



Civil society monitoring report
on implementation
of the national Roma integration strategy
in Poland

*Identifying blind spots
in Roma inclusion policy*

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
INTRODUCTION	9
SCHOLARSHIP SCHEMES AND TRANSITIONS FROM EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT ..	12
Definition of the problem	12
Background and cause of the problem	12
Policy answer to the problem.....	14
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION	15
Definition of the problem	15
Background and cause of the problem	16
Policy answer to the problem.....	17
ANTIGYPSYISM AS FACTOR OF INTRA-EU MOBILITY	19
Definition of the problem	19
Background and cause of the problem	19
Policy answer to the problem.....	20
RECOMMENDATIONS	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY	23

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EU	European Union
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PO WER	Operational Programme Knowledge Education Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Education that results in employment, political participation, and antigypsyism are critical areas to be addressed in the new Roma Programme 2021-2030,¹ the new national strategy for Roma in Poland.²

Scholarship schemes and transitions from education to employment

Education (vocational and tertiary) should lead to employment and, as such, employment status represents a measure of the success of the education process. Roma scholarships offered by the state (Scholarship programs for pupils and students of Roma origin) have worked to increase the academic level of the Roma entering secondary/vocational and higher education and, eventually, the job markets, but the Roma Programme remains ineffective when it comes to significantly increasing the number of Roma who successfully complete their education, whether vocational or higher, and enter the job markets. There are also no tools or mechanisms to support or monitor Roma's successful transition to the labour market.³

The new Roma Programme must continue the existing scholarship schemes. It should prioritise education for employment. Support needs to be provided to young Roma who aim to enter the job markets. The respective state agencies and civil society should monitor those who successfully enter the labour market as well as those who fail to because of antigypsyism. This monitoring should inform policy design as to what is working and what is not and whether the tools used are effective.

We argue that the new Roma Programme should support projects that aim to make Roma parents and children more resilient and ambitious regarding Roma children's aspirations. This is relevant both for families who lack the resources to ensure good education outcomes and for families who can afford to pay for education. These families need to see the benefit of education in the form of jobs and employment. Alternatively, the experience of antigypsyism motivates them to move elsewhere within the EU seeking economic and social opportunities.

Political participation

The existing structures of dialogue and consultation at the government and parliamentary level leave too many Roma leaders and organisations out of the process. As a result, a significant number of Roma do not feel represented by the current Roma representation. Their views are not considered in Roma policy outcomes. This is especially relevant for younger generations of Roma leaders and activists.

¹ The Polish government plans to extend the next Roma Programme for a period of ten years, 2021-2030.

² Roma Programme 2021-2030 refers to the new national strategy for Roma and this term will be used throughout the report.

³ See Roma Civil Monitor (2019) [Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategy: Assessing the progress in four key policy areas of the strategy](#), the chapter on Employment: "In the Polish context, labour offices deal with unemployed people and provide them with support, especially to the long-term unemployed persons and those endangered by social exclusion. Roma are overrepresented in both categories. The labour agency is claiming to follow a "colour-blind" policy and to carry out activation programmes for all unemployed regardless of their nationality or ethnicity. Surprisingly though, labour offices virtually do not participate in implementation of Roma Programme's activities in this priority area. Though, they are represented in projects under the PO WER Programme 2014-2020, measure 2.7 as partners to an Interdisciplinary Consulting Group and in expert capacity (along the local self-government, Roma representatives and NGOs) – a mandatory requirement under PO WER Programme. According to interviewees, their engagement in PO WER seems, however, to be more formal than substantive". (2019, pp. 14-15).

We see political participation in a broader sense as 'civic engagement', access to power and the ability to influence policy and decision-makers regarding Roma policy. It should include, therefore, the notions of empowerment, type of leadership, and self-organising.

We advocate for establishing a Roma youth council that could be recognised and institutionalised at the level of government. This would open the existing structures of dialogue and consultation to include the views of the educated younger generation of Roma leaders. It would revitalise the whole process and give new meaning to the issue of legitimacy and representation. It would also impact the self-government level, where often the younger generation of Roma leaders is leading the social inclusion process.

We see an eventually established Roma youth council as relevant in all the discussions on the new Roma Programme 2021-2030. Such areas as education for employment or the fight against antigypsyism are especially valid for the younger generation of Roma who want to integrate and at the same time to preserve their Roma identity.

Antigypsyism as factor of intra-EU mobility

The fight against antigypsyism has not become part of any official state policy; it did not find its expression in previous Roma Programmes. We argue that antigypsyism needs to be addressed in the new Roma Programme 2021-2030. Roma subjects need to feel protected against antigypsyism by the state. This is a cross-cutting issue affecting all areas negatively and it is especially relevant to the 'education to employment' and 'political participation' themes.

Antigypsyism is a common experience recalled by Roma seeking jobs. It guides potential employers in forms that are both covert and overt. Antigypsyism also limits the potential of political participation by Roma, i.e., their participating as candidates for public office in elections. Public opinion polls are the best example of antigypsyism: Roma are among the most disliked people in such polls. Such prejudices and negative stereotypes make the idea of majority people voting for Roma candidates difficult if not impossible.

However, even uneducated Roma (and low-skilled non-Roma) can find jobs abroad, which is a strong pull-factor for intra-EU migration. Though Roma represent only a relatively small fraction of migrating Poles, the migration trend among Roma can hardly be stopped if recognising ethnic diversity and fighting xenophobia are not part of official state policy.

INTRODUCTION

Since the change in political power in 2015, when the 'Law and Justice' party won the elections less attention has been paid to the issue of Roma discrimination and there have been fewer consultations regarding the human rights of Roma and other minorities, as well as smaller-scale activities with Roma and for Roma, as can be seen in the area of unemployment.

