Epiphenomena of Marginalization and Discrimination of Roma in Contemporary Society

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ABSTRACT:
This report offers a picture of the Roma people in a majority society, their way of life and way of thinking which needs to be harmonized with the rules of civilized society. The whole process is extremely complicated; accompanied by many conflicts and misunderstandings on both sides. The lifestyle of the Roma, including their housing problems, employment and educational levels, have accompanied this minority since their arrival into the "other" culture in civilized Europe. In this work we look at the issue of enculturation of the Roma minority and manifest the discrimination by the majority society. Marginalized Roma community and Social Work in any form refers to activities that are made in favor of the Roma for the purpose of moral upheaval, successful integration and prevention of discrimination.

Keywords: Discrimination, Roma, The Roma minority.

Introduction
Roma, their marginalization and problematic integration currently form perhaps one of the most contentious topics. Their life and position in society has been developing since their arrival to Europe and is constantly changing. Most of the majority population nourish prejudices against Roma. They cannot understand the Roma way of life, culture, customs, traditions and unconventional mentality. Those people who are dedicated to Roma issues and try to address the deficiencies relating to housing, education, social decline as well as poverty and unemployment of the Roma, are in for a very long haul. Marginalization is a phenomenon that degrades human dignity and every state should be anxious to help marginalized groups and promote their full integration.

Roma in Slovakia
The designation 'Roma' is a general name for many ethnic groups that share a common origin, a language and cultural features. Therefore, they can generally be divided into different aspects: an internal division, thus Roma, is used most often; an external division is used by non-Roma; professional divisions are used in ethno-linguistics (Rosinský, 2006).

Roma living in Slovakia are divided into several relatively distinct groups and subgroups: Slovakian Roma (Slovakian, Servika Roma) constitute the most numerous group, making up to 80-85% of the Slovak Roma population. An area around the southern border with Hungary is occupied by a subset group of Hungarian Roma (Roma Ungrike), which represents around 10% of the Roma population. Hence, more than 90% of the entire Roma population consists of these two traditionally settled Roma subgroups, which were labeled by the former nomads as "Rumungri." The group of Wallachian Roma (Roma Vlachika), which until February 1959 had lived a nomad way of life, represents a specific significant group. Together with the less numerous Sinti group from the Bratislava neighborhood, the Olah Roma represent the most closed community, which maintains an authentic way of life, values and other social norms and has specific cultural expressions (Poláková 2005). Olah Roma are internally divided into further subgroups, such as Bougesk, Ferkosk, Lovari Drizdar, etc. These groups have skin pigmentation and lighter, sometimes red hair (Rosinský 2006).
As reported by Rosinský (2006, p.23) "It could be said that the Roma divide themselves also into Roma (zuze) and Gypsies (degeš)." The Roma people are people who are decent, proud of Roma ethnicity and especially those who abide by Roma Principles. Gypsies (degeš) on the other hand refer to those members of the ethnic group who, by inappropriate behavior and actions, shame Roma. By such behavior they are creating an environment in which they are not liked by "gadžo".

According to the way of life, before the ban for itinerancy in 1959: the Roma were divided into the nomadic, the semi-nomadic and the settled. When one is dividing externally, the level of knowledge about the Roma is very important. The most widespread is the general division based on the degree of assimilation. These are the "decent" and "indecent" Roma. Roma is also divided by external characteristics: lighter (Olah) and darker (Rumungri).

On the basis of inclusion in society, Roma are divided into:

a) **Integrated** - fully accepted by the majority, their actions are not specific, do not agitate attention and most of them have a standard economic status and stable employment.

b) **Semi-integrated** - who often face discrimination in all forms and their presence is perceived with prejudice by the majority of society. Specific for them are a reduced social status and unstable employment opportunities.

c) **Non-integrated** - the majority of Roma refuses to accept and integrate into the environment. Their behavior contains in many cases elements that indicate a culture of poverty, low levels of education, and hence a consequent inability to find a job.

