

Marginalized Minorities in Higher Education in Spain: Policies and Practice

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The report is composed of two briefing papers, one on social dimension of Spanish higher education system authored by Stela Garaz, PhD, Program and Studies Officer at Roma Education Fund, and another on Spanish Roma’s access to higher education authored by Ilona Notar, Roma student from Hungary studying in the 1st year of PhD program at the Doctoral School of Education, University of Pecs and Roma Education Fund scholarship beneficiary. The briefing papers are based on interviews and documentary analysis conducted between September 16th and October 15th, 2015 in Seville, during the secondment of Roma Education Fund representatives at the University of Seville.

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Summary points:

- There are no affirmative action practices in Spanish higher education system targeting Roma or any other ethnic group. Quota system is only available for adult students and for students with disabilities.
- Despite the increase in ratios of the population with higher education in Spain over time, access remains reduced for several categories of disadvantaged groups, including migrants and children with working class parents or with parents with low levels of formal education.
- However, the most underrepresented group in higher education is the Roma community, with only 2% of Roma having higher education degrees, compared to about 32% in the total population.
- The reasons for the low representation of Roma in higher education include poverty and unemployment faced disproportionately higher by Roma communities in Spain, relatively lower completion rates of secondary education among Roma, as well as lack of information about enrolment and education process at tertiary level or benefits of higher education.
- The Spanish higher education system has put in place several possibilities for alternative access routes to higher education, including recognition of work experience as substitute for an upper secondary school diploma, and special examination system for adult university applicants who have not completed upper secondary school. Some of these practices could certainly inspire future reforms in higher education in Eastern Europe, where alternative routes to higher education are still relatively rare.
- The existence of part-time studies, distance learning, as well as the lack of restrictions on employment for students, also help students from socio-economically difficult backgrounds in Spain to study in higher education.
- However, what does constitute a barrier in studying in higher education in Spain is the financial cost associated with university studies, specifically in the context of the economic recession in the last years. About 70% of students in Spain pay tuition fees and only around 26% receive financial support. While tuition fee amounts are relatively low compared to median wages, the economic recession has resulted in high unemployment rates and in a decrease in families' incomes, making these amounts significant for the most vulnerable part of the population.
- For Roma these financial implications constitute a particularly significant barrier, keeping in mind that the Roma population face high unemployment rates and even when employed are in relatively low skilled jobs with lowest wages.

Briefing Paper 1

Social Dimension of Higher Education in Spain: Policies and Practice

Author:

Stela Garaz

Program and Studies Officer at Roma Education Fund, Hungary

[\(sgaraz@romaeducationfund.org\)](mailto:sgaraz@romaeducationfund.org)

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Introduction

For a long time, higher education has been accessible only to a few. But during the 20th century and notably starting with the 1960s the number of people enrolling in universities expanded. By 2012 in the OECD countries 40% of adults aged between 25 and 34 attained higher education (OECD 2014). This expansion naturally led to the increase in access to higher education for the socio-economically disadvantaged population, with growing ratios of female, minority, and working-class background students enrolling in universities. Both individuals and societies are believed to benefit from higher education expansion, since there is evidence suggesting that university graduates have better chances on the job market than those without university degrees; they also tend to be more active citizens, participate more in elections, live longer, be more satisfied with their lives, as well as trigger more human capital and productivity development for society in general (O'Carroll et. al. 2006, OECD 2013).

Despite the increased access to higher education, socio-economically disadvantaged groups are still underrepresented and they have the relatively lowest ratios of higher education graduates within their own groups (Altbach et. al. 2010). There are various barriers preventing socio-economically disadvantaged groups to access higher education. The costs associated with higher education, the uneven completion of secondary education, as well as the lack of family role models and mentoring for potential first generation students are among the most important barriers (Altbach et. al. 2009, Archer et. al.2005). Although most European countries have formal policies aimed at opening the access to higher education for the disadvantaged communities, the shape of these policies as well as their success in diversifying the socio-economic background of the student population differ significantly. This is why the social dimension of higher education is one of the main pillars of the Bologna process, which is a process of cooperation among European countries with the aim to strengthening the European higher education and to ensuring comparability in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications¹. Within the framework of the Bologna process, European countries agreed that the student body entering, participating, and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of their population (EHEA London Communique, 2007).

The aim of this briefing paper is to analyze the policies and practices through which the Spanish system of higher education facilitates the access to it for socio-economically disadvantaged population. The Spanish case is particularly important for analyzing the social dimension of higher education from the perspective of this project because it is the country with the second largest Roma minority in Europe. Since Roma are among the most marginalized and socio-economically deprived ethnic groups in Europe (European Commission, 2014), it is both relevant and important to analyze the degree to which the higher education system in Spain considers the social dimension. The access to higher education for Roma is crucial for the formation of a critical mass of Roma highly educated elite. The formation of such elite is critical in the effort of improving the situation of Roma communities in Europe, since highly educated Roma constitute a valuable social capital and role models for their communities, as well as stereotype breakers for the mainstream population.

Unlike in some countries of Eastern and South Eastern Europe with large Roma communities, in Spain there is no affirmative action policy or program targeting Roma or any other ethnic group. However, this does not necessarily mean that Roma access to higher education in Spain is hindered since ethnicity based affirmative action policies are not the only available tool governments can implement for widening participation. Theoretically a higher education system that does not implement affirmative action for

¹ Detailed information about the Bologna process can be accessed at <http://www.ehea.info>

Roma, but that implements comprehensive policy measures for widening access for socio-economically disadvantaged students, and/or for first generation students, and/or for students whose parents are blue collar workers, and/or for students coming from regions facing economic and social deprivation, etc., may constitute effective alternatives. Therefore, the focus of this briefing paper is precisely on analyzing the existing policy alternatives in Spain and their potential in widening participation implicitly for Roma.

The paper is structured in three sections. The first section analyses the representation of socio-economically disadvantaged groups in higher education in Spain based on available statistical data, with the goal to determine which groups are underrepresented and what the extent of their under-representation is. The second section describes the access to higher education in Spain in terms of the available entry routes and flexibility of studies. The third section focuses on the financial costs of higher education in Spain and the existing financial support schemes. The concluding section summarizes the findings.

1. Disadvantaged groups and their Representation in Higher Education in Spain

Generally speaking, the attainment rate of higher education in Spain is close to the average in other EU countries or to the non-EU developed countries. According to the data collected in 2012 by OECD, within the total population of Spain aged between 25 and 64 the ratio of those who attained higher education was 32%, similar to the OECD average (32%) and slightly higher than the average for EU-21 region² (30%). Among the EU-21 countries, ten had respective ratios smaller than in Spain (OECD 2014, p. 44). The fact that the ratio of the population who attained higher education is even higher among the youngest cohorts (i.e. 39% for the population aged between 25 and 34) suggests that the tendency is towards having more and more individuals with higher education degrees in Spain (OECD 2014). But to what extent do the disadvantaged social groups benefit from this expansion of higher education? Are they fairly represented in the total student population? These are the questions that this section seeks to address.

In order to improve the access to higher education, countries should first be aware of the social groups that are underrepresented. For this, there should be a mechanism for systematic data collection on the social composition of the student body. According to the 2015 Spanish Report for Bologna Process implementation, the Spanish Ministry of Education has such a mechanism in place, obliging higher education institutions to participate in a systematic monitoring of the composition of the student body. Within this mechanism, Spanish universities collect figures on students' age, gender, type and level of qualification achieved prior to entering higher education, and since recently also on socio-economic background. At the same time, the Ministry does not require universities to collect data on students' ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious minority status, on religion, on the migrant status (migrants or migrants' children), on labor market status, or on students' disabilities (European Higher Education Area 2015). Therefore, the data presented below are retrieved both from available national reports and from international surveys.

² OECD defines EU-21 region as the region composed of All EU countries prior to the accession of the 10 candidate countries on 1 May 2004, plus the four eastern European member countries of the OECD, namely Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovak Republic. (<https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=7020>)

1.1. Roma minorities

Throughout the centuries, Spain evolved as a nation composed of diverse autonomous regions with different cultural and historical heritages. Nowadays the largest regions in Spain, according to the number of inhabitants, are Andalusia and Catalonia, but there are others like Madrid, Castilla-León, Castilla-La Mancha, Basque Country, Comunidad Valenciana, Aragón, Galicia, Extremadura, etc.

Roma people entered the country in the 15th century and although they have been prosecuted and marginalized as an ethnic group along the history, the current Constitution does not formally permit their discrimination. Traditionally, Roma have lived in some regions more than in others. This is the case of Andalusia where Roma people is estimated to be close to 300.000 people. Other regions with large Roma communities are Catalonia (80.000 people estimated) and Comunidad Valenciana (65.000 estimated).

Though stereotypes among the different regional communities or groups (Andalusians, Basques, Catalans, Galicians and others) persist, normally in a negative or pejorative sense, from all these groups the only one perceived as being socio-economically marginalized is Roma (Gitanos), as the monitoring documents on ethnic minorities in Spain published by Council of Europe suggest (Council of Europe 2010 and 2014).

In Spain universities do not collect data concerning students' ethnic affiliation, therefore there is no official statistics revealing the access to higher education for various ethnic groups living in Spain. Respectively, very little information exists concerning higher education level attainment among Roma. The 2010 Action Plan mentions an estimation of 200 Roma with higher education degrees in Spain. If correct, this estimate would imply that less than 0.5% of Roma population in Spain had higher education by the time the estimate was calculated. To put this figure in perspective, among the total population of Spain aged between 25 and 64 years old, 32% graduated at least the first cycle of higher education (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014). The 2010 Action Plan also specifies that in the 2014-2015 academic year among the 1,462,771 university students there were not even 1,000 Roma students, while in terms of percentage of Roma population in Spain this number should have been 28,468 (Action Plan 2010-2012).

Another estimate for the attainment of higher education among Roma is included in the Spanish progress report from 2013 for the Decade for Roma Inclusion. The Report mentions that there is a significant difference in post-compulsory education attainments between Roma and the general population in Spain within the age group between 20 and 24, with only 8.9% of Roma having completed upper secondary or vocational education compared to 40% among the general population. At the same time, the report mentions that only 2.2% of Roma in the respective age group completed higher education, compared to 22% among the general population (Decade for Roma Inclusion, 2013). Hence, Roma in Spain constitute a particularly underrepresented ethnic group in the Spanish higher education system.

1.2. Students with migrant background

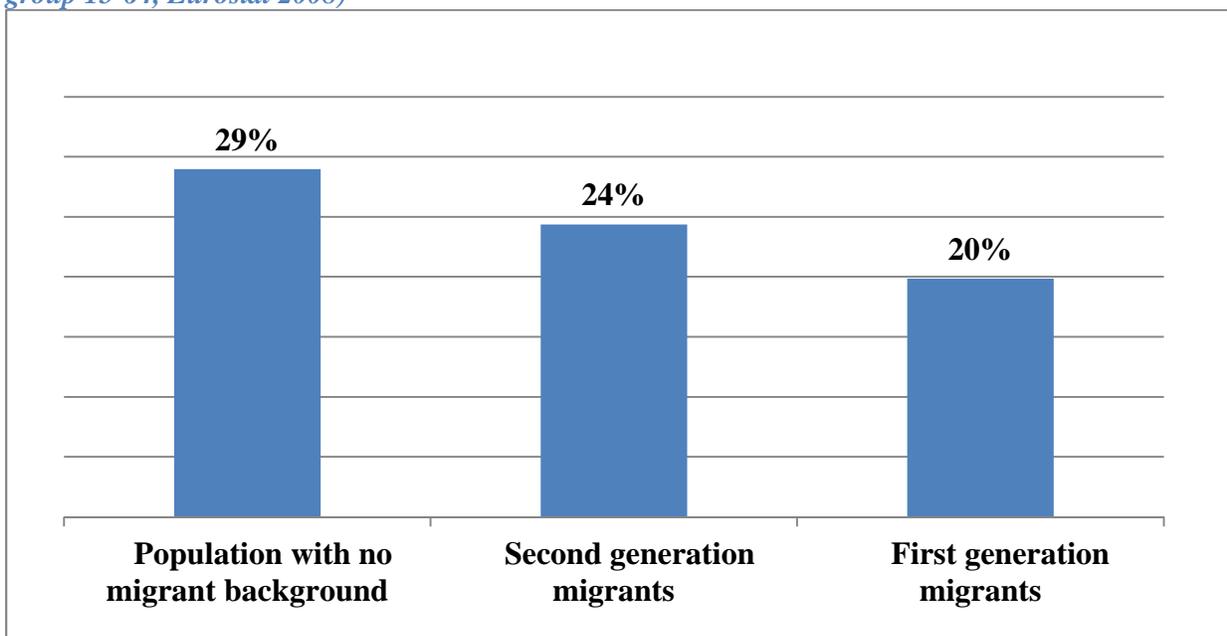
In the case of Spain, it is also relevant to analyze the representativeness of students with migrant background in higher education, because migrants constitute a significant part of the Spanish population and are also one of the potentially disadvantaged social groups in Spain. Data show that both first and

second generation migrants may experience significant labor market and educational difficulties compared to people with native-born parents (Eurostat 2011, p. 121).

According to Eurostat statistics, by 2008 within the population of Spain aged between 15 and 64 the first and second generation of migrants constituted 17% of the total population: 1% - second generation migrants and 16% - first generation migrants. Within both groups, over half have non-EU migration background. Among those with non-EU migration background, over half come from medium and low human development index countries (Eurostat 2008)³. The top three countries from which migrants come to Spain are Romania, Morocco, and Ecuador (Eurostat 2011, p. 28).

The available data on higher education attainment among 1st and 2nd generation immigrants in Spain reveal that generally the ratio of immigrants who attained higher education is lower than the ratio of the population with non-immigrant background who attained higher education. Figure 1 illustrates these discrepancies. The ratio of higher education attainment among first generation migrants is lower than among second generation migrants. This confirms the expectation that migrants tend to have a relatively lower access to higher education in comparison to the non-migrant population.

Figure 1. Higher Education Attainment among Migrant and Non-Migrant Population in Spain (age group 15-64, Eurostat 2008)



Source: Eurostat 2008.

Furthermore, there are differences among various subgroups of migrants in terms of higher education attainment. The lowest ratios of university attendance are observed among 1st generation migrants coming from non-EU countries with a medium and low human development index. In the respective subgroups, those with higher education constitute only about 15%, i.e. almost twice less than for the non-migrant population. The subgroups of migrants with the highest ratios of university education are the first

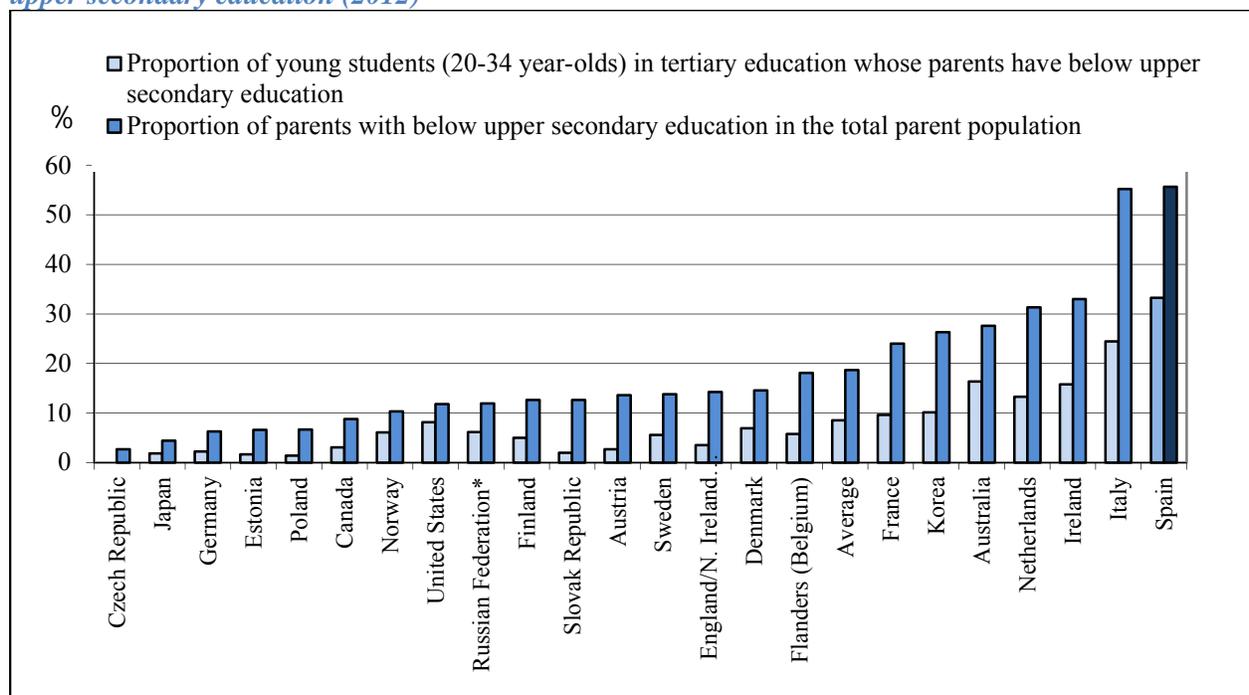
³High or medium human development index countries list is available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-2-human-development-index-trends-1980-2013>

generation migrants with EU backgrounds (27%), as well as second generation migrants whose parents came from non-EU countries with a high human development index (Eurostat 2011).

1.3. Students with low parental education background

An indicator for the access to higher education for socio-economically disadvantaged population is students' parental level of education, since it allows determining the degree to which higher education is accessible for first generation of students. With the expansion of higher education in the second half of the 20th century, it is natural that many students entering higher education came from families without higher education backgrounds. Data on OECD countries reveal that on average among the students from the OECD area 92% have parents with complete secondary education or higher. The remaining 8% come from families with parents with educational attainment below upper secondary education (OECD 2014). This implies that in the OECD area students coming from families with low education background generally have little chance to attend higher education. With this regards, in Spain the situation seems to be better than in the OECD area overall, since according to the same data 33% of students in Spain come from families in which parents have educational attainment below upper secondary level. As Figure 2 reveals, from all OECD countries with available data Spain has the highest proportion of students with relatively low education background.

Figure 2. Participation in tertiary education of 20-34 year-old students whose parents have below upper secondary education (2012)



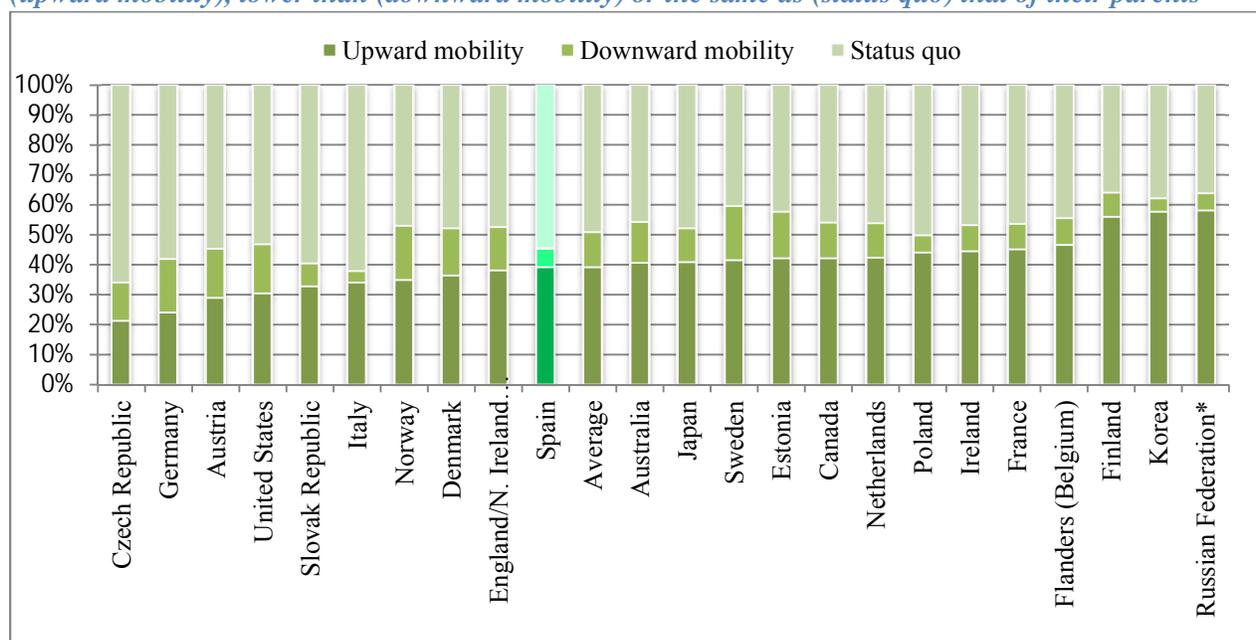
Source: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014. Table A4.1a. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm). The highlight for Spain was done by the author.

