

# Understanding the implementation of the Romanian National Roma Integration Strategy from 2001-2012

By

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## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned Carmen Tanasie 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**

This thesis looks at the factors that hindered the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) 2001-2012 in Romania. The NRIS, designed in early 2001, was demanded by the European Union (EU) as a precondition for Romania to become part of the EU. The NRIS has the aim of improving the lives of the Roma minority in four areas: education, health, employment and housing. The NRIS was updated and changed several times during this period, and a special institutional framework was established to assist the implementation of Roma policies. However, according to national and international reports, the implementation of the NRIS was not successful. This thesis focuses on the factors that hampered the implementation using document analyses and semi-structured interviews as methodology. The main factor that influenced the NRIS implementation process was the institutional discrimination of Roma in Romania. Long-term structural institutional discrimination in Romania against Roma led to less than clear policies and weak political commitment towards implementing the NRIS. In addition to diagnosing these problems, the thesis offers recommendations of how the loopholes which hinder the successful realization of the NRIS might be closed.

Keywords: Roma, Romania, National Roma Integration Strategy, implementation, policy, discrimination

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>COR</b>	County Offices for Roma
<b>CBME</b>	Central Body for Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>DRI</b>	Decade of Roma Inclusion
<b>FRA</b>	Fundamental Rights Agency
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>JC</b>	Joint Committee
<b>MLFSPE</b>	Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Protection and the Elderly
<b>NAR</b>	National Roma Agency
<b>NRCP</b>	National Roma Contact Point
<b>NRIS</b>	National Roma Integration Strategy
<b>OSF</b>	Open Society Foundation
<b>TWG</b>	Technical Working Group
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>WB</b>	World Bank

## INTRODUCTION

Currently, one of the most challenging public policy issues of the European Union (EU) is the improvement of the socio-economic situation of the Roma minority. The number of Roma in the EU is estimated to be around 10-12 million (COM, 2011, 2). The European Commission (EC) concluded in one report about conducted on the social inclusion policies that Roma are the most impoverished minority in the EU who are victims of racism, discrimination, poverty, lack of personal documents, recognition as a national minority and lack of political participation and representation.(COM, 2010, 8)

Romania is a homeland for more than 621,000 people who declared themselves as being of Roma origin, according to the last census conducted in 2012, however, the number is debated. According to the European Council the real number of Roma is around 2 million. As is stated in academic papers researches, surveys and official documents (National Institute of Statistics, 2002; Zamfir et al, 1993; Fleck and Rughinis, 2008 etc.) the Roma population in Romania is the most disadvantaged minority and faces discrimination in health, education, employment and housing throughout their lives. The discrimination that Roma people encounter every day also includes social exclusion from the legal system, and social insurance. For instance, Romanian officials such as the former Romanian President Traian Basescu<sup>1</sup> or the Minister of Foreign Affairs<sup>2</sup> expressed their prejudice against Roma even though there are laws against discrimination. Before 1989, the

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<sup>1</sup> Traian Basescu has made several anti-discriminatory statements about the Roma in his formal meetings with foreign politicians and national media during his mandate (2007-2014).

<sup>2</sup> Theodor Bakonsky stated in an official meeting with the French Secretary of State about Roma: “we have some physiological, natural problems of criminality amongst some Romanian communities, especially among Romanian citizens of Roma ethnicity



Roma population was not officially recognized as one of the national minorities and their poor socio-economic situation was not acknowledged. The Roma were only recognized as a national minority after the collapse of the communist regime. Romania has recognized 20 national minorities officially, amongst which the Roma minority is the most undesirable, often living in separate communities and abject poverty (FRA, 2014, 37).

The urgency of creating policies for Roma started with the pre-accession process to the European Union (EU). One of the conditions fixed for the candidate countries to join the EU was the Copenhagen European Council criteria of 1993<sup>3</sup>. The European Council was open for negotiations with the candidate countries if some political criteria were fulfilled – chief amongst which was the condition to take strong measures combatting the discrimination of minorities. In compliance, although largely in theory, the Romanian government adopted the "Romanian Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minorities" (NRIS) for the period of 2001-2010. NRIS had two main lines:

The first was the establishment of an institutional setting at national, regional and local level to represent Roma issues and to implement inclusivism policies, namely tackling discrimination against Roma. The National Agency for Roma (NAR) was established as the main body under the government with the specific duty of coordinating the institutions responsible for the implementation. The second priority of the Strategy was to improve the lives of Roma in the following areas: education, employment, housing, culture, and health. The NRIS was changed several times in the period of 2006-2015, and new institutions and objectives were added in line

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<sup>3</sup> The Copenhagen European Council in 1993 decided to accept new member states into the European Union. As a precondition for the candidate countries joining the EU, the states "must meet three criteria. 1. Political: stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; 2. Economic, 3. Acceptance of the Community acquis

with the European Framework and 2020 agenda. The NRIS was created to contribute to the wellbeing of the Roma and was supported by the EU and international organizations. However, even with special institutions created to be in charge of delivering the policy, the results are not visible. In consideration of the foregoing, I therefore argue that the weak implementation of the NRIS is due to low political commitment and unclear formulation of the policies of the NRIS – what could mostly be attributed to the ongoing discrimination of the Roma in Romania.

In order to understand why the NRIS failed in achieving its primary goal of improving the socio-economic situation of Roma, the main research question of this thesis is the following: What are the main factors that hinder the implementation process of the National Roma Integration Strategy in Romania, and how might the identified gaps be closed? In embarking in this voyage of discovery of gaps, several studies will be examined critically. For instance, the weak implementation of the NRIS is widely recognized in reports written by civil society, international organizations, and the European Commission (Roma Decade, 2012; Rostas 2012, Grigore et al 2007, EC 2011-2014). These studies of the implementation of the NRIS focused on the objectives of the NRIS: education, employment, health and housing. In analyzing the implementation of the NRIS from an academic point of view, there were very few studies. The research that was carried out was more focused on the representation of Roma in the implementation of the NRIS. (Ionescu, 2010; Moisa, 2012).

Additionally, the studies of public policy highlight the importance of implementation, and the factors that influence the implementation stage. For example, the opinions of some learned authors reveal the following: Werner and Weigrich (2007) underline that the implementation phase is crucial and needs political support and experts as administrators (Werner and Weigrich, 2007, 51). Hogwood and Gunn (1984) follow the same line but argue that if the policies are not supported politically or the administrative capacity is low, the implementation can be changed, distorted,

delayed or even blocked (cited in Werner and Weigrich, 2007, 52). Moreover, in the literature on policy implementation, different variables are discovered which are thought to affect implementation, but so far the authors do not agree on common factors. Even though the literature lists the variables which might hinder a successful implementation, the specific field of minorities brings new factors that are not considered.

Through the use of qualitative methods, semi-structured interviews with experts who are involved in the implementation of the NRIS, and the analyses of primary and secondary documents related to the NRIS, the thesis addressed whether the lack of implementation of the NRIS stems from the institutions' norms and values or from the formulation of the policies. One of the findings of the research reveals that institutional discrimination is one of the main factors that contributed to the weak execution of NRIS and had an impact on the formulation of policies and on the factors that are found in the literature on public policy. In the next part of this paper, I will present the methodology and data collection.

