



**"Împreună" Agency for
Community Development**



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ROMANIA**

ROMA ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES

2005 Facts and Trends

**ROMA ACCESS
TO
SOCIAL SERVICES
- 2005 Facts and Trends -**

Bucharest
2006



**Published with financial support of
Open Society Foundation Romania**

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ISBN 973-87756-1-2

Published by AMM Design
Cluj-Napoca 2006

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Introduction

In March 2005 "Impreuna" Agency for Community Development (henceforth "Impreuna" Agency) mandated a team of young Roma students to investigate the issue of access to social services in several Roma communities in Romania.

The preparation of this report was made possible by the financial support of KERKINACTIE Netherlands through the project entitled "Monitoring Roma access to social services". This report is the second output of the Department for Monitoring Roma Access to Social Services operating within "Impreuna" Agency for Community Development, following a report on Roma access to the labour market drafted and issued in 2005.

This work was published with the financial support of Open Society Foundation - Bucharest.

Selected communities covered both urban and rural areas, so as to ensure a coherent overall picture of Roma community access to social services. What we actually envisaged when deciding to research Roma access to social services was a better knowledge of the problems faced by Roma communities at the local level.

This report provides additional information that complements the literature and the measures that have been proposed in order to remove all the barriers that prevent the access of Romanian citizens of Roma ethnic affiliation to basic social services.

Report objectives

Despite the various (inter) governmental programmes/strategies for improving the condition of the Roma adopted up to 2005, problems still persist at the local level and even seem to be on the increase. Through the ideas put forth in this report we would like to draw the attention of all stakeholders (public authorities, international agencies, Roma NGOs) to the fact that objectives are still far from being accomplished, although various programmes, strategies, and plans have been adopted. Moreover, the report emphasises that the Roma have faced and are still facing rather serious problems.

This report makes to claim to exhaustiveness; its aim is to shed light on the problems faced by Roma communities in various areas in the country. We believe that the geographical areas we chose make up an overall picture in accordance with the sociological requirements applicable to the selection of research locations (poor vs. non-poor, urban vs. rural, traditional vs. non-traditional, geographic distribution).

Limitations of the evaluation

The large number of Roma communities, as well as the diversity of problems encountered during data collection, led us to focus on 16 communities with a significant Roma population.

We selected the main areas of interest that emerge in all the communities, namely: *education, healthcare, employment, housing/infrastructure.*

Organisation of the evaluation

A research team made up of members and collaborators of Impreuna Agency was given the task of elaborating a data collection methodology, establishing rapport with relevant stakeholders, control over on-site data collection, and final reporting.

The dynamic analysis of indicators regarding Roma communities was done by the secondary analysis of data and literature review.

On-site data collection was done by a team of 16 young Roma undergraduate collaborators of Impreuna Agency.

In order to obtain feedback to the interim report we resorted to specialists on Roma issues as well as to specialists on social policies and project management.

Report structure

Chapter 1 is a dynamic presentation of a series of social and economic data concerning the Roma population of Romania, as they evolved between 1990 and 2005.

Chapter 2 is a synthetic overview of information concerning the data collected on site about access to basic social services. We aimed to put forward an overview of the main issues related to housing, *education, employment and healthcare*.

In Chapter 3 of the report, Impreuna Agency wishes to provide sustainable solutions for all the decision-makers in charge of improving the condition of the Roma. These recommendations have been formulated by taking into account the findings recorded in the locations we researched.

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In the final chapter, Impreuna Agency provides a synthetic and accessible overview of the main national and international policies targeting Roma communities in one way or another.

We should also point out that all the measures proposed are in close correlation with existing documents adopted at national and international level. In the near future, the principles proposed in the Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma (Governmental Decision HG 430/2001) are to be closely correlated with the principles of action put forth by the Decade of Roma Inclusion, by European programmes of employment and social inclusion, and not last by PHARE 2004-2006 multi-annual programming, in which Roma issues will have a special place.

CHAPTER 1.

General indicators regarding Roma communities

A. The size of the Roma population

There are several sources of information concerning the number of Roma in Romania:

- The January 1992 census recorded a number of 409 723 self-identified Romanian citizens of Roma/Gypsy ethnic affiliation.
- However, Roma organisations put forward figures between 2500000 and 3000000, but none of these figures are supported by scientific methodology.
- In 1992, a multi-method research into the social and economic living conditions of the Roma population gave an approximate estimate of 1 million persons (*Țiganiii între ignorare și îngrijorare* (Gypsies being ignored or being a cause for worry), Altera Publishing House, E. Zamfir, C. Zamfir (eds.), 1993).
- The research done in 1998 by the Research Institute for the Quality of Life (RIQL) (*Romii din Romania* (Roma in Romania), Expert Publishing House, C. Zamfir and M. Preda, eds., 2002), highly credible from a statistic point of view, estimates that the number of Roma is 1515000, i.e. 6.9% of the total population.

- The January 2002 census recorded 535312 Romanian citizens who identified themselves as Roma/Gypsies.

In the 2002 Census the number of persons who identified themselves as *Roma/Gypsies* exceed by a third the number of self-identified Roma in the previous census, amounting to 2.5% of the total population; this is an increase compared to 1992, when the percentage was 1.8%. The increasing trend characterises both urban areas (from 1.3% in 1992 to 1.8% in 2002), and rural areas (from 2.3% in 1992 to 3.2% in 2002).

Significant proportions of self-identified Roma/Gypsies occur in the counties of: Mureş (7.0%), Călăraşi (5.6%), Bihor (5.0%), Dolj (4.3%), Sibiu (4.2%), and Arad (3.9%). In Bucharest the percentage of Roma is only 1.4%; the absolute number of Roma ethnics increased by 2.1 thousand persons.

Compared to the 1992 census, the proportion of self-identified Roma persons rose in all of the counties; in some counties the increase exceeded two thirds (Bihor - from 3.4% in 1992 to 5.0% in 2002, Dolj - from 2.4% in 1992 to 4.3% in 2002 etc.).

B. Demographic structure of the Roma population

The Roma population is very young, due to the high values of mortality and fertility among the Roma compared to the general population. In 1998, children aged 0 to 14 represented about one third of the Roma population; the elderly accounted for about 5%, and the mean age of the Roma population was 24. Due to a dropping trend in fertility rates, characterising both the general population and the Roma population, the proportion of Roma children is decreasing.

Below is a list of findings concerning Roma demographics.

- In 1998, 39.4% of the couples included in the sample were recorded as "common law marriages".
- The proportion of common law marriages is greater in the young age range and it rises from 20% for couples aged 45-49 to 83% for couples aged 15-19. Common law marriage is more frequent in rural areas, among people whose neighbours are exclusively Roma, or among people with a lower level of education (having graduated fewer grades).
- Roma women first get married at a very early age: 35% of married women started their married life when younger than 16 years of age, 31% when they were between 17 and 18 years of age, 26% between 19 and 22 years, and just 8% of marriages are concluded after this age. The number of women who get married before the age of 20 is increasing: 70% of women aged 25 to 29 got married before turning 20, while 84% of women aged 20 to 24 got married before turning 20. The proportion of women who get married before turning 18 rises from 44.6% (women aged 25 to 29) to 52.1% (women aged 20 to 24).
- There are two dominant patterns characterising Roma families and households: 56% of households are composed of mononuclear families, and 44% of Roma households also include persons who are not part of the core family.
- 91.3% of Roma persons aged 60 and over share the household, and 8.7% live alone (compare this with the general population, where 26.3% of persons aged 60 and over live alone).

The number of children born by Roma women is decreasing.

- For the Roma female population of reproductive age (15-44), the average number of children born throughout life recorded in the 1992 census was 2.35 children/woman.
- The 1998 research records a number of 1.93 children/woman for the same age bracket, or 2.08 children/woman, if we take into account only the women in those households where the respondents identified themselves as Roma.
- Comparing the 25-29 and the 20-24 age brackets, we would like to draw attention to an increase in the proportion of women who gave birth to their first child before the age of 18, from 30.6% to 37.1% (and to an increase in the proportion of women who got married for the first time before the age of 18, from 44.6% to 52.1%).
- There are significant differences in Roma families between the average number of children per family (3.19) and the number of children considered ideal for a family (2.24). Therefore, every family is larger, on average, than the ideal size, exceeding it by "almost one child" (0.95). these differences are usually explicable by the fact that contraception is not used.
- Differences in the use of contraceptives between the total female population and Roma women are overwhelming: in 1998 only 13.7 % of Roma women of reproductive age (15-44) use contraceptive

methods, while in the general population the percentage was more than four times higher (57.3 %) in 1993.

