

DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

**THE CASE OF THE ROMA ACCESS PROGRAMS (RAP) AT THE CENTRAL EUROPEAN
UNIVERSITY (CEU)**

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Author's Declaration

I, the undersigned, Barbora Petrova, 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 proper acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material that 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 argues that by understanding the potential benefits for the diversity of the CEU's student body as a whole that stem from both formal and informal interactions between non-Roma and their Roma peers, one's perspective is moved to an orientation of strength rather than one of disadvantage and deficiency. Overall, theoretical arguments on diversity in HE as well as potential benefits of an ethnically racially and culturally diverse academic community both for teachers and students are presented. Whether the formation of the Roma Access Programs was driven by diversity concerns, was addressed in two in depth interviews with two stakeholders who played a role in shaping the initiative. In order to estimate how Roma students at CEU affect the CEU community as a whole from an individual-student perspective, students' subjective assessments were looked for through 3 focus group discussions and an online questionnaire. In order to capture subjective faculty assessments, two in depth interviews with SPP professors took part. Among others, the thesis provides findings on how interactions between Roma students and non-Roma peer have tackled non-Roma students' prejudice and stereotypes. These are important findings that should be considered in light of the current socio-political climate in which European governments tend to hesitate to specifically address and include Roma as a particular beneficiary group in their national strategies (OSI 2007, 49).

Key words: diversity, higher education, Roma, Roma Access Programs (RAP), Central European University

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Abbreviations

CEU	Central European University
ENVI	Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy
EU	European Union
OSF	Open Society Foundations
OSI	Open Society Institute
RAP	Roma Access Programs
RELP	Roma English Preparation Program
RGPP	Roma Graduate Preparation Program
SPP	School of Public Policy

Introduction

The Roma, Europe's largest ethnic minority that has for centuries represented an integral part of European society (FRA, 2014), belongs to one of its most vulnerable minorities (Bačlija 2008, 175). Considering that the problems faced by Roma are complex, an integrated approach for addressing these issues is absolutely vital (FRA, 2014). The pressing need to improve the living conditions of the Roma has been further stressed in the Europe 2020 Growth Strategy, within which Roma integration is explicitly stated. However, successful integration efforts cannot be achieved when government education policies striving for equality of opportunity (Bačlija 2008, 177) at primary and secondary level are not accompanied by support for young Roma at tertiary level also. As the 2011 regional data suggests, it is only less than one per cent of Roma that continues on to higher education (FRA, 2014). For instance, Marina asserts (2010, 36) that higher education institutions (HEIs) tend to reflect their societies and as such have the same issues of prejudice and discrimination. One could argue that attitudinal obstacles faced by HEIs in forging ahead with an agenda of diversity (Brown 2004, 25) can be to some extent tackled when remedial affirmative measures as a tool for increasing access to higher education are effectively implemented, accompanied by tangible arguments as to how the mainstream society benefits when there are special places reserved for the ethnic Roma students.

In several Eastern European countries, universities follow a certain quota system to enroll students of Roma ethnicity. While, as Brennan et al. explain (2015, 10), this may have a desirable impact on the number of Roma students continuing on to higher education, there is also a negative impact on the very perceptions of the students themselves. This could be due to the fact that Roma graduates might not necessarily be valued, because Roma students' admissions to the university are not granted on a merit basis, according to some. In addition,

Roma students are also more likely to be enrolled at what is perceived as less prestigious universities in the region due to their preference to be closer to their communities. Additionally, many universities that enable access and participation to young Roma are said to have poor reputations, rather limited portfolios and limited opportunities for students to network (Brennan et al. 2015, 10).

Reflecting further on the points mentioned above, this thesis argues that affirmative action policies that are carried out by both public and private academic settings should not be implemented by neglecting their impact on other than just the primary beneficiaries of such measures. Therefore, this thesis examines why the impact of an affirmative action program, the Roma Access Programs (RAP) at CEU, should not be perceived and evaluated only in terms of benefits for its primary participants, Roma students at CEU, but also in terms how the presence of Roma students shapes and affects the CEU's student and faculty body as a whole. Considering that both political and public discourse on Roma, particularly in the CEE, is highly charged and politicized with stereotypical views about Europe's Roma communities, it is absolutely necessary to consider and look at the potential benefits of having representatives coming from the Roma communities of Europe and Eurasia at CEU. In most cases, the RAP students and alumni have practical experience doing grassroots advocacy and other activities aimed at empowering Roma communities prior to and during their studies at CEU, and are thus equipped with various experiences from the 'field.' CEU Roma students can, through both informal and formal discussions with their university peers, effectively deal with and tackle stereotypes that students and faculty members may have. As a result, CEU graduates are to be better equipped to deal with stereotypical or racist views that they may encounter in their personal as well as professional life after graduation. To put it differently, they can thus contribute to cooling down the heated socio-political climate that is linked to Roma inclusion as a complex public policy issue area. Because all kinds of learning

experiences, sometimes very satisfying and sometimes rather painful, bear relevance not only for particular students in an immediate sense but also for the entire society over time (Lawrence 2000, 8).

For current RAP student and alumni community, CEU is regarded as a very prestigious institution. Brenner et al. (2015, 10) have noted in their evaluation of the Roma Graduation Preparation Program (RGPP), one of the two programs of the RAP at CEU, that RGPP supports Roma students in their progress by enabling them to access what is perceived to be ‘the best’ higher education in status and reputation terms in order to overcome the prejudices they face (Brennan et al. 2015, 10). While the main rationale and purpose of the RAP’s creation dating back to the early 2000s will be briefly touched upon in the latter sections of this study, this thesis does not deal solely with the RAP and its primary beneficiaries, the CEU Roma student and alumni community. As already mentioned, by contrast, it positions the RAP unit within the wider CEU community as it seeks to identify what the RAP student and alumni bring to the whole CEU community when interacting with the non-Roma¹ student and faculty body.

In order to do so, this thesis supports an argument derived from discussions and discourses that are framed from an orientation of strength rather than one of disadvantage and deficiency (Tedesco 2001). Therefore, this thesis argues that by understanding the benefits of diversity, one’s awareness is necessarily moved away from a focus on remediation and disadvantage (Trickett et al., 1994). Therefore, *the primary research question that is addressed in this study is whether and how diversity and presence of Roma students benefit their non-Roma colleagues.*

¹ The term non-Roma refers to the CEU students and faculty members that are not or have not been enrolled in the RAP. It is, however, possible that within this community there are students of Roma ethnicity who are currently pursuing their studies at CEU without having gone through the preparatory programs offered by the RAP unit.

Overall, it is argued that as the racial and ethnic makeup of graduate programs shifts, attitudes and perceptions about diversity in graduate school will continue to be important (Ward & Zarate 2015, 590). This thesis seeks to find out how relevant and accurate is this claim among the members of the CEU community, more specifically its student and faculty body. In this regard, it should be, however, initially noted that CEU is a unique academic setting in terms of how international and diverse the community is. This thesis first looks at how the diversity of the CEU's student body is perceived by current students and academic staff and, second, how student respondents perceive the extent and importance of Roma students' contribution to diversity at CEU.

Therefore, the particular case study examined in this thesis is the *RAP Unit at CEU* within the wider CEU community by looking into subjective students' and faculty assessments of interactions with their Roma peers. Finally, the 'novel' aspect regarding the thesis' focus is not solely how RAP benefits its key recipients, the Roma, but rather that the unit of analysis are non-Roma students and their personal experience and responses on formal/informal 'learning through diversity,' with a primary focus on student-student formal and informal interactions of non-Roma at CEU with their Roma peers.

In order to determine the impact of Roma students' participation on the diversity of the CEU's student body, and how this affects their non-Roma colleagues at CEU, Chapter 1 provides a brief literature review. General benefits that diversity in HE may bring about are discussed in order to test whether these are valid and applicable when Roma students' role is examined. In addition, arguments on affirmative/positive action measures are briefly addressed, with a particular focus not only on primary beneficiaries of such remedial measures, but society as a whole.

In order to identify whether the potential benefits stemming from having a Roma colleague at CEU are fully realized, this thesis refers, among others, to a concept of structural

diversity. As it will be argued, increasing only the structural diversity in terms of numerical representation of various racial/ethnic groups (Gurin *et al.* 2002: 333) of an institution without considering the influence of each of the other dimensions of the campus racial and ethnic climate does not necessarily have to yield tangible benefits for the entire academic community (Hurtado *et al.* 1998: 280). Instead, what matters is, though scientifically difficult to measure, both the quality and the perceived frequency of intergroup interactions with racially/ethnically diverse peers that can take place in many contexts, with the majority of them occurring outside the classroom (Gurin *et al.* 2002: 333). Therefore, in order to identify Roma students' contribution to the diversity of the CEU's student body, both the teacher-student and student-student formal and informal interactions are addressed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, where qualitative data are presented in light of the theoretical arguments outlined in Chapter 1. The final chapter, Chapter 3 summarizes the key findings, refers the value of the research, and provides suggestions for further research.

