

**The Limits and Boundaries of the  
European Social Model – Roma Minority Inclusion Beyond EU  
Conditionality**

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Submitted to

Central European University

Department of International Relations and European Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Word count: 17, 214 words

Budapest, Hungary

2013

## Abstract

The minority issue has been readdressed since post-communist countries embarked on the road towards democratization at the beginning of the 1990s. After the enlargements of 2004 and 2007, significant minority populations became EU citizens. Minority related issues could no longer be considered as an external concern for the EU. Ever since, one of the greatest challenges for the EU and its Member States has been the inclusion of the Roma, the largest and most vulnerable ethnic minority group in Europe. The following thesis attempts to examine the EU's involvement in developments aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of the Roma in the wake of an emerging European Roma policy under the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. Research is carried out to evaluate the EU's influence on domestic policy-making towards Roma inclusion, with special attention given to the education policy sector. The thesis found that two years after the inception of the EU Framework, tangible results in improving the lives of Roma are yet to be seen. The growing influence of the EU and the huge potential of the Framework bring high expectations to move beyond the rhetoric to the substance of integration by 2020.

**Keywords:** Minorities, Roma, EU Framework, Education, Policy, Inclusion

## **Acknowledgement**

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of the following people. For this reason, I am indebted to my supervisor Professor Peter Balazs for his academic assistance, useful advice and a clear overview in the field. I would like to express my gratitude to Marton Rovid, a research and policy officer at the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation, for providing me with invaluable insights by sharing his expertise related to the subject.

Hereby I also want to convey my sincere thanks to my stepfather, Jean-Pierre Tanguay for his support, time efforts and peer review. Furthermore, I would like to thank my family, especially my mother, Maria Tanguay for having faith in me. Finally, I want to thank my friends and colleagues at CEU, mainly Varban Benishev, Lauri Peterson and Tony Ibrahim.

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## Abbreviations

AFSJ	Area of Freedom, Security and Justice
CBP	Common Basic Principle
CEE	Central and Eastern European countries
CoE	Council of Europe
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
EFC	European Foundation Centre
ERPC	European Roma Policy Coalition
ERRC	European Roma Right Centre
EU	European Union
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ICCPR International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020
OSCE	Organization for Social and Economic Development
OSF	Open Society Foundation
REF	Roma Education Fund
TFEU	Treaty of the European Union
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

## Introduction

After the Second World War a number of attempts were made to protect minority rights through international frameworks such as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Most of these efforts focused on the fundamental rights of individuals, which in turn safeguarded the protection of basic human rights. In a recent EU Commission's document we find that "the accession of the EU to the ECHR became a legal obligation under the Treaty of Lisbon and constitutes a major step in the protection of human rights in Europe, although the process is not yet finalized."<sup>1</sup>

Despite high expectations, these international provisions failed to meet the special needs of certain minorities since critiques (Hughes, J. and Sasse G., Benedikter, T., Kuhelj, A., etc.). view them as too vague and ambiguous in nature. It was not until the early 1990s when the first signs of a more coherent international framework emerged. Despite all the promising arrangements such as the EU's cooperation with other international organizations (e.g. Council of Europe), the creation of the Copenhagen Criteria, a High Commissioner for National Minorities etc., EU strategies and national policies can best be considered as only partially successful in protecting the rights of minorities.

The collapse of communist regimes began a unique phase in the history of Europe and opened a new chapter in the old continent's political, social and economic life. The subsequent process of nation-state-building in the newly formed independent countries was filled with sentiments of historical injustice that emerged from political oppression towards

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2012). What works for Roma inclusion in the EU. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. p.49



national and ethnic identities during the communist period. The most evident manifestation of such trends can be found in the Central Eastern European region (CEE), particularly after the peaceful break-up of Czechoslovakia and the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia. Many view these events as a driving force that generated national emancipation and a symbolic return to Europe. As a consequence, the question of minorities has once again become one of the most important aspects of the state-building processes. In fact, one of the perpetual issues of European history relates to minorities. They have always played an important role in shaping the political landscape of Europe, which is viewed as the cradle of nation-state. Their importance is particularly pertinent in the post-communist era, as political mobilizations were partially based on either an anti-minority or pro-minority stance. Trehan and Sigona state “the new geopolitical order has affirmed a neoliberal economic doctrine throughout Europe. A by-product of this phenomenon has been increasing marginalization of groups, which do not ‘fit’ the new socio-economic regime.”<sup>2</sup> Ironically, the neoliberalist ‘ideological credo’ was meant to elevate the poor from poverty, and to enrich everyone in society. In Romanescu’s words, “this presumption prevented governments fulfilling their essential role of regulating economic growth and preserving social protection.”<sup>3</sup>

Along with the socio-economic transformations of post-communist countries, the European integration process has taken unprecedented measures in scale and intensity, which has led to the removal of barriers in areas that would have been inconceivable even for European Federalists. The integration process, relevant in the European context, entails political, social and economic integration based on respect, multiculturalism and equal opportunities. In order to avoid confusion, Bo uses the UNDP’s report, which differentiates

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<sup>2</sup> Trehan, N. and N. Sigona (2009). Romani politics in contemporary Europe : poverty, ethnic mobilization, and the neo-liberal order. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, Palgrave Macmillan. Available at <http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/latest-books/romani-politics-in-contemporary-europe-poverty-ethnic-mobilization-and-the-neoliberal-order/view> Accessed on May 3, 2013

<sup>3</sup> Romanescu, S. Workshop Debate cited in Biro, A., Gheorghe, N. and Kovats, M. et al (2013). *From Victimhood To Citizenship*. Kinizsi Printing House Corporation. p.190

between integration, assimilation, social exclusion and marginalization by defining integration as “the opportunity to participate in socioeconomic life on an equal basis without losing one’s own distinct identity, while simultaneously contributing one’s individual distinctiveness to the cultural richness of the society.”<sup>4</sup>

As thought-provoking as it is, many have contemplated the idea that the reconciliation and integration of its minorities is one of the biggest and most difficult of challenges facing the European Union, which is all too often associated with the struggle against social exclusion. With this in mind, Kirova observes that EU policies addressing current challenges, such as discrimination, racism, xenophobia, etc. “can pursue measures within the EU Lisbon Strategy to establish a knowledge-based society on the principles of sustainable economic growth and social cohesion, with the ultimate goal of modernizing the European Social Model by investing in people and building an active welfare state.”<sup>5</sup> Kirova also recognizes that such achievements of social cohesion cannot be reached unless the needs of the most vulnerable communities are addressed in an appropriate way.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the most difficult task for the EU and its Member States in the past decade has been the inclusion of the Roma, who are viewed as the biggest ethnic minority in Europe.<sup>7</sup> The vicious cycle of the Roma’s poverty, despite growing efforts to improve their lives, has generated much debate in Europe. The present thesis aims at contributing to this debate by looking at the interaction of national and EU integrationist developments and initiatives.

When mentioning the most vulnerable minorities, there is no doubt that the Roma minority is in this category. Indeed, having low levels of political representation with no kin-

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<sup>4</sup>UNDP. 2002: *The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe: Avoiding the dependency trap*. Regional Human Development Report. UNDP: Bratislava. Cited in Bo, B. (2012). Policy, Power and Prejudice: The National Roma Integration Strategies of the European Union.

<sup>5</sup> Lisbon European Council , 23 and 24 March 2000. Cited in Kirova, I. (2007). The Decade of Roma Inclusion. Addressing Racial Discrimination Through Development.p.38

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 38

<sup>7</sup> My thesis focuses on Roma with EU citizenship

state to safeguard its interests, the Roma are considered one of the biggest losers of the socio-economic transformation in the 1990s post-socialist countries.

The Roma issue is trans-national in nature and the inherent problems of this heterogeneous group have touched upon every sphere of life in Europe, involving political, economic and societal concerns. In recent years, strategies have been formed at the EU and national levels, while the implementation has fallen under national authority. In short, policies have failed in a number of ways. The deteriorating situation of the Romani people corresponds to this claim. Various EU reports conclude that many of the estimated 10 – 12 million Roma continue to experience extremely high unemployment rates, poor levels of educational attainment, high rates of infant mortality and low life expectancy live in substandard conditions while constantly being subject to segregation and discrimination in housing, healthcare, social benefits, employment and education.

The most evident manifestation of the Roma's social exclusion has taken place in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. The latter two countries will serve as case studies in my research for a number of reasons. One of them stems from the fact that both countries have provided a fertile ground for re-emerging far-right movements and populist politics after gaining EU membership. Populism in the Roma context suggests that politicians use ethnic tensions to gain electoral support, which often strains minority-majority relations and contributes to the exacerbating situation of the Roma. The recent economic crisis and the rise of far right parties in these countries have fueled ethnic antagonism directed towards the Roma population. The selected countries have a significant amount of Roma populations (6-10 %) and similar legacies and socio-economic conditions, except that Slovakia is considered a more heterogeneous country than Hungary.

Currently, minority related policies remain somewhat ambiguous, which demonstrates the complex nature of this topic. A significant problem arises after raising the following question: What is meant by the concept of ‘minority’? There is no clear definition or even a generally accepted legal term in any international treaty that defines minority in Europe. Lantschner and Eisendle make a general interpretation of the concept by claiming that “minority incorporates a group of numerically and politically inferior people whose ethno-cultural characteristics differ from the majority of the population in a country.”<sup>8</sup> As Wippman remarks, “most theorists insists that minorities can only be defined by a combination of objective and subjective elements.”<sup>9</sup>

There are numerous ways to categorize minorities according to race, gender, cultural or national identity, religious orientation, etc. Hence, minority related issues cannot be examined through a universal approach as different minority groups face distinct challenges. Essentially, as Kahanec et al. encapsulate, “social and economic exclusion remains an everyday challenge to millions of members of ethnic minorities living in Europe today.”<sup>10</sup> Another important fact is that the concept of minority also depends on cultural perceptions corresponding to local and regional realities. In Western societies minority is associated with immigrants, while in Central and Eastern Europe minorities are related to ethno-cultural groups distinct from the majority in one way or another.

## Research Question and Aim of the Thesis

Despite an ample amount of literature that is already in place with regards to Roma related issues, the majority of this literature primarily focuses on developing analysis of

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<sup>8</sup> Lantschner, E. and Eisendle, A. (2010), *Part II Minorities in Europe: An Overview of National Regulations*, p. 159. Available at: [http://www.mcrg.ac.in/EURAC\\_Publication1.pdf#page=87](http://www.mcrg.ac.in/EURAC_Publication1.pdf#page=87) Accessed on April 25, 2013

<sup>9</sup> Wippman, D. (1997). Evolution and Implementation of Minority Rights, *Fordham L. Rev.*, 66, p. 597

<sup>10</sup> Kahanec, M. & Zimmermann, K. F. (Eds.). (2011). *Ethnic diversity in European labor markets: Challenges and solutions*. Edward Elgar Publishing. p.5

minority rights and minority related policies prior to the last EU enlargements (2004 and 2007) and the impact of EU conditionality. As the title of my thesis suggests, I investigate minority related developments and integrationist measures following the period of the last two EU enlargement rounds. There is only limited research dedicated to analyzing the effects of current policies that address the Roma problem. Inspired by Bo's analysis on the existing Roma Integration Strategies, the present study brings additional contribution to this particular field.

The aim of my research is to investigate how recent EU initiatives influenced domestic policies directed towards the socio-economic inclusion of the Roma in Central Europe. The outcome of my analysis will test Bo's illustration on certain mechanisms through which "policies can potentially serve as agents of social control against marginalized people with the least amount of social capital."<sup>11</sup> The findings of my thesis adds to the existing literature in the way that illustrates how policy measures that have failed to implement the protection of minority rights can reinforce stereotypes which have an impact on socio-economic inequalities. Despite the fact that institutional and political efforts have been made in recent years to eradicate ethnic and racial discrimination and to include the most vulnerable minorities into society, the consequences of the economic crisis in Europe have challenged such initiatives. The economic crisis seems to have fueled xenophobic and extremist political factions. Hence, the outcome of my research will also help to better understand whether national policies are only conforming to the language of EU, or are they actually addressing policy needs of Roma (or of national society).

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<sup>11</sup> Bo, B. (2012). Policy, Power and Prejudice: The National Roma Integration Strategies of the European Union. Available at: [http://www.academia.edu/1545203/Policy\\_Power\\_Prejudice\\_The\\_National\\_Roma\\_Integration\\_Strategies\\_of\\_the\\_European\\_Union](http://www.academia.edu/1545203/Policy_Power_Prejudice_The_National_Roma_Integration_Strategies_of_the_European_Union) Accessed on April 20, 2013

## Structure of the Thesis

Following upon the increasing efforts of certain European governments and the recent emergence of an EU framework that “marks the highest level of political recognition that concern the plight of Roma,”<sup>12</sup> several questions arise: *Why has both the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 - 2015 and the first EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 had limited achievements in improving the socio-economic situation of the Roma? How have EU policies and initiatives influenced the domestic policies of certain EU Member States and how have top-down policy approaches been translated to local policy outcomes?*<sup>13</sup> Lastly, *what are the limits of the EU for real social transformation?*

These questions address problems and challenges the EU and its Members States have been facing and touch upon a number of different minority related issues that need careful analysis. It is important to note that the answers provided in my thesis are not exhaustive. The ultimate aim of my investigation is to answer the main research question of my thesis: To what extent has the EU shaped domestic policy-making on the Roma minority in Central Europe after the enlargement rounds of 2004 and 2007?

