

**Framing of “Roma” in the Roma Policies of Bulgaria:
A Frame Analysis of the National Roma Integration Strategies of Bulgaria
(1999-2012)**

By

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Author's Declaration

I, the undersigned, Atanas Ivanov Stoyanov, hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis.

To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

This is a true copy of the thesis, including final revisions.

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Abstract:

The notion of “Roma” appears to be one of the most complex notions used in today’s public policies. In policies, the single label of “Roma” serves to designate various issues of minority rights, social exclusion, and equality. The numerous debates among academics and policy makers on what should be called “Roma” and what not, have led to separate policy results. Employing the Critical Frame Analysis Approach, this thesis analyzes the framing of the “Roma” category in the National Roma Integration Strategies in Bulgaria, to find out what the Roma problem is represented to be. The findings show that the “Roma” issue is formulated mostly as a socio-economic one: an implication that further reinforces the discrimination against Roma instead of helping them.

Keywords: Roma, Bulgaria, Roma policies, Roma representations, policy framing of Roma

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List of abbreviations:

CoE Council of Europe

CoM Council of Ministers

CFA Critical Frame Approach

DRI Decade for Roma Inclusion

EU European Union

NRI National Roma Integration Strategy

Introduction

“The beginning of wisdom is the definition of terms”

Socrates

After the fall of the communism in Central and Eastern Europe in the early 90s, the issues of the Roma people appeared on the civil and the political agenda stronger than ever before. A major political challenge that had to be answered was whether Roma should be granted special rights: be recognized as an ethnic or national minority. Another issue that required urgent response was the emerging social isolation of Roma. The collapse of the socialist systems brought many difficulties for the ethnically different Roma people. In the process of marketization, many of the Roma remained unemployed and discriminated. The deepening of some social problems led to the emergence of new ones. Poverty led to issues like low education and poor health status and this in turn made the discrimination by the majority even greater. At the same time a conversation that was systematically oppressed during the decades of communism, the one about the Roma culture and language, was reborn (Marushiakova and Popov 2015).

These various issues provoked numerous policy answers by governments, supranational institutions and academics: all of them using the same, single notion of “Roma”. While not everywhere definition of the Roma category is provided, one has to understand the meaning of “Roma” through the context and the way “the Roma issue” is formulated and represented in the related texts. Indeed, what is “Roma” and what is not is still an issue of interpretations and debates.

The different international organizations employed the category of “Roma” to show different issues. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe – OSCE, for example, recognizes the “Roma” as an issue of security and equal political participation. In 1994, on a summit in Budapest, OSCE took the decision to establish a special office dedicated to “Roma” – the Contact Point for Sinti and Roma (Osce.org 2015). In 1992, the Council of Europe (CoE) adopted the European Charter for European and Minority Languages and in 1995, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities: documents concerning the minority rights, including as well the rights of Roma as a minority. Therefore, the CoE considers “Roma” as an ethnic minority whose “minority rights” should be respected.

After years of debating, the “Roma” issue acquired significance for another, much more influential to national governments political alliance, the European Union (EU), insisting on a uniform common policy of “Roma inclusion”. In April 2011, the EU adopted the European Framework on National Roma Integration Strategies as the highest, up to date, political commitment to better the situation of the Roma across the EU-member states and to highlight the crucial role that national governments should play in this process. This EU Framework had another, own understanding of what “Roma” is: a collective term for people who share social exclusion and discrimination (Council of EU 2011).

While numerous political commitments, designed policies and programs and allocated funds, were taken as steps towards the Roma by the EU, national governments, the Open Society Foundations and many other international actors, the reports of civil organizations that are constantly working in the field of human rights and inclusion, still do not indicate a visible improvement in the everyday life of the majority of Roma people (Civil Society Monitoring

Report 2013, Rorke 2013). On the contrary, the problems of the Roma people became even more visible than before. In recent years the central and eastern European countries became a stage of Roma racial killings, a limited right of free movement and statelessness, forced evictions, school segregation, ghettoization and countless other human rights violations (Errc.org 2015).

Bulgaria, a current member-state of the EU, of CoE and OSCE, is a salient example of a country that adopted numerous public policies about Roma. According to the CoE, this is the country with the highest Roma ratio in Europe: one out of ten citizens is Roma (Keen 2015). Although the government started its efforts to deal with the various issues faced by Roma people long time ago, (with the Framework Program for Full Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society 1999), according to the monitoring reports of the civil society organizations the reality for the majority of ethnic Roma in Bulgaria today has slightly changed (Civil Society Monitoring Report 2013).

Deriving from the work of policy framing of scholars such as Yanow (1997), Fischer (2003) and Bacchi (2009) who look thoroughly at the issues of formulation, and representation of problems in public policy as crucial for the consequent policy implementation, in the current thesis I am investigating particularly the various issues of policy framing and formulation with regards to the notion of “Roma”. Although interpretativists like Fischer and Yanow have analyzed in depth the concept of policy, up to date very few academics have looked at the policy framing of the Roma-related policies and what the “Roma” representations in these documents are. Vermeersch is the first one who actively connects the concepts of “Roma” and “policy framing” making an attempt to explain the “Roma” as a complex, politically constructed identity being. (Vermeersch 2001). In early papers, McGarry also looks at the notion of “Roma” as a predominantly political one, constructed by various international governmental and non-

governmental organizations (McGarry 2011). In more contemporary works, however, McGarry and Tremlett make a step towards going beyond the single approaches towards “Roma”. They look at different Roma-related concepts and classify the different Roma representations as a tool to deconstruct the notion of “Roma” (Tremlett and McGarry 2013; McGarry 2014). In *“The work of Sisyphus: squaring the circle of Roma recognition”* McGarry et al. state: “Our main aim is to move debates on from continually describing who Roma people are and what they are doing, to questioning: who defines who is Roma, when and why? What happens in policy-making, research, everyday interactions?” (Agarin, McGarry and Tremlett, 2014, p.727).

Following the statement above, this study is an attempt to fill the niche categorization of “Roma” as a notion, being used in policy documents in various ways and having little or no systematic investigation. Therefore, this thesis poses the following research question: *“What is the framing of the “Roma” category in the Roma-related policies of Bulgaria?”*

The main contribution of this work is the frame analysis of the national Roma policies in Bulgaria. The current research aims to discover for first time by whom the notion of “Roma” is used and what for; what are the problems that are being described through it and how they are described; what is the context around the notion of “Roma”; what are the other most common terms/concepts one can read in the Roma policies of Bulgaria. As these policies are being designed to reach between 340,000 (according to official statistics) and 700,000 (according to CoE) the frame analysis of the Bulgarian Roma policies becomes a pivotal issue.

Methodology

For the purposes of analyzing the framing of “Roma” in the existing national policy documents in Bulgaria, I use the Critical Frame Analysis (CFA) approach that critically assesses the various ways in which an issue is framed (Verloo 2005). I employ the CFA approach because it has already been proven as effective in the frame analysis of other crosscutting policy issues, such as gender and equality (Dombos et al. 2012), where the “(u)nderstanding and the adaptation of the Gender Mainstreaming concept varies widely in the member states of the EU” (Verloo 2005, p.2). Similarly to the gender mainstreaming concept, the concept of Roma is even more complex and requires clarification. The CFA does not only help to clarify the notion of Roma and to analyze documents related to Roma, but it is also a good source for their assessment. Employing CFA’s document framing definition, I will find out what the common and the different points in the Bulgarian Roma-related documents are. As part of the frame analysis, this research will show if there are any inconsistencies between the Roma-related documents, e.g. whether they adopt a unified meaning of “Roma” or every document is driven by “its own” definition of what Roma is; whether they employ “Roma” as “ethnic minority” or “socio-economic category”. My aim is to understand how policy makers formulate the Roma issues and to implicate what could be the consequences from these written formulations.