### ***Methodology and data***

This thesis relies on qualitative methods to identify the factors that hinder the execution of the NRIS. The methods used are: document analyses and semi-structured interviews. The document analyses consist of the thorough examination of related primary and secondary sources. Romania was selected as a case study because it has the largest, the youngest and the fastest growing Roma population in the EU. Another reason for the choice is that the Romanian government was the first

to implement an official document aimed at Roma inclusion before becoming an official member of the EU.

The main sources used in the paper-analyses are the official data from the Romanian government related to the National Integration Strategy of Roma Inclusion, the programmatic documents, and the legislative acts related to the Roma inclusion policies from 2001-2012. Moreover, some of the primary data used in this thesis are the official reports developed by different public and private institutions which analyze, monitor or evaluate the NRIS in the areas that are foreseen as principal measures in the Strategy (education, employment, health, and housing). The secondary data used in the analyses are the official reports and the communications released by the EC, the Decade of Roma Inclusion (DRI) and the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), etc. Also, academic literature will be used which is based on the primary sources that assess these policies.

Semi-structured interviews are essential due to the fact that this method is based on the assumption that the experience and knowledge of the participants is valued, mostly because of their involvement in the process per se. Richardson et al. (1965) highlighted the importance of data gathering throughout interviews. He states that the respondents will not provide just a descriptive picture of the process in which they are involved but rather will reflect the understanding of the process to which the interviewee brings values, norms and motives that are crucial contributions in understanding the whole process. The use of semi-structured interviews is a relevant method for bottom-uppers.

The questions that I asked in the semi-structured interviews were developed around the research question and the pre-assessment of the implementation process of the NRIS. Besides the questions from the interview guide (see Appendix 1), I asked the respondents to share their experiences and explain their roles in the implementation process of projects and programs for Roma. Moreover,

their personal opinions as experts were requested because I consider their experience as practitioners very relevant in understanding how the implementation of the NRIS can be improved. The selection of the respondents was based on the different levels of the institutions that they represent. They come from various levels of implementation, and this will help to see where the bottlenecks in the implementation phase are. Moreover, most of the interviewees are of Roma origin and very active in the process of implementing or evaluating the NRIS for the last decade. The seven respondents are:

- Civil servants under the National Roma Agency and the State Secretary in the Ministry of Finance whose role is to oversee the social policies designed by the national government for the inclusion of minorities, namely the Roma.
- Leaders of the NGO's that have been active in implementing programs for Roma for the last 15-20 years.
- National experts paid by international organizations (Open Society Foundation, Decade of Roma Inclusion, Romanian government and academic scholars).

### ***Limitation of the research***

Among my interviewees, there was an apparent ethnic bias. A significant number of individuals who are representatives of the central institutions in charge of the NRIS implementation were contacted for interviews. When I approached the officials as a Roma researcher and explained to them the topic of my thesis, some would not cooperate. From the ten planned interviews, with five Roma and five non-Roma, I ended up having only one non-Roma interviewee and in the end I conducted just seven interviews. I consider that this can be a limitation given the fact that the six respondents who are of Roma origin were perhaps biased in their responses.

## ***Roadmap of the thesis***

The structure of the thesis is the following:

Chapter one will discuss the concept of institutions and will give a short overview of the factors that are considered by many scholars as the variables that hamper the implementation process.

Chapter two will give a brief outline of the Roma situation in Romania and will present the steps that were taken so far at the national level for Roma inclusion. Chapter three will be devoted to finding the factors that hindered the implementation stage. The factors in the case of the NRIS will be discovered by analyzing the specific documents and interviews that were conducted with the experts in the field. In the same chapter, policy recommendations will be given by experts for a better implementation of the NRIS. Also, it will present the possible factors which are hindering the implementation process and provide policy recommendations from the perspectives of the interviewed experts for a better implementation of the NRIS. In the conclusion, I will summarize the main findings of the research.

## **CHAPTER ONE – LITERATURE REVIEW: THE CONCEPT OF ‘INSTITUTION’ AND FACTORS THAT HINDER THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF POLICIES**

As stated in the introduction, this thesis seeks to identify the factors that have so far hindered the execution of the NRIS in Romania. To find the factors that contribute to the weak implementation of a policy is not a simple task. There are several academic studies in the public policy literature which focus on policy implementation. Matland, (1995) and Mazmanian and Sabatier (1980) are a few of the many authors who have designed different models for a successful implementation. Some authors (Barley et al. 1997; DiMaggio 1988) argue that the institutional setting is problematic when it comes to the execution of policy. Others claim that implementation can be hindered by other factors such as environment, leadership, people, communication, coordination, etc. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to give a short overview of the relevant literature on these factors and give a brief description of the concept of institutions.

### ***1.1 Institutions matter***

The word “institution” has a variety of definitions but in most of the official dictionaries and the literature, the word ‘institution’ is widely defined as a formal organization which has an important role in society (Beth et al 2001). Institutions are a form of organizations that are constructed by social relationships established on the basis of legal forms related to the area of activity in which the institutions act. (Hodgson, 2015). Few scholars would state that institutions are based on values and norms. However, there is much discussion in the literature about how they matter and how they are defined.

The concept of institution has been for a long period a main pillar in sociological institutionalism. The idea began to be discussed by many scholars among whom were Hughes (1936) and Selznick

(1947), who were looking mostly at institutions through the lenses of values, norms, and beliefs. Consequently, scholars such as Barley et al (1997) assume that the values and the norms of institutions influence the decisions taken by the actors of the institutions and also determine the formal or informal structure of the institution. (Barley et al. 1997, 3). According to the definition given in the sociological literature the actors who are part of an institution or organization make decisions and design policies according to their norms, beliefs, and values.

Contrary to these claims made by many authors in sociological theories, DiMaggio argues that the culture and the values of a person do not affect his/her decision-making (DiMaggio 1988). The decision-making or the implementation depends on the belief and commitment of the actors. Likewise March and Olsen (1989) acknowledge the influence that most influential actors who are part of formal institutions (governments, political parties, independent institutions, etc.) can affect the formulation and execution stage. (March and Olsen. 1989. 15) the claims made by the aforementioned authors are very important when we have to take a look at the implementation stage carried out in a decentralized system. The literature on implementation and institutions is broad and not so specific with respect to the relationship between the institutions and the actors who are in charge of the concrete measures. Romania has a decentralized system, and one can argue that at each level the institutional setting has its values and norms, therefore these concepts are going to be reflected in the case of the NRIS. Based on the interviews conducted with some civil servants who work at central, regional and local levels, these assumptions are going to be tested. Nevertheless, the theory of implementation and the factors which are found in the literature have to be defined in order to give us a broader understanding of the implementation process.



## **1.2 Policy implementation**

O'Toole (2006) defines policy implementation as “what happens between the establishment of an apparent intention of the part of the government to do something or to stop something, and the ultimate impact in the world of action” (cited in Werner and Weigrich, 2007, 51). The decision of the government to continue or not with a policy is usually influenced by the political intention and administrative capacities of the institutions that are in charge of delivering the policies. In the view of some scholars, successful policy formulation and implementation arise from two approaches: Top down and Bottom up.