1. Research Design and Methodology

1.1 Research Objective, Research Design, and Methods

In essence, this thesis relies on a general argument that diversity in higher education is beneficial (Bowen & Bok 1998; Bowen *et al.* 1999; Bollinger 2003; Gurin *et al.* 2002). The scholarly works on the topic generally assert that informal and formal interactions with diverse groups, values and ideas foster critical thinking and improved skills of a student (Gurin *et al.*, 2002; Smith 2009; Banks 1995; Banks & McGee Banks 2004, 2010; Cushner *et al.* 1992). More specifically, among the positive aspects to which mostly American scholars refer are an increased student's civic engagement, racial understanding, and commitment to the promotion of democratic ideals (Ward & Zarate, 2015, 592). In addition, Smith (2009: xii) stresses the role of higher education in building pluralistic and equitable societies that prosper and flourish as a result of diversity. Most relevant, Smith adds that "diversity can both

transform facilitate the core mission of a campus” (xii). Affirmative action programs are usually designed to enable access and participation to those students that have been historically excluded or underrepresented (NCSL, 2014). In short, many assert that only through affirmative action can adequate services be provided to minority communities (Lawrence 2000, 1).

While a scholarly analysis on the benefits of diversity in higher education should not neglect to mention both the points brought up by proponents as well opponents of affirmative action in education (Fetter 1995), this thesis does not deal in depth with both philosophical and policy questions that are at the heart of the debate on affirmative actions in admissions (Fetter 1995). Instead, only arguments in favor of affirmation action policies are brought up when the rationale for the creation of the RAP is discussed. While the Program was founded with a objective of targeting talented Roma, to prepare them to serve as role models and future leaders in their communities (Brennan et al. 2015, 9), this thesis examines how the Program indirectly benefits the non-Roma and CEU as an higher education and, in turn, how it indirectly benefits Roma students at CEU. In addition, this thesis does not seek to assess the RAP’s creation, purpose or how it selects eligible candidates to the Program. While some responses obtained from the study participants may be either directly or indirectly evaluating the Program and its actions, this thesis does not have such ambitions.

Whilst scholars continue to study the potential benefits stemming from a diverse student and faculty body, less is known about how people come to believe diversity is beneficial for their educational outcomes (Ward & Zarate, 2015, 592). Therefore, this thesis aims to explore the impact of diversity by asking students and academic staff if and how both formal and informal interactions have influenced their educational, alternatively, teaching experiences. In order to answer whether the RAP’s creation was to some extent driven by ‘diversity’ concerns and the impact of the Program on the wider CEU’s community, two

interviews were conducted with two stakeholders (Interviewee 1 & Interviewee 2) who were able to contribute to this research with their knowledge, among others, on the RAP's creation. Interviewee 1 worked for Open Society Institute and was directly involved in the launch of the Program, whereas Interviewee 2 currently holds a prominent position within the RAP Office at CEU. Faculty assessments were obtained from two professors at SPP (Interviewee 3 & 4).

Students' assessments on diversity at CEU are obtained through collective interviews and an online survey in which the responses were sought from the current students from the School of Public Policy (SPP) and the Department of the Environmental Sciences and Policy at CEU, though quantitatively more qualitative data was obtained from SPP students. The rationale for having current students from these two CEU's departments to provide answers to the survey is, first, to determine whether there is any contrast between respondents with affiliation to social science, on one hand, and natural science, on the other. Second, this research assumes that generally the awareness and perception about the existence of the Program and thus the potential benefits for the non-Roma student body will be declared more widely by the current SPP students as they are exposed to the contact with current RAP students and alumni more. This is due to the fact that current RGPP students audit mostly courses offered by the SPP or that a vast number of RAP alumni's preference is for the human/social sciences. In order to obtain a specific type of qualitative data for the purpose of this study, the methods that have been chosen are briefly examined below.

1.2 Methods

In order to find out how CEU students and academic staff perceive Roma students' contribution to the diversity of the CEU's student body, this thesis relies on the following most common qualitative methods. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with people from CEU in senior managerial or teaching positions. The first interviewee was closely

affiliated and involved in founding the Program when he worked as Program Manager at Open Society Institute (OSI), whereas the second interviewee currently holds a senior managerial position within the RAP Office as she serves as Acting Director of RAP and is also a former SPP student and RAP alumna. The researcher met with both interviewees twice; the author of this study met Interviewee 1 on 13 and 27 March 2016 and the other two personal communications with Interviewee 2 took place on 18 and 31 May 2016. Overall, these two interviews were conducted with an overarching objective to obtain data on the RAP's creation, the development of the Program and its administrative current structure and activities, both in terms of ordinary everyday activities relevant for the current RAP and alumni, but also RAP events, campaigns and initiatives for which the participation is open for the entire CEU community.

In order to capture how academic staff perceives the diversity of the CEU's student body and the impact of Roma students' participation on the rest of the classroom, two in-depth interviews with interviewees in teaching position were conducted. The first interview took place at the School of Public Policy in May 2016, with the current SPP professor (Interviewee 3) whom the author of this study has known since September 2015. The second research interview took place via email, since the SPP professor (Interviewee 4) was unable to provide a personal interview due the fact that he is currently conducting his research abroad.

Regarding students' subjective assessments of how they perceive Roma students' contribution to the diversity of the CEU community as a whole as well as at individual-student level, the researcher the following three categories of current students participated in the research. First, responses were obtained from the current School of Public Policy students; second, current students at the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy and, thirdly, in order to be able to capture the 'bigger' picture, the RAP students and alumni provided their perspectives.

The second method that has been employed is focus groups (FG) with three categories of participants that were selected in order to meet the aforementioned sampling criteria (Taylor et al. 2015). The purpose for conducting FG was twofold. First, the author of this study sought to do very preliminary research and to find out how students feel about and how they perceive the topic, such as diversity in higher education, diversity at CEU and the way they have interacted with their Roma peers. While the responses obtained from the participating students during the discussions were utilized in their entirety in the analytical part of this study, the output from the FG discussions mainly informed the author of the study of how to design and construct the questionnaire.

Three current SPP and two students from the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy attended the first FG discussion that took part in the second week of May 2016 in a small conference room in the premises of the CEU Residence Center. The idea of having a mixed focus group was to foster discussion both between colleagues who supposedly shared similar experience, i.e. due to having Roma classmates —RAP alumni—in their classroom and, on the other hand, those two Environmental students who have not been exposed to contact with a Roma student inside a regular class. The idea was that having a mixed group could broaden the participants' thinking, foster creative and unconventional responses and, for the researcher/moderator—to see whether there is any pattern to be found among the social science students who are exposed to, above all, formal contact during their mandatory classes and, on the other hand, the current Environmental students who can only seek contact through RAP alumni auditing Master's courses or, mostly, through less formal channels. The FG's participants have given an informed consent to record the 55-minute long discussion and use the collected data.

The second focus group was supposed to take place at the CEU Residence Center the following evening, but due to the unprecedented circumstances two participants could not be

physically present at the given time. The author of this study decided to schedule an online focus group later on. This second focus group was conducted with past RAP students that are and were enrolled in the Master studies at SPP at CEU. Although this step might have affected the spontaneity and dynamics of the second focus group discussion carried out via Skype, the participants were provided a sheet with questions that the researcher was likely to address in this discussion. All of the focus group participants were provided the questions approximately 2 hours prior to the Skype conference call. Due to unexpected technical difficulties when the Skype conference call was ongoing, two of the participants could not fully participate in this Skype conference call. The researcher had to ask them to provide answers separately on the provided question sheet and emailed it to the researcher. The call with the remaining participants has been recorded, following the participants' approval to do so. The second focus group discussion lasted for 90 minutes.

The third focus group discussion was conducted with the current RAP students, more precisely those enrolled in the Roma Graduation Preparation Program (RGGP). The rationale for conducting a collective interview with the RGPP students separately was due to the fact that they have been through the auditing of courses offered by various CEU departments exposed to ordinary academic life. The researcher's assumption was that the perception of the RGGP students on the diversity at CEU and both formal as well informal interactions with their Roma peers would have been much better developed than current RAP students that are enrolled in the Roma English Language Program (RELP). Due to the fact that this group faced the same technical difficulties as FG 2, those who were unable to participate in the 60-minute long call, they were also asked provide answers separately on the provided question sheet and emailed it to the researcher.

Finally, the additional qualitative data was obtained through responses that current SPP and Environmental students have provided through participating in an online survey.

1.3 Limitations of the Research

First, the students who were invited to participate in the study, i.e. focus group discussions, were contacted via informal channels, such as social sites. The researcher saw this approach as the most efficient and least-time consuming one.