The time scope of my research traces the Roma-related documents adopted after the democratic changes in 1989 until the adoption of the newest National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS), 2012-2020. As “Roma-related” policies I consider each document adopted by the Bulgarian government which includes either “Roma” or “ethnic minority” within its title. I

further divide these Roma-related documents into three types: (1) strategic documents¹ (these are the Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society 1999, the Framework Program for Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society 2010 and the National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Integration of Roma 2012-2020), (2) sectorial documents² (these are the National Program of the Republic of Bulgaria for Improvement the Housing Conditions of Roma 2005-2015, the Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities, 2004 and the Health Strategy for Disadvantaged People Belonging to Ethnic Minorities, 2005 and (3) operational documents (these are the action plans attached to the strategic documents). Due to its limitations, the current thesis analyzes only the three strategic documents since they are decisive for all the other Roma-related documents.

Thesis structure

The current thesis is developed into three main chapters. In the first chapter, I look more closely at the existing policy framing and policy implementation theories that will serve as the theoretical framework for the consequent analysis. In the second chapter, I am looking at the various opinions of international academics and institutions on what the “Roma” issue is seen to be. Here I classify the main “Roma” representations, and I present the decisive debates on the Roma policies. In the third chapter, I thoroughly present the three main Bulgarian documents concerning Roma, focusing on the events and the problems that have urged the adoption of these

¹ In Bulgarian language: (1) “Рамкова програма за равнопоставено интегриране на ромите в българското общество”, 1999, available in English at: <http://www.ncedi.government.bg/en/RPRIRBGO-English.htm>; (2) „Рамкова програма за интегриране на ромите в българското общество 2010-2020“ and (3) „Национална стратегия на Република България за интеграция на ромите 2012-2020“ Available in Bulgarian at: www.strategy.bg

² In Bulgarian language: (1) “Национална стратегия на Република България за подобряване на жилищните условия на ромите 2005-2015”; (2) „Стратегия за образователна интеграция на децата и учениците от етническите малцинства“; and (3) “Здравна стратегия за лица в неравностойно положение, принадлежащи към етническите малцинства”. Available in Bulgarian at: www.strategy.bg

documents. This chapter presents the frame analysis of the Bulgarian Roma policies and discusses what the “Roma issue” is seen to be and how it is addressed by the policy documents. It also looks at the definitions of “Roma” and other related terms that frame “Roma” in the policy texts, and examines whether these definitions have changed over time. Last but not least, the thesis provides further policy recommendations, which can be used by the government of Bulgaria and other national and supra-national public officials and policy makers when design policies about Roma.

Chapter one: Literature review

The aim of this chapter is to clarify most of the terminology used in the current thesis. Firstly, as I am not looking at how media or society represent and view Roma, but at how public policies are dealing with it, I will define the term “Roma policy” as a collocation that will often be used in the current thesis. Secondly, I will present important theoretical aspects of policy framing, as the instrument I am using for the close inspection of the Roma policies in Bulgaria is the frame analysis. This literature review will help the reader understand what “policy framing” is and for what it is being used. Lastly, this thesis is particularly interested in how the Roma issues are being identified, raised to the political agenda and formulated by policy makers, i.e. how the issues are being formulated and represented. However, this should not leave the reader with the assumption that policy formulation is the final stage of a given public policy cycle. On the contrary, policies are being formulated in order to be implemented and to bring the described, within a particular policy text, effect(s) to the defined beneficiaries. Although, due to the limitations of the current thesis, I am not going to discuss the technical implementation of the Roma policies in Bulgaria per se, at the end of this chapter I will still briefly elaborate on the significant linkage between formulation and implementation when it comes to Roma policies, particularly on the top-down and bottom implementation approaches. This will allow the reader to understand who participates and how in the formulation of the Roma policies.

1.1 What policy is a “Roma policy”?

The puzzling term that is still not defined by literature, although frequently used³, is the collocation of “Roma policy”. Unlike sectorial policies such as education, agriculture and health where the policy is framed around different sectorial problems (e.g. achieving better educational standards, a bigger quantity of crops, or reducing the price of the medicines) “Roma policies” are much more complex policies that go above the ordinary sectorial policy dimension. Thus, it is very much unclear and undefined what “Roma policies” are and who is supposed to benefit from them. This complication comes from the various issues that are being addressed by the policies concerning Roma people. For the purposes of the current thesis what I further call a “Roma policy” is each document adopted by public authorities that contains the words “Roma” or “minority” within its title. These are policies that are primarily designed to target “Roma”, perceiving them as a separate ethnicity, ethnic minority or social class. What I ultimately address in this thesis is the formulation of the problems that are being represented in the texts of these Roma policies.

1.2 Policy framing theory: What is the problem?

The theory on policy framing engages with the complexity of meaning constructions, conceptualizations, and narratives and helps us understand what is considered to be a “Roma” problem. The notion of “frame” has been borrowed predominantly from the social movements and sociology scholarship, where it was used “as a central dynamic in understanding the

³ A Google search for the collocation “Roma policy” shows 16,900 results, 27/05/2015

character and course of social movements” (Benford and Snow 2000, p.612). According to the groundbreaking work of Goffman, the frames serve “to locate, perceive, identify, and label” occurrences within their life space and the world at large” (Goffman 1974, p.21). In public policy and political science, framing was defined by Schön and Rein as “structures of belief, perception, and appreciation that underlie policy positions” (Schön and Rein 1994, p.23).

While Schön and Rein use the notion of policy framing mostly as a way to solve policy disagreements and controversies in politics, Triandafyllidou and Fotiou (1998) examine to a much greater extent the relation between cognitive-psychological heuristics and policy framing as a way to arrive at better policy options. According to the arguments of the cognitive scholarship (Eco 1979) borrowed by Triandafyllidou and Fotiou, people (citizens) perceive selectively and they tend to pay attention firstly to those elements and meanings that are already known to them. The identification of new concepts from the world happens in context. Although the only context I am looking at in my thesis is the one provided by public policies, decryption and storing of new meanings and concepts relies heavily not only on policy texts, but mostly on previous experiences and the reader’s culture.

Carol Bacchi contributes to this debate through her analysis on how gender issues are being represented in six countries. Roma policies and gender policies are similar because both of them are not classical sectorial policies but are dealing with complex categories encompassing various other issues. Carol Bacchi focuses on the “ways in which the concepts and categories used in the political debate are constructed and deployed for political purposes” (Blotsas and Beasley 2012, p.13). Her interest is not only to find what language is used to define the complex concept of gender policy, but also to closely investigate the problematization presented by these policies (*What’s the problem?* 1991). As a result, Bacchi elaborated on a new

approach called “*What’s the problem represented to be?*” (1997). The “*What’s the problem represented to be?*” (WPR) approach that was designed to help policy makers in the process of policy formulation and policy analysis can be very successfully employed for the frame analysis of the Roma policies. According to the author’s opinion, “rather than evaluate policies for their ability to ‘solve’ problems, we need to study the way policies construct problems” (Bletsas and Beasley 2012, p.38). This debate of meaning structure and deconstruction is further elaborated by Kostka: “by deconstructing the adopted definitions of a public problem one can capture the rationale behind the selected solutions. It could be speculated that policies that aim to satisfy sole political interest or address purely normative perceptions will run the risk of delivering unsuited, unnecessary, or unwanted public interventions” (Kostka 2015, p.44).