The current government further impedes the possibility of collecting ethnically sensitive data by recalling that the European Union has introduced regulations on the protection of personal data (GDPR). As a result, there is less data being produced or made available about Roma in Poland by state actors, as well as less available funding for research, especially research done by independent civil society organisations.⁴

This report relies on the findings and recommendations of previous reports,⁵ especially those related to education, employment and antigypsyism, as well as on data from a short

⁴ Although some interest in Roma has resurfaced among university researchers in the fields of anthropological and ethnographic studies. For more see: <https://projekty.ncn.gov.pl/index.php?slowokluczowe=Romowie>; or <http://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Between-tradition-and-change-migration-paths-of-Polish-Roma.pdf>

⁵ From the Executive Summary of the Roma Civil Monitor (2018) *Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategies in Poland: Focusing on structural and horizontal preconditions for successful implementation of the strategy*: "The lack of support in these areas is one of the Programme's major weaknesses because the social exclusion of Roma is not only a result of poverty, but also a result of continuous prejudice and discrimination. While the antigypsyist manifestations intensify and the level of social acceptance towards Roma declines during times of crisis, the Programme does not take them into account." (p.7). Further, "even at this stage, we can see a change in the authorities' attitude to the Roma Programme – less attention, fewer consultations, smaller-scale activities, especially at the local level. (p. 7).

Re Anti-discrimination: "After the elections of 2015, the change of power resulted in the increased centralization, domination of nationalist narrative, as well as anti-immigrant rhetoric in the media. Legal regulations directly related to the minorities did not change, however, other regulations relating to the human rights did change." (p. 8)

Re Antigypsyism: "Antigypsyism is not recognised by the state (parliament, ministries, and public authorities) as a specific form of racism, discrimination against Roma or as a root cause of their exclusion (e.g. in legislation, policies, measures and communication) nor does the term antigypsyism appear in Polish laws and regulations. As a consequence, there is no structure established by the government to monitor and analyze antigypsyism, and to introduce preventive measures in state institutions." (p. 8)

Re Recommendations in the area of antigypsyism: "Declaring antigypsyism as one of the key challenges in the future Roma strategy (after 2020) and creation of a priority in the Roma Programme to combat antigypsyism. To introduce into the laws and regulations relating to discrimination a term antigypsyism, as a special form of racism against Roma. This could be a motivation for various public institutions (e.g. local and national authorities, universities, research centres) to undertake actions and organize activities. Systematic training for people working with Roma is necessary as well as for Roma implementing strategies on, for example (stereotypes and prejudices, antigypsyism, sources of funding, projects reporting, applicable law, etc.)." (p. 21).

From the Executive Summary of the previous Roma Civil Monitor (2019) *Civil society monitoring report on implementation of the national Roma integration strategy: Assessing the progress in four key policy areas of the strategy*: "The implementation of the Programme is financially supported through Poland's State budget and the EU Structural Funds. The Programme does not take into account the issue of antigypsyism and there are no direct references to the situation of Roma women and the improvement of their position. Additionally, the implementation of the Programme lacks comprehensive and holistic approach in addressing situation of Roma, as well as comprehensive local strategies. Overall, mostly well-financed policies still bring insufficient outcomes considering the overall situation of Roma."

Re Employment, the Roma Civil Monitor report from 2019 states the following: "The unemployment rate among Roma continues to be high. The funding allocated to address this priority within the Roma Programme is still low, representing not more than 8 per cent (about 200,000 EUR) of the yearly available funds for implementation of the whole Roma Programme (some 2.5 million EUR yearly). Additionally, to this, about 40 million EUR from the ESF are dedicated to tackle the issue of integration of socially excluded persons, in particular Roma, into the labour market. The vocational activation aimed at enabling long-term unemployed Roma to enter the labour market have been to a large extent ineffective. This also because the developed

survey conducted mostly among the younger generation of Roma leaders and activists (more on this below).

With regard to the previous Roma Civil Monitor reports, they argue that the lack of recognition of antigypsyism is one key reason for the weak results or outcomes of the implementation of the Roma Programme. In the area of unemployment, the 2019 [RCM report](#) recommends increased funding for this area and more of a “focus on the transition from vocational and tertiary education to the job market” (p. 32). It advocates that “the struggle against antigypsyism has to be coupled with stronger mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation” (p. 32). The lack of active state policy in these areas encourages intra-EU mobility by Roma, from Poland to other EU countries as an outcome.

Regarding the short survey mentioned earlier, 24 Roma representatives (leaders of Roma NGOs, Roma school assistants, Roma activists) were surveyed (asked to fill in a short questionnaire).⁶ Additionally, two consultation meetings with a total of ten non-Roma and Roma were held in Krakow and Limanowa at the beginning of November 2019. Those meetings addressed and discussed the same questions as the questionnaire. The questions focused on education for employment, political participation, and antigypsyism. Considering the Polish context and that Roma are on the move, we also added the issue of intra-EU migration.

The Roma surveyed were mostly leaders of Roma organisations established in the 1990s and active since then. At that time, they were young and, for the most part, benefited from the state support schemes for education in the first Roma Programme 2004-2013. They entered the Roma civil sector and eventually became leaders of active Roma organisations. Of over 120 Roma non-governmental organisations registered, some 50 to 70 are operating actively and systematically.⁷ Therefore, nearly half of the leaders of these active organisations have been surveyed for this report. They represent the leaders of two major groups in Poland: the *Polska Roma* and the *Bergitka Roma*.⁸ Interestingly, 65% of those interviewed were Roma women.

Below are highlighted some findings from the short survey.

Most of the interviewed Roma noticed that the positive progress reached in the area of education remains insufficient. They argued that education should remain among the priorities in the next phase of the Roma Programme.

Most of the Roma interviewed saw a more active role for the state and employers to ensure more equal access to employment opportunities. In this context, most acknowledged the negative role played by antigypsyism in Poland. Potential employers continue to perceive Roma employees through stereotypes and prejudices.

measures often conflict with social help and support schemes, which makes the vocational activation less attractive than the social income.”