In order to answer these questions, the present thesis is organized as follows: The first chapter will first look at the most significant development towards the inclusion of Roma minority on a national level, the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 - 2015, then the focus is shifted towards the first ever EU initiative the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. In this section I will argue that the EU’s involvement in Roma related policy measures has increased in recent years, but despite increasing efforts the situation of

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<sup>12</sup> Council of the European Union (2011). Council Conclusions on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. 3089<sup>th</sup> Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, May 19, 2011. Available at [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/122100.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/lsa/122100.pdf) Accessed on 17 May, 2013

<sup>13</sup> By top-down policy approaches we mean policy initiatives or decisions taken on the EU level that may influence local policy-making

the Roma has not changed in a significant way. In short, policies have failed in a number of ways for a number of reasons, which are also discussed in the first chapter. Using Agarín's and Brosig's idea that European institutions borrow from basic assumptions linked to the 'multiculturalist approach,' I will also explore how this approach translates into policy initiation and how the EU's role is defined in developing integrationist measures towards Roma minority.

The focus of the second chapter is narrowed to the Central European region. A comparative case study analyses is carried out in the field of education between Slovakia and Hungary in order to see the extent of the EU's influence in the region's domestic policy making in recent years. In this part of the thesis, I will attempt to shed light on to what extent the most recent EU framework has had an impact on local educational policy outcomes in these two countries that have a significant Roma minority. The EU Framework was developed to serve as a guideline for Member States to follow their country-specific strategies, hence this chapter shows the extent of Slovakia's and Hungary's adherence to the EU initiative. Furthermore, the consequences of these local policy outcomes will be evaluated, and in the final part I will offer country-specific recommendations on how to improve the education of Roma.

Finally, in the conclusion I will make an attempt to offer a satisfactory answer to my research question with the aim of contributing to the ongoing debate on the inclusion of the Roma minority in the Member States of the European Union. The findings of the present work will show the value of an unprecedented EU initiative towards Roma and its impact on domestic policies on one hand, and its effect on the lives of Roma on the other.

## Methodology

The most suitable approach for my research is based on the qualitative research methodology. Hence, the bulk of the research is developed through the combination of primary and secondary resources. The former includes EU proposals such as the EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies, national government documents, publications released by various NGOs and think tanks, and reports produced by international institutions such as the Council of Europe. A significant amount of literature comes from EU literature, as well as books, journals, and press releases. Using these resources will help to identify the key issues related to integrationist policies and strategies aiming to improve the conditions of the most vulnerable minority group in Europe.

The research includes two case studies that have been selected to demonstrate the inadequate policy approaches and measures in the region on one hand, while exposing the European approach towards Roma on the other.

A comparative analysis approach will reveal similarities and discrepancies in terms of the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) in Slovakia and Hungary, while special attention will be paid to the educational sector and its conditions for Roma inclusion. Both countries have a significant Roma minority and provide a fertile ground for research in ethnic minority related policies. Educational policies have a significant impact on the conditions of the Roma minority since they are intertwined with housing, health and employment. This particular field is considered the most important part of poverty alleviation, social inclusion and other processes of development. My research, however, is limited in terms of quantitative data, since it is very difficult to obtain reliable data on Roma minorities for a number of reasons. Indicators play a crucial role in defining state policies towards Roma inclusion in the Decade of Roma Initiative and the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. It has been noted that these indicators fall short in their



potential to measure change.<sup>14</sup> Therefore the Commission has emphasized the need for a robust monitoring mechanism with clear benchmarks ensuring that tangible results are measured.<sup>15</sup> It might seem somewhat pre-mature to assess the effects of the EU Framework two years after its inception. However, the research is conducted in the hope to find indications for future outcomes.

## **Theoretical framework:**

### **The liberal – multicultural debate**

In this section, we revisit the ongoing debate among intellectuals, policy makers, institutions and governments on the choice of integrationist approaches. We distinguish between two prominent models in the field of minority integration, which are the multicultural approach and the liberal approach. The former uses a more general method corresponding to a human rights approach (individual rights), while the latter represents a more specific approach (collective rights). Through the course of modern history, policy makers and institutions have been facing a perpetual problem as to which approach to focus on. Those engaged with the ongoing European debate on the inclusion of minorities find that policy-making dilemmas are difficult to avoid. One of them concerns to what extent to apply a multicultural take on ethnic diversity in the EU, and in what cases to pursue the liberal approach. Scholars of multiculturalism focus on collective rights, which according to Agarín and Brosig are “inherent to members of minority groups, while at the same time dispensing with questions of individual autonomy.”<sup>16</sup> Both authors highlight the weaknesses and problems of pursuing multiculturalist solutions to minority integrations: “essentializing groups on one hand and seeking their convergence on the other are difficult outcomes to

<sup>14</sup> UNDP / World Bank / EC Regional Roma Survey (2011). Roma Education in Comparative Perspective. p.12

<sup>15</sup> European Commission (2011). En European Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020

<sup>16</sup> Agarín, T. and Brosig, M. (Eds), (2009). Minority Integration In Central Eastern Europe. *Multicultural Solutions for Central and Eastern Europe? Concluding Observations*. p.331

reconcile.”<sup>17</sup> In fact, the multicultural approach does not distinguish among individuals, but advocates special protection for groups who are considered by this approach as homogenous. Consequently, both authors state that “policies remain blind towards differences within non-dominant or excluded groups, reducing inequalities among some members of these groups immediately leads to the further marginalization of the least competitive members of these communities.”<sup>18</sup> Usually, children, women and the under-educated remain the victims of group-based approaches towards larger entities, as is the case of the Roma. On the other hand, the liberal model focuses on human rights (individual rights), which are based on the idea that “the best way to improve the lives of minorities is to treat their members in the same way as the members of the dominant ethnic group.”<sup>19</sup> Danova argues in her thesis that before EU accession, policy-making in EEC countries was based on the liberal model, which allegedly explains the failure to develop effective policies for improving the situation of the Roma minority in the CEE region.<sup>20</sup> To the contrary, Agarín and Brosig suggest that the group approach is the key reason that explains the failure of Roma to “achieve success in their integration endeavors across CEE.”<sup>21</sup> They also acknowledge that the group-based approach is likely to reproduce inequalities among sub-groups, “unless it is combined with the differentiated treatment of individual differences within the groups affected by the process of minority integration.”<sup>22</sup> In the individual rights and group rights debate, the following questions are raised by Kymlicka: “if the whole concept of legal rights has been developed in individual terms, how do we provide justice for the group? And if we provide justice for the group, then do we not, by the same token, deprive individuals of other groups, not included among the discriminated-against groups, of the right to be treated as individuals,

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 332

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.p.334

<sup>19</sup> Danova, M. (2011). Roma as a Unique Cultural Minority: the Impact of Communism and Democratisation on Roma in Eastern Europe (Doctoral dissertation, Durham University).p.2

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.p.2

<sup>21</sup> Agarín, T. and Brosig, M. (Eds), (2009). Minority Integration In Central Eastern Europe.p.335

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.p.334

independently of any group characteristic?”<sup>23</sup> Although Kymlicka’s thoughts are mainly associated with problems that have arisen in the United States, I believe that they are applicable in the context of the Roma minority in the EU. By inclusion, we mean the equal treatment (non-discrimination) and equal access of Roma in the areas of housing, health care, employment and education. Indeed, some scholars have compared and found similarities in many aspects between African Americans and the Roma. Although their plight differs in terms of historical, cultural, ethnic, social, economic and political realities, both have faced, as Rorke identifies, “racial discrimination, high unemployment, poor educational outcomes, negative perceptions and stereotypes.”<sup>24</sup>

Societal integration approaches have created a number of moral and political dilemmas for policy-makers and activists that evolved in the context of the emerging European Roma policy, as discussed in Marton Rovid’s article. Rovid also suggests that these dilemmas can be translated into policy options.<sup>25</sup> Three main normative dilemmas are presented by Rovid: (i) the relation of self-determination to anti-discrimination (ii) the question of Roma specific norms and policies; and (iii) the dilemma of whether the Roma should be recognized as a national minority or as a non-territorial nation.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the debate underscores whether to put emphasis on anti-discrimination strategies such as the promotion of the civic equality and the protection of the fundamental human rights of Romani peoples, or to encourage their self-determination and autonomy.<sup>27</sup>

Drawing on the discussion, international organizations have developed certain norms and standards, either at legal or policy level that caters for effective equality, non-discrimination and cultural diversity. Agarain and Brosig identify a contradiction between

<sup>23</sup> Kymlicka, W. (1995). *The Rights of Minority Cultures*. Oxford University Press Inc., New York. p.124

<sup>24</sup> Shabazz, R. (2012). *What Roma and American Black Males Have in Common?* Open Society Foundation

<sup>25</sup> Rovid M. (2011). One-size-fits-all Roma? On the normative dilemmas of the emerging European Roma policy, *Romani Studies* 5, Vol. 21, No.1

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.p.3

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

international organizations focusing too much on groups ‘to ensure equality and guarantee non-discrimination,’ and CEE states ‘having less sophisticated approach to creating and sustaining group bonds.’<sup>28</sup> With this in mind, the following chapter looks at integrationist measures developed on intra-national and supranational levels, which aim at improving the socio-economic conditions of the Roma minority. Many believe that the Roma problem is not a unique case, and unless actions are taken with tangible results, the prospects towards deepening the social aspect of the European integration process may be hindered. One of the advocates is Hochler, who points out in her thesis that Roma exclusion is not an ‘isolated phenomena,’ while she develops an argument that the multiculturalism approach, when incorporated into educational policies, has the potential to shape actors’ actions, attitudes and perceptions. She claims that this may affect the overall situation of Roma by using case studies of Romania and Spain.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Agarín, T. and Brosig, M. (Eds), (2009). *Minority Integration In Central Eastern Europe*.p.341-342

<sup>29</sup> Hochler, K. J. (2012). *A Comparative Study on the Situation of the Roma in Romania and Spain: A focus on multicultural education measures as a foundation for positive societal integration*. MA Thesis, Lund University., Available at: <http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=2607195&fileId=2607208> Accessed on 14 May, 2013

# Chapter 1. Efforts and initiatives towards Roma inclusion

## The Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005-2015

The development of EU processes has always been influenced and shaped by expansion. Not only have new member states have been required to adapt to the EU's legal and socio-economic structures, but the EU itself has had to adjust to new circumstances. The two most recent enlargement rounds (2004 and 2007) of the European Union included post-socialist states and was in many respects a historical turning point in the European integration process. The inclusion of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries has meant that minority related issues have become an internal part of the EU's agenda, which in turn has created high expectations for the inclusion of minorities under the aegis of the EU. In fact, as Rorke points out, "civil society activists have long insisted that the European Union has a vital role to play to protect the rights of minorities including Roma, and to coordinate the efforts of member states to promote equity and implement effective social inclusion policies."<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, the primary role of safeguarding minority rights and ensuring the welfare and security of minority groups falls upon national governments, since the EU lacks the legal framework to develop a single minority protection policy. Influence however can be exerted as "the Union's policies on anti-discrimination, regional development, immigration and integration are of direct relevance to persons belonging to minorities and complement the Member States' efforts to address minority issues effectively."<sup>31</sup> At present, after reviewing certain EU proposals and developments initiated at various levels, the following questions spring to mind: what role should EU institutions take when it comes to minority related issues

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<sup>30</sup>Rorke, B. (2011). Beyond Rhetoric: Roma Integration Roadmap for 2020: Priorities for an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, Open Society Institute, Roma Initiatives.

<sup>31</sup> European Union Agency For Fundamental Rights (2011). Respect for and protection of persons belonging to minorities (2008-2010). p.17

and what are the limits of EU governance in terms of shaping social policy-making in EU member states and beyond EU boundaries? Since this thesis is limited in scope - the main focus is put on the Central European region - the explanations will be made in the context of EU member states. Therefore the limitation of this paper is tied to issues and policies that concern Roma who are EU nationals.

At the advent of the last enlargement rounds of 2004 and 2007, expectations were high as candidate countries put forth efforts to fulfill the conditions set by EU conditionality, including the Copenhagen criteria. In 2004 Peter Vermeersch explored the impact of the enlargement process on domestic governance in Central Europe. In my opinion his conclusion that the effects in the region were ‘profoundly positive’ was premature. Almost a decade later, it is clear that in his volume ‘Minority policy in Central Europe: exploring the impact of the EU’s enlargement strategy,’ he was reflecting more on expectations than on facts.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, Vermeersch makes it clear that “despite the general effects of membership conditionality acknowledged by various studies, there is little research on the particular impact of conditions and negotiations on the specific policy area of minority protection.”<sup>33</sup> There is little doubt, however, that Hungary and Slovakia fulfilled the conditions set by the enlargement process that involved respecting human rights and protecting minority rights. Yet, following upon the accession of candidate countries with high Roma populations, concerns began to grow over the situation of the most vulnerable and marginalized ethnic group in Europe, the Roma. Following the last enlargement round in 2007, around 4.5 million Roma became EU citizens. Their appalling situation prompted the EU to get more involved with Roma related issues, but the extent of its influence remains unclear.