To deconstruct the meaning, i.e. to analyze the framing of the “Roma” category in the Roma policies, in the current thesis I am employing the Critical Frame Analysis (CFA) approach of Mieke Verloo that I already have presented in the introduction. The CFA is similar to the approach given by Bacchi, but in comparison, CFA offers a much more detailed scheme of frame analysis. CFA goes beyond the questions employed by WPR, analyzing not only the problematization of the issue per se, but also the issues of intersectionality, the voice of the ones speaking, and the participatory element (Verloo 2007, p. 47-49). All these issues are crucial elements in the process of policy formulation of issues about Roma.

Thus, an important question to ask ourselves is who decides what to be written and how to be formulated in policy texts. In an attempt to answer these questions, I will now employ the perspective of the policy implementation approaches to find more about how Roma issues are being formulated.

1.3 Policy implementation approaches: who decides what to be written?

The issue of policy framing comes with the question of who decides about public policies. The stakeholders involved in the problematization of the Roma issue could ideally be representatives of local Roma communities, NGOs, and administrations who know the issues on the ground. However, when it comes to describing the issue and putting them on paper, it is not very clear who decides what to be written. The two main policy implementation approaches, as the literature defines them – the ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches (Fischer, Miller and Sidney 2007) – can cast a light on this issue.

1.3.1 Bottom-up approach

Prominent representatives of the bottom-up approach in public policy theory are Lipsky (1980), Hjern and Hull (1982), and Bogason (2000) where the notion of “street-level bureaucrats”, coined by Lipsky, has a central place. According to Lipsky, street-level bureaucrats are the ones who are practically engaged with the issues of a given policy on a daily basis. They shape the policy formulation deriving from the practical issues of implementation. This approach presupposes that there is a built network, set structures of local administrations and organizations in constant dialogue with each other and with the national authorities. The way issues are solved is seen as participatory and decentralized (Lipsky, 1980). For example, teachers are forming professional unions where they discuss issues related to educational policies as equal participants, and they propose changes to the institutions higher in the hierarchy.

1.3.2 Top-down approach

Contrary to the bottom-up approach, the theory on top-down policy implementation (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973; Bardach 1977; Sabatier and Mazmanian 1979, 1980) looks primarily at policy makers on the national level as the ones who formulate policies and who require the administrative system positioned lower in the hierarchy to implement what is written. Following a rational model approach where the government is playing a central role in taking decisions and where decisions are not being questioned (Herbert and Simon, 1997), Pressman and Wildavsky draw a linear relationship between what is written and the policy outputs, downplaying the role of policy implementers (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973). This presupposes clearly stated instructions or, in other words, a very clearly formulated policy that describes in details who the policy stakeholders are. Sabatier and Mazmanian specifically focus on the distinction between policy formulation and implementation. They develop a set of criteria for effective implementation (Sabatier and Mazmanian 1979, 1980). The first two of them are directed to the stage of policy formulation as a first step towards effective policy implementation: “(1) policy objectives are clear and consistent and (2) the program is based on a valid causal theory” (Fischer, Miller and Sidney, 2007, p.92).

Without underestimating the efforts of some NGOs in Bulgaria dealing with the Roma problematic and playing the role of street-level bureaucrats, in my view, what matters in the understanding of the Roma policies in Bulgaria is who formulates them. The theorists employing the bottom-up approach would argue that street-level bureaucrats, those who are directly involved in implementation, play a crucial role in policy formulation. Nevertheless, since in Bulgaria there are no strong unions of organizations shaping the formulation of the various Roma

policies, I stand in favor of the top-down theorists who argue that policies are being formulated and decided on the national level and then being “lowered” to the implementers at the lower levels of the administrative hierarchy. In this case governments are the leading force when it comes to the formulation of what needs to be done by the implementers. Moreover, this formulation should be concise and unambiguous.

The next chapter elaborates more on how the general lack of clarity and unambiguity in academia and international policies with regard to Roma can result in different representations of the “Roma” category and various debates on how “Roma”-labeled issues should be solved: a discussion that further affects the constructive solving the complex issues of Roma.

Chapter two: “Roma” representations and “Roma policy” debates

The issue of how, in a single way, to understand the concept of “Roma” has been much debated among politicians, policy makers, and academics. According to McGarry, the variety of understandings are prerequisite for academics to rally around a unitary concept of Roma, for governments to properly approach and solve the problems, and for non-Roma to better understand the complex problems that Roma face (McGarry 2014).

In this chapter, I review a number of “international” academic opinions and public policies on what the “Roma” issue is and what the problems of “Roma” are represented to be. This international perspective is important for the debate about “Roma” in Bulgaria for two reasons. First is the big influential role that supranational organizations such as the CoE and the EU play with regard to the transposition of international policies and the adoption of national ones, especially when it comes to policies about Roma. This national-international interaction does not only mean a translation from one language to another. Those new, dictated-from-above commitments, often arrive with an attached “trailer”, full of new concepts and terms, bringing new meanings and interpretations. Some of these new concepts cannot be translated coherently, let me be specific, from English to Bulgarian and vice-versa, or might need further clarifications and definitions which are not being provided. The second reason is the dominance of academics from different disciplines who, writing in English, create the “international narrative” on the notion of “Roma”, one that results in controversy about what the “Roma” problem is, who Roma are and who are not, and what needs to be done by decision-makers. This thesis engages with the existing academic perspectives and the current debates on the topic of “Roma, by mapping them and contributing to them.

Having said this, below I present three different understandings of the notion of Roma: (1) Roma as ethnicity, (2) Roma as ethnic minority (political category) and (3) Roma as socio-economic category. Together with the concept of “Roma” I hereby look at, insofar as the length of this thesis allows, other related concepts such as “ethnic minority”, “inclusion” and “integration”. I also examine two main debates for the Roma policies: the “targeting vs. mainstreaming” and the “recognition vs. redistribution” debates.

2.1 “Roma” as ethnicity

The academy is rich with scholarship premised on or advancing the notion of Roma as ethnicity: a group bearing its own history, language and culture distinctive from all others. Some of the prominent academics who firmly hold the position that the Roma are a community sharing the same ethnic origin are ethnologists such as Popov and Marushiakova from the Bulgarian Academy of Science. Others, such as Kyuchukov, Hancock, Courthiade, Sarau, and Matras are linguists who mostly engage with research on Roma language and culture.