The top-down approach assumes that central institutions, such as the government, have to design and implement the policy due to their administrative capacity and political leverage (Matland, 1995, 147) Likewise, Sabatier and Manzanian (1989) argue that the government as a central body can track the problem, has the official statute to make a clear policy with defined goals, objectives, and tools. Matland also says that for a successful implementation in the top-down approach the number of institutions and actors involved in the implementation process should be limited. The central authorities have to find a suitable institution to accommodate the view of the policy in order to deliver a linear and clear implementation (ibid).

The bottom-up approach is a reaction to the top down approach. The proponents of the bottom -up approach argue that for good policy formulation and implementation, the realities from the grassroots should be considered. (Lipsky; 1980; Pölzl, Treib, 2007) Moreover, Berman (1980), Hjem and Hull (1982) argue that the relationship between institutions in the implementation process needs to be realistic and viewed through the eyes of the population and the institutions which are based at the local level. Bottom-up scholars argue that in order to understand the reality

and the process of policy implementation one should look at the policy deliverers: capacities and behaviors of the "street bureaucrats". Thus, the top-down approach has to give more flexibility and credentials to the policy implementers (street bureaucrats) in adopting the policy from the macro level to the micro level. To sum up, the top down approach is based mainly on hierarchical structures and focuses more on the macro level whereas the bottom-up approach is concerned about the micro level implication of the policy.

The theory of policy implementation is a complex debate, and several authors try to give good arguments on which approach is most suitable for the execution of policy (Hill and Hupe, 2002, 47). The focus of this thesis is to discover the factors that could affect the implementation of a policy, and not to settle the debate raging between the top-down and bottom-up scholars.

### ***1.3 Factors that affect the implementation of a policy***

The literature on the factors that affect the execution of any strategy have been researched extensively in public policy studies. Figure 1, for instance, presents some of the variables that were found by Al-Kandi, et al. (2013), and classified according to the findings of the authors, who analyzed several scholars' work on variables that hinder implementation.

Figure 1. Key implementation variables from previous studies (Al-Kandi, et al.; 2013, 7)

Author(s)	Variables
Stonich (1982)	Formulation, structure, cultural, planning, resource allocation, people, outcomes.
Hrebiniak & Joyce (1984)	Formulation, structure, people, control and feedback.
Galbraith & Kazanjian (1986)	Structure, people, planning, communication, outcomes.
Hamhavek & Cannella (1989)	Structure, people, rewards, resource allocation, internal and external communication.
Thomson & Strickland (1995)	Formulation, structure, cultural, planning, resource allocation, people, communication.
Waterman <i>et al</i> (1980)	Formulation, structure, cultural, resource allocation, people, communication.
Pettigrew and Whipp (1991)	Structure, cultural, resource allocation, people, environment, leadership.
Skivington and Daft (1991)	Formulation, structure, resource allocation, people, communication.
Schmelzer (1992)	Context variables (environment, formulation, structure, cultural) process variables (operational planning, people, resource allocation).
Bryson & Bromiley (1993)	Environment, cultural, resource allocation, people, communication, outcomes.
Kargar & Blumenthal (1994)	Formulation, structure, cultural, planning, resource allocation, people, communication.
Miller (1997)	Environment, formulation, structure, cultural, operational planning, resource allocation, outcomes.
Ghamdi (1998)	Environment, resource allocation, communication, leadership, people.
Okumus (2001, 2003)	Content, context, process, outcomes.
Ali & Hadi (2012)	Personnel, planning, management, organization, external factors.

As can be seen above, finding the variables that affect the application of a strategy is a challenging task and standard variables are not found in the inspected literature. From the above figure, the most common factors are going to be examined. A policy designed for minorities can contain a combination of these factors, or new ones may be relevant. Therefore, some of the factors that are found to contribute to the weak implementation of the NRIS in Romanian society will be inspected.

### **1.3.1. Strategy formulation**

It is commonly known in the literature that the first factor that leads to poor implementation is the formulation of the strategy, see Hrebiniak (2006). Even if there is good execution by the implementers, if a formulation is not clear, with specific objectives, it will lead to failure in achieving the desired results.

### **1.3.2. Communication and agreement**

The most widely encountered factors in the literature of implementation and failure are communication and agreement. Goggin et al. (1990) argue that communication in the intergovernmental institutions is more complicated due to several variables: inducements and constraints from the top (the central level), limitations and inducements from the regional and the local level (cited in Matland 1995; 152). The same authors claim that there cannot be an agreement in a strategy when communication is poor or entirely missing.

### **1.3.3. Commitment**

According to Wooldridge and Floyd (1989), understanding without a real commitment to policy results in a "counter -effort" (cited in Li et. al. 2008). Another important aspect related to the implementation of the strategy is that if the actors/institutions who are not involved in the designing of the strategy are not consulted, their commitment to the implementation process can be low (Heracleous 2008).

### **1.3.4. Administrative capacity**

Administrative capacities are defined in the Governance Report (Dawson et al, 2015) as:

*“The set of skills and competencies that are expected of public bureaucracies so that they can facilitate and contribute to problem-solving. They encompass the structural and*

*procedural provisions that enable bureaucracies to perform particular functions and embrace the individuals within these bureaucracies that are capable and skillful enough to meet the expectations of their political masters and the wider public'*

This definition clearly states that public bureaucrats should be skillful enough to contribute to problem-solving, moreover, that the administrative capacities of a decentralized system are limited to the institutional structure (Fisher, 1990) but this may not be the case in reality. In the literature on implementation, administrative capacity is considered to be able to shape to a great extent policy implementation (O'Toole and Montjoy, 1984). Also, the changes that are made over time in an institutional setting are related to the number of officials and financial resources of the institution.

From the literature on implementation, several factors are assumed to hamper the execution of policy. I consider that one of the most significant factors that obstruct the application of a strategy is related to the non-clear formulation of the policy. If there is not a precise formulation of a strategy, the whole process of implementation is affected even if there is a proper implementation in the final analysis. Additional factors such as the relationship between institutions which in most cases are taken from the perspective of the top-down approach often fail in including the actors who are part of the bottom –up in the implementation. Moreover, commitment and agreement are missing if there is asymmetric or minimal communication within the institutions. On top of that, the administrative capacities of the officials and the limited financial resources that the institutions possess are primary factors in hampering the implementation. However, so far, much uncertainty still exists about the adequate responsibilities of the respective institutions that are in charge of the implementation of a strategy and their real commitment to deliver. Furthermore, little attention has been paid to the broader institutional setting that is in charge of delivering a common policy and the changes which occur in the stage of implementation. The changes which occur in pre-existing institutional settings can delay the execution of policy.

The literature on the concept of institutions in sociology and political science claims that values, norms, and culture can shape policy formulation and affect the implementation process. However, some authors argue that there are several factors that hinder the implementation stage, not just values of the institutions but also the action of the actors who handle the delivery of the policy. To have a clear picture of the factors that contributed to the weak implementation in the case of the NRIS, a short overview of the setting of policies and institutions in Romania will be presented.