However, this does not necessarily mean that Spain performs better than other countries in opening access to higher education for this category of students. The data might simply indicate that the education attainment within the population of the age of students' parents was generally lower than in other countries, therefore the expansion of higher education in Spain at the end of the 20th century naturally

widened the access for children of families with low parental education as well. The relatively high proportion of parents with below upper secondary education in the total parent population that is also illustrated in Figure 2 supports this possibility.

To develop a complete picture on the access to higher education for first generation students a complementary indicator showing the **inter-generational changes in levels of education obtained** should be also used. OECD collects and reports data on intergenerational changes in education levels. This indicator enables seeing for how many pupils or students their educational attainment is higher or lower than that of their parents, hence revealing how frequent educational upward mobility is in a given country. In Spain 39% of the adult population experienced intergenerational education upward mobility. Figure 3 reveals that this is just below the OECD average and below 13 other European countries.

Figure 3. Percentage of 25-64 year-old non-students whose educational attainment is higher than (upward mobility), lower than (downward mobility) or the same as (status quo) that of their parents

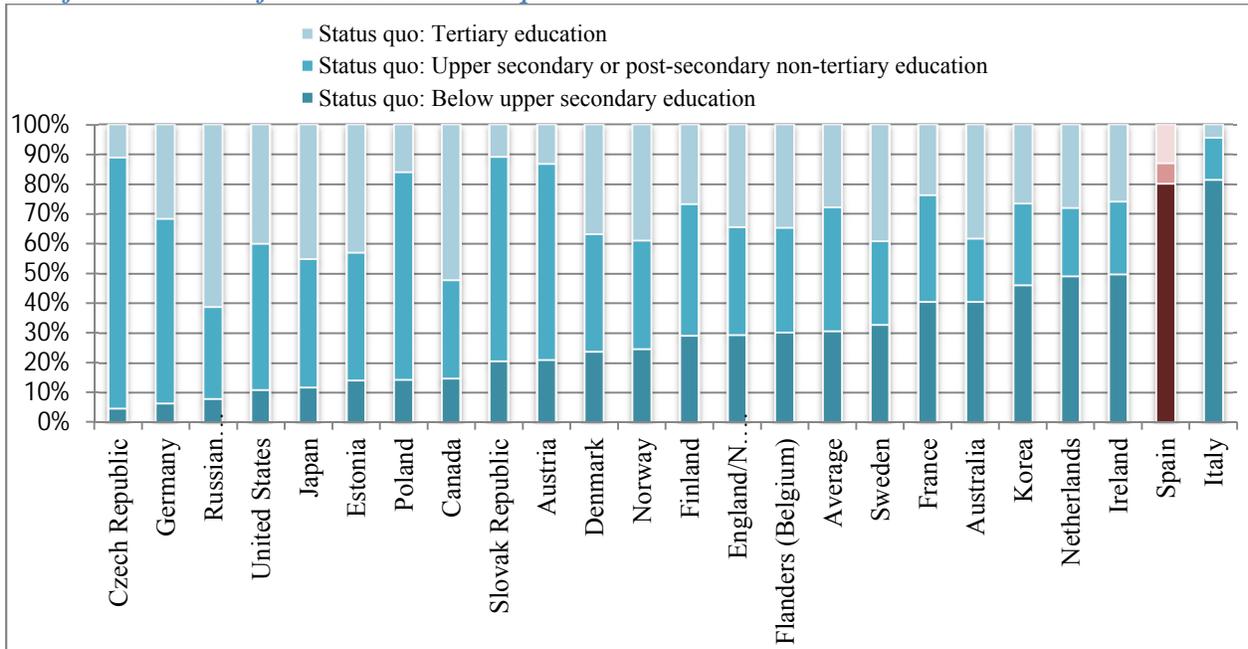


Source: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014. Table A4.4. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm). The highlight for Spain was done by the author.

If we focus only on the population with “status quo” mobility, i.e. those whose education attainment levels are similar to that of their parents, we can observe how many, in relative terms, have below upper secondary education (and respectively, have parents with below upper secondary education as highest education level achieved). Figure 4 reveals that Spain is one of the countries with the relatively largest proportion of adult population “stuck” in the below upper secondary education status quo. Only in Italy the respective ratio is higher.

This suggests that although there is a significant ratio of students in Spain coming from families with relatively low parental level of education (Figure 2) and that almost 40% of adult population experienced inter-generational upward mobility, for the most disadvantaged categories of population coming from families with relatively low levels of education the chances to obtain a higher level of formal education in comparison to their parents is still reduced.

Figure 4. Level of Education of those in the “status quo” (25-64 year-old non-students, percentages out of total number of those in the “status quo”)



Source: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development 2014. Table A4.4. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eag.htm).

Upward educational mobility has been mainly experienced by children coming from families with at least complete secondary education. Hence, Spanish society has not experienced social mobility through education attainment, but “social congestion” (Brown 2013), through which the level of formal education in society increased overall, but without removing existing inequalities.

1.4. Students with working class background

Another indicator revealing the social representativeness of the university student population in a country is the ratio of students from working class backgrounds. Working class background can be determined by the type of employment that students’ parents have. The Eurostudent project, a European project that collects data on university student populations in various European Higher Education Area (EHEA)⁴ countries by regularly conducting country-level surveys, provides information on students’ parental type of employment⁵. Namely, Eurostudent collects data on whether students’ parents work in blue-collar jobs or in white-collar jobs. Eurostudent defines blue-collar occupational group as the group which performs low-skill tasks (often manual or technical labor) and has a low wage level.⁶ Spain has been included in the 4th round of Eurostudent surveys that were conducted between 2008 and 2011 and reported under the generic name “Eurostudent IV”. The survey results provide the opportunity to understand where the

⁴ European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is a community of states meant to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe. More information on EHEA can be accessed on <http://www.ehea.info/>

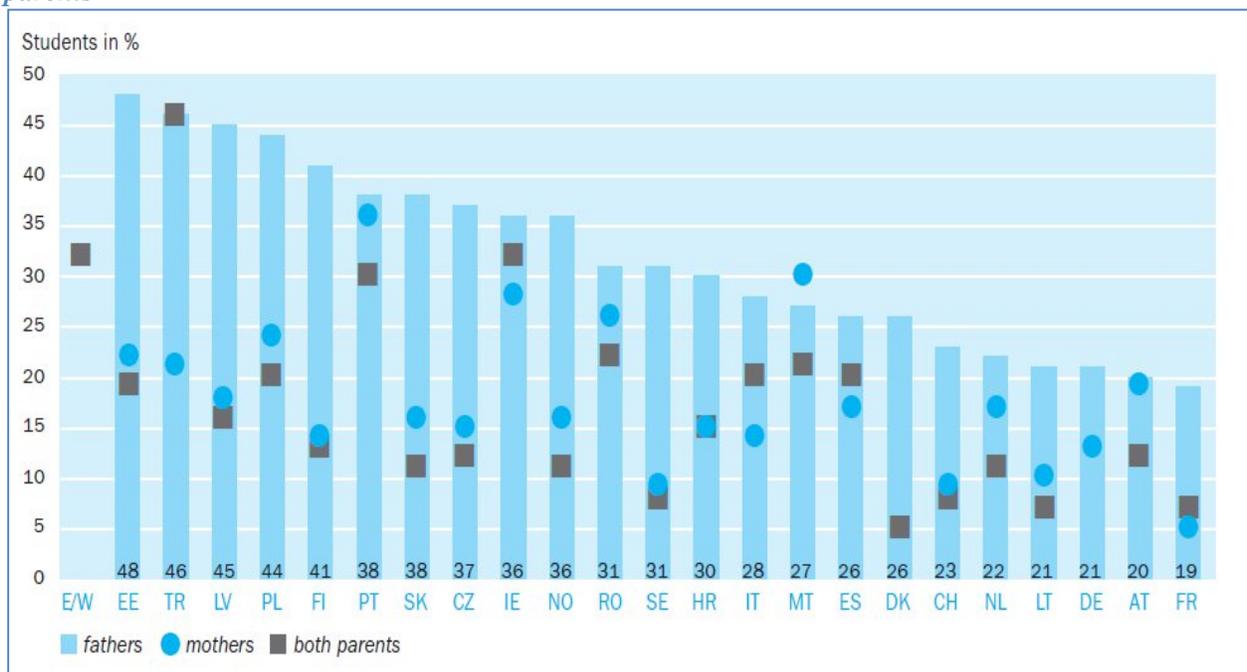
⁵ More information about Eurostudent project can be accessed at <http://www.eurostudent.eu/about/intentions>

⁶ The major categories of blue-collar occupations defined by Eurostudent are the skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers, craft and related trades workers, machine operators and assemblers, and elementary occupations. See Eurostudent Glossary available at https://eurostudent.his.de/eiv/download/Glossary_130810.pdf?x=44&y=14

Spanish system of higher education stands, in comparison to other EHEA countries, in terms of working class students' representation in its student population.

Figures 5 and 6 are taken from the Eurostudent IV report. The former figure illustrates the ratio of students in EHEA countries whose parents have blue collar occupations, emphasizing the values for both parents, but also for mothers and fathers separately. But this information alone is not sufficient for making conclusions on the degree of representativeness of students with blue-collar parental background in the total student population because a small ratio of blue-collar background students might simply relate to a small ratio of blue-collar workers in the entire population of the country. This is why the latter figure is necessary as well, since it correlates the ratio of students whose fathers have blue collar occupation with the total ratio of males with blue-collar occupation in a given country⁷.

Figure 5. Students' parents with 'blue collar' occupation as a share of the total population of students' parents



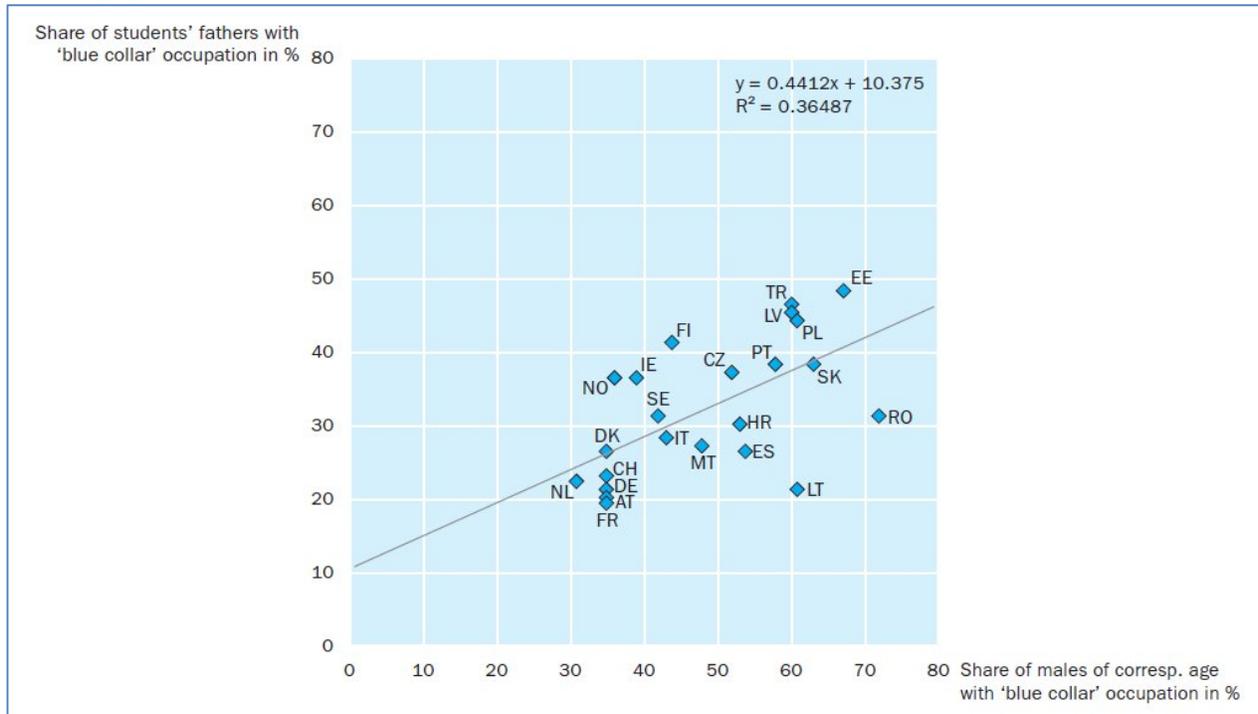
Source: Orr, D. et. al. 2011. Spain appears under abbreviation ES in this figure (8th from the right).

Figure 5 reveals that in Spain only about 20% of university students come from families with blue-collar occupational background, and only about 26% have fathers working in blue-collar jobs. This is a small ratio of students with blue-collar family background, both in absolute terms and relative to other EHEA countries for which such data have been collected. In 15 such countries the ratio of university students with at least one parent in blue-collar occupation is higher than in Spain, and only in 7 countries the respective ratio is smaller.

⁷ While mothers' type of occupation would also be relevant to present in this context, Eurostudent IV only presents the data for fathers. This might be problematic for the usability of the indicator since it assumes that fathers' type of occupation is representative for both parents; however, for the lack of an alternative indicator that would also consider mothers' type of occupation, here the author relies only on fathers' type of occupation as proxy indicator for students' class background.

Figure 6 suggest that students with blue-collar family background are underrepresented in Spanish higher education also relative to the total population of blue-collar male workers in Spain. In the respective figure, all countries below the line are the ones in which the proportion of university students with fathers in blue-collar jobs is smaller than the total proportion of males of corresponding age in blue-collar jobs in the country. From this perspective, only in Romania and Latvia the respective category of students seem to be even more underrepresented within the university population than in Spain.

Figure 6. Relative social mobility of students according to 'blue collar' background: Fathers' with 'blue collar' occupation against men with blue collar occupation of corresponding age group in the country population



Source: Orr, D. et. al. 2011. Spain appears under abbreviation ES in this figure

To sum up, these data suggest that in Spanish higher education students with working class family background are underrepresented, both in absolute terms and compared to a majority of other EHEA countries with available data. These results are also consistent with the findings from the previous subsection revealing that in Spain those with relatively low level parental education experience relatively low degrees of education mobility, both compared to other European countries and compared to those with relatively higher parental levels of education. Despite the increase in ratio of population with higher education degrees, for the population coming from working class backgrounds and low educational backgrounds the access remains limited.

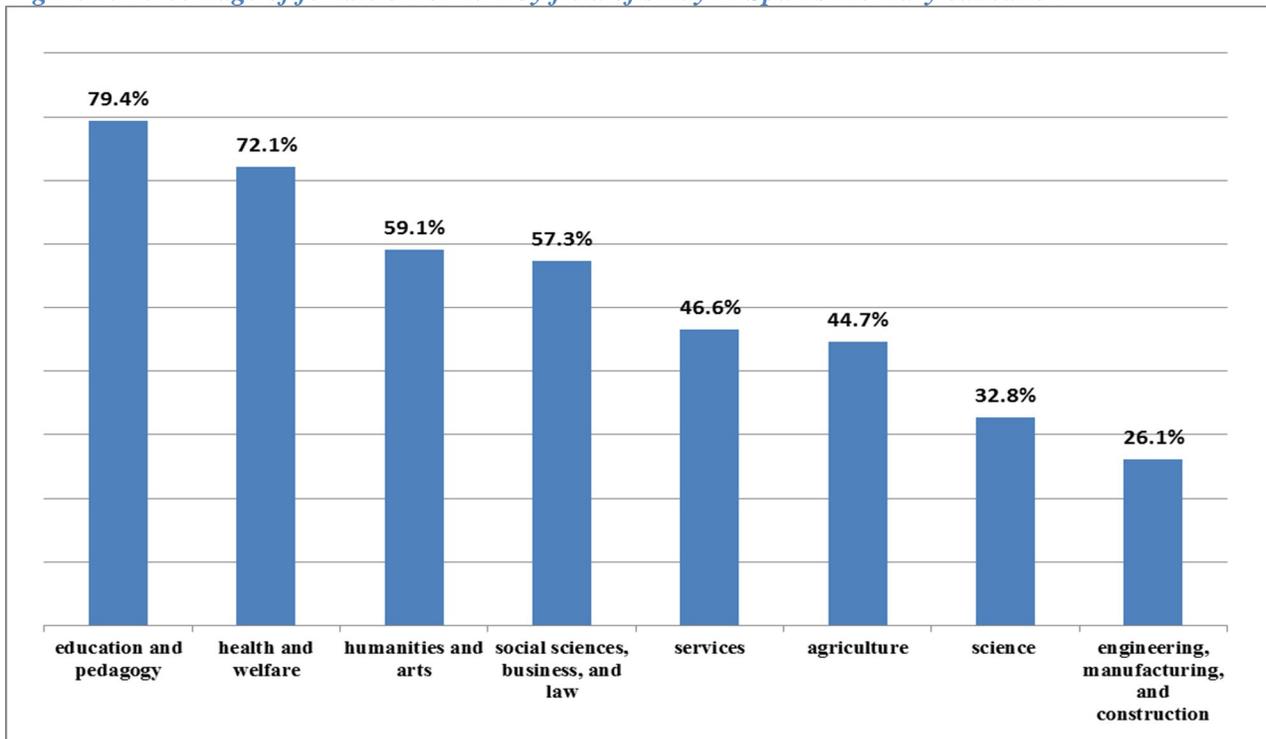
1.5. Women

Women's access to higher education around the world has improved during the 20th century as a natural consequence of the massification of higher education and changing wider social gender equality. Once underrepresented in higher education, nowadays women outnumber men within the student bodies of most of European countries (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2011).

According to UNESCO data, in 2013 53.5% of tertiary-level students in Spain were female, which was close to the female ratio among tertiary-level students of North America and Western European countries (55.2%), as well as to the female ratio among tertiary-level students in the region of Central and Eastern Europe (52.9%) (UNESCO data 1999-2015). Among the EU countries for which UNESCO have available data on student gender composition, only in Germany men outnumbered women in the gender composition of the tertiary student body (2013 data); but even in the case of Germany the ratio of female students was close to gender balance (47.1%).

Although the general gender composition of university student bodies is generally equilibrated, a closer look reveals important gender discrepancies with regards to choice of study programs. Women are generally overrepresented in humanities and social sciences and underrepresented in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programs. Figure 7 illustrates the ratio of female students in Spain across different fields of studies, based on UNESCO 2013 data. It reveals that in Spanish higher education women are particularly underrepresented in engineering, manufacturing, and construction and particularly overrepresented in education and pedagogy.

Figure 7. Percentage of female enrolment by field of study in Spanish tertiary education



Source: UNESCO data 1999-2015

These discrepancies in gender balance within various fields of studies may be problematic when it comes to employability of university graduates, since research suggests that graduates' competitiveness on the job market may be determined, besides other things, by the graduated field (Allen and Velden, 2009). For this reason, the more balanced the gender distribution across various field of studies, the less the risk that female graduates would find themselves in a disadvantaged position on the employment market upon graduation.

1.6. Students coming from rural areas

According to World Bank data for 2014, the population of Spain mainly lives in urban areas, with only 21% living in rural areas. This demographic characteristic has not changed significantly in the last 10 years, since by 2005 the ratio of the Spanish population living in rural areas was 23% (World Bank data 1981-2015). To know whether the rural population is equally represented in higher education, data on students' rural/urban origin are needed, which unfortunately are not available for the entire student population of Spain. Nevertheless, Eurostudent IV report contains an estimate based on student survey, according to which by the time the survey was conducted (2011), 21% of university students in Spain graduated from secondary education in rural areas (Eurostudent IV (a)).

This suggests that the representation of students coming from rural areas is equitable in the higher education system of Spain. The reason the rural area population is well represented in the Spanish student population might be related to the fact that starting with the 1960s until the end of the Socialist Government at the end of the 1990s, Government that promoted the access to higher education, the number of universities in Spain increased (Laus I. 2006), while many of the new universities have been placed in smaller cities and towns, which brought higher education physically closer to the rural population.

1.7. Students with disabilities

A 2008 report by National Institute of Statistics of Spain highlighted that only 10.5% of the population with disabilities in Spain aged between 25 and 44 had a higher education degree, compared to 24.1% in the total population of the respective age group (National Statistics Institute of Spain, 2008). The situation seems to have improved since then, since a more recent report identifies that by 2012 14.7% of people with disabilities had a university degree, which was nevertheless still low compared to the respective ratio among people without disabilities (32%) (Spanish National Statistics Institute of Spain 2012, quoted in Solera et. al. 2015).

The improvement in access to higher education for people with disabilities may result from policies that the Spanish government implemented, such as the quota system at enrollment for disabled students, as well as the improvement in the support provided to disabled students during their university studies (Solera et. al. 2015). Available data also suggest that the possibility for online learning available in Spain facilitates access to higher education for students with disabilities, since the ratio of students with disabilities enrolled in online programs is three times higher than the ratio of students with disabilities in on-site university (Solera et. al. 2015).