Among the myriad of literature representing Roma as ethnicity, the positions of Bulgarian scholars Popov and Marushiakova begins highlighting the biggest debate between western and eastern scholarship on what is being understood by the usage of “Roma”. In Marushiakova's and Popov's thinking, the meaning of the exonym⁴ “Gipsy” in the English language is different than the one used in Bulgaria and other Central European countries. While the notion of “Gipsy”, or “Roma” as commonly used in Western Europe, designates a “nomadic way of life”, in Eastern Europe the verbiage “Roma” points to “ethnicity”. Therefore, in this

⁴ Exonym is the common term that is being used by another ethnic group to name yours. “Gipsy” or “Gypsy” (both forms are valid in the English language) is the exonym that corresponds to the endonym (the way how members of ethnic group call themselves) of “Roma”.

chapter it becomes of particular interest to “trace” the understanding of those western-based international organizations engaged the most with the discussions on “Roma”: the EU and the CoE to understand what their definitions of “Roma” are and how do they differ from each other. Secondly, further investigated in the next chapter is which understanding of “Roma” prevails in Bulgaria in this process of policy transposition?” In the current section I present the “Roma” definition of the CoE, as the one that the closest defines Roma as a heterogeneous ethnic group: “The term ‘Roma’ used at the Council of Europe refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as Gypsies” (CoE 2012, p.4).

2.2 “Roma” as a political category: the notion of “ethnic minority”

The representation of “Roma” as a political category is very much built on the representation of “Roma” as ethnicity, where whether the ethnicity is homogenous or heterogeneous is not a priority concern. . Most related to the notion of “Roma” as a political category are such concepts as “ethnic minority”, “minority rights”, “Roma political parties”, “Roma NGOs” (civil society, movement) and “Roma nation” (Kovac 2001; McGarry 2008; Trehan and Sigona 2009; Vermeersch 2012; Vincze 2013).

Contrary to the common understanding of Roma as both “ethnicity” and “ethnic minority”, I posit that these two terms are not synonyms and that a distinction exists between them. Ethnicities, on the one hand, are those groups of people who differ from one another in historical, cultural and linguistic terms. The notion of “ethnicity” is used in the social science, such as in ethnography, anthropology, and sociology. As such it does not include any political

element and it does not define the official relation of the state towards a given group of people. The notion of “ethnic minority”, on the other hand, in contrast, is being used to define a relation, an official status given to those who are perceived by the states’ machinery as members of an ethnicity. In other words, “ethnic minority” is a political term invented to describe the relation between an ethnicity and a state (Kymlicka 1995). It presupposes a tension, or struggle, for distinct civil and political rights including participation in the national decision-making process. In this sense, I tend to disagree with Vincze, who writes about “constructing ‘Roma ethnicity’ through politics and policies for Roma” (Vincze 2013 p.3). “Ethnicity” cannot be constructed by outsiders. In contrast, the rights and obligations of “ethnic minorities” can be defined by politics and policies in the frames of a given state.

The Kymlicka's groundbreaking work *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995) provides a detailed explanation on the notions of “minority”, “nation”, and “integration” which are very often used in many Roma policies. Looking at the concept of citizenship as an enrollment in a political community, Kymlicka arrives at the conclusion that modern states are not ethnically homogeneous, but ethnically and culturally diverse. Since everyone should have the right to fully identify with the state and since culture and language are important elements of identity⁵, these rights must be guaranteed for everyone in the multicultural states we live in. The differentiation which Kymlicka made in the mid-90s between the notions of national and ethnic minority, making a distinction between “incorporated cultures” and “immigrants”, has so far shaped many narratives and policies about minorities and particularly Roma in different countries. Kymlicka defines “national minority” as follows:

⁵ 'Identity': “The characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is”. *Oxford online dictionaries* 2015. Web. 23 May 2015.

[C]ultural diversity arises from the incorporation of previously self-governing, territorially concentrated cultures in to a larger state. These incorporated cultures which I call 'national minorities', typically wish to maintain themselves as distinct societies alongside majority culture, and demands various forms of autonomy or self government to ensure their survival as a distinct societies. (Kymlicka 1995, p. 10).

Kymlicka defines the concept of ethnic minority (group) as follows: “cultural diversity arises from individual and familial immigration, such immigrants often coalesce into loose associations which I call ‘ethnic groups’” (Kymlicka 1995, p. 10). The main point made is that while national minorities are represented as “societal structures” with a history of self-governance, ethnic minorities have no such “societal structures” or “history of self-governance”. They are not an “incorporated culture” but need to be “integrated” into the society of the majority (Kymlicka 1995): an “integration” which is still widely advocated for in public policy.

2.3 “Roma” as socio-economic category

The description of the various social and economic challenges of “the majority” of those who define themselves as Roma shifts the meaning of “Roma” from the initial ethnic conceptualization to a socio-economic one. Sobotka looks thoroughly at this process of meaning-shifting of “Roma” in academia, politics and policies, underlining the huge role of the network dynamics with regard to Roma in the early 90s. She describes the multitude of governmental and non-governmental organizations which started working on the human rights dimensions and against the ethnic discrimination of Roma at that time. Subsequently, according to Sobotka, some of the academics who had exhausted the topic of ethnic discrimination then started addressing more “practical” issues about Roma. Similarly, NGOs, driven by the need to achieve practical results for Roma communities, also started to turn their focus on the fight with ethnic

discrimination towards other vectors of social progress, the fields where this battle should happen: education, access to justice, housing and others (Sobotka 2011).

Among the most common terminologies used in Roma-integration framing are “social exclusion/inclusion”, “school segregation”, “marginalization” and “equal access”. Such terminology are applied to Roma as a community predominantly suffering from various social and economic issues.

The socio-economic representation of Roma is a unique mixture of issues of poverty and ethnicity/ethnic discrimination taken together. Szelenyi defines this as a social process of the “rationalization of poverty” (Szelenyi et al. 2001). Building on the work of a number of sociologists who have previously researched the link between poverty and ethnicity, Szelenyi states that these two categories, although distinct do “not only overlap and reinforce each other (...), but also tend to become each other. Those who are poor become “ethnic”, while members of this ethnicity are more likely to be called poor“(Szelenyi and Emigh 2001, p.4-5). In continuation, Szelenyi also states:

[R]acialization arises from a strategy used by positively privileged ethnic groups to keep themselves out of the category “poor” and/or to blame the poor for their own poverty at the same time. (I cannot be poor since I am not African American or Gypsy” or “They are poor since they are African American or Gypsies. It is their biological heritage or culture that makes them poor. (Szelenyi and Emigh, 2001, p.5).

Many academics have done research on the “gaps” between Roma and non-Roma and have labeled such gaps “Roma segregation” and “Roma marginalization”. Wording, here, is problematic. While many academics are concerned about inequalities and their research helps to detect the institutional discrimination against Roma, there is a clash if one borrows the “Roma as

ethnicity” perspective. Other than the notion of “Roma segregation” in the CEE countries, for example, there are no other parallel terms that combine “ethnicity” and “segregation”. Thus, having no parallel categories, the social problems that are being experienced by many regardless of ethnicity, are being attached to no other ethnicities but the Roma. In this way those individuals and communities who self-identify as “Roma” are being seen not as what they would identify themselves, but rather as what their problems are, the latter mostly constructed by non-Roma.

In the public policy arena a stand to define the “Roma” as a predominantly socio-economic issue is being taken by the EU and its Fundamental Rights Agency, the Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 (DRI) and the World Bank. Moreover, the vision that the “Roma” mostly need targeted, special project-based “socio-economic” support to end being “socially excluded”, “marginalized” and “segregated” is seen as the engine of the change for Roma by a number of civil organizations: both donors and implementers. Notwithstanding the effectiveness of these organizations in addressing the problems they have defined, critical attention is paid below to the way these organizations describe “Roma” and the labels ascribed to the notion.