## CHAPTER TWO. NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK ON ROMA: A SHORT OVERVIEW

### ***2.1 Roma in Romania***

According to the last census carried out in 2011, 625,573 citizens of Romania declared themselves as being of Roma origin. If we compare this number to the settled population of Romania (19,042,936), the Roma population seems to be insignificant. However, according to Roma civil society, international organizations and the Council of Europe, the real number of Roma is estimated to be around 2 million. If both the official and non-official figures are taken into account, Romania hosts the largest Roma population in the European Union. Moreover, according to the last census, the Roma population is the youngest one and its rate of growth is extremely high. It is estimated that by 2050, the Romanian working age population will decrease by 30% while the Roma population will increase.

The big discrepancy between the official and unofficial figures comes from the hesitation of Roma people to not declare their ethnicity due to their history of discrimination and persecution. Roma were slaves in the historical principalities of Wallachia, Moldova and Transylvania (which now form Romania) from as early as 1385 (Sandu, 2005, 5). Other reasons except slavery are associated with historical events, particularly with the deportation and the killing of Roma in World War II and the forced assimilation under the communist regime (ibid). These historical events enforced the discrimination against Roma and created a social stigma, which barred Roma from thorough social integration. Being aware of this social stigma and their harmful historical path, Roma are sometimes hesitant to declare their identity.

From the socio-economic point of view, the Roma minority from Romania is the most disadvantaged one, facing severe poverty. In the research carried out in 2011 by the UNDP/World

Bank/EC on poverty analysis and income rates, it was revealed that Roma communities in Romania are clustered and that three out of four Roma live in absolute poverty<sup>4</sup>. Regardless of poverty, discrimination and the lack of formal education have a repercussion on the employment opportunities of Roma. For instance, only 10% of the Roma aged between 25 and 66 years have completed secondary education (WB/UNDP/EC, 2011). This is quite significant if we take a look at the overall population, where 58% of non-Roma have completed secondary education. These inequalities are found in Romania after more than ten years of social inclusion policies that were designed to close the social gap between Roma and non-Roma.

## ***2.2 Social inclusion policies for the Roma minority on the national agenda***

The process of including Roma issues on the public agenda of the Romanian government took almost ten years. It was only in the 1990's that the first 'official' institutional measure was taken by the Romanian state, and it happened as a consequence of the fact that Romania shifted from the communist regime to a democratic state. It should be noted that this change was influenced by the Western model of democracy and had a significant impact not only on the domestic policies of Romania but also on its political transformation.

Once Romania changed its political ideology the Roma were officially recognized as one of the country's minorities and their rights as an ethnic group were enshrined in the new Constitution of 1991, they found a place on the national agenda (Micu, 2009: 11). Although, the Roma were officially recognized as a minority and legal provisions have been made for their rights, they

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<sup>4</sup> Absolute poverty defined by the study refers to the situation when an individual lacks the necessities needed for minimum subsistence. These necessities mainly include access to certain goods such as basic food, adequate clothing, health, and shelter.



became highly visible only in 1993, when some sociological research was carried out by a group of sociologist who presented the “deplorable” life of Roma. The results of the analysis were compiled in a book called "*Gypsy: between being ignored and concern*"; Catalin Zamfir et al, 1993. Zamfir and his colleagues presented the critical situation of Roma, and provided official statistics with significant data, which showed the level of poverty, discrimination, low education, restricted access to employment, and lack of social services. The primary cause of their lack of access was ethnic discrimination. Once the research reached the attention of the media, the government was urged to take immediate actions. The need to create social inclusion policies and institutions to promote the rights of minorities and specifically of Roma had been declared in the mid-1990 when Romania started preparing for accession to the European Union (EU) and NATO. Furthermore, the establishment of the institutions was a crucial necessity for attracting World Bank funds and EU PHARE funds<sup>5</sup> (ICVV, 2014, 14).

Therefore, the Romanian government designed for the first time in 2001 an official document to improve the lives of the Roma minority and to combat discrimination for a period of 10 years (2001-2010), named "Romanian strategy for improving the condition of Romanian citizens of Roma origin" (NRIS) (Governmental decision no. 430/2001) with two emphases.

The first emphasis, from 2001-2006, was the establishment of an institutional framework at the central, the regional and the local levels for the implementation of the strategy for the next ten years. The second emphasis, which was neglected for a certain period, was the Roma themselves. Even though the strategy envisaged promoting policies in critical areas such as employment,

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<sup>5</sup> PHARE funds are the principal financial instrument given to candidate countries and have two top priorities: institutional and capacity building and investment financing.

education, health, and housing for Roma, specific measures and objectives were not formulated. Therefore, the second emphasis was not successfully implemented. Under the first emphasis, the following institutions were created in the period 2001-2004, responsible for the implementation of NRIS:

**The National Agency for Roma (NAR)**, established in 2004, is the same institution that was founded in 1997 under the name of National Office for Roma, in charge of tackling the discrimination against the Roma minority. The new role of the NAR is to implement, evaluate and monitor the activities taken at the central, regional and local level of the public administrative bodies, which are responsible for the implementation of the NRIS. The NAR is under the supervision of the General Secretary of Government and under the Prime Minister's Office. **A joint committee and 24 ministerial committees** were set up for the application of the strategy. The joint committee is composed of the state secretaries, leaders of Roma organizations, and a representative of the NAR, and its main duty is to implement the strategy and to monitor the implementation. However, according to the reports issued by civil society, leaders of NGO's are not involved nor consulted when it comes to the decisions taken by the ministries in charge of designing or implementing policies for Roma (Ilie et.al 2013).

At the regional level: **County Offices for Roma (COR)**. These regional institutions are composed of Roma counsellors and experts under the Prefectures<sup>6</sup>. The role of the counsellors and experts is to monitor the implementation of the NRIS at the regional and local levels. Moreover, a particular role was given them, namely advising the Prefect of the county about the Roma situation from the grassroots. The regional level is responsible for cooperating with the local and with the central

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<sup>6 6</sup> Romania has in present 41 Prefectures outside Bucharest

level. At the local level *local experts of Roma origin* were appointed by mayors, and they are under the COR, and are also administratively responsible to the mayors. The role of the local Roma experts is to connect the public local authorities with the Roma communities (ICVV, 2014, 30). These institutions were created at the beginning of the year 2001, and still continue to operate at the central, regional and local levels. Although these institutions were drawn up, there were no specific measures for Roma inclusion, and it was not clearly understood by the government and the responsible bodies how to implement NRIS. (Moisa, 2012).

The demand to create specific social inclusion policies for Roma began before Romania became an official member of the EU. The year 2005 marked the first social inclusion policies demanded by the EU, – when Romania signed the so-called “Joint Memorandum on Social Inclusion”<sup>7</sup> The Memorandum had a specific chapter on Roma where their poor socio-economic situation was acknowledged. Urgent measures and objectives were demanded of the government of Romania in order to ensure that concrete measures aimed at increasing job opportunities for Roma, equal opportunities for housing, health and schooling will be in place. Thus, the focus of the NRIS had to be shifted from the creation of the responsible institutions to the adoption of an action plan with particular measures and objectives to fulfill the requirements of the signed accord. Thus in 2006 the NRIS was updated with the new Action Plan for the period of 2006-2008 by incorporating new measures in areas such as housing, employment, education, community development and administration, social security and culture (Ilie.et al, 2013, 166). Under the financial measures in the Action Plan, it was stated that “the actions established in the General Action Plan for 2006-

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<sup>7</sup> The Memorandum's principal aim is to fight poverty and to tackle the social exclusion of vulnerable groups by promoting their access to the labor market, services, goods, resources and rights.