- Reasons for not using contraception: a significant percentage of Roma women aged 15 to 44 (23.2 %) state that they are not familiar with contraception.

C. Indicators

Fertility

Table 1: Mean number of children born throughout life, broken down on age brackets, 1992

	Total sample	Urban	Rural	Compact communities	Scattered communities	Self-identification as Roma	Other ethnic identification
15-19 years	1.62	1.08	1.91	1.62	1.64	1.64	1.51
20-24 years	2.60	2.38	2.75	2.66	2.46	2.64	2.36
25-29 years	3.55	3.49	3.60	3.71	3.35	3.53	3.63
30-34 years	4.77	4.80	4.74	4.85	4.09	4.81	4.08
35-39 years	5.03	4.69	5.25	5.32	4.39	5.18	4.59
40-44 years	4.77	4.73	4.81	4.93	4.85	4.97	3.89

Note: the women included in the 1992 survey and therefore in this analysis are women, either formally or in common law marriage.

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Marriage

Table 2. Mean age of first marriage

	Total sample	Urban	Rural	Compact communities	Scattered communities	Self-identification as Roma	Other ethnic identification
1992 Survey	17.07	17.12	17.05	17.07	17.11	16.90	17.79
1998 Survey	17.96	18.36	17.69	17.54	18.10	17.55	18.64

Table 3. The last form of education graduated by persons over the age of 10 no longer attending school; as of 1998

Zero grades	22.1%	Vocational school, completed	6.7%
4 grades, not completed	8.4%	High-school, not completed	5.9%
4 grades, completed	14.2%	High-school, completed	4.1%
8 grades, not completed	12.2%	Tertiary education	0.6%
8 grades, completed	17.1%	Higher education	0.3%
Vocational school, not completed	1.9%	No answer	6.5%

Professions and occupations**Table 4.** The proportion of types of professions among the total population aged over 16

	1992 Survey	1998 Survey
Modern occupations	15.75 %	37.7 %
Traditional occupations	7.14 %	10.3 %
No occupation	77.1 %	52 %

Note: in 1998, the professional qualification question was much clearer, which brings about a significant change related to modern occupations and the lack of qualification. Another explanation relates to the need of the Roma to carry out activities that generate a more secure income, between 1992 and 1998.

Table 5. Occupational status of the population aged over 16, in 1992 and 1998

	1992 Survey	1998 Survey
Salaried employees	23.4 %	12.9 %
Employers	0.8 %	0.5 %
Self-employed	22.1 %	33.6 %
Retired	5.3 %	7.1 %
No employment	46.8 %	40.7 %
In school	0.5 %	2.5 %
In prison	1.1 %	Other cases 2.7 %

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Table 6. Subjective assessment of household income, 1992 and 1998

1992 Survey - "Thinking of your family's total income, would you say that it's sufficient or not?"		1998 Survey - "Thinking of your family's total income, what would you say?"	
Our income is not enough for a living	40.9%	It's hard for us to make a living	68.0 %
It's just enough for us to survive, but we can't afford to buy anything special or save	44.8%	We hardly manage to get enough for the bare necessities	18.2 %
We manage to save a little bit of money or buy something good from time to time, but only with a lot of saving and sacrifice	9.1%	We make do, but we still lack a lot of things	10.9 %
The income is quite enough for our needs	3.0%	We manage fairly well	
		In general we have everything we need	2.1%
No answer	2.2%	No answer	0.6%

Land ownership

Table 7. Proportion of land-owning households, 1992 (%)

	Total	Urban	Rural	Compact communities in rural areas	Scattered communities in rural areas	Roma self-identification, rural areas	Other ethnic identification, rural areas
YES	15.4	3.3	23.2	21.5	28.9	15.5	59.2
NO	84.0	96.5	75.8	78.3	71.1	84.4	40.8
No answer	0.6	0.1	0.9	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table 8. Proportion of land-owning households, 1998 (%)

	Total	Urban	Rural	Compact communities in rural areas	Scattered communities in rural areas	Roma self-identification, rural areas	Other ethnic identification, rural areas
YES	31.4	16.8	41.4	28.2	51.5	40.4	43.2
NO	63.6	78.7	53.3	66.2	43.3	55.6	49.1
No answer	5.0	4.5	5.4	5.6	5.2	4.0	7.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

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Housing

Table 9. Type of housing, 1992 and 1998

1992 Survey	1998 Survey
78.7% Own house	74% Own houses, out of which:
	63.1% Own house and yard
	10.9% Own apartment in block of flats
17.2% Rented house, state ownership	8.7% Rented apartment in block of flats, state ownership
1.7% Rented house, private ownership	6.6% Rented house and yard
	1% Rented apartment in block of flats, private ownership
	3.2% House owned by a relative (mother, grandmother...)
	1.3% No ownership papers / house built on municipality land
	0.8% Shanty, hut, one room only
	0.2% Nationalised house
	0.2% Inherited house
	0.2% Common space in block of flats / squatting
	0.1% Deserted house
	0.1% Improvised housing, squatting
0.6% Tent	0.1% Company accommodation
1.7% No answer	3.5% No answer

Table 10. Average size of housing and habitation density, 1992 and 1998

	1992 Survey	1998 Survey
Number of rooms per household	2.68	2.51
Number of persons per room	2.53	2.23
Inhabited area per person (m ²)	Not included in the questionnaire	6.15

Note: the number of rooms also includes kitchens that are slept in.

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Table 11. Facilities: electricity, running water, bathroom; 1992 and 1998

	1992 Survey	1998 Survey
% of households connected to the electricity network	87.8%	86.9%
% households with bathroom	17.2%	20.8%
Water supply (% of households)		
Households with running water	29.0%	23.0% (in house) + 7.4% (in the yard)
Using common wells/standpipes	Not included in the questionnaire	42.5%
Have their own well in the yard		22.8%
Use water from a stream		1.3%
Take water from neighbours		0.7%

Table 12. House assessment, 1992 and 1998

	1992 Survey	1998 Survey
Good	26.1%	20.5%
Modest	38.6%	35.2%
Poor	34.9%	43.3%
No answer	0.3%	1.0%

D. The evolution of the standard of living and poverty among the Roma

Transition brought about a general drop in the standard of living, as well as major social costs. However, the Roma seem to have paid a greater social cost than the majority population, particularly as far as extreme poverty is concerned.

The disparity between the rate of severe poverty affecting the Roma and the rate of severe poverty affecting the total population is much more significant than the disparity between the rates of poverty affecting the two groups.

Table 13: Rate of poverty according to ethnicity (2001)

	Rate of severe poverty	Poverty rate
Romanian	9.3	24.4
Hungarian	6.4	19.9
Roma	52.2	75.1
German	1.8	7.4
Other	11.3	31.7

Source: Calculation by CASPIS (Committee for Fighting Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion, 2003) based on National Institute of Statistics data for 2001

Proof of poverty among the Roma is the much greater impact of the Daily Snack program implemented in schools has on the Roma population, compared to the average or to other ethnic groups.

Impact of the Daily Snack program according to ethnicity.

Table 14 "... a daily snack for your child..." (%) *

	Income quintiles					Ethnicity			Area		Total
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Roma	Roma- nian	Hunga- rian	Urban	Rural	
	It is absolutely necessary, as you cannot give the child a lunch pack	38.6	7.4	4.3	3.8	0.0	60.0	12.7	9.1	9.2	
Good on the days when you cannot give the child a lunch pack	45.5	29.6	39.1	42.3	12.9	26.7	35.8	40.9	31.2	39.1	35.4
It's just an extra snack that the child likes	15.9	48.1	45.7	42.3	58.1	13.3	40.8	36.4	44.0	35.4	39.4
No importance whatsoever	0.0	14.8	10.9	11.5	29.0	0.0	10.8	13.6	15.6	5.6	10.3

Source: "Barometer of Public Opinion - October 2002" done by MMT with support from the Open Society Foundation

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Access to social support (currently, to the guaranteed minimum income) is a remedy to poverty resorted to by a very large number of poor Roma.