Despite the positive measures to facilitate access to higher education for students with disabilities, various studies point to the fact that Spanish universities differ in the extent and quality of the services they provide for students with disabilities. Based on survey research, a recent study highlights that 46% of Spanish universities do not have scholarships for people with disabilities that would cover living costs during the studies; 25% do not have programs for students with disabilities that would make easier the access to higher education; 31% do not have programs for tutoring or tracking of students with disabilities; finally, one third of surveyed students with disabilities highlight still-existing accessibility barriers to Spanish universities, while two thirds highlight that lecturers do not know their educational needs (Solera et. al. 2015).

Section Summary

Hence, despite the relatively high enrolment ratios in higher education in Spain and the widened participation, the available data reveal that the increase in access has been uneven because the participation of socio-economically disadvantaged groups is still below their representation in the entire population of the country. From all the socio-economically disadvantaged groups analyzed in this section, only the rural population is equally represented in higher education. Women are also equally represented in higher education in general, but at the same time underrepresented in the fields of studies that are believed to be the most employable. The participation of those with relatively low parental levels of education and with blue-collar parents is also reduced, both in absolute terms and compared to the majority of countries of Europe. There has been some improvement in the participation of students with disabilities in recent years, however it still has not reached a level of equal representation. However, from all the analyzed groups, the lowest participation rates in higher education are faced by Roma minorities. The available data show that the discrepancy in higher education participation between Roma and non-Roma is the highest.

The following two sections analyze how the higher education system addresses the problem of underrepresentation in higher education for specific groups, by describing the available entry routes, the existing quota systems, the allowed flexibility in studies (section 2), as well as the financial costs associated with higher education and available financial aid schemes (section 3).

2. Entry routes to higher education and flexibility of higher education studies

One of the elements defining the openness of access to higher education for potentially disadvantaged students is defined by the flexibility of the eligibility criteria at enrollment. There are education systems in which only one entry route is possible, the one requiring the possession of a general or vocational upper secondary school leaving certificate. This is the practice in most countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe (European Higher Education Area 2015, p. 122) In addition to this route, other countries provide access to higher education via alternative routes, such as recognizing prior informal learning and/or having special admission tests for applicants who have not graduated secondary school or vocational education (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2011, European Higher Education Area 2015). In Europe most of the countries having alternative routes are located in Western Europe (European Higher Education Area 2015, p. 122).

The presence of alternative routes in the higher education system makes the system more flexible and more open for applicants with socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds, since it is precisely this category of applicants more likely not to have graduated upper secondary education. Flexible modes of studies such as part time studies and distance learning are also believed to accommodate the needs and constraints of a more diverse student population (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014). This is particularly important for students who need to work in parallel with their studies. The regulations concerning employability of students during their studies are also relevant, since in some countries there are restrictions on the maximum number of hours that students are allowed to work, which may constitute an obstacle to higher education for socio-economically disadvantaged students.

The following sub-sections describe the situation in the Spanish higher education system with regards to the entry routes and flexibility of studies.

2.1. The traditional entry route

According to the 2015 Spain National Report on Bologna process implementation, the majority of higher education students in Spain (73%) accessed higher education by graduating higher secondary school and by passing higher education entrance examination (European Higher Education Area 2015, p. 19).

The secondary school process in Spain is divided into two phases. The first is the compulsory phase called *gymnasium* that lasts for four years usually between age 12 and age 16 and that is the equivalent to the lower secondary education. The successful graduates of lower secondary education receive a Secondary Education Certificate (*Graduado en Educación Secundaria*), which is necessary for those who want to continue their studies beyond the compulsory education (see Annex 1). The second is the non-compulsory phase (*Bachillerato*), which lasts for two years usually between age 16 and 18 and which is the equivalent of higher secondary education. *Bachillerato* certificate (*Título de Bachillerato*) is required to gain university entrance through the traditional entry route, therefore pupils who want to continue their studies with tertiary education follow the path of *Bachillerato*. Graduates of higher secondary education – *Bachillerato* – also need to pass the Spanish University Access Test (popularly called *Selectividad*) in order to enroll in university studies. This test is set by public universities (Eurydice 2014).

Applicants need to have a minimum 5 (out of maximum 10) grade point average (GPA) score in order to access higher education (calculated as the average between upper secondary education leaving exam and the university access test). However, the minimum GPA with which applicants can be accepted in university-level studies depends on the specialization: the more popular a specialization, the higher the minimum GPA needed for securing an available enrollment place. The most prestigious specializations are considered to be the STEM specializations, while the least prestigious are considered to be humanities. Hence, students with relatively high GPAs have the opportunity to choose the specialization they are going to study, while students with the lowest GPAs can only study in specializations that are solicited the least. If an applicant with minimum GPA wants to study in higher education in the least prestigious specializations, s/he is likely to be accepted because the higher education system in Spain has sufficient capacity, at least for the time being, to accommodate all eligible applicants.⁸ From this point of view, higher education in Spain is accessible to all eligible candidates who want to study in higher education as long as they are able to cover the related financial costs and as long as they are prepared to accept enrolling in the specializations with the lowest prestige.

Applicants may also access higher education with a higher vocational education and training diploma. According to the 2015 Spanish national report on Bologna process implementation, about 12% students access higher education via the higher vocational education route (European Higher Education Area, 2015, p. 19). Graduates of vocational studies holding diplomas of “superior technical degree” for vocational professional training may apply to study in higher education. To achieve a Superior Technical Degree, first students have to study in an intermediate vocational training cycle, which is the usual path followed by graduates of lower secondary education who do not continue with the *Bachillerato* phase preparing students for higher education (see Annex 1). The intermediate vocational training cycle lasts for

⁸ Information provided by Dr. Mayte Padilla-Carmona, senior lecturer at Department of Research and Assessment Methods in Education, University of Seville, Spain (at author’s request), and by Dr. Manuel Jesús Caro-Cabrera, associate professor at Department of Sociology, University of Seville, Spain (interviewed on October 1st, 2015 by Stela Garaz and Ilona Notar).

two years and gives students qualification as technical specialists. Those wishing to continue their studies after the intermediary vocational training cycle have the option either to enroll in advanced vocational training, or to pursue one year of the *Bachillerato* program. Therefore, at this stage there is no possibility to access higher education directly. Those pursuing advanced vocational training lasting another two years obtain the Superior Technical Degree, with which they can apply for higher education studies (Field et. al. 2012).

Hence, compared to the route that requires two more years of *Bachillerato* after finishing compulsory secondary school, the access to higher education via vocational education requires four additional years of study after compulsory secondary school. Therefore, students accessing higher education via this route cannot start their university studies before they are 20 years old. At the same time, if they enroll in a university field of studies related to their advanced vocational education, there is a possibility to have a reduced university program, with reduced number of required credits, as some subjects studied during advanced vocational education can be validated as an alternative to the university-taught subjects.

2.2. The alternative entry routes

Alternative entry routes in higher education in Spain also exist. There are two possibilities:

- Applicants aged 25 or more may access higher education without any requirements of previous formal education as long as they pass a special test set by universities, a system that dates back to 1971. Furthermore, applicants aged 45 or more can also access higher education through such entry route, but since 2010 with a more simplified entrance test;
- Applicants aged 40 or older may access higher education without any requirements of previous formal education and without passing a test, as long as they have sufficient professional experience in the field they wish to study. The system of recognizing professional experience as an alternative route for accessing higher education was introduced in 2010.

For some of these alternative routes the legislation also provides quotas: no less than 2 percent of enrolled students aged 25 and above should come through the alternative route; at the same time, between 1-3 percent of applicants aged 45 and above should come through the recognition of professional experience route. The exact quotas can be decided by universities. Students accessing higher education via these routes have to pay the same tuition fees as students entering via the traditional route; and have access to the same funding opportunities.⁹

In the University of Seville, the most solicited alternative route towards higher education for adult applicants is the one for those aged 25 and above, with over 350 examinees every year since 2005, and with an acceptance ratio of around 50%. This is followed by the route for individuals aged 40 and above who seek to get their professional experience recognized as legitimate qualification for higher education. When this route was established in 2010, the University of Seville received 200 applications; the year after it received over 650, then the number of applications decreased with every year and reached 84 in 2015. However, the acceptance rates were always relatively high, at over 85%. Finally, the least solicited route is the one for applicants aged 45 and above, with the annual number of examinees varying between

⁹ Interview with Mr. José María GarridoTagua, Office for Orientation and Assistance to Students, University of Seville (interviewed on October 9th 2015 by Stela Garaz)

62 and 161 since 2010 and with an acceptance ratio of 29 and 72% depending on the year¹⁰. Hence, the system seems to be best used by relatively young adults.

Each of the above listed alternative routes is further described below.

2.2.1. Adult applicants with no previous education

In Spain adults aged 25 and above may apply for university studies without the requirement of having a certain level of complete formal education prior to applying, but subject to a testing process. The test consists of a general part and a subject specific part. To be enrolled, examinees need to have at least four (out of maximum 10) points for each of the two parts, and an average of at least five for both parts, which suggests that the testing phase is not demanding, since in Spain the grade five is generally the minimum passing grade.¹¹ The general part requires commenting a text, translating a text into a foreign language, and also contains a test of Spanish language aptitudes, while for the subject-specific part applicants are tested on two of the several subjects related to their desired field of studies (Resolution from 16th of January 2015). Similarly, adults aged 45 and above who cannot enroll in higher education via the traditional route may enroll through the alternative route, subject to testing, but with a simplified testing process. They have to pass the same general test as those in the category aged 25 and above and to obtain the same minimum results, but for the second part instead of having a subject-specific test they have an interview with an evaluation committee, for which applicants do not receive a grade, but a pass or fail qualification (Resolution from 10th of November 2014).

There are Life Long Learning Programs for Adults offering programs to provide preparation for these exams. These programs are organized in special adult education centers, or by universities themselves. In the city of Seville, there are four different institutions offering preparation courses. Some institutions also offer online courses. The preparatory courses are usually free of charge; however, for the enrolment exams applicants are required to pay a fee. In 2015 in University of Seville the examination fee was 88.10 EUR¹², i.e. about 12% of a minimum monthly wage in Spain.

2.2.2. Recognition of professional experience

Since 2010 Spanish adults aged 40 and above who do not have upper secondary school diplomas may apply for university studies via a system of professional experience recognition. Those applying through this system do not have to pass any test; they are selected based on their applications and on an interview. Applicants in this category may apply for studying in specializations that are connected to their professional experience. In the evaluation process the type of professional experience, as well as the number of worked months, are considered.¹³

In Andalusia there is also an online tool open to the public, where potential applicants can check the type of professional experience they need for the specialization they want to study in higher education¹⁴. Further publicly available documentation identifies the precise jobs that are eligible for studying in higher education through this alternative route. For instance, somebody who worked in agriculture as a pesticide

¹⁰ Statistics for University of Seville, information provided by Mr. José María Garrido Tagua, at author's request.

¹¹ [Sistema de calificaciones](#). Universia.net. Accessed on 18 November 2015

¹² Information provided by Mr. José María Garrido Tagua, at author's request.

¹³ Interview with Mr. José María Garrido Tagua

¹⁴ The online tool can be accessed at http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/innovacioncienciayempresa/sguit/g_busca_titm40_sup.php

applicator or agricultural worker of industrial crops, can have his/her work experience validated for studying agriculture engineering, biotechnology, or chemistry at the university. Similarly, somebody who worked as an office receptionist or secretary can study law, economy, or a variety of other disciplines related to humanities and social sciences. Therefore, the system is quite flexible in the type of work experience it considers eligible and in the number of possible specializations with which individual work experience can be matched.

2.3. Quota system for students with disabilities

Since 2008 there has been a quota system in the Spanish higher education system for students with disabilities. Based on this system, there is a 5% quota for disabled students' admission in all university degrees of any public university. The system also provides exemption from tuition fee payment for students with disability degree of 33% of any type (see SWING report). The quota is still below the representation of people with disabilities in the total population of Spain which is about 8%;¹⁵ however, according to various data the quota has nevertheless contributed to improving access to higher education for disabled students (see for instance Solera et. al. 2015). Furthermore, the quota system guarantees a tuition-free university place, but it does not necessarily imply financial help for covering living and other study-related costs, since there are still 46% of Spanish universities that do not have special scholarship schemes for people with disabilities (Solera et. al. 2015).

2.4. Alternative mode of studies - part-time and distance learning

Part time study generally implies less intensive workload, but longer studies. This mode of study facilitates access to higher education for students who need to combine their education with employment or with childcare. One would expect many socio-economically needy students, adult students, or students with children to be in this category. Available statistical data reveal that over 50% of students studying in part time mode in Spain in the academic year 2011-2012 were 30-34 years old, and only a minority of 15% were 20-24 years old (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

Spain is among the few countries of Europe where higher education institutions are required to offer part time studies (the others being Greece, Portugal, and the Flemish community of Belgium), provision which has been established since 2007¹⁶. In other European countries higher education institutions have autonomy whether to offer part time studies, in still others the system does not provide formally recognized part time programs at all (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). The way in which part time studies are organized in Spain is based on the number of credits students need to take in order to complete a degree. Students in part time mode are generally required to take at least half of the credits required for a full time academic year during the first year of their studies; at the same time, the minimum number of credits can be reduced from the second academic year. The precise conditions under which students can study part time are determined by each university, although part time students can generally request not to attend lectures and as a consequence they have alternative evaluation system.¹⁷

¹⁵ According to a National Bulletin of the Statistics Office of Spain from 2009, by 2008 there were 3.85 million people with disabilities in Spain (<http://www.ine.es/revistas/cifraine/1009.pdf>). The 2011 population census estimated a total population of 46,815,916 in Spain (http://www.ine.es/en/censos2011_datos/cen11_datos_inicio_en.htm).

¹⁶ Information provided by Dr. Mayte Padilla-Carmona, at author's request.

¹⁷ Information provided by Dr. Mayte Padilla-Carmona, at author's request.

Furthermore, studying in part-time mode in Spain does not imply higher tuition fees for students (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015). Tuition fees are calculated based on the number of credits taken in an academic year.¹⁸ At the same time, students are eligible for financial support in the form of grants, although certain grant components such as residence costs and academic performance bonuses were not accessible for part-timers, by the time these components were still available (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2014). Available statistical data reveal that in the last years the ratio of part time students in Spain increased. The Eurostat data suggest that by 2008 there were 11% of Spanish students enrolled in part-time mode of studies (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2011), while in 2013 the respective ratio was 27% (Eurostat 2013).

As for distance learning and e-learning, various international reports suggest that provision of this form of learning in higher education is still relatively rare in Europe. However, provisions currently exist in 12 European countries including Spain. In some of these countries distance learning is provided by small private institutions, while in others, such as Spain, providers count among the key players in the education system (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2011). The highest concentration of distance learning providers is in Southern Europe, with the National University of Distance Education in Spain being the oldest (created in the 1970s) and biggest (having currently over 200 000 students) institution of this kind in the region. The National University of Distance Education is run by the central government of Spain and offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, as well as various non-degree programs.¹⁹ Tuition fees in the respective university are around the country average (see Figure 8). There are no statistics available on the ratio of tertiary level students enrolled in distance learning and e-learning programs in Spain.

2.5. Student employment

In Spain there are no formal restrictions for students to be employed in parallel with their studies. Specifically, there is no restriction on the maximum number of hours or on the maximum wages students may earn while enrolled in full or part time studies. In practice many working students in Spain are employed based on unofficial arrangements with their employers, i.e. without a working contract and consequently without paying taxes²⁰.

According to the Eurostudent IV survey that collected data between 2008 and 2011 on the social dimension of higher education in various European countries, by 2009 about 53% of Spanish higher education students were employed at least in occasional or term break jobs. About 17% had regular jobs during term and term break, involving a minimum 5 hours of work per week. Surveyed students generally assessed that 26-29% of their monthly income was self-earned (Eurostudent IV (b)). A more recent data source dating from 2014 points to a smaller ratio of working students, with 5.7% engaged in full time employment, 2.7% in part time work, and 1.7% in “part time involuntary work” (Finkel and Barañano 2014, quoted in González-Montegudo J. et. al. 2015).

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Hence, when it comes to entry routes to higher education and flexibility of studies, the Spanish higher education system seems to provide a variety of possibilities that have the potential to open access to

¹⁸ Information provided by Dr. Mayte Padilla-Carmona, at author’s request.

¹⁹ National University of Distance Education, facts and data. Available at http://portal.uned.es/portal/page?_pageid=93_24305391&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

²⁰ Information provided by Dr. Mayte Padilla-Carmona, at author’s request.

higher education for the underrepresented. The openness of the system for vocational studies graduates, the alternative entry routes for adult students, as well as the quota systems for adult students and for students with disabilities, can be considered as good practice in widening participation and in opening access to students with socio-economic disadvantage. The possibility to study part time, through distance learning, and the lack of restrictions on student employment can also have a positive impact on the social dimension of higher education (although combining studies with employment may compromise the university studies outcomes).

But flexibility of studies and flexible entry routes only partly facilitate access to higher education, because another important obstacle for accessing higher education is the financial cost. Students may be successfully admitted for university studies, but be unable to cover the related financial costs. Hence the section below focuses on the financial implications related to higher education in Spain.

3. Studying in Higher Education in Spain: Financial Implications and Existing Financial Support

There are generally two types of costs related to studying in higher education: the costs for the education process and the living costs. These costs may be covered from public funds (the state budget) or from private funds (students and their families). Usually higher education costs are covered by both, but countries differ in the ratio of available public funding, and respectively, in the ratio of costs required to be covered privately. The practices in the same country can also change over time. In countries with generous public funding available for higher education, students study for free (or pay a symbolic amount) and they can also receive grants covering at least part of the living costs. The 2015 EHEA report mentions the three Scandinavian countries, Cyprus, Greece, and Scotland, and Turkey, among the countries where no home students pay tuition fees (European Higher Education Area 2015, p. 130). At the other extremity are the countries requiring tuition fee payment from all students and offering financial support grants only to a minority. The same EHEA report mentions 16 countries where all students pay tuition fees, among them England and Wales, Switzerland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Portugal, although in some of these the fees are only small administrative charges (Czech Republic) (European Higher Education Area 2015, p. 130). The aim of this section is to analyze where Spain can be placed on this continuum, as well as to determine the extent to which the costs associated to university studies constitute a financial obstacle for the access to higher education.

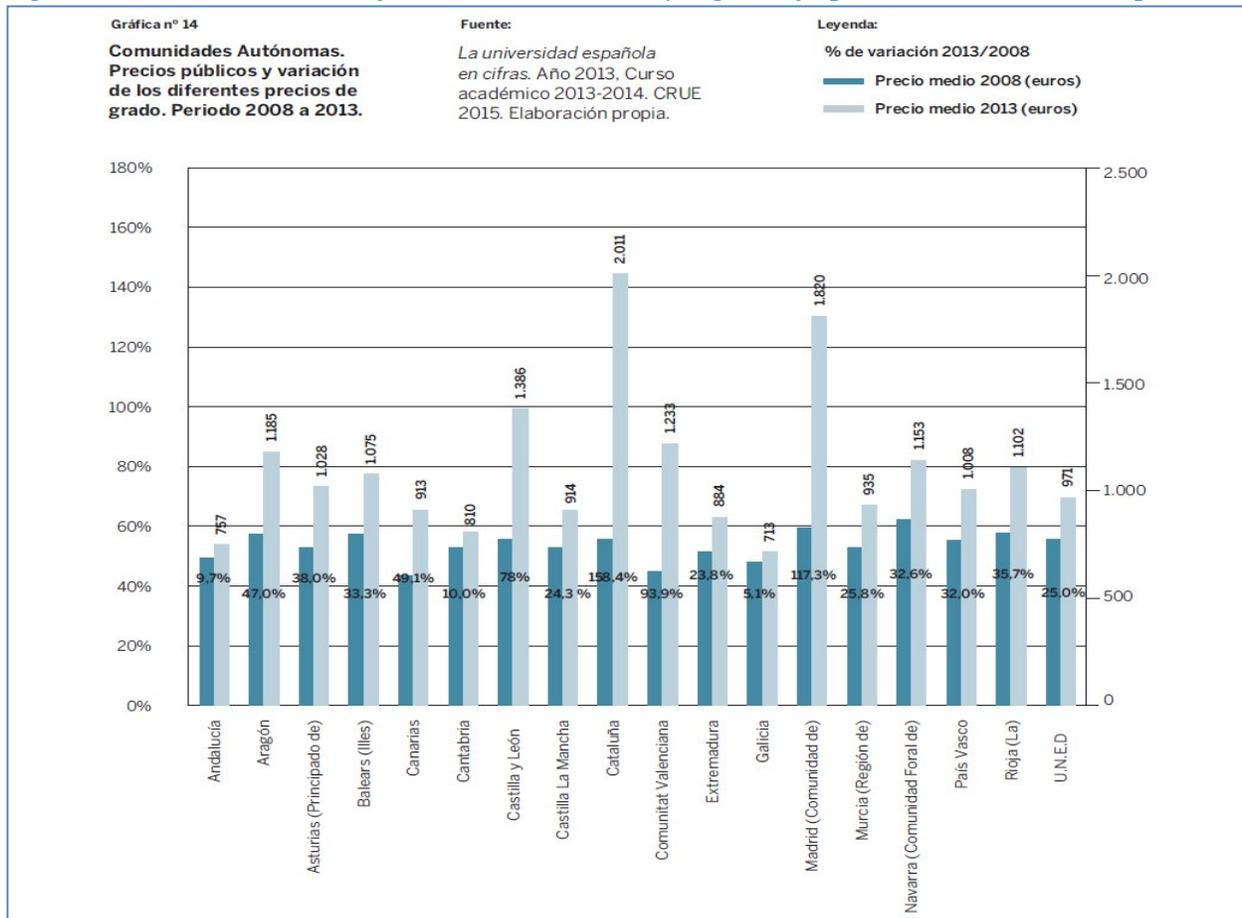
3.1. Costs of Higher Education in Spain – Tuition Fees

Students enrolling in Spanish universities are generally required to pay tuition fees. Tuition fee amounts depend on the degree of studies, the number of credits taken, and the number of exams failed in each subject (students failing exams and re-enrolling in the same subjects need to pay extra). The amounts are established by higher education institutions, but within limits set by the government (European Higher Education Area 2015, p. 24). In 2014-15 the amounts ranged between 713 EUR and 2011 EUR for first cycle students, and between 1060 EUR and 3952 EUR for the second cycle. The most common amounts were **1110 EUR** for first cycle students (Bachelor) and **2017 EUR** for second cycle students (Master) (Eurydice 2015, p. 19).

