

Report on the impact of Bridge to Business programme on participating Roma youth





Bridge to Business is performed within *"Bridging Young Roma and Business - Intervention for inclusion of Roma youth through employment in the private sector in Bulgaria and Hungary"* project that has been supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation ("EaSI") 2014-2020.

Goal: The overall aim of the project is to highlight an approach that contributes to the emergence and strengthening of Roma middle-class, consisting of Roma with at least secondary education, working in mainstream environment in quality positions. The project is applying rigorous quantitative and qualitative measurements to evaluate the effect of the interventions. The final outcome of the project will be policy conclusions and recommendations for state employment services to adapt to the needs of that special target group of relatively educated Roma employees as well as providing similar policy advice to future employers on internal procedures and services needed for a similar Roma employment initiative.

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Homepage: www.bridgetobusiness.eu, <http://autonomia.hu/hu/programok/hrom/>
<https://cps.ceu.edu/research/bridge-to-business>

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Contents

About Bridge to Business (<i>HRom</i>) in Hungary: Intervention for inclusion of Roma youth through employment in the private sector	4
I. Introduction	5
II. Description of the programme	5
II.1. Applicants and participants	5
II.2. Participants' profile	6
II.3. Programme training activities	8
III. Data and methods	11
III.1. Methodology applied by the impact survey	11
III.2. Methods and data of the qualitative study	12
IV. The main indicator: employment position	13
V. Other areas of the Bridge to Business programme's expected impact	19
V.1. Cognitive and non-cognitive skills of the participants and the control group	19
V.2. Looking for a job: job-search skills and experiences and how they were impacted by Bridge to Business participation	21
V.3. Job selection process	25
V.4. On the job: challenges of inclusion in the workplace	28
V.5. Future expectations, plans for employment, and visions of the future, especially in terms of employment	32
V.6. Social networks and the impact of the programme	35
VI. "Participants' voice": programme evaluation from the participants' point of view	38
VII. Systemic factors influencing the success of programme participation	41
VII.1. Gender	41
VII.2. Education and its impact	43
VII.3. Geographic location	46
VII.4. Labour market discrimination	49
Summary	50

About Bridge to Business (*HRom*) in Hungary: Intervention for inclusion of Roma youth through employment in the private sector

Bridge to Business embodies a new approach to Roma inclusion through promoting employment on the primary labour market in the private sector. The main idea of the project is to facilitate access by highly educated Roma (with at least upper secondary qualification) to quality, white-collar jobs in the private sector. The project involves 150 Roma with grammar school or tertiary educations.

The programme understands integration as a mutual process occurring between Roma seeking employment and companies aiming to hire a more diverse workforce, hence it aimed to have an impact on both the young Roma and the employer companies and brings together a very diverse set of stakeholders – Roma and pro-Roma civil society organisations, large multinational companies, researchers from the academic field, professional trainers and HR experts in a broad collaboration.

The activities in the programme target potential Roma employees as well as partner companies. Young Roma take part in a 4.5 day long intensive training that aims to prepare them to successfully apply for and enter jobs in the corporate sector (for details see chapter 2.3). The programme supports participants' access to private sector jobs by providing information about job opportunities, helping with the application process, offering career guidance, and connecting young Roma directly with employers offering relevant openings. Participants have access to a range of additional trainings, including English-language and IT skills, as well as mentoring and coaching throughout the job search process. The programme cooperates also with the employer companies to support the recruitment and integration of Roma candidates and to create a more inclusive environment. During the project, partner companies and young Roma jobseekers are directly connected with each other.

While the core idea of the project is rather straightforward, the initiative does feature several innovative elements. It targets a relatively small but important sub-group of the Roma community – i.e., highly educated young Roma – highlighting a social issue that was largely neglected before by policy measures. As many educated Roma have gained qualifications in professions that are of little interest to the corporate sector, the project supports young Roma in changing career paths, either by redirecting them to higher education or helping them recognise their skills that are relevant for certain types of jobs in the business sector. The project is also unique in the sense that it targets existing, quality employment opportunities on the primary labour market and aims at making these available for relatively disadvantaged Roma – as opposed to other programmes that try to create new job opportunities that are only rarely sustainable and integrated into the mainstream economy. The project's long-term aims are to contribute to the strengthening of a Roma middle class and to promote responsible employment practices. The elements of the intervention provide the basis for social policy tools to bridge the gap between the well-educated Roma minority and the corporate sector providing quality employment.

The project is unique also in term of the in-depth research it included to investigate its impact on the beneficiaries: Roma youth and partner companies. The investigation has considered how labour market position has changed from before to after participating in the program. It also discussed the most important factors that the programme addressed and hoped to make an impact on: job search skills, skills relevant during the job-selection process, adaptation to and inclusion at a new job, career expectations and personal networks. The impact study applied a multi-method approach and included a survey of participants, of a control group (including of Roma of similar age and education as the participant group) as well as repeated interviews with participants.

I. Introduction

The present report gives an account of the Bridge to Business programme¹ and its implementation in Hungary, as well as the key findings of the impact study about it. It will discuss the programme's activities and impact on participating Roma youth as well as some of the structural barriers that are influencing its long-term outcomes.² After introducing the programme, its participants, and the methods of investigation it will consider the key areas the programme addressed and hoped to make an impact on, chapter by chapter: labour market position, job search skills, skills important in the selection process, adaptation to and inclusion at a new job, career expectations and personal networks. Another chapter gives a voice to Roma participants and shares their insights about the training and the programme. The final chapter will discuss the most important structural factors that may influence the success of the programme, such as gender inequalities, educational experiences, residence and former experiences of discrimination.

II. Description of the programme

II.1. Applicants and participants

A total of 255 individuals applied to the programme by completing an online registration form. Participants took part in a training, the core of which was a 4.5 day course. There were a few exceptions to this rule: one course in May 2019 lasted just three days, and two trainings organized in cooperation with the Christian Roma Colleges in Nyíregyháza and Szeged were even shorter (one and two days).³ The total number of participants reached the original target of 150.

Based on the analysis of the registration form data, we can see a noteworthy difference between those who applied and those who actually participated in the programme. The latter category has a generally higher level of education, better foreign language knowledge and a more favourable labour market status (past and present) as well as more favourably self-assessed labour market skills. When checking these facts with colleagues at the implementing Autonómia Foundation (AF), they explained these disparities as reflecting self-dropout. Although a few of the applicants whose profiles and motivations were very different from what the programme could support were discouraged by the AF itself, (i.e., the applicants wanted to become truck drivers or entrepreneurs in the construction sector), the vast majority of dropouts were grouped into three broader categories: (1) those who disappeared after applying to the programme (they

¹ The Bridge to Business "Bridging young Roma and business – Intervention for inclusion of Roma youth through employment in the private sector in Bulgaria and Hungary" (Ref. № VS/2016/0236) programme took place between October 2016 and September 2019 with the financial support of the EC DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. The project took place in Bulgaria and Hungary. It was coordinated by OSI Sofia. The implementing partner in Hungary was the Autonómia Foundation.

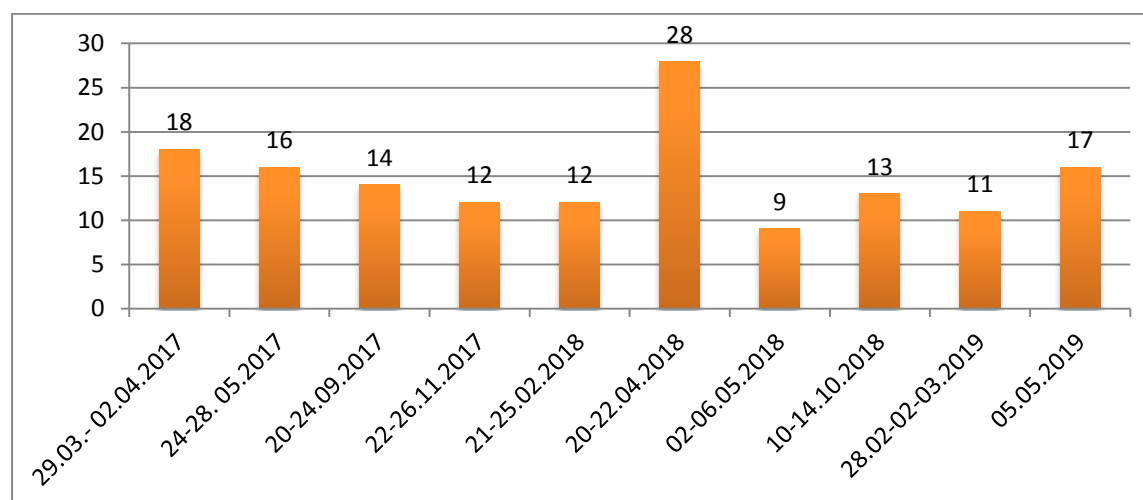
² One can read about the programme activities and their impact concerning the corporate partner companies in the *Bridge to Business: How did corporate partners benefit?* (<https://cps.ceu.edu/research/bridge-to-business>).

³ Participants of the Szeged training did not fill out the online registration form, as they were recruited directly by the Christian Roma College, and therefore we do not have any data about them. Consequently, the analysis presented here does not include this group of 17 university students.

could not be reached at the phone or e-mail they provided), (2) those who found a job in the meantime, (3) those who had some personal obligations they could not leave for five days in a row (coursework, young children, other care duties, job obligations or close relatives who did not support the applicant spending five days away from home). Some of these reasons for dropout obviously affected women more than men, which is also reflected in the data showing some gender bias in the dropouts (60% of the registered males finally participated in the training compared to just 43% of the registered females).

Participant numbers in the first trainings numbered around 18, 16, or 14 but then dropped to 12 (or even nine), with the exception of the two-day training organised at the two Christian Roma Colleges (with 28 and 17 participants).

Chart 1 Number of participants in each training round.

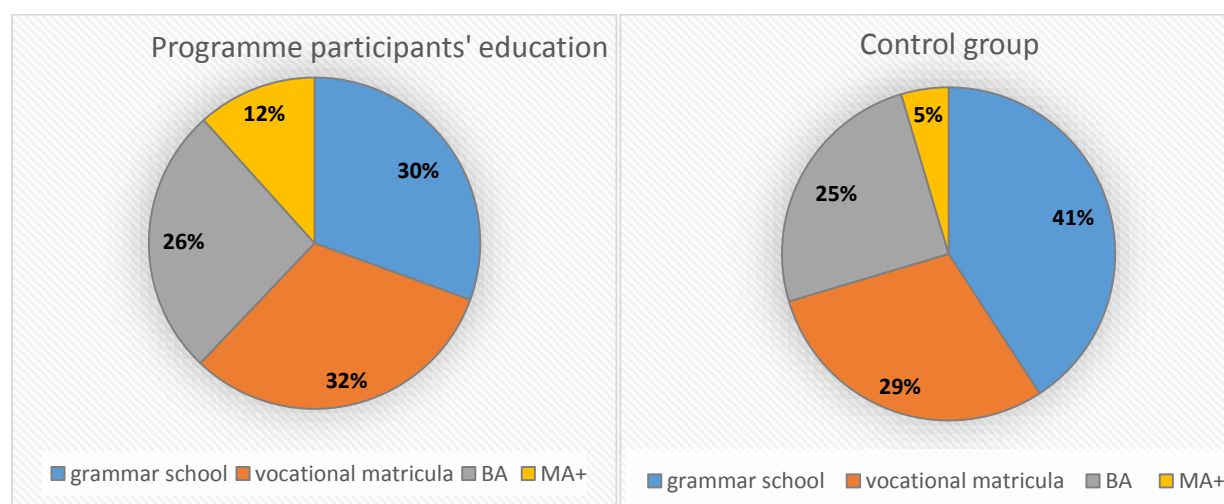


II.2. Participants' profile

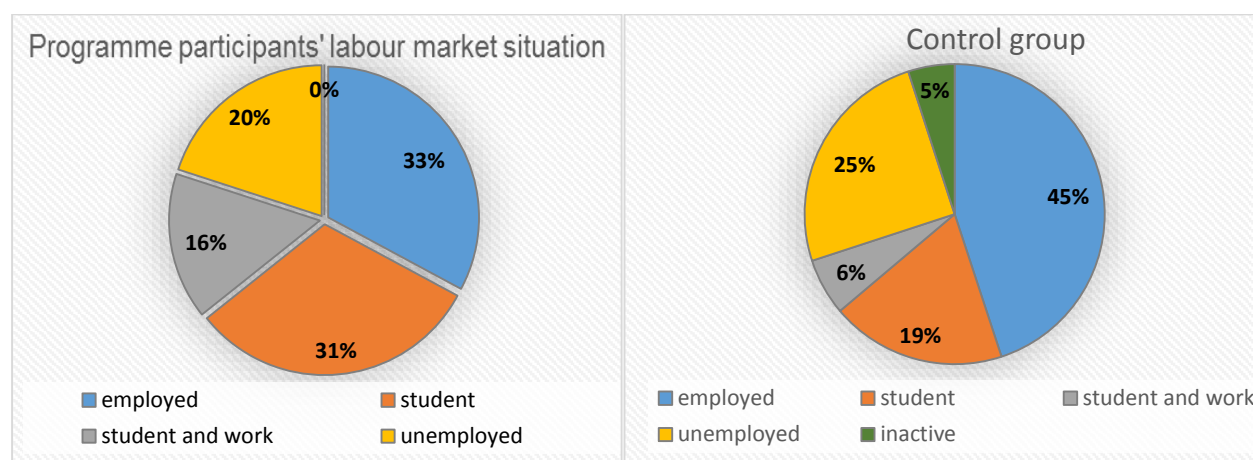
Census data (2011) show that 80% of Roma in Hungary complete just eight years or less of primary school; 13% earn a vocational qualification, 5 % earn a grammar school qualification, and just 1% have a tertiary education. This picture is somewhat better among the younger generations: in the cohort of those age 20-29, 17% have a vocational qualification, 10% have a grammar school diploma, and 2% have a tertiary degree. In the light of these core statistics, it becomes evident that this programme targets a very narrow, specific subpopulation, the elite of Roma youth.

In the programme, 30% of the participants had earned a general secondary diploma, another third had attended vocational secondary school with an apprenticeship, while 38% had obtained a tertiary qualification (12% held an MA). The control group's composition with regard to education was somewhat

(but not significantly) weaker, featuring somewhat more young people with grammar school educations and fewer with an MA.



Almost half of the participants (47%) were pursuing studies when they entered the programme (16% were working in addition to studying (29% of the control group were studying). The programme captured many of Roma youth who were already halfway to the labour market, studying and looking for a job or studying and working already; only a third of the participants were working.

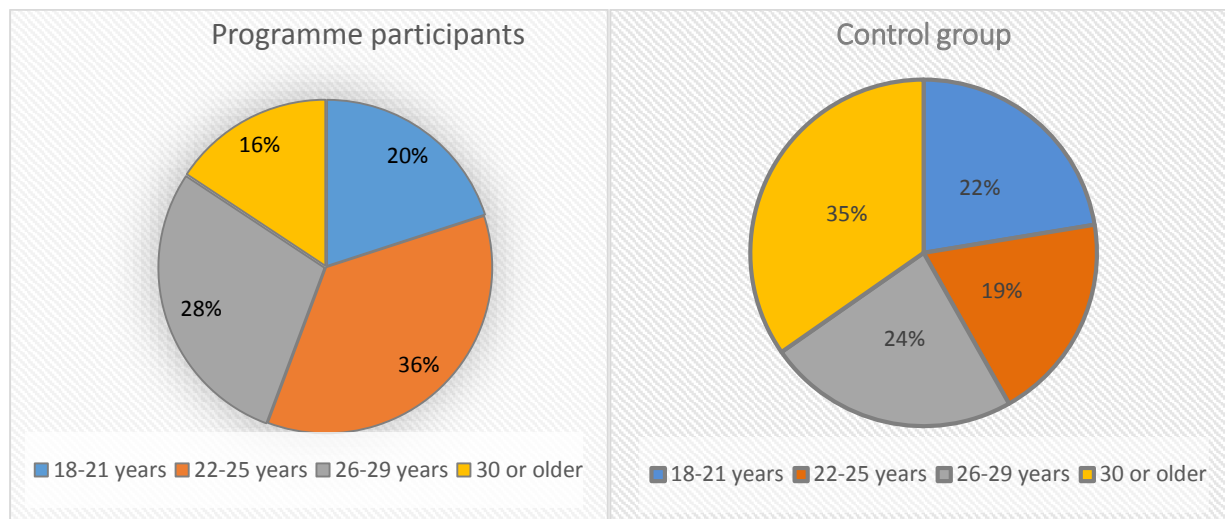


Only 6% of participants (and 21% of the control group) had never been employed, which indicates that even though this was a very young population, including a high share of students, the vast majority had already gained some work experience (including student work, occasional work, etc.).

As to gender, there is a somewhat higher proportion of men (56%) than women (44%) among the participants, while the opposite is the case in the control group (36% men vs 64% women).

The programme targeted Roma youth, and the prerequisite for applying was to be between 18 and 35 years of age. However, relatively few participants were younger than 21 and the bulk of the participants were

between 22 and 29 years old. This is less the case for the control group, where those over 30 represent the largest segment. One reason for this age distribution is that the training with the largest number of participants (28) took place in a Christian Roma College, among university students. Only 12% of participants had a child at the time of the training.



Geographic location is a similarly important aspect: just 15% of participants lived in Budapest (which also served as the main training site), half came from rural towns, and one-third live in villages. The control group is somewhat different, with a larger share of those living in the capital city and a smaller share of those residing in villages.