Table 15: Social support and the Roma population in 1998

The respondent believes that s/he is not entitled to social support	21%
The respondent believes that s/he is entitled to social support	75%
No answer to this question	4%
The respondent has filed an application for social support	47%
The respondent has not filed an application for social support, because it's not granted anyway	14%
The respondent believes that s/he is entitled to social support but has not filed an application	28%
The application was turned down (failed to meet criteria)	5%
Required documents missing	9%
The application was rejected	17%
The application was submitted but no result has been given yet	5%
The application was approved	25%

Source: RIQL data base "Roma 1998"

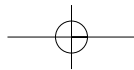
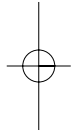
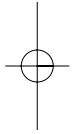
The status of housing is one major source of poverty and social exclusion among the Roma.

In Romania, living on rented premises is generally a disadvantage (due to the level of rent and the uncertainty of maintaining a medium- or long-term contract).

- 16.5% of the Roma live on rented premises; therefore, they are at a high risk of becoming homeless.
- An even more critical situation is the one of the 21% of the Roma who live in houses for which they do not have title of ownership (the houses have been built illegally,

or in rarer cases the Roma are squatters). Apart from the legal problems posed by such cases (tens of thousands of Roma households are concerned), the risk of social exclusion is particularly high, as hundreds of thousands of people are in danger of becoming homeless if the law were enforced ad litteram.

The issue of house ownership must be solved as soon as possible, because otherwise it would encourage the continuation of this pattern by young families in similar situations.



CHAPTER 2.

2005 Facts

By analysing the social and economic problems already identified by various studies carried out by stakeholders (research done by academic institutes, as well as various reports prepared by national and international bodies), we wanted to emphasise the main lines of action which the Romanian Government should follow closely over the next years.

We wanted to analyse the situation of basic social services up to the present time, the implementation mechanisms of Roma-targeted public measures, and not last to highlight the priorities undertaken by the government in order to improve the condition of the Roma. *Against this background, "Impreuna" Agency team members carried out a field research in order to see how Roma access to basic social services has improved in the last years, to identify local level barriers, and to see what improvements are required to obtain more palpable results.*

In this chapter we will present the main data obtained on-site with regard to Roma access to social services. We do not wish to extrapolate the conclusions of this field research, but to highlight some of the problems faced by the Roma communities involved in the research. We chose a representative number of Roma communities from all over the country, keeping a strict balance between urban and rural areas. The methodology used for data collection at the local

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level consisted of in-depth interviews with all the local leaders involved in "Roma issues": local authority representatives, local Roma leaders, other stakeholders.

First we will analyse the main results of our field research into Roma access to social services; this will be followed by an analysis of the way in which the objectives undertaken by the Government through the **Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma**¹ have been achieved.

In order to corroborate our analysis with the areas covered by the Decade of Roma Inclusion, we focused on the four major fields identified as priorities in 2003²: Education, Healthcare, Housing, and Employment.

a) Education

Various reports and studies have been drawn up during the last years, showing the educational deficit of many Roma in Romania and stating clearly that the role of education is to act as a starting point for providing more opportunities for the inclusion of the Roma throughout society. In current society, formal education complements the role of the family in the socialisation process of children and teenagers. School has the task of conveying information, skills and values which society considers to be important to social life.

Funding has been provided for various programmes specifically aimed at improving education for the Roma

1 Governmental Decision HG 430/2001 on approving the Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma in Romania www.dri.gov.ro/documents/m_2001-2004.pdf

2 www.sgg.ro/back/documents/60/deceniu_incluziune_romi.pdf

population of Romania. Investing in education is a long-term process which sometimes may fail to lead to the expected results, unless those measures are taken which eventually provide more opportunities for the Roma. Unfortunately, very numerous such programmes failed to lead to positive effects such as mobilising Roma communities. This relative failure is due to complex causes that are closely correlated and do nothing else but keep the Roma trapped in a permanent circle of exclusion from Romanian society.

The analysis of data collected on site clearly indicates the existence of several problems related to the educational process as such. Problems exist both as regards *Roma access to formal education*, and the *extremely poor quality of formal education* that is provided to the Roma population.

The lack of access to education is the most stringent problem faced by the Roma community generally, in all respects:

- pre-school education
- school education (from primary school to high school)
- professional training and retraining
- family education
- civic and religious education
- sanitary education

We wish to draw attention to a risk faced by Roma children due to the absence of equal opportunities, which is sometimes concealed. According to an interview done at "Mihai Eminescu" School, attended by the Roma children living in the community of Drumul Apelor (Craiova), there is clear ethnic discrimination

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invoking "the hygiene and cleanliness of Roma children". The reasons proffered usually constitute a way of concealing deeply rooted discriminatory attitudes that can be found among teaching staff.

There is not enough information and advice on education for Roma families, and there are no specific professional (re) training courses tailored to the needs and potential of the community. The approach of teaching staff is generally that "the teacher's role is to convey information, and the pupil's role is to reproduce it"; we haven't identified any inclusive methods which to take into account the students' understanding and the usefulness of the subject matter.

Most of the subjects interviewed in almost all of the target Roma communities showed that there are certain discrepancies when speaking about access to education, due to multiple causes: economic causes (the lack of material resources), cultural and institutional causes (differences in treatment by teaching staff).

The school performance of Roma children is low, either because of the lack of material support, or because of the lack of educational support and motivation from their parents who in turn lack appropriate education. School allowance and the daily snack provided to children enrolled in grades 1 to 4 represent for many Roma families the main reason for sending their children to school. Faced with the problem of short-term survival, parents are inclined to send their children to work at an early age (around 9-10 years) and encourage them to "make money" to sustain themselves. The consequence of such acts is the high rate of school non-attendance among Roma children, inevitably leading to school dropout.

Field data show that most of the children would like to continue their studies if circumstances were more favourable, that is, if they had a stable material support. After graduating four grades at the village school, Roma children must commute in order to attend secondary school in other villages, which may be at a significant distance, such as in the case of the village of Zeletin (Buzau County). The nearest village where children can attend school is Bisceni de Sus, which is 4 kilometres away from Zeletin.

The second major problem is the **extremely low level of education** of many Roma. Many Roma only graduated a few grades as part of primary education and lack the possibility of furthering their education. Many Roma are enrolled in school precisely because school attendance is conditional on the granting of school allowance, which for many Roma families is the only source of income; school dropout is more evident starting with secondary school (grades 5 to 8).

The educational level of adults in most of the Roma communities under research varies between primary school and vocational school; very few Roma manage to graduate high school. They often represent community role models, as in many cases children strive to follow the "career" and lifestyle set by their parents.

As far as pre-school education is concerned, very many families do not send their children to kindergarten, for the following reasons: poor financial status, the lack of proper clothing, the parents' lack of interest in sending their children to kindergarten. Roma children's lack of involvement in pre-school education creates the first gap between Roma and non-Roma, because by the time they enrol in primary school many Roma

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children are already affected by certain deficits which cannot be made up for. These deficits can only grow worse and eventually lead to school failure or to much poorer results.

Regarding school attendance, dropout represents a serious problem, particularly for teenagers who cannot graduate at least 8 grades and for those who graduate 8 grades and reach the end of their educational career. School attendance is much lower among girls than boys.

Many children who attend school contribute not only their school allowance to the economic life of the family, but also the work they do in their free time, along with the parents. Other ways of supplementing the family income are working in local markets, collecting recyclable waste, or exploiting other marginal resources.

The lack of a modern professional qualification in a trade demanded on the labour market forces some of the parents do agricultural work in neighbouring localities, which leads to fluctuations in income according to seasons. Truancy rates reach a peak during winter months, which is explained by the low financial resources available to the family during these periods. Many of first graders' socialisation problems and their school performance, which is lower than in the case of their Romanian peers, are explained by the fact that they did not attend kindergarten, or by high truancy rates.

Overall, the highest educational level is 5-8 grades. It is rarely the case that Roma children graduate vocational school or high school. The main consequence is the lack of formal professional qualifications leading to a better integration into the labour market. Many Roma see school attendance as a waste of time and financial resources.

Still, why is this happening? Where does this mentality come from?