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<sup>32</sup>Vermeersch, P. (2004). "Minority policy in Central Europe: exploring the impact of the EU's enlargement strategy." *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*3(2): 3-19

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.p.3

The following chapter examines measures that have been developed by the Decade of Roma Inclusion and looks at the most recent initiatives of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020, which was adopted during the Hungarian Council Presidency of the EU in 2011. The aim of this chapter is to illustrate various developments towards Roma minorities on national and EU levels, which is a pre-requisite to getting a better understanding of the EU's impact on domestic policy-making towards the Roma minority. Thus, in the later stage of my thesis an investigation is put forward to elucidate the causal path of top-down approaches in the Roma integration context.

In spite of numerous attempts to safeguard minority rights and to improve the situation of Roma in Europe, it is believed that progress has been limited in many ways, and as a result, many Roma continue to experience cultural and economic discrimination, particularly in the CEE<sup>34</sup> region where Roma represent between 7 to 10% of the population.<sup>35</sup> Estimates currently suggest that the Roma population in the EU is approximately six (6) million people. The majority of the evidence found in EU surveys, government reports, and in academic literature suggests that the largest ethnic minority group in Europe, the Roma, continues to suffer primarily from poverty. This is reflected in high unemployment rates, low percentage of school attendance among Roma children, high rates of infant mortality and lower life expectancy than the majority of the population in the countries of their residence.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>CEE region accounts to EU member states with high Roma population including Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria

<sup>35</sup>European Commission (2012) What works for Roma inclusion in the EU. p.7. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/roma> Accessed on April 24, 2013

<sup>36</sup>Bo, B. (2012). Policy, Power and Prejudice: The National Roma Integration Strategies of the European Union. Available at: [http://www.academia.edu/1545203/Policy\\_Power\\_Prejudice\\_The\\_National\\_Roma\\_Integration\\_Strategies\\_of\\_theEuropean\\_Unionn](http://www.academia.edu/1545203/Policy_Power_Prejudice_The_National_Roma_Integration_Strategies_of_theEuropean_Unionn) Accessed on April 25, 2013

In the 1990s, the EU continuously exerted pressure on candidate countries to comply with the Copenhagen criteria.<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile the international community, the Council of Europe and the OSCE in particular, has pushed countries to incorporate the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995) into their legal systems. Annabel Tremlett believes that the EU has had the potential to offer "...an influential arena for Roma politics," but asserts "European institutions have been accused of not going far enough to make any real changes."<sup>38</sup> In order to ascertain the verity of Tremlett's statement, there is need to examine what role the EU has taken in shaping domestic policies in the post-enlargement period, particularly to developments towards the Roma minority.

The first signs of political will and collective commitment to solving Roma issues emerged in 2003 at the regional conference on Roma in Budapest. The goal was to put political and social effort towards improving the lives of Roma based on strategies developed by nine countries<sup>39</sup> from the CEE region. As a result, The Decade of Roma Inclusion was adopted. Launched in 2005, it represents a voluntary action framework for national governments "to reduce disparities in key economic and human development outcomes for Roma through implementing policy reforms and programs designed to break the vicious circle of poverty and exclusion."<sup>40</sup> The ultimate goal of the Decade is to integrate Roma into society by providing the same opportunities as the majority of the population.

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<sup>37</sup>The Copenhagen criteria refers to the political, economic and legal requirements from candidate countries, including respect for and protection of persons belonging to minorities

<sup>38</sup>Tremlett, A. (2009) Comparing European Institutional and Hungarian Approaches to Roma (Gypsy) Minorities.p.129

<sup>39</sup>Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, FYR Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovakia (Bosnia Herzegovina and Spain joined the Decade in 2008)

<sup>40</sup>The World Bank, The Decade of Roma Inclusion Accessed April 15, 2013



From the outset of the Decade, national authorities set a limited amount of goals for improvements in the areas of education, housing, health and employment, while the Steering Committee - made up of representatives of governments - addressed the need to focus on poverty, discrimination and gender. More importantly, the framework aims to encourage Roma participation (international Roma organizations) in assessing the needs of communities and consultation with the civil society, which has been supported by the international community, including the World Bank, the European Commission, the United Nations Development Program, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Council of Europe, etc.. The broader objective of the Decade program aims to create better conditions for the Roma's socio-economic integration into the society by improving their living conditions, which as a consequence would lead to closing the gap between Roma and non-Roma populations.

Expectations were high at the launch of the initiative in 2005, but success in implementing measures and meeting objectives set by national governments remains a contentious subject as it has generated great debate among scholars, politicians and the general public. The interpretation of 'successful measures' is highly contentious on its own, as it is often viewed in a way that corresponds to a particular actor's expectations and interests. Adem Ademi, a program coordinator at the Decade of Roma Inclusion's Secretariat believes that any successes or failures of the Decade initiative should be measured by "the commitment of the governments to implement the action plans they prepared themselves and the implementation of those policies."<sup>41</sup>

According to many human rights activists and campaigners, the promising measures offered from the onset of the framework have not yet been realized, but some governments do

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<sup>41</sup>Popkostadinova, N. (2011). Little to Celebrate Halfway through Europe's 'Roma Decade'. Available at: <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/little-to-celebrate-halfway-through-europe-s-roma-decade> Accessed on May 3, 2013

take a more positive stance on the issue. Some officials believe that efforts have initiated positive developments towards Roma inclusion in Central Europe, but the majority of Roma and non-Roma population claims that there is a long way to go if the objectives of the Decade are to reach their full potential. Developments towards Roma inclusion and the achievement of positive outcomes have also varied over time between and among countries, regions and local municipalities. The case studies of Slovakia and Hungary are presented in the following chapter to demonstrate that regional disparities of the Roma's living conditions are a common feature of this particular Central European region. Whilst some governments of the Decade countries have achieved progress by increasing efforts to improve the socio-economic situation of the Roma, others have failed to maintain their commitments. It has been said that school attendance in Romania has increased, while some reports have shown that courts in Slovakia have prevented Roma from being excluded from schools.<sup>42</sup>

The Decade Watch<sup>43</sup> has produced three reports so far, “assessing government action towards implementing commitments made under the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015” in the four priority areas of education, employment, health and housing.<sup>44</sup> In the most recent Decade watch report published in 2009, Slovakia and Hungary were ranked at the bottom of the Decade countries, while in the previous report of 2007 Hungary was placed among the best performing countries with regards to the government's inputs.

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<sup>42</sup>Citizenship in Southeast Europe (2012) “Another Decade of Roma Exclusion?” Available at: <http://www.citsee.eu/blog/another-decade-roma-exclusion> Accessed on May 3, 2013

<sup>43</sup> Decade Watch – an initiative of Roma leaders and activists supported by the Open Society Foundation

<sup>44</sup> Decade Watch (2009), Results of the 2009 Survey. Available at: [http://www.romadecade.org/decade\\_watch\\_results\\_of\\_the\\_2009\\_survey](http://www.romadecade.org/decade_watch_results_of_the_2009_survey) Accessed on April 30, 2013

## EU's role leading to the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020

Despite some of the positive features of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the Commission's Roma Task Force findings indicate "strong and proportionate measures are still not yet in place to tackle the social and economic problems of a large part of the EU's Roma population."<sup>45</sup> In her thesis, Boroka Bo also claims that seven years after the launch of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, no real progress has been made to improve the social and political situation of the Roma population in Europe.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, Kirova touches upon the socio-economic insecurity fueled by the recent economic crisis in Europe and political instability in countries with significant Roma populations that have contributed to the marginalization of the Roma minorities, particularly in the CEE region.<sup>47</sup> According to Beger, "austerity measures could not be an excuse for continuous discrimination against the Roma."<sup>48</sup> The recent rise of populism and the emerging far-right movements in Central Europe has raised even more concerns over the situation of discriminatory practices against minorities, in which Romani people are the most affected group. Rosenfield has also recognized that "members of extreme-right political groups with anti-Roma agendas have gained popularity and have won seats in national parliaments, signaling their viability in mainstream politics."<sup>49</sup> The Jobbik party in Hungary is just one example of many that constitutes to this paradigm. Therefore, the recent and ongoing economic crisis coupled with the consequent social discontent signal a real threat to safeguarding European values, including the protection of minority rights and their interests, while the EU has been

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<sup>45</sup>European Commission (2011). An EU framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. p.3

<sup>46</sup>Boroka, B. (2012). Policy, Power and Prejudice: The National Roma Integration Strategies of the European Union. p.6

<sup>47</sup>Kirova, I. (2007). The Decade of Roma Inclusion. Addressing Racial Discrimination Through Development. p.36

<sup>48</sup>Gaydazhieva, S. (2013). Beyond national Roma integration strategies.

<sup>49</sup>Rosenfield E. (2010). Combating Discrimination against the Roma in Europe: Why Current Strategies Aren't Working and What Can Be Done, Denver University. p.123

somewhat puzzled to take coherent action against anti-Roma, anti-immigrant, xenophobic manifestations throughout Europe.

In the past decade, the need for a targeted approach has prompted the EU to make a number of proposals for Member states to promote the social and economic integration of Roma. Under Directive 2000/43/EC, Member states had already been obliged to give Roma an equal access to education, employment, healthcare and social protection, but the implementation of national policy measures have fallen short in safeguarding the interests of the Roma on many grounds. Therefore, many, including political figures, experts in the field, Roma, and human rights activists have come to the conclusion that national policies alone are not capable of accommodating the needs of the most vulnerable minorities in Europe. Thus, a widespread demand emerged for a more coherent approach in improving the situation of the Roma that would require a more active role from the EU. As a result, the future of a European Roma Policy was discussed at the highly anticipated European Roma Forum in Brussels in 2008. The event is recognized as the first time when national governments, civil society organizations from across Europe and EU institutions came together to discuss the alarming situation of the Roma in Europe. Despite placing high hopes on the event, criticism and disappointment followed. Uzunova feels that the discourse at the Summit represents the ongoing dysfunctional dialogue between and among national governments, the Roma community, civil society and European institutions.<sup>50</sup> Tremlett also highlights that “the outcomes did not match the high hopes placed on the Forum as an event that would shake up the apparent inertia of European institutional activity.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Uzunova, I. (2010). Roma Integration in Europe: Why Minority Rights are Failing. *Ariz. J. Int'l & Comp. L.*, 27, 283

<sup>51</sup>Tremlett, A. (2009). Comparing European Institutional and Hungarian Approaches to Roma (Gypsy) Minorities.p.129

Drawing on the Council conclusions and on observations in general, the EU's role has certainly increased since the first European Roma Forum summit. Simultaneously, there has been a shift in focus from analyzing problems to finding ways of making existing instruments more efficient.<sup>52</sup> It seems that a number of Council conclusions since 2007 indicate that “there is a powerful EU framework of legislative, financial and policy coordination tools already available to support Roma inclusion,”<sup>53</sup> but critics have continued to cast doubts over the efficacy of such frameworks. Arguably, the absence of a comprehensive approach on a European scale has hindered chances for making real progress, while it is debatable whether the initiative of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 has the potential to offer a new momentum that would move beyond the rhetoric. However, the complexity of the Roma integration process makes it a difficult task to simply rely on the EU's growing role, particularly when implementation falls under national competences. Another challenge for the EU has been to find a comprehensive approach which is country-specific at the same time and makes available instruments more effective. Thus, when taking the EU perspective into account, the following concern arises among others: how is it possible to achieve progress, when, according to Rosenfield, “the Roma are caught up in a classic vicious cycle? As more programs are designed and implemented specifically for them, their stigmatization and isolation increases; yet if no such programs are devised, their suffering will continue unabated.”<sup>54</sup> Taking into consideration such dilemmas, one may wonder: what are the limits of social transformation in the European integration process? There is no easy answer to this question. However, we can be sure that progress can only be

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>EUR-Lex, European Commission (2010). The social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010DC0133:EN:NOT> Accessed on April 29, 2013

<sup>54</sup>Rosenfield Erica (2010), Combating Discrimination against the Roma in Europe: Why Current Strategies Aren't Working and What Can Be Done, Denver University.p.122 Available at <http://www.du.edu/korbel/hrhw/researchdigest/minority/Roma.pdf> Accessed on May 2, 2013

achieved by offering a way of reconciliation to the most vulnerable groups in Europe, including the Roma.