Second, regarding the questionnaire, while Evelyne Patrizia Hübschner, MAPP Program Director, has provided an institutional endorsement and sent the link to the survey to its participants from SPP, the author of the study has spoken to her fellow classmates at both departments to encourage people to provide answers to the survey if they had not done so yet. Therefore, the identity of the author of the survey has been revealed and some responses provided in the survey might have been affected by knowing the student's identity, affiliation and interested in Roma-related issues. For example, the student's fellow classmates who have been introduced to her research in February or March could have been less impartial than those who have been introduced to the research area and topic for the first time when taking part in the survey.

Third, regarding the purposive sample in this qualitative research and survey respondent rate from the two departments, SPP respondents provided more answers as 67 per cent of the data obtained through the online survey comes from current students enrolled master's and doctorate degrees at the School of Public Policy, including its PhD program. But considering that Roma students' general preference for postgraduate studies is for Public Policy, Human Rights and International Relations, according to Interviewee 2 (31 May 2016), it was anticipated that quantitatively more fellow students from SPP would be willing to volunteer and participate in the research. Overall, SPP offers more degree programs than the other department, resulting in a larger current student base. Second, considering that RAP alumni's preference is for social science degree programs, it was highly likely that SPP students will know more about the RAP unit and Roma issues. Because in general, one could

argue that online survey participants who feel more confident about the survey topic and, therefore, find it more interesting were expected to be more engaged and provide more valid and reliable answers to the questionnaire (Vannette 2015).

Fourth, while this thesis generally refers to the RAP unit as a whole that comprises not only Roma Graduate Preparation Program (RGPP), but also Roma English Language Program (RELP), responses were only sought from RGPP students as they are exposed to ordinary academic life of the university through auditing MA courses.

As following, the author of this thesis decided to analyze the data collected through using semi-structured interviews in great depth. More specifically, as the researcher cared more about the quality of the analysis and the dignity (Baker 2012), statistical logic that would mean interviewing more people and, therefore, result in a larger amount of data was not chosen as a preferred approach. As the researcher was faced with practical limitations, i.e. time constraints, in case she sought responses from more interviewees, she would have been unable to question and criticize the obtained data in light of the theoretical framework. Finally, one should be cautious about the generalization and accuracy of the findings for other Departments and Schools at CEU. For instance, while the data obtained from SPP students could be well applicable to the Department of Legal Studies where RAP alumni also tend to pursue their studies, one cannot confidently predict, for instance, the validity of the findings for CEU Business School where students' exposure to RAP students and alumni is considerably lower.

1.4 Research Ethics

First of all, the author of this study is aware of ethical issues and risks that stem from, first, conducting research on such a sensitive research topic and, second, doing research on an institution the author of this study is enrolled in as a full-time student at the moment of writing. More specifically, while this research has been done only with the best intentions, an

apparent risk stemming from doing this research may undesirably lead to harming some individuals that could potentially just from the context find out that they are being referred to.

Second, it must be noted that the author of this study posits that this research could only be conducted at CEU, because it is a more mature environment, students here are able to see nuances. Similarly important, one must bear in mind that the results of this study are not transferable, in their entirety, to other context (s).

Finally, regarding the responses obtained through the interviews, the questionnaire and the focus group discussions, it should be stressed that, in general, many prejudices are created on interactions with a few people. For instance, if one of the respondents has had one bad experience with Roma, their responses might be negatively influenced. Therefore, it must be noted that this research – by no means – aims to reinforce prejudice. By contrast, this research has been designed and carried out with a primary motivation of countering the prejudices and potential stereotypical views among the survey' respondents.

Chapter 1 - Literature Review

1.1 (*Internal*) Diversity in Higher Education

Considering that this thesis captures how non-Roma members of the CEU community assess the impact of Roma students' participation and contribution to the diversity of the student body both at the level of the whole institution as well as at the level of an individual student, the empirical evidence collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups and the online survey tests the accuracy of the following theoretical arguments. In short, in order to determine how students of Roma ethnicity affect and shape the academic community as well as its individual members that, in turn, affects the CEU community as a whole, a brief overview of seminal arguments on diversity in higher education that informed the researcher's qualitative fieldwork is provided below.

Higher education is increasingly becoming international as a result of the process of globalization (Kedzior *et al.* 2015, 1). In this newly emerging global environment, a university should be able to foster a global consciousness among students, to make them understand the relation of mutual connection between other people and diverse societies (Gacel-Ávila 2005, 123). Only then can students develop understanding of themselves and other cultures and to learn how to respect and cherish pluralism (Gacel-Ávila 2005, 123) and, also, reduce prejudice and develop more positive attitudes about members of different ethnic and racial origin (Allport 1954; Banks 1995). It is generally assumed that being surrounded by different people fosters more creative thinking, diligence, innovation and, finally, makes people work harder (Nieto & Bode 2012; Smith 2009; Gurin *et al.* 2004; Wood & Sherman 2001). Regarding further positive effects on performance that stem from being a member and contributing by one's presence to diverse groups, students of different ethnic and racial backgrounds contribute by their different knowledge bases, skills or perspectives. In case of high informational diversity, as Jehn, Northcraft, and Neale (1999) refer to the differences in

diverse viewpoints, capabilities or knowledge bases, the information that is made available to the students during in-class discussions is likely be analysed in depth because every student can offer a different perspective on how a specific task should be solved. Also, diversity in education in general tends to serve a democratic function because interactions between students of different backgrounds enable the student body to build alliances that can result to desirable, systemic equitable changes and prepare thus young individuals to better function the aforementioned global society (Gurin et al. 2004).

Additionally, Gay (2013, 61-62) considers culture and difference, as essential elements of humanity; therefore both should play a major role in teaching and learning experiences. What is more, to ignore these two assets is, in Gay's opinion, "To assure that the human dignity and learning potential of ethnically, culturally, and racially diverse students are constrained or minimized" (62). Nevertheless, as will be further examined below, diversity in HE is not and should not be regarded as 'an end in itself' (Fine & Handelsman 2010, 7). Taking into consideration that the primary subject of this analysis is a university that, geographically, lies in Central Europe, but brings with its dual accreditation, both in Hungary and the USA, two educational traditions from Europe and the US (Lukic 2013), the subsequent sections reflect on both the American and European discussions on diversity in order to determine which suits the case of the diversity of the CEU's student body.

As scholarly works from the USA indicate, hundreds of colleges and universities take into consideration the educational value of diversity as they see it as an essential resource for optimizing teaching and learning processes (Alger et al. 2000, 1). By contrast, when looking at the issue of diversity in higher education through the European lens, Wilson (2009, 6) argues that this issue has moved to the center of Europe's policy discussions with such questions as how to ensure knowledge-based societies are and remain competitive and, similarly, are equipped to respond to diverse needs and demands brought forth by the student

as well as the wider academic body. Wilson (2009, 6) highlights that institutional diversity is regarded as a positive quality to strive for, as it is becoming more central to higher education policy, with higher education institutions (HEIs) moving to the center stage of the attention of political representatives as well as of the citizenry (Reichert 2009, 8). Nevertheless, it must be noted that the European discussions deal with the system diversity and diversity of institutional types within a system, and focusing on the changing role of HEIs and, similarly, on the diverse functions they need to fulfill (Reichert 2009, 15). Therefore, while both discussions tend to see diversity in light of enhanced social and economic responsiveness, Reichert (2009, 15) concludes that the aspects that stand at the core of the diversity debate in the USA resonate more readily in minor institutional circles in Europe, and are usually far from attention of the education policy makers. Lastly, the research carried out by Reichert (2009, 15) indicates that the only area where both European and US discussions overlap concerns gender inclusiveness. Therefore, as Reichert (2009, 15) explains, the concept of external diversity – diversity of institutional types at the level of the overall system – is less charged in the USA as an issue due to the fact that the historically grown differentiation is large, accompanied highly diversified educational institutional market.

As a result, this Master's thesis incorporates the concept of institutional diversity that has been taken from the American diversity debate, where it is concerned with inclusiveness and where it has preceded earlier discussions of the inherent issues and most effective methods of affirmative action measures. As already mentioned, while the European discussion is overwhelmingly concerned with the system diversity, the diversity debate in the USA tends to focus on the ethnic and gender diversity of the student and faculty bodies (Reichert 2009, 15). Most relevant, the concept of institutional diversity in the American terms does not only add attention to the need of to expand the pool of qualified graduates, but

also aims at promoting and measuring learning outcomes and competences that an effective diversity management may bring about (Siegel 2003).