The BtB participants represent an extremely mobile group in terms of education and social status. All had graduated from secondary school, while only 40% of their mothers had achieved any kind of secondary education (mostly at vocational training schools that do not result in general secondary school diploma, which means the participants have surpassed their parents' qualifications at a young age. We also asked about the motivation and support for continuing their studies, and the results clearly indicate that their immediate family (parents and older siblings) had the most important impact on such decisions. Schools and teachers were mentioned to a much smaller extent. However, if we consider generally socially disadvantaged families, the availability of financial support (various scholarships and fellowships) played an elemental role in fulfilling their decisions to pursue higher education (over four-fifths of participants were recipients of some kind of scholarship).

II.3. Programme training activities

The most significant part of the programme was the training, which was attended by all participants. The main aim of the training was to empower young Roma on the labour market by building skills needed for searching a job and successful perform during job selection processes. All trainings were delivered by

professional trainers and HR experts active in the business sphere. While the programme implementers regard labour market discrimination of Roma as a reality in Hungary, they decided to focus on aspects that are under the control of the individual (as opposed to being controlled by the environment) rather than focus on barriers stemming from discrimination. The training aimed to enhance the participants' realistic awareness of their competences, their self-respect and strengthen a realistic understanding of the labour market. There are several special features of the training that differentiated it from similar initiatives. In addition to focusing on developing activities that can proactively influence the participants' labour market success, the training simulated real-world experiences, modelling the workload and working hours that an employee has to manage in a corporate sector job. The participants were treated as partners throughout the entire training and were supported in making informed decisions about jobs, applications. Another unique feature of the programme is that it cooperated intensively with HR experts working for the corporate sector: in the course of the training, participants could meet and talk to professional trainers and HR experts, practice interviewing with them and get feedback from them.

The content of the trainings

The core trainings (1-5 and 7-9) took three full days and two half days. They started on Wednesdays, early in the afternoon, and lasted till Sunday lunch. They included several modules: on the first day the the training, its purposes, and the participants were introduced. The next session introduced job ads and the types of jobs advertised by the partner companies. This session helped to identify the 'ingredients' of a job call and helped to 'translate' that information. The day ended with filling in the entry questionnaire of the impact research. The second and third days included a complex self-awareness and communication training held by two professional trainers whose primary experience was in the business sector. This module aimed to enhance the self-assessment, self-respect and communication skills of the participating Roma youth. It provided insight into aspects of the HR professionals doing the recruitment and selection at firms, including what kind of skills and competences they look for and what interview questions they ask to assess those competences. The training also included a section that aimed to support participants in assessing their own personalities and finding out what types of jobs fit their needs and competences best. A lot was said about the situations that may occur during a job interview, about efficient communication, body language, and strategies concerning unexpected questions and situations during a job interview. Participants rehearsed job-interview situations with each other and provided feed-back to their peers. The evenings of these two full training days were similarly important elements. On the evening of the second day, the so-called **HR dinner** took place, which provided a unique opportunity for young Roma to meet and talk to HR representatives of several (4-6) partner companies in an informal environment (for more details see the report on the corporate partners). On the evening of the third day, the **alumni dinner** took place: here a few former participants of the programme employed by the partner companies since their participation in the training shared their experiences with the job search and inclusion at the company. These discussions are also very informal and helpful for those who are about to start searching for a job in the business sector.

The fourth day of the training provided information about actual job searching (online portals, the ingredients of CVs and motivation letters), as well as interview and AC (assessment centre) simulations with professional HR experts active in the corporate sector. Each participant took part in three simulated job interviews conducted by HR experts in three consecutive rounds and received feedback immediately. These interviews simulated real-world job interviews. The last module of the day included two AC tasks and feedback from HR experts to participants on their contribution to the group work.

The final half-day was dedicated to individual feedback, a CV clinic, and the development of individual action plans together with colleagues at the Autonomía Foundation, as well as an assessment of the foreign language and IT skills of those who aimed to take a language course or an Excel training within the framework of the programme at a later stage of the BtB programme.

With the exception of the trainings organized by the Christian Roma Colleges, which were shorter and had a curriculum streamlined for university students with little or no labour market experience and no immediate need to find a job, all trainings took place in Budapest; participants were offered accommodation, full board for the period of the training, and their travel expenses were reimbursed.

III. Data and methods

The impact study applied a mixed method approach to assessing the results and potential impact of the programme on the beneficiaries. The research incorporated a balanced mix of qualitative and quantitative elements. These elements were concurrent, meaning that they were applied in parallel, not in sequence. The study included two surveys of the beneficiaries: one taken at the entry point of the programme (entry survey) on the first day of the training, and the other six months after participation (follow-up survey). The survey also included a control group so that any changes we detect can be contrasted with a group that has not benefited from the programme. The qualitative element of the programme included interviews with selected participants (2 to 4 interviews per training) and follow-up interviews as well. We must emphasise that although the labour market situation of an individual is in constant flux, the impact assessment research took a 'snapshot' of two time spots (at the time of entering the programme and six months later) because this is the only way to assess impact systematically. However, we are aware that the actual data about placements (followed up continuously by the implementing agency) may be somewhat different from the snapshot the research took.

III.1. Methodology applied by the impact survey

The quantitative research is a 'regular' counterfactual impact assessment study based on a ***survey of the Roma youth participating in the programme (participants)*** and a ***control group*** with similar characteristics. The survey addressed participants' (1) skills and competences; (2) changes in their labour market positions; (3) self-image and ambitions; (4) personal and social networks. Not all participants took part in the survey: the last two trainings' participants were excluded (in March and May 2019) because these trainings took place in the final semester of the program thus it was impossible to conduct a follow-up survey for them. This leaves us with 120 potential entry survey respondents. However, several refused to fill in the questionnaire. We have 94 completed entry questionnaires.

The follow-up questionnaires were completed by 70 participants. We made repeated efforts to reach out to and convince the programme beneficiaries to fill in the follow-up questionnaires and send them back to us. Here the lack of our personal presence was obviously a difficult circumstance. Participants received reminders by e-mail three times. This type of approach resulted in very low response rates (below 25%). They were then approached through phone calls to clarify the reason for their non-response and were again requested to fill in the questionnaire. This resulted in a significantly higher response rate. Many had to be contacted several times before they sent back their completed questionnaires. This repetitive, labour-intensive method of reaching out to the participants finally resulted in a response rate of more than 70 %, which can be regarded as high. Approximately 20 participants were not reachable after their completion of the training. However, we must emphasise that achieving this response rate necessitated considerable

effort and the kind of human resources deployment that would probably be impossible in a programme with a larger number of beneficiaries.

Like the beneficiary survey, the **control group** survey involved two measurement points, one in September 2017 and one six months later in February 2018. This task was outsourced to a survey agency (TÁRKI) with considerable expertise and field infrastructure, including expertise in surveying Roma populations. The control group sample was similar to the beneficiary sample in terms of age (18-35 years old) and education (graduated from upper secondary school, at least). The control group entry survey included 280 respondents and the follow-up survey included 195 respondents, which then formed the panel data set of the control group analysed in this report.⁴⁵

III.2. Methods and data of the qualitative study

In addition to the survey, we conducted qualitative research with a select group of participants. On the last day of the training we undertook individual interviews with 2-4 participants per training inquiring about their background, family and childhood, schooling experiences, motivations and expectations about participating in the programme, their previous work experience, and their career expectations and plans for the future. Altogether we made 25 interviews in the eight rounds of the training. To be able to understand the programme's direct and indirect impacts as well as the changing job market situations of the programme participants, we conducted 23 follow-up interviews with some of the former participants inquiring about their experiences after the programme, about their current employment situations, and about how the programme supported them in fulfilling their ambitions. Several of the former participants were interviewed repeatedly. During the follow-up interview phase, we tried to reach out to various types of participants: those who got employed at partner companies after the programme, those who got employed in the corporate sector but not at a partner company, and those who got employed in the public sector. We also talked to participants who applied for jobs in the corporate sector but did not succeed for various reasons. We tried to gather information about the employment and integration experiences of those who were employed after the programme.

⁴ In contrast to the participant survey, the follow-up survey for the control group was face-to-face.

⁵ Altogether we have $(94 + 280 = 374)$ entry questionnaires from the two surveys, which is possibly the largest survey data set covering a large part of this very special, important population segment who play a crucial role concerning the future of Roma social inclusion. We plan to analyse this data further, together with the interviews, for academic and policy purposes.

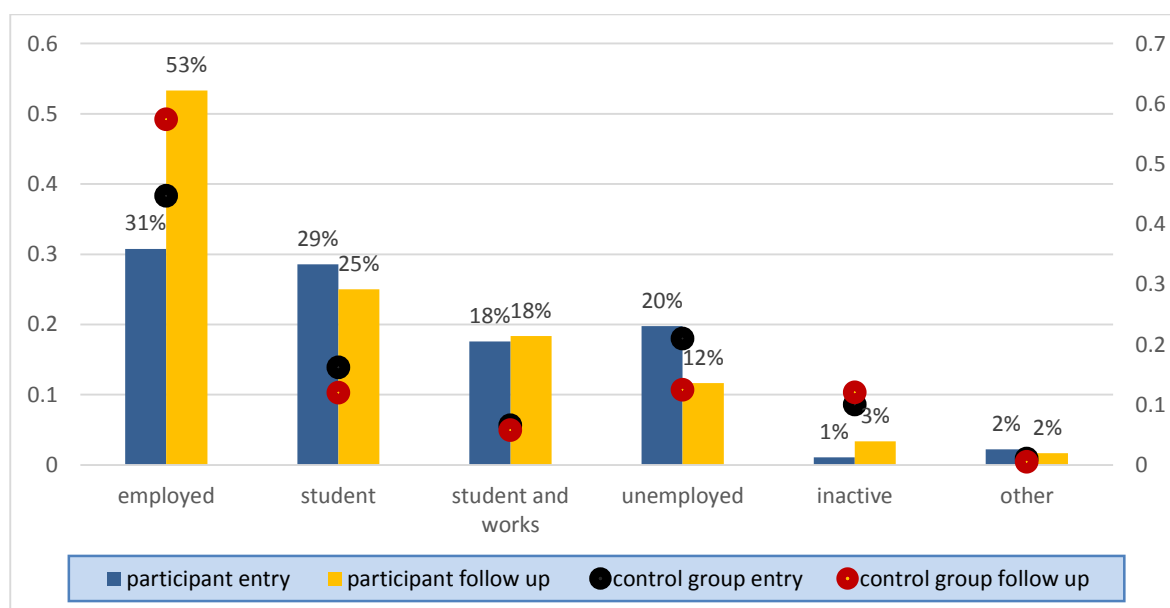
IV. The main indicator: employment position

The main indicator of our study is evidently the programme participants' changing labour market situation in comparison to the control group. We have data from two sources: the survey of participants (which is incomplete, as many did not fill in the follow-up survey questionnaire; see chapter 3.1. on data), and the records of the implementing Autonomía Foundation. The latter is complete (or close to it) but is not suitable for a systematic analysis of the programme's impact.

Based on the AF registry, of the 93 participants not attending the trainings organized for members of Christian Roma Colleges (and therefore pursuing university studies), 40 found a (new) job, 18 became inactive after the training (meaning they did not actively look for employment) and two gave birth to a child. This leaves 33 participants remaining who were looking for a job but did not find one (however, nine of them had participated in the final training, which had taken place the most recently).

The following table presents the survey data about the labour market position of the beneficiaries at the entry point to the programme and then six months later (at follow-up) compared to the control group, who did not benefit from the programme.

Chart 2: Labour market situation before and after participating in the BtB programme



The proportion of employed persons significantly increased (from 31% to 53%) in the six months after participants entered the programme, while the share of unemployed persons decreased. However, to see the actual impact of the programme we need to check these changes against the control group who did

not participate in Bridge to Business so we can eliminate any effect of the general economic and labour market boom on these results.

The data show that at the entry point, the control group had a more favourable labour market (LM) situation than those who entered the BtB programme, and that the control group's LM position also improved during the post-programme period. However, the improvement is much more salient among programme participants (a 22% increase in the proportion of those employed) than in the control group (a 13% increase).

We believe that being employed is not the sole measure of LM position for Roma youth. During our interviews we found that the programme had made several of the Roma youth who had graduated from secondary school consider the possibility of continuing to study in tertiary education, an option they had not considered prior to the programme. In fact, nine of the 70 respondents to the follow-up survey mentioned that they had started their tertiary education since they took part in the training. Obviously, tertiary education improves the odds of finding a good, white-collar job significantly. We thus constructed a **composite indicator of labour market position change** categorising people into three groups that will make more in-depth analysis possible:

- The first category includes those whose LM position improved, compared to the situation when they entered the programme. This category includes people who:
 - were in education when entering the programme and changed to employment since;
 - were employed in low-status jobs and re-entered education at a tertiary level;
 - were unemployed or inactive prior to entering the programme and became employed; and
 - were employed both before and after participating in the programme, but whose salary increased significantly between these two points in time;
- The second category includes those participants whose LM situation has not changed compared to when they entered the programme;
- The third category includes those whose LM situation has deteriorated. This category includes those:
 - who were employed prior to entering the programme but became either unemployed or inactive; and,
 - who were employed at both time-points but whose salaries fell.

The table below shows a summary of this indicator:

Table 1: Labour market position change

	Programme participant	Control group
Labour market position deteriorated	9%	12%
Labour market position unchanged	41%	63%
Labour market position improved	50%	26%
N	70	195

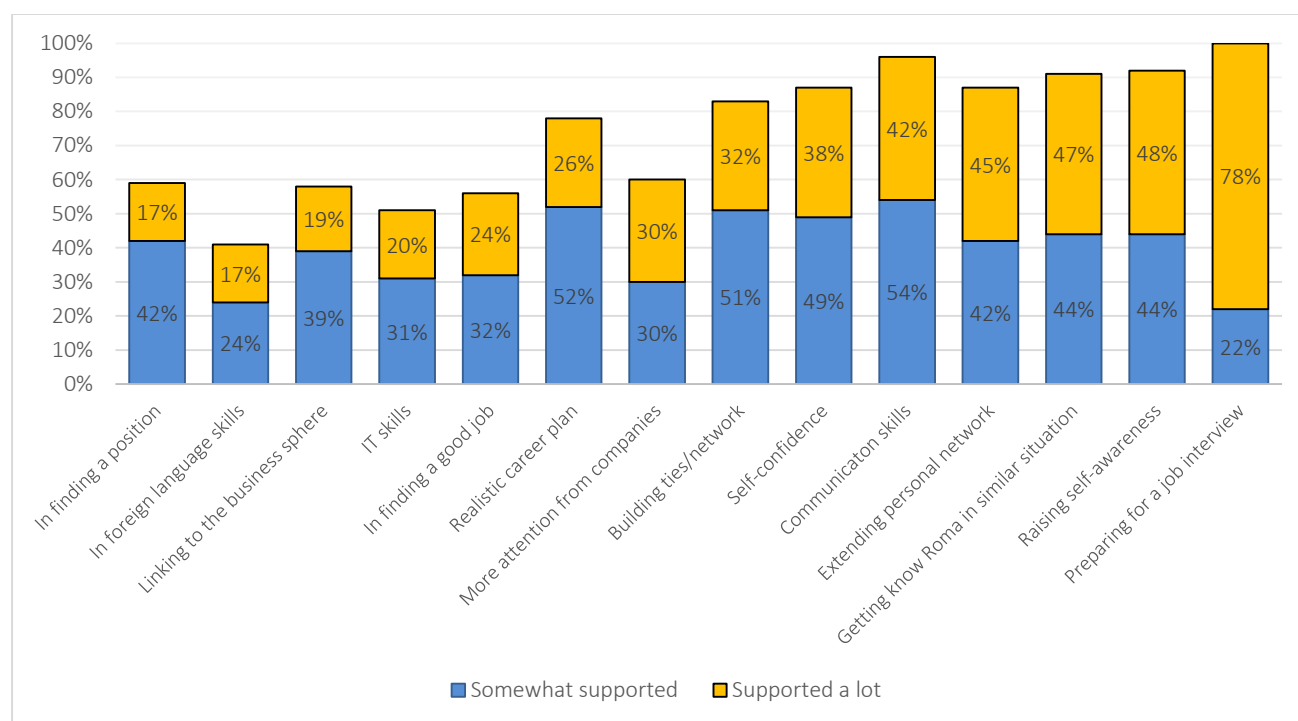
Using the composite indicator of labour market position change, the data show that in both the participant group and the control group, labour market position generally improved: significantly more Roma youth overall experienced improvement than experienced deterioration of their position. However, when compared to the control group – consisting of respondents with highly similar socio-demographic characteristics – proportionally, twice as many programme participants as control group members improved their LM position: 50% of beneficiaries improved their LM position and only 9% saw it deteriorate. This suggests that, in addition to improvement due to the generally favourable labour market environment, the BtB programme has positively influenced the LM position of those Roma youth who participated. When checking the basic demographic characteristics, we see that the youngest participants (18-21) benefited the least from the programme. This is quite evident, as many of these youth are still in education, and a six-month follow-up period would not likely show much change in their labour market position. As to gender, we see no significant bias, which is good news, given that most programmes targeting disadvantaged social groups tend to demonstrate a strong gender bias in terms of their impact. While in the control group the change of labour market position was equal among young Roma irrespective of where they live, among BtB participants the greatest improvement could be detected among those who lived in the capital, while those coming from rural areas benefited the least (but still significantly more than in the control group). It is also important to mention that five out of seven participants who were parents improved their LM position following the programme. However, when looking into how the programme enhanced intra-generational mobility, we couldn't distinguish clear patterns: those whose parents completed just primary education (or less) were as likely to benefit from the programme as participants with more highly educated parents.

