

Do “National Roma Integration Strategies: a first step in the implementation of the EU Framework”¹ achieve goals in Housing of Roma in Hungary?

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Introduction

The Roma are the largest minority in Europe, estimated at about 10-12 million people, although exact population data is unobtainable and official and unofficial estimates for each country vary. Numerous of academic and non-academic writings have been presented and published since the Roma appeared in sizable groups in Europe in the XIII-XIV centuries (for example/ e.g. Hancock 2002, Liegeois 2007, Fraser 1992). These writing are mostly about the Roma in historical, cultural, anthropological, sociological and linguistic, and sometimes political approaches. The common feature of these writings is that they focus on the past and want to establish facts, such as origin, historical heritage, travel, language, customs and culture. As a consequence, they focus more on differences than on consistencies, and have at least one feature in common: most Roma are poor, living in ghetto-like marginalised communities, strikingly underrepresented in well-paid jobs, higher-education and do not have access to the formal political decision making processes. Until 2003, although some local or national affirmative actions were held for example in Hungary, or Romania, Slovakia and Bulgaria, mostly in primary education, but a complex and global, European level initiative was still missing.

The Decade of Roma Inclusion

In 2003 George Soros from Open Society Institute and James David Wolfensohn from The World Bank, the European Union, with the partnership of the Hungarian prime minister, Peter Medgyessy, organised an international conference “*Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future*” in Budapest.² The aim of the conference was to gather Romani and state governmental leaders, high-level politicians from European countries which have significant Roma populations, and other international leaders, to address the need for Roma inclusion in policymaking processes. Several sessions were held on the fight against discrimination, improved housing and infrastructure in Roma communities, health, education, employment and as well as in relation to the cross-cutting issues of

¹ Brussels, 21.5.2012, COM(2012) 226 final downloaded: 10 July 2017.

² The conferences had a pre-session day 29 June 2003, what focused on Roma Women equity and participation and involvement in Roma integration and democracy

anti-discrimination, gender equality, and poverty reduction. In the final assembly in the Hungarian Parliament, the representatives of the governments of Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovakia declared their engagement in the "Decade of Roma Inclusion," which aimed to provide a framework for governments to set their own goals for Roma integration".³ The next step of the initiative was to elaborate the national action plans by the involvement of Roma experts, young Roma leaders, and governmental officers, high-level representatives, such as state secretaries, ministers and expert of international organisations and institutions, such as United Nations, European Union, Council of Europe, Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe, etc. In order to assist the national working groups, Open Society Institute and the World Bank established the Decade Trust Fund to cover moderate expenses of these meetings. In addition, the International Steering Committee was initiated in this process to coordinate the cooperative work of representatives of governments, Roma organisations, international donors, and other international organisations. The National Action Plans consisted of measures and expenditures intended to serve the Decade of Roma Inclusion.⁴ The aim of the National Action Plans were to close the gap between Roma and non-Roma in these aspects. Later more countries, such as Croatia and Spain, Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina joined the Decade.⁵

Thus the Decade of Roma Inclusion (DRI) was initiated in 2003 and launched on 2 February 2005. What and how the Roma Decade achieved or is still waiting to achieve, is the subject of several reports and essays which I do not intend to repeat here.⁶ Instead, I will focus specifically on the European Roma Strategy Framework, a policy introduced in 2011 in accordance with the EU 2020 goals and priorities, which are based on the aims of the DRI.⁷ This includes the fight against poverty and social exclusion,

³ <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/press-releases/governments-endorse-decade-roma-inclusion>

⁴ <http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/decade-of-roma-inclusion--progress-report.html> downloaded 24 July 2017

⁵ 12 countries participating in Decade of Roma Inclusion: Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Montenegro, Macedonia, Slovakia, Serbia, and Spain.