The European Roma Policy Coalition recognizes that Roma inclusion will continue to face challenges as long as ‘deep-seated anti-Gypsyism’ and discriminatory tendencies prevail in Europe.<sup>55</sup> The harsh reality reflecting the Roma’s condition is constantly highlighted in the academic literature and reinforced by European and national surveys that in contemporary European societies the Roma are perceived as ‘social parasites,’<sup>56</sup> whose way of living is incompatible with the rest of the society. Most certainly, the meaning of ‘social parasites’ refers to Roma’s reliance on social welfare, while showing no effort to seek employment. Uzunova believes that anti-Gypsyism can be seen as a social norm, and follows upon the scholarly argument that “social norms are not only stronger than legal norms in a society outside the courtroom, but that social norms influence how legal norms are interpreted and enforced inside the courtroom.”<sup>57</sup>

These socially constructed stereotypes have been formed over centuries, and have solidified mistrust between Roma and non-Roma which has led to a strong resistance “against the successful application of legal norms and effective social policies for Roma inclusion.”<sup>58</sup> Rosenfield also views this prejudice against the Roma as a “deeply ingrained structural feature of European society...”<sup>59</sup> From drawing on personal experiences, it is important to note that antagonistic sentiments towards Roma often stem from a general perception that their lifestyle, behavior and attitude generates conflict with the rest of the society. Positive

<sup>55</sup>European Roma Policy Coalition (2012). Analysis of the National Roma Integration Strategies.p.57

<sup>56</sup>Uzunova, I. (2010). Roma Integration in Europe.p.302

<sup>57</sup>LoPucki, L. M., & Weyrauch, W. O. (2000). A Theory of Legal Strategy. *Duke Law Journal*, 1405-1486.Cited by Uzunova, I. (2010). Roma Integration in Europe: Why Minority Rights are Failing. *Ariz. J. Int'l & Comp. L.*p.306

<sup>58</sup>EUR-Lex, European Commission (2011). An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Roma Strategies up to 2020

<sup>59</sup>Rosenfield E. (2010), Combating Discrimination against the Roma in Europe: Why Current Strategies Aren’t Working and What Can Be Done, Denver University.p.123

discrimination is another factor that goes back to the general debate and dilemma over whether to grant special rights to the Roma or treat them as the rest of the society. Based on recent European surveys, 77% of Europeans believe that Roma are put into a disadvantaged position in society.<sup>60</sup> This statistic informs us about the severity of the Romani's social, political and economic disadvantages as perceived by the majority of European society. The systematic discrimination of the Roma undermines the democratic credentials of the EU and its member states. Many have gone as far as claiming that the Roma problem can hinder the social development of the European integration process.

It goes without saying that it takes generations to change the attitudes of majorities. It requires further EU involvement and participation of all the actors, particularly the active involvement of the Roma. Rorke has also tried to convey this message, as he reminds us that “integration should be understood as a two-way process...,” and he adds that “...without a participatory “bottom-up” approach to developing integration policies, future efforts will prove to be as ineffective as those in the past.”<sup>61</sup> As the cliché states: ‘It takes two to tango.’ Andras Biro is convinced that blaming the embedded prejudices and stereotypes of the majorities’ attitudes and “ignoring the Roma’s own weaknesses reproduces the victimhood stance which blocks action and ‘explains’ the impossibility of changing the status quo.”<sup>62</sup> It is widely known how low Roma participation has been despite the efforts of both the Decade of Roma initiative and the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies to include Roma communities and activists in policy shaping in the four priority areas.

Meanwhile, the Council of the European Union has acquired certain competence to take action to combat discrimination under the Directive 200/43EC, which includes the principle

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<sup>60</sup>Villarreal F. and Walek C. (2008), European Roma Summit conference report, Brussels, p.6

<sup>61</sup>Rorke, B.(2011). *Beyond Rhetoric*,p.55

<sup>62</sup>Biro, A., Gheorghe, N. and Kovats, M. et al (2013). “From Victimhood To Citizenship”. Kinizsi Printing House Corporation. p.12

of equal treatment between people irrespective of their ethnic or racial origin.<sup>63</sup> The 1997 Amsterdam Treaty includes Article 13, which empowers the EU institutions “to take action to deal with discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, disability and sexual orientation.”<sup>64</sup> These protectionist measures are developed further in Article 2 of the Treaty of Lisbon, which states the following:

*“The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.”*<sup>65</sup>

Yet, discrimination continues to be part of the Roma’s daily life, which illustrates the need for more effective EU instruments. EU Member States need to ensure that “Roma are treated as EU citizens with equal fundamental rights as enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.”<sup>66</sup> A report made by the Open Society Foundation (OSF) in 2005 also suggests that policy makers cannot achieve progress unless they come to understand the drivers of Roma discrimination and design strategies that change attitudes.<sup>67</sup> Scholars, including Carolina Henriques, have identified that institutional change in policies and practices alone do not bring promising changes unless the EU and Member States embark on the mission to promote a change of mentalities among the majority of the population.<sup>68</sup> A

<sup>63</sup>Rorke, B. and I. Open Society Institute. Roma (2011). Beyond Rhetoric.p.7

<sup>64</sup>Europa. Summaries of EU legislation (2005). Equality and non-discrimination in an enlarged European Union

<sup>65</sup>EUR-Lex, Treaty of Lisbon, Article 2. (2007), Amendmens To The Treaty On European Union and To The Treaty Establishing The European Community.

<sup>66</sup>European Commission.(2011). An EU framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. p. 173

<sup>67</sup>Open Society Foundations (2005).Current Attitudes Toward the Roma in Central Europe: A Report of Research with non-Roma and Roma Respondents

<sup>68</sup>Henriques C. (2012). Is the European Union ready for the Roma? International Journal of Humanities and Social Science.



general debate about development processes and integrationist measures has led to the recognition that there is need to shift from previous approaches towards marginalized groups.

By observing developments in the past decade, we can assert that integrationist measures have failed so far. Is it time to change the existing approach towards the Roma? Empirical evidence suggests that pursuing narrow-group approaches towards vulnerable groups has negative repercussions. Kirova uses the OSF survey from 2005 that shows “programs perceived as preferential of the Roma were seen by both Roma and non-Roma as counterproductive, with the potential to increase discrimination and hostility towards the Roma in the long term.”<sup>69</sup> According to the findings of the survey, programs such as the Decade initiative “should also address the needs and concerns of other citizens in the region suffering from similar social and economic disadvantages.”<sup>70</sup> One may also cast doubt over the impact of antidiscrimination measures aimed at fostering good relations between minority and majority. In response, Kymlicka and other liberal theorists of multiculturalism contend that “antidiscrimination laws fall short of treating members of minority groups as equals; this is because states cannot be neutral with respect to culture.”<sup>71</sup> As stated earlier, and reiterated by Marton Rovid, the EU has also been facing with the dilemma of “whether anti-discrimination measures based on universal individual rights are sufficient to promote the social inclusion of Roma, or whether policies based on group-differentiated minority rights are required to ensure the exercise of their fundamental human rights.”<sup>72</sup> Also, it is important to note that discrimination is just one of the challenges that the Roma on one side, and policy-makers, activists on the other have to face. Presumably, anti-discrimination measures can

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<sup>69</sup>Kirova, I. (2007). The Decade of Roma Inclusion. Addressing Racial Discrimination Through Development. p.37

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.p.37

<sup>71</sup>Song, S.(Winter 2010 Edition). "Multiculturalism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.). Available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/multiculturalism> Accessed on April 20, 2013

<sup>72</sup>Rovid, M. (2011). One-size-fits-all Roma? On the normative dilemmas of the emerging European Roma policy, *Romani Studies* 5, Vol. 21, No.1, 1-22, p.1

only mitigate the negative stereotypes and antagonistic attitudes towards Roma, but they do not necessarily address or solve Roma's access to housing, health care, education and employment.

Jose Manuel Barroso's speech addressed to the first European Roma Forum on 16 September, 2008 in Brussels reminds us that challenging discrimination alone is not sufficient to remove the obstacles of a disadvantaged group, and calls all the actors involved in policy-making "to take ethno-cultural differences and entrenched social disadvantages into account."<sup>73</sup> In addition, it has been recognized in recent years that in order to implement effective anti-discrimination measures, action needs to be taken at the local, regional, national and European level involving public authorities, the civil society and the Roma community itself. Creating a dialogue on the Roma issue between Roma and non-Roma persons is believed to be a pre-requisite to improving the social inclusion of the Roma.

At the second European Roma Forum summit held on April 8, 2010 in Cordoba, Spain, Commissioner Viviane Reding highlighted the significant progress achieved for Roma inclusion at EU level since 2008. The second European Roma Forum led to the Council's agreement to compile a set of Common Basic Principles on Roma inclusion that advocates the use of anti-discriminatory policies and involves the use of EU instruments, Roma participation, and other relevant institutions. According to the European Foundation Centre (EFC), these principles, "can serve as an explicit EU-wide reference to govern current and future policies for the inclusion of Roma in Europe."<sup>74</sup> In order to achieve this objective, the EFC emphasized that it is essential to codify these principles into the legal and policy frameworks of the EU Member States. Furthermore, the EFC believes that the second

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<sup>73</sup>Villarreal, F. and Walek, C. (2008), European Roma Summit conference report, Brussels, p.4

<sup>74</sup>European Foundation Centre (2010). Recommendations of the European Forum of Foundations for Roma Inclusion to the Second European Roma Summit From principles to action for the inclusion of Roma in Europe.p.1

European Roma summit demonstrates the EU's and Member States' commitment to changing their policy approaches towards Roma. The creation of the integrated European Roma Platform is a good example of taking responsibilities to another level for improving the unacceptable situation of the Roma.<sup>75</sup> The EU's increasing role can be observed after the summit as Commissioner Reding's portfolio was expanded to the responsibility "of ensuring the necessary coordination and cooperation between the services in the Commission, developing and applying a comprehensive and cross-sectoral set of policies and programmes aimed at Roma inclusion."<sup>76</sup>

In order to address these challenges, a coherent approach had to be introduced that would entail unprecedented measures within the EU Member States. In recent years, the Commission has asked the Member States to adopt their strategies and policies into a comprehensive approach towards Roma integration. Under the Hungarian Council Presidency of 2011, the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 was adopted to encourage the implementation of more effective measures that would bring tangible benefits to the lives of people that have been left on the margins of society. The framework serves as a guideline for the National Roma Integration Strategies. It has been emphasized that national goals for Roma integration "should be set, taking account of needs, constraints and the diverse situations in each Member State."<sup>77</sup> In the initial phase of the framework, Member States were called upon to propose their national strategies or policy measures that would be followed by the Commission's assessment and its monitoring of the implementation process. The EU Framework would also encourage the participation of the stakeholders concerned, including representatives of the civil society and the Roma. According to Rorke,

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid.p.1

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.p.2

<sup>77</sup>Europa < Summaries of EU legislation (2011), National Roma Integration Strategies: Common European Framework. Available at: [http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/employment\\_and\\_social\\_policy/social\\_inclusion\\_fight\\_against\\_poverty/em0049\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/social_inclusion_fight_against_poverty/em0049_en.htm) Accessed on May 2, 2013

the Commission's latest effort may signal a shift, where "Roma integration has moved from the margins to the mainstream of policy concerns within and beyond the European Union."<sup>78</sup>

The regrettable situation known as "l'affaire des Roms" in the summer of 2010, which resulted in the expulsion of Roma from France and Italy, has demonstrated that the Roma 'problem' is not constrained to the CEE region, but concerns all of Europe. In fact, it is not even limited to European borders as during the course of the events this 'invisible community' received significant worldwide public attention.

### **EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020**

The promising signs and the latest developments of the Roma Decade, the two European Roma Forums and the European Roma Platform did achieve some progress, but did not bring significant changes in the day-to-day lives of the Roma throughout Europe. As demonstrated above, the EU's role has shown an increasing tendency and efforts have been made to get involved with Roma related issues by making proposals to Member States to support the socio-economic inclusion of the Roma. Following the EU's efforts after 2011, Member States were called to create and present a country-specific plan of action under the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) up to 2020, with the aim to improve the welfare of Roma minorities in Europe. Indeed, policy makers have come to realize that it is imperative to design tailor-made, holistic approaches in each Member State since they each differ in socio-economic conditions.

The priority areas in the latest EU Framework and the Decade of Roma Inclusion are identical. Both put emphasis on improving access to education, housing, health and employment. The Council of the European Union endorsed the Framework in May 2011, which has been considered as the "clearest declaration from the European Commission that

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<sup>78</sup>Rorke, B. (2011). Beyond Rhetoric: Roma Integration Roadmap for 2020, Open Society Foundations, Createch Ltd. p.5

concern over the plight of the Roma needs to move beyond rhetoric to the substance of Roma integration.”<sup>79</sup> However, concerns remain over the prospects of the framework, particularly in the area of growing intolerance towards minorities on societal, and in some cases, institutional levels. It has become abundantly clear that Member States left on their own devices would simply not deliver on Roma integration.<sup>80</sup>

The goals and priority areas of the Decade and the EU Framework have remained to eliminate discrimination and close the intolerable gaps between the Roma and the rest of the society in the four priority areas. The basic principles of the framework originate from the EU Charter of Fundamental Human Rights, where Article 21 prohibits any kind of discrimination. The document also contains mandates that are contradictory in nature, according to Bo. Her explanation reveals that the essence of this document “sets the stage for how the guidelines drawn by the EU Framework manifest themselves in a distorted manner in a country level. The European Union, guided by its charter, attempts to protect minority rights, while at the same time reaffirming the constitutional traditions of its member state.”<sup>81</sup> Bo argues that the lack of specific requirements for measurement tools in the EU Framework is by necessity to conform national interests.<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, we could speculate that member states may implement policy measures that conform to EU norms, but do not necessarily have a direct impact on the Roma. Nonetheless, the EU framework has been viewed as a meaningful attempt to bring changes in the approach towards including the Roma minority. In a European Commission’s Memo, it is pointed out that “instead of a scattered approach that focuses on individual projects, the EU Framework raises Roma inclusion to the

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<sup>79</sup>Council of the European Union (2011) *Council conclusions on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*.