- **The lack of models** - Roma communities lack role models, i.e. community members who became successful due to education. Generally, the successful role model is a person who has the strength to support their family, and this is something Roma children internalise at an early age.
- **In Romanian society, school is seen as a "provider of educational services"** - as co-operation between school and third parties (community, church, public authorities etc.) is far from what it should be. Parents are far from being involved as much as they should, which in the case of disadvantaged categories - Roma included - leads to the lack of family support.
- **The state of poverty leading to self-marginalisation** - many Roma families live in a state of severe poverty. The poverty of the Roma cuts off drastically aspirations concerning children; this is clearly shown by frequent assertions such as "My child won't grow up to be a priest", or "All they need to know is how to read and write and they'll do fine in life". During many talks with various Roma representatives, reference to community was made in such terms as "wretched", "poor devils", "unfortunate"; among other things, this shows an inability to capitalise on the positive elements existing in the community. *However, we must specify that this attitude is an effect of social inequality - of discrimination - to which the Roma have been submitted for a long time.*

b) Healthcare

The health status is an important indicator of the quality of life and is determined by the general level of development, consumption patterns, hygiene standards, the level of culture and the quality of public services. Public healthcare is guaranteed by the state and funded through the budget of social health insurance, local budgets, and the beneficiaries' contributions, as the case may be. As shown in various studies done in previous years, the health status of the Roma is extremely precarious, hence the need for emergency measures. Improving the health status of the Roma community is a priority stated clearly in the Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma, the Joint Inclusion Memorandum (JIM), the Decade of Roma Inclusion, and other statement papers endorsed by Romania. In recent years there have been various programs of the World Bank, the European, and the Romanian Government, aiming to improve Roma access to medical services. Unfortunately, the results obtained do not meet expectations and there are still significant problems regarding access to health services in Roma communities.

According to fieldwork done in 2005 by "Impreuna" Agency, the medical status of many communities either got worse or remained the same. We analysed the data obtained during on-site visits and classified problems as follows:

1. Difficult access to public healthcare services: first of all, we should specify that after 1989 access to medical services deteriorated at the level of the entire Romanian population. Against this background, many Roma communities are facing either the complete lack of public healthcare services

available in their respective areas, or major difficulties in accessing the various medical services provided by the state. In many of the communities researched by us it is obvious that Roma families cannot afford to pay for medical services. Although many families clearly qualify for free access to medical services, these families are not registered with the social security system, mainly due to the lack of identity papers, which does not allow them access to a family doctor or to other kinds of free medical services. Apart from this formal aspect, there have been cases of families who resorted to public medical services and had to pay other informal costs, which many Roma families cannot afford. Such informal costs lead to the exclusion of the Roma from the system.

The interviews carried out in Roman with four communities in the town and with the health mediator reveal that access to medical services is deficient. Out of the four Roma communities in Roman, "caldarari" Roma face most problems. 90% of community members are not registered with a family doctor. The most frequent reason is that family doctors refuse to register Roma on their rosters, claiming that there are no more places available. In other cases, the existence of discriminatory practices, mainly indirect, is obvious; the Roma community living in town, particularly "caldarari" Roma, are clearly discriminated against. Many doctors in Roman refuse to treat the Roma, on the grounds that the Roma should seek treatment at the community medical centre funded by the local budget. We should mention that the doctors who had been working at this medical facility retired and are no longer allowed to refer patients to other doctors or to write prescriptions for non-contributory medication.

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In the case of the Roma in Simleu Silvaniei (Pusta Vale village, Salaj County), most medical facilities are located very far from the Roma community. Moreover, there is no health mediator in this large community.

In the case of the Roma community in Baltesti (Prahova County), there is no medical facility or health mediator, which makes regular medical check-ups impossible. If they require medical services, most of the Roma are forced to travel a long distance to the closest villages. Because of the long distance separating the Roma community from medical facilities, most Roma go to the doctor only in an emergency, when the disease is already in an advanced stage, which makes early diagnosis and prevention almost impossible.

In Mizil live almost 3000 Roma, half of which are not registered with a family doctor. The main cause may be the insufficient number of family doctors available in Mizil (there are only 4 family doctors), but also the doctors' discriminatory attitude, which makes it impossible for the Roma to access medical services which should normally be free. Moreover, many Roma families have complained that the doctors refuse to write prescriptions for free or partially free medication, claiming that the funds allocated by the Ministry of Health are insufficient.

In Craiova, the general lack of identity papers prevents the Roma community from accessing basic medical services. There is only one health mediator working in Craiova.

2. The environment inhabited by many Roma communities constitutes an infection centre. A great many communities both in urban and in rural areas are located in

polluted areas and exposed to a high risk of infection, which eventually leads to a decrease in life expectancy. Even if national objectives have been established for reducing the spread of disease among the Roma population, health problems are always a reason for concern. Although many reports of various national and international bodies point to a high rate of fertility in these communities, existing infection hotbeds increase mortality. In many Roma communities child mortality exceeds by far the national average.

According to the type of settlement (rural, urban), there are different problems related to the health status of the Roma.

The health status of the Roma is directly influenced by the location of the community. Most communities are located at the periphery, in highly polluted marginal areas, which leads to serious and irremediable effects on their immune system. In rural areas, the most affected communities are isolated, compact Roma communities deprived of medical services. In the village of Baltesti (Prahova county), there is a high rate of infection precisely because of the lack of hygiene in Roma-inhabited areas. The lack of the most important facilities (in particular drinking water) are worrying sources of infection in almost all of the communities we investigated.

Secondly, the poor economic status of many Roma households makes it impossible for them to access basic medical services and exposes them to a high risk of disease, because of improper nutrition. For instance, field research shows that in Roman an improper diet has led to a high incidence of so-called "poverty diseases", such as TB, vitamin deficiencies, dystrophy, rickets, growing deficits, food poisoning etc.

Quite a serious problem is that many children become ill before being born. Many mothers do not have an appropriate diet and they smoke during pregnancy, which leads to the birth of ill children whose illnesses may be compounded throughout life. We encountered such cases in the communities of Baltesti (Prahova), Craiova (Dolj), Pusta-Vale (Salaj), Roman (Neamt).

Birth rates are high in many of the communities we researched, but the rate of child mortality exceeds by far the national average. Many women give birth for the first time around the age of 15-16, which may have serious consequences for both mother and child (due to inappropriate breastfeeding).

3. The lack of medical information sources for Roma families. Apart from the impossibility of accessing public medical services and from social and economic causes leading to severe infections, there is a lack of proper information addressing Roma families. The lack of information and medical planning is particularly obvious in rural areas, where access to information is limited and prejudices about the medical profession are worrying.

Due to the low educational level of many Roma families, many families are reluctant to use contraception in order to prevent unwanted pregnancies. A case in point is that of the Roma in Baltesti: apart from the high risk of infection in the community, many families stated their reluctance to asking the doctor's advice, either because of informal costs which many households cannot afford to pay, or to the general impression that seeing a doctor will lead to other diseases being diagnosed, thus leading to further expenses; besides, there is a general mistrust towards contraception.

c. Housing

Access to housing is an essential condition in any society in order to reach a minimal level of social integration. Access to housing is a prerequisite for any individual, taking precedence over any other right. The lack of adequate housing eventually leads to poverty and social exclusion.

Access to housing means first and foremost the existence of good quality housing. This is characterised by compliance with minimal standards accepted in society: the existence of a balanced number of persons per house, an inhabited area corresponding to the number of persons living in the house, the existence of appropriate infrastructure - water, electricity, gas supply etc. Location in a non-polluted area, in a favourable environment (e.g., playgrounds for children, parks, socialisation facilities, easy access to transportation) and the availability of an economically acceptable house are other elements that define quality housing. Failure to meet these conditions leads to exclusion from housing and eventually to social exclusion.

As far as the Roma are concerned, exclusion from housing is a complex phenomenon with multiple causes. Field data reveal the existence of significant differences as regards housing, both within Roma communities and between Roma communities and the majority population. Differences in the quality of housing are felt by every type of Roma community we researched, no matter how small it may be. According to the rural vs. urban division, we identified various types of exclusion from housing. The most severe types of exclusion from housing are identified in areas where severe poverty is predominant. As shown by field data and by a study carried out in 2005 at the

request of the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Tourism¹, several Roma housing typologies have been identified in rural and urban areas. According to the above-mentioned research and to our field data, we propose the following typology:

1. In rural areas:

- Roma communities that are **isolated** from all points of view (usually severe poverty, affecting invisible communities, i.e. those uncharted by any public authority); houses (or rather shanties) are crude buildings of mud bricks, with no adequate planning. The houses are rickety and on the verge of falling apart. They are built on improper terrain, in most cases highly polluted (garbage dumps or other such locations -e.g. Cetateni - Arges).
- The existence of **para-rural Roma communities**: these communities are part of the commune, but they are always located at the periphery. In these communities, poverty and the lack of economic opportunities characterise the whole community. Roma houses are the poorest possible and are built of poor material such as combinations of mud bricks, straw and bits of wood. The lack of resources prevents people from building new houses. The lack of water, electricity and gas supply has a major impact. Such cases are the Roma communities of Mocesti village (Iordachescu commune, Prahova county), Furesti village (Dobresti commune, Arges county), Ghighideni commune (Galati county).