Professional divisions of Roma mainly focus on linguistic characteristics and sway to three basic groups. 1) A group who speaks Romani in the proper sense of the word. 2) use Sinto-Manuš dialect which contains a large proportion of Germanic languages. 3) represent the Roma who speak in local dialects of other languages, containing only a certain fraction of Romani words (Rosinský 2006).

**Roma in Slovakia after 1989**

The change in the social system after 1989 significantly altered the standing of Roma within the ethnic, social, cultural, educational and economic spheres. Several political parties were created such as The Roma Civic Initiative; followed by other parties and cultural associations. In 1990, Roma were first elected as Members of Parliament. They got positions at major places such as the Government Office of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education. On 9 April 1991, the Government of the Slovak Republic adopted The Principles Governing the Approach to Roma. The document emancipated Roma with other nationalities in Slovakia and promised support for the development of culture and education (Zeman 2006).

**Currently, there are three ethnic groups in Slovakia that inhabit "Roma Settlements".**

The First Group represents the Olah Roma (they refer to themselves as the Valchik Roma), who came from Romania to Slovakia during the 19th century. Some members of this group roamed until 1959, when the state prohibited the nomadic way of life. Trade in horses by men, and the reading of palms and cards provided their livelihoods.

The Second Group consists of Slovak Roma who label themselves as the Servika Roma and today the members of this group are simply called Roma. The first reference to this group within Slovakian Territory is from the 14th century in the Špis area. Livelihoods were provided by smithery, broom making and furrery.
The final tragedy for the *European Roma* was World War II when according to the Nazi racial theories they were considered - as the Jews - an inferior race. As a result, they were transported from various countries to a special Concentration Camp in Auschwitz - Birkenau where nearly 20,000 European Roma died. Although Third group, *Slovak Roma* were not deported to Concentration Camps, they were subjected to a number of discriminatory measures: they were not allowed to travel by public transport; could enter cities and towns only on specified days and hours; special labor camps were created for the men. In September 1944, during the German occupation of Slovakia, in several places the Roma population was executed *en masse* (History of the Roma Gipsy.sk).

**Socialization of Roma Ethnicity**

If one is talking about Gypsies and Nomads dwellings in different countries, here we can only provide information about the tendencies to search certain types of dwellings. In fact, the situation is very different and the possibility of movement remains largely critical for the adaptation to changing livelihoods, especially in housing and economic activity. Differences in the type of Gypsies and Nomads dwellings are dependent on the overall situation of the environment: negative approach of the local population over all seasons; different legislative regulations as determined by spatial factors, limitations, and laws (Liégeois 1995).

**Discrimination and Prejudice in the Majority Society**

Already in the past, there was lots of talking and writing about the Roma; the main topic the discrimination of Roma by the majority community. Not only in Slovakia, also worldwide, the Roma minority belongs among the most numerous ethnic groups. It is a community that despite the differences from the majority society struggles to survive in any society. The most widespread form of racism that affects the daily life of Roma is the latent form of racism. Iveta Radičová calls this broader perceived discrimination "social exclusion". This exclusion in Slovak society is described as "a complete lack of social, economic and cultural life" (Radičová 2001 in: Šoltésová, Robertson 2004). Roma are a minority which suffered discrimination mostly based on their "inferiority". Humiliation and dehumanization of the Roma minority for their "gipsyhood" are essential elements of *Romophobia*. The Roma minority is perceived differently than other human beings, and accordingly "have no moral claims" for human rights (Government Office of the SR, 2008).