Re Recommendations in the area of employment: “Funds allocated in the employment area should be increased in the Roma Programme Future initiatives intended to address the unemployment rate among Roma need to focus on the transition from vocational and tertiary education to the job market. In reaching tangible outcomes, the struggle against antigypsyism has to be coupled with stronger mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation.”

⁷ Roma Civil Monitor (2018), p.13

⁸ Those interviewed were from cities and towns across Poland, for example, from Warszawa, Krakow - Nowa Huta, Andrychów, Czarna Góra, Zabrze, Chorzów, Limanowa, Kamienna Góra, Głogów, Pabianice, Radom, Lublin, Szczecinek and Gorzów Wielkopolski.

Most of the interviewed Roma do not feel they are represented in the existing bodies for dialogue and consultation⁹ with minorities. In only one example did the interviewed person expressed the belief that Roma groups are well-represented in the existing bodies.

Most of the interviewed Roma noticed a connection between education achieved, employment status, experiences of antigypsyism and political participation. Specifically, in the Polish context, they have noticed that the Roma are too few and politically unorganised to represent a political force.

At the same time, they saw politics and dialogue with state institutions and lawmakers as the only possible route for raising their concerns and issues. In this regard, they advocated for inviting younger, educated Roma into the existing forums at the government and parliament and at the self-government levels in order to better represent Roma communities' interests in the modern world.

The surveyed Roma leaders and activists pointed to difficult relations with the majority population due to antigypsyism. This was seen as relevant in such areas as education (Roma children are still placed into special education;¹⁰ a few of them reach secondary and even fewer reach the tertiary level) or employment (employers still prefer non-Roma as they believe Roma are either not qualified or, stereotypically, not to be trusted that they can do a job well).

According to the surveyed leaders and activists, Roma from Poland emigrate for two reasons: economic (to access a place where it is easier to find jobs and secure, stable living conditions) and social (to avoid intolerance or antigypsyism). The two are closely interconnected. For many, the perceived dominance of ethnic Poles or the mono-ethnicity of Polish society and its related intolerance of difference, especially ethnic or racial difference, work as push factors for migration.

Those surveyed argue that societies abroad are more tolerant and complex – there are many cultural groups among whom Roma become less visible, whereas the Roma have commonly experienced racism in the Polish context. Hence, the intra-EU mobility of Roma ranges from 20% in some communities (in southern Poland) to 80% in others (in some cities in central Poland).¹¹

In the thematic section we will recall some of these assertions from the surveyed Roma leaders and activists. For the purpose of using quotations, we have anonymised the quoted Roma leaders.

⁹ In the Roma Civil Monitor (2018), we described the existing structures of dialogue and consultations with Roma and other minorities: "The National, Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language Act created a national Joint Commission of the Government and National and Ethnic Minorities. It includes two Roma representatives. The Commission is an advisory and consultative body to the Prime Minister and meets regularly few times a year. Within the Commission, a Panel for Roma issues was created. Besides the government representatives, it includes twenty Roma representatives – leaders of Roma organizations from all around Poland, appointed by the Roma members of the Joint Commission. It is a consultative body, a kind of discussion forum, intended to explore topics and current problems faced by Roma or implementation of the Roma strategy. Between 2008-2012, 15 regular meetings of the Panel took place, unfortunately in the following years only two meetings were organised (both in 2016)." (2018, p. 12).

¹⁰ From the Roma Civil Monitor (2019): "In 2013, about 17 per cent of Roma children were following special education programmes, whereas in 2015 the Ministry of Interior and Administration reported that there were 280 Roma students in special schools, what constitutes 6.9 per cent of all Roma students attending school" (2019, p.27).

¹¹ These data and numbers were provided by interweweas and very similar data can be found in the research report: Kamila Fiałkowska, Michał P. Garapich, Elżbieta Mirga-Wójtowicz, *Continuity or change – anthropological analysis of Polish Roma migration paths to Great Britain. Research report, 2018*. Available at: <http://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Between-tradition-and-change-migration-paths-of-Polish-Roma.pdf>

SCHOLARSHIP SCHEMES AND TRANSITIONS FROM EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT

Definition of the problem

Promising schemes regarding supporting education exist (the system of scholarships),¹² and the previous two governmental Roma Programmes rightly prioritised the area of education.¹³ The Roma Programmes, however, remain ineffective when it comes to significantly increasing the number of those who successfully complete their education, whether vocational or higher, and enter job markets. The effectiveness of the transition from education to employment is in question. There are also no tools or mechanisms to support the successful transition from education to the labour market and to monitor it.¹⁴

We argue that the scholarship schemes for secondary and higher education should be continued and should be closely interconnected with employment opportunities. Support provided for education that is discontinued when a person is supposed to enter the labour market simply represents a waste of the resources committed in the earlier phases. It has adverse consequences as well, strongly motivating intra-EU mobility to places more open to ethnic diversity where even less-qualified Roma can find secure employment.

Background and cause of the problem

According to research by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency from 2016,¹⁵ 63% of Roma youth in the EU countries remain outside the education system and outside the labour market ("Not in Education, Employment, or Training", NEET), which has deteriorated from the 56% recorded in 2011.¹⁶

To date, the Roma Programmes in Poland have remained ineffective when it comes to significantly increasing the number of those who successfully complete their education,

¹² In the second RCM (2019), in the chapter Education, we wrote: Motivational scholarships for high school students are intended for those students who, in accordance with the regulations, have excellent grades, very high attendance at school, take part in competitions, or have sports or artistic achievements. An additional advantage is the work for the Roma community. The positive trend is that the number of high school students obtaining the scholarship is rising. For example, in 2015, 51 students were granted, in 2016, 57, and in 2017, already 58 students. The scholarships for Roma students at Universities has been part of both the previous and the current Programme. Between 2004 and 2017, altogether around 736 Roma university students were supported; an average of 52 students receive the scholarships annually. The highest number of Roma students at higher education were supported in 2009 – 80 Roma students. (2019, pp. 28-29).