Now that we have established **that the programme had a positive, significant impact on the labour market position and opportunities of the participants**, we shall look more deeply into where and how participants found jobs. According to the responses to the questionnaire, just six persons found a job at a partner company of the BtB programme, 29 found one through personal contacts, and 13 found one through open job calls. We need to make a small amendment here: the follow-up questionnaire was filled out six months after participation in the training, thereby covering the situation at that point in time. However, the actual number of those who got jobs at partner companies rose to 14 participants by June 2019. The interviews

shed light on the fact that, contrary to our expectations – namely, that many participants would find a job at the partner companies – the programme rather supported them in finding a job on the open market. This is a positive, somewhat unexpected project result: it means **that instead of facilitating employment among a closed circle of employers with the AF's direct support, the programme rather empowered participants to independently search for, find, and get a job on the open market.** The greatest barrier to taking a job at a partner company include the mismatch between the programme participants' home residences and the companies' locations (and the high cost of the relocation and housing rental that the salaries offered to entrants would not cover), as well as the mismatch of educational backgrounds or career interests and the types of jobs available at partner companies (for more about this, see chapter 7.3).

The questionnaire also inquired about participants' perceptions with regard to the type of support they received from the programme:

Chart 3: How did the programme support you in the following areas? (% of valid answers)



Participants felt the programme provided considerable support in developing the skills necessary to looking for work and successfully participating in the selection process, such as preparing for a job interview and honing communication skills (over 90%). Very importantly, over 90% of the young Roma felt that participating in the training enhanced their self-awareness and self-confidence – characteristics that basically all the interviewed HR colleagues mentioned as one of the most important barriers to a successful

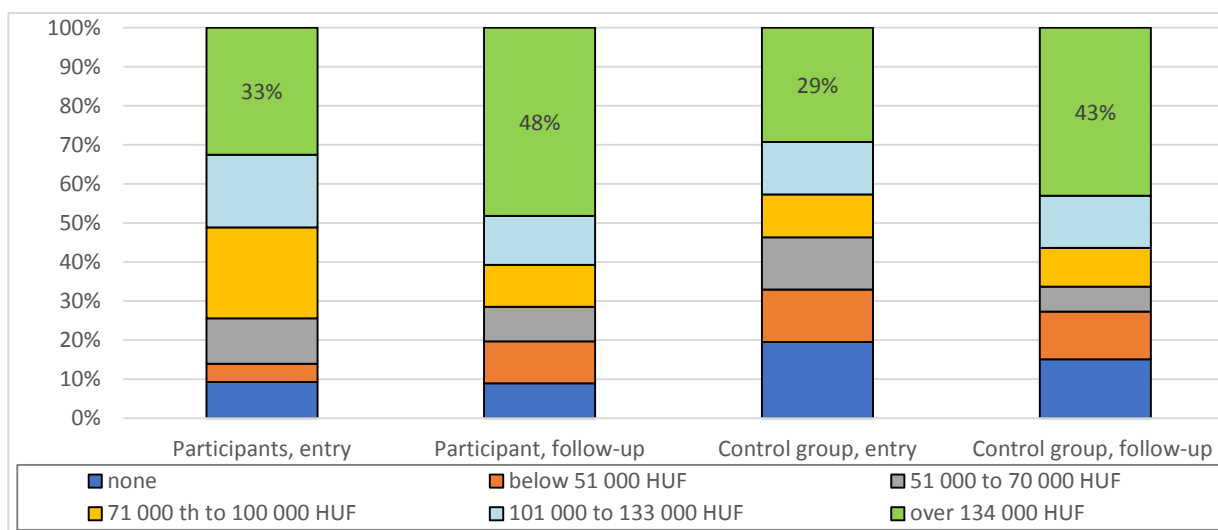
job interview for Roma in their personal experience: *“And another disadvantage [of the Roma candidates] is their lack of an ability to present themselves. They are not able to sell themselves. This is closely related to their self-image, whether they have a realistic image of themselves and whether they have an image about their future, if he/she knows what he/she wants to do in the future. Our experience is that they tend to under-estimate themselves, though of course sometimes the opposite happens as well,”* sums up a senior HR staff member of a partner company.

However, the chart above shows that developing job-search skills did not automatically lead to successfully finding a new or better job. Many factors that influence the success of a job search, such as the level and focus of an applicant’s education, his/her geographical location, etc., (see chapter 6) were beyond the scope of the programme. We see that several participants felt they received insufficient support in finding a good position through the program, in building connections to the business sphere, and in improving the skills aimed to be developed by the additional, elective modules of the programme (foreign language and IT skills). Even for these attributes, though, over half of the participants mentioned that the programme provided some or significant support.

All in all we find that **the success of the programme lies less in directly placing participants at partner companies than it does in enhancing essential skills (self-awareness, confidence and communication skills) that are crucial to a successful job-search and placement process.** Participants explained how the training affected these skills in many ways. A young woman from a small village who had attended a segregated school tells how her self-esteem was first brought down and then rebuilt during the training - *“My experience at the beginning was that I am still so dull. I missed so much at school.”* - while after the fourth day, *“I got to know myself much better, for example, that I am anxious during interviews... but I also learned about my many good qualities that I had not been aware of, previously. The HR people praised those qualities.”* A man in his twenties says: *“It was all very useful: the interview simulations, the feedback I received, the reinforcing comments, and that I was told what qualities I am good at and which are those that need to be worked on further.”* The point we want to emphasise here is that participants themselves felt that they were supported in developing realistic self-esteem, career plans, finding out in what field they would be good as well as where they could develop further, and these kinds of feedback were given mostly by professional HR experts and trainers.

An important measure of the LM position change is how incomes developed for those in employment. The table below summarises this aspect:

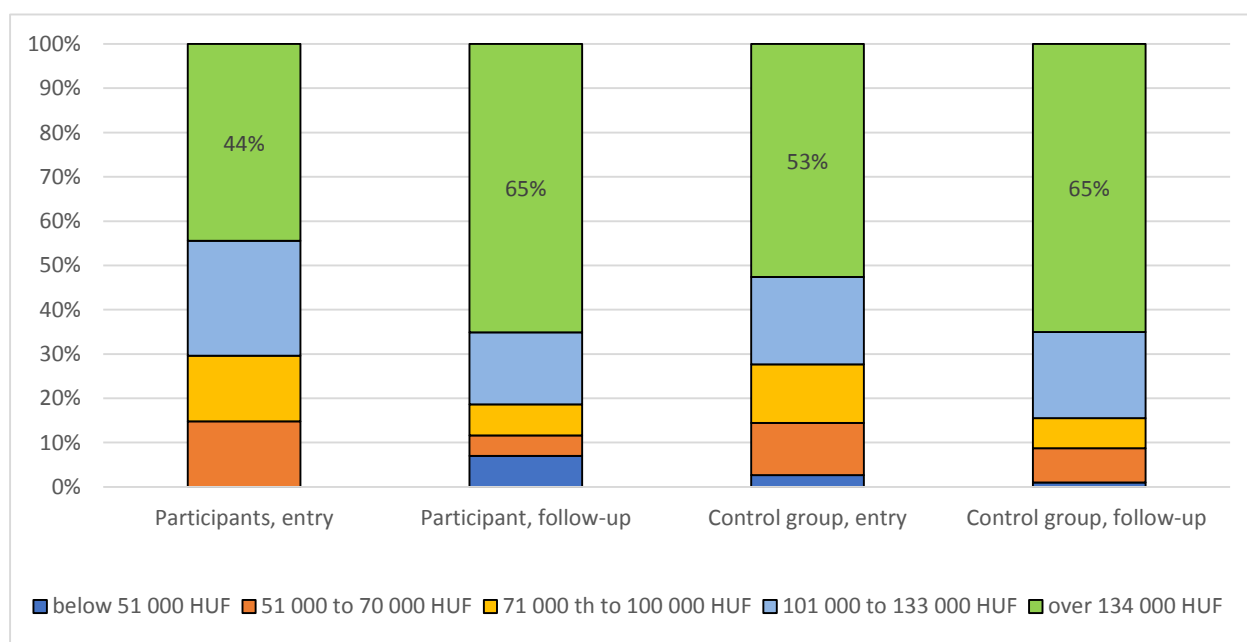
Chart 4. Change in income among participants and the control group? (% of answers)



Incomes increased in both the participant group and the control group; the share of those below 134 000 HUF (~ 415 EUR) decreased in both groups similarly (by 15% and 14%).

Filtering for those who had a job at the time of the survey, this change and its deviation from the control group becomes more salient:

Chart 5. Change in income among those participants and control group members who had a job when completing the survey? (% of answers)



Here we see that the share of those with an income over 134 000 HUF has increased by 21% among participants with a job; this increase was 12% in the control group.

V. Other areas of the Bridge to Business programme's expected impact

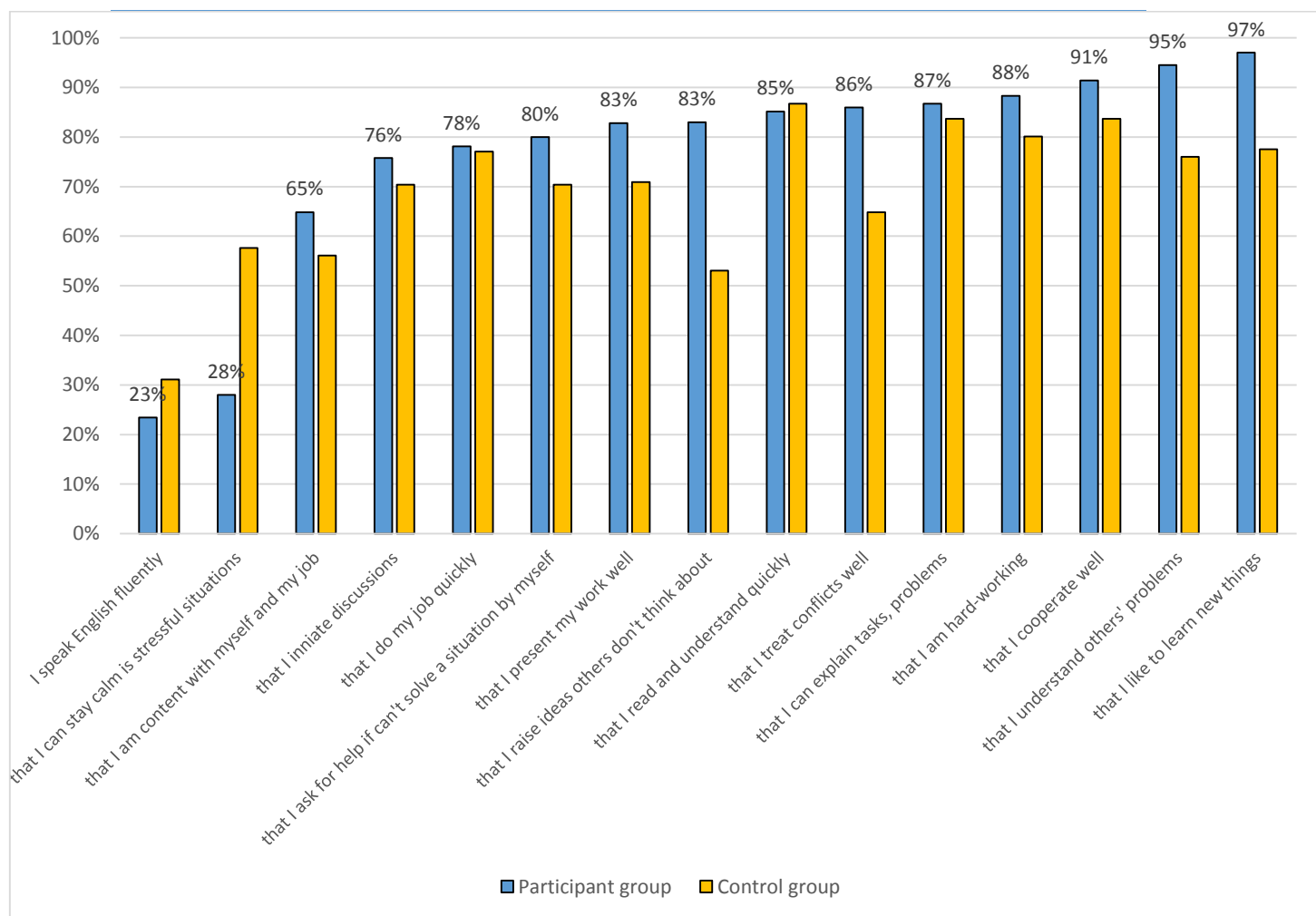
The following chapter discusses skills, competences and the changes required at each and every step of the process of finding and settling in a new job. The subchapters are organised according to these steps and discuss these through data and the personal accounts of participants.

V.1. Cognitive and non-cognitive skills of the participants and the control group

The first set of skills relate to basic cognitive competences such as reading, understanding, writing and IT use, skills that are often tested by employers in the corporate sector. We found no significant differences between the reading or writing skills of the participant group and the control group, nor did we find any significant changes to these competences as a result of attending the programme. The only slight difference as well as change was in terms of IT skills and computer use: the share of non-users decreased more among participants over the six-month period (down to 1%, in contrast to 9% in the control group). However, the change in these competences may hardly be attributed to participation in the programme, which did not target changing basic competences; rather, these changes may be due to the fact that many of the participants were pursuing university studies during their programme participation or had entered the labour market.

Another question set inquired about non-cognitive, work-related skills, ones that are sought by employers for various positions. Skills such as conflict management, stress tolerance, problem orientation, ability to learn, openness, self-reflection, etc., are regularly tested by HR experts in job interviews or at other points of the job-selection procedure. We were not able to test these skills, but we asked the respondents to self-assess them. The following chart shows the proportion of those who mentioned that they completely possessed a given skill:

Chart 6. Job-related skills (% of those who stated that this was completely true for them when entering the programme)



Compared to the control group, the participants of the BtB programme gave themselves higher assessments in almost all fields.⁶ The exceptions were English language competence and stress tolerance. The skills for which they rated themselves most highly is the one that employers look for most: openness to learning new knowledge. As one of the HR experts working for a large financial firm formulated this expectation, referring to the uneven quality of schools and degrees, *“although this is not a problem, [referring to the lower quality of knowledge imparted by certain secondary schools] we are looking for those among the grammar school graduates who can easily be trained. So we don’t look for high levels of knowledge, but rather for people who can be taught, who are open to new knowledge.”*

⁶ We might presume that this self-assessment of skills and competences is overly optimistic and reflects a high level of self-esteem, but self-esteem was among the skills self-assessed at the lowest level. We assume that the participants may have been trying to present the best possible image of themselves because they were completing these questions during their entry to the labour market programme.

Participants self-assessed their skills of cooperating with others to achieve a certain goal very highly, as well as their empathy skills, and they thought of themselves as hard-working. The greatest gap between the participants and the control group proved to be their self-assessments of conflict management and creativity: here over 80% of participants thought they possessed those skills.

V.2. Looking for a job: job-search skills and experiences and how they were impacted by Bridge to Business participation

The Bridge to Business programme's initial aims were to connect educated Roma youth with employers in the business sphere and to empower participants with the skills essential to accessing quality employment: the ability to efficiently look for a job and to produce a CV that attracts recruiters' attention, as well as developing interview skills. The latter is a complex, multi-layered task: training participants first needed to understand the aspects of why employers would choose which candidates for various positions. They needed to learn to think with the mind of the employee-seeking interviewer. They also need to develop their self-confidence, their communication skills, and their cooperative competences.

In the survey we asked participants to assess their own competences necessary to looking for employment. The following table summarises the relationship between **job-search skills** (as assessed in the follow-up survey) and how the participants' labour market position changed. We worked with a 0 to 2 scale, where 0 signifies that the respondent does not possess the given skill at all, 1 signifies that s/he possesses the given skill partially, and 2 stands for complete possession of the given skill.