However, as noticeable in Figure 8 above, there is a high regional disparity in the actual tuition fees that students pay, the highest fees being charged in Catalonia and Madrid and the lowest in Andalusia and

Galicia. Figure 8 also reveals that tuition fee amounts increased in all regions since 2008, the most considerable increase being also in Catalonia and Madrid. Other available data reveal that since 2013 tuition fees continued to increase, on average with 3.4% (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports of Spain, 2015).

Figure 8. Variations in tuition fee amounts (in EUR) by regions of Spain: 2008 and 2013 compared



Source: Armenteros et. al. 2014.

According to the 2015 Spanish national Report for Bologna Process implementation, in the 2012-2013 academic year 41.4% of new incoming students received a general grant covering at least tuition fees (European Higher Education Area, 2015). Another source indicates that in the 2014-15 academic year the ratio of tuition fee paying students was 70% (Eurydice 2015, p. 19). Exemption from tuition fee payment is primarily based on need, as measured by family income, although there is also a requirement for minimum academic performance. At the same time, students coming from large families or disabled students may get significant discounts or be exempted from tuition fee payment as well (Eurydice 2015, p. 19).

In order to determine how big a financial burden Spanish tuition fees are for students and their families, it is necessary to put these figures in perspective. One way to do this is to compare tuition fees with typical incomes in Spain, as well as with the minimum costs of living, which gives some idea of how much of an annual available budget a family must potentially invest in the university studies of one or more of their members.

3.2. Costs of Higher Education in Spain – Living Costs

In addition to paying tuition fees, prospective students and their families also need to consider the costs of living in the city where the university is located. Living costs usually cover transportation, food, housing (in case of the students studying outside their home locality), clothing, and leisure. There is no systematic data available on the living costs for students across different cities of Spain, but various formal and informal sources indicate living costs in some of the cities of Spain. Hence, available figures indicate that in Madrid a student would need about 750 EUR per month to cover basic living costs, conditioned upon living in a shared flat²¹. In Barcelona, Pompeu Fabra University indicates that a student would need about 1,000 EUR per month for covering living costs²². In Bilbao and Seville the monthly costs of living for students are estimated to be about 600 EUR.²³ Hence, for covering the costs of living for a 10-month academic year a student living outside his/her home location would need between 6,000 and 10,000 EUR, depending on the city.

3.3. Costs of Higher Education in Spain relative to the Population Income

According to the data collected by the Spanish Institute of Statistics, the median wage in Spain in 2013 was **19,030 EUR per year, i.e. 1,585 EUR per month**. However, the same data source reveals significant discrepancies among regions of Spain, with highest median wages in Basque country (23,729 EUR per year), Community of Madrid (21,274 EUR) and Catalonia (20,763 EUR), and smallest in Extremadura (16,122 EUR per year) (National Statistics Institute of Spain data 2008-2013 (a)). Figure 9 compares the annual tuition fee amounts in Spanish regions with the median wages in the respective regions earned by the working population. The comparison reveals that in all regions tuition fees constitute below 10% of an annual median wage. Tuition fees constitute the highest proportion of a median wage in Catalonia and in the Community of Madrid, regions with the highest tuition fee amounts in Spain. In the other regions this proportion is around 6%.

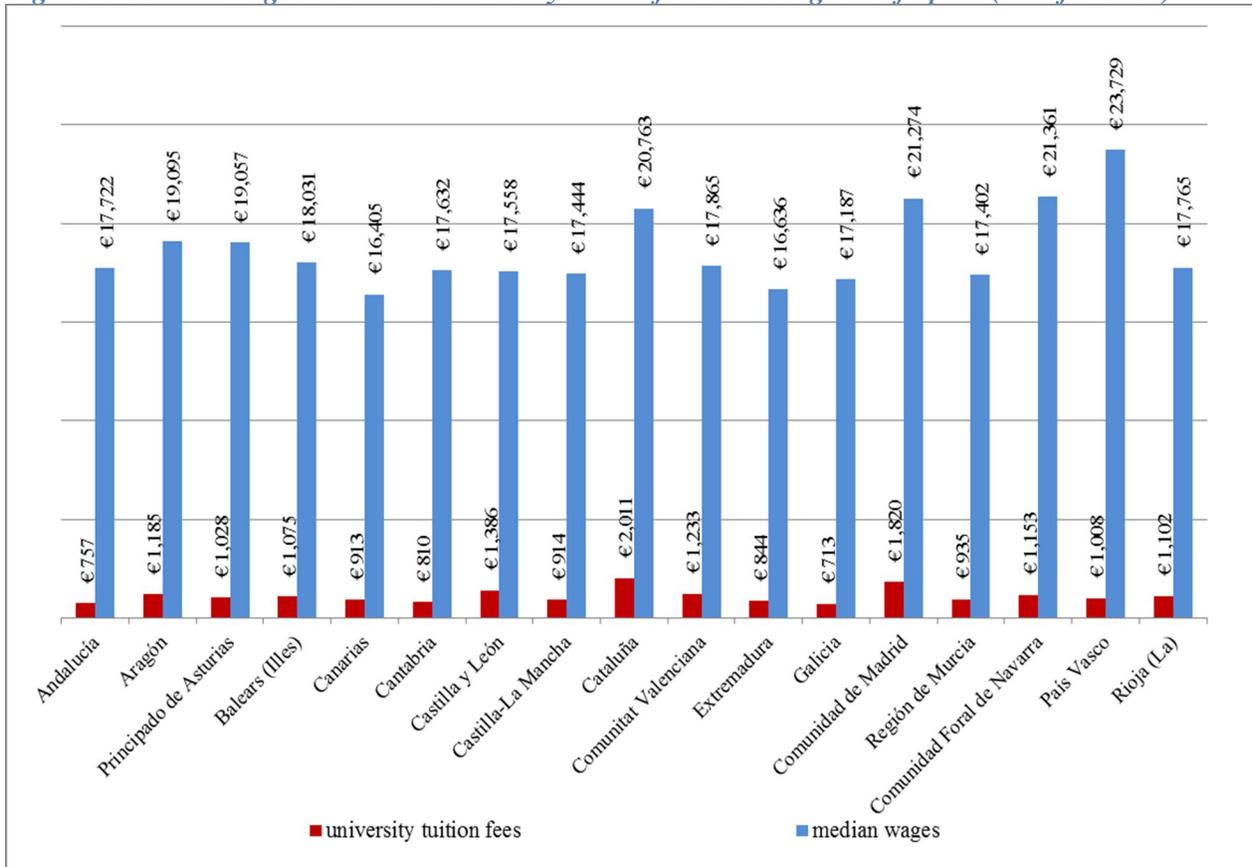
Hence, for a family with two working members who earn median wages each, and with one of the members studying in higher education, tuition fees constitute about 3% of investment from the family budget. A family with one employed member and one student needs to invest 6% of the family budget for covering tuition fees. These figures seem to be a relatively low financial burden; however, one should also take in consideration that a great part of population of Spain is unemployed because of the economic recession. Moreover, among those employed there is a considerable ratio receiving low earnings that are 2/3 or less than the median earning per country.

²¹ Living costs in Spain – Madrid. Estimations available at <http://www.ie.edu/financial-aid/cost-of-living-in-spain/>

²² Cost of living in Barcelona as calculated by Pompeu Fabra University, available at <http://www.barcelonaschoolofmanagement.upf.edu/en/welcome-to-barcelona/cost-of-living>

²³ Estimation for student costs of living as calculated by International Studies Abroad platform, for Bilbao available at <http://studiesabroad.com/programs/country/spain/city/bilbao/cultureCorner/moneyMatters> and for Seville available at <http://studiesabroad.com/programs/country/spain/city/sevilla/cultureCorner/moneyMatters>

Figure 9. Annual wages vs. annual university tuition fees in the regions of Spain (data for 2013)



Source: figure compiled by the author, based on data from Spanish National Institution of Statistics CRUE report

Unemployment in Spain grew considerably in the last 8 years, from 8.2% in 2007 to 26% in 2013 and only slightly decreased since then (24.5% in 2014) (Eurostat 2005-2014 (a)). Unemployment is also unevenly distributed across different part of the country, with the most affected regions being the ones in the South, including Andalusia where over 40% of the Roma population of Spain lives and where the unemployment rate reached 35% in 2014.²⁴ The ratio of long-term unemployment (i.e. 12 months or more of continuous unemployment) also increased considerably in the last 8 years, from 1.7% in 2007 to 12.9% in 2014, out of the total active population (Eurostat 2005-2014 (b)). Among those employed, 18% received low earnings (i.e. less than 2/3 of the median earnings) (National Statistics Institute of Spain data 2008-2013 (b)). Naturally, for students coming from families with unemployed or long-term unemployed parents, or from families with low earnings, university tuition fees constitute an important barrier for accessing higher education. In addition, it is important that tuition fee costs are not the only costs that students and their families must cover. Students' living costs must also be considered, especially for internally mobile students (i.e studying outside the locality of their family). The data in sections 3.1 and 3.2 suggest that for this category of students the living costs for a year can be at least five times higher than the tuition fees, which increases considerably the financial burden on students and their families and

²⁴ Labor Market Information – The European Job Mobility Portal, <https://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?countryId=ES&acro=Imi&showRegion=true&lang=en&mode=text®ionId=ES0&nuts2Code=%20&nuts3Code=null&catId=452>

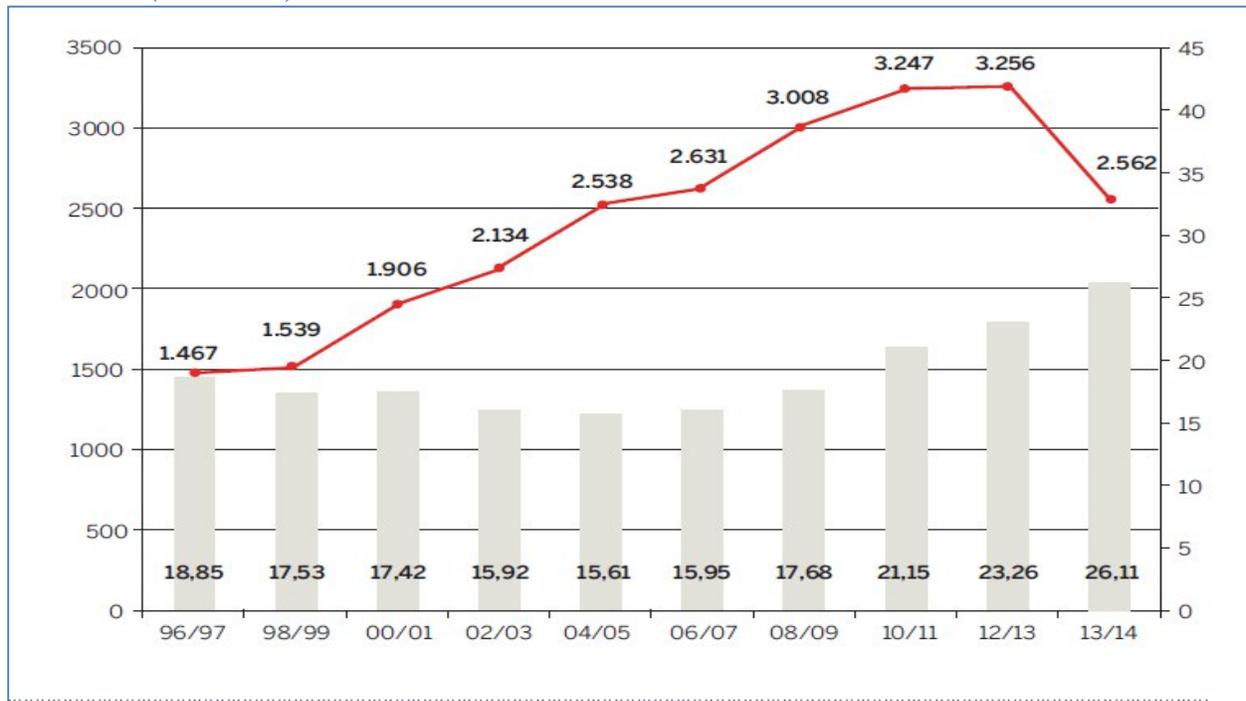
potentially hinders access to higher education for students coming from socio-economically disadvantaged communities.

The means through which countries address this issue generally include loan schemes and grant schemes for students. The financial support schemes available in the Spanish system of higher education are described in the next section.

3.4. State-Funded Grants and Financial Support

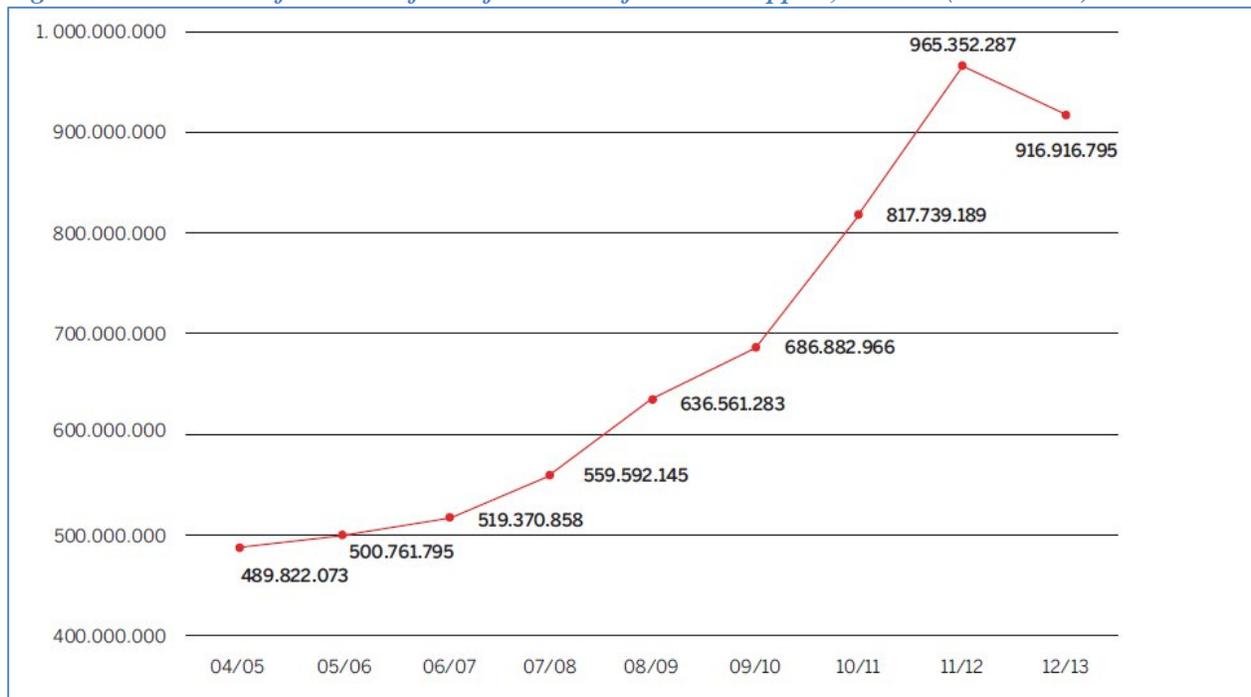
In Spain there is no system of publicly subsidized or guaranteed student loans to cover expenses during higher education studies. There were public loans, mainly for the second cycle, until the 2011-2012 academic year, but not since then (European Higher Education Area, 2015, p. 26).. As for the financial aid in form of grants, the latest available figure is for the 2013-2014 academic year and it reveals that in that year **26%** of students in Spain received some kind of state support for covering costs related to their studies. The data also reveal that although the relative number of students receiving support increased, the average amounts of scholarships decreased and so did the total available funding for students' support. Figure 10 illustrates how the state financial support in form of grants evolved between 1996 and 2014, while Figure 11 shows the evolution of the available funds for student grants between 2004 and 2013.

Figure 10. Evolution of average funding per beneficiary and acceptance rate for funding in public universities (1996-2014)



Note: red line indicates the average amount of grant per year, while the grey bars indicate the ratio of students who received financial support. Source: Armenteros et. al. 2014.

Figure 11. Evolution of available funds for student financial support, in EUR (2004-2013)



Source: same as for figure 10.

As can be seen in Figure 10, in the 2013-2014 academic year the average amount of a state funded grant was 2,562 EUR. Keeping in mind the data presented in the previous sections, this amount is not sufficient for covering living costs. Hence, even for the students receiving state financial support a significant part of the costs related to their studies need to be covered from alternative resources, particularly in the case of students living outside their family residence.

In the past Spanish students could benefit from a scholarship based on their economic status and conditioned upon their completion of 60-80% of university courses. Scholarships were not distributed based on competition. There was also a grant supplement for awarding academic performance. Since the reform of the university grant system initiated in 2012, students' scholarships are not only based on their economic situation, but also on their academic results, while the distribution of scholarships, as well as the actual amounts, is determined by the academic results of all grant recipients and also by the available funds allocated by the government in an academic year. Therefore, the grade point average required for receiving a scholarship, as well as the relative number of courses passed, may change from year to year, which makes it impossible for students to know in advance the amount of money they are going to receive. This is believed to hinder the access to higher education for economically needy students (Río-Ruiz et. al. 2015).

Section Summary

Hence, the financial costs of higher education in Spain required to be covered by students and their families can be significant, especially for students coming from families with unemployed parents or with parents receiving relatively low wages, and especially for students living outside their home. Tuition fee amounts together with the living costs may therefore constitute a significant barrier for socio-economically needy students to access higher education. Only 30% of students are exempted from paying

tuition fees and only about 26% receive financial support; at the same time, there is no system of student loan. This means that for an absolute majority of students the economic situation of their families is determinant on the decision to study in higher education or not. Considering that the Roma population faces particularly high poverty rates, low incomes, and high levels of unemployment in Spain, it results that the costs related to higher education in Spain may be a significant barrier for otherwise eligible Roma candidates to access higher education.

Conclusions

The aim of this briefing paper was to analyze the policies and practices through which the Spanish system of higher education facilitates the access to it for socio-economically disadvantaged groups. The reason for conducting this analysis was to determine what the potential institutional enablers and barriers in Spain are for marginalized and socio-economically disadvantaged groups like Roma to access higher education. There are no affirmative action practices in Spanish higher education system targeting Roma or any other ethnic group, which is why the report analyzed the social dimension of Spanish higher education system in general, since Roma students could potentially access higher education via other available routes than affirmative action.

The data presented in the report revealed that despite the increase in ratios of the population with higher education in Spain over time, access remains reduced for several categories of disadvantaged groups, including migrants and children with working class parents or with parents with low levels of formal education; however, the most underrepresented group is the Roma community, with only 2% of Roma having higher education degrees that is significantly beyond the ratios of highly educated among the mainstream population, as well as among the other disadvantaged groups.