**Section 2, Paragraph 1 of the Anti-Discrimination Act** states:

*Respect for the principle of equal treatment is based on the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sex, religion or belief, race, nationality or ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, color, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.* (own translation)

Unfortunately, as Fejčzo writes (2007 p.89) the Roma in Slovakia "are often victims of various forms of discrimination. The majority society suffers different kinds of prejudice towards the Roma population and is in varying degrees racist: in the latent, radical, or extreme form." (own translation)

The data records of Roma nationalities that for some reason have formal relations with the Authorities of the Slovak Republic could be considered as a typical manifestation of the latent discrimination against the Roma. In the past, it was a common practice of labor offices to record a letter "R" in the files of Roma job-seekers. In 1999, the Government of the Slovak Republic ordered to end such illegal practices, however many labor offices began to write a letter "B" (*biely*- white) for the majority population, so the situation has changed only cosmetically (Kusín *et al* in: Fejčzo, 2007).
The Roma face discrimination even if they contact the municipality. It took several years before the villages of Rokytovce and Nagov in eastern Slovakia removed their discriminatory regulation which prohibited the Roma entry to the village. Additionally, some healthcare facilities also practice various forms of discrimination against Roma: by allocating office hours exclusively for Roma (Košice); separate rooms for Roma and non-Roma mothers (Krompachy). Similarly, in some cases restaurants and hotels prohibit Roma from entering (Fejčo, 2007).

The biggest problem is that Slovakia has currently no concept that would lead to the standardization of procedures that would monitor ethnic discrimination. Slovakia does not have a policy in the sphere of monitoring ethnic categories, and therefore in this complicated issue it maintains the status quo (Škobla et al. 2008).

It is said that the prejudices have an irrational basis that rational arguments cannot change or disprove (Ondrejkovič et al. 2001). Prejudices and stereotypes are ways in which societies evaluate the world around them. Prejudices appeals to fear, irrational feelings and antipathy. They can be perceived as filters that protect us against information overload and allow us to judge people who we don't know personally, or only know superficially. Thus, prejudices distort our perception in a certain way (Government Office of the SR 2008). Prejudice is very closely related to racism, which is pursued very often against the Roma. Also, in the dictionary of the majority society the term relates particularly to the Roma minority:

*Racist-nationalist theories ascribe to nations specific, reportedly for them typical anthropological and psychological characters and confuse the concept of nationality with race. They emphasize both exclusivity and superiority of one and inferiority of other nations* (Balogová et al. 2003 p.81-82).

*Racism* is basically an intolerance, which depends on many factors in general. It is not simply black and white; it is rather a complicated phenomenon of the human psyche, emotions, feelings, attitudes and behavior (Zelina 2005).

**Roma men are portrayed to have bad characteristics:** incompetent and unsuitable for taking part in any demanding activity. According to Poláková (2005 p.66), the majority usually creates the following picture of the Roma:

> The Roma threatens Slovakia, he's a disruptive criminal element, non-working individual with a tendency to steal or beg, living at the expense of the majority population, a parasite of the social state system, representing an economic burden to society, unable to control the reproductive process, illiterate or semi-literate, poor without the possibility of finding a livelihood, unable to handle funds and unable to comply with work habits. (own translation)

**Misleading media information** describing the negative deeds of this minority often contributes to prejudices about the Roma and negative attitudes towards them. Another increasing problem represents the communication between the majority-minority societies. As presented by Rosinský (2006, p.43)

> If we follow the communication in terms of its linguistics, we can define it as "transmitting and receiving messages." Each step in communication gives us a number of alternatives to make a mistake. (own translation)
Inaccurate reception of messages, improper verbalization, usage of offensive words, and bad gesticulation all lead to mutual misunderstanding, subsequent confusion and even in extreme cases to conflict. This is also confirmed by the words of Gáborová (2007 p.75):

> Communication is an essential component of interpersonal interaction and is carried out on the basis that within certain areas of social life, there is a consensus, thus an announced set of meanings by all. Based on this consensus people are able to communicate with each other. (own translation)

The style of communication among Roma is in many ways different from the style of communication of the majority society. The human intellect is affected by education, considerateness, politeness, tolerance, as well as economic status, which are also important factors in mutual communication and cohabitation. Members of the Roma community, whose actions and way of life does not correspond to the standards of the majority population, are involved in a high percentage of conflicts. Their actions are thus generalized to the entire community (Rosinský 2006).