Table 3: Mean values of job-search skills in the follow-up survey, by groups, with respect to LM position change ⁷

(mean of values: 0 – does not possess the skill, at all; 1 – possess the skill to a certain extent; 2 – possesses the skill completely)

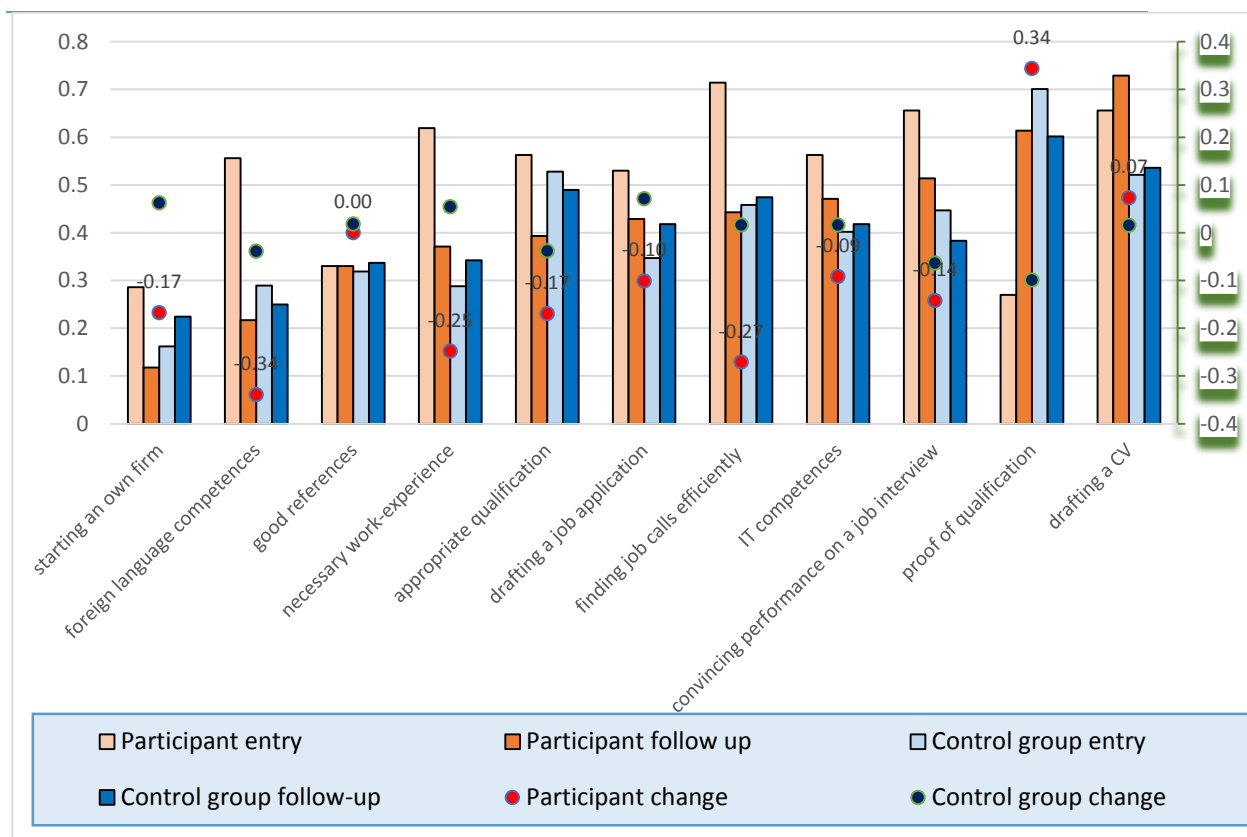
	Labour market position deteriorated	Labour market position unchanged	Labour market position improved	total
drafting a CV	1.50	1.72	1.77	1.73
proof of qualification	1.17	1.69	1.60	1.60
convincing performance on a job interview	1.33	1.48	1.54	1.50
IT competences	1.33	1.34	1.57	1.46
self-esteem	1.00	1.48	1.46	1.43
finding job calls efficiently	1.33	1.38	1.46	1.41
appropriate qualification	1.00	1.40	1.40	1.36
drafting an application	1.00	1.28	1.37	1.30
necessary work-experience	1.00	1.28	1.31	1.27
good references	0.83	1.14	1.37	1.23
foreign language competences	0.83	1.04	0.97	0.99

When comparing how these self-assessed skills relate to the change in LM position following participation in the programme, we see that with few exceptions, **those who were able to improve their labour market position were those whose self-assessed job-search skills were relatively strong after they took part in the training.** Participants assessed their foreign language competences to be the weakest spot, while drafting a CV, ability to deliver a convincing performance at a job interview, proof of qualification, and efficient job-search skills were assessed as relatively strong competences after participating in the training (last column). Here we must add that the low foreign language skills of Hungarian youth (not exclusive to Roma) is one of public education's gravest problems; although the programme offered some support in developing foreign language skills (see the Introduction), relatively few participants were able to take advantage of this opportunity because they did not meet entry conditions.

As to changes in the skills as self-assessed before the training, the results after the six-month period between the entry and follow-up surveys are surprising at first glance, as they show a decrease in the self-assessed skills:

⁷ See Chapter 4: Main indicator - Employment position change (Table 1)

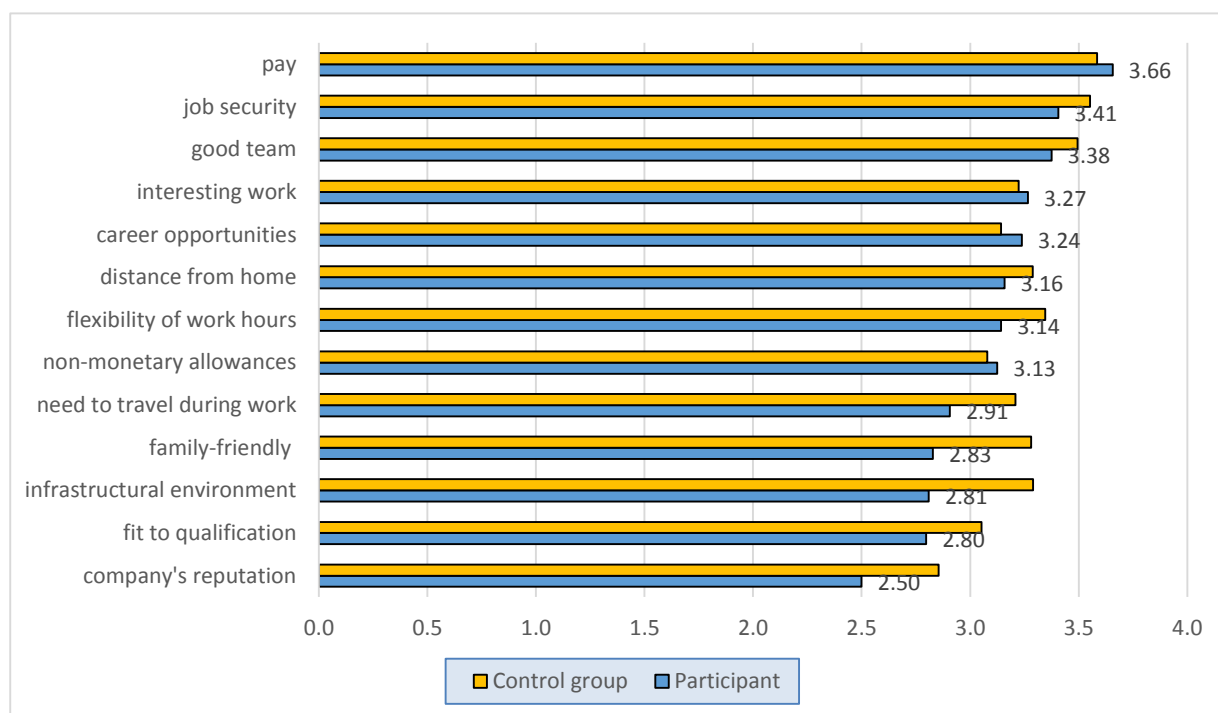
Chart 7: Job-search skills and their changes in the participant and control groups
(share of those who said they completely possessed the skill)



The data show that at the point of entering the programme, participants thought they possessed job-search competences to a remarkably high extent. On average, they assessed that they were able to efficiently find job calls, draft CVs, and perform convincingly in a job interview. Their self-assessment of most skills targeted by the training then deteriorated; here we would argue that the emphasis must be on *self*-assessment: qualitative data tell us that their skills did not actually deteriorate – rather, the participants’ self-assessment became more realistic. The following quote tells how this mechanism worked: *“My first thought at the training was how stupid I still am. Looking at my CV, [after receiving expert HR guidance on CVs] it was that mine was catastrophic. [The most important benefit of the training was] that I could get to know myself, my strengths and weaknesses, better.”* Interviews reveal that one of the training’s important impacts was that participants’ views of their own job-search and related skills became realistic: they learnt the difficulties and challenges associated with this activity and became more aware of what type of skills they had to work on. *“This has been a unique and absolutely great experience for me, and I worked on being able to say what I do not want to become,”* one participant said, and continued: *“I managed to learn more about myself, for instance, that I am usually very nervous during the interviews, even though this had not been not the case before. I also learnt about my positive characteristics, that I use my voice well [...] The HR people also complimented me on my body language, saying that even if I am very nervous, it doesn’t show.”*

Another question set inquired about what was important to the participants about a job, in general. The following chart presents a summary of those results for programme participants and the control group:

*Chart 8. What is important about a job? (mean value of answers)
(1 = not at all important, 4 = very important)*



The list above shows that all aspects of employment were either somewhat or very important (on average, more than 2 on a scale of 1 to 4) to the Roma youth when they entered the programme. However, there are clearly some factors that drive their decisions: pay, job security, and a 'good team' seem to be essential in terms of how attractive a given job opportunity seems to be. There are minor differences between the participants and control group, but just concerning aspects considered less important, such as the company's reputation, the job's fit to qualification, and the infrastructural environment. We also checked whether these preferences changed from before to after the training and, with the exception of the 'good team' aspect, we see just a few minor changes that are not really significant. As to gender differences, we found minor differences concerning most of the aspects, but there were two that were significantly more important to women than to men: distance of the job from home, and its 'family-friendliness', meaning that the employer takes into account the personal situation of parents raising children. Both aspects relate to women's role as mothers and caretakers, which is very important in rural Hungary and even more so among Roma households.

V.3. Job selection process

The training organised within the framework of the programme focused primarily on preparing Roma youth to understand and navigate through the selection process in a business environment. It introduced the steps of the selection process, supported participants in preparing competitive CVs, and most importantly, taught them about the interview process. The data shows that in this respect, **the training has been rather successful: most participants found a job individually, outside the circle of the partner companies.** Their experiences, however, were very diverse: some found a job easily, on the first attempt, while others had to apply and reapply many times even to get invited for an interview.

Using interview data, in this chapter we will describe cases of how the participants experienced this process, including both successful and unsuccessful cases that represent the types of paths, the challenges and the difficulties of the selection process. Our first case is participant K, who passed a selection process without much difficulty and got hired by a company in her hometown. It must be added that, having the relevant secondary school qualification, she was aiming for a job in the retail sector, where the labour shortage is significant.

“The AF called me to tell me about a job opportunity. He gave me an email address and a phone number. I called them and an interview appointment was agreed right away with the HR person from the company. All this happened within a few days. It was a fast sequence of events. They told me what the offer was about, what were the advantages and the disadvantages - that I would have to work even during the weekend. They told me about the salary, about extra benefits such as covering commuting expenses (travel-pass), and they asked me if I had any questions, and I did ask some questions, mainly clarifications to what was told to me... and that’s it.”

Participant P went through a similarly ‘smooth’ selection process for a job in a multinational company in the retail sector despite initial geographic and sectoral barriers. P had a job in public administration, but she wanted to change to the private sector. She had experience in project and team management in the public sector, as well as some work history in the hospitality sector. The employer (in retail) recognised that P’s skills gained in seemingly disparate sectors were transferable to the type of job they wanted to fill. Like many of the programme participants, P. lived in a rural town far from the capital city where the retail position suitable for her training and job interests had opened. She was unable to move and rent a flat on the outskirts of the capital without additional financial support. At that point, AF drew her attention to the special ‘relocation support’ scheme offered by the state in the framework of a state-funded programme addressing unemployed youth. She had to be registered as unemployed for at least 30 days to qualify. The company was flexible and agreed to wait for P to meet the requirements to qualify for relocation support. Once these conditions were fulfilled, P could receive state support for her rental deposit and for her monthly rent. Her case is a good illustration of how important it can be for an employer to recognise that

the skills of an applicant with experience in another sector and/or job type are transferable and valuable in a new field (skills from an administrative job in the public sphere to skills in retail in the corporate sphere) and also that an employer identifies barriers to the applicant taking a job and supports the applicant by being flexible.

The next case is a programme participant whose experiences shed light on the importance of feedback after unsuccessful interviews. After returning from the US, where he had worked for several months, the participant couldn't find a job despite considerable effort put into searching (applying to approximately 40 job calls). He took a job in a public work scheme where he worked three shifts, variable hours for seven months. Following his participation in the BtB training, he decided to quit the public work job and applied for the position of a helpdesk assistant at a partner company of the BtB programme:

"I applied in the town of D. ...It was a multinational company...for an English-language helpdesk position, and I did everything according to what was taught us during the training, and I was able to speak in a way that impressed them and surprised them... and concretely, we were discussing that I don't have a driver's licence, so the agreement was that my job description would be written in such a way that I would not be required to drive... so I was under the impression that I made it, but then they didn't even bother to say, 'Listen, we don't need you'. It was quite a big disappointment."

This case indicates a frequent experience of the BtB participants: they become able to use what they were taught during the training, they feel the impact of it, they perform better during the selection process than before the training, yet in many instances they are still not selected. Being not selected is not extraordinary, but what many do not get and feel disappointed about is the lack of feedback from the companies. This has been discussed in another report;⁸ not providing feedback is a general practice in the corporate sector, but in the case of applicants coming from disadvantaged circumstances, feedback about their performance and the reasons they were not selected is essential. Lack of feedback kills motivation, creates a feeling unworthy, and does not help the applicant to develop his/her interview performance. Luckily there are several examples where the cooperation of the partner company and the AF during the BtB Programme has kept young Roma on board despite numerous rejections. In all these cases, feedback about the circumstances and reasons for not being selected for a certain job was communicated to the applicant. We found that such intensive mentoring throughout the sometimes lengthy job-search process is of the utmost importance, because feedback not only gives applicants the courage to continue with applications (and prevents them thinking they are undeserving or have been discriminated against) but also is a very important source of personal development.

The next case concerns repeated unsuccessful attempts by one participant to get a job at a partner company. It sheds light on how the willingness to be geographically mobile is crucial for young Roma who

⁸ <https://cps.ceu.edu/publications/working-paper/roma-employment-and-potentials-state-and-business-actors-labor-market>

want to make a change in their career path and how tenaciously applying and re-applying may be misread by employers:

Z has a university degree in social work and has worked both as a warden in a school for Roma children as well as with socially disadvantaged children in a children's home. He can be described as a sensitive, empathetic person with excellent communication and conflict-management skills. Like many of the programme participants, he wanted to make a career change because he was burned-out, as well as for existential reasons (his working conditions in the childcare sector were difficult to cope with and the salary did not allow him to maintain an independent existence). His career ambition, to work as a client service employee, was feasible according to both the AF and HR experts cooperating in the programme, as his communication and conflict-management skills were relevant. The only limitation was that he wanted to stay in the southwest of Hungary for family reasons. During the training he talked to a partner company representative and his idea to apply for such a position was reconfirmed. He soon was offered a client service job by another partner company in Budapest which he declined because of his preference to stay in the southwest. After the training, he submitted a job application to the company that offers jobs in his region, but the response was just an automated message. He kept sending in his CV for various positions at the same firm but never got past the level of automated rejections.

"After the training I started working with the AF with all my energy to find employment. I submitted many CVs, mainly to NN (a partner company), focusing on their customer service department, as that was my big dream. I applied repeatedly, involving the AF in the process - each time I applied, I told them about it and asked them to help by getting in touch with the employer. I had a very good working relationship with the AF. Sometimes they told me about an opening, sometimes it was I who notified them that I am going to apply for something. Unfortunately, none of this worked out. The system always sent me a rejection: 'Thank you for applying, but we are trying to look for candidates who are more suitable for this position' - this was the usual message. I never really understood why."

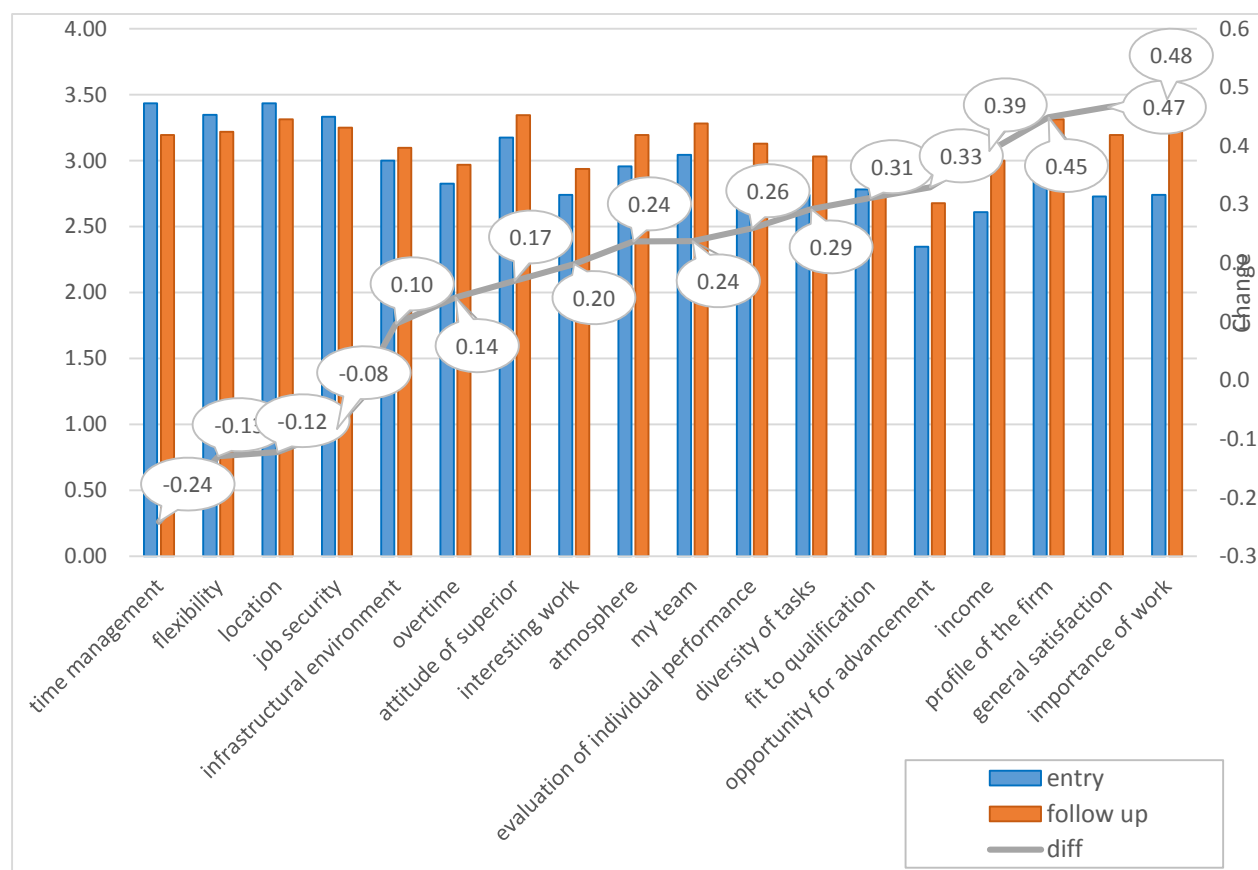
He felt frustrated and disappointed, and also his savings were running out, so he took a manual labour job in a food-production factory, in three shifts, commuting from his rented apartment to the factory in a distant town on a daily basis.