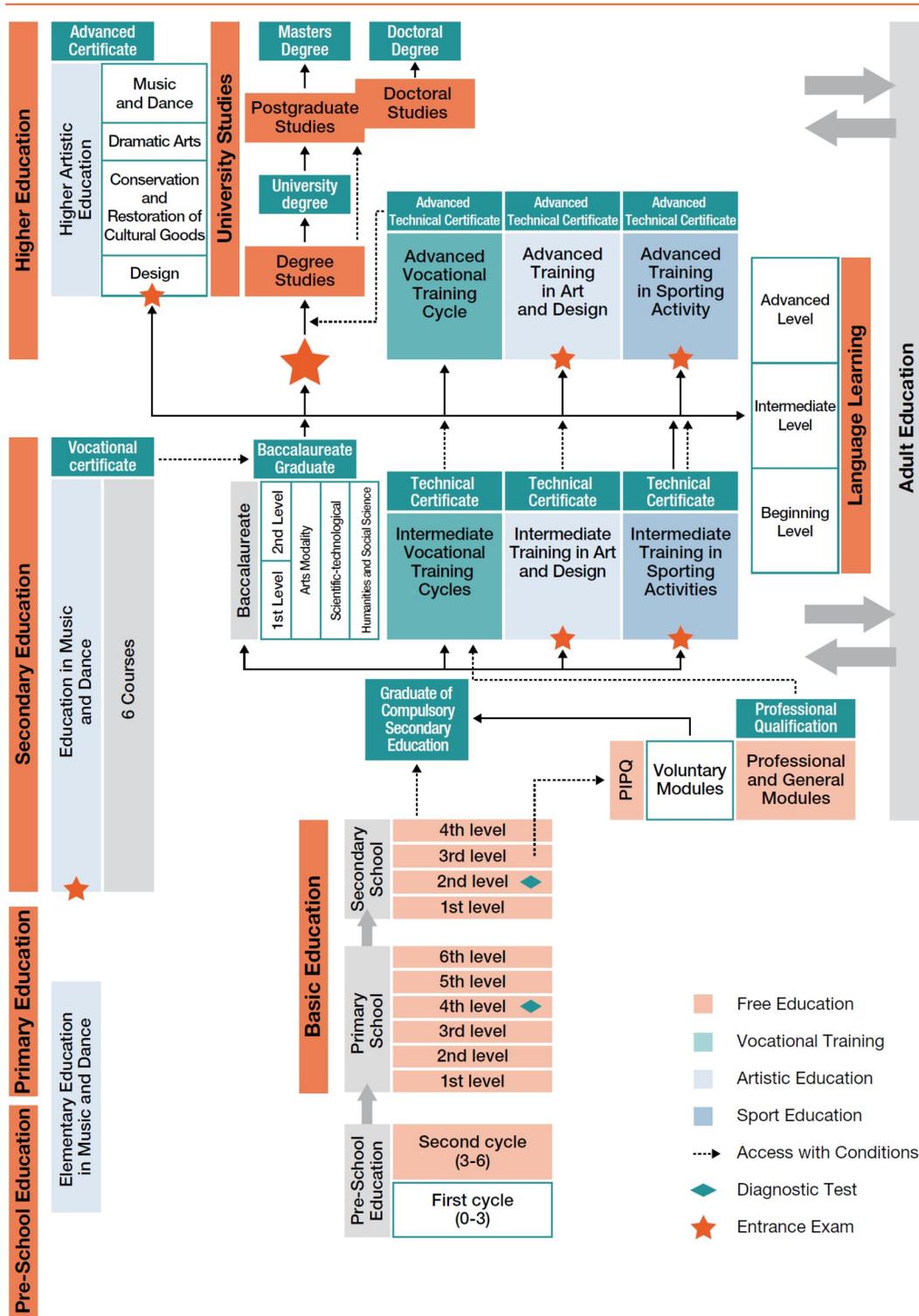
The data in the report also reveals that the available routes to higher education, as well as the amount of flexibility of studies allowed, facilitate the access to higher education. The Spanish higher education system has put in place several possibilities for alternative access, including recognition of work experience as substitute for an upper secondary school diploma, as well as a special examination system for adult university applicants who have not completed upper secondary school. The quota systems for adult students, as well as for students with disabilities, further support access. The obligation for all universities to allow part time studies, the existence of distance learning, as well as the lack of restrictions on employment for students, may also help students from socio-economically difficult backgrounds to study in higher education. Some of these practices could certainly inspire future reforms in higher education in Eastern Europe, where alternative routes to higher education are still relatively rare (see European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015, p. 122 and p. 124).

However, what does constitute a potentially serious barrier in studying in higher education in Spain is the financial cost associated with university studies, specifically in the context of the economic recession in the last years. About 70% of students in Spain pay tuition fees and only around 26% receive financial support in the form of grants. While tuition fee amounts are relatively low compared to median wages (i.e. constituting only about 6% of one median annual wage), the economic recession has resulted in high unemployment rates and in a decrease in families' incomes, making these amounts significant for the most vulnerable part of the population. Moreover, reduced access to grant schemes means that the majority of students need to cover *all* living costs during their studies, costs that can be five times higher than the tuition fee amounts for an academic year, particularly for students living outside their family

residence. For Roma these financial implications constitute a particularly significant barrier, keeping in mind that the Roma population face high unemployment rates and even when employed are in relatively low skilled jobs with lowest wages.

Hence, marginalized groups including Roma in Spain face institutional barriers in accessing higher education. If the system does not decrease the costs of university studies for the entire population, or does not provide financial assistance to all socio-economically disadvantaged enrolled students, or does not institute a quota system specific for Roma that would also be coupled with an effective outreach campaign and financial support during the studies, Roma will continue being underrepresented in higher education in future as well.

Annex 1. The Structure of Spanish Education System



Source: Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport, quoted in Oriol Homs (2009)

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Briefing Paper 2

Roma's Access to Higher Education in Spain: Enablers and Barriers

Author:

Ilona Notar

Ph.D. candidate at Doctoral School of Education, University of Pecs

ilona.notar@gmail.com

Aided translation:

Etelka Tamas-Balha, Jutka Beko

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Introduction

In this report I present a general view about the Roma from Spain, more exactly the Roma from Andalusia. I would like to deal with some basic notions which are rarely interpreted mainly because of them being basic: the concept of disadvantageous position, racial discrimination, the critical problem of migration, and the forms and effects of segregation.

This report highlights the fact that the Spanish educational system offers several opportunities that disadvantaged students usually opt for. It analyses the chances Roma students have in enrolling to higher education. Keeping in mind their potentially disadvantaged situation and the possibilities available for studying, the report presents the history of the Spanish Roma and the history of Roma enrollment in the educational system. Given that in Spain very few Roma are incorporated into the higher education system (less than 2%) the report examines the factors that contribute to this reality: economic situation, geographical location and the disadvantages that they entail, together with the linguistic differences and the reality of discrimination.

After analyzing the role of the government, I also dedicate an important part to the work of NGOs which focus on Roma enrollment in education and also highlight the role they play in supporting the young Roma to enroll to higher education.

The method used consists of three phases: analyzing materials, conducting structured and non-structured interviews with Roma students, university professors and professionals who work on this topic. During this work I became familiar with a Roma family in Cadiz and Cordoba, I visited segregated settlements in the outskirts of Seville, and conducted interviews with Roma people about how they see their own situation in terms of their access to higher education.

Research Area, Targeted Group

It is not easy to specify the research area if we consider an enormous country like Spain the area of which is 46,77 million people in 2014.²⁵ In an unusual way Spain is organized in provinces and territories with independent local governments. According to the code system used for statistical purposes by the European Union, the country is divided in 17 provinces and two more cities²⁶.

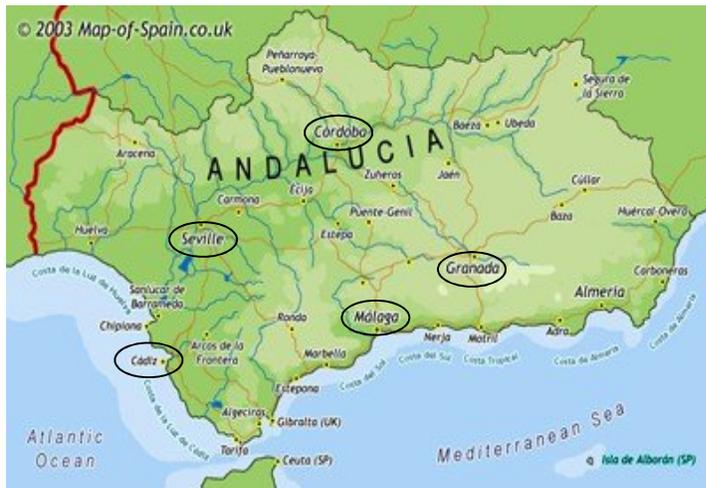
I tried to work with the data available for the whole country, but considering that our temporal home was in Andalusia, Sevilla, it seemed obvious to focus the research about the situation in Andalusia. Therefore the report is focused particularly on the situation of Roma living there (40% of the total number of Roma inhabitants of Spain live in this province), based on the the help of the local civil and educational personnel.

It is important for me to clarify right at the beginning of my research who are is the research target group, because disadvantageous situation cannot be considered an economic problem, and we need to talk about Roma as an ethnic group with its own culture, traditions, system of values, language and mentality. The Roma are not a homogenous group, it is an ethnic group with varied cultural, historical and linguistic heritage. My research methods includes data analysis of the empirical research conducted and also uses

²⁵ <http://www.statista.com/statistics/263751/total-population-of-spain/>

²⁶ <http://www.statista.com/statistics/263751/total-population-of-spain/>

several anthropological methods. I conducted structured and unstructured interviews across Spain, especially in Andalusia (Córdoba, Cádiz, Sevilla, Málaga).



The Methodology of the Research

The structured interviews for this report were based on put-up questionnaires, as well as on free discussions with the interviewees. The interviewees were two Roma students studying in the higher education, one PhD student (social scientist) who was also an NGO worker and activist. We also made personal and group interviews with 12 workers of three NGOs, three professors of the Sevilla University, and one researcher who conducted research on Roma in Malaga. Along with the theoretic research work (analyzing and organizing the bibliography) I paid particular attention to the field work. I visited the different areas of Sevilla living among very humble economic situations, the segregated Roma "districts", I also visited the public education institution (vocational school in Mira Flores), and one of the ghettos having the "worst reputation" next to which there is the home of the Roma Theatre. Moreover, I joined for several days the street life of local musician gitanos²⁷, thus finding out even more about their difficulties, culture, tradition and family structure as well as their inner motivation, outside pressures, self-definition and inner struggles.

On the other hand I tried to find out more about the Flamenco²⁸ culture, obviously not as a tourist, but using the "snow ball method" to get to those authentic places which are basically family-supported traditional Roma music and dancing places. This visit was extremely useful for me to understand the role of the family in the life of Roma people, the importance of music and its very deep roots. It also highlighted that apparently contradictory fact, that in spite of all the prejudices existing in Spain, the Flamenco, the traditional dance of the Roma ethnic group, has become an integral part of Spanish history and present.

During the four weeks of research work every weekend I visited those towns where I knew that Roma ghettos and segregated places can be found. Thus I gained empirical knowledge in Malaga and Cadiz, where I spent one or two days in the street with Roma musicians and later I joined them to their homes

²⁷ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/gitano+cigány>

²⁸ <http://www.andalusia.com/flamenco/history.htm>

where I had the chance to experience the fact that the same city incorporated two different worlds in two streets located near each other. In one street comfort, cleanliness and wealth could be found, while in the other crumbling walls and poverty with all the discomfort possible. I am going to talk about these experiences later showing pictures as well. In Cordoba I met women telling fortune and selling things, which was very useful because I had the opportunity to ask them about their chances of further studying and their children's possibilities at school. English language was spoken well only by those who worked in the milieu of the university, which is why I met difficulties in communicating with "average" Roma people. I needed all my knowledge as a researcher.

I learned all the basic words in Spanish and I used metacommunication skills which were highly appreciated by Roma people who were very helpful. I used the questions from the questionnaire and I also asked the help of local PhD students who spoke good English. This tactic proved to be very effective and made it possible to get over the language barriers. I discovered that it was difficult to become a member of music and dancing groups from schools and from the streets as long as I had to keep my status as a researcher, meanwhile I wished to get an inner point of view. During my silent observing position I had the opportunity to realize that people (strangers from the street) were all very helpful. So, as a foreign researcher I did not try to become one of the Spanish, but I managed to get "involved" by asking for help.

I discovered a method rooted in my personal need: the difficulty that I had a very low capacity of orientation turned out to be for my advantage. I was obliged to talk to almost a hundred of people and to have discussions in order to find the way to my destination. This fact helped me to obtain an interpersonal, relevant point of view from the researched group of people.

The Attitude of the Researcher

As a cultural researcher I know the cultural differences that can be found among the members of a nation. In my position of a cultural intercommunication teacher I try to accentuate the importance of diversity and to admit the otherness as a value. I believe that the empirical knowledge about the different ethnic groups can provide great help. On one hand one of our targeted groups for our research are Roma or Gitanos, to whom I feel myself closely related, firstly because I believe in acceptance, secondly because I am of Roma origin as well. These facts proved to be very useful for my experiences with Roma people, along with the detailed knowledge about their culture. On the other hand I tried to keep in focus my duty as a researcher in the interaction with Roma people.

Roma in Spain: General Situation

The Spanish Roma is estimated at 725.000 to 750.000 people, 40% of which live in Andalusia. There is also a significant percentage of the Roma community in Madrid, Valencia and Barcelona (Laparra, 2007). 1.6% - 1.9% of the Spanish population is Roma, while the percent of the Roma compared to the overall population within the 27 EU Member States is at 1.2%.

The Roma is the largest ethnic minority in the European Union (EU) and is also one of the groups that face deprivation, social exclusion, discrimination and unequal treatment when it comes to employment, education, housing and healthcare. Article 3 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU focuses on combating social exclusion and discrimination, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

and the Social Charter adopted by the Community and by the Council of Europe focuses on social rights²⁹.

The History of the Spanish Roma

It would be a misbelief to think that Roma people in Europe are a homogenous group with a common culture, history and language. Gitano is neither a homogenous group in Spain, nor in Europe. Several groups exist, such as Sinto, Kaldheras, Cherar, Beas, Vlach, etc.

In the 14th century the Andalusian Gypsies were not treated with respect. They were horse breeders and lived of animal trade. In the middle of in the 16th century a law was introduced in order to control the nomadic Roma (it imposed settling down, forced them to give up their Gitano name, etc... (the origin of the name is discussed further in this report). Most of them lived in villages and very few lived in cities.



In Triana, restaurant with Gitano motives.

The Gitano who live in Spain today, in the 1950s started to move from smaller cities to bigger cities and from the countryside to smaller cities. This process paved the way to ghettoization, to creating Gitano settlements. The biggest Gitano community lives in Andalusia. This is where flamenco was born. The Roma community is not a homogenous group, has many dialects and several traditional communities.

According to Jose Manuel Fresno³⁰, a minority researcher, the Roma, or as the Spanish call them, Gitanos were persecuted (could not be hired for work and could not benefit from the educational system) until 1977, when the law limiting nomadic behavior was introduced. In the aftermath of the dictatorship, the situation of the Roma changed: for the first time, they were incorporated into the social welfare system, regardless of their ethnicity. This meant that they were incorporated into the health care and education system, and also benefited from other allowances.

According to Fresno, Gitanos have settled by now and live in settlements in the bigger cities, below the poverty limit, (their houses have tin roofs, have no electricity nor gas, and no water supply), and also, have very poor statistical results when it comes to education, especially higher education.

²⁹ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, OJ 2012 C 326; European Social Charter, CETS No. 163.

³⁰researchgate.net/publication/275669324_Separation_of_Radio-Frequency_Sources_and_Localization_of_Partial_Discharges_in_Noisy_Environments

The Diagnostico Social Gitana en Espana in 2007 conducted a survey about the level of incorporation of the Roma in the educational system and also focused on the employment rate of the Roma living in Spain.

Padilla-Carmona Teresa is a professor at the University of Sevilla and during our conversation she confirmed that the Spanish call Roma population in many ways:

Gitano? – Spanish Roma, born and raised in Spain, with flamenco dance and music

Gypsy? – as in Europe- acknowledging the Roma as a community with its own culture and language

Roma? - the traveler people who come from Romania



*Barbie dolls with traditional Gitano clothes*³¹

The first group is accepted by the Spanish, who are proud of their Andalusian heritage. Flamenco dancers and musicians are drawn on postcards and there is no souvenir shop where tourists couldn't buy typical Gitano skirts, the red ones with white dots on them, or porcelain, table cloth and so on. Most restaurants use these motifs, and when asked, all said that the motifs come from the traditional flamenco music and dance, the heritage of the Gitanos in Andalusia. Many restaurants host flamenco evenings at least once a week, and at expensive prices, too. The traditional Gitano heritage has become an integral part of Andalusia.

The feelings towards the Roma are mixed. Now each time we hear expressions such as “*if they integrate*”, which for us, researchers, based on the long interviews we conducted, means that they could only imagine integration as assimilation.

“If they live like us, then there is no difference.”

„My name is Roma³² (the Spanish have two names), but nobody thinks I am a Roma.”

³¹ The picture was made in the outskirt flea market of Seville Trina. It represents well that the Barbies made Flamenco and Gitano society: for children do not wear the usual dresses known by the average people, but the traditional dotted Roma dresses. It seems that Spanish people do accept Roma people who are in a strong connection with music and Flamenco. Moreover, Flamenco is considered to be part of the cultural life, recognizing its economic value and traditional attraction for tourists.

³²This is surname

(Charo Rosalio Caraballo Roma- Seville University, Researcher)

During the interview with the above mentioned researcher, she pointed out the fact that the name itself (roma, gipsy) is not enough for the people to consider it that way. Nobody supposes that she is a Gitana, even though she uses in her name the word others call the ethnic group. The name is used to stigmatize, so if the signs connected to the "stigmatized being" do not correspond to the person (racial signs, dressing, traditions...), he/she can "drop out" of the Roma ethnic group, in case he/she belonged to it before. Unfortunately from the point of view of education system this can lead to a very strong stigmatization and discrimination. The difference between the Roma in Spain and other European countries is that being a Gitano has nothing to do with looks. Many Gitanos have lighter skin than the Spanish, the markers of race are not significant. Gitano university students that we interviewed all used this strategy in order to become Spanish, or to be accepted as Gitanos. This meant that they hid their culture, their traditions, habits and their language (callo³³). –

The third group is made of up the most disadvantaged. These people live in segregated areas, in houses with tin roofs, in very bad condition. Many wear traditional long dresses and handkerchiefs and come from Romania. They still do not speak the language, despite having come ten years ago if not even more, but given that they live in segregated areas, they prefer to use their own language, the Romani in their everyday interactions. They live mostly of trade, do not have jobs and are not registered. Their children, will most certainly end up as drop-outs, will look for jobs or start a family, as they have no alternatives.



The Roma women who came from Romania about 9 years ago

Identity

During my field work I talked to many Roma families, who are first, second or third generation Roma in Spain, and to those, as well, whose parents belong to different ethnic groups. In Spain Roma people are in a special situation, because if they "want to" or they are open to the pressure of the society they can "disappear" among the majority, because due to their racial signs they are very similar to Spanish people. I had the experience to see that the picture of a Spanish woman is very similar to the picture of a modern Roma woman, who wears the clothes worn by the women belonging to the majority.

She does not wear a handkerchief, does not live in segregation and can easily slide through the process of assimilation. This is dangerous because the young generation who enroll in higher education do not have the necessary knowledge about their culture and they are not sure about their identity, they cannot enjoy the strong support of their families, and they will not be able to return to their communities after the

³³This is the Spanish Gitano group's name

graduation and to help more and more young Romas to reach higher education level. That is why nationality studies and strengthening their identity should have an especially strong attention.

I would also like to talk about the Roma woman who migrated from Romania and with whom I made a structured interview at the flea market near Triana. She together with her five children and their families left their country in the hope of a better life. Their children are second-generation Spanish and their grandchildren third-generation ones. She speaks Spanish but from our conversation it turned out that her mother tongue is Roma from Lovar, language which she masters easily and fluently. She did not forget her origins but fleeing from starvation and racism she had to choose a new home, where even if they live at the "bottom" of society, segregated and in the ghetto, they still have a better economic situation compared to where they come from.

I would like to mention Ian Hancock's³⁴ study in which it is stated that in Europe the adjectives "nomadic" or "wandering/vagabond" are incorrectly used for Roma, because almost 100% of them are settled down, and those who are forced to leave their countries, do it not because of their "beloved" lifestyle, but because they do not have another choice. They have to leave because of their origin or because their living conditions are not insured. The Roma woman from Triana said that she considers it very hurtful that she and her family are considered to be strangers while they have been living in Spain for many years, and they feel themselves Spanish and Roma.

Spain Education System

Identity, Disadvantageous Situation and Targeted Research Group

First of all I would like to clarify the question how "*The possibilities of enrolling in the higher education for people in disadvantageous situation*" is related to Roma people, and why they have become the main targeted group of our research. I need to make clear some misunderstandings. Our research doesn't focus specifically on Roma communities, but on the disadvantaged people who have no access to higher education. According to our survey, a significant part of the Gitanos also face severe disadvantages when it comes to access to higher education. But it is also worth clarifying whom the Spanish and the Spanish Roma are using the denomination of Gitano for and why. It's a fact that people living below the poverty limit are not necessarily Roma. The Roma are not a homogenous group, but a number of smaller groups with special ethnic and cultural characteristics.