Intolerance between the minority and majority population as indicated by Hanobík (2009 p.118) "will only escalate further if the Roma situation does not improve. Currently, efforts are needed for a comprehensive solution to the problem, because postponement will have a negative impact on the growth of tension between the majority population and the Roma." (own translation)

Church on Discrimination Issues

The Bible clearly states: "God shows no partiality" because all people have equal dignity and are created in His own image and likeness. What applies in relation to an individual, applies in relation to nations, ethnic groups and cultures. Equality in recognition of the dignity of every person and every nation must be consistent with the consciousness that human dignity can be protected and developed only jointly by all mankind (Červeň 2010). During the Conference of Bishops of Slovakia in 1993, led by the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Košice (Mons. Bernard Bober) the Commission for Pastoral Roma was created. The main role of the Commission was to map the situation of the Roma and to evaluate the possibility of pastoral work and catechization. Pope John Paul II continued the movement started by his predecessor: he condemned the discrimination of Gypsies; called for respect for their identity; recognized them as a minority:

> You belong to those minorities that lead a modest and unstable life, are faithful to your ethnicity, wandering way of life and long cultural tradition (Liégeois).

The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church stresses that:

> All men are called to the same goal, which is God himself. There is a certain similarity between the community of the divine persons and the fraternity which people have to shape among each other in the truth and love. Love of thy neighbor is inseparable from love for God (KKC, 401)

The Second Vatican Council recalled the need to respect the dignity of every human being; avoid discrimination; respect all rights. It said:

> It is necessary to overcome and eliminate every kind of discrimination that concerns basic human rights, whether in the social or cultural sphere, on the
ground of sex, origin, skin color, social or cultural status, language, or religion because this is in contrary to God’s plan (Červeň 2010).

Initiatives undertaken by the Church for the Roma population are based on implemented Principles that emerge from God’s order and which are generally valid. They respect the human rights of the diversity. In the process of integrating Roma into society, in addition to the general Principles that the Church respects and accepts also offer other Principles, ie. in the sphere of human rights about a supernatural human dignity (Červeň 2010). This teaching already is seen in the First Encyclical dedicated to social issues by Pope Leo XIII in 1891. The encyclical Revum Novarum focused on social issues of that time in which he said:

*The rights of the human person in respect to his dignity are inviolable, and no man can abandon them. No one is allowed to outrage the dignity of man, to which God himself approaches with a great respect, with impunity, nor cross his path for his improvement, which is focused at obtaining an eternal life* (Košč).

The dignity of the human being is very closely related to the common good, which very well reflects not only the rights of members of society, but also their responsibilities. This means that an individual has to contribute according to their powers and abilities to making the life of society better (Červeň 2010). M. Uháľ says that the definition of the common good is all that belongs to all people in a society or in a particular state. These are all things, values or goods which an individual needs for its existence, in order to live and to act freely, carry out tasks, fulfill plans and goals (Uháľ, 2006).

According the Second Vatican Council:

*The common good is a summary of common, social conditions that enable and help to facilitate the absolute development and ultimate achievement of own perfection of human communities as well as concrete human persons.*

M. Uháľ identifies the concept of solidarity with the concept of social love. Basically, this means that man does not keep certain personal goods and values for himself alone, but are offered to society as a whole or to a particular individual who is in distress or need (Uháľ 2006). One of the important principles is solidarity. Solidarity is an active expression of love to a neighbor. This expression is closely linked to respect for dignity that is perceived according to the most important commandment *by faith*. The experience of people working directly in the field says that it is not possible to use the same approach effectively in every locality. It is necessary to transfer responsibility and support to the lowest levels. Different demands require different approaches; best reflected in the Principle of Subsidiarity (Červeň 2010). The best interpretation of this Principle states that it is "a competen ce rule". It advocates building a social order from the bottom up in a natural sequence: individual - family - borough - region - state - the international community. It serves to prevent a greater social unit or society’s restriction of the powers or rights of the lower social unit (Uháľ 2006).

**Authentic human coexistence** has respect for justice; a regulated hierarchy of values; subordinates material and instructive dimensions to the inner and spiritual dimensions. Integration of the Roma in Slovakia is a challenging and lengthy process. Also, a social church doctrine contributes to finding solutions and ways out. Their aim for the future should be a better coexistence of Roma with other citizens in Slovakia (Červeň 2010).