2008 shall be financed by funds from the State budget, Pre-Accession Instruments, other EU funds, as well as by funds attracted from domestic and external sources” (Ibid). It should also be mentioned that in the previous NRIS, 2001-2004, national funds were not included, and the NRIS was exclusively dependent on the PHARE programs.

### ***2.3 Decade of Roma Inclusion***

Another important agreement that Romania signed which highlighted the importance of social inclusion policies is the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 (DIR). DIR is a political commitment that brings together 12 countries – those that have a sizable Roma population. DRI 2005-2015 is an initiative of the Open Society (OSI), the World Bank (WB) and the European Union (EU). The goal of the Decade is to involve the governments through a political commitment to speed up the implementation of the national documents which aim to improve the life of Roma citizens from the signatory countries. The condition of the DRI was that signatory countries had to design and adopt action plans for Roma integration in four areas: education, employment, health, and housing (Decade website). The political commitment assumed by the Romanian government did not meet the priorities of DIR. Even though Romania was the first signatory country in 2005, the Action Plan has never been adopted.

## **2.4 EU frameworks and the New National Integration Strategy**

The European Union plays a significant financial role in the inclusion of Roma in Europe<sup>8</sup>. The EU had an important impact on the measures that were taken by the Romanian government concerning Roma inclusion. The EU was delighted with Romania for the Strategy that was in place (2001-2004), and wanted the establishment of the responsible institutions for Roma issues. However, a constant recommendation that Romania has to pay attention to is that many measures are not fulfilled which were included in the Action Plan. Discrimination and school segregation have not been combatted, low employability and severe poverty have not been alleviated, and no concrete measures were in place for these things to change.

A new direction that changed the planned strategy was the adoption of the EU framework for Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. The EU realized that even though countries with a significant Roma population such as Romania and Bulgaria are implementing measures for the Roma minority, the situation did not improve visibly. Heated debates started concerning the Roma in the EU when Roma from Romania and Bulgaria were expelled from France by the French authorities in the summer of 2010. That was the decisive moment when the EU together with the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee of the Regions proposed that an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies be developed and adopted (COM, 2011, 173/4).

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<sup>8</sup> The Accession Partnership with Romania which was signed in 2001 stated that the “EU will provide adequate funding and administrative capacity in order to implement the Government Strategy on the improvement of the situation of Roma”.

The Framework's goal is that the member states have to improve the welfare of Roma people in four areas: education, employment, healthcare, and housing. Due to the new requirements from the EU, Romania had to update its Strategy for the period 2011-2020, including the new objectives of the 2020 Agenda, which underline the need for concrete measures and an active dialogue with Roma civil society. Similarly, the EC underlined the need of establishing specific governmental institutions responsible for the implementation and evaluation of the NRIS in order that the new goals of "smart and sustainable and inclusive growth" be achieved (COM 2011, 173).

The new objectives of the EU under the 2020 Agenda aim at integrating the Roma into the internal market by forcing the member states to invest in education and programs which assist the Roma in entering the formal labor market, so as to meet the economic targets envisaged in the 2020 Strategy (Goodwin and Buijs 2013).

This was the decisive step taken by the EC which urged the member states to create special strategies or measures for Roma inclusion. Therefore, the Romanian government was hard-pressed by the EC to create new institutional bodies with the main responsibilities of coordinating and implementing the NRIS efficiently. Thus, the Romanian government included in the new NRIS (2012-2020) a new institution called the **Central Body for Monitoring and Evaluation**, with the exclusive role of coordinating the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Strategy. The Central Body is in charge of maintaining the connection with the EC in relation to the social inclusion policies for Roma. It is composed of representatives of the five ministries that are in charge of the measures of the Strategy (education, health, employment, justice and culture), two representatives from the General Secretariat of the Government, the president of the NAR and the Counsellor of State.

Another important institution that was created by the Prime Ministerial decision nr 36/24.03.2011 was the **Inter-ministerial Working Group**, composed of the ministries in charge of the implementation of the Strategy and other institutions. The Working Group is to be coordinated by the Vice Prime Ministry and the Office is managed by the president of the NAR together with two state secretaries from the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Protection and the Elderly (MLFSPE) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA). The group meets on a monthly basis, and each six months the results of the implementation and measures taken for Roma inclusion are presented in an informative bulletin in the cabinet meetings. Besides the new internal arrangements concerning the monitoring and implementation of the NRIS, the EC stressed the need for a **National Roma Contact Point (NRCP)** in each member state. The role of the NRCP is to monitor the NRIS and to have a permanent contact with the EU institutions. The NRCP together with the NAR have the main responsibility to monitor and evaluate the NRIS as well as to represent Roma from Romania at the international level.

As shown above, Romania focused for 12 years on creating particular institutions at the central, regional and local levels and on including Roma issues on the public agenda. However, the new NRIS and the voluntary political involvement in the DIR did not contribute to the wellbeing of Roma people. For instance, Annex 1 of the new updated NRIS, 2015-2020, reveals that the socio-economic situation of the Roma is worsening. Statistics show that in 2005 two out of four people were living in relative poverty, while in 2011 three out of four were living in the same conditions. In the same document, the Roma are presented as being socially excluded from the labor market (10% are officially employed). It follows logically therefore that the small percentage of Roma people on the labor market is due to discrimination, low qualifications, and insufficient formal education (Annex 1 NRIS, 2015, 6). The aim of the next chapter is to identify the factors that have

so far hindered the implementation of the NRIS in the eyes of the experts who work on Roma policies and are involved in the implementation, evaluation and monitoring of the NRIS.



### **CHAPTER THREE. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NRIS: FACTORS IDENTIFIED BY EXPERTS AS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POOR IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS STRATEGIES**

The aim of this chapter is to present the analyses of the interviews conducted with the experts who are involved in the field of Roma issues. The respondents come from different sectors. Two respondents are leaders of Roma NGO's and have been working on Roma issues in the last 15-20 years. One respondent is from the DIR<sup>9</sup>, which is an institution that works on Roma inclusion policies in twelve EU and non-EU countries and is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the measures taken by the national governments. The other has worked in the past as an expert at the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, the Open Society Institute and the Roma Rights Center, and is currently a visiting professor at Corvinus University of Budapest specializing in Roma policies. I chose to interview these experts due to their position as external participants whose work is reflected in the international reports and academic literature on Roma social inclusion policies. The other three interviewees are civil servants employed in the central, regional and local institutions that are in charge of the implementation of the NRIS.<sup>10</sup>

As it was mentioned above, this thesis seeks to identify the factors that hindered the implementation of the NRIS, which was designed with the goals to the integration of Roma in Romanian society in four main areas: education, employment, housing and health. In the next part I will investigate the comments of my respondents to find the factors that have so far affected the execution stage of the NRIS.