Most people associate flamenco with the Roma, but researchers also pointed out the low standard of living and the high unemployment rate. Undoubtedly, Andalusia is the home of flamenco and the Roma are aware of their role in having created it. The majority population accepts the Flamenco and is proud of it, too, as Charo Rosalio Roma Carballo is. This is what she said about the Roma culture:

"They are very poor. They have housing problems, educational problems, they can't read."

³⁴ Ian Hancock *On Romani Origins and Identity* 2008, Washington

Pedro³⁵, the third year Roma student at the University of Sevilla had difficulty in understanding our question:

— *I am Spanish. Gitano. Spanish.*- and he changed from one identity to another, then he said that it depends on the situation which identity is more important. *-I had no conflicts at the university, I received help all the time. It didn't matter if I was a Gitano or not.*

— *But you told us, they didn't even know you are a Gitano.* - I said.

— *„Yes, our skin color is the same, and I usually don't say that I am a Gitano, we are very integrated. And I'd rather avoid possible conflicts.”* -answered Pedro.

Pedro is Roma and he is in his third year at the university, but he never told anybody about his origin. He doesn't live segregated and he hasn't got so-called Roma traditions, nor does he speak Roma language: so can he be considered Roma? Or the medical student girl whom I quoted at the beginning of my research: she has totally assimilated within the majority, then how could she be considered Roma?

Obviously, they can be considered Roma from any point of view if they consider themselves to be of that identity. But it was a wrong researching concept to place them in the interview group of people in disadvantageous situation only because they are Roma.

Roma identity can be of no means an exclusive indication of the disadvantageous situation, because Roma people must be recognized an original ethnic group with their own culture and traditions.

Perez de Guzman, a Gitano writer said: „I am not a chauvinist, if I say that the Gitano are the truest Andalusians”. That is case of the Gipsy community who live here for many centuries. They are not foreigners, nor migrants, also because their lifestyle and culture (especially their music and dance) is a very important part of the Spanish society, history and culture. Of course there are big differences between the Roma communities living in Andalusia. Gitanos settled down centuries ago and the recently arrived migrant Gypsies are still looking for jobs and for a better life.

In Spain³⁶ the average income³⁷ is around 1500 Euros (two adults and two children). *„The minimum salary in Spain for 2016 is 764.40 euros/month. Poor families do not receive economical support from the government. They do only in very especial situations: for example, for those who are long-time unemployed and in risk of social exclusion they might get about the 70% of the minimum salary (the final amount varies among the Autonomous regions) but it lasts for some month (about 6 months) and after that they get nothing.”* – The statement is based on Mayte Padilla's –professor at Sevilla University – research focusing on this topic.

This sum almost corresponds to the data from Hungary: the minimal sum of a household³⁸ of two active adults and two children is of 2,90 (1 euro) x 87 510 forint = 253 779 forint (930 Euro)³⁹. In this household the average minimal sum/person is 63 445 forint= (235 Euro). So, people in disadvantageous situation are

35Pedro: Interviewee and coworker in the Seville University (the name is fictive, the person is anonym)

36 Interview with Dr. Mayte Padilla-Carmona, lecturer at Department of Research and Assessment .Methods in Education, University of Seville

37Information provided by Mr. José María Garrido Tagua, at author's request

38http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/innovacioncienciayempresa/sguit/g_busca_titm40_sup.php

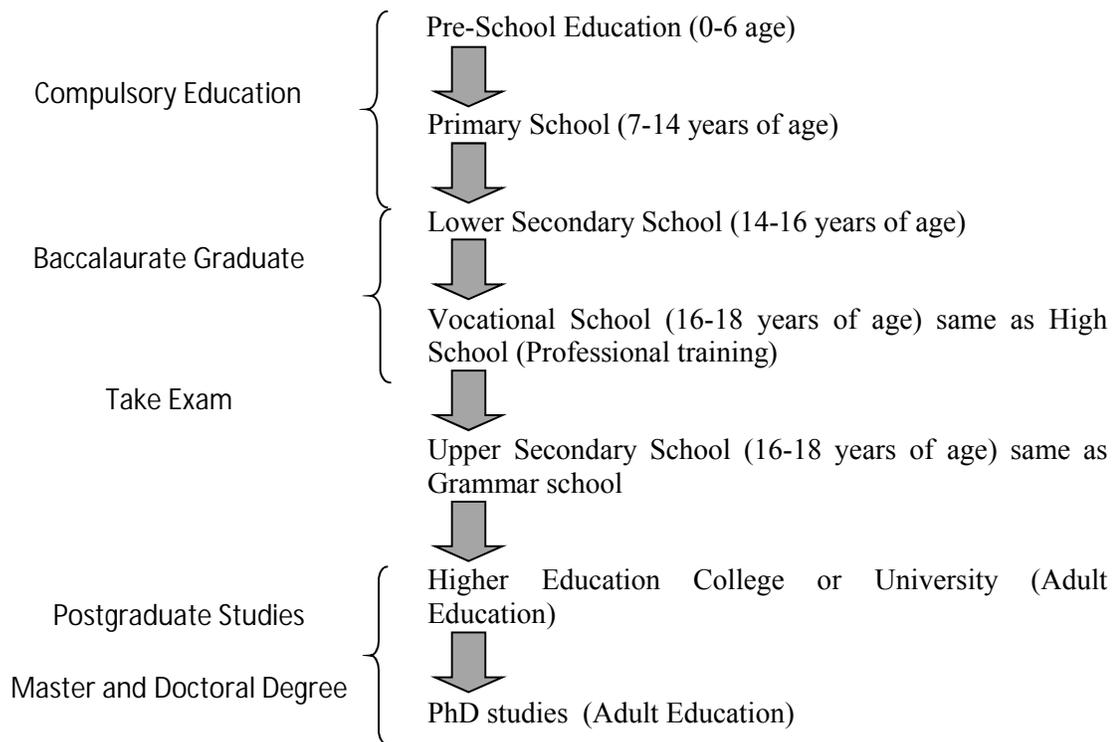
39<https://www.ksh.hu/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/letmin/letmin14.pdf>

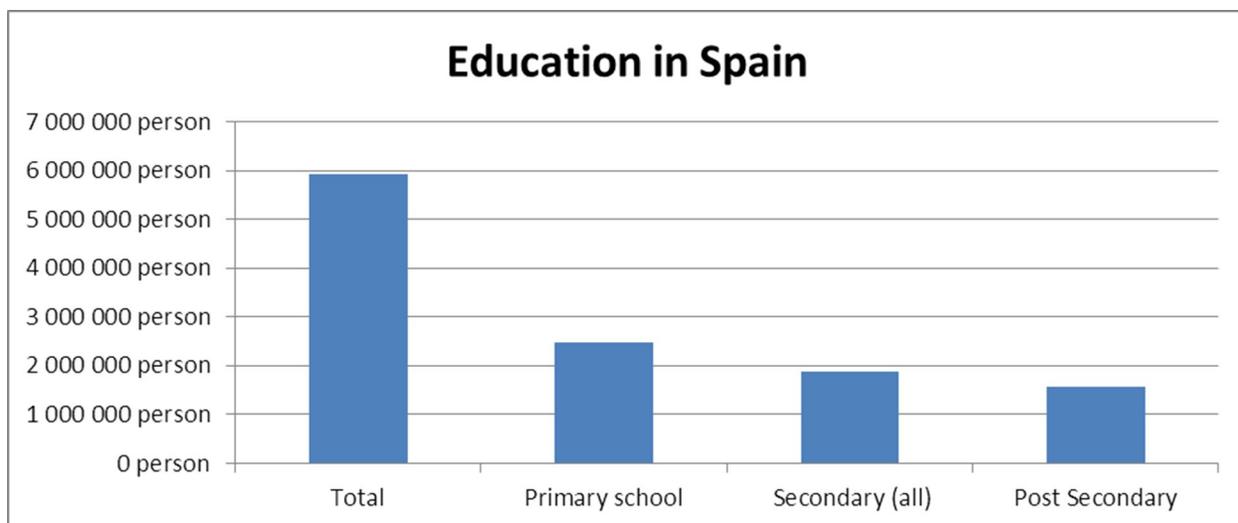
those who live under the living wage, and suffer multiple disadvantages because of their housing, the situation of education and their level of living.

Unfortunately the majority of Roma people in Spain live segregated and under the living wage. The interviews we made convinced us that those Roma who do not live in a multiply disadvantageous situation, do not meet any racism related obstacle, while the others do it regularly. Only two of our interviewees who grew up in a Roma environment and nobody knew about their origin confirmed that they did not face any discrimination while the Roma workers of two Spanish organizations (workers owning a diploma) had all faced some kind of racist discrimination during their lives in one or more educational institution: facts that means that more that 80% of the interviewees (approximately 14 people of the whole group) met discrimination.

All in all, there is a relation among the life quality of Romas and people living in disadvantageous situation, they cannot be considered and absolutely identical group.

Spanish education system





OECD Education and Glance 2002

The EU and its member states established a series of key competences for personal fulfillment, and include abilities that contribute to improving social inclusion and improving the employment rate. The key competences are shaped by of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are stimulated during compulsory education. EU Member States are committed to ensure that all children have equal and unhindered access to mainstream, inclusive schools, as Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights establishes. Besides ratifying the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees right to education for all children, the Member States also ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Measuring Progress in the Case of Roma Inclusion: a Mission Made Possible

Since 2001 important steps have been made in providing statistical data on the situation of the Roma in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. Results show that the Roma live in more severely disadvantaged circumstances and that this is closely related to the rate of illiteracy, infant mortality and malnutrition. In terms of education, the Roma have very bad results. Education levels were of dramatically low of and thus, competitiveness on the labour market is also low.

These results triggered a series of other research which focused on evaluating the extent of deprivation the are facing. Thus, in 2004, UNDP conducted a comprehensive and comparative on the situation of the Roma and compared it to the situation of their non-Roma neighbours in Central and South-Eastern European countries. The retrieved data is used as a reference when measuring progress on Roma inclusion, especially progress made.

In 2006, the FRA predecessor, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), published a comprehensive and comparative report on the participation of Roma in public education, based on available secondary data⁴⁰.

⁴⁰FRA in 2006 European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC)

According to this report, there is direct and systemic discrimination towards the Roma within the educational system, which manifests itself also in the form of exclusion from the educational system. This is the case for a number of Member States. This is caused by interrelated factors of poverty, high unemployment, substandard housing conditions and limited access to healthcare services.

The report revealed that there is few data on Roma enrollment to the education system, and that the level and performance of the Roma incorporated within the educational system was not examined, ethnicity was not considered a category of research.

The Disadvantages of Age Group

Analyzing the Spanish education system we found that it tries to offer help in many ways for young students and adults in order to make them part of the higher education. Still, it is a sad fact that only 2% of the Roma inhabitants frequent higher education and in spite of the apparent possibilities they do not share the goods in an equal way.

In the following I will make a brief presentation about the education system and some of its barriers from the Roma point of view.

1. After the compulsory education (done at the ages 16-18) those who want to study further can do an exam or they can continue the so-called *Bachillerato* exam, which provides a good education.
2. The 70% of those who study in the Bologna-system can reach the higher education level after passing an exam with high demands.⁴¹

The scale on which grade points vary is between 5 and 10, with 5 as minimum and 10 as maximum. The grade point average (GPA) is the average of marks gained at the leaving exam of upper secondary examination and university access test.

There are specializations that need a higher GPA (STEM specializations) and those which demand a minimum specialization are humanities. Students with a high GPA can choose the university where they would like to enroll, while those with a low GPA can enter only the not too demanding specializations. Hence, the system is flexible enough to accommodate all the eligible students⁴²

- The flexibility of the system consists in the fact that it takes into account the work experience when choosing specialization.⁴³
- Since 2008 there is a quota system for adult students.
- The system assures tuition fee free places but only for about 30% of students⁴⁴.

41 European Higher Education Area 2015, p. 19

42 Information provided by Dr. Mayte Padilla-Carmona, lecturer at Department of Research and Assessment .Methods in Education, University of Seville, and by Dr. Manuel Jesús Caro-Cabrera, associate professor at Department of Sociology, University of Seville interviewees

43 Information provided by Mr. José María Garrido Tagua, at author's request

44SWING report

It could be said that the system has enough flexibility in order to make it possible for "those who want to study to be able to do it so", but in reality this is not like this because many Roma students do not get even closer to this chance. They are not able to pass the exam which is needed to apply to the universities.

The Spanish higher education is available for everybody who wants to learn further and can afford to pay all the taxes, moreover who accept to be enrolled to the less demanding specializations. Researches done by us and by others prove these facts to be true:

„In the higher education there is no discrimination, I was always accepted” - said a Roma medical student colleagues and teachers of whom do not know that she is Roma. She lives in good conditions, her mother is a teacher, and her extended family is able to support her. She does not live segregated and her friends and acquaintances are not Roma.

„Higher education? That the skilled worker, isn't it? No. Then I don't know what that is.” This was said by a second-generation market seller Roma woman at the Vacie ghetto.

The most important experience of my visit at the Triana market was that while I was doing the research on how Roma people could enroll in the higher education, and why they are represented in a very low number, I found that my interviewees did not even know what higher education was. They do not know about the universities and colleges. The only alternative reachable for them is the vocational school which many times they do not even finish.

I consider that the reasons are the following:

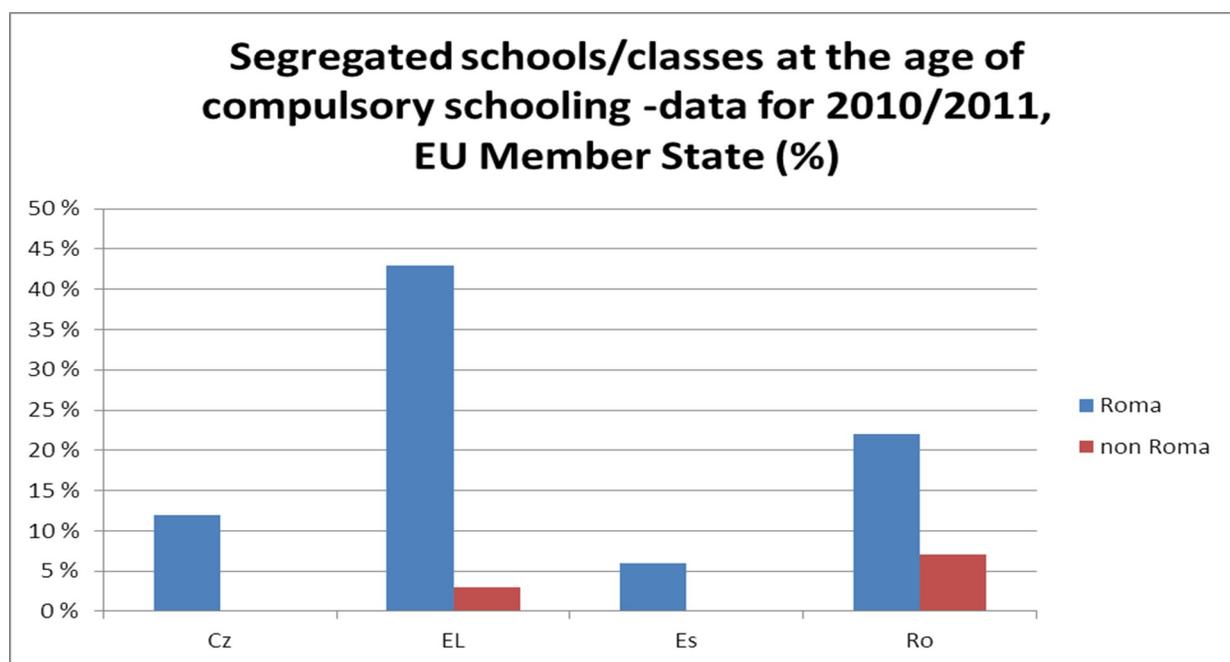
- in the ghettos and Roma districts people do not get an elementary and general education of quality and do not have the chance to do an exam and to enter the higher education;
- There is a serious lack of information because of the segregation and stigmatization, which is why Roma living in humble conditions do not know the process and possibilities of getting in the higher education.
- The lack of information leads to the fear that they do not have and will not ever have the chance and the capability to enroll in the system, to meet challenges and to pay the fees. This is because they do not know how and what kind of scholarships they should ask from the state.
- The higher education system helps mostly the young adults (between the ages 18-24), but forgets about very vulnerable group of people (those between 16 and 18 years) and their financial problems. There exist an identity and economic crisis, because similar to other European countries the education system loses many young people belonging to this age group, and they will not be able later to get back to school. So there is no serious program for these young people neither from the part of the society neither from the part of the government.
- The quota for adults does not provide financial help, but only a position at the university, which is why it is very difficult for the family to provide material support, mainly because these families live under the living wage.⁴⁵
- Roma vocational colleges and clubs for the Roma intellectuals are very new notions nowadays, that is why many young Roma have to choose the "lonely fight" or they have to assimilate with the values of the majority, because they do not have the supporting power of their community (the community of young Roma intellectuals).

⁴⁵http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/innovacioncienciayempresa/sguit/g_busca_titm40_sup.php

Equal Treatment-Segregation

In many EU Member States, many Roma children are enrolled in special educational institutions and programmes, despite the fact that they have no difficulty studying. Segregation is dominant in education system in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Greece. 33% -58% of Roma children attend a class where all or most children are Roma. In Italy, Poland, Portugal and Spain segregation is not very dominant.

Approximately 10% of the respondents who had contact with educational personnel felt discriminated in the past 12 months, compared to 10% of respondents who felt discriminated when accessing healthcare services. Only 7% experienced discrimination at the workplace, while 23% experienced discrimination when looking for an apartment and 24% felt discriminated when looking for a job. The willingness to report discrimination is low, which means that the Roma perceive unequal treatment as enrolment.⁴⁶



Source: Roma pilot survey, 2011

In some member states the rate of Roma high school graduates is at 91%, but for Portugal, France, Czech Republic and Spain this rate is at around 45%. This is extremely worrisome, because these youngsters will have no chance to continue their studies and most certainly will not enroll in the higher education system. In Spain, Romania and France almost all children with compulsory schooling are enrolled in the education system, but for the Roma. For them, the percentage of dropout is as high as 40%.⁴⁷

A 2011 FRA study which evaluated enrollment of Roma children of compulsory schooling age showed that many do not attend school despite being 6-7. This is the case for Greece, Spain, Bulgaria. But what is

⁴⁶Source: Roma pilot survey, 2011

⁴⁷(Laparra, 2011) Government's statistical data 2007

even more striking is that the number of adolescents (16-17) who drop out is also very high especially in Greece, Bulgaria, Spain and Poland.

Poverty can cause a certain distancing from Roma identity. Those who want to break away distance themselves from the Roma identity too, because they want to be accepted and integrated into Spanish society.

The photos below were made by me during my field work in 2015, between the 1st and 15th of October. During this period of time I conducted several interviews. They present the abandoned ghettos at the Southern part of Seville and the outskirts of Triana, at a marketplace used by migrants and refugees.



VACIE – one of the ghettos having the worst reputation in Seville⁴⁸

Roma children may attend either a mainstream school, or become incorporated in class in a nominally integrated school that most Roma children attend. The survey included questions about the ethnic background of the children's classmates and thus provided information the different ethnicities of the children.

Questions were addressed to parents. The questions referred to the ethnic background of children's classmates at school or at kindergarden. In neighbourhoods where many Roma live compared to other regions within the country, one would expect that a high number of results⁴⁹.

The methodology chosen might explain partly the differences in the results between the two surveys. In the FRA survey a randomly selected member of the household answered the questions and provided information about all the children living in the household, while the UNDP survey asked the children's main caretaker. The reference group were the children up to 15 years old, belonging to both Roma and non- Roma households enrolled in the education system.

About 90 % of the Roma children in Poland attend classes where the majority is non-Roma, this percent is 60 % for and about 50 % for the Czech Republic, Italy and France. In Greece, about a third of Roma children, as reported by the household respondents, attend schools or classes where all or most of their schoolmates or classmates are Roma; only a quarter attend mixed classes.

⁴⁸Vacie: the typical housing segregation place. The majority of people do not dare to enter this place and getting out of there is almost impossible. Those who have this address in their documents can be sure about that they will not get a suitable or any kind of job. In the mornings volunteers bring food for the children, and if there is a possibility they take them to schools.