The World Bank, defines Roma as “the largest and most vulnerable minority group in Eastern Europe”, including in its narratives concepts such as “inclusion”, “development”, and “marginalized Roma” (Worldbank.org 2015). Priority areas of the DRI 2005-2015 are “education, employment, health, and housing” having the initial role to “eliminate discrimination” (Romadecade.org 2015). These are also four priorities of current Roma policies of the EU in the European Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies 2012-2020. The definition given by the European Commission about Roma neglects the cultural and ethnic dimension of “Roma”:

The term "Roma" is used – similarly to other political documents of the European Council, European Parliament etc. – as an umbrella term including also other groups of people who share more or less similar cultural characteristics and a history of persistent marginalisation in European societies, such as the Sinti, Travellers, Kalé etc. The European Commission is aware that the extension of the term "Roma" to all these groups is contentious, and it has no intention to "assimilate" the members of these other groups to the Roma themselves in cultural terms. Nonetheless, it considers the use of "Roma" as an umbrella term practical and justifiable within the context of a policy document which is dealing above all with issues of social exclusion and discrimination, not with specific issues of cultural identity. (European Commission 2010).

This EU-“definition” apparently raises more questions than it provides answers for. In the first sentence of the definition it is stated that “Roma” is an “umbrella term”, and there are some, much hidden, not explicit, elements of considering “Roma” as “ethnicity”. However, the conclusion of the “Roma” definition states that the usage of “Roma” is “practical and justifiable” when it comes mostly to “social exclusion” and “discrimination”. Since the last Roma national policy of Bulgaria, the NRIS 2012-2020 was adopted as a requirement by the EU. In forthcoming analytical parts for the Bulgarian Roma policies in this thesis, I will also analyze to what extent this EU-definition influenced the content of the Bulgarian document.

The three distinct representations of the “Roma” notion that I presented above are nonetheless interrelated. “Roma as ethnicity” is fundamental for the minority rights perspective of the “Roma as ethnic minority” standpoint. However, the latter alludes to political demands that go further beyond the issues of language, culture, and history. The “Roma as a political category” point of view advocates for political empowerment and equal participation of minorities in all spheres of the public life. However, it becomes clear that “Roma” does not fit the definition of “ethnic minority” provided by Kymlicka, since Roma are not simply “migrants” but rather they have occupied the territories of contemporary Europe for centuries, being always a part of the societal life yet rarely allowed to be partake of the decision-making process

(Romafacts.uni-graz.at 2015). The “Roma as a socio-economic group” clashes with the “ethnicity” representation, yet the demands for redistribution could be interpreted as part of the minority rights demands, i.e. part of the “Roma as ethnic minority”. The “socio-economic Roma” borrows the “Roma” ethnonym to designate all those who simultaneously do not belong to the ethnic majority and who experience poverty and other related social issues, i.e. racializes “Roma”. The ethical policy dilemma that arises is whether the state should tolerate redistribution of social goods based on “ethnicity and poverty” or solely on “poverty”. The first option leads to negative tensions against Roma in the mainstream society. Moreover, when it comes to the practical implementation of the “Roma as socio-economic category” policies, there is a dilemma: who should get aid and who should not? Who is Roma and who is not? Not to mention that in some countries the collection of ethnic data by public administration is prohibited, and debates as to the legitimacy of this prohibition persist.

2.4 Debates on Roma policies

Having presented the three major representations of “Roma” and their clashes and overlapping points, I now explore two main academic debates that provide important analytical perspectives for the forthcoming analysis of the Bulgarian Roma policies: the “Redistribution vs. Recognition” and the “Mainstreaming vs. Targeting” debates about Roma policies.

2.4.1 Roma policies: between redistribution and recognition

The first debate which I call the “Between redistribution and recognition” debate, justifies the existence of Roma policies through deconstruction of the various issues addressed by such policies and their categorization into two major groups: the issues of recognition and the

issues of redistribution. Within this paradigm, Roma policies are defined as combining the struggle for cultural recognition simultaneously with the demand for socio-economic equality. This debate was launched by Nancy Fraser in 1995 by her work “*From redistribution to recognition? Dilemmas of justice in a ‘post-socialist’ age*”. Fraser not only defines “redistribution” and “recognition”, but she argues that the remedies of these two groups of issues undermine each another, i.e. they are in a constant conflict: “People who are subject to both cultural injustice and economic injustice need both recognition and redistribution. They need both to claim and to deny their specificity. How, if at all, is this possible?” (Fraser 1995, p.74). According to Fraser, the answer is “transformative deep restructuring of relations of productions and relations of recognition” which she respectively titles as “socialism” and “deconstruction” (Fraser 1995, p.87). By “deep restructuring” Fraser understands changing the culture: something that heavily relies on the belief that policies can shape culture: a topic previously touched in this thesis.

Fraser’s paradigm of “redistribution and recognition” is borrowed by many scholars contributing to the debate about the Roma policies. Building on it, Tremlett investigates whether Roma issues are being presented more as an issue of redistribution or recognition in the documents of the CoE, the EU and the Hungarian government (Tremlett 2009). Similarly, McGarry looks at the EU Roma policies and the Roma activism as combining the struggle for recognition and redistribution (McGarry 2011). The polemic of “recognition-redistribution” is employed by many other scholars such as Agarin, Dobos, Kostadinova, Nicolae, and Pallai. The polemic of this debate insists that the addressing of many complex issues by a common policy, Roma policy, is possible if the right balance between redistribution and recognition is found.

These academics call for deconstructing the various issues that are addressed by a policy but do not call towards deconstruction of this Roma policy and its division into many other policies.

2.4.2 Mainstreaming vs. targeting about Roma policies

On the contrary, while the debate on redistribution vs. recognition justifies the existence of the Roma policies, the second debate, the “mainstreaming vs. targeting” approach, questions to a certain extent this existence. This debate recognizes the various “Roma” issues, but it is concerned with the approach to be taken in addressing Roma issues: Should policy makers target, i.e. explicitly mention and design policies for “Roma” or should “Roma” be mainstreamed, i.e. listed (or not mentioned at all) as one of the potential target groups? The polemic that Roma need a special targeting is related mostly to the struggle for cultural and political recognition in the early 1990s when the Roma civil movement required “special” policies about Roma (Sobotka 2011). Others, such as Andrzej Mirga, a prominent name in the struggle for political recognition of Roma, claim that since the mainstreaming policies on discrimination are proving ineffective in protecting Roma, specific Roma targeting policies are needed. (Mirga 2005). Rovid uses “mainstreaming minority policies” as opposed to “Roma policies” (Rovid 2011). Sobotka defines the concepts of “mainstreaming” and “targeting”: “Mainstreaming aims at integrating the Roma focus into general EU policies on promoting anti-discrimination and social inclusion. Targeting calls for programmes with a specific focus on Roma as an underprivileged, socially deprived group who require action in the framework of fundamental rights and equality” (Sobotka 2005, p.1). The decision as to which approach to take is solely that of the national governments. If one decides to advance the targeting approach, a practical issue would be the deciding on who is Roma and who is not. If one considers

mainstreaming as a better approach, an issue might then be the discrimination and non-equal treatment faced by Roma. Therefore a question for thought and further analysis becomes, “Are the so-called Roma policies a good way to fight the discrimination towards them?”

