

SOCIAL SITUATION AND POVERTY OF ROMA

Lenka Kováčová

Abstract

The purpose of the article is to **analyze the social situation of the Roma** and poverty more broadly, to highlight the factors underpinning their lack of access to education and hence to jobs from which they derive income insecurity and worsen their living conditions, their poor health and finally, their poor contact with the majority. **Theme of Roma** poverty and their general social situation is very demanding in terms of finding the solution, since the large rate of Roma population is unable to even minimally participate in social, economic, cultural and political life. I have picked a combined survey interview as a method for the empirical part of the article, by looking at various projects and literature. Scientific objectives of the article is to highlight the fact that in all areas affecting **the way of life of Roma**, including their discrimination, the most influential one is the long-term segregation of the learning process, which is essential to their integration into an active lifestyle. I refer to the fact that the condition of education of Roma children depends mainly on the socio-economic environment from which they come from and which can be measured by various factors. As one of the factors in the education of the parents alone, other factors could be household equipment, monitoring the overall social, economic and cultural status of Roma pupils. In the conclusion of the article, I want to point out that a large number of research findings demonstrate that the **dependence of education** outcomes as students from their socio-economic environment suggests that the education system is no way meeting the requirements of a fair transfer of learning to all, according to their abilities and is just never obilizing the social equality in education. The Education Act and the related rules do not contain provisions that are aimed directly at Roma pupils. However, the general term "**socially disadvantaged**" environment is being used, that is defined primarily by poverty. However, many disadvantages faced by the Roa in all areas of life, often are not only subject to their financial circumstances.

"Given that some portion of barriers stem from the approach of the majority population towards the Roma on the basis of their declared or credited ethnicity, it is questionable whether the measures are based on the financial circumstances of families enough." (Draft concept of education of Roma children and pupils, including the development secondary and higher education, 2009, p.1).

Keywords:

Poverty, Roma, Education, Unemployment, Health and housing, Social conditions

Introduction

The ethnic composition of Slovak Roma people have their special place. They live mostly in segregated or integrated form. As a whole, in fact, they stand for minority that is not interrelated with the definitions for the exhaustive determination as a national minority, which means that they do not own any territory in the world, which would represent their culture and national standard language of communication. Perhaps, for this reason most of the people see this minority rather than ethnicity than nationality. According to various historical records, the Romas resides on the territory of the Slovak Republic for more than 680 years in ethnic sub-communities, and that is in Olah, Rumungri, German (Sinti), Hungary and Slovak gypsy communities. However, data on the total number vary greatly. Official sources says that in 1991, that there was a 75,802 of Roma (the ones who applied to Roma nationality) aged between 15 -- 69 and in year of 2001, it was 89 920 people in total. According to estimates - anecdotal evidence respectively - of their actual number there is 480 000 up to 520 000 of them in total. The point is that in real life society, the most attention goes to the most regressed part of the Roma minority for decades, the minority which is living in marinalized segregated health risk settlements with a high concentration of individuals. It is possible that these are the Roma, which belongs to the extent possible who are the Rumungro Roma sub-community. Especially for those Roma in these settlements, the problems are most concentrated and there are a socio-economic, participatin, coexstience, communication, cultural and linguistic problems of education, health, environmental, safety and many others nature of problems that are there for countless years already. Despite the enormous efforts of the whole society at all levels of the state and the amount of depleted funds to improve the situation of Roma, not even a single significant issue has been successfully improved or even minimize any significant issue which are also interconnected and as a whole are harmful not only to the minority itself, but also for the entire Slovak society. Settlements and ghettos, segregated areas, where hygiene is significantly underdeveloped, just as culturalism, there are often greater and/or lesser offenses occurring in these kind of places. These are areas which ordinary citizen is not attending/visiting since Roma people like these create fear, resistance, as well as the conviction itself. Many studies conducted focused just on the social category of people within the Roma minority proves this fact. Despite the trend of civilization development of a large part of the population, it seems like the time has stopped at the 18th or early 19th century in these settlements we are talking about. It is an undeniable fact that, just as in the past, unfortunately, even today, the socio-economic problems of excluded Roma from their settlements are being solved more randomly, not giving importance of their interrelation and follow-ups, regardless of the consequences or effect, of course, without direct participation of persons known to be personally affected. It is well known, as well as social practice confirms it, that solving the problems which are tackled-out-of-context, though well-intentioned, where the professional specific action is being neglected, is weakening and certainly is phasing out. Many issues must be addressed in a wider context, and particularly systematically, and in particular with the active participation of Roma. We can only confirm its finding that the understanding of the nature and differences in the type and quality of life of the Roma ethnic group is possible only if problems are openly named and also where there an interest expressed to provide assistance for their removal in the broad sense, without any xenophobia and prejudice. Only this way, can we work towards the "optimal" solutions to problems raised

by Roma, but also society as a whole. Attention is drawn to highlight the overall social situation of the Roma and poverty, which consists mainly of unemployment, insufficient diet, inadequate housing conditions in poor condition, as well as in many other factors. It is necessary to emphasize the draft resolution and measures that could contribute to the enhancement and improvement of the living conditions of the Roma. The main emphasis should be given to under-education of the Roma population, because without education, there is no such path along which they could walk through their conscious lives, and thus, to fulfill their objectives and to ensure a more fulfilling life in all areas.