Scholarship programmes for pupils and students of Roma origin:
<http://mniejzosoci.narodowe.mswia.gov.pl/mne/romowie/programy-stypendialne-d>

¹³ For more details, please see previous RCM Reports on Poland available at: <https://cps.ceu.edu/roma-civil-monitor-reports>

¹⁴ In the second RCM (2019), in the chapter Employment, we wrote: "In the Polish context, labour offices deal with unemployed people and provide them with support, especially to the long-term unemployed persons and those endangered by social exclusion. Roma are overrepresented in both categories. The labour agency is claiming to follow a "colour-blind" policy and to carry out activation programmes for all unemployed regardless of their nationality or ethnicity. Surprisingly though, labour offices virtually do not participate in implementation of Roma Programme's activities in this priority area. Though, they are represented in projects under the PO WER Programme 2014-2020, measure 2.7 as partners to an Interdisciplinary Consulting Group and in expert capacity (along the local self-government, Roma representatives and NGOs) – a mandatory requirement under PO WER Programme. According to interviewees, their engagement in PO WER seems, however, to be more formal than substantive". (2019, pp. 14-15).

¹⁵ Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey – Selected findings, 2018, p 10, available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings_en.pdf

¹⁶ *Roma Pilot Survey. Technical report: methodology, sampling and fieldwork* (p 11); 670 Roma from Poland took part in that research.

whether vocational or higher, and enter the job markets. Despite the existing support provided to Roma students through scholarship schemes under the Roma Programmes, the number of those who attain a higher education and enter the job markets successfully are too small to make a visible impact on the way Roma are viewed in society.¹⁷

On the other hand, the antigypsyism that continues unabated (not recognised and not challenged by the state) limits the opportunities and chances of Roma children in education and Roma youth in employment in comparison with the majority.¹⁸ With regard to antigypsyism, we still need more data and research to learn how it operates and how it can be challenged. What we have learned to date is that antigypsyism is out there, it is entrenched, and it is largely shared among the majority. It depicts Roma and their culture as responsible for all ills (through the "blame the victim" mechanism) and prevents, amongst other things, young Roma entering the job markets.

How antigypsyism operates is well described by one of surveyed leaders: *"Like many Roma, I experienced discrimination. The simplest and, at the same time, the most delicate example of discrimination that comes to my mind, which I experienced, is that despite the fact that I graduated with a Master's degree in pedagogy - sociology, no one wants to hire me at school as a pedagogue, while others have been accepted to the position"*.

Educated Roma youth, while still few in number,¹⁹ face a choice: to stay and struggle against all the odds because of antigypsyism, or to emigrate to other EU countries and seek a chance for employment and a better life there. In fact, many of those who graduated from university are staying; they become Roma NGO leaders and activists. Most of those interviewed in these short surveys have had such a life history.

We argue, however, that antigypsyism affects, in general, the entire Roma minority and in particular the less-educated younger generation of Roma.²⁰ Although motivations for migration may differ, in the case of Roma it is important that the receiving society be tolerant, multi-ethnic and a place where antigypsyism is something the state is fighting against. The reasons for migration by Polish Roma to the UK, in the view of our interviewees, are commonly, as one of them put it: *"More tolerance, less racism"*.

No doubt that economic reasons for migration are important here as well; many Roma are following the visible trend among Poles to migrate and seek better opportunities elsewhere. Roma choose to migrate to such countries as the UK, Sweden, Ireland or Germany because of their better social security and welfare care and the fact that their job markets can absorb such a workforce.

One of the surveyed Roma explained: *"Roma in England do not have a problem with employment, they work in various professions with no educational requirements indicated, they know what amount of money they want to make, and they want to work. In my neighborhood, 10% of those living have left and are not going to return, rather they are moving to Germany and Canada."*

Another told this story: *"In my experience, the Roma who left Poland after 2000 got accommodated faster... [and] do not want to come back. In my city (Lublin), the majority*

¹⁷ The social distance and dislike of the Roma in Poland has remained at a high level for years, despite the measures taken. For example, here's what the research shows from 2014, the level of dislike is as follows: 2014 - 55%, 2015 - 58%, 2016 - 67%, 2017 - 50%, 2018 - 59%, 2019 - 57%. Public Opinion Research Center <https://www.cbos.pl>

¹⁸ More details provided in the RCM (2019), in the chapter Education (2019, pp 26-31).

¹⁹ In the RCM (2019), chapter Employment, we wrote: "Between 2004 and 2017, altogether around 736 Roma university students were supported; an average of 52 students receive the scholarships annually." (2018, p. 29)

²⁰ See the statement of the leader from Lublin city: those who stay are mostly 'elderly, on pensions and children'...

of Roma live abroad, practically. I think about 40 percent [of Roma] people stayed in the city, mainly the elderly, those on pensions, children."

There are also no tools or mechanisms to support the successful transition to the labour market and to monitor it.²¹ There is no official data on unemployment among Roma, especially young Roma, as the state institutions prevent monitoring this area by recalling GDRG.²² Monitoring such data, however, and especially documenting successful paths to the labour market would serve both the majority (by countering its antigypsyism) and the Roma minority (by demonstrating the usefulness of the educational path to some Roma families).

Policy answer to the problem

We advocate for more of a focus and support provided to young educated Roma who aim to enter the job markets. It is essential that the state provides young Roma with similar or the same equal opportunities for accessing a quality education²³ that would enable them to effectively compete for jobs.

Projects that would help to strengthen resilience on the part of Roma parents and their children regarding their educational and job aspirations, as well as the fight against antigypsyism, should be prioritised and supported by the new Roma Programme. To date both are neglected or not recognised as hampering Roma efforts to access education and jobs.