<sup>80</sup>Rorke, B. (2013). Beyond First Steps. What Next For The EU Framework For Roma Integration? Createch Ltd. Hungary.

<sup>81</sup>Bo, B. (2012). “Policy, Power and Prejudice: The National Roma Integration Strategies of the European Union.” p.29

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

EU level for the first time and clearly links it with the Europe 2020 strategy, the EU's growth strategy."<sup>83</sup> The overall aim of the framework is to include Roma inclusion policies into mainstream policy areas since policy makers have come to the conclusion that Roma policies cannot be separated from other policies.

### **EU instruments beyond conditionality**

Prior to the enlargement rounds of 2004 and 2007, the EU's conditionality is viewed by many as its prime leverage or driving force that was able to exert strong political pressure on candidate states to shape their administrative and institutional structures. In terms of minorities and their interests, pressures would be applied through the Copenhagen criteria that allow supranational institutions to maneuver their political will. Although incentives for countries go in vain after accession, their legal obligations become stronger. Thus, the post-accession period can be characterized by weaker political pressure on Member states, but strict compliance with the *acquis communautaire*.

In the post-enlargement period and when the first signs of an increasing involvement to Roma related policy developments emerged, the EU has lacked the means (e.g. legal framework) to enforce its initiatives related to minorities. So what kind of system of sanctions or mechanisms is at the EU's disposal for ensuring compliance by member states? What happens in cases where its members violate human rights? The fundamental rights mechanism stipulated in Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) has the competence of withdrawing the voting rights in the Council, which can be applied "in the event that a member state blatantly and persistently violates the fundamental values of the EU, explains Kuhelj."<sup>84</sup> There has not been a precedent for this sanction. On a number of

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<sup>83</sup>Europa press releases (2012). Roma integration: national representatives discuss progress and pool ideas.

<sup>84</sup>Kuhelj, A. (2012). Conflict between Declared Roma Minority Rights and European Practice: Why the Legal Framework Doesn't Work in Reality?. Available at SSRN 2177540. p.12

occasions, the EU has failed to put sanctions forward, particularly with cases such as Hungary changing its constitution in 2012 in an undemocratic fashion or the French government's expulsion of 8,000 Roma from France. Responding to the outcome of the latter case, Carrera and Atger draw attention to its profound implications for fundamental rights protection in the EU. Accordingly, "the Roma affair has constituted a severe test of the legitimacy of the EU's Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (AFSJ) and the overall effectiveness of the EU's legal landscape."<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, they assess the developments in France and come to the conclusion that it "demonstrated the limits of current EU enforcement mechanisms in providing a swift and depoliticized answer to contested national measures whose compliance with EU law and fundamental rights remains questionable."<sup>86</sup>

Other than that, the Commission can use the infringement proceedings foreseen by Article 258 of the Treaty of the European Union (TFEU). Nicolas Beger, director of the European institutions office of Amnesty International, has called the Commission to exercise its power "to open infringement procedures as a tool to protect Roma and enforce their right," as Amnesty International suggests that in some cases the Commission has been reluctant "to launch infringement proceedings against states which have violated Roma human rights."<sup>87</sup> When looking at the post-conditionality period, it is important to note that apart from the specific Roma related policy instruments such as the Decade, the EU Platform and the EU Framework, the EU has a wide range of instruments at its disposal, including legal, policy, and financial instruments.

Financial instruments, particularly the Structural Funds, the European Regional Development Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development are one of

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<sup>85</sup>Carrera, S. and A. F. Atger (2010). *L'affaire des Roms. A Challenge to the EU's Area of Freedom, Security and Justice*. Brussels, Centre for European Policy Studies.p.1

<sup>86</sup>Ibid. p.1

<sup>87</sup>Gaydazhieva, S. (2013). *Beyond national Roma integration strategies*.

the most important soft-power tools of the EU when it comes to exerting influence on policy developments related to Roma inclusion. The amount of EU funds has increased in the recent years, which, according to Levitz, “is likely to fill in at least part of the leverage gap because of the end of pre-accession conditionality.”<sup>88</sup> On average, the EU allocates 50 billion EUR towards dealing with social and economic problems in its member states that concern the Roma. In Rovid’s article, we find that “the Structural and Cohesion Funds redistribute €347 billion between 2007 and 2013. Within the Structural Funds, the European Social Fund – with an overall budget of €76 billion for the same period – is supposed to endorse the social integration of Roma.”<sup>89</sup>

It is clear that EU funding cannot solve the problem of Roma integration, and the lack of political will at local and national governments only makes it a daunting task to promote social cohesion and combat poverty. The Commission has called on member states numerous times to live up to their democratic responsibilities towards minorities: “to devise concrete measures, allocate proportionate financial resources, set clear targets for measurable deliverables, etc...”<sup>90</sup> The EU framework of 2011 also stresses the need for using EU funds, thus making Structural Funds and the other above mentioned funds more available to Roma inclusion projects.

From Bo’s perspective, the EU’s approach could result in the victimization of the Roma, as their integration process is labeled “costly,” which may exacerbate the population’s negative approach towards Roma.<sup>91</sup> Needless to say that without sufficient funding and the

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<sup>88</sup>Levitz, P. and Pop-Eleches, G. (2010). Why No Backsliding? The European Union’s Impact on Democracy and Governance Before and After Accession. *Comparative Political Studies*, 43:457. p.471. Available online at: <http://cps.sagepub.com/content/43/4/457> Accessed on May 6, 2013

<sup>89</sup>Rovid M. (2011). One-size-fits-all Roma? On the normative dilemmas of the emerging European Roma policy, *Romani Studies* 5, Vol. 21, No.1.p.3

<sup>90</sup>Rorke, B. (2012). Damned with faint praise. EuropeanVoice.com. Available at <http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/2012/may/damned-with-faint-praise/74387.aspx> Accessed on May 8, 2013

<sup>91</sup>Bo, B. (2012). Policy, Power and Prejudice: The National Roma Integration Strategies of the European. p.31



adequate use of resources at all levels; the goals set by the NRIS cannot be realized. In short, the use of funding towards Roma related policy developments varies from country to country, but it remains unclear what funding is allocated on national levels to support integration measures. Two years has passed since the EU Framework initiative and more funding is available to member states, yet their capacity to absorb and manage EU financial incentives is weak<sup>92</sup>, and funds are often mismanaged. According to Dezideriu, “problems during the accessions of the last decade have not been resolved, and the European Commission has not intervened directly enough.”<sup>93</sup>

In his article, Rovid captures the EU’s main capacities and competences, which “stretch beyond that of all other inter-governmental organizations in at least three ways.”<sup>94</sup>

1. The EU provides a comprehensive legal framework complementing regular international public law.
2. The EU has substantial financial instruments overshadowing those of inter-governmental organizations.
3. The EU provides an institutional framework for policy coordination in social inclusion, employment, health care and education.<sup>95</sup>

### **Priority Areas for Action (A Brief Overview)**

There is a common understanding among the key actors working in the field of Roma inclusion that the four main areas where challenges need to be overcome are employment, housing, health and access to education. In addition, it has been recognized that an integrated approach is required to tackle problems in each area since they are all intertwined as the

<sup>92</sup>Rorke, B. (2012). Damned with faint praise.

<sup>93</sup>Dezideriu, G. (2012). Roma Rights 2011: Funding Roma Rights: Challenges and Prospects. Available at <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=4062&page=0> Accessed on May 8, 2013

<sup>94</sup>Rovid, M. (2011). One-size-fits-all Roma? p. 3

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.p.3

following finding shows: “housing (conditions and geographical situation) affects the health situation (e.g. access to health services), and influences access to job opportunities; the health situation influences the educational attainment while education affects health related behaviors and exposure to social determinants of health; the level of education and professional training influence the possibilities of employment which in turn allows for improvements in living standards, including changes in housing, access to education and healthcare.”<sup>96</sup> Since it was launched, the Roma Decade has focused on these four priority areas, “the Roadmap of the Platform for Roma inclusion identified the key issues related to each of them, and the recent Commission Communication refers to specific goals for each of them.”<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>Ibid.p.17

<sup>97</sup>Ibid. p.17

**Table 1: What works for Roma inclusion in the EU?**

INSTRUMENTS AND TOOLS MOST LIKELY APPLICATION			
AREAS	LEGAL INSTRUMENTS	POLICY TOOLS	FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS
<b>ALL AREAS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EU Treaty</li> <li>- Charter of Fundamental Rights</li> <li>- Racial Equality Directive 2000/43/EC</li> <li>- Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA</li> <li>- UDHR</li> <li>- ECHR</li> <li>- Other international human rights treaties: CERD, CESCR.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Europe 2020 Strategy</li> <li>- OMC in SP and SI</li> <li>- National Reform Programmes</li> <li>- European Platform Against Poverty</li> <li>- Antidiscrimination policies</li> <li>- EU Roma Platform</li> <li>- FRA studies and reports</li> <li>- Roma Decade</li> <li>- EURoma network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ERDF</li> <li>- ESF</li> <li>- Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme</li> <li>- PROGRESS</li> </ul>
<b>EDUCATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CRC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youth on the Move</li> <li>- The EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child</li> <li>- OMC in education</li> <li>- Recommendation on Early School Leaving</li> <li>- Equality in Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youth in Action Programme</li> <li>- Multilingualism</li> <li>- GRUNDTVIG</li> <li>- COMENIUS</li> </ul>
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employment Equality Directive 2000/78/EC</li> <li>- ILO Conventions: equality, non-discrimination in employment and occupation, employment policy, social policy, freedom of association, forced labour, child labour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agenda for New Skills and jobs</li> <li>- Recommendation in Training Systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EAFRD</li> <li>- ERDF</li> <li>- Leonardo da Vinci</li> <li>- European Progress</li> <li>- Microfinance Facility</li> </ul>

<b>HEALTH</b>	- EU Directive on Cross-Border Health Care 2011	- Commission Communication Solidarity in health	- The Second Programme in the Field of Health 2008-2013
<b>HOUSING</b>			- ERDF
<b>OTHERS SPECIFIC AREAS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CEDAW</li> <li>- Directive 2004/38/EC on the right of EU citizens to move and reside freely within the EU</li> <li>- Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (1954)</li> <li>- Directive 2006/54/EC on equal treatment of men and women in employment</li> <li>- Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (1961)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- European Agenda for Culture</li> <li>- Innovation Union</li> <li>- Digital Agenda</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue</li> <li>- Europe for Citizens program</li> </ul>

**Source: European Commission<sup>98</sup>**

*Health* – The social conditions of the Roma, including poverty and exclusion, contribute to inequities of accessing health care and affect health outcomes. Evidence compiled by various studies indicates a serious gap in health service access between Roma and the majority of the population. For Roma, life expectancy at birth is estimated to be 10 years less than the average in the EU. Evidence suggests that infant mortality rate is much higher among Roma communities and research also shows that Roma have higher prevalence

<sup>98</sup>European Commission (2012). What works for Roma inclusion in the EU. Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. p.54

of chronic diseases.<sup>99</sup> The research findings show that Roma have worse health status than the majority of Europeans, which implies that health objectives have failed to bring expected results for Roma. While some member states have subscribed to the principle of reducing health disparities and the EU's new strategy has put emphasis on reducing health inequalities, comprehensive strategies are still not in place yet, thus the impact at the national level remains limited. To date, the Open Method of Coordination has not brought any significant changes in reducing the gap in health care, while Rorke is convinced that visible changes will not come unless concerted and coordinated efforts are put in place.

*Housing* – There is a wide recognition among key actors related to Roma related issues that financial resources such as the European Regional Development Fund should be used to improve access to public or municipal housing. The most important aim in this area has been “to eliminate shacks and illegal dwellings and to improve the infrastructure of Roma neighborhoods, thus decreasing the disparities between the Roma and the majority populations regarding drinking water, and to sewerage and energy networks.”<sup>100</sup>

*Employment* – Lack of formal education has been a major, but not exclusive, impediment to accessing labor markets, which has resulted in high unemployment rates among the Roma population. Many EU Member States have not yet recovered from the economic crisis in Europe, and needless to say the most vulnerable groups have been affected the worst. Thus the main challenge for Roma inclusion has been improving access to employment opportunities. Roma continue to face discriminatory practices when seeking employment on one hand, and often lack the education or skills to compete in the labor markets. Employment remains an enormous challenge in rural areas, where employment opportunities have proved to be scarce.

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<sup>99</sup>Rorke, B.(2011). Beyond Rhetoric: Roma Integration Roadmap for 2020, Open Society Foundations, Createch Ltd. pp.37-38

<sup>100</sup>Kumanova, Z. and Skobla, D. (2012). Slovakia's Roma integration strategy. Undp.org.

*Education* – Education is one of the most important priority areas when it comes to poverty alleviation. As stated heretofore, Roma integration measures will fall short unless Roma participation is not only promoted, but reached through effective measures. In order to achieve this objective, it is imperative to provide equal access to education. The following chapter dedicates more intellectual space to elaborate on education and its relation to Roma integration.