⁴⁹http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-roma-survey-employment_en.pdf

The data on schools or classes attended by non-Roma children living in close vicinity with Roma families reveal an ethnically homogeneous school environment for most countries: In Poland (96%), in Greece (91%) and in Italy (85%) of non-Roma children attended classes without or with just a few Roma classmates. In the Czech Republic (78%), in Slovakia (76%) and in Portugal (77%). All of these countries have a rate of over 75% of non-Roma children attending classes without or with very few Roma classmates.⁵⁰

According to this survey, countries where Roma children live in close proximity to non-Roma children, they not attend the same schools/classes. Based on the results from Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, 32% to 49% of non-Roma children who live in close vicinity with Roma children that they studied in ethnically mixed classes.⁵¹

France was not included in this analysis because comparing children of nomadic populations to children who live in the close vicinity of Roma families, might lead to misleading results.

There are three important types of segregation

1. SNI (SEN)⁵²-children- When children are included in disability categories (mild disability or medium disability). Research from Hungary shows that these categories are not based on intellectual abilities, but are created based on cultural differences where also a lack of social skills is present. The children cannot sit still for 45 minutes, complex math problems cause difficulties and they also have difficulty understanding the language of communication and have discipline issues, too. The educational system does not acknowledge that these children need teachers with proper understanding of their cultural backgrounds. These children have excellent verbal and non-verbal communicational skills (because of their socio-cultural background) and if teachers address that properly, their work would be successful and easy⁵³.
2. Direct segregation: when Roma children are placed in separate classes, or separate schools; in most cases this stems from structural and institutionalized supported by the local governments, against which in many EU countries human rights organizations protest and launch lawsuits. Nonetheless, segregation is flourishing in the Romanian, Polish, Spanish educational system.
3. The segregated classes that are formed spontaneously: the majority population take their children out of the institutions many/mostly attended by Roma, because they are afraid that the level of education will worsen. Those who take children out of schools may move away from the village, too. As an outcome segregate Roma villages and schools are created. This is the case in Spain in the neighbourhood of Poliano Sur. According to the professors of the University of Sevilla, all of the bigger cities of Andalusia (17) have segregated neighbourhoods that are inhabited mostly by Roma and it is only multiply disadvantaged Roma children who attend the public school.

⁵⁰Eurostat 2010 http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-577_en.htm

⁵¹http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-577_en.htm
http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-577_en.htm

⁵²SEN: Special Educational Need

⁵³ Ilona Nótár - Conscious Life Education Program based on experience with a program dedicated to children with disadvantaged backgrounds

Fieldwork Experience in Triana

Triana is the south-eastern part of Seville, old town, located at the outskirts. It is an area where many Roma families reside. In the weekends a market is set and many Roma are active there: they buy and sell groceries, electronics, clothes, shawls. I conducted non-formal interviews with three extended families. I focused on the circumstances they live in and the access they have to higher education. One of the old men had seven children. The extended family lives in Seville. He and his family lived all their lives in Seville. Two of his children helped him with the business and the rest also tried to live of the same trade. He said he never faced discrimination in Seville, and none of his children graduated high school, nor vocational school.



The old woman (image) came to Spain 12 years ago with her family. She has 11 children, who all live in the same community. She still has language issues. We realized that for her, it is not Romanian, nor Spanish, the language of communication; she could only communicate in Romani. Of the eleven children not even one graduated from high school, and two of her children were present at the interview. One of them, the 16 year old girl was wearing a long red skirt with polka dots, her hair braided in the back. She told us that she “will continue with school for a little longer”.

My third interviewee was a young father of 19 and his young wife of 17, who was pregnant. They have their own business, they sell clothes and shoes. None of them graduated from upper secondary high school and they said that if they had work, they would like to settle in Spain.

People who were interviewed (old and young) did not understand what university was. For them it is so difficult to understand what upper level secondary school means, or what vocational training is, that they are not even aware how to get even further. But they don't wish to either, because their only goal is to find a job and have an income with which to support their family or contribute to the family budget.

Illiteracy

Based on the FRA Roma pilot survey, 2011: the rate of Roma children up to the age of 15 who attend special schools/ classes created mainly for the Roma, by EU Member State (%): Self- declared illiterates among Roma and non-Roma adolescents – with results by Member State: The FRA Roma pilot survey of 2011 addressed the following question: “*Can she/he read and write?*” The research focused on Roma and non Roma respondent, aged 16 and older. The results showed that in each member state the number of

illiterate Roma is higher than the number of illiterate non-Roma. In Spain this rate at 14%, in Greece at 52%, in France at 25% and in Romania is at 31%.⁵⁴

The lack of data on preschoolers enrolled in special and segregated education, and due to gender differences in participating in the education system the assessment of the situation is made difficult. The Roma who are enrolled at the different levels of education is significantly low. There is also an increasing gap between the school enrollment to secondary education of the majority population and the Roma population. Only in terms of literacy can we see a reduction of the gap in terms of gender differences, which also improves over time.

The reason behind is not just that the children don't attend school after turning 15, but that the level of is also very poor and the schools are unable to deal with the special needs of children coming from culturally different backgrounds.

According to this research there are more girls who cannot read or write than boys, because they drop out sooner than boys, as they have more duties to attend to, than boys (chores are done by girls. This is due to the different tasks that are decided by strict gender roles).

Nonetheless, the number of illiterate Roma is lower than it used to be (compared to the generation of the grandparents), but still, drop-out levels are very high. Based on the Eurostat and FRA⁵⁵ research results, we can say that for the Roma of 18-24 years, drop-out levels are still significantly higher than for the students/pupils the majority population. Spain, Poland and Romania have the highest number of drop-outs: high school students leave school without being able to perform basic skills.

Juan de Dios Ramirez Heredia 56, the leader of Romani Union⁵⁷ and the first MP with Romani origins thinks that the situation of the Roma in Spain has improved, but points out the existing problem of illiteracy and discrimination that affect the Roma when it comes to the educational system.

Women and tradition attitude

The situation of Roma women in Spain compared to other EU countries is even worse when it comes to early drop-out. 62 % of Roma men and 72 % of Roma women drop out before turning 16.

The most striking difference in high school attendance based on gender is in Hungary: Roma women drop out of the education system before turning 16. This occurs at a higher rate (20%) than men. The gap between Roma men and women dropping out of school is only at expressed in percentage in the Czech Republic and France. This result also shows that if Roma children attend school at a young age, the difference in drop-out rate based on gender also decreases.

But most countries have better results for the drop-out rate of girls. Hungary managed to decrease Roma girls' drop-out rate. The rate of Roma women who dropped out before turning 16 went down from 82% to 33%.⁵⁸

54 FRA 2011 Early school leavers among Roma (FRA survey) and the overall population

55 FRA 2011 Early school leavers among Roma (FRA survey) and the overall population (age group 18-24)

56 <http://www.unionromani.org/downloads/URmemo2014.pdf>

57 <http://www.unionromani.org/downloads/URmemo2014.pdf>

This improvement is particularly worth noting. School drop-out affects boys and girls disproportionately. When girls drop out, their chances in life narrow down significantly, and thus, it is important to maintain the current low rate.

When summing up the data on education within the region, we see an improvement for the situation of Roma in terms of preschool, primary and secondary education enrollment. There is also an improvement in literacy experienced the past decade. Moreover, the difference between the Roma and non-Roma population in terms of school attendance is decreasing, but far from being eliminated. This gap possibly grew in the case of education, although the overall situation of the Roma improved.

Still, there is an overrepresentation of the Roma in special schools and the overall segregation of the Roma in the education system became more pronounced in the past decade.⁵⁹

The number of Roma completing different levels of education is significantly low and the gaps between Roma and non-Roma school attendance, especially in the case of secondary education, where there is a growth in the gap.

This gap is decreasing only for the case of illiteracy.

We have available data on employment where we see a worsening situation. This is true for the Roma, and even more of women. This trend manifests itself in long-term unemployment for the Roma, whereas for the non-Roma the tendency is decreasing.

Data on housing shows minor differences between Roma and the majority population, and some increase in the number of Roma who don't have access to drinking water and electricity.

We do not have any data access to healthcare. The only data we have show that the Roma infant mortality rate is almost three times higher than that of the majority population and that life expectancy of the Roma is 10 years less compared to majority population. The trend is negative in both cases.

We don't have data average income either. About three-fourths of the Roma live at the poverty limit and about one-third live in deep.

Compared to the non-Roma, the Roma are proportionately poorer and the gap between the two groups grew over time. Moreover, one-third of the Roma experience discrimination.

The percentage of illiteracy compared to the education of people in Spain

The total population	total population%	Roma population%	female Roma population%
Primary Ed.	78	45	No data

⁵⁸Roma Inclusion Index http://www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9810_file1_roma-inclusion-index-2015-s.pdf
http://www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9810_file1_roma-inclusion-index-2015-s.pdf

⁵⁹All Roma respondents aged 16 and more. FRA Roma pilot survey, 2011

34% fewer Roma complete primary (compulsory) education than overall population			
Secondary Ed.	39	10	No data
29% fewer Roma population secondary school than the majority population			
Tertiary Ed. 10% fewer Roma than majority population complete tertiary education	12	2	No data
Literacy 5% fewer Roma are illiterate. For Romani women the gap is 8%	98	93	90

Source: Roma Inclusion Index 2015

Tradition and Women's Possibilities for Studying Further

In the following I discuss in details Roma organizations and Roma women's rights, but first I concentrate the cultural approach. I take as a starting point Sandra Heredia's words, who is a social scientist of Roma origin and she makes her studies as a PhD student at the Spanish University. She is a Roma rights activist, employee of the Fakali and Amuradi⁶⁰ organizations who due to her language knowledge has an important role in the international relations. Sandra helped us to translate Roma women's opinions who work at their NGO, moreover when we visited several events, she made it possible for us to hear about personal experiences, life stories and traditional roles. Sandra is from Cordoba which is a small location at the South-west side of Andalusia, place famous because of its buildings and relatively large Roma community. The reason why Sandra joined the Amuradi organization was to help those ambitious women whose identity was important, and they, like her, wanted a larger space for their possibilities and dreams. It was a very interesting experience that according our research and the opinions of our interviewees women were in a multiply disadvantageous situation (early motherhood, childbirth, the rate of leaving school and getting a job), still from the three non-governmental organizations in two we found Roma women in leading position, being intellectuals and having diplomas.

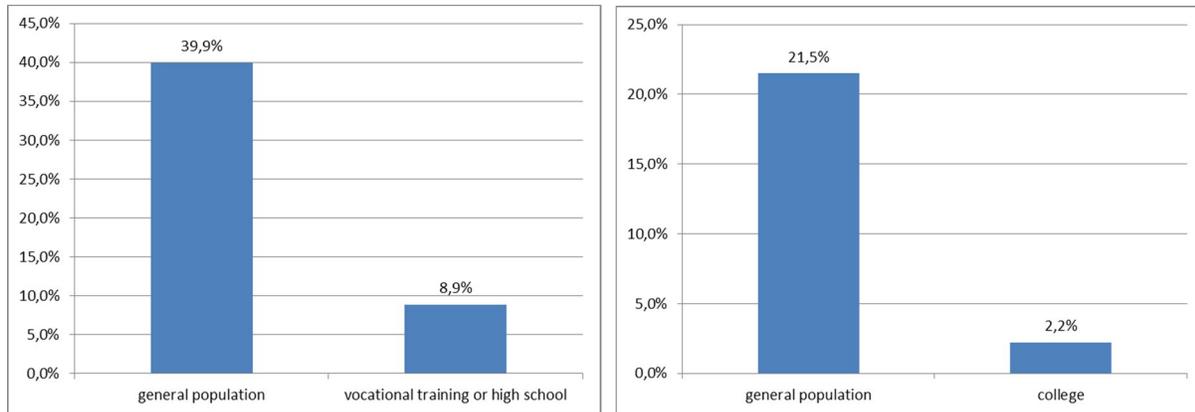
They welcomed the fact that I was a Roma, too, and I struggle to obtain my PhD degree, but the greatest recognition I got was because I am a mother bringing up two children. Because of this they hugged me every day, and as we visited an organization more than once, they greeted me expressing that the work I did was valuable since I did it as a mother, and I could be respectable as a Roma woman, too. Most likely it was the common fate, because we, the women, know from personal experiences how hard is to meet multiple expectations and also to keep them.

Socio economic situation, possibilities and disadvantages

Statistics in on Roma in Spain and in particular regarding their participation in higher education is unfortunately very limited. This is an important factor especially when analyzing the educational progress of this group, because lack of data makes it difficult to assess in quantitative terms the progress that has been made in Roma inclusion.

⁶⁰<http://www.amuradi.org/>

Fakali⁶¹ (2012) states that there is a minority group, but nonetheless, growing group of young Roma who have access to and graduate from higher education. Similarly, there is a more recent study⁶² which focused on the Roma population aged 20-24 years. Only 8.9% of Roma (compared to 39.9% of the general population) complete vocational training or high school. Only 2.2% of young Roma (21.5% in the general population) graduate from college.



Laparra (2007) warns of the risk of stereotyping the Roma and states that the cases of people experiencing deprivation are much more visible despite the fact that only 20% of them are Roma. According to him, the reality is that many Roma do not live in conditions of marginalization and poverty and that they belong to different social sectors that are not as visible to society. *"These Roma today represent 80% of the Spanish Roma but their appearance of normality does not interest the media"* (p. 78).

The 2010 Action Plan estimates around 200 Spanish Roma having higher education degrees⁶³. If this is correct, it implies that less than 0.5% of the Spanish Roma had higher education degrees at the time the estimation was done. To put it in perspective, it means, that among the total population of Spain older than 25, about 27% graduated from at least the first cycle of higher education⁶⁴. The 2010 Action Plan also specifies that in the 2014-2015 academic year, among the 1,462, 771 university students not even 1000 were Roma, whereas if we take into account the percent of the Roma population of Spain, this number should have been at 28,468.⁶⁵

The Spanish Progress Report 2013 gives another estimation for the number of Roma graduates of higher education. The Report mentions that there is a significant difference in the number of graduates from post-compulsory education between Roma and the majority population for the age group of 20 to 24: only 8.9% of Roma will have completed upper secondary or vocational education compared to 40% of the majority population. At the same time, the report mentions that only 2.2% of Roma of the respective age group completed higher education, compared to 22% of the majority population.⁶⁶

61 <http://www.fakali.org>

62 gitanos.org/upload/64/76/RESUMEN_EJECUTIVO._EI_alumnado_gitano_en_secundaria_ingles_.pdf

63 The action plan, p 23

64 UNESCO database, Population by minimum completed level of education (cumulative), figure for 2012. Source: <http://data.uis.unesco.org/#>

65 [The action plan, p 23](#)

66 FRA Roma pilot survey, 2011; Eurostat, available at: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-11-1114_en.htm

As mentioned, the Roma in Andalusia live mostly in segregated settlements. Almost all of our interviewees grew up similarly to the rest of the society, as integrated, so they did not have to face the difficulty of their Gitano heritage. Pedro did not even mention it to anyone, and Noemi and Maria said that this is not a topic they would talk about, besides their very close friends no one knows about their background. People do not know that they are Roma, which is due to the fact that here people have darker skin color, so there are no specific racial marker that would differentiate them from their non-Roma fellows, unless they show specific signs such as traditional jewelry or traditional Gitano dresses, which is not very common in the center of Sevilla nor in any other city.

Maria, who works at a Roma organization called Fakali thinks that there are two main causes behind the lack of access of the Roma to higher education:

Segregation- which means that they live in very bad housing conditions, have limited social interaction, high unemployment, experience hunger

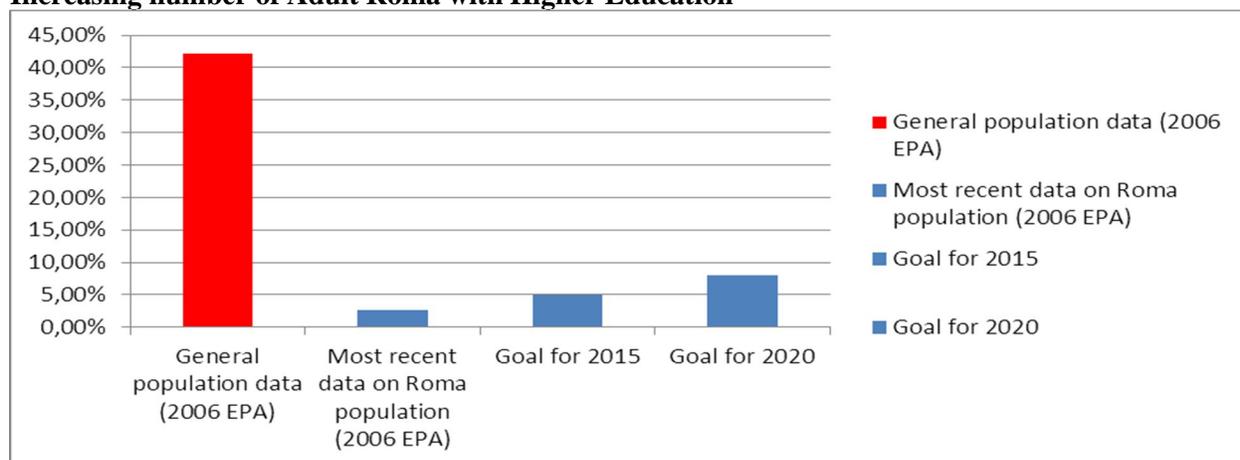
- The Spanish have a stereotypical image of the Gitanos.
- Education should be key, but studying at the university is not even an option for a Roma person. Their goal is to have a vocation, which is not sufficient in order to have a degree in the Spain, the system requires that they also have a graduation exam...

Government Initiatives

The Ministry of Health introduced the program on Social Services and Equality in 2011 as part of the National Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma in Spain for 2012-2020. This program is dedicated to improving on social inclusion of the Roma and focuses on the issues of education, employment, access to healthcare and housing.

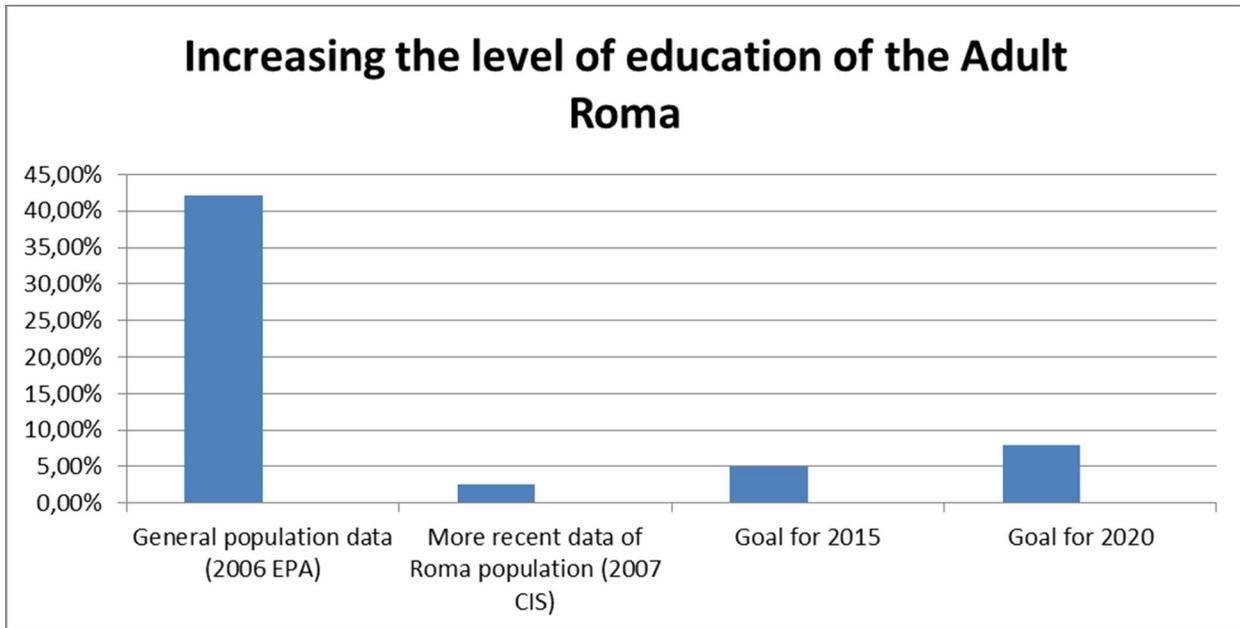
As part of the National Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma in Spain for 2012-2020, the National Roma Integration Strategy for 2012-2020 (Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, 2011) deals with the issue of the integration of Roma (and improving their situation in terms of education, employment, health and housing). The Strategy for education and especially for higher education is the goal number 4, and aims at improving the educational situation of the Roma.

Increasing number of Adult Roma with Higher Education



National Statistics Institute: “Active population -survey 2006” (Annual data 2006)

National Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma in Spain 2012-2020 National Roma Integration Strategy for 2012-2020 (Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, 2011) also deals with the above mentioned areas and works for the social inclusion of the Roma (improving their situation in education, employment, healthcare and housing). The Strategy for education, especially focusing on higher education is strategy number 4. It sets the goal of improving the educational level of the Roma.



