prior criteria in the grant system.

Government Act 237 of 2006 on the selection process of institutions in higher education (page 6-10)

Section 21.

Providing positive discrimination for disadvantaged students

- (1) Extra four points can be received by disadvantaged applicants in selection process of institutions
- (2) Additional extra 4 points can be received if the parents' highest education level is eight-class at elementary school or if she or he is under a permanent education.
- (3) Each disabled applicants can receive 8 extra points

Act 51 of 2007 on student grants in higher education

Section 4

....(2) On the basis of social grounds students can receive the following benefits regarding the payment of university fees. The exemption of the fees or the discount in the payment of the fees or postponing the payment for a later date could be approved.

(4) The exemption of residential fees for those students are approved legally who are belonging to one of the following categories: students with disadvantageous background, orphan, main family supporter.....

Section 5

- (1) The institutions could make decision according to their internal regulations to provide the exemption of tuition fees for students. It is regulated by the institutions. ..

Section 6

(1) For students the following grants can be given:

(a) Social grants

(b) Performance-based grant.....

(2) The institution in higher education can provide special scholarship programs for students according to their regulations and available financial resources

Section 7

The types of grants can be:

a, Performance-based grant

Scholarship

Grant provided by the Republic of Hungary

Science

b, Social grants

Regular social benefit

Exceptional, crisis social benefit

Bursa Hungarica social grant

Ministerial grants for foreign students

Bachelor grants

c, doctoral grants

d, further grants regulated in the regulations of institutions

e, Grants related to the function of institutions

Support in producing notes and buying text books, supporting cultural life, residential support...

Section 21

The social conditions of students

(1) In the judgment of social situation of the student the following criteria shall be taken into account:

(a) ...the number of persons in the family and their wages per person..

(b) The distance of the residence place and the place of the institution including the transportation costs

(d) In the case of disabled students, the extra costs paid for special equipment and social carer....

(e) In the case when the student has illness or one of his/her relatives in his/her household, the extra cost is paid

(f) if in the household, more children live...

(g) if there is need for extra expense for one of the relatives in the household in the field of social care...

(2) the average salary per person

Act CXXV of 2003 on Equal opportunities

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