¹ Centre of Research, Design, Expertise and Consulting - *Houses for the Roma*. Typologies, Research, Stage 1, February 2005.

- The existence of Roma communities in the centre is the result of illegal squatting or the purchase of houses in areas affected by massive migration. Such communities are to be found in Transylvania, in villages from which the Saxon population left in the early 90s. In almost all of these cases, Roma occupation changed these houses for the worse.

2. In urban areas

- First of all, we have **communities residing in the historical centre of the town**: most families live in nationalised houses as squatters, and severe poverty is predominant. Such areas are the product of a measure taken by authorities, who moved Roma families to areas without a clearly defined legal status, which leads to permanent insecurity (e.g., Lipscani - Bucuresti, Dorohoi - Botosani, Tg. Mures - Mures).
- Secondly, there are **urban ghettos**: many such areas grew around deserted areas left after the decommissioning of industrial facilities (after 1989). Most of these areas developed spontaneously, after the forced eviction of Roma families who lost their employment in industry and could not afford to pay for the utilities. Police raids are frequent in these areas; criminality is quite high, and social and economic cohesion is low. Such communities are those established after major industrial facilities closed down: Valea Jiului, Brasov, Energeticienilor - Bucharest, Barlad, Satu Mare, etc.
- **Roma communities at the periphery of towns** - usually a part of the town, but constituting a distinct

administrative unit (as in Pusta Vale, the town of Simleu Silvaniei, Salaj county). Researchers call these communities "town-flanking communities". Many such communities live on garbage dumps, and there may be clear borders (natural or established by the authorities) separating Roma communities from the non-Roma. Such communities are to be found on garbage dumps near cities, on deserted land, and their main source of income is the collection of recyclable waste from the garbage dump (e.g., Valea Rece - Tg. Mures, Pata Rat - Cluj Napoca etc.).

The analysis of patterns of exclusion from housing in the case of urban and rural Roma communities reveals the following trends:

- 1. Very many Roma families are illegal occupants of houses and land**, either because they lack identity papers, which prevents them from proving title to the land, or because of permanent evictions from various other locations. Illegal situations last for many years, as authorities have been unable to find solutions for issuing ownership documents for families who have been living there for a long time. This explains the perpetuation of police abuse and interventions of local public authorities in order to "cleanse" the area.

Many families do not have ownership documents for the land that they occupy, and they live in areas where informal rental is a common practice and over-indebtedness is frequent as far as the payment of utilities is concerned.

- 2. Apart from being illegally occupied, most Roma houses can only be considered shelters with a high degree of**

overcrowding. Most families live together in a very small space - e.g., 5 to 8 persons living in the same room (in almost all of the rural locations researched by the "Impreuna" Agency team).

3. In most cases, **the problem of Roma housing is its inadequacy for proper habitation.** Such housing conditions are unacceptable by society. The quality of housing is deplorable and can be compared to a "humanitarian catastrophe". What makes it even more serious is that such living conditions are considered below the acceptable limits of poverty tolerated by the poor majority population.
4. Many communities in both rural and urban areas are located in areas with **poorly developed or inexistent infrastructure** - areas with a high potential for infection, and which are difficult to rehabilitate by public authorities.

d) Employment

In many cases Roma access to social services is difficult because of their lack of a stable income which would enable them to have an adequate health status, proper education, and decent housing.

The lack of stable financial resources is one of the causes that trigger social exclusion. Stable financial resources would enable many Roma to meet basic needs, but such resources are missing. The lack of financial resources keeps the Roma on permanent stand-by, because whatever money is available is used to ensure survival, not a secure future. Even the income obtained through illegal activities can be considered marginal,

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because such activities may cease.

After 1989 Romania entered an economic crisis which led to chronic poverty among the population. According to World Bank data, in 2004 about 30% of Romanians qualified as poor, and 7% lived in extreme poverty. This economic crisis led to generalised unemployment. We should understand Roma unemployment against the background of generalised poverty. There are certain conditions that maintain the permanent inactivity of the Roma, but unemployment affects almost all social categories in Romania, both in rural and urban areas. In urban areas, ethnic discrimination is more strongly felt than in rural areas. In urban areas, many Roma will resort to quasi-illegal activities, which keeps them in a permanent state of marginalisation, whereas in rural areas agricultural activities are predominant.

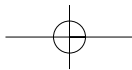
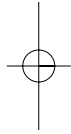
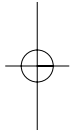
According to field data, most of the Roma are over-represented in informal economy. Because of the lack of economic opportunities in Roma-inhabited areas and of the lack of professional qualifications and identity papers, and owing to widespread prejudice which prevents Roma from obtaining employment, the Roma must resort to all sorts of means to survive.

As shown by RIQL research and by the data collected by our field operators, most of the income sources of Roma communities fall into two categories:

- **formal income sources:** most Roma families receive social benefits, child allowance, pensions (for those Roma who worked in heavy industry or agriculture before 1989), unemployment benefit (extremely

limited, as many Roma never had formal employment, which makes them ineligible); income derived from formal stable employment is a rare occurrence.

- **informal income sources:** the most numerous category, because formal funds are impossible to access. Most Roma families must resort to various marginal activities to obtain income. In urban areas, this may mean the collection of recyclable waste, small businesses (selling flowers, seeds, second-hand products), loading and unloading merchandise, other activities. In rural areas, the range of activities is greatly diminished. In most cases, the Roma must do day work, to do various chores for other community members, to travel to other parts of the country, to collect scrap iron etc.



CHAPTER 3.

I. General recommendations:

1. Strengthening the role of NGOs: the role of NGOs in implementing projects aimed at improving the condition of the Roma must be acknowledged. These organisations are permanently in touch with the needs of Roma communities and have the resources required for putting into practice best practices at all levels. Various forms of Cupertino have often been proposed between public authorities and NGOs, but such partnerships failed to yield any palpable results. Such partnerships concluded strictly on paper should be avoided; what the partners agreed on should be put into practice.

2. The structures involved in the implementation of the Strategy should be made apolitical: there were many cases of excessive political interests affecting the national and local structures supposed to implement the Strategy. The appointment of local representatives in charge of the Strategy is in many cases political. The law forbids local and central public authority representatives to be involved in politics or to find themselves in conflicts of interest. Therefore, we recommend compliance with the law at all levels, and the avoidance of political appointments of local representatives. Political affiliation does not entail competence for a certain position. We believe that the law should be applied impartially and that transparency criteria should be observed in the appointment of local or national representatives.

3. Extensive development of the public-private:

Romania has gone through an economic crisis over the last 15 years, which meant a reduction of resources required for enforcing solutions for poor populations. Most state efforts aiming to improve the condition of the Roma require a significant financial effort from the authorities. Most projects can be carried out in partnership between public authorities and the local private sector, reflecting the needs of the local community in the best possible way. Particularly in the field of housing local authorities already have a good starting point. Most communities already have the necessary skills to be used locally for house building. Public-private partnership does not necessarily mean a partnership between local authorities and private companies: it can also mean a partnership with local Roma communities, in various forms of organisation, based on the premise that these communities have the best understanding of their own problems and that they possess the necessary skills for putting various projects into practice.

4. Including Roma issues in general policies (*mainstreaming*): over the last years there has been a visible attempt at limiting the fields targeted by public authorities when taking measures meant to improve the condition of the Roma. Most of these measures focus of the social field, which enables the state to keep the Roma in a permanent state of "dependency", without giving them the opportunity for self-assertion in society. "Impreuna" Agency believes that the complete inclusion of the Roma in society requires a focusing of the authorities' attention on all fields of activity. We endorse the idea that a process of including Roma issues in the general policies of the Government can only lead to a better common

life in a multi-cultural society capable of accepting all kinds of difference, including ethnic diversity.

5. Re-evaluation of the Strategy and development of a complex system for the monitoring and evaluation of its objectives: almost five years after the adoption of the Strategy, the results did not have the expected effect because the mechanisms were put into practice with no allocation of resources for achieving the objectives. So far there have been very few positive examples; therefore, we need a re-evaluation of the Strategy in order to identify its strengths, its weaknesses, and what is to be done. Currently only the implementation structures have been set up, but a system of ongoing monitoring and evaluation of Strategy objectives has not been put into practice. We need such a system, involving both public authorities and non-governmental organisations, as the latter are much closer to the real needs of the communities.