1. Roma and their history

The origin of the Roma by many literature and preserved historical manuscripts circulated different variants. In the course of history, it was argued that the Roma come from Egypt. However, in the 18th century, on the basis of comparative linguistics showed that the original homeland of the Roma is the Indian subcontinent. Various studies have shown that they belonged mostly to the poor segment of the population that lived a nomadic way of life.

They were earning a living by working in various crafts such as blacksmith, processing leather, clay, wood and wicker, as well as breeding and selling horses or were entertaining others by singing and dancing. According to a preserved researches, the scientists believe that they were part of the Dom group of people, who live there until now. The discovery of Roma origin contributed finding Calvinist priest Štefan Váli from the surrounding of Komárno, who studied in the second-half of the 18th century in the Dutch city of Leiden. There, he met three Indian students: because their language was strikingly resembling the language of the Roma from around his hometown, he wrote a thousand of words they spoke and their meaning as well. When he returned home and read the Indian words to local Roma, they were able to translate them back to him correctly. "During the 9th and 10th century, the ancestors of today's Roma were leaving India and the groups traveled through Persia, Armenia and minor Asia on the European continent." There are various hypothesis standing behind the possible reasons for which they came to Europe, as for example: to expand the circle of people interested in their products and services, search for better livelihoods in areas that have favorable climatic conditions, or it could be the reasons for the external nature and expansion of other tribes in India. (Arne B. Mann, 2001, p. 2).

1.1 Journey of the Roma and their way of life

So far, the oldest known written mention of the Roma in Europe is from 1068. It is a record in the manuscript "Life of St. George Antonita", written by his disciple George Little in a monastery on Mount Athos Iberony in today's Greece, Chalkdiki peninsula. It describes the incident in the court of the Byzantine Emperor Constantine Monomach, who in 1050 called into his office - Constantinople (today Istanbul) the group of "wizards", to let them to destroy the beast in his hunting grounds by their spells. The writer tagged them by a term of Adsincani. On the territory of present-day Greece stayed even larger groups during the 13th to 14th century- the island of Crete and the Peloponnese. From the 14th to the 18th, they existed on the island of Corfu "Baroni Gypsies" (feudum Acinganorum), where the local Roma had to hand down the prescribed dose (money and poultry) regularly to the administrator of the island. During the 12th and 13th centuries, Roma gradually penetrated along the Danube from the Balkans to Central Europe.

"The oldest preserved reports on residence of Roma in Slovakia are from the second-half of the 14th century, in years 1377 and 1381 they have been mentioned in the Zemplén County. Roman came to Europe in groups. One of these groups was passing in the 15th century through the territory of Slovakia. There was "king" Sindel standing as the head and the "dukes" Panuel, Michal and Ondej. In 1471, this group consisting of more than 300 individuals went from Buda through Košice to Bratislava, where it was divided into several parts. Members of the nomadic groups are represented as pilgrims from Little Egypt, who, as a penitent sinners must travel around the world. Populations were initially accepting them with hospitality. Various nobles, kings and popes, emitted them a protective instrument - safe conduct. One such instrument was for "Gypsy Duke Ladislav" which was issued in 1423 by Emperor Sigismund at Spiš castle. In 1563, the Roma got established in Liptovský Hrádok, through the permission they have been given, to forge the required tools for farmers, such as nails, hoes, axes, forks and also halberds for night watchmen. In 1850, they have been granted a permission by the city magistrate, in Litpovská Ľupča, to settle down in a place "Pod šibenice" (Below the Gallows) to three Roma brothers, called Puška - to make living as blacksmiths. In 1561, there was a census of Roma conducted in Liptov, which shows that in this region, there were 96 sedentary families: they were all employed as blacksmiths, trowmen, brush-men, basketries and some have referred to as a side job to play the violin. "(The Office Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities Facts about Roma, Roma history, www.romovia.vlady.gov.sk).

1.2 Roma and their history after 1945

According to various authors, after the Second World War, there was a significant relocation of Roma from Slovakia to the Czech lands, where they found a position not only to work, but also to have a better option than living in Roma settlements. Since the most of the Czech Roma never returned from the Nazi concentration camps, the bulk of the Roma living now in the Czech comes from the Slovakia. "Roma are employed mainly in mountain pasture cooperatives, later in state farms and forest plans. They found jobs even in the war-damaged economy - in road construction, reconstruction factories and the like. The relationships between the Roma families living both countries are alive, and the relatives are visiting each other during the holidays and various family events up to this day. The authorities in the post-war period refused to treat Roma as a specific ethnic group. They were considering that their backwardness can be overcome only if they give up of their former life as much as possible and if they adapt to the majority population. Such was the establishment of the (until then) Nomad - Olah Roma people: politicians then came to the conclusion that living in homes is better than traveling".(Arne B. Mann, 2001, p.22). Widely significant milestone was the 1969 creation of the "Government Commission for issues of Gypsy population" and when Slovak Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, whose main activity consisted in solving the problems of employment, housing, education and youth crime restrictions. In different districts, they were a district committees constituted at which a network of social workers in the field gradually emerged. They were tasked to do so - through the intermediaries between Roma residents of the community and the authorities. Each year, there were reports made out on the number of Roma population, about their problems in housing, employment, schooling of children etc. It should be excluded that the work of social workers in the past was very necessary and beneficial. However, the above-mentioned Committee of the Government, as well as the entire network of field workers in 1991 were canceled. (Office of the

plenipotentiary for Roma Communities Facts about Roma, Roma history, www.romovia.vlady.gov.sk).