To compare, a quantitative survey on the socialization and perception of discrimination against the Roma ethnic group in the areas of Poštárka in Bardejov and Luník IX in Košice,
highlights associated problems. Article 12 of the first section of the Chapter II of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic states:

Basic rights and liberties on the territory of the Slovak Republic are guaranteed to everyone regardless of sex, race, color of skin, language, creed and religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, affiliation to a nation or ethnic group, property, descent, or another status. No one must be harmed, preferred, or discriminated against on these grounds. (own translation)

Both locations have very similar characteristics, they are located within the city, but have a specific locality. They have their own schools, spiritual centers managed by the Salesians of Don Bosco and their access to Social Services is similar to the majority population. We have investigated what are the biggest problems of socialization of the Roma minority; access to education, hygiene, use of Social Services; the impact of socio-economic status and a social level; sense of discrimination.

The survey was launched in November and December 2013. In sequence, we visited Lunik IX in Košice and Poštárka in Bardejov. We approached the field Social Workers from the Social Development Fund Project, whose aim is to ensure a better life of the Roma minority; assistance with integration; help break down the various prejudices and discriminations.

The data obtained were processed first by summing Questionnaires; then summing responses and the attributes were processed in Excel. Interviewers distributed over 350 Questionnaires, 100 Questionnaires in Bardejov - Poštárka which is home to about 1,000 Roma and 250 Questionnaires in Lunik IX in Košice which houses about 5,000 Roma.

Poštárka Bardejov - 49% were 20-27 years old, 38% 28-37, 9% 38-48 over 4% 49 and over.
Lunik IX, Košice - 51% were 20-27 years old, 35% 28-37, 12% 38-48, and 2% 49 or over.

1: We assumed that the socio-economic status of Roma living in Lunik IX is higher than for the Roma living in the urban agglomeration of Poštárka, Bardejov.

Poštárka, Bardejov: household: 97% have electricity; 95% have drinking water from their own source; 0% have a public gas supply; 14% have gas cylinders; 99% have a toilet in the apartment/house; 1% have toilet outside the apartment/house; 0% have heating from public sources; 100% have heating from their own source.

Lunik IX, Košice: household: 37% have electricity; 95% have drinking water from a public source, 20% have a public gas supply, 4% have gas through gas cylinders, 97% have a toilet in their apartment/house; 3% have a toilet outside apartment/house; 10% have heating from public sources; 90% have heating from their own source.

The survey clearly shows that the residents of Poštárka in Bardejov are better equipped as the paying discipline is better in the rented apartments. Community work and awareness of responsibility for their own living is dominant in this discipline. At Lunik IX in Košice, many apartments are disconnected from radio and television due to debts and a consequent chronic non-payment of subscriptions.

2: Care of education and child preparation for classes is more neglected in Lunik IX, because of the higher concentration of Roma than in Poštárka borough.

Attendance at school facilities - Bardejov - 56% of children attend school facilities; 20% do not attend school facilities; 24% answered that their children attend school establishments only sometimes (a kindergarten and pastoral center managed by Salesians of Don Bosco).
Attendance of school facilities - Košice - 26% of children attend school facility; 56% of children do not go to school; 14% children only sometimes attend school (a kindergarten and a school club, managed by the city and a pastoral center, managed by the Salesians of Don Bosco); 4% gave no answer.

Assistance for preparation in classes - Bardejov - 41% help their children with learning; 12% help only if asked by a child; 37% help their children only very little because they do not understand the homework; 10% do not help their children in their preparation for classes.

Assistance for the preparation in classes - Košice - 32% help their children with learning, 23% help their children if asked by a child; 27% help their children only very little because they do not understand the tasks; 18% do not help their children in preparation for classes.

School attendance - Bardejov - 70% are inclined to believe that attending school has great importance for the future of their children; the remaining 30% of are in favor of completely different values than school.