II. Recommendations concerning distinct areas:

Education

The issue of education has been the subject of constant discussion, and many problems are still present. In many communities there is a tendency to perpetuate and worsen the exclusion pattern visible in education, due to various factors which have been explained above. In many communities we are witnessing an exclusion process due to the lack of conditions enabling fair education, to high dropout rates due to poor education, and to a lack of positive Roma role models which to determine parents to send their children to school.

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As field data have shown, there are at least two types of problems in education: the lack of access to education and the low quality of education. There are also Roma communities who find it difficult to assert their ethnic values, which prevents them from developing self-awareness, asserting their own cultural values, and studying in their own language. This report only deals with the first two problems, those which have to do with access to education. Education is seen as a key element in the assertion of Roma identity, in the acquisition of skills required on the labour market, in personal development and in the development of social relations both within the Roma community and within the Roma and the majority population. Poor education among the Roma may be considered the first link in a chain of exclusion mentioned by many sociologists. The underlying belief stated in this report is that fair access to education precedes the assertion of Roma ethnic values. Therefore, education is considered to be essential in accessing basic social services. Failure to access educational services can be seen as a rejection of the Roma from society.

Consequently, we would like to formulate several recommendations, according to the problems that we have identified:

- **improving access to education:** most barriers to Roma integration come from the lack of access to education. Accessing education has become a problem for many Romanian communities, and the issue of Roma children being excluded from education is even more serious in this wider framework of exclusion. Access to education should be a priority on the public agenda, by the development of a culture of investment

and by breaking free from the welfare pattern: investing in education means investing in future labour force, in the future elite of a multi-cultural society.

- Access to education can only be improved by increasing the attendance of pre-school education. Many families do not send their children to kindergarten either because they lack the necessary resources (clothing, food etc.), or because the cultural pattern of the community does not consider this form of education to be of major importance. In fact, the exclusion pattern and the "vicious circle" of marginalisation and social exclusion starts by failure to attend pre-school education.

Access to education can only be improved by working along two directions: the integration of Roma children in the school system as a whole (mainstream schools) and the involvement of the Roma themselves in the educational process.

A first step towards improving access to education is to provide resources to children coming from extremely poor families. Such supportive measures should not be focused on Roma only, so as to avoid conflicts between communities; support should be given to the children of poor families. The lack of resources is actually the first barrier against access to education; that is why the state should have a "social investment" programme when providing support to Roma children, not a welfare-type support programme. This dependency circle must be broken for good; otherwise, we will be facing a culture of dependency and the quality of teaching will always be low.

Another solution is the integration of Roma in mainstream classes; "special classes" with predominantly Roma students should be banned. The ultimate goal of education is to integrate Roma children in mainstream schools providing them with the same opportunities for intellectual development as available to other children.

- **Enhancing the quality of teaching:** the role of teaching needs strengthening among Romanian Roma. The quality of education has been decreasing over the last years all over the country. Against this background, the Roma population was excluded even more from quality education. Quality education is not limited to the building of schools and the provision of stationery; it also means the participation of the Roma and the way in which they receive education. Then we should focus on the causes that lead to school dropout, particularly starting in grades 5-8. More Roma university students would be a desirable reality, but for the time being we will limit ourselves to recommendations concerning pre-university education. Special focus should be laid on the first years of school, without neglecting later grades.

Curricula should be devised for all levels:

- primary education (grades 1-4):
 - developing extra tuition programmes for children who could not go to kindergarten, so as to make up for gaps separating Roma children from other children (daily snack, special help with homework, stationery);
 - continuing the "Daily Snack" programme for children coming from poor families;

- free stationery and school materials for children coming from low-income families;
- multiplying the educational offer so as to include alternative methods (Step by Step, Waldorf, etc.)
- training Roma school mediators so as to ensure a better representation of Roma children in mainstream schools
- grades 5 to 8:
 - training programs for Roma parents, to raise awareness of the role of education in finding employment
 - school materials for children of low-income Roma families
 - training teaching staff according to alternative methods
 - social (and other types of) support for children on the verge of dropping out of school
- high school (grades 9 to 12):
 - continuing best practices for Roma children wishing to enrol in high school or vocational school;
 - adequate grants for children who go to high school and perform exceptionally;
 - other incentives for Roma high school pupils;
 - training high school pupils as future school mediators and health mediators wishing to go back to their communities and liaise with the majority

- adult education:
 - special focus on civic education programs, to establish a connection between Roma communities and the majority population.
 - Another aspect to be developed in the future - awareness programs for adults, to make them understand the important role played by school. In many cases the Roma refuse to send their children to school either because their cultural pattern does not allow them to keep on investing in education, or because they see no point in sending children to school.

Roma role models who succeeded through education:

Romania has been going through an overall process of social degradation. A series of social categories have had to suffer more due to social exclusion. The lack of role models is also a consequence of individual or collective choices, either due to the cultural pattern of a community (which does not value education highly), or because society provides role models which are not likely to promote education. Most Roma are brought up by their parents according to the idea that success is measured in money and a successful man is one who can support a family. In this context, school has a limited role to play. Therefore, it is urgent that a national plan be implemented in order to promote Roma role models that succeeded due to education. Encouraging such positive models would attract children and allow for a better inclusion of Roma communities.

Healthcare

While Roma access to healthcare can only be understood against the background of decreasing quality of medical services as a whole, an important role in Roma communities is played by access to health-related information and by changes in a lifestyle that now allows for the onset of disease. In many cases medical services are inaccessible to those Roma communities which are not included in the social security system and are geographically isolated. The high cost of medical services and the existence of informal costs are another barrier to accessing basic healthcare services, but they do not affect Roma communities only. This is a national phenomenon that can get extreme in the case of the Roma.

The most serious problem is faced by those communities living in areas with a high risk of infection, which is compounded by the doctors' lack of interest. Most Roma tend to postpone recourse to medical attention and see a doctor only when they need surgery. Health information programs should be developed, so as to make the Roma aware of the risks they face by not treating infectious diseases in an early stage. The culture of "last resort treatment" should be replaced by a culture of prevention. Such prophylactic programmes can only work if health mediators are trained to inform the Roma, if funds are allocated for medical facilities in Roma communities, and if medication is available for treating various diseases etc.

Family planning is another issue. Family planning programmes are already being implemented in Roma communities in order to explain the risks of early pregnancies.

Employment

The availability of employment is an extremely important link in the social inclusion of the Roma. Many families are socially excluded because they have no stable formal employment. Most of the Roma work informally, which keeps them in a constant state of uncertainty. Most income sources are day work, small-scale trade, quasi-illegal activities that do not allow them full involvement in the formal labour market.

Low access to the labour market is due to causes that have to do with the economic system and to the lack of professional qualifications; this enhances the vulnerability of the Roma. Romania has been going through an economic crisis which meant more redundancies, less jobs and less training opportunities. In this general context, the situation of the Roma is quite difficult, because of the lack of formal (many Roma have skills but do not have certification for these skills), discrimination by employers, and the attitude of some Roma community members who refuse to seek jobs because social benefits allow them to maintain their relative passivity.

In this context, we believe that measures are mandatory for revitalising the human resources available in Roma communities. We would like to suggest measures along the following lines:

1. investment in human resource development:

- professional training for adults; most adults lack qualifications required on the labour market and do not have formal certification of their skills. A system must be developed for life-long adult training.

- including young Roma aged 18 to 25 in "Second Chance" educational programs;
- adapting vocational training curricula to the needs of Roma communities;

2. increasing quality and competitiveness on the labour market:

- better and more competitive jobs: according to the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy, by 2010 all European states will have to develop a system for the promotion of competitive quality jobs. Such jobs cannot be created if the Romanian labour market is inflexible, has high social costs and cannot attract actors from the informal market into the formal market.
- Sustainability of jobs: there were many programs for including Roma into the labour market, but after joining the labour market they quit their jobs.
- Supportive measures for employers who hire Roma ethnics: tax incentives for employers who hire Roma would increase acceptance by employers.
- Supporting Roma entrepreneurship: there are very few programmes that support Roma entrepreneurship. Most programmes are based on passive measures of social support, which do not stimulate the Roma to be active on the labour market and to look for new economic opportunities.
- Supporting Centres for the Professional Inclusion of the Roma: a pilot project developed in Bucharest was highly successful, because it focused on the needs of Roma communities. Such inclusion centres can act as

catalysts for Roma inclusion onto the labour market. These centres can develop data bases of Roma job-seekers, they can develop training programmes for the Roma according to the needs and demands of the labour market, they can establish partnerships with public institutions and policy-makers concerned with Roma issues.