1.2 Affirmative/Positive Action in Higher Education

Concerning the affirmative action measures, educators in higher education in the USA have long asserted that affirmative action policies are justified because they lead to the creation of ethnically and racially diverse student bodies (Gurin et al. 2002: 330 – 331). What is more, such affirmative action policies that enable access and participation of minority group that has historically been at a disadvantage (Stahlberg 2010) are deemed to be essential to providing the best possible environment for student, majority and minority alike (Gurin et al. 2002, 331). Those advocating for affirmative action, it is seen as ‘leveling the playing field.’ By contrast, those opposing such policies see it as ‘bureaucratized inequality’ (Ibarra 2001, 3). ‘Affirmative’ or ‘positive action’ programmes, as referred to in the European discourses and discussions, may contribute to the reinforcement of common stereotypes, rather than countering them. More specifically, it may foster common stereotypical views that certain groups are not able by themselves to succeed only on the basis of their individual qualities and capabilities (Martín 2012, 1). Here, again, an interesting contrast between the US and European approach can be found, especially when equal access to education is concerned. In essence, Bergan (2005, 18) argues that contemporary European societies are more likely to agree on a more activist approach, according to which educational (public) authorities should not only be responsible for the scrutiny of the equitable application of rules. Besides this, they should strive to ensure equal opportunities through other means, such as designing and implementing measures that will result in an increase of qualified candidates through improving educational opportunities underprivileged segments of society (Bergan 2005, 18).

Shifting the focus back to Europe to policies for inclusion of its largest ethnic minority

that are referred to as ‘positive discrimination,’ experts argue that the only way for getting the Roma out of a so-called „dependency trap“ is through access to quality education (Bačlija 2008, 175). Members of ethnic groups that find themselves in an underprivileged situation or discriminated against in some way require extra protection of their rights in order to better function in society. To overcome the “dependency trap” mentioned above beginning with the higher educational levels of the Roma communities in Europe, many education policies of ‘positive’ discrimination have been implemented throughout the continent (Bačlija 2008, 177). Nonetheless, as Open Society Institute (OSI) (2007, 49) contends, European governments tend to hesitate to specifically address and include Roma as a particular beneficiary group in their national strategies. In this regard, Bačlija (2008, 180) points to the lack of direct targeting of Roma pupils and students that blurs the focus of almost every policy approach. To sum up, positive action in theory comprises all sort of policy interventions aimed to help the members of social disfavored groups, in this case the Roma minority group, to overcome decades of past societal discriminatory practices (Martín 2012, 1).

Referring back to the overall issue of affirmative or positive action, Wiley (2002, xi) notes, “The issue now is not about the value of affirmative action, for that has been proven.” Instead, Wiley (2001, xi) addresses – in his opinion – a more pressing question, more precisely how to value and ensure diversity on university campuses so the student and faculty body benefits as a whole. Wiley (2001, xi) elaborates on a wide array of possible returns for the student and faculty body stemming from valuing diversity that have been already briefly put forth. Among the immediate benefits belong opening up new ways of thinking, teaching, learning, and conducting research that is likely to result in the emergence of new knowledge from looking at the world through different cultural contexts and cognitive learning styles. In addition, Ibarra (2001), for instance, rejects to see and seek diversity only as a “matter of law”

or “the right or/and smart thing to do;“ Ibarra’s research goes further as he sees diversity as the only way to unlock the full spectrum of human potential.

1.3 Culturally Responsive Teaching: The Role Of Teachers

When analyzing the human, more concretely student potential, the role of teachers is worth mentioning. Gay (1972; 2010; 2013) examines the importance of being responsive to cultural diversity and treating the diverse student body as a resource, an asset that educators should make use of when designing their teaching techniques. Overall, for Gay (1972, 35), education should be specifically designed and aim to “perpetuate and enrich the culture of a people” and should, at the same time, “equip them with the tools to become functional participants in society, if they so choose.” Villegas and Lucas in their seminal article on multicultural education also advocate for reflecting on culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, and incorporating it into their curricula (2002, 21).

Therefore, when the role of the university instructors is concerned, Gay considers (2013, 49) culturally responsive teaching as “the behavioral expressions of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning.” What is more, such educators and academic instructors respecting such a type of teaching technique see cultural differences as an asset, since their aim is to create caring learning communities where students of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and heritages are valued and, similarly, where the knowledge of the diverse student body guides curriculum development and classroom climates (2013, 50). Very important, Gay’s (2013, 63) concept of culturally responsive teaching, both in idea and action, stresses localism and contextual specificity. In this regard, Gay (2010b) refers to the principles of applying multiple ethnic, racial, and cultural viewpoints when educational problems and possibilities are a subject of in-class analysis. Interestingly, Gay (2013: 63-64) also recommends teachers to help develop skills among students for crossing cultural borders. Lastly, Gay (2013, 64-65) also examines

how to match teaching strategies to the learning styles of different ethnic groups, an aspect that is going to be referred to in the latter section when the learning practices of the Roma students from the Central and Eastern European region are concerned.

1.4 Formal And Informal Interactions: The Role Of Students

Having referred to basic theoretical arguments on diversity in higher education, how a diverse student body is to be achieved and, also, how teachers and academic staff can contribute to the potential stemming from having students of different ethnic heritages and cultural backgrounds in their classroom to be fully realized, the focus now must be centered on students themselves. Crucially, it must be noted that structural diversity – the numerical representation of diverse groups – is not a prerequisite for all potential benefits of having peers of different ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds to be practically realized (Gurin et al. 2002, 332-333). As Gurin et al. (2002, 333) point out, while structural diversity increases the likelihood of students' encounters with others of diverse backgrounds, it does not necessarily need to yield meaningful intergroup interactions that are, in Allport's (1954) opinion, pivotal for the reduction of racial prejudice. Therefore, what matters more than the mere presence of students of different ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds is both how frequent and of what quality intergroup interactions are, a realm that Gurin et al. (2002, 333) have coined '*informal interactional diversity*.' Chang (2007; 2013) in this regard contends that while such informal interactions with diverse peers can occur in many campus contexts, in most instances they occur after a class takes place, outside of the classroom. These interactions may take a form of an interaction in residence halls, university events, conferences, and social activities.

Last but not least, a third kind of diversity includes getting to know diverse people - content knowledge – and gaining experience with diverse fellow students strictly in the classroom that Gurin et al. (2002, 333) term as '*classroom diversity*.'

To sum up the aspects brought forth above, the impact of racial/ethnic diversity is very much ‘interaction-dependent’ as the effect comes, first and foremost, from informal as well as in-class interactions with diverse peers (Gurin et al. 2002, 333). In addition, for the potential of the diversity of the student body to be fully realized, Glass and Westmont (2014) refer to the concept of belongingness that they deem as a necessary prerequisite for successful integration of individual members of the student body. The authors add that successful integration efforts can be best achieved during campus-wide activities aiming at promoting intercultural communication and integration of all members of the community.

Chapter 2 – Diversity at CEU and the Roma students' contribution to the diversity of the student body

2.1 Roma Access Programs (RAP) at CEU: creation and diversity concerns

Overall, as already stressed in the preceding sections, by paying attention to the benefits of diversity, one's initial perspective is moved from an orientation of disadvantage and remediation to one of strength (Tedesco 2001). In short, in order to determine whether the formation of the RAP unit at CEU in the early 2000s was driven by any diversity concerns for the CEU community as a whole, the rationale and purpose behind the creation of RAP is briefly discussed. Second, in order to test the relevance and accuracy of those claims on the potential benefits of the diversity of the student body within the classroom, in general, and Roma students, in particular, responses obtained from the perspective of teaching faculty are provided. In short, classroom diversity—content knowledge and gaining experience with diverse students backgrounds—is addressed in the subsequent paragraphs (Gurin et al. 2002, 333).

In essence, the RAP unit that was founded in 2004 seeks to deliver the two following ultimate objectives. First, the Program aims at preparing Roma students by providing good education and English language skills so they can serve as future role models and young leaders for Roma communities (Brenner et al. 2015, 9). Second, the Program believes that language skills, academic qualifications and critical thinking skills that graduates of the Program receive will contribute to and result in the empowerment of Europe's largest ethnic minority and, most relevant, reduce prejudice and inequality the members of Roma in the region remain to be faced with (Brenner et al. 2015).

Qualitative fieldwork conducted uniquely for the purpose of this study yielded the following data through two personal communications with each of the two interviewees briefly referred to in the methodological section.

First, key considerations and motives that informed the formation of the Program were expressed during a discussion with Interviewee 1, who was holding a senior managerial position at the Open Society Institute (OSI) and was directly involved in the RAP's creation. Interviewee 1, who served as the Program Manager at OSI during the period of the RAP's formation, has explained that the primary beneficiaries of both programs of the RAP unit were considered Romani individuals, who would be offered a preparatory program and then could continue on to postgraduate studies at prestigious and competitive postgraduate educational institutions in Western Europe and Northern America, and at CEU (13 May 2016). It was clear from this interview that the potential benefits of having students of Roma ethnicity at CEU on the overall diversity of the student body were not taken into consideration (Interviewee 1, 13 May 2016). This is precisely how Interviewee 1 has explained whether the Roma students' contribution to diversity of the student body at CEU was ever touched upon prior and during discussions on the creation of RAP:

At the core of our discussions was not diversity; our main argument was not about Roma students' contribution to diversity of the CEU community as a whole. We maintained a more 'activist agenda,' that it simply would be good to have more Roma at CEU.