In this chapter I defined the notion of “Roma” in three different ways and I presented the decisive debates related to Roma policies to analyze what the usage of the “Roma” notion at international level is. The next chapter gives a brief overview of the Roma in Bulgaria. It analyzes the main Roma strategies adopted in Bulgaria after the democratic changes that took place on November 10, 1989 to date.

Chapter three: Roma policies in Bulgaria: A frame analysis of the National Roma Integration Strategies of Bulgaria

The current chapter looks firstly at the notion of “Roma” used to designate ethnicity and ethnic minority in the Bulgarian context. Then it presents a frame analysis of the three National Roma Integration Strategies of Bulgaria, issued between 1999 and 2012.

3.1 Roma in the national context of Bulgaria

In relation to the definition of “ethnic minorities” given by Kymlicka, the first historical records about Roma people coming to the Balkans date from between the 12th and 14th centuries or earlier. (Open Society Sofia, 2008). This is to say that Roma have already been part of Bulgarian society for 700 to 900 years. The last national census held in 2011 showed that 325,343 citizens or 4.7 % of the total population of Bulgaria identify themselves as Roma. This makes Roma the third largest ethnic group in the country after ethnic Bulgarians (around 5.6 million) and ethnic Turks (588,318). The CoE estimates the number of Roma to be even greater, at around 700,000 (NSI 2011, Stoyanov 2015).

However, the concepts of “ethnic minority” and “national minority” do not exist and are not defined in the Bulgarian legal world. These terms are used mostly when referring to international treaties which the state has ratified, such as various documents relating to national or ethnic minorities issued by the UN and the CoE. In 1998 the Constitutional Court of Bulgaria provided an interpretation of the terms “national minority” and “ethnic minority” with regard to the CoE’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities ratified by Bulgaria: “The Court accepts that the will of the contracting States at this stage of international legal framework is to provide the determination of the term "national minorities" at the discretion of

each Contracting State” (Decision No. 2 1998). In other words, each country is free to define the concepts of “national” and “ethnic” minorities on its own and Bulgaria, to date, has chosen not to. This means that Bulgarian Turks and Bulgarian Roma do not benefit from any special rights or privileges⁶ besides those available to all Bulgarian citizens.

This lack of definitions does not prevent the government from using the term “ethnic minorities” in some of the national policy titles, for example the Strategy for Educational Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities, 2004 and the Health Strategy for Disadvantaged People Belonging to Ethnic Minorities, 2005.

3.2 Frame Analysis of the National Roma Integration Strategies of Bulgaria

Here I provide the Critical Frame Approach (CFA) analysis of the three national Roma integrations strategies of Bulgaria, adopted respectively in 1999, 2010 and 2012, as documents that are decisive for all the sectorial and operational Roma policies. The adoption of these documents has been dictated by various factors, both national and international. This CFA-analysis shows the shift in the meaning of the “Roma” concept. It allows the reader to understand what “Roma” are represented to be and what subsequent complications could arise due to the presented policy formulations.

⁶ Besides the everyday 10-minutes news emission in Turkish language broadcasted by the national television since October 2, 2000 and the right of education in mother tongue (National Educational Act 1991). The education in Romanes actually never happened for Roma since there is a curriculum approved by the ministry, but no student books approved.

3.2.1. The NRIS - 1999

The Framework for Full Integration of Roma in the Bulgarian Society, hereinafter NRIS-1999, is the first national strategy of Bulgaria that explicitly mentions and targets Roma. The document consists of only 8 pages and was adopted on April 22, 1999 by the Council of Ministers (CoM) for a period of 10 years. The adoption of the first Roma strategy was a result of the advocacy efforts of several Roma NGOs, and mostly, the Human Rights Project Association headed by Rumyan Rusinov, a Romani activist and politician with extensive experience in the management of the Roma Education Fund in Budapest (News Bg 2001).

Real equality for Roma in Bulgaria and the elimination of discrimination against them are presented as the main goals of the NRIS-1999. In the text of the strategy the problem is defined as follows: “Discrimination against Roma in societal life presupposes the problems of the community in socio-economic and educational-cultural aspects” (NRIS-1999, Part I). The actors that are involved according to this policy document are the Bulgarian government and the Roma community. Both of them are seen as single entities with no further differentiations within them. For example, when talking about the government, the CoM and the Ministry of Education and Science are mentioned in the text only once, meaning that there is no clear division or allocation of responsibilities. When talking about Roma, none of the 101 Roma groups or subgroups (Open Society Sofia, 2008) is mentioned.

The voice speaking in the document is clearly the one of Roma civil society. The main perspective of the strategy is that Bulgaria must adopt an antidiscrimination law and set up a national antidiscrimination body, both of which were still missing in 1999. These demands refer only to one document, the *UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial*

Discrimination. Some of the concepts used in the text are: “citizen’s rights”, “interethnic relations” (having translation in Bulgarian), “discrimination”, “racism”, “equal integration” and “desegregation” (introduced as new words to the Bulgarian language with no definitions provided in the text). The concepts of “inclusion” and “marginalization” are missing.

The State is seen as having responsibility for causing the problem because of the failure to address discriminatory treatment towards Roma. Firstly, the Roma, but also the government, are seen to be the problem holders. Roma are seen as having no equal rights. The government is represented as having structural and legislative issues to be solved. Roma are seen as the problematic group while the normative group is Bulgarian society: Roma need to be “equally integrated” into Bulgarian society. It is assumed that Roma are being passive and, therefore, there is a call for their activation: “Roma should not be passive objects that are influenced but active subjects in the public sphere” (part I).

According to the document, the issues that need to be addressed are prioritized as follows: (1) Protection from discrimination; (2) Economic development; (3) Healthcare; (4) Territorial division of the Roma neighborhoods; (5) Education; (6) Protection of ethnic specificity and culture of the Roma in Bulgaria; (7) Presence of Roma in national media; (8) Roma women. The concrete mechanisms for the achievement of this strategy are planned to be set up by a special “group of experts representing the Roma community and the Bulgarian state” (part I).

The notion of “Roma” is undefined in the document. The terms “ethnicity”, “minority” or “ethnic minority” are not used even once. The collocation “socio-economic” is used three times together with “educational-cultural” to indicate aspects of discrimination towards the Roma.

Although “Roma” is not explicitly defined the text analysis shows that “Roma” is being framed as an ethnicity demanding equal civil rights and non-discrimination. In other words, “Roma” is being used as a notion designating the meaning of “ethnic minority”, and the relationship between Roma and the state, but never explicitly represented as such.

3.2.2 NRIS-2010

The Framework Program for Integration of Roma in the Bulgarian Society, 2010-2020, hereinafter NRIS-2010, consists of 22 pages and was adopted by the CoM on May 12, 2010, as a continuation of the NRIS-1999 that expired in 2009. Unlike its predecessor, the text of NRIS-2010 was heavily influenced by many international organizations and events that Bulgaria took part in: the DRI 2005-2015 and the regulations and policies of the EU⁷ with regard to non-discrimination, equal rights and Roma (p.6).