Though the motivations for migration may differ, higher absorption rates of younger Roma by job markets in Poland and an official state policy of fighting antigypsyism could limit the propensity for Roma intra-EU mobility.

Under certain conditions, such as anonymisation of data and the subject's consent, a bigger role should be assigned to Roma civil society organisations or Plenipotentiaries of the Voivode at regional level to monitor, collect and share data on the employment of young Roma.

We foresee that a similar role could be assigned, eventually, to a Roma youth advisory group at the level of a Roma Sub-Commission (a Panel for Roma Issues within the Government's Joint Commission on National and Ethnic Minorities). As it would be built up by the younger, better-educated generation of Roma leaders who have access to Roma communities, their organisations can monitor and collect such data and share it with all interested parties.

²¹ In the RCM (2019), in the chapter Employment, we wrote: "In the Polish context, labour offices deal with unemployed people and provide them with support, especially to the long-term unemployed persons and those endangered by social exclusion. Roma are overrepresented in both categories. The labour agency is claiming to follow a "colour-blind" policy and to carry out activation programmes for all unemployed regardless of their nationality or ethnicity. Surprisingly though, labour offices virtually do not participate in implementation of Roma Programme's activities in this priority area. Though, they are represented in projects under the PO WER Programme 2014-2020, measure 2.7 as partners to an Interdisciplinary Consulting Group and in expert capacity (along the local self-government, Roma representatives and NGOs) – a mandatory requirement under PO WER Programme. According to interviewees, their engagement in PO WER seems, however, to be more formal than substantive". (2019, pp 14-15).

²² More about the new regulations on the protection of personal data (GDPR) at: <http://aram.eu/gdpr-rodo-regulations/>

²³ We noticed in the RCM (2019), in the chapter Education, that "In 2013, about 17 per cent of Roma children were following special education programmes, whereas in 2015 the Ministry of Interior and Administration reported that there were 280 Roma students in special schools, what constitutes 6.9 per cent of all Roma students attending school.¹¹³ Much can be assigned to the work of Roma school assistants and supporting teachers. Many Roma organisations were engaged in providing trainings for them (...)" (2019, p 27). Further however, we observed that "Despite success in desegregation, the antigypsyism in schools remain a problem, yet often not systematically monitored. Roma parents point out that more needs to be done in order to overcome teacher's biases and prejudices or antigypsyism that still continues to largely impact the outcomes of the education process". (2019, p 30).

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

We wrote in this regard in the RCM report from 2018: "There were almost no positive results within this scope, as empowerment has not been defined as a priority. Likewise, the Roma Programme did not initiate additional or new activities. Over the past ten years, an increase in the number of newly established Roma organisations in Poland has been observed. According to the data of the National Court Registry, there are over 120 non-governmental organisations registered, which declare themselves as organisations bringing together and/or representing the Roma minority. In practice, 50-70 out of them are operating actively and systematically". (p 13).

Definition of the problem

Roma political participation means more than just participation in general and local elections²⁴ (including as candidates) or in the state consultation process. We see it also as 'civic engagement.'²⁵ If political participation is to be understood as access to power and ability to influence²⁶ policy and decision-makers, it should also include the notions of empowerment, type of leadership, and self-organising. It matters, therefore, to prioritise the political participation of the Roma minority in this broader sense, as "no solutions to the critical problems Roma face in the areas of housing, health care, education, and employment will be lasting"²⁷ if the way Roma engage in the political processes of the majority is not changed. The question is whether Roma in Poland have developed modern 'civic engagement' and exercise their political rights to the extent of gaining influence over policy makers, concomitant with the EU-led, favourable formulation of Roma policy.²⁸

One of the surveyed leaders touched on the core of the issue of political participation and engagement by saying: *"In no way do I as a Rom feel represented by the Joint Commission for National and Ethnic Minorities, by the Parliamentary Committee for National and Ethnic Minorities. There is no communication about what is going on in these committees, there is no representative of the Bergitka Roma. Nobody consults us, there are no meetings. They are not treated equally, there is no representative of the Bergitka Roma, only representatives from the Polska Roma, and hence no Polska Roma consults with us, no*

²⁴ Göran Adamson, Immigration and political participation – background, theory, and empirical suggestions, Dept. of Sociology, London School of Economics and Political Science, available at: https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/221-mmigrants_and_political_participation_2006.pdf

²⁵ Francis Dalisay, Matthew Kushin, Masahiro Yamamoto, Yung-I Liu, and Wayne Buente. "Attachment to Facebook and the civic lives of minority college students in the United States", *First Monday*, Volume 21, Number 3 - 7 March 2016, available at: <https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/download/5578/5221> and at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5210/fm.v21i3.5578>

²⁶ McGarry, A., and Agarin, T. (2015), "Unpacking the Roma Participation Puzzle: Presence, Voice and Influence", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Volume 40, Issue 12. We follow here McGarry and Agarin's distinction. In their view 'participation as *presence* is but the first building block for effective participation, leading to participation as *voice*, whilst only with participation as *influence* does a minority group ensure a degree of control over institutions and policies which affect them' (2015, p. 5) or putting it in different way, '*influence* allows minorities to enjoy substantive voice as agents of policymaking' (p. 7). McGarry and Agarin request also that 'minority groups need to have guaranteed *presence*, *voice* and *influence* in political decision-making processes, especially when decisions affect them directly' (p. 2). Groups such as the Roma need 'structural support to assert their interests vis-à-vis structurally more empowered majorities' (p. 5). Finally, however, they notice that 'The institutional framework for enhancing Roma political participation appears to be fundamentally inadequate. If Roma are unable to exert an influence in majority-dominated institutions and discourses, then negative perceptions of Roma will remain in the ascendancy' (p 23).