(Interviewee 1, 13 May 2016)

Interviewee 1 has also mentioned another important aspect that informed the creation of RAP, more specifically how the Roma represented and still represents a priority for the CEU's founder George Soros, and how actions in this policy area were and still are ideologically linked with the wider principles of open society (13 May 2016). The principles are, among others, respect for human rights, minorities and a commitment to improve the lives of individuals from marginalized communities (Open Society Institute 2002). What is more, as Interviewee 1 has clearly explained, should the program that enables access to a postgraduate academic setting and supports Roma students in their future careers at CEU be not created, the principles of open society would have hardly been delivered (13 May 2016).

Interviewee 1 has also brought up an opinion that the author of this study collected during the focus group discussion with the RAP alumni who are now enrolled as full-time students at SPP. He had expressed that diversity of the student body at CEU should be matched by the diversity of the CEU's teaching body as well, with Romani intellectuals teaching courses on Roma, which is currently non-existent.² Interviewee 1 asserts that in the absence of a Romani scholar in the ranks of CEU teaching faculty, "You are not doing diversity at CEU as much justice as you could were there Romani scholars." As he has further explained:

The idea is not to restrict non-Roma professors to teach courses on Roma, but to bring on board someone who is of Roma ethnicity. By having Roma professors at CEU, they would offer their perspective and experience of being a Roma and potentially counterbalance what students are hearing from their other course instructors.

(Interviewee 1, 13 May 2016)

To sum up, regarding the original intention that informed the Program's creation, the primary and, in fact, sole beneficiaries of both programs, RELP and RGGP, were considered young Roma graduates who were good students in their countries of origin and had some knowledge of English, but who would be most likely unable to get accepted to prestigious HEIs otherwise (Interviewee 1, 13 May 2016). Therefore, one could argue that secondary beneficiaries of the RAP activities and undertakings—diverse, non-Roma student and faculty body at CEU—were only affected by the RAP's creation in terms of how RAP has shared and shares the values of the Open Society Foundations (OSF). In short, this is the only, though indirect effect that Interviewee 1 could recall when the impact of RAP and its student and alumni community back in the Program's first months and years of existence was looked for.

Reflecting further on the CEU's commitment towards creating elite students who will eventually become Roma community leaders, Interviewee 2 who serves as Acting Director of RAP has stated, "CEU has set a real example in terms how profoundly an institution of higher

² Currently, the Chair in Roma Studies position at CEU is being filled.

education has been trying to address what happened to the Roma in the very recent history” (18 May 2016).

In this regard, Interviewee 2 has also added that, “CEU seeks to compensate for the actions that prevented access to institutional and organizational settings to Roma.” Interviewee 2 has also pointed to the fact that RAP is a unique program of its kind in the region and that by having this affirmative or positive action program “CEU addresses what other universities in the region have not been addressing” (Interviewee 2, 18 May 2016).

More readily, the fact that the second Interviewee is a former RAP and SPP student and currently holds a senior managerial position at the RAP Office, her perspective proved extremely valuable when the RAP Office’s approach towards the diversity of the whole body was addressed. When asked whether the rest of the CEU’s community benefits from Roma students being members of its community and, similarly, whether the potential benefits for the academic community as a whole are sufficiently communicated to the whole institutions, Interviewee 2 has noted the following:

As a Program, I am aware that we are not addressing it enough, we should definitely talk about this much more, but we are working on that. We do not explicitly talk about the benefits for the wider community at conferences we organize, and it is also rarely mentioned in the public discourse. (Interviewee, 18 May 2016)

While the RAP Acting Director has mentioned that the RAP unit is aware of this particular shortcoming, with the Program and its administration becoming more visible nowadays, mostly in terms of on campus events that further show how committed the RAP unit and its student and alumni community are, their actions have started to have much wider impact on the rest of the CEU community. For instance, when compared to the situation a decade ago, RAP conferences and campaigns are more complex and reach a wider segment of the CEU community than when the Program started in the early 2000s (Interviewee 2, 18 May 2016).

Based on additional qualitative data obtained from this second interview, the Acting Director and the whole RAP Office believe that in order to make RAP even more visible within the CEU community and beyond, the RAP unit's current approach is to publicly talk about both the individual as well as collective achievements of RAP and their students which will result in an increased credibility of the Program (18 May 2016).

Moving on to how directly the RAP contributes to the diversity of the student body, Interviewee 2 has also stated that they do so by contributing to the overall values of CEU, such as inclusiveness in education. Other important aspect came up in both interviews is how having Roma students at CEU contributes to reducing and tackling prejudice among the members of its community. This finding is in line what Allport (1954) and Banks (1995) have argued. More concretely, Allport (1954) argued that an ethnically, racially and culturally diverse academic community fosters more positive attitudes about members of different ethnic and racial origin and, as a result, contributes to reducing prejudice.

Interviewee 2 has elaborated on how efforts aimed at building up RAP's credibility and respect with the 'closest' stakeholders will, eventually, likely have an effect a wider segment of people at CEU:

Challenging stereotypes, takes a lot of time, but we need to position ourselves. What the Program does indirectly is tackling the stereotypes as many people in the region are not accustomed to see Roma in higher education. (Interviewee 2, 18 May 2016)

More specifically, regarding how a diverse student body—of which Romani individuals are an integral part—affects CEU students' prejudice and stereotypes that some members of the CEU may have, Interviewee 2 has noted that the mere fact that the Program enables access and participation to Romani individuals, "By being exposed to a diverse community, student and faculty body learns unconsciously" (18 May 2016). When asked

about how precisely the Program and its student community affect the viewpoints and mindsets the CEU's student and faculty body, Interviewee 2 has responded the following:

What happens during the process of being exposed to an extraordinarily diverse community is that you [we] do not realize when we change existing stereotypes of others.
(Interviewee 2, 18 May 2016)

To sum up, it is clear from the conversations briefly summarized above that, first, prior and during the discussions on the creation of RAP in the early 2000s, diversity concerns were not taken into consideration. The perspective Interviewee of 2 enables one to see that while international Roma students remain the primary beneficiaries, the Roma Access Programs, though a non-degree program, does not only seek to serve the Roma students, but aims at treating Roma students as a valuable resource for the rest of the CEU's student body. This is not only through RAP students and alumni organizing much more conferences, campaigns, and initiatives for the entire CEU community, but also by focusing on individual and collective achievements of RAP graduates at CEU and beyond.

2.2. Diversity at CEU and Roma students' contribution from the perspective of teaching faculty

In order to capture the Roma students' contribution on the diverse student body through formal interactions in the classroom from the non-student perspective, the following responses were obtained from scholars in teaching positions at SPP.

Basically, both teachers at the School of Public Policy (SPP) have adapted their teaching methods and techniques to the CEU's densely international academic community. Interviewee 3 who has been teaching a mandatory course over the last two academic years at CEU has explained in depth how unique the ethnically, racially and culturally diverse student body at CEU is. For him personally, a diverse academic community creates "a very safe environment" (23 May 2016).

Therefore, Interviewee 3 perceives diversity of the student body with different backgrounds as something highly positive, as he tends to push forward in his classroom to share their various backgrounds and treats it as an asset. Interviewee 3 has referred to the fact that CEU offers its student and faculty body such a learning and teaching experience to which students and scholars from the Central and Eastern European (CEE) are not used to.

Regarding his experience on having been teaching a mandatory class at SPP to Roma students for the past two years, he thinks that they always needed encouragement to speak out. Interviewee 3 has noted that he does not know “whether it was because they were not so confident in English or that they did not feel so comfortable and familiar with the topics.” Nevertheless, once RAP alumni in his classroom were given a little of encouragement, they performed well, he added (Interviewee 3, 23 May 2016).

By contrast, Interviewee 4 who agreed to do an email interview with the author of this study, has expressed that his students never felt uncomfortable with topics in his elective class on international political economy and social science methods (31 May 2016). Interestingly, with regards to Roma students’ contribution and bringing their knowledge of Roma-related issues to in-class discussions, Interviewee 4, holding a position of Associate Professor at SPP, has noted that he cannot recall any cultural-specific contributions in his classes from his Roma students and has provided the following explanation:

There has never been a specific contribution with a Roma background. But again, the topics of my courses are international political economy and social science methods. I think it is difficult to bring in Roma specific experiences. (Interviewee 4, 23 May 2016).

In addition, when asked whether he can recall any implicit or explicit benefits stemming from having Roma students in the classroom, Interviewee 4 has referred to a situation in which one of his students from the province of Bihar in India told him that she thought that Roma in Europe were subjected to the same treatment as *Dalits* (the caste of untouchables) in India. Interviewee 4 has noted, “In that sense I think interaction with Roma

students had an effect on her.“ (31 May 2016).