3. fighting social exclusion: social exclusion can only be combated by professional reinsertion programs focused on active measures for supporting the Roma, not on passive welfare measures. So far, most social support programmes in Romania focused only on measures that keep the unemployed in a constant state of dependency and unwillingness to get involved. Social support programmes can be improved by developing measures which would compel the Roma to look for a job, transforming them from passive recipients in active seekers of economic opportunities.

Housing

Of all the measures proposed in this report, adequate housing is one of the basic priorities in achieving the social inclusion of the Roma. Various measures can be taken, but the lack of appropriate housing will keep the Roma in a constant state of marginalization and exclusion. Exclusion from housing is the consequence of many causes, some of which are to be found in the specific characteristics of Roma communities, and some of which are the result of economic changes undergone by Romanian society.

Access to housing is a prerequisite for the social and economic integration of individuals. The lack of adequate

housing means exclusion from the social system and above all poverty. As shown by the field data, most Roma in Romania are excluded from housing because they face so many problems related to the quality of houses and the poor infrastructure of the areas they inhabit, and because of the uncertain legal status of the houses and land occupied by the Roma.

Measures should be taken at least along three lines of action, but they must be designed in close inter-relation and in connection with the other types of social services outlined above. The development of programmes for building social houses, the development of regional infrastructure, or the legal status of land and house ownership can only be sorted out in close connection with other types of programmes, particularly those that aim to provide economic opportunities to Roma communities. At least from the standpoint of this report, **housing is closely connected to employment**: you cannot provide housing in the absence of employment opportunities in Roma-inhabited areas.

Therefore, we propose the development of principles for intervention ultimately leading to the existence of adequate housing and responding to the needs of Roma community members:

- **developing the concept of "housing mediator"** enabling Roma communities to solve their problems related to land or house ownership. We saw that almost all Roma communities have no access to information when required to solve their housing-related administrative or legal problems; the existence of a mediator, having good knowledge of community problems and capable of representing the community in relation to public authorities and of helping Roma community members to solve their legal problems, can only be beneficial;

- **all the projects aimed at building or rehabilitating Roma houses can only be achieved by actively involving the Roma.** Previous projects have shown that the best solutions were those in which labour force from within the community was used;
- housing development projects can only be successful if they **take into account the specific characteristics of the area where the Roma community is located.** Each community has its specific characteristics and a certain way of interacting with the rest of the population and with authorities; solutions must be tailored to the specific traits of the community;
- **a non-ethnic housing policy:** many Roma are excluded from housing, but policies must not be developed along ethnic lines, so as not to have perverse effects. Ethnic-based housing policies would lead to the development of Roma-only housing programmes, eventually separating the Roma from the rest of the population and leading to the constitution of ghettos. The ultimate goal of a housing policy is full social integration, not the creation of separate Roma-inhabited areas;
- **settlement of issues related to the legal status of land and houses occupied by the Roma:** most Roma live in constant uncertainty because the authorities refuse to clarify the legal status of the land or houses occupied by the Roma for years. Public authorities have taken extremely superficial measures such as relocating the Roma to their place of origin. But this is another vicious circle, since the local authorities in the places of origin of the Roma are not willing to clarify their legal

status and invoke various technicalities. Most of the Roma are being permanently relocated. Failure to clarify the legal status of houses and land occupied by the Roma maintains a permanent state of tension in the community and makes the Roma unwilling to invest too much in their houses;

- **programmes of investment in Roma community infrastructure:** most communities are located in rural areas which are extremely poor, highly polluted, and lacking any kind of infrastructure to connect them to other communities in neighbouring areas. Solving these problems requires a sustained financial programme allowing for the construction/rehabilitation of local infrastructure (drinking water, electricity, gas, roads etc.). Investments in infrastructure can already be made by using the low-cost labour force available in Roma communities.

The investment programmes targeted both at the quality of housing and at the basic infrastructure of those communities must take into account the existence of an optimal leap: the programme should not provide too great an investment in an extremely poor community, because that community certainly lacks the financial means required to keep the investment working. Investment programmes must be developed so as to take into account existing resources at community level. Most investment programmes targeted at Roma housing led to the houses being deserted or sold because they had been much too expensive for the Roma to maintain.

III. The need to correlate national public measures and international programmes aiming to improve the condition of the Roma

International bodies have lately been undertaking various initiatives for improving the condition of Roma throughout Europe. Special focus is laid on improving the living conditions of the Roma in Eastern Europe, where almost 50% of the members of this ethnic community are concentrated.

The most active actors in the development of an international public policy for the Roma are the World Bank, the Open Society Institute - New York, the European Council, OSCE, and EU.

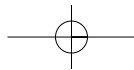
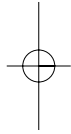
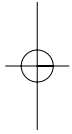
2005 saw the official launching of the **Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015**. Through this joint effort of international actors, each state undertook to elaborate plans of measures for each priority area: education, health, employment and housing. According to the plans of measures developed for each field, each state is monitored by an International Secretariat.

What this report wishes to do is not only to propose a plan of measures for each individual field, but also to develop **a common plan of measures in accordance with the Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma**. The Strategy also envisages the development of a plan of measures for each domain; we believe that a joint approach showing Romania's commitment to improving the condition of the Roma would be welcome.

Through the financial support instruments made available

to candidate countries (PHARE), EU laid the foundations of a **multi-annual Phare programme** (2004-2006) with a special component for the Roma. It identifies the main lines of intervention: investment in education, training programmes for Roma organisations to enable them to access structural funds and grant schemes for projects in the fields of employment, housing etc.

It would be useful for Romanian public authorities to develop a similar programme, with adequate resources, **focusing on the other areas identified in the Strategy.** Much has been invested in education, professional training, or employment, but little has been done in administration and public order, justice etc. By developing programmes such as Phare 2004-2006, Romanian authorities prove their willingness to support the assertion of Roma in the public arena.



CHAPTER 4.

The outlook of public policier for improving the condition of the Roma

1. The Romanian Government's Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma

The main public policy paper in this field is the *Romanian Government's Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma*¹, the first government initiative with a comprehensive approach of Roma issues.

The elaboration of this Strategy is undoubtedly the result of Cupertino between governmental structures and the non-governmental organisations of the Roma, with the significant support of international institutions, in particular the EU.

Included among other political criteria for accession, the Strategy is one of commitments undertaken by Romania as part of the negotiation process. The *2001 Accession Partnership* requires that "adequate financial support and administrative capacity should be provided for the implementation of the *Romanian Government's Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma*", and the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire

1 Governmental Decision 430/April/2001, 25 April 2001, published in the Official Journal no. 252, 16 May 2001.

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includes as a short-term priority the improvement of the economic and social condition of Roma communities, by the entry into force of the Master Plan of Measures included in the *Romanian Government's Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma*; on the medium term, it stresses the need to improve the social and economic condition of the Roma in Romania by the implementation of social, educational and healthcare projects and programmes, according to the Master Plan of Measures.

The basic elements for improving the condition of the Roma are the following:

- Sector and partnership-based approach of Roma options / priorities, by including, funding and multiplying such projects as part of public policies at central/local level, according to the specific traits of communities; in order to achieve social solidarity and harmonisation of public space up to European standards.
- Starting initiatives meant to synthesise traditional identities with modern trends, to match occupational and development opportunities to existing human resources; capitalising on traditional Roma crafts and adapting them to the demands of the modern market.
- Establishing public institutions for the formation/representation of identities / communities; community development; communication networks; opportunities for dialogue, information, advice, expertise, support, preventing and fighting discrimination against the Roma, in order to establish communication and Cupertino with local and central institutions; involving the Roma in decision-making and empowering

communities to improve their own living conditions.

The Government Strategy was adopted through a Government Decision.

The *Strategy* outlines a number of guiding principles:

- the principle of consensuality, defined as "a joint effort of the Government and Roma representative organisations";
- the principle of sector utility, which requires measures that answer specific needs felt by the Roma community;
- the principle of "sectoral distribution", whereby various bodies are assigned various tasks in accordance with their areas of competence;
- the principle of decentralisation, whereby local public institutions are assigned specific tasks;
- the principle of identity differentiation, which ensure the right of the Roma to assert and protect their minority identity;
- the principle of equality, which states that the measures devised to protect the Roma must not put other groups at a disadvantage.²

The *Strategy* identifies 10 priority fields of action: *community development and public administration, housing, social security, healthcare, economic, justice and public order, child welfare, education, culture and religious affairs, communication and civic involvement.*³

² Government Strategy, Chapter I.