²⁷ *Why does political participation matter?* OSF 2019, available at: <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/why-roma-political-participation-matters>

²⁸ No doubt the EU is playing a positive role in mobilising state authorities to come up with social and economic policies, both mainstream and targeted, that aim to overcome the centuries-long marginalisation of Roma minority. We need to consider prioritising the political participation of Roma minority in this context.

contact. The Bergitka Roma are somewhat pushed away, although it is a very large group, and open-minded, and open to talks and to acting for the good of all Roma groups."

Background and cause of the problem

The Roma ethnic minority in Poland is marginal in terms of its number and influence, though due to the Minority Act of 2005 it has had certain roles and opportunities in consultation processes and in policy design with the state authorities.²⁹ Therefore, the representation of the Roma minority on the Joint Commission of the Government and Minorities and on the Parliamentary Minority Commission³⁰ remains vital as an avenue for directly influencing lawmakers and policy-makers regarding Roma policy and its priorities.

Since then, however, the role and meaning of the consultation process has diminished. The surveyed Roma leaders point to the irrelevance of the consultation process at the level of government and Parliament, especially in that they do not find themselves represented in these discussions by the two Roma individuals who are officially recognised as representatives in those bodies.³¹

The political participation of Roma at the local or self-government level is similarly weakened due to their absolute numbers; chances that a Roma candidate could be elected are very small. The only possibility for election is that the general public would vote for the Roma candidate. This means that such a candidate needs to come up with a programme that includes issues important to the entire society.

The last local elections in Poland (2018) brought in a higher number of Roma candidates (10 people),³² among them Roma assistants and various advisors who have become representatives and spokespersons on behalf of the local Roma community. Although none of them were elected in the end, this higher number of Roma candidates indicates that ethnic mobilisation among Roma is taking root and individual aspirations are rising.

Roma self-organising³³ in terms of 'civic engagement' has been progressing since the fall of communism, and the successive Roma Programmes have accelerated this process. This can be measured by the number of Roma organisations that have appeared during this period. As we wrote in the RCM report from 2018: "According to the data of the National Court Registry, there are over 120 non-governmental organisations registered, which declare themselves as organisations bringing together and/or representing the Roma minority. In practice, 50-70 out of them are operating actively and systematically." (2018, p 13) Here, Roma self-organising means mostly a change in leadership that the more educated, younger generation of Roma, are entering civil society. As we observed in our previous report: "Many of the Roma leaders, currently representing the Roma communities or implementing projects from the Roma Programme, are in fact alumnae of these

²⁹ The English version of the above-mentioned Act can be found at:
http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/files/act_on_national_minorities.pdf

³⁰ We have written extensively on both structures in previous RCM reports, especially in the 2018 one. For more, see pp 11-12.

³¹ Information based on interviews with Roma activists and leaders.

³² Information based on our own observations (also through social media like Facebook) and on interviews with Roma activists and leaders.

³³ For the purpose of compiling this report, 20 interviews were conducted with organisations, leaders and activists; about 60 per cent of the respondents were Roma women. (2019, p. 11) This list included: Romano Waśt Association, Dialog Pheniben Foundation, Romani Educational Association Harangos, Jamaro Association, Kałe Jakha Association, Integration Association Sawore, Center for Counseling and Information for Roma in Poland, Association of Roma Assistants in Poland, Karolina Kwiatkowska – Organising Courses and Training, Amaro Drom Association, Mucha Foundation, a Roma teacher and school counsellor, Roma assistants, career counsellors (Chrzanów, Kraków, Kowary, Jelenia Góra), a probation officer in Krakow, the head of a school and an education centre in Warsaw, and others.

scholarships; they emerge as the minority's future leaders and partners for the central and local authorities" (2019, p 29).³⁴

A change in the types of leadership points to the changes that the Roma community is undergoing itself – from the more traditional to the modern (for example, there are more Roma leaders who are educated and aspire to deal with the larger issues of the general society). This process is exacerbated by the fact that Roma communities are highly dispersed, small, and most of their members have emigrated. In these circumstances, exercising traditional social control or keeping old traditions becomes difficult. More Roma, especially of the younger generation, are aware of this erosion of the traditions and traditional model of social order in the community.³⁵ This situation is best epitomised by the institution of *Sero Roma*³⁶ and the rules of elders – increasingly often questioned by the young, new leaders.³⁷

Finally, in all the efforts of this new leadership to influence Roma policy outcomes, a central role is played by empowerment. We believe this empowerment is an outcome of education and the level of education reached; it is the person's social capital.³⁸ Therefore, empowerment through education provides entitlement and presupposes it, whereas self-organising aims at building an organisation well-rooted in one's own community. The state and the government now face the challenge of whom to support through the Roma Programme's activities: the older generation, or the new leaders who are younger and better-educated.

Policy answer to the problem

We argue that the existing structures of consultation at the government and Parliament level need to be altered to become more open to the views of educated Roma youth. Thanks to the first and second Roma Programmes prioritising education, there is a more numerous, visible, articulate new generation of Roma leaders who are beginning to replace

³⁴ Regarding the higher education scholarships, we previously wrote in RCM: "In the period of the current Programme 2014-2017, approximately 63 per cent of supported persons were full-time students, while almost 37 per cent were part-time students. Interestingly, 60-70 per cent of the supported students belonged to the Bergitka Roma group, the rest were Polska Roma, Sinti and others. Contrary to some general views of Roma and their culture among the beneficiaries of scholarships schemes 60-70 per cent were girls. Whereas in the previous Roma Programme, the most-chosen field of study was pedagogy, in the current Roma Programme, their choices are more diversified and Roma students study political science, Polish philology, psychology, journalism, biology, law, art, economy and computer science." (2019, p 29)

³⁵ *Leadership, Representation and the Status of the Roma*, Krakow, Poland March 9-10, 2001, Project on Ethnic Relations Report, Princeton, 2001, available at: <http://www.per-usa.org/Reports/PERKrakow.pdf>

³⁶ *Sero Rom* literally means 'Head of Roma' or chieftain; he is an institution, performs the role of the highest court in the community, and is entitled to solve issues among Roma community members (mainly Polska Roma group) and to impose a sentence of 'pollution' on somebody found guilty or to 'exclude' somebody from the community so that others have to control their behaviour with that person in order not to become 'polluted' themselves. See: J. Ficowski, "Zwierchnictwo Sero-Rom nad Cyganami w Polsce" (The Authority of Sero-Rom over the Gypsies in Poland), *Miesięcznik Literacki*, vol. 18, no. 1 (1959).