School attendance - Košice - 52% are inclined to believe that attending school has great importance for the future of their children; the remaining 48% are in favor of completely different values than school.

These survey results clearly show a better integration of the Roma in Poštárka Bardejov. This result reflects the 20 years of Salesians presence in this locality. Systematic work with Roma bears fruit. Around 20 children from this area are already in their fifth year in a boarding school/high school/in Kremnica which represents another very good sign that the new Roma intelligentsia is growing.

3: Health care and the Social Services are sufficiently accessible in both locations.

Some Medical Studies confirm that Roma from the marginalized communities suffer exceedingly from a wide range of diseases. The high content of fat in the diet contributes to an increase in the percentage of obesity; an increase in the number of cases of diabetes; cardiovascular; oncological diseases. Obesity is also supported by a high consumption of sugary drinks, which was shown by some partial studies in Slovakia. Doctors from areas where the Roma represents a majority population again recorded an increased number of infectious diseases, especially hepatitis, scabies and lice. Periodically, meningitis occurs in these areas. The occurrence of TBC and respiratory diseases is higher in the Roma than in the majority population.

The research shows:

Health status - Bardejov - 55% rate their health as excellent; 25% + are quite satisfied with their health, but 20% are disabled. Health status - Košice - 25% rates their health as excellent; 45% are quite satisfied with their health status; but 22% are disabled; 8% did not answer.

Regularity of preventive examinations - Bardejov - 38% regularly attend medical examinations; 56% do not remember when was the last time they were on a medical examination; 6% do not consider it a necessity to attend medical examinations. Regularity of preventive examinations - Košice - 29% regularly attend medical examinations; 66% do not remember when they attended a medical examination last time; 6% do not consider it a necessity to attend medical examinations. Hospitalizations in a Healthcare Institution - Bardejov - 62% were repeatedly hospitalized; 38% were not hospitalized or they are treated as outpatient. Hospitalizations in a Healthcare Institution - Košice - out of 250 Questionnaires, 58% were repeatedly hospitalized; 42% were not hospitalized or are treated as outpatient.

Also this issue of Healthcare dominates Poštárka Bardejov. Pointed to that, the high rate of morbidity and hospitalization is the result of a lack of prevention and care for personal health.
The main factors that affect the malignant health of Roma today are:

- lower level of education, which causes insufficient level of health awareness;
- low level of personal and communal hygiene;
- low standard of living;
- polluted and devastated environment;
- unhealthy eating habits and diet;
- increasing rate of alcohol and smoking, including during pregnancy;
- a growing rate of drug addiction and associated increased risk of infections.

Access to Social Services - Bardejov - 42% use commonly available services and assistance in filling in forms; 40% use a service that accompanies clients to various institutions (labor office, hospital, etc.); only 18% use interpretation assistance. No respondent used the service in mediating employment and consulting services.

Access to Social Services - Košice - 52% use commonly available services and assistance in filling in forms; 28% use a service that accompanies clients to various institutions (labor, hospital, etc.); only 8% use assistance in interpretation. Up to 12% expressed an interest in employment mediation and consulting services.

The use of Social Services - Bardejov - 15% use Social Services almost every week; 45% once a month/these are services to individuals who are dependent on the assistance of another person and transportation; 25% use Social Services according to their needs; 15% do not know about Social Services.

The use of Social Services - Košice - 65% use Social Services almost every week, 20% once a month/most used are support services in the laundry since the water flows only 4 hours daily and the provision of Social Services in a center of personal hygiene, the provision of Social Services to individuals who need the assistance of another person and transportation; 15% use Social Services according to their needs.

Visiting Facilities - Bardejov - 55% regularly attend the Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family; 25% visit the Municipality; 15% visit the Social Insurance; 5% do not visit any Institution.

Visiting facilities - Košice - 45% regularly attend the Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family; 35% visit the Municipality; 15% visit the Social Insurance; 5% visit other Institutions that help their integration in society.

4: Roma living in the City are more confronted with expressions of discrimination than the Roma living in rural areas.