We tried to trace the reasons for this unsuccessful employment application with the partner company. The employer was very open and willing to check 'what went wrong'. It turned out that during the time of his first application, they had not been in a position to offer Z a suitable position, and he then kept applying for different advertised positions (the strategy suggested during the training of the BtB programme). This was translated and understood by the HR department as a lack of focus, as indicating that Z had no clear idea about what kind of position he was seriously interested in, and also as untrustworthiness.

V.4. On the job: challenges of inclusion in the workplace

We also asked how satisfied the Roma youth were with their jobs as part of the survey. The question investigated 18 elements of job satisfaction. 55 participants who filled in both the entry and follow-up questionnaires were in employment six months after entering the programme, and 32 had found a new job after participating in the training. On average, regarding those who had a job, satisfaction with their jobs was 12% higher than before. The chart below shows the traits the participants who had jobs were most satisfied with, and also how their satisfaction changed.

*Chart 9. Change in job satisfaction for those who have a new job after the training
(mean value of participants' answers to the entry and follow-up surveys)
(1 = not at all important, 4 = very important)*

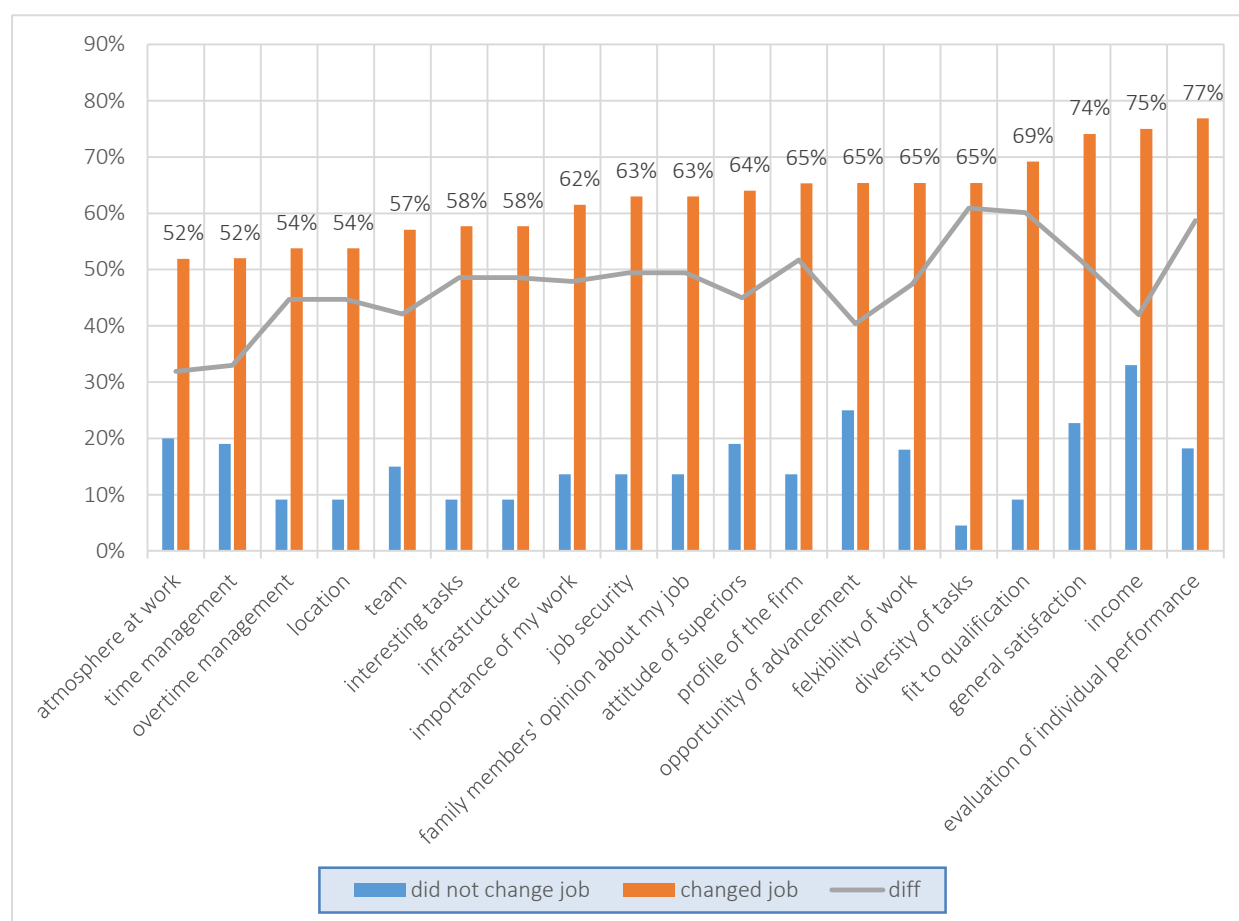


The changes speak for themselves: those elements of job satisfaction increased most significantly which the programme participants had been least satisfied with prior to entering the training and which added the most to their professional career and well-being, such as income, opportunity for advancement, importance of work, job fitting their qualification, and the firm's own profile. With respect to elements identified as less crucial (about comfort), such as flexibility, time management, location and overtime,

satisfaction increased just slightly or not at all. We may say that **participation in the programme has brought about significant and important changes in terms of the career and job satisfaction elements** identified as most important.

We also asked participants to report whether they experienced any changes regarding the above-mentioned factors of job quality. We grouped the respondents into two groups: those who changed their jobs after the training, and those who stayed in the same job. The results are very explicit:

Chart 10. Change in job satisfaction (% of those who mentioned positive change)



In all aspects, the vast majority – 52% to 77% – of those who changed their jobs became more satisfied with their conditions. We can see that income, fit to qualification, evaluation of individual performance and general satisfaction with the job are the factors in which most programme participants who changed their jobs following the training experienced improvement.

As a relatively large proportion of the candidates have degrees and experience in social work, social care, the teaching profession and humanities - the typical profile for highly-qualified Roma - one of the BtB programme's challenges was to help Roma youth **who aspire to change career paths from their original**

qualifications and job experience to the areas and types of jobs offered by the corporate sector. The challenges were of different extents and natures in individual cases. Those in the teaching profession who were specialized in the field of the sciences, e.g., maths and computer science, could more easily change professional careers, while in other cases, such as someone with an M.A. in History, more creativity and imagination was required to identify his/her place and type of employment in the corporate world. In other words, one of the challenges was the *mismatch between original qualifications and the type of employment offered* in the corporate sphere. This is obviously a challenge occurring during the selection process, from a company perspective, or during the job-search period from the jobseeker's perspective. Another type of challenge - related to the first one but occurring during the actual employment period - is that some of the newly-hired Roma employees turned out to be far too *overqualified for the type of jobs* they were hired for. Such situations may create frustration over intellectual energies going unused. A third type of challenge also experienced during the initial employment period could be called one emerging from miscommunication or *lack of efficient communication*.

Without claiming that the above-mentioned list is exhaustive or complete, we will present three types of employment trajectories of workplace inclusion that resonate with these previous points:

1. *A relatively easy match between qualification and job profile.*

The first example presents an "unproblematic" match during which the candidate found quality employment leading to better working conditions, higher income and results in job satisfaction with an opportunity for learning and career development.

Participant A earned his teacher qualification in the sciences and worked as a teacher in Maths and IT in a secondary school educating disadvantaged, mainly Roma, students. A. came to the programme despite his love for the teaching profession, as he was unable to live on the income he earned as a teacher. After the training, he applied for an IT job at a multinational consultancy firm with the help of a friend who was an employee there. He was hired relatively quickly.

The new employment resulted in significant changes in his life: moving to the capital city; working in a nice, modern work environment; and a significant income increase, enabling him to leave behind his previous daily financial struggles. In addition to the existential, socio-economic improvement of his own living conditions, the new employment provided him with significant job satisfaction and new opportunities to learn and to improve himself. A is very satisfied with his new job and sees himself working for his present employer long-term.

2. *Mismatch between qualification and job requirements: to what extent is switching employment tracks possible? Does it involve a waste of talent and existing qualifications?*

The second example is about two different types of mismatch, one with respect to qualifications and employment requirements (a very frequent case for Roma with tertiary education), and the other a

mismatch with respect to the quality of a qualification. Participant N has an MA degree in social sciences from an international university where English is the language of instruction. She was hired by a global company providing consultancy services for corporate partners in an administrative position. She supported a local team and her supervisors were physically located in different countries. The job seemed to be challenging from the beginning - she had to perform tasks she was not trained for and was expected to tolerate a significant level of monotonous tasks and a heavy workload. Though she invested significant time and effort into acquiring new skills, she was constantly made to feel she was underperforming and falling behind the expected schedule. These pressures and frustrations caused by doing a job she was unqualified for and wasting the knowledge and skills she had been trained for led to her quitting the job after 10 months.

Part of her decision, as she explained during the follow-up interview, was that she wanted to perform a job that matched both her level and area of qualification, her interests. She then decided to take a job at a Roma NGO although it paid much less. Her case proves that changing career paths radically – meaning a change in profession and sphere as well as position – involves risks for both Roma youth and the firms that risk hiring them, although trying such new paths is certainly an important experience for both stakeholders.

3. Match of qualification and employment, but miscommunication during initial employment period.

The third case is a qualified electrician, L, with a family of six. His motivation to participate in the training was to find secure, well-paid employment to sustain his family. His profession is much sought after, but living in a small town in an economically marginalised and also highly prejudiced part of the country made his job search extremely difficult. After the training he applied to a corporate firm in the energy sector with the support of the programme. Through the year-long job-search process, mentored by the programme, he was able to learn from his failed applications, persisted in reapplying, and finally took a job that suited his qualifications and expectations at a BtB partner company. Though his workplace is far from his home and requires 2.5 hours of daily commuting, he is satisfied with it: his professional skills and experience are valued and his salary is adequate to sustain his family. In the first year of his employment, he requested a brief paternity leave to help out his wife after the birth of twins (they already had two older children). However, his direct supervisor misread the situation and denied his leave. The news about this debate soon reached a senior HR staffer who knew of the former BtB Programme participant. The parties were summoned and the problems were discussed in an open manner. It turned out that the direct superior of L misunderstood his request for leave as a manoeuvre to “avoid work”. The conflict was identified, and a solution was soon reached. In this process, the story of L was re-framed as someone caring for his family instead of being work-avoiding. This case indicates that even in firms with open mind-sets towards employing Roma, hidden stereotypes may function at the micro-level. It also shows the importance of mediation and of adequate diversity (and conflict) management.

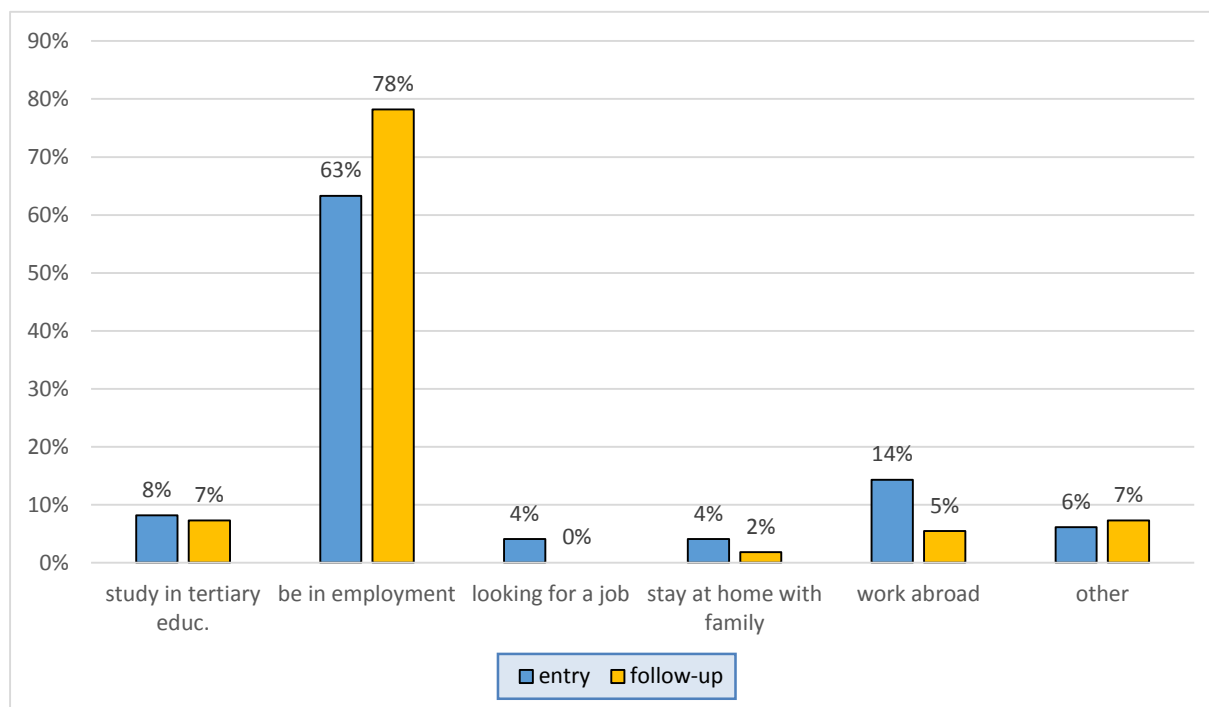
4. *Jobseeker is willing to adjust to the job requirements, but an opportunity to grow is missing, as is appropriate financial compensation.*

G was hired to become the manager of a state-owned service unit in a small village in an economically-deprived region of eastern Hungary. His daily commute was significant, and to fulfil all the daily routines and duties related to the job took more than the eight hours for which he was paid. He had to perform multiple roles and was often requested to go far beyond his paid duties. G would have even been happy to perform such extra duties, but his salary was hardly enough to cover his daily expenses and commute by car. To make his situation even more precarious, he had to handle a huge financial responsibility related to the daily financial turnover of the office. In addition, he was required to attend various trainings and pass exams related to them. He tried his best but failed to pass one of the many exams. When he suffered a road accident during an official trip and his personal vehicle was damaged, his employer refused him any financial compensation. This incident was the final straw - he has decided to quit. Despite the willingness of G to learn and adjust to the job requirements (his qualification did not particularly match this type of employment), the major challenge in this case was the high requirements in terms of responsibility, workload and on-the-job training, the inability of the employer to offer long-term career perspectives, and finally but most importantly, inadequate financial compensation for a job conducted in a difficult work environment.

V.5. Future expectations, plans for employment, and visions of the future, especially in terms of employment

We inquired about the Roma youths' plans for the future (what they plan to do in the next three years) both when they entered the programme and six months later when following up. The following chart shows the distribution of answers in both surveys:

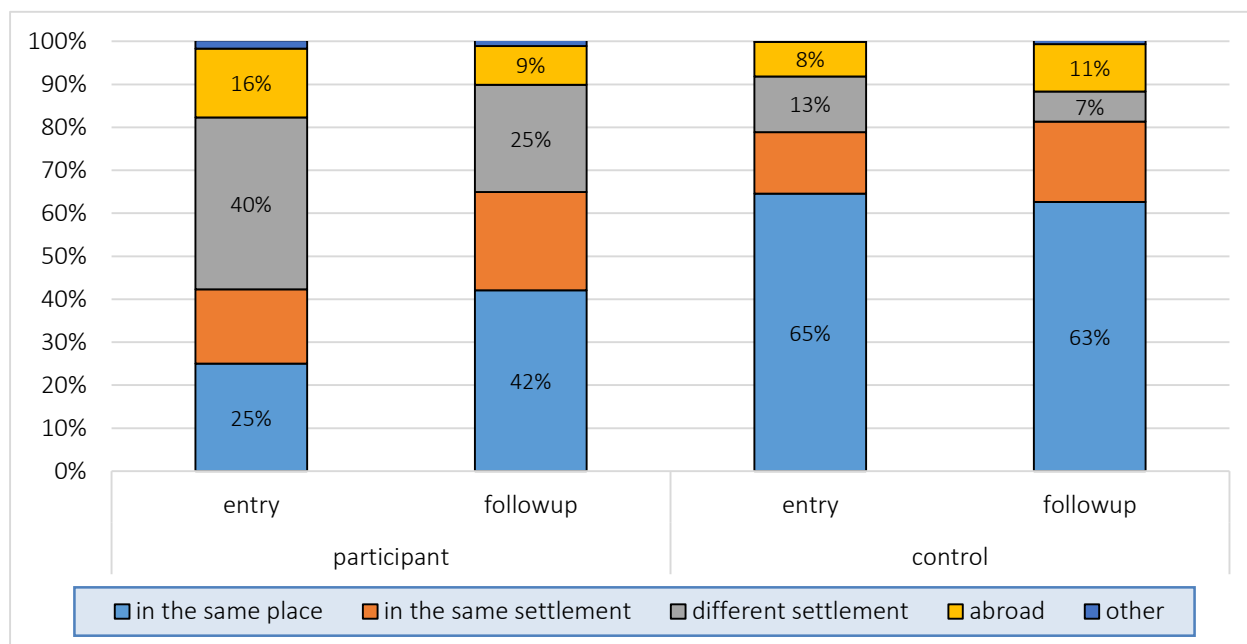
Chart 11. Changes in future plans, before and after programme participation



Since they were participants of an employment programme, it is not very surprising that most people mentioned a plan to be in employment and that the proportion of those with such plans increased notably (by 15%) after their participation. The already low share of those who planned to stay home and raise children was halved, and the decrease of those who envisioned a future working abroad is even more significant.