³⁷ For example, see: <https://gp24.pl/rom-romowi-nie-przepusci/ar/4279465>

³⁸ Coleman, J.S (1988). "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital", *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 94. Available at: [https://www.bebr.ufl.edu/sites/default/files/Coleman%20\(1988\)%20Social%20Capital%20in%20the%20Creation%20of%20Human%20Capital.pdf](https://www.bebr.ufl.edu/sites/default/files/Coleman%20(1988)%20Social%20Capital%20in%20the%20Creation%20of%20Human%20Capital.pdf). We are following here on Coleman's view that social capital represents 'a particular kind of resource available to an actor' and that 'social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors' (p 98). It represents resources 'available to an individual and existing in various social networks' (p 98). For Coleman 'one effect of social capital'...is especially important: its effect on the creation of human capital in the next generation', i.e. "family background". It includes financial capital, 'measured by the family's wealth or income'; human capital, 'measured by parents' education' that determines 'the potential for a cognitive environment for the child that aids learning' and 'social capital' that within the family is different from either of these' that is 'the relations between children and parents...' (p 109).³⁸

the older one. They are skilled and better prepared to represent and voice the concerns of the Roma community.

This generation of educated Roma leaders has the potential to bring in and propose new policy goals that the older generation has not been capable of bringing in or noticing. For the latter, it seems that there has been a tendency to prioritise having and enjoying a little bit of power, mostly in relations with other Roma, rather than suggesting solutions that would impact the entire community positively and uphold the community's interests.

At the local or community level, Roma assistants need reinforcement as they become *de facto* leaders of their Roma communities. They often serve as advisors to local authorities and they are also creative about bringing new funds to Roma beneficiaries. More importantly, they have reached certain levels of education and as such they become the voice of the community.

The young generation of Roma needs recognition, especially, for their abilities and skills, not against Roma elders and traditions, but in addition to them. They need to find their own space in the existing power structures and the new Roma Programme must prioritise political participation and invest more into it, following the earlier examples of support provided to a Roma civil society led by younger, educated leaders.

ANTIGYPSYISM AS FACTOR OF INTRA-EU MOBILITY

Definition of the problem

As one of the surveyed Roma leaders articulated, antigypsyism is: *"A deep prejudice against Roma, pushing Roma out of society. In extreme cases, it views Roma as non-human or just worse. For me it is perceiving the Roma as antisocial individuals, unnecessary, unwanted. This is unequal treatment by institutions. Unfortunately, I meet with its manifestations both professionally and in everyday life. An example in a nutshell: there is a job [when we speak] on the phone and we invite you, and after contact in person, there is no [longer] a job..."*³⁹

In the Polish context, antigypsyism is often denied by officials. Potential employers also mask antigypsyism by claiming someone's lack of skills or education justifies their rejection of Roma seeking jobs. What is often impossible in Poland can happen, however, in the UK. According to one surveyed Roma, *"In Poland, uneducated Roma will not find a decent job. In England, they often get such a job that they are satisfied with. They do not feel discriminated against."*⁴⁰ Another explains that *"You can get a good allowance – welfare benefit abroad, but it is also easier for Roma to get a job in multicultural societies where they do not differ in culture or appearance."*⁴¹

Antigypsyism is, therefore, a cross-cutting issue affecting all areas and it is especially relevant for the themes of 'education to employment' and 'political participation'. With regard to the latter, antigypsyism limits the possibility of non-Roma viewing Roma as partners capable of shaping Roma policy outcomes at the level of the government or Parliament, or at the self-government levels. On the other hand, Roma in Poland see that fighting antigypsyism is still not an official state policy. Hence, they are motivated to emigrate elsewhere within the EU. They view the "old" EU countries as ethnically diverse and more tolerant, places where governments actively promote diversity policy. This knowledge is largely shared among Roma families in Poland.

Background and cause of the problem

Since the fall of communism, Roma have been increasingly on the move. From an analysis of existing documents,⁴² it is clear that receiving countries, before the accession of Poland to the EU, exerted certain pressure on the Polish government to actively prevent Roma emigration.⁴³ This demand was rooted in the media construction of Roma as 'unwanted' immigrants – Roma were portrayed as 'criminal' and 'exploitive' and as causing 'panic'.⁴⁴ For the Polish authorities, the appearance of Roma asylum seekers from Poland in the West

³⁹ Information based on interviews with Roma activists and leaders.

⁴⁰ Information based on interviews with Roma activists and leaders.

⁴¹ Information based on interviews with Roma activists and leaders.