## **Conclusion**

In short, this chapter served the purpose of introducing the two most significant initiatives of Roma inclusion in the last decade: the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the National Roma Integration Strategies. This part of my thesis has also shed more light on how and to what extent the EU can instigate developments aimed at the socio-economic inclusion of the Roma in the EU Member States. The complexity and the multi-faceted nature of the Roma problem in Europe have only allowed me to focus on a limited amount of issues that served to point out the difficulty of implementing the above mentioned strategies. We have come to the understanding that socio-economic discrimination against the most vulnerable group in Europe, the lack of political will and the inadequate use of resources, may partially explain the limited achievements of the Decade and the NRIS. However, we need to be cautious when assessing the NRIS as it would be premature to make full-fledged presumptions about the effectiveness of the framework. We have also learnt that policy approaches need to be resilient in order to tackle upcoming societal and economic challenges, while accommodating the special needs of the Roma population along with other marginalized minority groups.

## Chapter 2. Comparative analysis of Roma in Slovakia and Hungary with special regards to education

Education is widely considered the starting point to breaking the poverty cycle. It is one of the key priority areas for Roma inclusion, and as Rorke identifies, the priority is “to scale up and coordinate efforts to combat all forms of discrimination and segregation,” in this particular sphere.<sup>101</sup> More than half way through the Decade and two years after the inception of the EU Framework, it is clear that there is a lot more still to do to meet the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and to achieve its headline targets. The biggest challenges that Roma face in the sphere of education are racial discrimination and systematic segregation. The case studies of this chapter will serve to demonstrate this claim. The Roma Education Fund defines Roma inclusion in education as “desegregation of education systems and full participation of Roma children and parents in public education.”<sup>102</sup>

The fact of the matter is that educational inequalities prevail among the Roma population residing in the European Union. The EU’s Labor Force survey demonstrates that educational achievements within Roma communities are much lower than the rest of the population, although conditions differ among Member States.<sup>103</sup> The situation is particularly alarming as sub-standard living conditions, poor health conditions and high unemployment rates derive from low educational achievement. Experts in the field believe that it widens the

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<sup>101</sup>Rorke, B.(2011). Beyond Rhetoric: Roma Integration Roadmap for 2020. Priorities for an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. p. 13

<sup>102</sup>Roma Education Fund (2010). Roma Inclusion in Education.p.4

<sup>103</sup>EUR-Lex (2011). **Communication From The Commission To The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic And Social Committee And The Committee Of The Regions. An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020.**

gap between Roma and non-Roma people, which can lead to social instability.<sup>104</sup> A UNESCO report shows that “despite the efforts to expand and improve education for Roma children, as many as 50 per cent of those in Europe complete to fail primary education.<sup>105</sup> Discrimination against approximately 3 million Roma children in schools in the EU is regarded as one of the most burning political, social and human rights issues that need to be solved.<sup>106</sup> Discrepancies in education between Roma and the majority of the population “are forging inequalities that challenge the European Union’s fundamental values,”<sup>107</sup> and put Roma into a disadvantaged position from the early childhood. Extensive research shows that educational practices are important elements of social inclusion.<sup>108</sup> It has been recognized that “experiences in early childhood determine the life chances of an individual, while evidence shows that investment in comprehensive, accessible, and quality early years’ provisions reduces the equity gap and has the potential to break the cycle of exclusion and poverty.”<sup>109</sup>

Many Roma continue to experience segregation due to systemic discrimination of the Member States’ educational systems, particularly in Bulgaria, Romania, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. This usually takes the form of inter-school segregation through organizing segregated Roma classes or intra-class segregation of differing quality and content teaching.<sup>110</sup> Roma children are put into special needs primary schools designed for children with learning disabilities. The consequences are clear. Due to low education attainment or segregation, without qualifications and lack of skills, it seems almost impossible to become competitive on the labor market.

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<sup>104</sup>European Commission (2009). EU platform aims to improve Roma access to education. Available at <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=89&langId=en&newsId=597&furtherNews=yes> Accessed on May 21, 2013

<sup>105</sup>UNESCO (2010). Roma Children

<sup>106</sup>Farkas, L. (2007) Segregation of Roma Children in Education

<sup>107</sup>Edumigrom (2011). Ethnic Differences in Education for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe. Available at [www.edumigrom.eu](http://www.edumigrom.eu) Accessed on May 21, 2013

<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

<sup>109</sup>Rorke, B.(2011).p.22

<sup>110</sup>Edumigrom (2011). Ethnic Differences in Education for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe



In 2007 the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) assessed the impact of education policies in these countries and concluded the following:

*“Roma-specific actions in the field of education are rarely related to general educational policies; these are often stand-alone initiatives without strategic focus or systematic implementation.”<sup>111</sup>*

The study of ERRC also reveals that “neither anti-discrimination laws nor other relevant legislation require public authorities to undertake specific actions to eliminate segregation in education; such actions are minimal or entirely absent in some countries.”<sup>112</sup>

Most of the Member States have set goals that go beyond the minimum standard of primary school completion stipulated in the EU Framework that includes education from primary to secondary and tertiary education.<sup>113</sup> The Framework shares certain targets with the Europe 2020 strategy that include, but are not limited to, reducing school drop-out rates. The overall goal of the EU is to ensure that “all Roma children complete primary school and have access to quality education.”<sup>114</sup>

The table below shows extremely low rate of primary education attendance of Roma children in Hungary, which may be explained by the fact that on many occasions Roma children ‘are designated as private or study-at-home students,’ which is not included in the table.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>111</sup>European Roma Right Centre (2007). The Impact Of Legislation And Policies on School Segregation of Romani Children. Westimprim, Budapest

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.p.8

<sup>113</sup>European Commission (2012). National Roma Integration Strategies: a first step in the implementation of the EU Framework. Brussels

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.p.4

<sup>115</sup>Lopez, E. (2008). Romani Education in Hungary: History, Observances, and Experiences. p.172. Available at <http://www.fulbright.hu/book5/ericlopez.pdf>, Accessed on May 22, 2013

**Table 2: Educational attendance of Roma at the age of 6**

	<b>Attending pre-school education</b>	<b>Attending primary education</b>	<b>Not attending any kind of institutional education</b>
<b>Czech Republic</b>	49%	16%	34%
<b>Slovakia</b>	45%	18%	37%
<b>Hungary</b>	88%	3%	9%
<b>Bulgaria</b>	61%	0%	39%
<b>Romania</b>	54%	3%	43%
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	4%	25%	71%
<b>Croatia</b>	47%	7%	47%
<b>The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia</b>	23%	47%	31%
<b>Montenegro</b>	13%	7%	80%
<b>Serbia</b>	45%	6%	49%
<b>Albania</b>	30%	10%	61%
<b>Moldova</b>	27%	2%	71%

Source: UNDP / World Bank / EC Regional Roma Survey 2011<sup>116</sup>

### **Hungary's approach towards Roma inclusion**

Hungary belongs to those EU Member States that have a significant Roma population. In education, Hungary has been facing with challenges of desegregation and finding ways to apply mainstream policies that also respond to the specific needs of the Roma. Further, gaps have been identified in the lack of vocational training that would make Roma better qualified

<sup>116</sup>UNDP / World Bank / EC Regional Roma Survey (2011). Roma Education in Comparative Perspective. Available at [http://issuu.com/undp\\_in\\_europe\\_cis/docs/education\\_web](http://issuu.com/undp_in_europe_cis/docs/education_web) Accessed on May 23, 2013

on the labor markets. The table below also identifies that more specific measures are needed in the area of health and employment. In Hungary almost 30 per cent of the population lives below poverty line, 1.2 million of them in extreme poverty.<sup>117</sup> One of the major contributors to poverty is poor education that often is the result of segregation or low school attainment. It is believed that the Roma community is the most affected, which is the largest ethnic minority in Hungary.

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<sup>117</sup>Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy (2011). Romagov.kormany.hu. Available at <http://romagov.kormany.hu/hungarian-national-social-inclusion-strategy-deep-poverty-child-poverty-and-the-roma> Accessed on May 21, 2013

**Table 3: Hungary's NRIS towards Roma**

Document sent to the Commission on:		6 December 2011
Roma population	Estimate in the document	approximately 750 000
	<i>Council of Europe estimates</i>	<i>approximately 700 000 i.e. 7.05 % of the population</i>
Approach		National strategy

	KEY ELEMENTS	IDENTIFIED GAPS
Education	<p>The sound strategy includes in particular the following positive elements:</p> <p>Compulsory pre-school participation from 3 years of age.</p> <p>After-school programmes.</p> <p>Second chance schools.</p> <p>Mediators.</p> <p>School meals.</p>	<p><i>More focus on desegregation, integrated education and ensuring that mainstream policies also respond to the specific needs of Roma could further improve this part of the strategy.</i></p>
Employment	<p>The sound strategy includes in particular the following positive elements:</p> <p>A very clear vision on raising employment in a systematic way, based on 3 pillars (integration into open and legal labour market; through active labour market policies; social economy; and public employment schemes for the most disadvantaged).</p> <p>Specific attention to job creation in rural areas, mainly in the agricultural sector.</p>	<p><i>More focus on reintegration to the open labour market, developing more concrete measures in the area of social economy, self-employment /microfinance and vocational training would be needed. Clear share of tasks and responsibilities among service providers and targeted services for Roma job-seekers via the public employment service could improve results.</i></p> <p><i>Possibilities of job creation in rural areas in sectors other than agriculture could also be considered.</i></p>
Health	<p>The sound strategy includes in particular the following positive elements:</p> <p>Strong analytical part in the area of health.</p> <p>Acknowledgement of the need to target Roma women and children specifically.</p> <p>Active involvement of civil society and Roma representative foreseen in implementation of the strategy.</p> <p>Focus on geographically deprived areas (micro-regions) covering also non-Roma population living under the similar conditions as Roma.</p> <p>Training programmes for healthcare and social service workforce</p> <p>Measures to tackle unhealthy lifestyles.</p>	<p><i>Developing measurable targets and more specific measures to tackle problems identified would be necessary. A clearer timeline for implementation, reinforcing the budget would make measures more efficient.</i></p>

Source: European Commission - NRIS<sup>118</sup>

According to Rorke's findings "four-fifths of Roma adults – compared to one-third of the total population – only have primary education. A little over two-fifths of Roma children

<sup>118</sup>European Commission (2012). European Commission calls on Member States to implement national plans for Roma integration. Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/discrimination/news/120523\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/discrimination/news/120523_en.htm) Accessed on May 21, 2013

go to nursery school, as compared to an overwhelming majority of the total population. Among 20-24 year olds, five percent of Roma and 55 percent of the total population completed secondary education.”<sup>119</sup> Following on the same report, there has been some increase in the levels of educational attainment, but there is a long way to go to make a real difference in closing the gap in educational outcomes between Roma and the majority of the population. According to an earlier survey from 2007, “the proportion of Roma students admitted to universities and colleges was even lower than 1.2 percent of Roma people aged 20-24 attended institutions of higher education.”<sup>120</sup>

The survey, however, contradicts with an earlier study of the Roma Education Fund’s (REF) which claims that the participation rate of Roma children in Hungary is high, and that drop outs only represent a problem at the secondary school level.<sup>121</sup> This example is typical of discrepancy among data indicators, which often runs the risk of false assessments on Roma related issues. Another point relevant to data discrepancy is that in many cases policy implementation on local levels are not aligned with national legislation.

The following table is based on the European Roma Policy Coalition’s assessment, which puts Hungary into a promising position. The table also shows Slovakia’s compliance with policy initiatives covered in the EU Framework.

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<sup>119</sup>Rorke, B. (2011). p.104

<sup>120</sup> Decade of Roma Inclusion Strategic Plan (2007).68/2007(VI.28).Parliamentary resolution. Available at [http://www.romadecade.org/files/downloads/Decade%20Documents/Hungarian%20NAP\\_en.pdf](http://www.romadecade.org/files/downloads/Decade%20Documents/Hungarian%20NAP_en.pdf) Accessed on May 23, 2013

<sup>121</sup> Roma Education Fund (2007). Advancing Education Of Roma in Hungary.p.10. Available at [http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/hungary\\_assessment\\_english.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/hungary_assessment_english.pdf) Accessed on May 23, 2013

**Table 4: Assessment of EU Member States' NRIS**

<b><u>Policy approach</u></b>	<b><u>ERPC's Positive assessment</u></b>	<b><u>ERPC' Negative assessment</u></b>
Establishing concrete goals / specific targets to be achieved	<b>Hungary</b> , Finland, Portugal	Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Netherlands and Wales
Defining specific timelines that seem realistic	Finland, Latvia, Portugal, Spain	Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Wales
Covering the full range of the EU Framework	<b>Hungary, Slovakia</b> , Finland, France, Latvia, Portugal, Slovenia	Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, Wales

**Source: European Commission (2012) National Roma Integration Strategies**<sup>122</sup>

Table 3 corresponds to Table 4. Although both tables indicate that Hungary and Slovakia have addressed all of the measures to increase the educational attainment of children required by the EU Framework, one can still wonder whether these measures are reflected in the reality of Roma lives.

<sup>122</sup> European Commission (2012). National Roma Integration Strategies: a first step in the implementation of the EU Framework. Brussels.