This new international influence contributed to the usage of new terminology in Bulgarian Roma policies. For example, “inclusion” appears in the text many times concerning the EU documents, while “integration” is the term that is traditionally used most intensively in the strategy. “Segregation” is used once, when talking about Roma education and “marginalization”, a new term for NRIS, is mentioned three times when talking about the living conditions of Roma. Other common expressions are “full participation” and “discrimination”. These are all complex terms that have no given definition but are a matter of individual interpretation, and all of them appear in the Bulgarian language as new concepts and words that are apparently describing negative processes.

⁷ Bulgaria became a full member of the EU on January 1, 2007

Similarly to the NRIS-99, issues of intersectionality are also addressed by the NRIS-2010. Roma women, children, and youth are mentioned under the “Non-discrimination and equal opportunities” section of the document. However, the points describing what actions to be taken are not prioritized, but listed randomly.

Although the strategy states that the active participation of Roma communities and organizations is important, and despite the statement that there had been 2 years of public consultation with Roma communities NGOs, responsible public institutions and academics on the document before it was adopted (p.2), from the frame analysis it can be concluded that Roma are not represented as an equal actor in this integration, but rather as an object of different measures. The main actors mentioned are the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Healthcare, the Committee for Protection from Discrimination, the Ministry of Regional Development, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies and the Ministry of Culture (p.3), but not the Roma community. The audience of the documents is not specifically mentioned either. From the “Mechanisms for implementation of the integration policy” section, it can be assumed that these actors are the EU, the DRI 2005-2015, the Bulgarian government, policy makers at the top level and Roma organizations.

Funding sources for priorities and mechanism for implementation, proposed in the strategy, are seen to be predominantly intergovernmental organizations such as the EU, the CoE and the DRI, but little or no responsibility for the issues outlined is given to the national budget i.e. these problems of the state related to Roma should be solved with the help of foreign aid.

The strategic aim presents to the reader what the main issue is: “(E)qual Integration of Roma in social, economic and political life by achieving equal opportunities and equal access to rights, benefits, goods and services, participation in all spheres of public life and improve the quality of life in accordance with the principles of equality and non-discrimination” (p.5). This formulation and the six priority sectors proposed further in the text of NRIS-2010 (education; healthcare; living conditions; employment; non-discrimination and equal opportunities and culture) strongly shift “Roma” representation towards a predominantly social category. If we analyze the formulation of this strategic aim in parts, we will better understand what the hidden implications are (*Table 1*):

Strategic aim of NRIS 2010-2020	Implication
Creating conditions for Equal Integration of Roma in social, economic and political life...	Integration happens in these listed spheres of public life.
...by...	This explains how integration happens.
....achieving equal opportunities and equal access to rights in all spheres of public life...	This is what integration means. However, it is not reached, i.e. Roma do not have equal rights and opportunities in all sphere of public life.
... and improve the quality of life...	The quality of life of Roma is insufficient.
...in accordance with the principles of equality and non-discrimination.	Roma are not equal [to Bulgarian society] and they are being discriminated against [by the Bulgarian society].

Source: Framework Program for Integration of Roma in the Bulgarian Society, 2010-2020, p.5

Although the problem is discrimination and unequal treatment, in the policy text it is not stated that Bulgarian society has caused the problem or that the state has allowed the problem. In the policy text, the focus is on the damage caused to Roma and not on the perpetrator. The problem holders are seen to be the Roma. They are the ones who are not equal, who are outside, and who have poorer living conditions: Roma have worse health, employment, and education. The state is seen as the one that attempts to help through various institutions. The strategy firstly frames the

category of Roma and then suggests measures that objectivize “them”, i.e. there is a generalization. Most importantly, the biggest part of the strategy is devoted to the social issues of education, healthcare, living conditions and employment and not to culture and non-discrimination. All in all, this policy text creates a generalized and racialized image of Roma as a single entity suffering from various social issues in comparison to Bulgarians and other minorities.

3.2.3 NRIS-2012

The current National Roma Integration Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria, 2012 - 2020, hereinafter NRIS-2012, consists of 23 pages and it the first Roma document to be adopted not only by the CoM⁸, but also by the Parliament as a sign of political determination to solve the issues of “Roma”. The document was designed as a response to the EU Framework for National Roma Integrations Strategies 2012-2020 and it is defined as a “policy framework strategy” meaning that it is fundamental for taking action in different public sectors. According to the Integro Association, 53 representatives of institutions and civil organizations took part in the drafting of the document (Integro Association 2012).

Although the format of the document is the same as NRIS-2010, the terminology used, and the structure of the text differ. The naming of the priorities and their sequence are the same as in NRIS-2010, but two of them are changed slightly, most probably because the requirements of the EU differ from those of the DRI: “Non-discrimination and equal opportunities” becomes “Rule of law and non-discrimination”, and “Culture” becomes “Culture and media” - the important role of media representation in the process of Roma integration is recognized.

⁸ The NRIS-2012 was adopted by the Council of Ministers as Decision No1 on January 5, 2012.

The main goal of NRIS-2012 is defined as “social integration”: a term traditionally used by western EU documents to refer to migrants and people with disabilities (OECD 2003). However, “social integration”, although not defined by the text, is used in the sense of “integration into society” or as a synonym of “social inclusion” in NRIS-2012. However, the strategic aim is unclear.

The strategy employs the following concepts - the frequency of usage is indicated in brackets. “Exclusion” (3) and “inclusion” are used only when referring to EU documents or as part of the DRI. “Disadvantaged” (7) is used as part of the “Health Strategy for Disadvantaged Persons belonging to the Ethnic Minorities, 2005-2015” and points 2 and 5 of the “Health” section, where refer to “ethnic minorities in disadvantaged positions”. “Ethnicity” is used with regard to the EU’s Racial Equality Directive and other anti-discrimination law, while “ethnic minorities” is used only in the Strategy for Educational Integration of the Children from the Ethnic Minorities and in the Health Strategy for Disadvantaged Persons belonging to the Ethnic Minorities, 2005-2015. “Ethnic issues” (5) are mentioned as part of the name of the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Integration Issues. The most used collocation when referring to the target group of the strategy appears to be “ethnic group”, which is used 11 times.

The Roma are presented as those who have caused their own problems. The “Current status of the Roma community” chapter of the strategy does not state what the causes of the various problems described in the text are. Instead, the status of the Roma is a *status quo*. Roma are represented as the ones who have caused the problems. In the section about “Living conditions”, Roma “spatial isolation”, for example, is presented as a result of Roma’s “concentration in separate neighborhoods”. Since Roma are concentrated in separate

neighborhoods, this is seen as the main cause for their poor living conditions: “problems with the construction and maintenance of the infrastructure and cleanliness” and others, i.e. Roma are also seen as dirty people unable to maintain their houses. Under the “Employment” section Roma are presented as the ones who cannot find a job, not because they face discrimination, but because they are “disadvantaged” and “less competitive”, i.e. they are seen as unsuitable to find a proper job, while what they get is only “very low income job”. Under the “Education” section Roma are presented as much more illiterate than any other group, because “children do not speak the official Bulgarian language well enough” and because of the “patriarchal norms of excessive control of the behavior of the girls and women”. Under the “Health” section Roma are presented as statistically more likely to be ill than ethnic Bulgarian and ethnic Turks. The Roma, suffer from “hepatitis, gastrointestinal diseases, (and) other diseases caused by parasites” (p.9). Reasons for these illnesses are said to be “their” bad living conditions, those conditions that are primarily caused by Roma’s “concentration”.