⁴² Such a review has been conducted under the NCN Polonez projects; it also included interviews with migrant Roma and with experts/scholars. For more see: <http://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Between-tradition-and-change-migration-paths-of-Polish-Roma.pdf>, "Continuity or change – Anthropological analysis of Polish Roma migration paths to Great Britain", grant no. 2015/19/P/HS6/04125. The project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 665778

⁴³ The international discussion over the Roma minority in Poland targeting the Polish Government has been a consequence of the emigration of Roma from Poland, immigrants who were few in number but politically and socially controversial. The diplomatic exchanges between Tony Blair of the UK and Prime Ministers Jerzy Buzek and Leszek Miller are particularly interesting in this regard. For more see the report "Continuity or change – Anthropological analysis of Polish Roma migration paths to Great Britain", available at: <http://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Between-tradition-and-change-migration-paths-of-Polish-Roma.pdf>

⁴⁴ Clark Colin, Campbell Elaine, 2000, 'Gypsy Invasion': A critical analysis of newspaper reaction to Czech and Slovak Romani asylum-seekers in Britain, 1997. "Romani Studies", pp 10, 23-47.

was considered as complicating Poland's EU accession demand, given that Polish Roma minority members were asking for asylum claiming they were facing discrimination in their country.⁴⁵

Since Poland's EU accession in 2004, Roma from Poland have benefited from the right of free movement and many choose to move to the UK and other EU countries. Views on the reasons for their migration largely differ – mainstream politicians, the media and societies in the receiving countries claim there is a danger of Roma exploiting welfare provisions, and based on this, they call for restricting Roma migration. On the other hand, Roma in Poland point to reasons of discrimination and lack of equal opportunities in Poland, coupled with more tolerance and openness toward ethnic multiculturalism and ease of getting jobs in the receiving countries.

In reality, the Polish Roma minority's intra-EU mobility is small compared to the large Polish non-Roma migration to the West. Even if we assume that half of the Roma from Poland have moved to other EU countries, that would amount to around 15,000 people, which is a relatively small percentage in comparison with the number of non-Roma Poles who have moved to the West after EU enlargement, which is more than two million people. Equally, the comparisons with Western societies that describe them as more rich, tolerant, multi-ethnic and as fighting xenophobia increases the propensity to move out of Poland among Roma. It seems, therefore, that the mobility trend among Roma can hardly be stopped if, at least, the circumstances of recognising diversity and fighting xenophobia and antigypsyism continue to not be part of official state policy.

Policy answer to the problem

In our view, the new Roma Programme needs to address and prioritize combatting antigypsyism. Not only does antigypsyism negatively impact implementation of the Roma Programme, it also strongly motivates Roma to move elsewhere in the EU. Recognising this and pursuing an active policy of fighting this phenomenon has a prerequisite: Roma as Polish citizens must be granted equal rights and opportunities.

Demonising Roma migrants and portraying them as blameworthy people through stereotypes alleging welfare exploitation and criminal tendencies involves unjust generalisations and represents antigypsyism in its most rudimentary form. The media and mainstream politicians expressing such views should be challenged, at least, by the government.

At the same time, the example of anti-Semitism teaches us that these phenomena are deeply ingrained in popular culture and as such are difficult to challenge or alter.

Equally, young educated Roma entering the labour market can effectively counter these negative stereotypes; the new Roma Programme needs to support such initiatives.

⁴⁵ Poland as a country in the process of accession to the EU had to follow, among other matters, the so-called Copenhagen criteria of 1993 for the protection of national minorities, in this respect also of the Roma minority. More at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ftu/pdf/pl/FTU_5.5.1.pdf

RECOMMENDATIONS

Scholarship schemes and transitions from education to employment

To the Ministry of the Interior and Administration. Coordinator of the state policy towards ethnic and national minorities, coordinator of the Roma Programme:

1. The new Roma Programme should continue the scholarship schemes; It should prioritise education that results in employment. It should provide support to those young Roma who aim to enter the job markets. The respective state agencies and civil society must monitor this process.
2. A Roma activist and youth advisory group should be established at the level of the Roma Sub-Commission in order to provide exact data and revive the consultation process of the Joint Commission on National and Ethnic Minorities or the Parliamentary Minority Commission.

Political participation

To the Ministry of the Interior and Administration. Coordinator of the state policy towards ethnic and national minorities, coordinator of the Roma Programme:

3. The state Roma Programme should invest more resources following the earlier examples of supporting civil society organisations among Roma NGOs, especially if these are set up by members of the younger generation.
4. Roma assistants and all kinds of advisors to local authorities who become representatives and spokespersons for Roma need concrete support and empowerment (trainings, internships, work placements in offices, agencies, membership in advisory teams or committees).
5. Roma leadership, participation, empowerment and self-organisation as well as consultation processes must be revisited and redefined, especially in the context of the changing culture and relationship between the generations, and also in the context of the emergence of Roma within vocational and higher education. Efforts to improve civic engagement among Roma and their interest in politics, particularly among Roma youth, should include training, awareness-raising campaigns, and the placement of Roma candidates on mainstream political party electoral lists.
6. We recommend reviewing the tasks and the composition of the Panel for Roma Issues (the Sub-Commission) at the government level. We believe it should be revived as the prime forum for dialogue with policymakers, that it should be moderated and led by Roma representatives who are well-educated, legitimate, and who reflect the complex diversity of the Roma minority. To date, the surveyed Roma leaders do not feel they are represented by the Joint Commission of the Government and National and Ethnic Minorities or by the Panel for Roma Issues, nor do they feel that those who are seated there consult anything with them.

Antigypsyism as factor of intra-EU mobility

To the Ministry of the Interior and Administration. Coordinator of the state policy towards ethnic and national minorities, coordinator of the Roma Programme:

7. Antigypsyism needs to be clearly addressed in the new Roma Programme 2021-2030 either as a specific chapter or as a cross-cutting theme, including in the area of Roma mobility. Roma intra-EU mobility from Poland needs to be viewed as part of the general migration mobility exercised by Polish citizens and as an example of it. At the same time, it needs to be put in the right framework – Roma migrants represent just a small fraction of the Polish citizen who have moved to Western countries within the EU.
8. In the West, Roma migrants need to be seen through more exact, accurate descriptions and narratives based on research, both in Poland and in the receiving countries. The new Roma Programme should include both qualitative and quantitative research in order to provide more reliable data to help counter antigypsyist views regarding Roma migrants' mobility. The possibility of such research should be included in the new Roma Programme in order to adequately respond to the needs of Roma in Poland.

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