⁶ UNDP report <http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/roma/decade-of-roma-inclusion--progress-report.html> downloaded 24 July 2017, Bernard Rorke - <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/bernard-rorke/end-of-decade-what-happened-to-roma-inclusion>, Bernard Rorke, Margareta Matache, Eben Friedman, 2015: A lost decade – reflection on Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 <http://healthrights.mk/healthrightsmk/pdf/Publikaciji/Zdravje%20na%20malcinskite%20grupi/2015/A%20Lost%20Decade.pdf>

⁷ EU 2020 goals are: increasing employment, research and development, and educational level, decreasing climate change and energy dependence, poverty and social exclusion. Roma Framework priorities are based on Decade priorities: employment, education, health and housing. https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/european-semester/framework/europe-2020-strategy_en

raising employment levels, and reducing school drop-out while increasing attendance in tertiary education.

European Union and the National Roma Integration Strategies

In 2011, the European Commission recognised that the legislation alone is not sufficient to facilitate the inclusion and Roma and so designed a European Roma Strategy Framework in order to persuade member states to implement national strategies with short, medium and long term objectives. The integration and policy measurements were intended to address the main problems of the Roma: education, housing, employment and health.

The European Union budget is 1,087,192 million Euro between 2014 and 2020.⁸ They declared that some of this money, specifically the Structural Funds, could be a powerful tool to improve the socio-economic situation of disadvantaged groups such as Roma. The amount aimed to assist Roma is unknown, but €26.5 billion was targeted within the field of social inclusion for the 2007-2013 period. As the European Union's budget increases period by period, it is assumable that the budget to co-finance measures increases as well.⁹

Using these funds and prompted by the European Roma Strategy, by June 2011 all member states had to present their National Roma Strategy, except Malta. Malta declared that has no Roma inhabitants.¹⁰

Overall Strategies for Meeting Housing Goals in Hungary

Despite these large-scale policies and interventions to support Roma, there are huge barriers to achieving social inclusion. My doctoral research looks closely at housing in Hungary and how Roma struggle to access adequate and safe housing compared to the non-Roma population. Since the 1990s political change, several short, mid-, and long term measurements and strategies has appeared in Hungary.¹¹ These strategies focused on the above mentioned fields, however the balance and priority order was somehow on education and employment, rather than housing.

The first housing program for Roma in Hungary started in 2006, co-ordinated by the State Secretariat responsible for Roma. The programme intended to reduce segregation by terminating Roma slums outside of the nearby settlements. Between 2006 and 2009, the program reached 37 settlements with

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/budget/mff/figures/index_en.cfm. Downloaded 23 Jul. 17

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/budget/figures/fin_fw0713/fw0713_en.cfm Downloaded 23 Jul. 17

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_country_factsheets_2014/malta_en.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.asz.hu/storage/files/files/Szakmai%20kutat%C3%A1s/2008/t206.pdf>

an estimated spend of 11 million Euro.¹² Another study claims that 47 settlements were reached and the amount was around 13-14 million Euro.¹³

In the autumn of 2011, a national census was held in Hungary which showed that the Roma population increased in the last decade: it was around 205.000 in 2001 and more than 315.000 in 2011.¹⁴ What is interesting in the census nationality question is that more than 1.3 million people did not answer for it. The census data also showed large amounts of segregated settlements, where undereducated, unemployed and mostly Roma population live, with this segregated population representing 2.8% of Hungary's inhabitants. The national population census and its result on minorities, especially the increased number of Roma citizens, put pressure on the Hungarian government and the European Union, to elaborate and dedicate direct actions and programs for Roma inclusion.

In 2011 Hungary, in accordance with the European Roma Strategy, launched its National Strategy for Social Inclusion and its two year governmental implementation action plan. The first housing program was the TÁMOP 5.3.6 11/1 Complex Roma settlement housing program¹⁵. The program was implemented by 55 settlements with total support of 27 million Euros over four years.¹⁶ A new period of European Union funding started in 2014. In order to meet the objectives of the EU 2020, Hungary prepared 10 operational programmes. All programmes were accepted and approved by the EU Commission. Hungary's Partnership Agreement was published in 15 August 2014.¹⁷ In 2016, the National Strategy for Social Inclusion 2.0, in the accordance with the EU 2020 objectives decreasing poverty, rural and local segregation, launched two new call for proposals *EFOP 1.6.2 and 2.4.1*¹⁸ for rural segregated settlements (no towns and cities). The program aims to decrease the segregation, and improve housing and access to public services in 110 settlements.¹⁹