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<sup>9</sup> I have to mention that the interviewee from the DIR is the only interviewee who does not have Romanian citizenship and is not of Roma origin

<sup>10</sup> I will refer to the interviewees by numbers (1-7) and mention their positions without giving their name

### 3.1 NRIS policy formulation

In the theory of implementation, Sabatier (1989) discusses the issue of policy formulation, claiming that implementation cannot be carried out without analyzing the formulation of the policy process. One can say that a good formulation has the following steps: a specific target group, clear measures, objectives and mechanisms of monitoring, institutions responsible for execution and financial resources allocated for the entire period of the policy (Werner and Weigrich 2007). As Sabatier says, a policy cannot be implemented without double-checking the formulation of the policy. It seems that in the case of the NRIS in the last years the national government did not analyze the policy formulation before trying to implement it. Most of the respondents agreed with Sabatier's claim. For instance, one of the Roma NGO leaders (no. 1) mentioned:

*"this was not a public policy document <sup>11</sup> when the document was designed there were no clear indicators, measures, and very important budget... there are no clear objectives and, for instance how can you implement a policy at national level if you do not give money for the implementation, and rely on external financial help<sup>12</sup> ..."*

As the respondent mentioned, the NRIS, is not considered a policy document due to the non-allocation of financial resources and the lack of involvement of the civil society in designing the policy. Respondent number five, who is a civil servant at the regional level, considers that the NRIS formulation did not take into account the values and norms of the institutions that are in charge of implementing the NRIS claims:

*"When the NRIS in Romania was formulated as a public policy document at the beginning of 2000, an important aspect was missing, the values and the norms that the institutions have... Discrimination against Roma at the institutional level is a common practice in Romania "(no.5)*

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<sup>11</sup> According to the interviewee, when the NRIS was designed in 2001 and updated in 2006 and in 2012, Roma civil society was not consulted, even though the EC required that civil society be consulted for drawing up the goals, measures and objectives of the NRIS (Moisa, 2012, 138

<sup>12</sup> He is referring to the PHARE fund and the European Social Funds.

Discrimination occurs when one person or a group of persons are treated unfairly on the basis of race, gender, socio-economic situation or ethnicity. According to Sampson (2008), institutional discrimination occurs when one individual or a group of individuals are treated unfairly by an institution as a result of the institutional values and structure (Sampson, 2008, 726). As was clear from the detailed discussion, in the opinion of respondent number five, a clear formulation of policy cannot be done in an institutional set-up where prejudices and discrimination against Roma have existed for centuries. When the regional expert was asked how the values of the institutions affect implementation, he gave as an example the educational system – claiming that school segregation was a common practice until early 2012. He stated that even now, there are several cases of school segregation in isolated areas where Roma live. In his view, school segregation and the low education that Roma receive at the local level are due to the institutional discrimination that is reinforced by public officials and the media.<sup>13</sup> According to one research about discrimination against Roma at national level, conducted by the Roma NGO Romani CRISS in 2011 (Romani Center for Social Intervention and Studies), 7 out of 10 (71%) respondents recognize that they are discriminated against on the labor market and 66% of the respondents admitted that they were discriminated against in public spaces (health care, legal services, education) (Marin and Csonta 2012, 21). The above answers, provided by an activist and an expert, show that the policy formulation is affected by the following factors: lack of clear measures, objectives and financial resources, as well as institutional discrimination. As it was stated by the

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<sup>13</sup> The respondent mentioned the example of the former Romanian president's hate speech from recent years against Roma.

fifth interviewee, the institutional discrimination against Roma delayed a clear formulation of policy, because the formal and informal institutional settings did not have in the past an agenda for minorities. Therefore, Barley's claim regarding the values and norms of an institution can affect policy formulation and implementation. (Barley et al. 1997, 3) Based on the analyses of the two respondents, I argue that the policy formulation of the NRIS depends heavily on institutional values. The fact that the national government failed to draw up clear measures, indicators and goals and did not allocate a fixed budget shows that the NRIS is not a priority for the government. Roma are not seen as an area worthy of investment even though under the Constitution Roma have the same rights as the majority.

### **3.2. Who is responsible for the implementation of the NRIS?**

The implementation of the policy needs a specific set of institutions to be responsible for delivering it (Matland 1995). Policy formulation in the case of the NRIS is clearly a top-down approach: the problem of Roma was first identified by the EU and then by the national authorities under the Copenhagen criteria. The respondents (no. 4 and 6) from the international and national sector both admitted that Romania created the institutions due to political pressure, which came from the EU, not from their own will of contributing to the improvement of the life of the Roma.

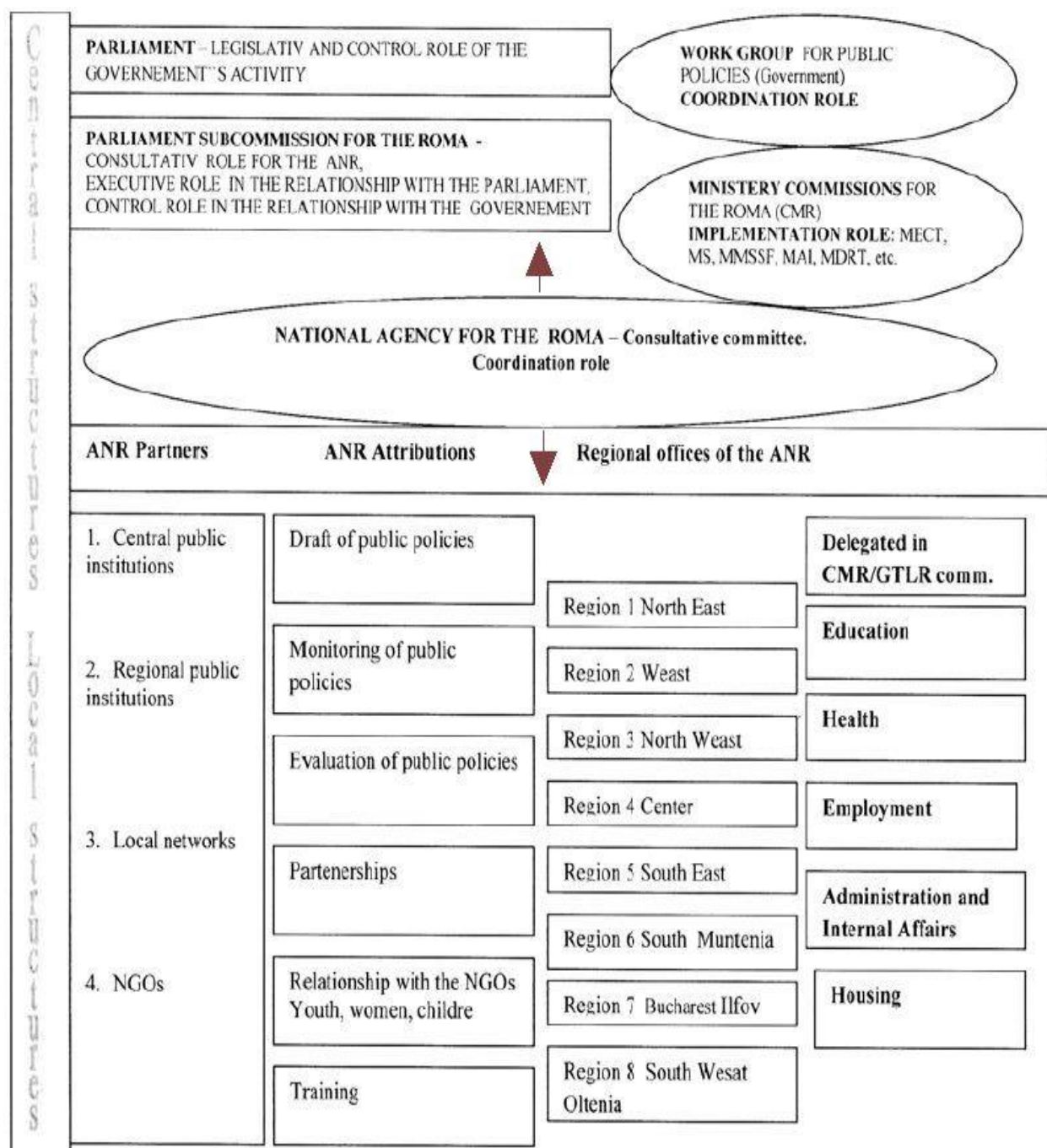
*“Improving the Roma situation, at least in the 10 years come as an external condition for national politics, and not from the side of the national government, therefore there was not a clear institutional setting, and it was rather a puzzle, which aimed just at creating institutions in line with the EU conditions...” (no.4)*