When the contribution of Roma students during classes was looked for, Interviewee 3 has expressed that he sees a lot of ‘lost potential.’ He thinks that Roma students’ contribution to in-class discussions was not as notable he would have liked or would have expected it to be. Interviewee 3 has noted the following:

Given Roma students’ rich, diverse and personal experience with various national Roma communities and, similarly, the challenges that the Roma communities face, I would have expected their contribution to be much greater, such as applying and interpreting the concepts on practical example from their work with Europe’s Roma. (Interviewee 3, 23 May 2016)

Nevertheless, Interviewee 3 was unable to clearly identify and decide whether Roma students being less active during his classes was “time-, topic-, and encouragement-dependent” (Interviewee 3, 23 May 2016). Another possible reason behind their in-class performance is due to the fact that not only for Roma students from the CEE region, but from universities with different traditions, it takes time for them to ‘acclimatize’ at CEU. Interviewee 3 has added the following:

One needs to keep in mind an acclimatization process that each student experiences. For some, to get used to this way of learning takes more time because it is unique and rather unprecedented for them. (Interviewee 3, 23 May 2016)

Additionally, an issue that likely affects overall Roma students’ in-class performance and, therefore, potentially hampers Roma students’ contribution to the diversity of the student body by bringing issues and perspectives that pertain to Roma, was also clear from responses obtained through the focus groups discussions that they often lack a necessary level of confidence. In other words, the way Roma students at CEU perceive themselves might be directly linked to how they perform (Interviewee 3, 23 May 2016). While this issue did not come up only in a personal communication with Interviewee 4, but on various occasions the

RGGP and RAP students as well as RAP alumni would refer to internal constraints and, in fact, how they perceive themselves may negatively affect their academic performance.

Should the students—in the opinion of Interview 3—eliminate the internal constraints and feel more confident with themselves, they could feel confident to deal with the in-class topic and readings. As Interviewee 3 has concluded, “In my opinion, I see some kind of a chain reaction there.”

To sum up, Interviewee 3 has referred to the way he takes into consideration and, furthermore, treats diverse students’ backgrounds as a resource, a practice that has so far proven very beneficial for him as well as for the whole classroom. While the diversity of the student body has shaped the teaching style of Interview 4, he has not particularly considered particularly Roma students’ contribution to diversity at CEU as the topics of his elective courses are international political economy and science methods and, therefore, Interviewee 4 deems it difficult to bring in Roma-specific experience.

According to the teaching experience of Interviewee 3, he perceives that the potential of Roma students is not fully realized due to their internal constraints, i.e. lack of confidence, and perception of themselves as students who have a different status. This results in them not being as fully effective in articulating their own experience others. As Interviewee 3 has noted, “Not that they do not have much to say, but they are afraid to share.” This perception closely corresponds with the concept of belongingness put forth Glass and Westmont (2014) and brought up in the preceding section. According to the authors, such a feeling is necessary for successful integration of individual members of the student body. Also arguments put forth by Gay (2013, 64-65) on the need of educators to match their teaching strategies to the learning styles of different national and ethnic groups were indirectly mentioned. It has been stressed that one needs to keep in mind that due to diverse learning styles and experiences particularly of those who have pursued their previous studies at universities in the region,

each student deals with acclimatizing and adjusting to the CEU learning and teaching style differently (Interviewee 3, 23 May 2016).

Chapter 3 - Roma students' contribution to the diversity of the student body: students' subjective perspective

3.1 An analysis of primary qualitative data

As already pointed out, there are several potential benefits that diversity in higher education may bring about, such as students of different backgrounds contributing by their different knowledge bases, perspectives or skills (Jehn et al. 1999) that, in turn, enables intercultural and informational exchange (Bowman 2010). In cases when this informational diversity is high, it may reduce prejudice and stereotypical views (Allport 1954; Banks 1995). Another crucial benefit identified in Chapter 1 regards how diversity in higher education tends to serve a democratic function (Gurin et al. 2004).

Overall, Chapter 3 determines the impact of Roma students' contribution to the CEU's diversity of the student body as whole as well as at an individual-student level. In this regard, points mentioned above should be perceived in light of an argument that a racially, ethnically and culturally diverse student body simply should not be perceived as an end in itself, especially the way benefits stemming from a highly homogenous academic community are addressed. In order to test whether the aforementioned benefits are being realized, research participants from the ranks of current students were asked about their formal and informal interactions with their Roma peers. More specifically, Chapter 3 presents data obtained from the discussions with focus group participants that are often richer than data obtained from individual interviews or online surveys (Chalmers & Nason 2005, 38).

3.2 Subjective assessments of students from SPP and ENVI: focus group 1

Three current School of Public Policy (SPP) students³ and two students who are currently enrolled in the two-year MA program at the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy (ENVI) attended the first focus group discussion (FG).⁴

Regarding the group's overall account on diversity in higher education and at CEU, in particular, most of the respondents have expressed that the diversity of the CEU's student body is something that would previously not be exposed to. Both SPP students from the CEE region have expressed that the diversity of the CEU's student body is a unique experience and that, for instance, they seldom had chance to interact to such an extent with students from South-East Asia and the African continent (FG Participant 2, 18 May 2016). The ENVI student has added another interesting point on the advantages of studying in such a diverse academic environment, "It is going to act as a selling point on my CV as well that I studied at such a multicultural environment" (FG Participant 4, 18 May 2016).

All of the three SPP students have been exposed both to formal as well informal interactions with the students, whereas the ENVI students only had a chance to get to know the RAP student and alumni community at one official event. Regarding students' account on classroom diversity, they generally appreciate Roma students' input; they benefit by hearing 'first-hand' stories, acquiring the knowledge of systemic discrimination and, lastly, by developing an in-depth understanding of Roma-related issues" (FG 1 Participant, 18 May 2016). One student has, however, referred to one objection regarding Roma in-class contributions:

They [Roma students] have a tendency to put too much emphasis on Roma-related issues, even in cases when it was not necessarily applicable to the cases or theories we were discussing. (FG Participant 3, 18 May 2016)

³ For practical purposes, FG 1 participants were identified as follows: FG Participant 1: SPP female student from the USA, FG Participant 2: SPP male student from Croatia, FG Participant 3: female SPP student from Serbia, FG Participant 4: female ENVI student from India, FG Participant 5: male ENVI student from Mexico.

⁴ On request, transcripts of FG discussions with the study participants are available.

Finally, regarding the aspect that has been brought up by four out of five FG participants concerns prejudice prevention and reduction. One SPP student spontaneously said that having young Romani individuals at CEU, many prejudice of Roma students not being able to pursue masters or doctoral studies is countered (FG Participant 3, 18 May 2016).

The ENVI student has brought up a personal story on how, prior coming to Budapest, her grandmother told her that “in Eastern Europe, there are many ‘gypsy’ people.” The student has added the following:

I did not have any knowledge about this. I only heard stories about caravans, people singing and dancing in long journeys and I thought it sounded like fun. And then my grandmother told me, ‘No, no, no, they are thieves and you have to be careful.’
(FG Participant 4, 18 May 2016)

When asked whether informal interactions with Roma students⁵ at CEU have anyhow contributed to disregarding her grandmother’s claim, she responded, “Yes, it is definitely gone for now, the image of Europe’s Roma portrayed by my grandmother last summer” (FG Participant 4, 18 May 2016).

3.3. Subjective assessments of the RAP alumni enrolled at SPP: focus group 2

RAP alumni that are currently enrolled in one-year MA and MPA programs at SPP, and one Roma student who has not gone through the RAP unit but did her MA degree at SPP, took part in FG 2. Overall, Roma provided more in-depth and, at the same time, more critical responses. The researcher anticipated this as due to the Roma students’ academic and professional experiences with Roma-related issues, they are likely to be more receptive and knowledgeable and, therefore, will be able to argue with a slightly more advanced logic in the FG discussion than those students that have not been exposed to Roma inclusion as a research or public policy area.

⁵ For practical purposes, FG 2 participants were identified as follows: FG Participant 6: RAP alumnus and one-year MAPP student, FG Participant 7: RAP alumna and one-year MAPP student, FG 8 Participant: Roma MAPP alumna, FG Participant 9: RAP alumnus and MPA student.

Overall, all of the Roma respondents perceive the diversity of the student body as highly beneficial. FG Participant 6 has particularly emphasized the diversity of the Roma student body at CEU. He perceives it highly positive, because the members of the non-Roma CEUs community are able to see that there are also differences between Roma students coming from different European and Eurasian countries (FG Participant 6, 19 May 2016).