This portrayal of Roma “social integration” issues does not present the state as holding responsibility for these problems, but does justify why the state needs to intervene and address these social issues of the “Roma and other groups who share the same socio-economic conditions”. The problem is seen to be entirely one of the generalized entity of Roma. The norm group is ethnic Bulgarians. The problem group is “the Roma” and the “other” in “similar” situations. The cause for the status represented by the text is not even mentioned. Roma are seen as victims of their own objectified specificities and characteristics, most of them being an opposite of what is presented to be the normative.

The explanation of what the NRIS-2012 is and who it targets is as follows: “The Strategy applies an integrated targeted approach to the citizens of Roma background in vulnerable

condition, which falls within the framework of a more general strategy for combating poverty and exclusion, and it does not exclude rendering support to disadvantaged persons from other ethnic groups” (p. 1).

Firstly, the notion of “integrated targeted approach” is an “innovative” one. It differs from the commonly used formulations of “mainstreaming” and “targeting” approaches. It remains unclear from the formulation whether the “integrated targeted” approach equals “mainstreaming” or “targeting” or is a new category of its own. Moreover, there is no explanation in the text as to what an “integrated targeted approach” is. Secondly, it can be inferred from “other ethnic groups” that the notion of Roma actually means an “ethnic group” but it is not directly stated. The notions of “poverty”, “exclusion” and “disadvantaged persons” are those that are used “around” the notion of “Roma” and that frame the notion of “Roma”. From the given sentence, the main problem is seen to be social but this strategy is not designed simply for “Bulgarian citizens”. These citizens should have a Roma origin or belong to other “disadvantaged” ethnic groups.

This representation generalizes the notion of “Roma” excluding any implication that there might be Roma who are not poor and not excluded. The statistics presented in the strategy are for all the “Roma” compared to ethnic “Turks” and ethnic “Bulgarians” and not only for those Roma, who experience poverty and exclusion as the strategy mentions. For example, there is no data presented on how many Roma statistically belong to the middle-income class of Bulgarian citizens, how many are educated and employed, i.e. what the percentage of those who have already achieved this “social integration” is. “Roma” are represented as an equally poor and disadvantaged under-class.

3.2.4 Summary of the analysis

After the frame analysis of the three Bulgarian NRISs adopted between 1999 and 2012, one can notice a significant shift from the human rights perspective (Roma are seen as an ethnicity and ethnic minority) adopted by NRIS-1999 towards the “developmental” understanding of what the Roma issues are in NRIS-2010 and NRIS-2012, framing them mostly as socio-economic ones.

Although the term “ethnic minorities” is used in the titles of some policy documents, it has no legal value in Bulgaria, thus there is no representation of “Roma” as a political category, despite the many references to related international documents. Most importantly, the terms used in the documents are not defined in any of them. The strategy that presents the Roma in a comparatively better light is the NRIS-1999 where the voice of Roma civil society is clear and the demands for minority rights are very precisely formulated, despite the fact that “ethnic minorities” are not mentioned by NRIS-1999 even once. With the adoption of NRIS-2010 and in the process of policy transfers with the DRI and the EU, the clearly drawn and concise priorities and demands of the NRIS-1999 shifted towards demands concerning social issues only. Moreover, from the “mechanisms for implementation” parts of the last two strategies it can be seen that the funding of these “Roma” issues is no longer primarily a responsibility of the state (as it was in NRIS-1999) but is a major concern of the EU and other international donor organizations.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to analyze what the framing of the “Roma” category in the Bulgarian national Roma integration strategies is. I argued that the sense lost behind the vocabulary of the Roma-related issues, this definitive chaos and lack of clearly defined policy target, are obstacles for the success of the Roma-related policies, very early in the process of policy formulation. From the CFA-analysis it became clear that the usage of the complex concepts of “Roma”, “ethnic minority”, “integration” and “inclusion” is often a usage by default and without decryption. The lack of clarity and coherence in meaning is an early barrier to fully and effectively implement the Roma policies. Moreover, the way Roma problems are being represented in policy texts, having the intention to solve problems, actually construct new ones, i.e. the problematization of the issues *per se* causes even more problems.

A main problem is that Roma policies are policies of otherness and not of equality which all look at the “Roma”, regardless of what the representation is, as a whole and homogenous entity that is opposed to the norms of the majority. There is a distinction between “us” and “them” as intrinsically different from one another. These are not policies respecting the cultural diversity among individuals and nations, but policies of alienation. Roma policies “integrate” or “include” Roma, meaning their objectification and imposing the norms of the majority as the “right” ones.

The current racialization of Roma policies in Bulgaria is a result of the Bulgarian de-ethnicizing context and the EU policy demands with regards to Roma. These policies ultimately reject seeing “Roma” as a heterogeneous ethnicity or as holders of minority rights. Roma policies are simultaneously claiming that these are policies to help the generalized entity of “Roma”

while portraying all the Roma as a social underclass with no analogues. Integration is undefined and presented as a bottomless jar that has no filling. The starting positions these strategies occupy is that there are no integrated Roma. The policy texts miss out the number of those who are “integrated”; those that do not require benefit by the social measures of the Roma policies, but still identify as Roma.

With regard to the “Recognition vs. Redistribution” debate, the Bulgarian Roma policies are solely about redistribution of social measures but not about recognition. The Roma recognition is not related to the Roma people’s language, culture or history or any other minority right. It is a recognition of people suffering from poverty that differ from the ethnic majority and other ethnic minorities.

Deriving from the “Mainstreaming vs. Targeting” debate about Roma, one may argue that social mainstream policies do not reach Roma, because of discrimination, and therefore special Roma policies (targeting) are needed to ensure this social redistribution. Thus, the understanding of the real problem is heavily diverted from the real cause of the issue: discrimination, to particular solutions dealing with discrimination’s consequences: social redistribution. If discrimination against Roma justifies the existence of Roma policies, policy makers should think whether such policies are suitable to fight this discrimination. The current framing of Roma in Roma policies only reinforces discrimination, while it does not help to combat discrimination. I do not claim that Roma targeting policies should be abolished in favor of the mainstreaming: the both approaches are tools for achieving the same goal: a full participation of Roma people in public life. What I argue for is that the Roma targeting policies should adopt a language and formulation that present the real causes of the issues and does not sidedly blame Roma for the status-quo.

The conclusions of this thesis can serve both Bulgarian and supra-national policy makers and academics that use the label of “Roma”. Regardless of the three Roma representations I presented, one should bear in mind that first of all “Roma” is about people, the Roma people that are not being given a fair chance. Given that policy makers and academics dictate and literally write down the public discourse, they must take a stand that Roma are equal in rights and obligations when using the label of “Roma”. Roma policies should be policies of equality and cultural diversity. They should encourage Roma to develop and study their ancient and unwritten language, to write down their history and culture and to be the leading force in the public framing of what “Roma” is. Moreover, the battle against inequality should move from the social field towards education in interethnic tolerance and elimination of discrimination based on ethnicity. Only then Roma people will be able to contribute fully to all the spheres of public life.

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