The establishment of an institutional setting that was described in the previous chapter shows that there was not the political will to implement social policies for Roma but rather a political pressure from the EU and the desire to be part of the international sphere – for instance, membership in NATO ( Moisa, 2012). As Wooldridge and Floyd (1989) stated, without real commitment, the

results of a policy cannot be visible. It is obvious in the case of the NRIS that improving the condition of Roma in the last years is done mechanically. Therefore, the results are not seen after 20 years of policies for Roma inclusion.

The policies that were designed for Roma in 2001 and updated till 2020 are to be implemented by public authorities and NGO's. Figure 2 shows the institutional setting and the bodies responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the NRIS.

Figure 2. The mechanism of institutional cooperation for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the NRIS



Source: Ionescu and Stanescu, 2012, 72

Figure 2 shows that the NRIS institutional structure is mixed, and there is cooperation, monitoring and evaluation on a horizontal and a vertical level. In the literature of policy implementation, Matland (1995) argues that for successful policy implementation in the top-down approach, the institutions that are in charge of the implementation of a policy should be limited. Also, the institution/institutions in charge of the execution stage should adopt the view of the policy and have clear roles. The Romanian government created the NAR to be the main institution responsible for the implementation of the NRIS. According to my respondents, the institutional setting that was established for the implementation of the NRIS and the position of the NAR are problematic. The NAR is the main institution that is under the government and is the link between the ministries, the regional institutions and the local level. Moreover, the NAR handles the cooperation with the civil sector and the local experts, but at the grassroots the situation is quite different.

In one report published by the National Democratic Institute (2006) it was shown that the main perception of the Romanian majority is that the responsibility for implementing Roma inclusion policies belongs to the National Roma Agency and the Roma minority. Even though on paper, the NRIS clearly defines the responsibilities which each institution has in carrying out these measures aimed at improving the wellbeing of Roma, the respondents claim something else.

For instance when the question about the relationship between the ministries and who has the main power in implementing, coordinating and monitoring the NRIS was raised, one of the interviewees who works in the structure of the NAR said:

*“The NAR became a self-government for Roma without real political leverage. If you go and ask something at the ministries that are in charge of the Roma they automatically send you to the NAR, but the NAR does not have any power, administrative or financial. In my opinion it should not exist.” (no 2.)*

The answer of the interviewee, who is a civil servant under the NAR administrative structure at the central level, confirmed the perceptions of the majority. Even though there are institutions which have been responsible for the execution of the NRIS for many years, the perception that Roma should implement their own policies is sustained by the lack of political will and commitment from the part of the national government.

Under the governmental decisions in 2004, 2005 and 2009 (Article 1, par.3); the NAR is the main body responsible for developing policies for Roma under the NRIS, for promoting social inclusion programs and for protecting the rights of the Roma minority. Under the same governmental decision, Article 3, point b, the NAR is responsible for managing the funds for the above-mentioned measures. However, according to the NRIS, no additional national funds are needed and the NRIS “shall be supplemented by other sources, particularly European funds” (NRIS, 2015, 44). In addition, the NAR has limited administrative capacity, the agency has only 25 employees: 16 at the central level and just 9 placed at the 7 regional offices (Craiova, Timisoara, Cluj-Napoca, Iasi, Calarasi, Braila and Alba Iulia) (ANR, 2015). Furthermore, according to the civil society report issued in 2012 by the Roma Decade on the implementation of the NRIS and the Decade Action Plan, the central barrier and limitation of the implementation is the lack of political leverage of the agency. The agency does not have any power to increase the ministries' involvement nor over the decentralized services at the local level. Given the large Roma population and the number of Agency employees, it is very difficult in practice for those employees to monitor or cooperate with the bodies that are in charge of implementing the NRIS or to follow all the measures taken in the 42 counties of Romania. As the analyses of the above answers show, the unclear policy formulation, the lack of political will, and the weak administrative capacity result in an inadequate evaluation and monitoring of the NRIS by the NAR.



### **3.3 Institutional communication and cooperation**

Another aspect that was found to be a factor that hindered the implementation of the NRIS is the minimal communication between the institutions. According to the international expert and scholar, in the case of the NRIS, communication and cooperation are missing at the central level between the main ministries which are in charge of the implementation, evaluation and monitoring of the NRIS. According to him:

“...the institutional structure in Romania is fragmented, leading to a lack of communication and coordination between the relevant authorities at national and local level”(no 7)

To support his claim, the respondent brings an example from one of the conferences that he attended in the spring of 2015. The conference was about the social inclusion policies for minorities, where the Joint Committee (JC) met with the Central Body for Monitoring and Evaluation (CBME), the Inter-ministerial Working Group and the Roma Contact Point to discuss the NRIS implementation and results. The representative of the MLFSPE, who has been the State Secretary responsible for the last three years for Roma inclusion in the labor market and is a member in the CMBR and the Working Group, asked his colleagues to meet and discuss the measures taken so far. According to my respondent this is clear indicator that reveals the lack of commitment, coordination and communication between the intergovernmental structures. The NRIS clearly specifies that the CMBE, JC, and the Working Group have to meet on a monthly basis and to discuss the steps taken at the national level and by each ministry in charge (NRIS, 2012, 29). Moreover, the Central Body of Monitoring and Evaluation is in charge of reporting to the EC on the measures taken in their ministries. The minimal amount of communication, cooperation and agreement between the institutions which are in charge at the central, regional,

and local level are detailed in two reports that assess the capacities of the NAR (ICVV, 2014, 40) and one report that evaluates the public policies for Roma in the last 20 years in Romania (Ionescu and Stanescu, 2014, 112). These statements clearly specify that in the last decade the implementation of the NRIS was slowed down because there is a lack of communication and coordination between the main institutions that are responsible for the implementation of the NRIS. Communication between organizations is imperative for pursuing a successful strategy. Goggin et al. (1990) argue that communication in the intergovernmental setting is more complicated due to the constraints from the central level. When there is minimal communication within the institutions, an agreement cannot be reached.