¹² p. 9-10 in Esettanulmány – A romák lakóhelyi szegregációja elleni küzdelem, Magyarország ISBN: 978-92-9192-579-7, October 2009

¹³ p. 41-42 in Inclusion – Housing <http://www.romagov.hu/en/download/lakhatasi-strategia/?wpdmdl=646>

¹⁴ The fact is that the questionnaire of the census allowed the person to select two nationalities, and also cultural-linguistic connection. So now someone could tell he/she is Hungarian and Roma as well. Before, in 2001 census only one answer on nationality was accepted.

http://www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/tablak_nemzetiseg - Hungarian Central Statistical Office

¹⁵ TÁMOP: Social Renewal Operational Programme. Roma settlement

¹⁶ 1 Euro~300 HUF

¹⁷ https://www.palyazat.gov.hu/szechenyi_2020

¹⁸ EFOP: Human Resource Development Operational Programme – it is a 2,6 billion Euro European fund for Hungary between 2014-2020.

¹⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/programmes/2014-2020/hungary/2014hu05m2op001,
<https://www.palyazat.gov.hu/efop-162-16-szegreglt-lehelyzetek-felszmolsa-komplex-programokkal-esza>,
<https://www.palyazat.gov.hu/efop-241-szegreglt-lehelyzetek-felszmolsa-komplex-programokkal-erfa>

What this means is that every 7th segregated settlement will have the chance to improve their living conditions and access to public services in the next period. The estimated budget of the two proposals is 150 million Euros. The towns and cities have different funds from rural areas, coming from the *Területfejlesztési Operatív Program* – Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme, to develop deprived urban areas.²⁰ The fund available for this programme is approximately 150 million Euro as well. Both programmes intend to increase local employment capacities and improved labour access, alongside their housing targets. The local authorities and applicants are supported by a team of 100 experts who provide information and good in preparation and implementation of the resident projects.

These initiatives demonstrate that Hungary has a 10-11 year experience in Roma housing, with good and bad results. We may assume that after the experimental time between 2006-2010, and the second phase between 2011 and 2015, that the current programme will impact 110 rural and 80 urban areas to improve living conditions. Human resources, funds and political commitment all appear to have come together. The initial question of whether National Roma Integration Strategies have achieved the goals in Housing of Roma in Hungary is too early to definitively answer. However the fact that already more applications are going to be approved than was indicated, could make us optimistic.²¹

Summary

It is clear from the policies and initiatives described above that the European Union and Hungary (alongside other countries) agree that the involvement of Roma in the European economy is important. Indeed, World Bank research has emphasised that economic integration of the Roma will contribute to social cohesion, and increase the GDP of all states.²² However, such involvement is not

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/programmes/2014-2020/hungary/2014hu16m2op001 The total OP budget is 3,9 billion Euros.

²¹ http://emir.palyazat.gov.hu/nd/kozvel/?link=eupr_eljarasrendi&sc=1&ml=3&sr=40&offset=8&id_op=1384&id_tamogatascel=1444&id_paly_tip=3300

²² p. 2-3 in An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020, Brussels, 5.4.2011, "According to a recent research by the World Bank, for instance, full Roma integration in the labour market could bring economic benefits estimated to be around € 0.5 billion annually for some countries. Greater participation of Roma in the labour market would improve economic productivity, reduce government payments for social assistance and increase revenue from income taxes. According to the same World Bank study, the tax benefits of Roma integration in the labour market are estimated to be around € 175 million annually per country. All of these important economic and financial consequences of Roma integration could in turn foster a climate of greater openness to the Roma people with the general public and thereby contribute to their smooth integration in the communities of which they are part of" <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52011DC0173>

possible without developing the living conditions of Roma. Housing is one key factor, employment is another, education is one too, and health as well – it is problematic to separate these out when considering Roma inclusion. More action is needed to solve all problems of Roma, including housing and segregation, as my research has indicated. I know that my research is focusing on a small tip of the iceberg, but it represents a step towards progress on Roma inclusion.

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