We also inquired about geographic mobility related to employment: 11 participants out of 70 (16%) who answered both the entry and the follow-up questionnaires mentioned that they had moved to a new location since the training due to employment (which means that every fifth participant who was in employment had moved during those six months due to a new job). Their visions concerning their future residence, compared to the control group, are shown in the following chart:

Chart 12. Where will you live in three years' time? (% of responses)



The data reveal two important things: first, the motivation of the participants to move elsewhere to live and work was much higher than for the control group. This is certainly no accident: applicants to the Bridge programme were more likely willing to change their career paths and to be open to changing their environment. The change among those who had foreseen their futures as involving staying in the same place increased due to those participants who have already moved because of a good job opportunity. The other significant finding is that the share of those who had foreseen living abroad decreased from 16% of participants to just 9%. We do not want to draw far-reaching conclusions from such a small sample, but as such a change did not occur in the control group, we suspect that this decrease in interest in transnational labour migration might be due to the programme showing young Roma that aiming for jobs that offer decent incomes and career paths in Hungary is a realistic option.

V.6. Social networks and the impact of the programme

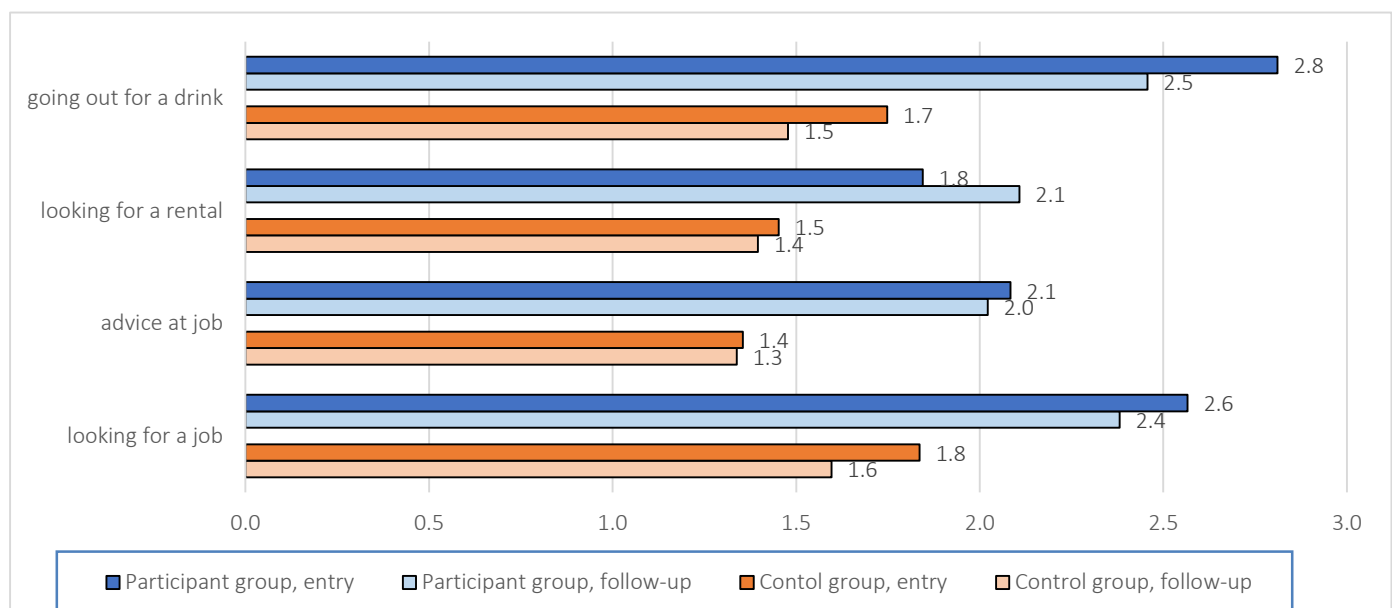
When planning the Bridge to Business project we argued that *“A lack of network capital is a key barrier to educated Roma youth finding a good job. In many cases they are first-generation intellectuals, the very first in their families, so they lack the network necessary to find a good job, which is essential in a labour market where finding and getting a job is very much dependent on personal contacts...”* Thus, the impact study focused specifically on the personal networks young Roma have and how the programme affected their personal ties.

Through the survey we asked about the friends, family members, or other contacts Roma youth would turn to in four different situations: when searching for a job; when renting a flat; when discussing work-related conflicts; and when going out for a drink/informal chat. All had an opportunity to mention four individuals in all four situations. Two of the situations are strongly work-related situations, one may be – and according to the interviews, is – also related to their labour market situation (finding a flat to rent) and only one is informal, not related to LM matters. We inquired about each contact’s gender, age, and ethnic background as well as the nature of the relationship both in the entry and the follow-up surveys, and we are therefore not just able to reveal the characteristics of these personal networks, but we can show how these changed during the six months of the investigation.

Altogether, participants mentioned an average of 5.5 contacts in the four situations. In general, women had somewhat wider networks (5.7 persons) in contrast to men (5.2 persons on average). As to age, the only significant difference is that people over 30 have fewer contacts (4.7) than those below 29 (5.7). Interestingly, Roma living in mid-sized towns reported fewer ties (4.9), while those living in villages mentioned the highest number of contacts (6.1).

The following chart shows the average number of ties mentioned by respondents from the participant group and the control group at the entry and follow-up moments. In all respects, participants in Bridge to Business had more extended networks compared to the control group.

*Chart 13. Average number of contacts in four situations
(maximum four contacts could be listed)*

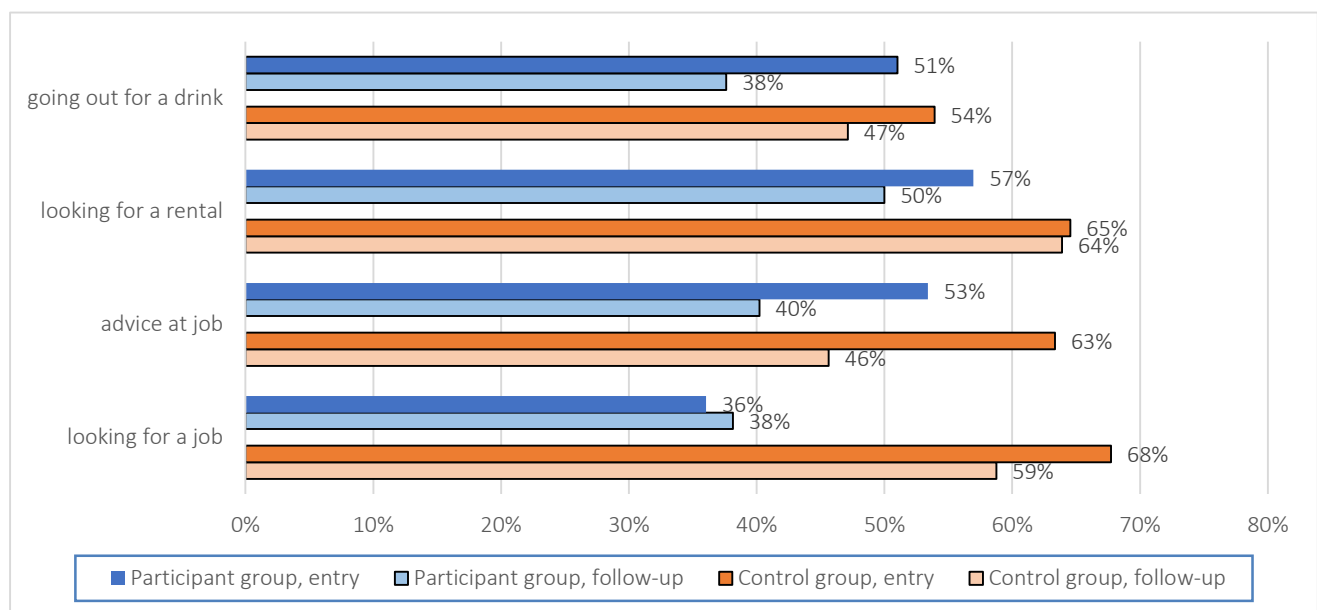


We did not find any significant change in the six months between entry and follow-up; most of the change – both in the participant group and the control group – is negative, but minor: respondents, on average, mentioned a somewhat lower number of supporting ties, with the only exception in the participant group concerning advice about renting a flat. Thus, in contrast to our expectations, we cannot state that the participants' network has widened due to the Bridge programme.⁹

When looking into the ethnic composition of individuals' networks, the survey shows one significant finding: the share of intra-ethnic ties in participants' networks has decreased (by 8%), while the weight of interethnic ties in their networks has increased. With respect to some crucial functions – in terms of labour market inclusion – the chart below shows important differences.

⁹ We must add, however, that completing this part of the questionnaire was not easy and came across as time-consuming; therefore, many respondents skipped this part or filled it in carelessly, especially in the follow-up phase of the survey (when an interviewer was not present).

*Chart 14. Share of Roma contacts in individuals' personal networks
(% of contacts)*



Asking for support when looking for a job had been the type of contact for which participants relied more on inter-ethnic contacts before participating in the programme, and this stayed the same six months later. The big change occurred for more informal situations: participants were much more likely to ask for the advice or companionship of non-Roma when going out for a drink or looking for a rental six months after participating in the training. If the programme brought about any changes in the participants' personal networks, they were not – as we expected – in the width of the network, but in its ethnic composition. Participants changed their personal networks from more intra-ethnic ones to more open, inter-ethnic ones within just six months, including for informal activities not directly connected to employment or a job.

The case of A is a good example of how important the individual network is in finding employment and how finding a job affects network ties: A is a secondary school teacher of Maths and IT in a rural town in Hungary. He wanted to get a job in the business sphere because his income as a teacher was insufficient to maintain himself. He found a job at a large multinational company through the support of his university friends. The job was not even openly announced; his friend told him, informally, that at the firm they could make use of someone good with IT, who was willing to learn new skills.¹⁰ He sent his CV (developed during the BtB training) and very soon was invited to an informal meeting and then to a formal interview. He used his interethnic friendship ties to find accommodation in the capital, too: he teamed up with other friends he knew from university to share a multi-room apartment. Without these friendships he would certainly not have had access to information about the job, or to accommodation, which is one of the greatest barriers

¹⁰ One of the partner companies operates similarly: they do not announce open positions, but rely on internal recommendations and recruitment.

for mobile Roma youth willing to take on a job in the business sphere outside their hometown. (See chapter 7.3) Employers in Hungary, even in the business sector, rely greatly on recommendations from current employees in the process of recruitment: employees are motivated to share the information about opening positions in their own networks and to recommend friends, relatives, and acquaintances to the firm. (See the companion report on the BtB corporate partners).

Although one can find a job without such ties, lacking them is certainly a huge disadvantage. Bridge to Business aims to enhance the social networking of participants in multiple ways. Evidently, building relationships that can be used in situations requiring a great degree of trust – i.e., recommending someone for a job – necessitates more time than the programme can offer (this is also shown in Chart 7: the share of those claiming to have good references did not change during the programme). However, the training is a first important step: the HR dinner provides an opportunity for participants to talk to representatives of firms in person and introduce themselves. Another way the programme aimed to enhance personal networking is by teaming up 10-15 young Roma participants in very similar life situations coming from different parts of the country and working intensively together for 4.5 days. During the training, participants got to know each other well and many are still in contact with each other, sharing information including about labour market opportunities (trainings, jobs, etc.). *“It was an extremely positive experience. The team was super; I got to know a lot of new people who come from (and are in) a very similar situation as myself. I was able to open up in this group.”* Also, the alumni network of the programme, including the alumni dinner during the training, when current participants meet former participants who have found a job since, is an important resource for extending personal networks.

VI. “Participants’ voice”: programme evaluation from the participants’ point of view

In this section we will share the participants’ experiences concerning the programme. We collected this information in various parallel ways: We asked for their opinions and suggestions in the follow-up survey; we asked for this feedback during the personal interviews; and the programme coordinator (AF) distributed a two-page feedback questionnaire after each training session.

All these research tools revealed that the vast majority of participants were very much satisfied with the training; all its elements were rated and appreciated highly, especially those focusing on communication skills and on the development of the CVs and interview skills. Here are a few opinions from the participants:

“It was very intense but also very professional”;

“I found out a lot about myself thanks to the training”;

“The training showed me that with my skills, there is a chance to get a job at a multinational company in Hungary”;

“The programme helped me in putting together my future plans”;

“It was extremely useful to learn how to search and apply through job portals; to develop a professional CV or to simulate interviews - I have never experienced such a situation before and most importantly, I received a lot of positive feedback”;

“I learned that it was realistic to find a job in the business sector with a degree in liberal arts”;

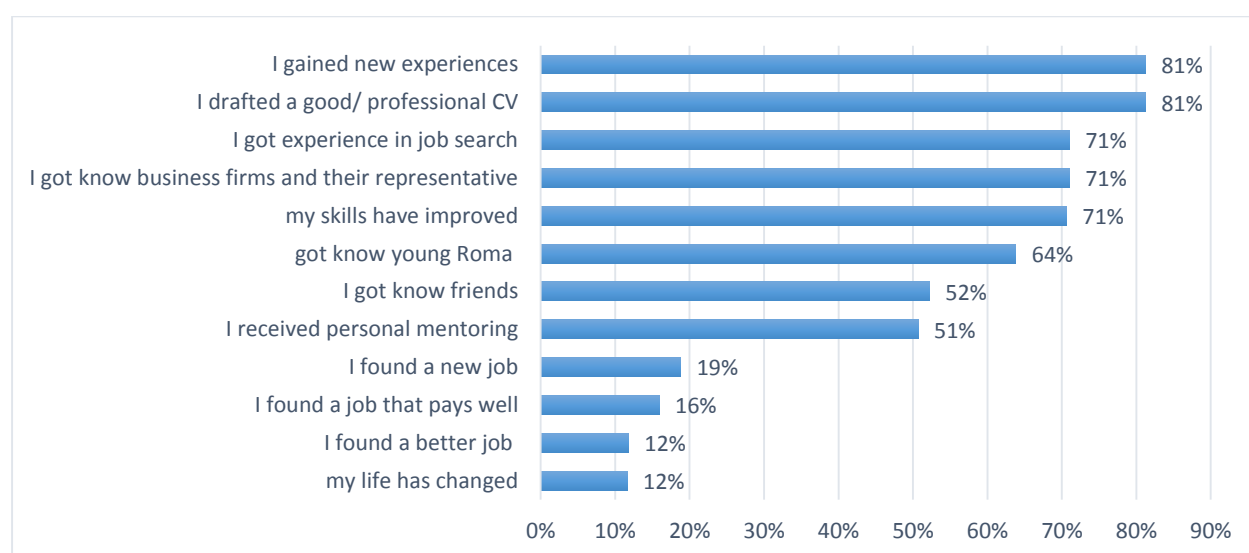
“... to me, the most important part of the training was that we could practice interviewing and get feedback from HR professionals who work in the field and have up-to-date experience. Also, the communication part has been very useful”;

“Now I have a professional CV I can use for any application – either a job or a tender. The training gave me a great bunch of self-confidence and communication skills”;

“The training helped me a lot in finding a job. I received information that I wouldn’t have been able to receive from other sources. I got to know HR experts, and this proved to be a great opportunity. They remembered me. ... and this is important because they prioritised our CVs over unknown applicants.”

The follow-up survey offered a wider perspective concerning experiences with the training and the programme in general. We asked about changes that had occurred in their lives which they associated with participation in the programme. The following chart summarises their responses.