Based on the analyses from the respondents' answers, we have found a series of factors that are hindering the implementation stage of the NRIS. One of the civil servants claimed that the institutional discrimination that exists in Romania has an effect on the implementation. NGO leaders and international experts consider that the policy formulation lacks specific indicators and measures. The fact that specific financial resources were not provided for the implementation of the NRIS in the view of the respondents shows that there is lack of commitment from the part of the national government. Communication, agreement, and cooperation is missing due to the unclear division of responsibilities among those institutions/bodies that are in charge of the NRIS. So far the NRIS was implemented from a top-down approach. There were many institutions in charge of its execution. The lack of communication, agreement, and coordination between the ministries and the bodies concerned with its implementation and monitoring contributed to weak implementation.

### **3.4. Solutions and recommendations for a better implementation of the NRIS from the viewpoints of the interviewees**

The semi-structured interview guide was developed in a way that the respondents could add their opinions as experts about a more successful implementation of the NRIS. The following recommendations were provided:

1. For a better evaluation and monitoring of the NRIS, the Focal Contact Point and the NAR should be one institution and that institution should monitor the polices at the regional and local level.<sup>14</sup>
2. In the NRIS, all the measures should be budgeted for by the national government and European funds should be optional for specific programs or projects.<sup>15</sup>
3. Roma NGO's need to have a permanent observatory status in the Joint Ministerial Commission and the Committee for Evaluation and Monitoring and there should be an explicit methodology on how data on Roma is collected.<sup>16</sup>
4. A transparent and professional meritocratic system should be in place to ensure that the appointments in all the positions in the institutions are given to those who have expertise in social inclusion policies.<sup>17</sup>
5. There must be clear differentiation between indicators and measures.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Recommended by respondent no.1, a civil servant.

<sup>15</sup> Recommended by the representative of Romani NGO's, civil servants and international experts

<sup>16</sup> Recommended by respondent, no. 2, a civil servant.

<sup>17</sup> Recommended by respondent, no. 2, a civil servant

<sup>18</sup> Recommended by the representative of Romani NGO's, civil servants and international experts.

6. Anti-discriminatory law should be enforced at the level of institutions and more awareness raising campaigns should be conducted at the local level in the compact communities where Roma live.<sup>19</sup>
7. The implementation mechanism of the NRIS should be reshaped, the NAR should have more administrative control in the ministries and bodies at regional and local level.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Recommended by respondent no.4, a civil servant.

<sup>20</sup> Recommended by the representative of Romani NGO's, civil servants and international experts

## CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of this thesis was to explore and expose the factors that hindered the implementation stage of the NRIS in Romania during the last decade. In order to find the main factors which contributed to the weak execution of the NRIS, this thesis used qualitative methods: data analyzing and semi-structured interviews with experts from different sectors who are involved in the implementation, evaluation and monitoring of the NRIS from 2001-2011.

This research revealed that many of the factors identified in the theoretical section significantly contributed to the weak implementation phase of the NRIS. As I argued, the policy formulation is the main problem that affects the later implementation stage. As shown, the policy development of the NRIS failed to contain clear objectives and goals, evaluation and measurement mechanisms, and a clear line of financial resources allocation. Moreover, the weak administrative capacity and the lack of effective communication between the main stakeholders and interested actors led to a low level of cooperation and agreement at the central level. This in turn had repercussions on the whole institutional setting.

The main finding of this research is that the policy formulation of the NRIS from 2001 to 2012 was influenced by the institutional discrimination that exists in Romania towards citizens of Roma origin. The fact that Roma still experience discrimination in Romania is supported by the low level of coordination and commitment of the governmental bodies that are the principal actors in enforcing the delivery of the NRIS.

This research can be extended in the future by including more non-Roma actors who work in the institutions in charge of the NRIS implementation. This will show to what extent the factors that

have been presented by the current thesis will also be confirmed by respondents of non-Roma origin. Experts, who play the role of catalysts in the implementation process, claim that the NRIS should be revised, and new indicators and measures must be formulated and added. Roma NGOs should be part of this process of policy formulation and monitoring. They should also participate in the oversight bodies of the NRIS. Anti-discriminatory laws need to be enforced, and there is a need for a transparent system of appointing the civil servants who are part of the official institutions at the central, regional and local levels. All of them must be chosen according to their expertise in social inclusion policies, contrary to the current political appointments. The most highlighted recommendation given by most of the respondents is that the implementation of the NAR mechanisms should be redesigned, and the NAR should have real political leverage over the ministries and bodies in charge of the Roma inclusion policies. It is crucial that the policy recommendations provided by the experts be taken into account in the current NRIS implementation of 2015-2020 to change the status quo.

I am not claiming to be a prophet but based on the results of the research are suffice it to say that if these recommendations are not urgently implemented, but the status quo is allowed to get more deeply rooted in the Romanian system, the inclusion project will grind to a halt and become ineffective. The consequences of this will be severe, considering the fact that the death rate in Romania's mainstream society is currently higher than the birth rate. What this means is that the ever rising population of Roma in Romania will in less than a century make Romania a country populated mostly by low skilled people – with all the attendant social consequences. Romania's future source of labor paradoxically lies in its currently discriminated population. This situation can be avoided however by ensuring that institutions established to ensure Roma inclusion (i.e. the NRIS) are persistently and efficiently doing their job. It is obviously not easy to ensure this aim,

and it certainly goes beyond the existence of the NRIS on paper. Admittedly, it exposes the Romanian government to the bee-watcher-watcher dilemma<sup>21</sup> – which has serious cost implications. And here I invite other researchers to investigate how this dilemma of monitoring the NRIS and related bodies might be resolved in favor of Romania's future and the wellbeing of Roma.

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<sup>21</sup> The bee-watcher-watcher problem is a philosophical dilemma. This is it: The bee farm owner wants to know how the bee does its work. He employs a bee-watcher. But in order to ensure that the bee-watcher is actually watching the bee, he has to employ another bee-watcher, and so on – until the entire society is now watching bee-watcher-watchers.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### Interview guide

1. What is your position in the Institution/organization you represent? For how long have you been working for this institution/organization
2. What were the most acute Roma issues ten years ago? Were there any positive developments in terms of Roma issues since then? Did the policies, programs, projects have any major impact on Roma issues?
3. Who were the main actors involved in the creation of these measures? Which is/are the institution responsible for monitoring the implementation of the National Roma Inclusion Strategy?
4. Could you please indicate the Body responsible for the implementation of the National Roma Strategy? Which institution/s play(s) key roles on Roma issues?
5. How would you describe your cooperation with the relevant Ministries for Roma issues and with the National Agency for Roma?
6. Who is performing/developing the Progress Reports on Roma issues?
7. When did the last inter-ministerial committee take place?
8. In your view, what are the weaknesses and the strengths of the National Roma Strategy?
9. Any recommendations for a better implementation of National Roma Integration Strategy?



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