National statistics institute: “active population survey 2006”

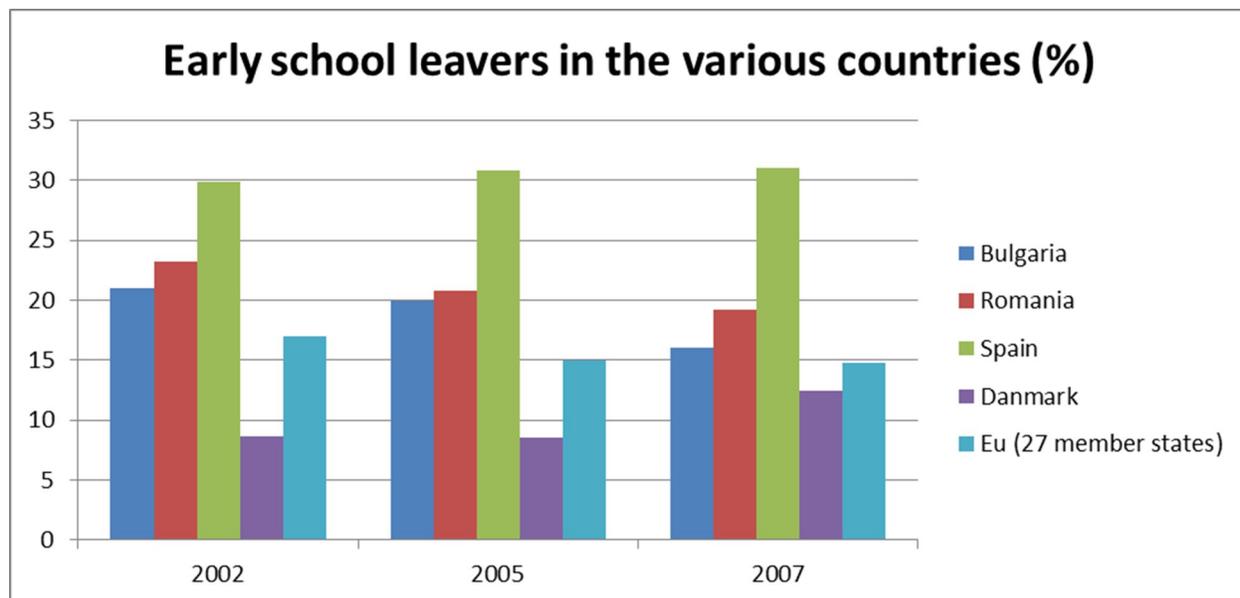
Suggesting Solutions

Improving the educational level of the Roma is the fourth provision of the strategy. It focuses especially on improving the access to higher education. Roma organizations criticized the government plans, because they were not invited to participate in the process and also because the plan focused on the Roma community only as a social category without considering it as an ethnic group. I consider this a very interesting point, and I think we need to take it into account when thinking about the Roma community.

In 2010 the Spanish government approved an Action Plan for the Development of the Roma Population, which among its education-related objectives aimed to “*facilitate the university entrance and permanence of the young Roma within the system*”. The Plan specified that this objective would be attained by fostering career guidance programs in the last formal education years, by promoting grant programs for Roma university students financed by non-profit or private institutions, and by encouraging organizations supporting Roma mobilization to develop assistance programs for the Roma in order to gain access to higher education. It is worth seeing that the tools created do not require direct involvement on behalf of the Government. This role is attributed to NGOs and the private sector.⁶⁷

⁶⁷Fourth Report Submitted By Spain Pursuant To Article 25, Paragraph 2 Of The Framework Convention For The Protection Of National Minorities

The Plan also specified that facilitating the access to higher education for Roma shall be conferred upon of secondary education and upon successful university entrance exams. For those older than 25 (especially women) academic support programs shall be launched Adult Education Centers, which will also encourage the young Roma, „especially women” to continue their academic careers.



Eurostat Labour Force Survey

There are two countries where the situation is worsening: Spain and Denmark. But if we look at the adult Danish population, then the results are not that bad. Leaving school stands for an attempt of finding their path, and they provide proper career orientation trainings. For majority of countries there are no changes in terms of drop-outs. In Spain the number of drop-outs has increased, but not significantly, whereas in Romania, where the number of drop outs was on the rise, we see improvement.

The European solution offers two options:

1. There is no need for separate schools. A solution must be found in order to prevent drop-outs. (For instance graduating without having theoretical training, only a practical one based on lots of practice of a given profession)
2. There is a need for separate schools, because introducing these youngsters to the educational system and the labor market is a much longer process and it requires a change in the character of a person. This requires more resources, and can be used in countries that have strong economies.

Two decades ago drop-out was an issue researched only by sociologists. Today, we know that the reason why there is no possibility on the labor market is because of the very low level of education or the lack of it. If these youngsters are unemployed for a long time, they end up on the peripheries of the society. Reintegrating them is very expensive and also very difficult. Maintaining a strong economy can only be done with proper labor, and thus, rethinking the educational strategy is highly recommended, together with the series of opportunities in training grown-ups and widening the options of vocational schools.

According to the declaration of Copenhagen the most important goal is to eliminate drop-out, to improve vocational training and the transparency of vocational trainings throughout Europe.

Non-Governmental Initiatives

There are several civil organizations of the Roma living in Spain that help and support the community in reaching their goals while keeping in mind their interests. These organizations can help in the integration process.

From the 1970s a process has started in Spain due to which organizations protecting Roma rights have started to get stronger. This is a very important step for reaching further education, which is why it is an important part of my report to present orally the past and the profile of Andalusian organizations, mentioning that many times these organizations work together with Madrid or Barcelona centers. Obviously, the main action of these organizations is linked to the places where the number of segregated Roma is very big, like Malaga, Cadiz, Cordoba, Seville and Granada.

Fakali Foundation and Amuradi

Amuradi

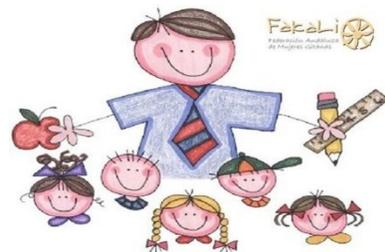
The Foundation gathers the Andalusian women who graduated from university. This was the first organization founded in 2002. Its leader is Beatriz Callilo de los Reyes, who later has become chief of the Fakali organization, too. Their work focuses on striving for equality for the Roma. It has its headquarters in Sevilla, where most of their activity takes place. It is an NGO which is financed by other institutions, such as state organizations and private companies.⁶⁸

Goals: rights for women and equality between genders; equal treatment for all regardless of ethnicity; acknowledgement and respect of the Roma culture

Tasks: providing advice for the Roma in order to improve and better their social situation; organizing trainings, launching programs that focus on issues of integration; cooperation with other organizations; raising awareness and teaching courses on how to solve the situation of people living in disadvantaged circumstances; organizing events against racism and xenophobia.

Fakali

Fakali and Amuradi are the only organizations in Andalusia that are helping the Roma in accessing higher education. Sandra, the coordinator of the organization thinks that this is important because “it is women, who teach the traditions to their children, the importance of studying and they act as examples for the future generations”. Sandra’s parents respect traditions and at the beginning they had a hard time understanding why university was important, but as they saw her sturdiness, they supported her in everything.



⁶⁸<http://www.amuradi.or>

Now she is a PhD student. In her view if women have a chance to study, than it will be way easier for their children to continue their studies. If women manage to become good examples, the Gitano society might revive. The health and economic conditions, the social status and the living circumstances of their children might improve. On the long run their life expectancy can also rise.

Fakali organization has a special program that supports Roma women in gaining access to higher education:

- Getting to know each other, issue of identity
- Creating a personal map: what do I want, where am I now, how can I achieve my goals?
- How can I make my dreams come true? Can I make them come true? Starting with very concrete steps: a tutor accompanies the student to the university, introduces them to the professors, familiarizes them with university life
- They hand in the Application Form together, they help filling it out, and what is most important, they assist in looking for a scholarship, for a job, for a place to stay.

Thanks to this complex assistance package, Fakali hires volunteers in a lineage system (we met new faces each time from Cádiz, Córdoba, Málaga). Student beneficiaries receive support from a community which knows and understands Roma culture and is familiar with the complexities of Roma identity (culture, traditions, male and female roles, difficulties). But at the same time this community is also familiar with the complicated higher education system. Its members have become successful and thus, younger people turn to them with trust.

There is good collaboration between the University of Sevilla and three Roma organizations. Roma volunteers hold workshops at the universities of Andalusia (connections with 17 universities). In teams of two, they give a one or two day-long interactive lecture for university students (anthropology professors, sociologists, psychologists) about Roma identity, about their economic situation, their limitations and their possibilities.

It is definitely an initiative worth mentioning, because the university leadership is very open to information coming from authentic sources, and acknowledges that there is a need for communication and proper information. Students can be motivated by the credit points they can acquire if they attend the class. Maria, another coordinator at Fakali, told us that these seminars and workshops are held by Roma who have university degrees, PhD students and volunteers without degree. 70% of the lecturers are of Roma origin.



Foundation Secretariado Gitano

The Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) is an intercultural non-profit organization. It started its activity in the 1960s, but it was registered only in 1982. Their work includes participating actively in various networks, councils, platforms and establishing partnerships with other stakeholders on international, national, regional and local levels. Its headquarter is in Madrid, but is also present in cities of Andalusia, and they also collaborate with various local Roma organizations.

In 2008, the organization published a book containing interviews with 50 young Roma people, with the title *The life stories of 50 Roma students, (Historia de vida de 50 estudiantes gitanos y gitanas)*, which aimed at portraying the Roma in a realistic way. The goal was to share information about their lives, their dreams and plans. The testimonials and accounts are narrated in first person, and the Roma identity is an important issue that the interviewees talk about. It also includes a presentation of the benefits of getting into higher education.

During our visit at FSG⁶⁹, I realized that the main goal of the organization, present throughout Spain and Andalusia, is to assist and support the Roma in their struggle for work and their studies both at elementary school level and at vocational schools. In Andalusia they do not have practices in assisting the young Roma in their quest for accessing university education. The leader of the organization together with the colleagues, who were mostly women, said that for the local Roma studying at the university is not even an option. They live in deep poverty, and their main struggle is surviving from one day to another. The everyday struggle confers them a sense of dignity, gives pace to their everyday lives and gains them respect from their wider community.

It is a sad reality that it is almost impossible to reintegrate the Roma who live in segregated areas into the labor market, because their documents will allow the employers to know where they live. And if the address is in areas that have a bad name, they are not hired. Trying to reintegrate the Roma on the labor market, besides a profession, requires more than just an one-sided solution. In many cases they need to change addresses. The organization helps them in looking for new residence, but given that their resources are limited, their possibilities are also limited.

They give support to 2000 people per year. Since 2003 they assisted almost 15.000 people.

They also have a program for children who attend secondary education. They offer tutoring for pupils living in segregated areas. Based on their experience, the children drop out of the educational system when they turn 16, because most of the girls marry at this age, and boys start working next to their family and help in selling clothing, fruits or spare parts.

⁶⁹Fundation Secretaritado Gitano

European equal opportunity programs

I would like present some European models which work in Europe, Hungary and Eastern Europe. Me, as well, as a Roma participant, I could participate in a research in Spain, with the support of the Roma Education Fund and the HEIM Project. This program together with the others I present, could be of great help for Roma realignment, gaining for themselves the same rights as the majority and reaching their dreams. Spain could also get inspired from these models.

- CEU-RAP-RELP - Central European University Roma Access Program and Roma Language Program
- Romaversitas
- Jezsuita Szakkollégium
- REF-RMUSP - Roma Education Fund Roma Scholarship Program

These types of programs do not exist in Spain even though it would be of utmost importance. These programs are very useful because there is a strong relationship not only between the tutor and student, but also among students, with a strong community-building power. Moreover they provide professional development.



ROMA
VERSITAS
ALAPÍTVÁNY



- **CEU Roma Access Program**, which has the **Roma English Language Program**, a 9-month English language course for Roma students who will enter BA level, implemented by Central European University in Budapest. Enrolled students come from 20 different countries.⁷⁰ The program aims to bring

⁷⁰<http://rap.ceu.edu/>

students from a basic or elementary level to intermediate and upper intermediate level of English, provides help for students to find their ways in the academic field and to make them capable to represent the goals of Roma community later in their future career. The approximately 1000 hours of English language help them not only to communicate, to write and to make presentations, but also develops a sense of community and group responsibility. It was launched in 2011: 69 students graduated since then. In this program students take part in language courses and an MA level education where they can do researches around five professional topics. These students arrive from different countries and they are provided accommodation, tuition and a minimal scholarship.

- The **Jesuitic Roma College and Vocational College** were founded in 2011 due to the decision of Forrai Tamás, Provincial of the Society of Jesus, and with the initiative of Hofner József and of Roma students. Its aim is to help students facing social disadvantages, tries to offer possibilities to talented people and to gather together young Roma from the high education in Budapest. Those who can apply are full-time students from universities and colleges from Budapest and its surroundings. Successful applicants are provided rooms with two beds, sport facilities, scholarship, Internet connection and a library with all the necessary books and documents.⁷¹ This program is planned to be expanded through the whole country, and it is worth mentioning that they do not necessarily want it to be under the guidance of the Jesuit convent, but it has to be under the guidance of some church. The pitfall of this project is that young people will be obliged to respect the rules of a religious group or they will not be able to get tutorial help, accommodation and financial aid. Moreover it doesn't encourage the co-operation with other colleges and the Roma intellectual community but it tries to give them orientation from a separate point of view.

-The **Roma Education Fund (REF)** was created in 2005 and it has a mission: to close the gap existing in the education of Roma and non-Roma and to ensure education of quality for Roma people. REF works with a very rich palette of projects: they help Roma pupils not only with free textbooks and educational materials but also involving their parents in the education. They consider it very important to teach the Roma language, which means a link to the tradition, while the desegregation of Roma people who come from segregated schools is another aspect of the program, because many times entering the mainstream schools comes with difficulties. The beginning is even harder than finding the way to higher education or frequenting schools, that is why working with the parents and giving assistance with the registration is essential as well as the literacy courses and later the career advice for young people graduating secondary schools. The REF Scholarship Program is available in sixteen countries (unfortunately Spain is not among them), offers competition based scholarships and helps Roma students to continue their studies at Bachelor, Master and Doctorate level.

The Roma Versitas Foundation is a scholarship program that supports Roma students in the higher education in Hungary. It was established in 1997, and it targets young people belonging to the Roma community. The program supports students in fulfilling different academic requirements trying to involve them in different activities and providing them help in discussions, a friendly atmosphere, and if needed, computers and printers. Those who can apply are young Roma adults who frequent a full-time higher education program, but they can accept only those students who speak Hungarian, because the language of teaching is Hungarian⁷². This program gives a very good educational help for young people trying to involve the most highly qualified professors⁷³. They accentuate professionalism and the importance of

⁷¹<http://jrsz.hu/kurzusaink/>

⁷²<http://www.romaversitas.hu/?q=en/node/78>

⁷³<http://romagov.kormany.hu/download/8/e3/20000/Strat%C3%A9gia.pdf>

identity helping Roma students to recognize their values as Roma and to return and help their communities to do the same way.

Conclusions

The one month I have spent in Spain was enough to understand the possibilities Roma have to access higher education. I consider it important to present at the beginning of my paper who are the target group of our research, because we cannot consider „disadvantaged group” denomination only in relation to Roma. We do not consider them as an economic problem, segregated community, or group in need of inclusion, but we need to keep in mind that the Roma are an ethnic group with specific traditions, set of values, language and mentality.

We also need to keep in mind that in Spain, as well as in many EU member states, majority of Roma families live under the poverty limit, compared to the majority society, also the number of unemployed is higher, housing conditions are poorer and they have problems in accessing higher education.

My method, besides analyzing sociological data, relies on analyzing the Hungarian and English language scholarship, conducting structured interviews and empirical anthropological field work, including in-depth interviews, unstructured discussions.

Spain is in a special situation, because the Mediterranean people and the Roma have a lot in common, which is a relief and a burden at the same time, because those Roma who accept pressure from society, might assimilate and turn their back on their families. They might sense this is the only way in which they can access higher education, to have a proper training, and proper jobs as well. Thus, they avoid segregation, and provide good opportunities for their children. Society turns a blind eye on ethnic origins if the Roma are willing to accept societal norms and forget about the family traditions, such as early marriage, value of virginity, sacredness of the female body. The double or triple burden causes many of them to leave school, and thus have no degrees nor have any access to higher education system.⁷⁴ Some people, who are Roma or who carry this in their names, such as Rosalio Caraballo Roma, but it doesn't fit with the stigmatized Roma image, will not be considered as such.

It's an unfortunate fact that the rate of the Roma who are enrolled in higher education is less than 2%. This situation is especially hard to comprehend if we look at all the state support within the educational system. The negative number is due to several factors: the majority of the Roma in Andalusia live in segregated areas with very poor economic conditions, bad housing conditions. They lack employment and live below the poverty line, play music on the streets, do fortune telling, carry out black market activities and beg. The children can only attend segregated schools and many don't even finish with their vocational schools either. In Sevilla only there are 6 segregated areas, and Vacie is the worst among them, where they live in terrible housing conditions. The situation is similar in Poligono Sur, San Diego and around Mira Flores, too. Children won't make it to their final exams and thus have no access to higher education. They face a huge lack of financial resources and knowledge, but the lack of information is also important.

⁷⁴Two Roma students, but their university community not know their origin

One of the most important results of my research is that neither the government, nor civil society organizations have any helpful and meaningful assistance programs for doing proper outreach activities for Roma aged between 15-18, only 2% reach higher education, the rest drop out education.

The situation of women is especially difficult, because we see intersectionality⁷⁵. Intersectionality is a concept used by Kimberly Crenshaw in order to reveal the interrelated and mutually defining aspects of gender, race, sexuality, religion and all important aspects that define the position and situation of a woman in a given social context. Women have multiple burdens, because they have to take care of the household as they marry young. Also they help their husbands, raise the children, because it is also their task to teach the children the Roma traditions and culture, and also, language. It is important to understand the pressure this all puts on women, thus, fulfilling their own goals is not among Roma women's priorities. Studying, having a career and equal household tasks are not among Roma women's first options. I have given out forms to Roma women who are in contact with civil society organizations, but they were reluctant in answering on issues of family structure and traditional roles of women. But it was interesting to see that all three organizations (Romani Union, Secretariato Gitano, Fakali-Amuradi) there were Roma women in leading positions, who also had degrees in higher education.

The role of civil society organizations is extremely important when it comes to helping Roma people to have access to higher education. I would like to mention the Amuradi organization, whose task is to help women in obtaining equal opportunities with a very good and complex program. They are looking for those young people who might be interested in continuing their studies, they map their areas of interest, look for potential universities, they introduce them to the city, look for housing for them, and also provide them with strong community support. Unfortunately, they work with limited financial support. Their devoted work will most certainly pay off.

In my paper I presented four European organizations with vast experience in finding career path for the young Roma and help them follow it and motivate them in their choices. The Roma Education Fund, which also helped me do my research, is an excellent opportunity for young Roma researchers, because it entrusts the young Roma with the sense of responsibility, but also it helps them with a complex network of researchers and provides them with financial support as well. The organizations that I have mentioned have programs that focus on identity building and strengthening, acknowledging the power of the community, where one can feel that he/she is not alone, doesn't have to fight alone, but a struggle with joint forces makes all participant more brave and stronger, because it makes one realize that there are other Roma who have the same problems and it is easier to acknowledge one's identity instead of sensing it as a stigma.

Based on my experience, the gap between Roma and the majority society is quite wide, current government programs do not fulfill their goals and do not decrease the distance between different groups. It would be important to create scholarship programs for Roma, which would not be called positive discrimination programs, but equal opportunity ones.

It would be important to launch a media campaign which would direct attention on the real problems instead of the fairytale-like Flamenco dancer, Carmen. Eradicating segregation is of utmost importance for both schools and housing, and for this work anthropologists and social workers are needed. Educational systems curricula should contain the history of Roma on all levels, in order for the next

⁷⁵Kimberly Crenshaw

http://socialdifference.columbia.edu/files/socialdiff/projects/Article__Mapping_the_Margins_by_Kimblere_Crenshaw.pdf

generation to be able to unearth the stereotypes and give voice to questions. It is very important to do this with the involvement of Roma intellectuals, teachers, professors, sociologists, anthropologists.

It is very important that information is exchanged in both directions, towards the majority society in order to help them see the Roma culture as a value, to realize that it is important for them to keep their traditions, because in this way it will be easier for them to believe that they are valuable for the society and can achieve their goals more easily.

Finally, I would like to thank Judit Szira, the director of Roma Education Fund, who believed in me and gave me this opportunity to participate in this research. I can only hope that I can also work in the second part of the project and that I can be useful for fulfilling the project's goals.

I also thank Stela Garaz for being able to work together with her who, with her disciplined work ethic and analytical thinking made me become a better social scientist.

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