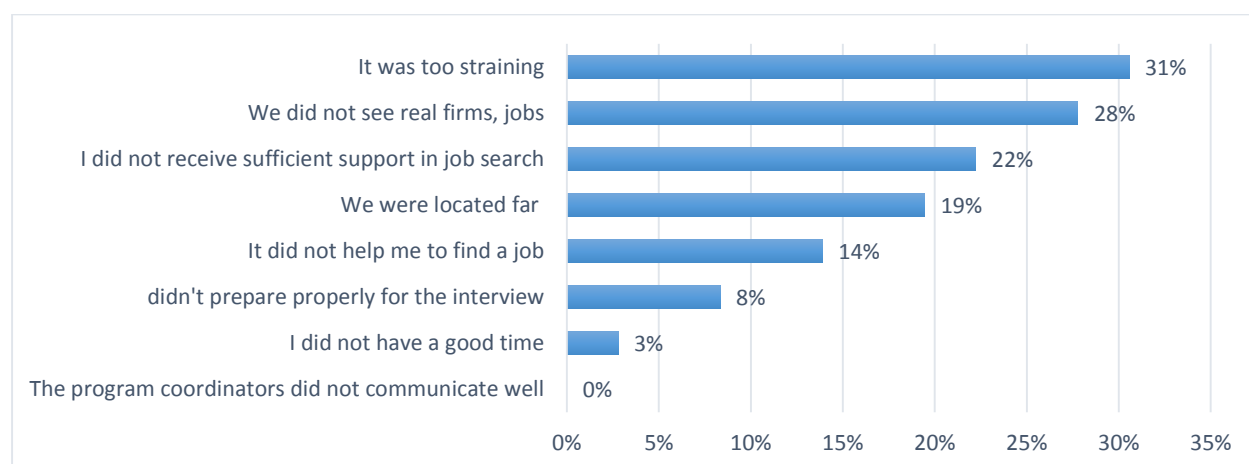
Chart 15. Changes associated with participation in BtB



The most common experience was that participants learnt new things and managed to come up with a professional CV. Except for two people, all who applied for a new job used their CVs developed during the programme, so this part of the training proved to be very practical and useful in the longer run. Over 70% of the participants mentioned that they gained job-search experience, that they learned about the corporate sector and its individual firms, and that they improved their skills. Over half of the participants noted that their personal networks had expanded (they got to make new friends and to meet other young Roma in similar situations to their own). Also, half of the participants mentioned that they had received personal mentoring through the programme.

From the responses given to the question asking about problems associated with the programme, we learned that almost one-fourth of the participants mentioned that they felt they did not receive sufficient job-search support and 14% said the programme did not support them in finding a job.

Chart 16. Problems with the programme as perceived by beneficiaries of BtB



The above chart shows that one-third of participants found the training to be very intensive and strenuous. This issue came up during the interviews as well: the 4.5 days of training, with some days starting at 9 AM and lasting till 9 PM in the evening with few breaks were extremely hard; this would have been difficult even for mid-career employees used to long hours, but many of the participants were recent graduates and most had never worked in the business sector and were not used to such a workload. Throughout the training they were expected to provide their full focus, a pro-active presence, and cooperation. However, most did an extremely good job in stepping beyond their comfort zones and keeping up with the pace, which modelled the workload typical of the corporate sector.

The survey responses, as well as the interviews, reveal that while the programme did an extremely good job in preparing Roma youth to look for jobs, undergo selection processes, and perform well at job interviews, it was less able to directly support their actual placement with the partner companies. To our knowledge, only 14 participants found a job at one of the partner companies, which is significantly less than expected. According to the interviews, many of the participants expected direct support in finding a job at a partner company in the form of a job offer. Still, most participants did find jobs beyond the partner company circle, which means the training segment was effective: they became able to apply for a job and to successfully go through a selection process without the direct involvement of the programme implementers. We consider this a great success. However, the programme could have been more efficient in its function as an intermediary between the employers and the educated Roma youth. The reasons for this, as discussed in detail in the next chapter, are manifold. One is the lack of fit between participants' profiles and needs and the companies' offers. A large share of participants had been trained as teachers, social workers, and early childhood care personnel, while companies were looking for engineers,

administrative staff, retail personnel, client services, and help-desk people just to name a few, frequently-mentioned white-collar company positions. Another significant factor concerning the mismatch was the lack of geographic fit: many of the participants lived in settlements and the companies could not offer positions in their vicinity.

VII. Systemic factors influencing the success of programme participation

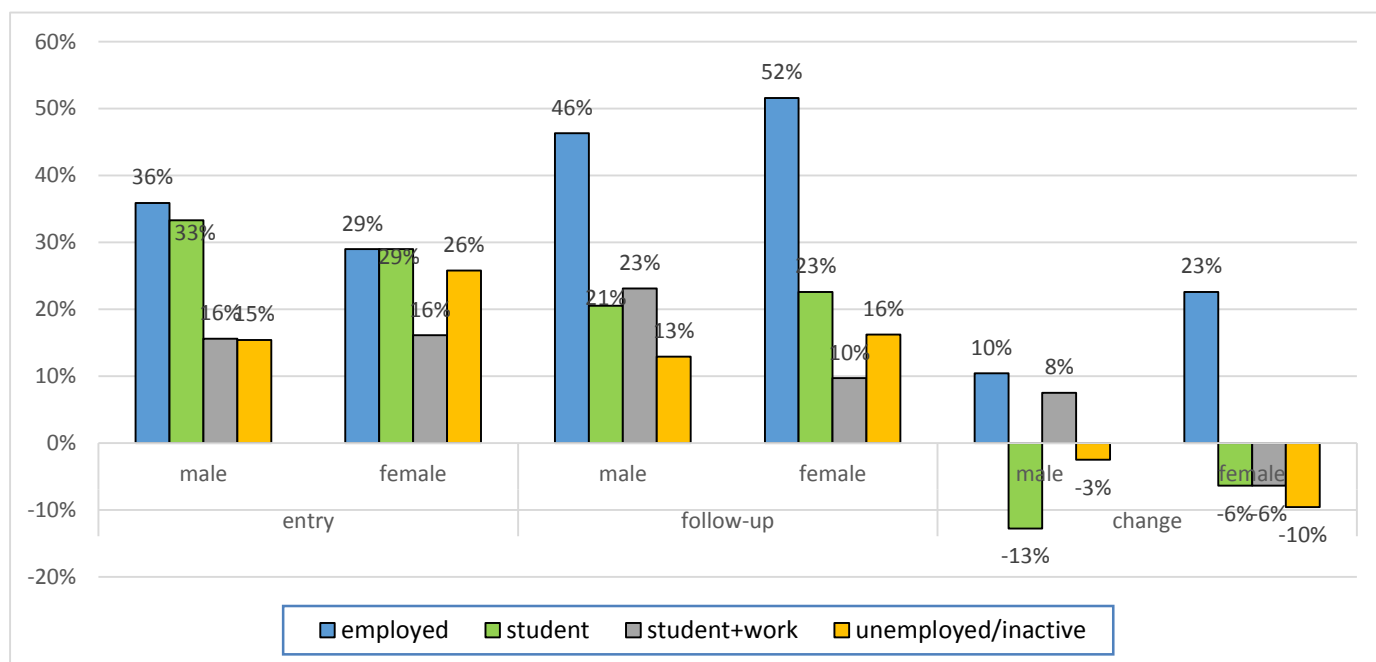
In the following chapter we are going to review some of the systemic factors that may influence Roma youth success in the BtB programme and the extent to which they may benefit from such a programme. We are looking into the wider structures that single programme cannot impact. Even though these factors are beyond the reach of the programme, it is important to understand how these structural factors influenced participants' achievement in the programme. We will discuss the roles played by gender; experiences in primary and secondary school, including the quality of schooling; ethnic segregation; teacher bias; studies beyond compulsory education; prior experience of discrimination on the labour market; and geographic marginalisation (distance from regional hubs where jobs are available).

VII.1. Gender

Earlier in this report we established that gender played a role in several aspects related to the BtB programme, such as attending the training (60% of the men who registered for the programme actually participated compared to just 43% of the women who registered). As a result, there was a somewhat lower presence of women (44%) than men (56%) in the programme (see chapter II.2). We learnt from the interviews conducted with participants, when inquiring about barriers to participating in the training, that several of their peers had not been able to come due to family obligations (caring for children or other family members, school or work obligations) or because they had not been allowed by their families to come spend several days and nights away from home. This latter case occurred in traditional Roma communities, but we have no information about the frequency of such cases.

Once a woman did attend the training, she was able to benefit from it more than the men did: more women than men changed their labour market situations from economically inactive to employed in the six months between the entry and the follow-up surveys, which means that the programme may have supported women's (re)entry onto the labour market more successfully. This is also because the starting points of the women were more disadvantaged than those of the men.

Chart 17. Employment situation and its change by gender (%)



Finding and retaining a job, however, may be more difficult for women who are young mothers. There were very few mothers among the participants (six altogether), but we can illuminate their challenges through the qualitative data.

As one participant – the mother of a four-year-old boy – explained, for some time she had just been able to get short-term assignments, but later she was hired by a large public service company. She spent 2-3 months in that job, which she liked in general, and she enjoyed the tasks. However, she soon found herself in a difficult situation due to the fact that she worked in three shifts and her shift times kept changing, meaning that sometimes she was working in the morning and sometimes till the late evening. She was unable to reconcile this erratic work pattern with her childcare duties and had to quit.

Another young female participant had to give up commuting to the capital for a better-paid job due to the fact that she was raising her daughter on her own and had to pick her up from kindergarten every afternoon. Another female participant had to take up a public works job in her village, a heavily underpaid type of employment, to be able to take care of her ailing mother. Even though it can be stated in general that caring for children, the elderly and the ill is still defined as a woman's duty in Hungary, Roma women's burdens in these functions are even greater due to their disadvantaged social position and the fact that such gender roles are more strongly reinforced in their communities.

VII.2. Education and its impact

Education is a key prerequisite to labour market success. All of the participants in the BtB programme had graduated from upper secondary education, and we therefore thought education would not be relevant to our impact study. However, we found the opposite was the case: not only were a significant part of the participants either in tertiary education or graduates of it (35%), which gave them a great advantage, but we also found that the impact of their experiences in secondary and even in primary school was decisive in terms of how young Roma succeed.¹¹ When checking how participants' LM position changed depending on their different educational levels, we see that those with MA degrees and with a general upper secondary qualification benefitted the most (75% and 57% of those groups, respectively improved their LM position six months after the training) while those with a secondary vocational education profited from participating in the programme the least (just 31% of this group experienced improving their LM position six months after the training).

Primary school

Primary school experiences may be decisive for later school career paths. The academic and policy literature has found that an important factor in Roma education is ethnic segregation, and we therefore also included this aspect in our analysis. We found that just 7% of participants had attended a fully segregated primary school, and an additional 9% had attended a school where Roma children comprised the majority (we can also call these segregated schools). Although a decisive majority of participants (84%) attended a school that was either dominated by the ethnic majority (there were no or just a few Roma in the entire school) or one that was mixed, one-third had attended a primary school that separated the Roma into parallel classes. According to the academic literature, such separation, especially if combined with an internal hierarchy (one class is identified as 'good' and the other as 'weak') may be as harmful to Roma children's future chances as are fully segregated schools. The following quote from one of the participants reflects how such segregation worked: *"The school in H., my hometown, was considered an integrated school, but in reality it wasn't, because there was one class in each year dedicated exclusively to children with special needs. Nobody actually realised how this functioned at the time. All children in the 'special class' were Roma. Their classrooms were situated in the basement next to the changing room for gym classes." ... "Roma children from the colony [settlement] were automatically placed in the special class. I was not because we lived in the village, not in the colony."* All in all, 53% of participants attended a primary school that was either truly ethnically mixed or that was dominated by the ethnic majority, and 47% went to either a fully segregated school or to a school that featured segregated classes.

¹¹ For example, 66% of the participants and 70% of the control group had achieved an upper secondary school education, 24% of participants and 25% of the control group had BA degrees, and 10% of the participants vs. 5% of the control group had MA degrees. The only big difference is seen in the proportion of those possessing an MA.

Table 2: Primary school segregation

Type of school	%
truly integrated school	53%
segregated school	16%
school with internal ethnic segregation	32%
Total	100%

When checking how Roma youth's experiences of primary education had influenced their success in education in relation to how much they profited from participating in the programme, we see that **those who attended a segregated school or class benefited more from the programme than those who attended school** in an ethnically integrated setting (53% vs 40% improved their LM position). This is unexpected, but our analysis as well as interviews reveals that it is exactly those who attended segregated schooling suffer the most from a lack of self-confidence and self-respect, probably also due to the discrimination they have experienced during this early stage of their childhood. These experiences, even traumas, burn deeply into the personality and may then resurface in competitive situations as low self-confidence. One of the most important goals of the BtB training was exactly to reinforce self-esteem and confidence, to support participants in evaluating their situations on the labour market realistically, and to enable them to recognise and articulate the skills and advantages they might have with regard to a certain firm or job. The survey data, as well as the interviews, support this hypothesis: when checking the differences between participants who attended primary school in segregated vs. non-segregated environments, we see that half of those whose primary school experience included ethnic segregation mentioned that the programme supported their self-confidence significantly, almost twice as often as did those who studied in integrated environment.

Secondary school

When checking the potential role played by experiences during secondary school, of 12 characteristics investigated, we found three that are slightly significantly correlated to how the labour market position of the participants changed after participation: those who said they had difficulties with studying were less likely to change their situations for the better, while attending a (subjectively-perceived) good school, as well as having many or mostly non-Roma friends, seem to be positively correlated with how the programme supported improving their labour market position. This may seem far-fetched, but it is not: rather, it shows that the programme is not able to compensate for systemic, long-term factors related to education. Good-quality schooling and the opportunity to build interethnic ties are factors that are essential not just in terms of future opportunities, but also are factors for which no short-term training programme can compensate.

Based on the qualitative data, two more factors related to secondary school experiences proved to be relevant in terms of whom the programme could efficiently support, namely, intermittent or scatter-shot educational careers, and racialised bullying or other incidents. Interviews reveal that an intermittent school career is not just a true disadvantage, but it is also frequently a result of teacher bias. While 60% of participants attended one and the same secondary school, 10% attended three or more, which means that their educational careers have been quite scattered.

The other factor influencing self-esteem is bullying on an ethnic basis, which many participants said they had experienced. Most Roma youth report enduring verbal insults at secondary school from their non-Roma peers or even from their teachers.

Interviews with different Roma participants reveal that their intra-classroom relations with their non-Roma peers were tense, and their teenage years, which are already difficult in multiple ways, became even more troublesome due to this ethnically/racially-based bullying and their teachers' lack of pedagogical methods to deal with it, in the best case, while in the worst cases, teachers themselves were directly involved in discriminatory practices and the ethnic/racial profiling of their students. Such experiences may have long-lasting consequences on self-esteem and confidence for which a short-term programme such as BtB cannot compensate.

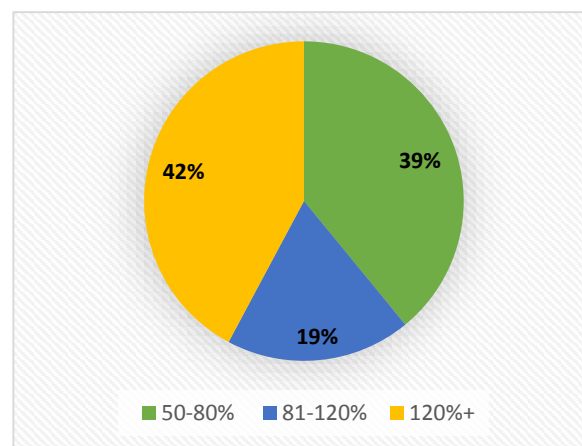
Tertiary education

Many of the participants were students in tertiary education while taking part in the training, while 27 had graduated from tertiary education by that time. This is a really high number compared to the Roma population in general. One would suppose that with such qualifications it would be easy to find a good job in the business sphere, but in fact that is not quite the case. Most Roma with a university degree studied professions that are difficult to use in the business sphere, such as the social sciences and social care, teaching, early childhood pedagogy, and Romani Studies. This was also the case for many of the BtB participants: only seven had a diploma in fields generally valued by the business sphere, such as technology, economics and law. Although skills acquired in the field of social care, pedagogy and childcare are transferable to certain jobs in the business sphere, as we described in Chapter Five, this is not just a challenging but also a risky enterprise. We have explained the successful and less-successful stories of career path change, but certainly the profile of even university-educated Roma does not secure an easy, clear path to corporate jobs.

VII.3. Geographic location

One of the most important structural factors affecting Roma labour market chances is the fact that a large segment of them lives in geographically-marginalised localities. (for details see the *State of Art Report*¹²). This is also true for highly-educated Roma, though to a somewhat lesser extent. Most - 85% - of the participants came from rural Hungary, a third lived in villages, and almost half lived in rural towns, while 36% of all participants lived either in Budapest or in the county seats or settlements where jobs in the private sector concentrate. The following chart show a composite index of the economic development level for the micro-regions the BtB participants live in:

*Chart 18. Development indicators of the micro-regions where participants live
(% of the national average)*

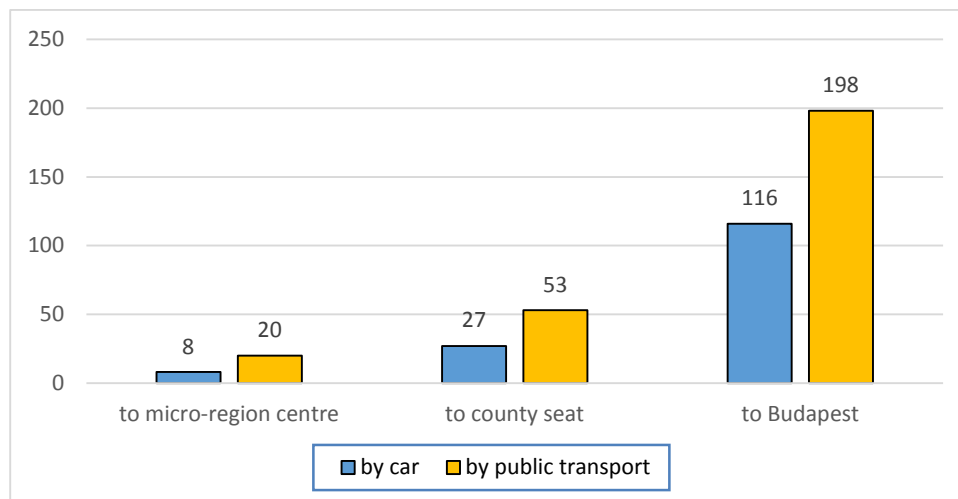


Thirty-nine per cent of the participants live in economically underdeveloped micro-regions where the labour market is very weak, dominated by the public sector and by jobs organised within the framework of the public works programme, while 42% live in micro-regions that are doing well economically in the Hungarian context. This again demonstrates the relative advantage of the programme participants compared to the entirety of Roma in Hungary.