As following, FG Participant 7 has expressed some opinions on how explicitly CEU puts the principles of diversity in practice so its benefits can be fully realized, particularly when events and conferences for the whole CEU community are considered. She has further elaborated on this by saying that there is—to her knowledge—only one major event, CEU’s International Intercultural Festival, that CEU holds annually so people are explicitly invited to share introduce each others’ cultures, habits and values (FG Participant 7, 19 May 2016). She has also added that in terms of organizing events that would bring to the table students’ diverse backgrounds and experiences, she perceives the Roma students to be among the most active ones by organizing public events accessible for the whole CEU community. But since attendance of non-Roma students and faculty members for these events is not mandatory, it is up to the preference and availability of each member of the CEU community to decide whether to take part and hence enrich her or his knowledge base and get more accurate information about Roma in Europe (FG Participant 7, 19 May 2016).

Overall, as the researcher expected, all participants have identified the issue of prejudice reduction as an immediate benefit stemming from having Roma students at CEU. More specifically, as Participant 7 has explained, “Basically, Roma students challenge non-Roma students’ knowledge, views, perceptions and beliefs of who Roma are ” (FG Participant 7, 19 May 2016). In addition, by mainly contributing to the in-class discussions, Roma students can challenge and tackle stereotypical portrayal by the media that non-Roma students from the CEE region usually get (FG Participant 8, 19 May 2016). FG Participant 9 has

provided thinks the following, “What we bring in the classroom is experience of being discriminated against, segregated that are precise examples of policy and institutional failure.”

All of the participants have expressed that non-Roma students benefit because at other universities, they would hardly be exposed to some many young Romani individuals who come from different parts of the world. One student has elaborated on this by saying, “They [non-Roma students] have the possibility to hear what diversity and democracy means, from a Roma student’s perspective (FG Participant 8, 19 May 2016).

Regarding aspects and topics that were not mentioned by the non-Roma FG when the impact of the Roma students’ contribution to the diversity of the student body at CEU is concerned, non-Roma focus group has not referred to the potential benefits democratic citizenship and the way the RAP unit as a whole and its students enhance and contribute to the principles of open society. In other words, the issue of minority rights and minority group protection, accompanied by an emphasis on how supporting Roma in higher education and beyond is matter of human dignity and human rights for all, did not come up in the discussion with non-Roma students. Finally, all Roma students have agreed that while informational interactional diversity (Chang 1996) is occurring, it yet remains limited. The Roma SPP students have argued that everything is a matter of individual student’s preference if he or she wants to continue on with discussions and debates with Roma students outside of the classroom.

3.4 Subjective assessments of students enrolled the RGPP: focus group 3

Lastly, five RGPP students⁶ provided responses during the third FG discussion. Overall, RGPP respondents have referred to similar aspects as their RAP peers who are currently enrolled in MA degrees at SPP. One student has explicitly mentioned that other universities in the region should take CEU as an example in terms how it embraces diversity as a postgraduate academic institute. He has further elaborated his argument by saying, “It prepares future generations that will serve as a strong point between academia and the policy practice world. The student has also added, “Potentially, the CEU alumni will hold prominent positions as policy makers and practitioners and design and implement policies on diversity, making the world more open for different cultures” (FG Participant 13, 20 May 2016).

Regarding formal and informal interactions with Roma students, the vast majority of the RGPP students have noted that they quite regularly continued their in-class discussions outside the classroom as well, depending on the interest of individual students. Another students has added the following, “It is a pleasure for me, always, to have an opportunity to listen what people know about Roma and to address what people might not know” (FG Participant 12, 20 May). Other student has noted that their contribution is in terms of setting an example that Romani intellectuals are present, that they can speak foreign languages, tackling thus effectively existing stereotypes about Roma (FG Participant 10, 20 May 2016). Other student has mentioned how participating in ordinary academic life through auditing regular courses enabled her to discuss with her African fellow classmate similar struggles that Roma and Afro-Americans have gone through, i.e. slavery (FG Participant 11, 20 May 2016).

Again, regarding further benefits that were not brought forth by non-Roma FG participants, but were explicitly mentioned by RAP alumni and current RGPP students,

⁶ For practical purposes, FG 3 participants were identified as follows: FG Participant 10: male RGPP student from Hungary, FG Participant 11: female RGPP student from Hungary, FG Participant 12: male RGPP student from Ukraine, FG Participant 13: male RGPP from Albania, FG Participant 14: male RGPP student from the Russian Federation.

regards seeing Roma students' contribution through the prism of the rule of law and overall democratic ideals. Another student has noted that Roma history and culture is an important part of world's historical heritage as they, Roma communities, have some crucial messages and aspects to share:

Our collective memory is a cornerstone in terms of shaping and further developing the idea of human rights. Roma in Europe had really catastrophic past during WWII that we share with other minority groups, such as limited access public services or human rights violations.

(FG Participant 13, 20 May 2016).

Other RGGP student thinks that people are not always curious about other traditions unless there is a dedicated occasion to speak up about them. He elaborated on this further by saying, "People tend to learn more about each other mainly during special occasions such as intercultural festival and, for instance, hate speech monologues rather than merely in personal discussions" (FG Participant 12, 20 May 2016).

To sum up, it is clear from the three FG group discussions that students perceive an ethnically, racially and culturally diverse student body as something beneficial and, more readily, as something to which they were seldom exposed during their previous studies. For SPP non-Roma students, primarily from the CEE region, having a Roma fellow classmate yields immediate and tangible benefits in terms of Roma's perspective stories and practical experience on Roma-related issues that non-Roma are used to hear in a vastly negative light from the mass media, for instance. As for ENVI students, their contact with Roma students remains limited as the two have interacted with RAP students was at RAP events in September. One of the students has explicitly stated that prejudice reduction is the most immediate benefit that interacting informally with Roma, seeing them being active in campus events brought about. Regarding the responses from the RAP students and alumni, they perceive the benefits of their presence at CEU for the wider community, among others, through the lens of democracy and human rights concerns, an aspect that was not mentioned

by any of the non-Roma students. Finally, the RAP participants maintain that while having a Roma international community at CEU is a notable contribution to the diversity of the student body, whether the benefits will be realized depends on the interest of individual students and the way Roma and non-Roma wish to pursue their discussions outside the classroom. This claim closely corresponds with the argument put forth by Gurin et al. (2002). The authors argue that the numerical representation of diverse groups does not automatically result in the potential of having peers of different ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds being practically realized (Gurin et al. 2002, 332-333).

3.5. CEU students' views on diversity at CEU: A 19-question online survey

As already mentioned, students currently enrolled at the School of Public Policy and the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy were asked through official university channels to fill in an online survey⁷ with 19 questions on diversity in higher education, in general, and Roma students' contribution, in particular. In total, out of 40 students who provided responses to the survey are 27 females and 13 males mostly between 25 to 30 years of age. 67 per cent of all responses come from SPP students, whereas ENVI students' responses constitute only 33 per cent of all answers. Regarding respondents' origin, 17 respondents come from Europe, 10 from North America and the first most frequent region of origin is Asia.

Concerning the data, out of 38 respondents that provided responses to the first question, 22 perceive diversity in higher education 'very important,' 14 students see it as 'important' and the remaining two students find it neither important nor unimportant. When asked whether they have ever considered some specific minority group students' contribution to the diversity of the student body to be greater than the contribution of others, 18 students—

⁷ On request, the questionnaire in a PDF format is available, alongside with sheets including respondents' answers. The link to the survey also remains active and is accessible at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2WCGF7Z>

46 % of respondents—have answered negatively. The rest of respondents remained neutral (10 % of respondents), accompanied by 40 per cent of students who do perceive the contribution of some specific minority group of students to be greater. The most common answers regard the impact of students from Africa and South America, Roma students, but also students with disabilities. One student has pointed out that he deems this question ambiguous as it “starts from the biased assumption that a certain identity can lead to more or less contribution. In addition, if he were to evaluate contributions, he would judge on other factors. When analyzing the contrast between social and natural science students, negative answers on the aforementioned question were more common among ENVI survey participants, 9 students consider one or more minority groups students’ impact to be more notable, whereas 4 of them do not.

Regarding respondents’ awareness of Roma in Europe, more specifically whether they have ever heard about any issues faced by Roma in Europe, only 1 out of 39 students who provided responses to this question has not heard about any issue. The most common answers were discrimination and a lack of chances on the labour market, stigmatization, poverty, and low educational attainment, and poverty. When asked particularly about their knowledge on RAP at CEU, 35 out of 39 students have heard about the Roma Access Programs. Three out of 13 ENVI have not heard about the Program, whereas only one out of 26 SPP student does not have any knowledge about the existence of the Program. Out of 34 respondents who indicated some knowledge about RAP, only one considers her knowledge as ‘excellent,’ two students as ‘very good.’ 15 students as ‘fair’ and, finally, 9 students as ‘poor’ and 7 study participants as ‘very poor.’