**Table 5: Measures to increase the educational attainment of children**

Measures required by the EU Framework	Member States that have addressed them <sup>14</sup>
Endorsement of the general goal	BE, BG, CZ, DK, DE, EE, IE, EL, ES, IT, CY, LV, LT, LU, HU, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, UK
Concrete goals to reduce education gap	BE, BG, CZ, EL, ES, IT, CY, LU, HU, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, UK
Widening access to quality early childhood education and care	CZ, EL, ES, IT, CY, LV, HU, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI
Measures to ensure that Roma children complete at least primary school	BE, BG, DE, EE, IE, EL, ES, FR, IT, LV, LU, HU, NL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, SE, UK
Reducing secondary school leaving	BG, CZ, IE, EL, ES, FR, IT, HU, AT, PL, PT, RO, SK, FI, UK
Increasing tertiary education	CZ, ES, IT, HU, PT, FI
Measures aimed at preventing segregation	CZ, EL, ES, HU, PL, RO, SK
Support measures	BE, CZ, EE, IE, ES, IT, CY, LV, LT, HU, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI, SE, UK

Source: European Commission (2012). National Roma Integration Strategies<sup>123</sup>

### Hungary's Roma integration strategy (NRIS)

Hungary has had experience with Roma integration strategies since joining the Roma Decade and its involvement with various international partnerships that support the integration of Roma. The current government has demonstrated its commitment to Roma integration, particularly during its EU presidency, when the EU Framework was adopted

<sup>123</sup>European Commission (2012). National Roma Integration Strategies: a first step in the implementation of the EU Framework.p.5

based on Member States' commitment, 'building on the joint efforts of EU institutions,'<sup>124</sup> while positive signs emerged with the establishment of a new ministerial unit to address and solve problems that the Roma community has been facing. The Hungarian NRIS builds on these previous experiences, which provide valuable lessons drawn from the Decade initiative. In general, the Strategy complies with the Common Basic Principles (CBP), but concerns arise from the compatibility with these principles to the NRIS. As the Open Society review states: "The Strategy is not clear about de-segregation, integration. In education the Strategy avoids promoting integration or de-segregation."<sup>125</sup> However, concrete measures have been set prior to the Strategy which are described in the three years action plans (2012-2014). The European Roma Policy Coalition's (ERPC) analysis points out a contradiction since the Strategy aims to close the gap between marginalized and the majority, while "the action plan does not include measures that are strong enough to counterbalance the massive negative trends of exclusion, especially during the financial and economic crisis."<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, the Strategy does not explicitly state how to enhance the quality and efficiency of implementations, which runs the risk of governments pursuing the cheapest, ad hoc programs. The ERPC's review makes a positive evaluation on the tone of the Strategy since it includes "anti-poverty provisions and the pursuit of equity in access to services, opportunities and outcomes to close the gap between Roma and non-Roma", which are in line with the wider European context of Europe 2020 strategy.<sup>127</sup> However, within the Hungarian context, some reviewers found certain controversies in the text, which are pointed out in the following analysis: "the current government has launched an ambitious Strategy of economic policy,

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<sup>124</sup>Hungarian Presidency Of The Council Of The European Union (2011). Hungary is committed to Roma integration. Available at <http://www.eu2011.hu/news/hungary-committed-roma-integration> Accessed on May 22, 2013

<sup>125</sup>European Roma Policy Coalition (2012). Analysis of the National Roma Integration Strategies. p.12. Available at [http://www.ergonetwork.org/media/userfiles/media/Final%20ERPC%20Analysis%2021%2003%2012\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.ergonetwork.org/media/userfiles/media/Final%20ERPC%20Analysis%2021%2003%2012_FINAL.pdf) Accessed on May 21, 2013

<sup>126</sup>Ibid.p.12

<sup>127</sup>Ibid.p.13



aiming at growth, strengthening the middle class and including, inter alia, a tax cut for the rich, radical reduction of unemployment benefits and criminalizing homelessness.”<sup>128</sup> The tension identified in this analysis is between this set of measures, which are deemed to exacerbate inequality, and the anti-poverty agenda enclosed in the draft. The study also captures an intriguing point: “while economic growth and social equity are not intrinsically irreconcilable goals, in this particular national policy context some trade-off between social goals is unavoidable.”<sup>129</sup>

Drawing on my personal investigation, I also found another contradiction. From the ERPC’s analysis we learn that some civil society organizations have found a lack of the human rights approach in Hungary’s Strategy, which mentions the damaging effect of discrimination but does not contain any anti-discrimination measures.<sup>130</sup> As a result of current developments, the changes in educational policy are predicted to have drawbacks which close the access to quality education for children of the poorest families.<sup>131</sup> Concerns arise as these changes are predicted to result in “providing support to establish a parallel training system with mainstream education; instead of active desegregation of segregated schools they will be maintained by the National Roma Self-Government; abolishing grant and scholarships schemes assisting Roma pupils and students which existed for decades, etc..”<sup>132</sup>

Previously we mentioned that European institutions, including the EU, have put emphasis on guaranteeing anti-discrimination measures to groups. Yet the Hungarian approach, based on the NRIS, does not contain any specific anti-discrimination tools and measures. The most important tool for anti-discrimination measures has been the result of the

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<sup>128</sup>Ibid. p.13

<sup>129</sup>Ibid.p.13

<sup>130</sup>Ibid.p.13

<sup>131</sup>Partners Hungary (2012). Recommendations to the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy. p.4 Available at [http://www.partnershungary.hu/images/Letoltheto/civilek\\_angol.pdf](http://www.partnershungary.hu/images/Letoltheto/civilek_angol.pdf) Accessed on May 23, 2013

<sup>132</sup>Ibid.p.4

Hungarian Equal Treatment Act.<sup>133</sup> According to Tremlett, the friction between the European and the Hungarian approach is one of the reasons why social policies related to Roma have failed so far.<sup>134</sup>

Despite positive signs that the Hungarian NRIS contains, the evaluation of various NGOs, including Amnesty International, “expresses strong criticism regarding the lack of explicit guarantees and positive measure for Roma minority rights (culture, language, institutions); and the lack of an articulated human rights approach (fundamental rights, prevention of hate crimes).”<sup>135</sup> In short, drawing on the aggregated data and on various reports, the following is concluded, which is in line with the NGOs’ perception on the Hungarian NRIS educational policy: “the Government declares equity as a principle at theoretical level, but it clearly excludes the most disadvantageous, mainly Roma children from having equal access to high quality education which could assure their future.”<sup>136</sup> The Hungarian NRIS commitment corresponds to the Commission’s Communication, which highlights the importance of tackling discrimination and segregation, but one may wonder whether this may go as far as conforming to the overall EU Framework initiative.

### **Slovakia’s approach towards Roma inclusion**

For Slovakia, the most challenging issue is the same as the one facing Hungary: the inclusion of Roma. Although estimates vary in terms of the Roma population in the country, our assumption is based on official reports that indicate the Roma are approximately eight percent of the population.<sup>137</sup> Exclusion in the Slovak education system is considered to be a

<sup>133</sup>TheWorld Bank (2012). Towards an Equal Start: Closing The Early Learning Gap For Roma Children In Eastern Europe

<sup>134</sup>Tremlett, A.(2009) Comparing European Institutional and Hungarian Approaches to Roma (Gypsy) Minorities.

<sup>135</sup>Rights, Equality and Diversity network (2011). National Roma Strategy adopted in Hungary. Available at <http://www.red-network.eu/?i=red-network.en.items&id=841> Accessed on May 23, 2013

<sup>136</sup>Partners Hungary (2012).p.11

<sup>137</sup>Rorke, B. (2011). p.135

‘built-in systemic problem’ that leads to up-front ‘discrimination’ against Roma students.<sup>138</sup> Having low rates of pre-school education attainment among Roma children, Slovakia’s NRIS aims to increase pre-school participation. The table below reveals that Slovakia needs to fill gaps in allocating adequate budget towards vocational training and improve its effectiveness in current labor market policies. Slovakia’s NRIS meets standards set in the EU framework, however school segregation and the attendance of special schools is increasing as statistics below demonstrate.

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<sup>138</sup>Roma Education Fund (2010). Roma Inclusion in Education. p.29. Available at [http://www.ose.be/files/midi\\_OSE/RomaInclusionEducation\\_PositionPaperREF.pdf](http://www.ose.be/files/midi_OSE/RomaInclusionEducation_PositionPaperREF.pdf) Accessed on May 24, 2013

**Table 6: Slovakia's NRIS towards Roma**

Document sent to the Commission on:		11 January 2012
Roma population	Estimate in the document	approximately 440 000
	<i>Council of Europe estimates</i>	<i>approximately 500 000 i.e. 9.17 % of the population</i>
Approach		National strategy

	KEY ELEMENTS	IDENTIFIED GAPS
Education	<p>The strategy includes in particular the following positive elements:</p> <p>Increasing pre-school participation of Roma children from 3 years of age.</p> <p>Increasing inclusiveness of the educational system and effectiveness of the social support system.</p> <p>Eliminating barriers in the transition to high schools; linking secondary education with the labour market's needs.</p> <p>Increasing the number of teachers and specialists fluent in Romani language.</p>	<p><i>More focus on desegregation, second chance education and ensuring that mainstream policies also respond to the specific needs of Roma could further improve this part of the strategy.</i></p> <p><i>Measures to develop local policies preventing 'non-Roma children flight' from schools attended by many Roma pupils would be needed.</i></p> <p><i>Compulsory pre-school education, offering increased financial support to high school and tertiary school students should be examined.</i></p>
Employment	<p>The strategy includes in particular the following positive elements:</p> <p>Supporting "second-chance" education and increasing training opportunities.</p> <p>Motivating public and private employers to adopt a culture of offering job opportunities to the marginalised and socially excluded.</p> <p>Improving non-discriminatory access to work opportunities.</p>	<p><i>High inactivity, long-term unemployment and low skill levels should be addressed by more specific measures and supported by adequate budgets.</i></p> <p><i>Ineffectiveness of current Active Labour Market Policy and public work creation should be also addressed with increased focus on effective integration to the open labour market.</i></p> <p><i>Public Employment Services providing accessible and targeted services for Roma job-seekers could improve results.</i></p> <p><i>Non-discriminatory access to the labour market, policies involving the majority population, schools, social partners, and media, to fight prejudice are necessary. Strengthening territorial aspects of policy making with focus on most disadvantaged regions should be considered.</i></p>

**Source: European Commission - NRIS<sup>139</sup>**

<sup>139</sup>European Commission (2012). European Commission calls on Member States to implement national plans for Roma integration.

Systematic segregation is perpetrated in the form of placing Roma children into special schools designed for individuals with learning disabilities or to special classes in regular schools. Most of the children enrolled are the result of a diagnosis of some sort of mental disability, which according to the Roma Education Fund (REF) is commonly fabricated by authorities. The Roma Education Fund findings also show that “special schools for the mentally handicapped in Slovakia cater to more than 24,000 children”<sup>140</sup> of which half are Roma. The report also stated that “the vast majority of these children do not belong in special education.”<sup>141</sup> At the inception of the Decade strategy, UNICEF carried out a study of 23 countries and their findings identified Slovakia as having the highest enrollment rate in basic special education.<sup>142</sup> Since then, this trend in Slovakia has not changed in any significant way. A World Bank report from 2012 shows that the gap in pre-school enrolment is the largest in Slovakia and Czech Republic, while “Hungary stands out as the country with the highest enrolment among Roma children (76 %) and the smallest enrolment gap with the majority population.”<sup>143</sup> According to the report, Hungary’s better enrollment rates are the result of using the practical experience of NGOs and the government-led initiatives, coupled with provisions of subsidies “to enroll children based on conditional attendance.”<sup>144</sup> Another factor is that pre-school is compulsory in Hungary, while in Slovakia the law was only introduced last year to include obligatory pre-schooling for children of families considered as at risk.