We also examined how far participants lived from the centre of their micro-region, from the county seat, and from Budapest. These three levels of regional centres and the distance from them are significant in terms of access to public services, education and jobs. Most private-sector jobs (except agricultural ones) are situated in (or close to) county seats. The following chart shows the average time (in minutes) it takes to reach the centre of the micro region, the county seat, and Budapest, by car and by public transport:

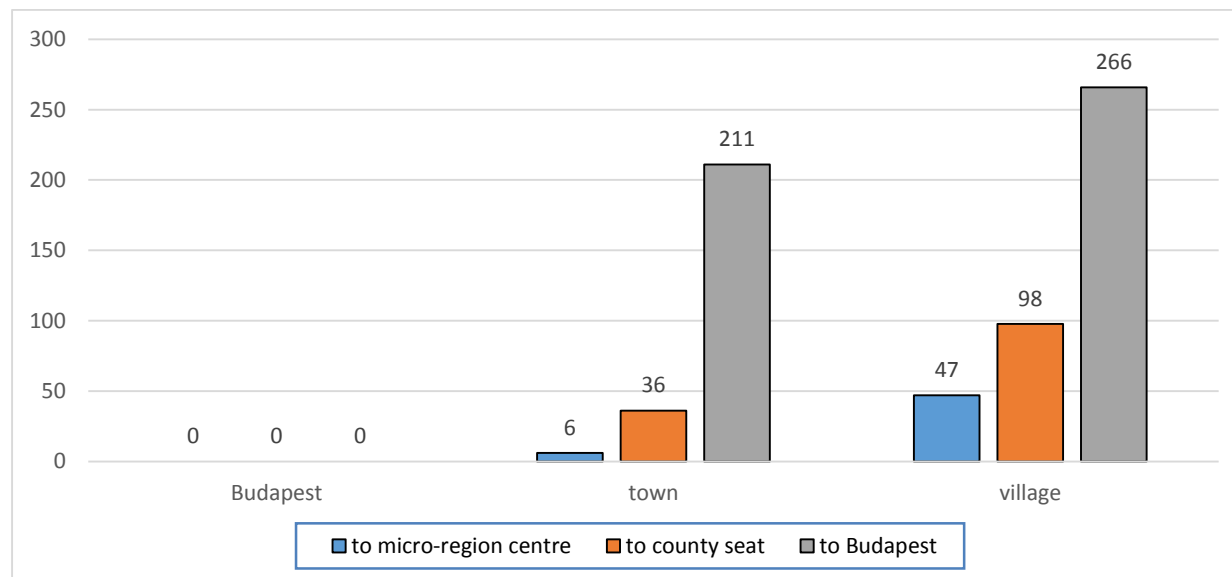
¹² <https://cps.ceu.edu/publications/working-paper/roma-employment-and-potentials-state-and-business-actors-labor-market>

Chart 19. Average time to reach the centre by car or public transport (in minutes)



As most of the participants are young and come from socially disadvantaged families, we presume that owning a personal vehicle would be more the exception than the rule for them. The following chart shows the time needed to travel by public transport to reach the geographic centres according to the type of location the participants live in:

Chart 20. Length of time for participants to reach geographic centres by public transport from different types of settlements (in minutes)

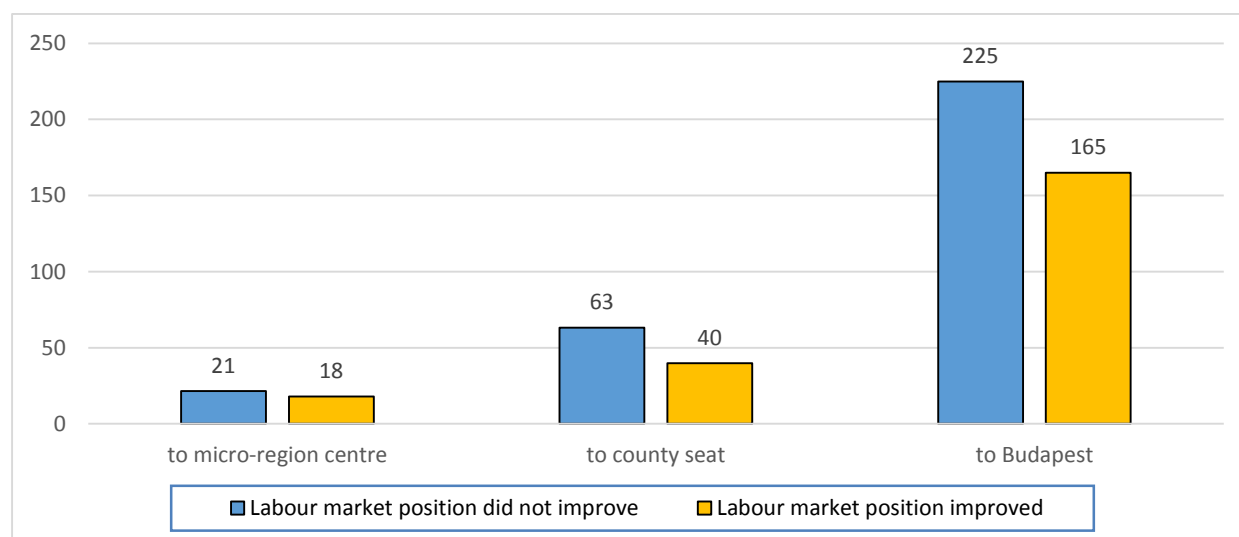


The chart highlights the relative labour market disadvantage of those Roma youth who live in rural Hungary: living in a village means a daily commute by public transport of almost two hours to the micro-region centre,

where most public services and educational institutions are located, while it takes on average over three hours to commute to the nearest county seat, where most private-sector jobs are located.

Checking the impact of the programme, we see again very big differences based on distance from geographic centres:

Chart 21. Programme impact depending on the average time needed to reach geographic centres by public transport (in minutes)



The chart is very explicit about the barriers to the BtB Programme in terms of where it can best impact the LM position of participants¹³: the closer participants live to a county seat and/or to Budapest (where most private sector jobs are concentrated), the better chance there is that the programme will be able to improve the LM position of its participants.

Geographic mobility is crucial in terms of finding a job in the private sector for many Roma youth. We asked participants whether they would be ready to move to another settlement for a (new) job. Only one-fifth said they would not do so, one-third gave a conditional answer (“Maybe, depends on the job”) and almost half (47%) said they were willing to move. Participants living in the most underdeveloped parts of Hungary (the east and northeast) were significantly more open to moving for a job than were others. In the follow-up survey we asked whether the respondent had relocated for work, and 11 of 70 respondents answered yes.

The interviews reveal the types of situations that characterise labour-related mobility decisions:

The first category of people includes those who are not willing to relocate or who cannot move away from their communities and /or family. Either for objective reasons or for sentimental ones, they are not ready

¹³ For a description of this composite indicator of LM position change, see chapter 4.

to leave their homes. These cases include young Roma with houses and families of their own whom they could not abandon. The case of L, who has a desirable qualification, is a good example: he lives in eastern Hungary, in a small town with few jobs and a high level of anti-Roma prejudice. He built a house and has four children. He was eager to find a higher-quality job in the private sector and finally, after almost a year of an intensive job search and with the support of the AF he was finally hired by a BtB partner company, but his present job in county seat requires long hours of daily commuting. It is often women who are more restricted in their geographic mobility: because of the care duties many have (caring either for their own children or for an elderly or disabled family member), they are not just restricted in terms of moving away from their homes, but daily commuting is also a challenge several could not manage. (See Chapter 5.1)

The second category includes those willing to relocate for work, but with some restrictions: for example, they said they would move, but not to a distant part of the country. The reason, in most cases, is that they would like to stay connected to their families and the closer community and moving far away would make it impossible to maintain these relationships. The case of Zs, who has a university degree and work experience in the public sector shows this dilemma. He was ready to move for a job but wanted to stay in the same macro-region but this need proved to be a significant limitation to his LM opportunities. He was offered a position in Budapest that he did not take, and even though he was intensively applying to job calls in the region, he could not find employment through BtB and finally had to take a manual labour job.

However, the largest category of Roma youth are not just open to mobility, but also have significant experience with relocation: 60% had moved at least once in their lifetime, and 20% of those with work experience mentioned having moved for the sake of a job. Interviews revealed that many participants – especially those living in the east and northeast of Hungary - were not only ready to move away from the settlement where they live, but would even have preferred to do so.

VII.4. Labour market discrimination

In addition to living in small, distant settlements and lacking network capital, discrimination is one of the major barriers to qualified Roma¹⁴ finding good-quality employment (for details, see the *State of the Art* report). Being discriminated against during a job search is an important structural barrier to Roma employment. In the research, we tried to map the extent to which participants of the Bridge to Business programme experienced discrimination in the labour market and how it affected their opportunities, what kinds of strategies they developed in response to these incidents. Concerning education, we have already mentioned how various forms of discrimination (i.e., school segregation, teachers' bias and peer-group ethnic bullying) may have impacted Roma youth career paths. Despite their age and relatively short time on the labour market, 20 out of the 64 participants who had been employed in the past 12 months

¹⁴ <https://cps.ceu.edu/publications/working-paper/roma-employment-and-potentials-state-and-business-actors-labor-market>

mentioned they did have such experiences. This means almost one-third of the programme participants had experienced discrimination at least once in employment. These experiences cover various aspects of the labour market: most (13) participants mentioned that they felt discriminated against during their job search, 11 mentioned that they were treated with bias during job interviews, and seven mentioned that they experienced discrimination on the job. Perceived discrimination is primarily racial bias: the most frequent types of discrimination in Hungary (i.e., gender or age based) were mentioned by just two respondents, while racial discrimination was mentioned by 19. The interviews with participants highlight how these experiences, all of which happened prior to their programme participation, arise and influence employment opportunities.

The experience of one such participant is unfortunately not unique to her: *“I submitted my CV to a number of job announcements. I was invited to the workplace [her family name does not refer to her Roma origin] but as soon as I walked in the door I was told the position had already been filled. I had such experiences in the financial sector and in retail. For example, I applied for a shop assistant position in one of Budapest’s large shopping centres: I went for a trial day, but after the first hour, when they recognised that I was a Roma girl, ... you know, people in Pest have an expression on their face: ‘Who is this Gypsy girl?’ – they thanked me and said the position had been filled.”* As she explained, although she has a secondary education (she is the first woman with such a matriculation in her village), speaks English, and has work experience in sales and administration, in her tiny village in rural Hungary she could not get a job other than in public works.

Another former programme participant provides an example of how discriminatory, racist comments by colleagues at a job can be addressed by a strategy we call joining the ‘bullies’ games’. She works at a client service desk of a large service company. She is visibly Roma but she doesn’t *“make a fuss about it”*. She explained that her boss called her in on her second day at work. *“He told me that colleagues like to express their opinions about clients and I should not be surprised if one or another client is referred to as a ‘Gypsy’. I should not take such racist comments personally.”* She chose a strategy of laughing with the bullies and excluding herself (her Gypsy identity) from such comments. *“We discussed with the colleagues that such comments are not about me, and as long as nobody speaks with me about certain issues differently just because I am Roma, then I don’t care.”* This case is a good example not only of a possible strategy in response to a discriminatory environment, but also demonstrates how lack of diversity management may result in a hostile environment for Roma (and others) in the workforce, where individual employees feel they have to solve such situations by themselves. Not all participants were able to accommodate to an intolerant environment; we also have instances of young Roma quitting jobs in such environments.

Summary

This report gives an account of the Bridge to Business programme’s implementation in Hungary and the key findings of the impact study about it. The investigation has considered how participants’ labour market

position changed after participating in the programme. It also discussed the most important factors that may potentially influence participants' job-market success, as well as changes in the skills the programme addressed.

The programme certainly did have an impact on the labour market situation of its beneficiaries: the proportion of those employed – also in comparison to the control group – significantly increased (from 31% to 53%) in the six months after entering the programme, while the share of those unemployed decreased. The composite indicator of labour market position change (including aspects such as return to tertiary education and incomes) shows an even greater improvement: although in both the participant group and the control group their labour market position generally improved, compared to the control group, the improvement was significantly greater among programme participants - 50% of beneficiaries improved their LM position and only 9% ended up with worse LM position, while these proportions are 26% and 12% for the control group, respectively. This suggests that, in addition to the improvement due to the generally-positive labour market environment, the programme itself did indeed have a positive influence on the labour market position of the Roma youth who took part in the BtB Programme. A deeper look into the employment data reveals that 14 participants found a job at a partner company of the BtB programme, 29 found one through personal contacts, and 13 found work through open job calls, which signals that the 4.5 days training was successful in terms of preparing participants to search for, apply for and go through job selection processes successfully. The success of the programme lies less in direct placements at partner companies, but rather lies in enhancing the essential skills (self-awareness, confidence and communication skills) that are crucial to a successful job-search and placement process.

The barriers included a mismatch between participants' residences and company locations (and the high cost of relocation and rentals which the salaries offered to entrants would not cover) and a mismatch between educational backgrounds or career interests and the types of jobs available at the partner companies.

When looking into how the Bridge to Business programme affected the participants, we found several important areas of impact.

- Participants' views of their own job-search and related skills became more realistic in the course of the training: they learnt about the difficulties and challenges associated with this activity and became more aware of the type of competences they had to work on.
- Job satisfaction increased significantly for those who took on a new job after the training. Those elements of job satisfaction increased most significantly with which they have previously been least satisfied and which added the most to their professional career and well-being, such as income, opportunity for advancement, importance of the work, jobs fitting their qualifications, and the profile of the firm. With respect to the reportedly less crucial (comfort-related) elements – such as flexibility, time management, location, and overtime – satisfaction increased just slightly or not at

all. We may say that programme participation has brought about significant, important changes with respect to the most important elements of career and job satisfaction.

- In all aspects of job satisfaction, the vast majority (52% to 77%) who became newly employed after the training experienced improvement. Income, the job's fit to qualification, evaluation of individual performance, and general satisfaction with the job are the factors where most programme participants who changed jobs following the training experienced improvement.
- As most of the candidates have degrees and work experience in social work, social care, the teaching profession, and the area of the humanities, a typical profile for highly-qualified Roma, one important challenge of the BtB Programme was to support Roma youth's ambition to change career paths toward corporate sector and develop skills relevant for such change. These job trajectories, which include a wide range of success and failure stories, are described in detail in the report.
- Participants' future expectations changed in a very interesting way: evidently, the share of those who foresaw their future in employment is dominant and has increased from 63% to 78%. The interesting outcome is that the share of those who foresaw their future in a foreign country has been halved after participating in the programme. We do not want to draw far-reaching conclusions from such a small sample, but because such a change did not occur in the control group, we suspect that this decrease in interest in labour migration might be due to the programme showing Roma youth that aiming for jobs offering decent incomes and career paths is realistic and that a meaningful future in Hungary is possible.
- Concerning personal networks, if the programme brought about any changes, they were not – as we expected – in the size the personal networks, but in their ethnic composition. Participants changed their personal networks from more intra-ethnic to more open, inter-ethnic ones within just six months, including for informal activities that are not directly connected to employment or a job.

Participants were very satisfied with the programme in general, as well as with the individual elements of the training. They most frequently mentioned that it:

- enhanced their self-esteem;
- made them understand and more realistically assess the labour market in the business sector;
- helped them to formulate realistic career plans and expectations;
- produced a professional CV that could be used for applications;
- prepared them for job interviews and AC tests through a lot of practice;
- provided contacts with representatives of corporate firms (HR personnel)
- supported their search for work and their navigation on job-search portals;
- strengthened their personal networks.

However, several participants felt they received insufficient support with job placement and with building functioning connections to the business sphere. Survey responses as well as interviews reveal that while the programme did an extremely good job in preparing young Roma to search for a job, go through the selection process, and perform well on a job interview, it was unable to efficiently support the placement of young Roma at the partner companies. Only 14 participants found a job at one of the partner companies, which is significantly less than expected. Still, most participants found a job beyond the set of the partner companies, which means that the training part was efficient: they became able to apply for jobs and successfully go through the selection process without the direct involvement of the programme implementers.

When checking the structural factors that may have influenced the success of the programme, we found that the quality of education and discriminatory experiences during participants' educations and labour market careers were significant factors. Also, geographic location is a very significant structural factor influencing the impact of participating in the programme. Those young Roma who live in smaller, distant settlements of rural Hungary are less likely to benefit from the programme in terms of changing their labour market position for the better, and this is even more the case for those who cannot move away from the region where they live. When checking for structural factors concerning compulsory schooling (assessment of school quality, teachers' competences, etc.) we found that a short-term programme such as BtB is not able to compensate for systemic shortcomings of education. Gender plays a role in the ability to join the programme (being able to leave home for five days in a row), but if women did attend the training, they benefited more from programme participation than men.



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BRIDGE TO BUSINESS

The report along with other reports and summaries on the implementation and impact of Bridge to Business in Hungary can be accessed at:

<https://cps.ceu.edu/research/bridge-to-business>



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