³ See the *Government Strategy for Improving the Condition of the Roma*, HG 430/April/2001, Chapter VII, Lines of action.

The Government Strategy combines the two perspectives of Roma issues: discrimination and poverty. This is obvious in the development of each line of action and in the Master Plan of Measures which includes measures for fighting discrimination and poverty.

2. The National Plan for Fighting Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion (the Anti-Poverty Plan)

The new millennium brought about a series of laws meant to strengthen the role of social policies: Law 416/2001 on the Minimum Guaranteed Income (in force since 1 January 2002), Law 705/2001 on the National Social Support System (in force since 1 January 2002), Law 116/2002 on preventing and fighting social marginalisation.

A highly significant moment is the establishment in April 2001 of the Government Committee for Fighting Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion, which elaborated the Anti-Poverty Plan approved under Governmental Decision 829/2002. This complex document is "a social construction programme along the lines of European social construction"⁴, and is based on a series of principles such as social *solidarity*, *activation*, *ownership*, *accountability*, *social economy*, *social support as a tool for social inclusion*, *partnership*, *involvement* etc.

Chapter 14 of the Anti-Poverty deals with the reduction of poverty and social exclusion of the Roma. The programme aims to strengthen community involvement in the economic, social,

4 H.G. 829/2002, National Plan for Fighting Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion

educational and political life of Romanian society, and to improve access to healthcare services.

As in the case of the Government Strategy, the philosophy underlying the Anti-Poverty Plan aims to activate and stimulate accountability and ownership within Roma communities, as a basic element of intervention.

3. 2005 Plan of Priority Measures for European Integration

Another public policy paper is the Ministry of European Integration 2005 Plan of Priority Measures for European Integration. It contains public policy elements meant to improve the condition of the Roma. These elements can also be found in the Strategy, and their implementation is delayed to a great extent.

This paper is also based on the two perspectives: fighting discrimination and fighting poverty. The central focus is on facilitating access to professional qualification and employment.

4. The Joint Inclusion Memorandum

The Joint Inclusion Memorandum contains a number of references to the Roma. This document approaches social inequality and poverty and deals less with discrimination.

Roma involvement in the labour market is approached in relation to the considerable lack of professional qualifications, which combined with discrimination constitutes major barriers to Roma access to the labour market. Among high-risk groups exposed to poverty, the Roma are identified as being part of the

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extreme poverty bracket. The Strategy is mentioned in this context, but it has not been supported by sufficient resources allowing for the effective implementation of its measures.

Difficult access to healthcare is another field in which the Roma are mentioned; they are not registered with family doctors, particularly in rural areas.

The education of Roma children is a field in permanent change; more and more children are included in secondary and higher education. Functional illiteracy remains a problem, as more than one third of the Roma are in this situation; school dropout is also a factor. Apart from the high rate of non-attendance, there is a significant polarisation in terms of the education provided. As a result of residential segregation, the schools attended by Roma children and other poor children have lower-quality teaching staff and learning conditions.

As far as housing is concerned, overcrowding is a serious problem affecting the Roma population. The number of inhabitants per Roma houses exceeds two times the national average. Access to modern facilities and to slow-moving consumer goods is just a dream in many Roma communities.

The Roma are considered to be one of the groups at high risk of poverty, exclusion and marginalisation, as a result of chronic development gaps, strengthened by discriminatory attitudes. Roma communities are facing multiple deficits that compound one another: lack of housing, improper living conditions, precarious health status, low educational level, lack of professional qualification and experience. The vicious circle of poverty can only be broken by the implementation of coherent social policies.

The Memorandum lists several key challenges to improving the living conditions of the Roma:

- *"Developing economic opportunities and creating job opportunities;*
- *Improving access to all levels of education, as well as access to compulsory education for the younger generations;*
- *Identifying and granting arable land in rural areas and land for house building, either traditional or modern;*
- *Ensuring full access to primary healthcare;*
- *Fighting all forms of discrimination against the Roma in all sectors (employment, access to public services etc.) and promoting a supportive collective attitude."*

The Memorandum identifies *difficulties* in the implementation of national and local strategies and programmes meant to improve the condition of the Roma:

- *"Limitation of available financial resources;*
- *The institutions and skills required by such a program are still in an inceptive stage".*

The priorities for action identified by the Memorandum are similar to those in the Strategy and in the other papers: identity papers, extended school attendance, employment, access to social and healthcare services, development of community infrastructure, access to modern housing, development of local partnerships, awareness campaigns, rehabilitation of Roma self-image, fighting discrimination, promoting a supportive collective attitude.

5. The Decade of Roma Inclusion

This is an initiative adopted by eight Central and Eastern European countries with the support of the international community; this is the first such collaborative effort meant to improve the condition of the Roma. The Decade is a political decision to reduce disparities in economic and human development and to break the vicious circle of poverty. Policy co-ordination and transparency at European level is expected. Each country involved is developing a national action plan with clearly defined objectives and quantifiable indicators of success.

The Decade is supported by the Open Society Institute, the World Bank, the European Commission, UNDP, OSCE, European Council, EBRD.

The core value of the Decade is Roma involvement. Roma representatives and Egos should be involved in all the stages of the programme, including the capacity of Steering Committee members.

The Decade areas are *education, healthcare, employment and housing*. Three cross-domains have been identified: *poverty, discrimination, and gender issues*.

The following *education priorities* have been identified:

- ensuring Roma access to compulsory education;
- improving the quality of education;
- implementing integration and desegregation programmes;
- expanding access to pre-school education;

- improving access to post-secondary education and to adult education.

The priorities identified in the field of *employment* are the following:

- improving opportunities through education and vocational training;
- expanding involvement in the labour market through active measures;
- improving information about the labour market;
- reforming employment services.

Healthcare priorities:

- access to healthcare;
- improving data bases on the health status of the Roma;
- increased inclusion of Roma in healthcare services;
- improving the health status in vulnerable communities.

Housing priorities:

- approaching discrimination in access to housing;
- improving living conditions in Roma communities;
- expanding access to housing.

6. Roma Education Fund

REF is a structure that will contribute to diminishing the gap separating Roma and non-Roma in terms of education; it will contribute to ensuring equal access to quality education and to the desegregation of educational systems. REF has been

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operational since 2005 and relies on funding in amount of 30 million USD, most of which has been donated by George Soros, one of the initiators of this fund.

The Fund will act along the following *lines*:

- supporting ideas, projects, and programmes for improving the school performance of the Roma, in the context of the Decade of Roma Inclusion;
- construes "education" in broad terms, so as to include both formal and vocational education for children and adults;
- it operates as a financial instrument, not as an implementing agency;
- it makes available and seeks funding;
- it keeps the balance between beneficiary countries;
- it supports activities that respect and include the will of the Roma;
- it establishes a simple and quick funding process;
- it is an *advocacy forum*;
- it pools relevant information in the field.

As can be seen, the two international initiatives are complementary, as education is seen as a central pillar for improving the condition of the Roma, with a long-term sustainable impact. Even if the main aim of the Decade is to break the vicious circle of poverty, the measures and topics underlying the main areas, i.e. anti-discrimination and gender mainstreaming, will restore the balance between the two perspectives: fighting poverty and fighting discrimination.

Actually, progress can be ensured only by a complementary approach, with the direct involvement of Roma community members. For the time being, public policies meant to improve the condition of the Roma did not succeed in ensuring their participation. This element must be understood at all decision-making levels and in the implementation structure of Roma-related policies, from bottom to top. Supporting Roma civil society is a self-evident necessity.

7. The Millennium Development Goals

In 2000, 191 countries signed in New York the UN Millennium Statement. This document reasserts the commitment of the international community to the fundamental values of humankind - *freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature* - and emphasises the importance of solving grave problems related to peace, respect for human rights, sustainable development, protection of the environment.

The Millennium Statement is the starting point of the *Millennium Development Goals*, which synthesise the goals to be achieved by 2015:

- eradicating extreme poverty and hunger
- universal access to primary education
- promoting gender equality and empowering women
- reducing child mortality
- improving the health status of mothers
- preventing HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

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- ensuring a sustainable development
- establishing global partnerships for development

In this context, minority protection and improving living conditions constitute significant elements.

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Locații incluse în cercetare