Threat to the community - Bardejov and Košice - 100% confirmed that certain groups in Slovakia threaten the Roma community.

Which group threatens you - Bardejov, Košice - up to 80% claim that the most threatening groups are non-Roma/Skinhead movement, nationalist parties; 15% are threatened by Roma/loan sharks; 5% reported other undefined groups.

Manifestations of discrimination - Bardejov, Košice - 50% cited insults as the greatest expression of discrimination; insinuations of their uncultured behavior; 15% abusive language; 35% mentioned verbal attacks.

According to the survey, the biggest problem of today's society is discrimination. Many citizens of the majority society judge negatively the marginalized Roma community, even if they have not had any personal negative experience with Roma.
Elimination of Discrimination by the State

In 1991, the Government of the Slovak Republic adopted the Principle of government policy with respect to Roma. This document equalized the Roma with other ethnic groups in Slovakia (Gallová, Kriglerová, Gallo et al 2009).

On 1 September 1992, the Slovakian National Council adopted the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, which unreservedly and imperatively governs the equality of all citizens, regardless of nationality, religion and social affiliation. Since 1991, the Government of the Slovak Republic initiated and adopted a number of adjustments of the lower legal framework related to Roma (Vašečka in: Fejczko 2007).

In 2004, the need to address the situation of the Roma minority within the scope of the European Union, led to the creation of the first international campaign that aims to change the situation of Roma in Europe. The initiative was accepted by the Governments of Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia. At the same time, the initiative is supported by the European Commission, the World Bank and the Open Society Institute. In addition to support by national governments and the mentioned organizations, the initiative received support from the UN Development Program, OSCE, Rozvoj Bank and importantly also from the Roma representatives of each State (Gábor in: Luluďi Romanes 2006).

In September 1995, the Government Resolution # 668/1995 appointed a Government Commissioner to address the problems of citizens in need of special assistance. Its status defined that special assistance should be preferably directed to employment, social, housing, educational, health and hygiene problems.

Careful formulations of the term Roma (citizen - Romá) persisted until the adoption of Conceptual Plans of the Government of the Slovak Republic for addressing the problems of the Roma in the current socio-economic conditions in November 1997. Part of this material was the allocation of means of the state budget to ensure the Conceptual Plans for the years 1998 to 2002; first for individual Departments and Regional Offices and also across the board in all areas (The Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Romani Communities, 2008).

Government Resolution No. 126/98 approved the Development Housing Program for 1998, for which 30 million Slovak crowns was reserved. For the mentioned program 10 buildings for housing and technical infrastructure worth 38.312 million Crowns were assigned for citizens living in Roma settlements. From 1996 to 1998, the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development of Slovakia funded construction for the Roma in the areas of Spišská Nová Ves, Fiľakovo, Nálepkovo, Egriš and Rimavská Seč (Office of the Authority for Roma Communities, 2008).

Between 1999 and 2005, the Slovak Government approved 75 resolutions that were directly related to the Roma in Slovakia (Gallová, Kriglerová et al 2009).

The Ministry of Education of Slovak Republic Bill # 408/2002 introduced the position of Assistant Teacher into Teaching Practice. Currently, several projects are being implemented for the education of Roma children to increase the performance of those school children. One of the long-term projects is the project of Preparatory Classes. Already in the school year 1996/97 56 zero grade classes were established in primary schools for nearly 700 children. A year later an additional 91 classes were established for 1,250 six years old children from linguistically disadvantaged and socially deprived environments (The Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Romani Communities, 2008). In addition to support for Roma children in primary education, the Office of the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Romani Communities also provides funding for the support of Roma students in Secondary School (Zelina, in: Luluďi Romanes 2006).
Since the beginning of 1997, the number of the Field Social Workers increased to 265 providing social assistance in a natural social environment, particularly in Districts with a higher proportion of Roma; in the Districts of Banska Bystrica, Košice and Prešov regions.

After 1998, several key documents were gradually adopted which constituted a ‘roadmap’ for the implementation of measures to integrate Roma communities; to reduce ethnic tensions in society; repress and prevent racist expressions (Gallová, Kriglerová et al 2009).