Overall, when it comes to Roma inclusion issues, Slovakia’s education system has raised a wave of criticism from human rights activists and international institutions. Another

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<sup>140</sup>Ibid.p.29

<sup>141</sup>Ibid. p. 29

<sup>142</sup>Rorke, B. (2011). p.135

<sup>143</sup>The World Bank (2012). Toward an Equal Start: Closing the Early Learning Gap For Roma Children In Eastern Europe. Part 6. Conclusion. Available at [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTROMA/Resources/615986-1338478600647/RomaECD\\_25May2012Conclusion.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTROMA/Resources/615986-1338478600647/RomaECD_25May2012Conclusion.pdf) Accessed on May 25, 2013

<sup>144</sup>Ibid. Executive Summary.p.2

stream of special education has been recently introduced in a scheme that creates special classes in regular schools and offers a very modified curricula for students.<sup>145</sup> Generally, those classes are poorly equipped and Roma students do not get a certificate after completion of such classes. As a result, they lack qualifications and skills, which puts them at a huge disadvantage by limiting their access to the labor market. Based on the World Bank figures, “only 20 percent of Roma of working age are employed, compared with 65 percent in the general population, while only 28 percent of Roma children even start the equivalent of high school, compared with 94 percent of Slovaks who graduate.”<sup>146</sup>

## Slovakia's Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS)

Slovakia has included action plans in the NRIS that had already been drafted for the Decade of Roma Inclusion initiative. Based on the ERPC's analysis, CBP's are not explicitly included in the Strategy, although some key principles, including destigmatisation, desegregation and deghettoisation are elaborated in the text that is supposed to govern the four key policy areas. The analysis finds that the objectives of the Slovak NRIS go beyond the full range of the EU framework by adding financial inclusion, non-discrimination and public opinion.<sup>147</sup> Contrary to the Hungarian Strategy, the Slovak NRIS involves certain elements of the human rights approach as some anti – discrimination measures are set. Yet here, as is so often the case, the semiotics of the legislation is ambiguous and raises issues in and of itself. Rorke mentions that “despite the fact that discrimination and segregation are prohibited by several Member States, Slovak legislation lacks a clear description of segregation that would allow the introduction of targeted and applicable measures to prevent

<sup>145</sup>Roma Education Fund (2010). Roma Inclusion in Education. p.29

<sup>146</sup>The New York Times (2013). In Its Efforts to Integrate Roma, Slovakia Recalls U.S. Struggles. Available at [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/10/world/europe/in-slovakia-integration-of-roma-mirrors-early-struggles-in-us.html?\\_r=2&](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/10/world/europe/in-slovakia-integration-of-roma-mirrors-early-struggles-in-us.html?_r=2&). Accessed on May 24, 2013

<sup>147</sup> European Roma Policy Coalition (2012). Analysis of the National Roma Integration Strategies.p.19. Available at [http://www.ergonetwork.org/media/userfiles/media/Final%20ERPC%20Analysis%2021%2003%2012\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.ergonetwork.org/media/userfiles/media/Final%20ERPC%20Analysis%2021%2003%2012_FINAL.pdf) Accessed on May 25, 2013

and eliminate it.”<sup>148</sup> The Slovak Prime Minister, Robert Fico, encapsulated the systemic ignorance towards Roma inclusion in recent years by proposing that all Roma children be taken from their parents and sent to boarding school.<sup>149</sup> The government’s proposal is completely in contradiction with EU developments, while its adoption would contravene both Slovak law and international human rights standards on non-discrimination.<sup>150</sup> While pondering upon the different approaches towards Roma inclusion, the following question springs to mind: To what extent does the set of national goals in the NRIS match those defined by the EU Framework?

Both Hungary and Slovakia have made implicit but not exclusive plans that correspond to the EU Framework, and even in some cases surpass certain expectations. In an OSF review of the NRIS, both countries are listed as among the five best performing Member States that meet the standards towards Roma’s inclusion, although deficiencies remain in place which may hinder further developments. In the review we also find that in terms of using EU funds for Roma inclusion, Slovakia took a comprehensive approach which has been viewed as unsuccessful due to weak political commitment, fragmented management and budget, while Hungary could overcome such problems.<sup>151</sup>

Most problematic areas for both Slovakia and Hungary are desegregation; “the increase of the capacities of kindergartens and the decrease of the share of school drop-out rates in the least developed micro-regions.”<sup>152</sup> The Hungarian Strategy is not exclusively designed for Roma, but targets groups in extreme poverty and child poverty. The strategy

<sup>148</sup>Rorke, B. (2011). *Beyond Rhetoric*. p.139

<sup>149</sup>Amnesty International (2010). *Slovakia Plans To Remove Romani Children From Their Families*. Available at <http://www.fightdiscrimination.eu/news-and-events/slovakia-plans-remove-romani-children-their-families> Accessed on May 27, 2013

<sup>150</sup>Ibid.

<sup>151</sup>Rorke, B. (2012). *Review of EU Framework Nation Roma Integration Strategies*.p.8. Available at <http://www.romadecade.org/files/downloads/General%20Resources/roma-integration-strategies-20120221.pdf>, Accessed on May 25, 2013

<sup>152</sup>Ibid. p.44

also aims at changing negative attitudes of the dominant majority towards Roma, making sure that other vulnerable groups also benefit from those policies. Another focal point of the strategy is to highlight that improving the socio-economic conditions of the Roma is equally beneficial to society as a whole. According to the World Bank 2012 report, Slovak GDP would increase by 3.1 billion euros if Roma had the same access to labor markets and same wage levels as the non-Roma population.<sup>153</sup>

In general Slovakia's strategy is in line with the EU Framework, but critics point out that certain areas of the NRIS as such are too broad, thus its understanding is subject to differing implementations. Based on the evidence, we can point out certain weaknesses of the NRIS in general that is relevant in the Hungarian and Slovak policy context. A review of the NRIS by the Open Society Foundation (OSF) finds that the NRIS is lacking in "a firm and unambiguous commitment to end school segregation, and to desist from the practices of misdiagnosing Roma children as 'mentally handicapped' and sending them to special schools in defiance of the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights that such practices are discriminatory and unlawful."<sup>154</sup>

So what conclusions can we draw from the analysis above? We can certainly see a degree of EU influence in the way national policies are constructed in the field of education. The area which needs further research is examining how these policies are implemented at local levels. It is difficult to improve Roma inclusion in education when you have discrepancies between government policies and local programs. Also, mishandling EU funds hinders the chance to establish institutional adjustments on local levels which are supposed to be aligned with national legislation. In some cases, experiences have shown that sudden integration can be counter-productive. The primary school in Šarišské Michal'any, a village in

<sup>153</sup>The World Bank (2012). Policy Advice on the Integration of Roma in the Slovak Republic.p.5

<sup>154</sup>Ibid.p.4



the Prešov Region of north-eastern Slovakia is just one of the many examples, which show that parents enroll their children to schools where sudden integration policies are not introduced.<sup>155</sup> Similar experiences are found in other countries, including Hungary. Legislation is often ignored in order to conform to local realities. This is one of the reasons why EU measures have put emphasis on anti-discrimination measures, yet it takes generations to curb social sensibility. The Hungarian MEP, Livia Járóka reflects on the issue in the following: “It’s no use to talk about national policies adopted in the capitals, as long as the attitude towards mayors and school authorities remains the same. If parents say they don’t want their children to be in a same room with Roma, then mayors and school directors act accordingly, despite all non-segregation policies.”<sup>156</sup>

## **Two opposing approaches towards Roma integration**

In the past two decades Slovakia has used two different approaches which can be compared and contrasted with the Hungarian approach towards Roma inclusion. The first Slovak approach (1998-2006) corresponds to Fraser’s ‘recognition’ paradigm that views social exclusion of the Roma as an injustice of social patterns – based on non-recognition, cultural domination, etc..<sup>157</sup> The recognition paradigm, or the multicultural approach, or ‘intercultural’ paradigm, as Tremlett calls it, is put forth in the Council of Europe’s and the EU’s approaches. This approach sees the recognition of cultures and languages as the way to integrate minority groups. The second Slovak approach (2006-2010), still relates to the recognition paradigm, and puts emphasis on the ethnic aspect of the Roma agenda, focusing on ethnic self-identification, languages, etc..<sup>158</sup> The Hungarian approach, Fraser’s second

<sup>155</sup>The New York Times (2013). In Its Efforts To Integrate Roma, Slovakia Recalls U.S. Struggles

<sup>156</sup>EU Observer (2009). Roma education policies don’t work at local level, experts say. Available at <http://euobserver.com/education/28737> Accessed on May 26, 2013

<sup>157</sup>Tremlett Annabel (2009) Comparing European Institutional and Hungarian Approaches to Roma (Gypsy) Minorities.p.130

<sup>158</sup>Rorke, B.(2011). *Beyond Rhetoric*.p.138

paradigm, is related to ‘redistribution,’ which is “based on the understanding of injustice as socio-economic: for example exploitation in the workplace...”<sup>159</sup> The similar conditions of Roma in both countries suggests that none of the above mentioned approaches can single-handedly solve the Roma’s social exclusion or bring tangible results in the effort towards their integration.

## Conclusion

In the education sector we have touched upon the limits of EU influence, however more extensive research is needed to see the EU’s impact on other key policy areas, including housing, employment and health. The greatest concern is losing another generation of human capital, as policy initiatives are still in too early a stage to make tangible results towards the socio-economic integration of the Roma minority.

First and foremost, Roma inclusion “will continue to face challenges as long as little is done to combat the deep-seated anti-Gypsyism and discriminatory tendencies prevalent in European societies.”<sup>160</sup> Strategies to combat anti-Roma sentiments at the European and national levels requires strong commitment “to take urgent measures to combat widespread racism, violence and harassment that Roma face.”<sup>161</sup> Moreover, governments should set up clearer indicators and monitoring instruments to measure progress and to identify ineffective or badly implemented programs and projects. Based on the Commission’s assessment of the NRIS, we can assert that national strategies vary in scope and ambition, and “even the best fall short of what is required: Much more needs to be done when it comes to securing sufficient funds for Roma inclusion, putting monitoring mechanisms in place or fighting

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<sup>159</sup>Ibid.p.130.

<sup>160</sup>European Roma Policy Coalition (2012). Analysis of the National Roma Integration Strategies.p.57

<sup>161</sup>Ibid.p.57

discrimination and segregation in the key policy areas.”<sup>162</sup> The case studies of Slovakia and Hungary have shown that segregation in education is one of the burning issues in Central Europe, thus the Commission has urged Member States to “eliminate school segregation and the misuse of special needs education; increase early childhood enrolment; improve teacher training and mediation; raise parental awareness; and promote vocational training.”<sup>163</sup> It was also pointed out that in some cases, policies developed on EU and national levels will not have a significant effect on the lives of Roma as long as discrepancies prevail among various levels of authorities.

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<sup>162</sup>Rorke, B. (2012). *Beyond First Steps*. p.26

<sup>163</sup>*Ibid.*p.26

## Conclusion

The present thesis has touched upon a number of minority related issues. European integration has come to the phase where the protection of minority rights on national and European levels must be addressed in a concerted effort. The European Union's expansion of 2004 and 2007 has raised expectations and highlighted the need to protect the interest of minorities. In my thesis I pointed out that the EU has increased its involvement in minority related issues, which can be illustrated by EU policies addressing current challenges, including widespread racism, discrimination, xenophobia etc... In order to advance social cohesion in the EU, it is imperative to address the needs of the most vulnerable groups and to implement policies that offer alternatives in improving their socio-economic conditions. Therefore, the bulk of my thesis was organized in a way that involved issues related to the Roma minority, which forms the largest and the most vulnerable ethnic minority in Europe. One of the greatest challenges for the EU and its Member states has been the inclusion of the Roma minority into society. While developing my thesis, I came to the understanding that the 'Roma problem' created a two-fold challenge for actors involved in domestic and EU policy making: first, the socio-economic problem, where policies need to ensure that marginalized groups have equal access to employment and other services; second the ethnic minority integration problem, which goes beyond equal access problems.

Furthermore, I used the reasoning developed by other scholars which concludes that the failure of integrationist policies stems from the different approaches between European institutions and Member States. It was demonstrated that the group-based approach is likely to reproduce inequalities among sub-groups, which was illustrated by certain policy initiatives' failure to tackle the problems of segregation in education. In the previous chapters

I also argued that social integration approaches cause a significant dilemma for the EU, which can influence policy outcomes. It was noted that the EU's and the European institutions incline more towards multiculturalists approaches that disproportionally focus on anti-discriminatory measures, while overlooking the abject poverty of many Roma.

One of the main aims of my thesis was to explore the EU's influence on domestic policy developments oriented towards minority issues in the region of Central Europe. In the wake of an emerging European Roma policy, I explored the two most significant initiatives of Roma inclusion in the last decade and came to the conclusion that despite positive signs, policies have failed so far to improve the conditions of the Roma. Concerns have grown since the economic crisis and the subsequent social upheaval in Europe that has fueled racism and anti-Gypsy sentiments. Further explanation was given to the limited achievements of the initiatives that are partially the cause of a lack of political will coupled with a misuse of resources. However, I have assessed the impact of the most recent EU Framework with caution as only two years has passed since its inception. My overall evaluation of the EU Framework can be understood by two different perspectives: taking a skeptical perspective, targets and objectives are too broad to meet the specific needs of the Roma, while another generation of Roma children is in danger of losing out on the opportunities that could be offered by increased efforts and coherent approaches; on the other hand, the EU Framework is the first collective political commitment to improve the socio-economic conditions of the Roma minority, which has a significant potential to influence domestic policy making in the Member States. Although tangible results have not been obvious, there have been signs of successful projects and programs that can be used as examples of good practices. In short, the European integration has finally reached a phase where the hardships of the most vulnerable groups are addressed and solutions pursued collectively. It is clear that without improving the

socio-economic and sometimes cultural struggle of minorities, little can be done to proceed with modernizing the European Social Model.

It has been shown that the EU's role has been increasing, but the Commission will have to shift from its position of being a broker to a more interventionist role if the objectives set in the EU Framework are to be met by 2020. The case studies in my thesis showed that in the field of education, despite growing EU influence on social policy matters, there are discrepancies between national legislation and local policy implementation. After evaluating the Hungarian NRIS and the Slovak NRIS, I have come to the conclusion that policies and strategies do not always reflect reality. Despite both national strategies conform, and even go beyond, to strategies set in the EU Framework, Roma segregation in education is on the rise, mainly in Slovakia.

In conclusion, it is difficult to predict the future impact of the EU Framework on the lives of Roma, and almost impossible to foresee the limits and boundaries of the European Social Model. Expectations are high as ever, since tangible results are yet to be made. There is little doubt about the qualities and potential of the EU Framework to make a difference in Europe by 2020, but the question remains whether “Roma [can] move beyond the rhetoric to the substance of integration.”<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>164</sup>Rorke, B. (2011). *Beyond Rhetoric*.p.5

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