As following, formal interactions have occurred for all SPP students through mandatory as well as elective courses. For ENVI students, only informal interactions took place. Out of ten ENVI respondents, 3 students took part in an event, campaign or initiative

organized by RAP and its student and alumni community. Six students noticed these public events, but did not take part. The remaining student has not noticed any RAP public event. Interestingly, regarding SPP students' participation at RAP events, only 3 out of 24 respondents actively participated in a RAP event; 80 % (19 students) have noticed RAP public events, but did not take part and the remaining two have not noticed any event initiated or organized by the Program and its students.

As following, 31 out of 34 students think that it is important to consider the existence of RAP in terms how it affects the CEU's community as a whole. The remaining three respondents do not share such an opinion as they posit that RAP should be only considered in terms of its primary beneficiaries, CEU's Roma students.⁸

Finally, out of 33 responses provided, 18 students have personally observed or realized one of more benefits from interacting with a Roma colleague. Seven students have not realized any benefits and the remaining 8 have never considered it.

Last but not least, the most immediate benefits both formal and informal interactions with Roma students bring about for their non-Roma peers and the CEU community as a whole is similar to what FG participants stated. First, among the most widely cited benefits are Roma students contributing by their minority group perspective and, similarly, that non-Roma students are able to get familiar with Roma-related issues and struggles. For instance, as one student has noted, "I gained insight from unique perspective in classroom discussions." Other most frequent responses regard how input brought up mainly during in-class discussions effectively counters prejudice and stereotypical views that some of the students have had previously. Several students have expressed rather neutral answers, such as that Roma students enrich one's cultural knowledge of the world.

⁸ The researcher is aware that respondents could have been affected by the way the question was framed and, therefore, inclined to respond that not only benefits for Roma students should be taken into account when RAP's existence and actions are concerned. This question was as follows: "Do you think that it is important to consider the existence of the RAP unit not only in terms of the impact on the Roma students, but on the CEU community as a whole?"

Additionally, only three students have noted how they value presence of Roma mainly not only in terms of acquiring accurate information about the Roma communities and prejudice reduction, but how Roma students have an effect on their social, cognitive and moral development. According to one student, “Roma students teach me how to be humble.” According to another respondent, “Roma student makes you stop taking things for granted.” Lastly, another response is that interacting with Roma students is beneficial as it “enhances social empathy by being exposed to other people’s struggles.”

Regarding students’ responses on Roma students’ contribution in light of democratic and human right principles, only one respondent has argued in this sense. The student identified the benefit as a “contagious passion for equal human rights and global governance.”

To sum up, the assumption of the researcher that social science students from the School of Public Policy will be more knowledgeable and therefore receptive towards Roma and their contribution to the diversity of the student body has proven only partially accurate. On one hand, due to the fact that SPP students are exposed to interactions with Roma primarily through their mandatory courses more than ENVI students, they were much better equipped to articulate specific benefits due to hearing Roma students speaking up in the classroom and, informally, engaging in discussions after the class or at the CEU Residence Center. On the other, this does not lead automatically in SPP students also pursuing contact by taking part in RAP events and campaigns, quite the contrary. Instead, their participation at RAP public events is much lower than the students from the other department. Overall, benefits from interacting with Roma peers, as expressed by SPP and ENVI students, did not show any striking differences. Finally, in regard to the conclusions stemming from focus groups, while Roma students, in a vast majority, have referred to the need to perceive the contribution of Roma students to the diversity of the CEU’s student body as a matter of

democracy and human right framework, online survey participants have not paid any particular attention to this, only with an exception of one student.

Conclusion

To conclude, the impact of remedial affirmative measures, implemented by both public and private higher educational entities, should not be considered solely in terms of its effect on primary beneficiaries, such as ethnic minority group students. Instead, as this thesis has determined, policies that enable access and participation to those minority group students whose communities have been at a disadvantage (Stahlberg 2010) are essential in providing the most suitable and stimulating academic environment for students, majority and minority alike (Gurin et al. 2002, 331). Therefore, in order to understand and, furthermore, ideally realize the various benefits that stem from having an international Roma community at CEU, one's awareness should be shifted from an orientation on remediation and deprivation to one of strength (Tricket et al. 1994).

The first analytical chapter, Chapter 2, has shown that the formation of the RAP unit at CEU in the early 2000s was not driven by any diversity concerns for the CEU community as a whole. According to Interviewee 1, potential benefits for non-beneficiaries—the entire CEU community—were not an original intention of the ‘architects’ of the Program as they maintained a more activist stance that meant considering young Romani students as the primary and sole beneficiaries (Interviewee 1, 13 May 2016).

Interviewee 2, who currently holds a position of Acting Director, explained that by having this Program, CEU “addresses what other universities in the region have not been addressing” (Interviewee 2, 18 May 2016). Interviewee 2 also noted how the scope and the impact of the RAP's activities and undertakings on the diversity of the CEU's student body are much wider than was the case in the early 2000s. Interviewee 2 also examined how the RAP unit realizes that the way in which the RAP, its student and alumni community contributes to CEU's overall diversity, is not addressed enough at public events they organize and in the public discourse they shape through the existence of the Program and its activities.

In relation to how the potential benefits of the diversity of the CEU's student body are realized through formal interactions and discussions in the classroom, both interviewees from teaching faculty positions have adapted their teaching style to an ethnically, culturally and academically diverse classroom. Interviewee 3 explicitly stated that he encourages his students to refer to their backgrounds, to use practical examples, and that he treats diversity as an asset, a point that was mentioned by scholars advocating for culturally responsive teaching.

Interviewee 3 noted that Roma students' contribution was not as great as he would have expected or have liked. His personal explanation behind this is due to the fact that Roma students see themselves as students who have a different status and that they perceive of themselves as not being the best in the class. Interviewee 3 noted that if Roma students were to abolish such internal constraints and become more confident, their effect on the in-class discussions would be greater as they have a lot to offer.

Finally, regarding the output received from focus groups, all participants from the ranks of students enrolled at the School of Public Policy, the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy and the Roma Access Programs, have referred to how being exposed to Roma students results in the acquisition of more accurate knowledge and a new (minority group) perspective. Importantly, interacting both formally and informally with their Roma peers helps them to tackle stereotypical views and even prejudice that have been created from how politicians and the media in region portray Roma. The most striking difference in responses was that non-Roma students have not referred to the contribution of Roma students in terms of its benefits for democracy, democratic ideals and human rights.

Finally, regarding the data obtained through the questionnaire, any striking differences in responses between SPP and ENVI non-Roma students were not proven. While the students from SPP have indicated better awareness about Roma and RAP in particular, their informal interactions—when assessed in terms of their participation in RAP events and campaigns—is

lower than the participation rate of ENVI students.⁹ Again, while the identified benefits are generally similar to those put forth by non-Roma FG participants, only one student perceived the Roma students' contribution in terms of human rights and global governance. Responses referring to more abstract, moral benefits were seldom acknowledged; of three respondents, one said how having a Roma student taught him to be humble; other developed social empathy and, for the third students, having a Roma colleague at CEU means "Stop taking things for granted."

To conclude, students stressed that personal contact of a non-Roma student with his or his Roma peer has helped to challenge prejudice the students might have previously had about the Roma's ways of living, their culture, and historical heritage. In this regard, it must, however, be noted that it is very probable that CEU students inevitably benefit from interacting with students of other racial or ethnic backgrounds whose 'first-hand' stories may also contribute to the reduction or elimination of stereotypical views. Considering the heated socio-political climate that is linked to Roma inclusion as a complex public policy issue within the EU context, it is particularly important to consider that non-Roma students at CEU believe that they are better equipped to deal with such stereotypes they may encounter during their upcoming personal and professional lives as a result of being exposed to an international Roma community at CEU. In addition, assessing the aforementioned points in light of the argument higher education institutions (HEIs) tend to reflect their societies and are as such faced with the same issues of prejudice and discrimination (Marina 2010, 36), significantly more higher public as well as private higher education institutes in the CEE region should commit themselves to designing and implementing measures so that young Roma individuals are enabled access to and participation in higher education. This is of a paramount importance, especially when one takes into consideration that is it only less than one per cent

⁹ In this regard, any definite conclusions should not be made considering that only 33 per cent of all answers to the online survey come from current students enrolled in the Department of Environmental Sciences and Policy.

of Roma that continues on to higher education (FRA 2014) and that, despite this, European governments tend to hesitate to specifically address and include Roma as a particular beneficiary group in their national strategies (OSI 2007, 49).

Finally, it must be noted that the results yielded by conducting qualitative fieldwork in two departments at CEU are not necessarily transferrable and valid to the remaining departments and Schools at the university. Therefore, in order to provide a more complex and coherent assessment of how other than just SPP and ENVI students perceive the contribution of Roma to the diversity of the non-Roma student body, the scope of the research should desirably be extended to other CEU departments beyond SPP and ENVI.

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