The Slovak government adopted a document called The Strategy of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Solution of the problems of Roma National Minority and the Set of Measures for its Implementation (first stage) stage from 27.9.1999 resolution # 821/1999. As stated in the draft report, the Processor and Presenter of the material also suggested that Ministries and Regional Authorities prepare a draft of measures to implement proposed strategy which would form a 2nd Stage In-process Strategy of the Government.

The basic thesis of the SR Government conceptual policy in the integration of Roma, adopted by Resolution #278 on 23 April 2003 states:

*Temporary affirmative action serves to achieve equality and decent living conditions that are demonstrated by a widespread practice in many developed democratic countries.*

In International Law, which is an important source of Law in the area of discrimination, affirmative action is considered as a legitimate measure aimed at achieving *de facto* equality for the disadvantaged groups.

In 2004 to 2006, after joining the European Union, the Government adopted a number of documents concerning the politics in relation to Roma; important was the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*. The Plan also defined the groups that are most at risk of poverty and social exclusion (Gallová, Kriglerová et al 2009).

In February 2005, Governments of several European Countries, including Slovakia adopted the program *The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015*, supported by the World Bank, the Open Society Institute and other International and Non-Governmental Organizations (Zelina, in: Luluďi Romanes 2006).


In the second half of the 20th century the approach to Gypsies and Nomads has changed. Social control was strengthened. Its purpose was to prevent conflicts and limit violations of the Law. Therefore, several States formed Social Departments to deal with the problems of Gypsies and Nomads (Liégeois, 1995).

**When working with the community it is necessary to respect the biological, ethnic, psychological, cultural, social and environmental needs of its citizens.**

There are four basic types of approaches to work with the Roma minority, which can be used by a Social Worker:

- **Despot access** - trying to mitigate the uncertainty of the unknown by manipulating the dealings of members of different groups.
- **Ally access** - trying to achieve understanding between minority and majority by rapprochement with the minority.
- **Leader access** - helping a minority group to promote their interests in society which binds them together.
- **Expert access** - trying to figure out what is causing problems in the lives of minorities, or in its relations with other groups, and on the basis of this knowledge to determine how these problems can be eliminated.
Several barriers exist in the field of Social Work.
The most serious is the communication barrier between representatives of communities, clients and among Field Social Workers. A major problem is a lack of supervision and a lack of opportunities for professional growth. The burden also represents administrative requirements, bureaucracy, excessive expectations and pressure from the clients (Institute of Ethnology SAV, 2009).

To completely raise the level of the Social Work Field, according to Strieženca (2006 p.93):

it is necessary to adjust the social field work, especially Social Work done in a natural social environment (Social Work with families, Social Work on the street) so that the opportunity to work longer with the family in its natural environment could be generated – to decontaminate the family environment, which would also create jobs or allocate employees to perform this formal social prevention. (own translation)

A document of the Slovak Government Plenipotentiary for Romani Communities defines Objectives and Contents of the Field Social Work in Roma communities as the program of the social field workers (Rosinský et al 2006).

Social Work is also carried out through Institutions and is well-defined by legal standards. In addition to Private and Non-governmental Sectors it is mainly the government which provides a social assistance through the following:

- Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family,
- Offices of Labor, Social Affairs and Family,
- District Office,
- Social insurance,
- Health insurance,
- Various State Institutions and Social Service Organizations.

Strieženec writes (2006 p.81):

The disadvantage of the Institutionalization of aid is the loss of solidarity; of belonging. It creates a large anonymity; shared responsibility is not produced; it is expected that the state will take care of everything; thus impersonal institution whose operation should be enforceable by law.

Conclusion

Most of the majority population have prejudices against the Roma minority. They cannot understand their way of life, customs, and therefore the position of Roma in society largely depends on the degree of integration with the majority. While the differences between the majority and minority will still exist, understanding and acceptance of the differences in value systems, housing, traditions and mentality can lead to mutual co-existence and the elimination of prejudices.

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