1.3. The Roma and their history after 1989

An important milestone recent Roma history was the year 1989. Shortly after the events of November, the first Roma political party arose - Roma Civic Initiative, followed by other parties and cultural associations. In the first election in 1990, there was a 10 members of the Roma elected for the shortened term of two-years into the highest organs of the then, Czechoslovakia. A very important element at that time was well accepted principles of governmental policy of the Slovak Republic for Roma and it was on 9th of April in 1991. This document in the broader aspects, designed the approach to solving the problems of ethnic, social, cultural, educational as well as the area of economic security. The main principle of ethnic has been in legislative and legal system, starting with the constitution of the Republic, to recognize the Roma ethnic identities for them to be at the level of other ethnic minorities living in the Slovak Republic. In practice, this meant that Roma were emancipated with the other ethnic minorities. The proposals in the social and economic security, which principles contained, was however, at a later stage met with criticism particularly in relation to compliance with the principles of not shedding the special funds under the state, provision of aid, social, cultural, educational and schooling or healthcare for the Roma who needed assistance on the basis of ethnicity. Document was not taking the need of solving the issues related to employment and housing of Roma into account. The principles also pointed to the weaknesses of the system. (Kotvanová A., 2003, p. 23).

"Based on the noted history, it can be concluded that after the 1989, a lot of positive things has happened for the Roma. In particular, during the years of 1990 - 1992, there were important acts and symbolic recognition recorded - recognition of the Roma as national minority, the Roma Holocaust grant, the possibility of developing the Roma language. " (M. Vašečka, 2010, p. 4.) In the 90s, there was a space created for publishing activities and periodicals has been published. Currently, the only magazines published continuously since 1990, is a fortnightly *Romano nevo ľil* - the Gypsy Sheet. (www.rnl.sk). Since 2002, there is also a Roma Press Agency, medium on the principle of Internet Newspaper (www.rpa.sk), book market is continually expanding each year with the initial formation of Roma and translated literature. It can be concluded that it is the education, where there was a lot of changes made, whose main task was to improve the educational level of Roma children and on the other hand, the increase of awareness of the majority population of Roma, at the same time. Nevertheless, the overall social and economic condition did not improve at the desired pace. As a result of socio-economic transformation after 1989 was the the gradual creation of a new system of social inequality and large part of the Roma lost their jobs and new job opportunities are absent. Life in Roma settlements and ghettos is marked by material poverty, poor hygiene, deteriorating health situation, but also with social exclusion.

Constantly deteriorating social status of the Roma population was continually requiring a systemic solutions at the level of government and in 1989, the government of Slovak Republic, appointed a plenipotentiary for Roma communities.

2. Poverty Roma, its causes and consequences

Roma poverty can be understood in a narrow but also in the broader sense.. In a broader sense, it can be understood, except material consumption and as a lack of other aspects, even including lack of access to social services, which means inability to participate in social, economic, political and cultural life, but due to many factors such as: low income, poor health, lack of education, respectively, little contact with the majority population and discrimination. Poverty among Roma is closely related to four main factors.

A/ economic conditions in the region - in economically developed regions, the situation of the Roma favorable compared with those living in poorer areas.

B/ size and concentration of the Roma population in the colony - in comparison with Roma in other countries in various regions of the Slovak Roma often live in settlements and on the edges of villages and towns. Types of settlements vary considerably in geographical location and ethnic composition. Approximately, one quarter of the Slovak Roma live in settlements, many of which lie in the poorer eastern regions of the country. Their actual number is difficult to estimate because of the methodological problems in the census of Roma and the definition of what actually "settlement" means. The living conditions of Roma living in settlements are generally worse than the rest of the Roma population.

C/ proportion of Roma in the settlement - based on research and each statistic, there is an ample evidence that the poverty rate in areas with a higher proportion of the population is higher than in areas with a lower density of Roma. According to the researches poverty among Roma in districts where at least 5 percent of population officially proclaimed themselves as a Roma, is substantially greater and deeper than the Roma population in general.

D/ degree of geographic integration or segregation of the settlement and its distance from the nearest town or village - within regions, there seems that the level of poverty of Roma settlements is closely linked to the geographical location of settlements and the level of ethnic integration and segregation. The conditions in the settlements populated exclusively for Roma population are significantly worse than those in integrated communities. (World Bank, Foundation, S.P.A.C.E - INEKO, 2002, p. 13).

From above mentioned characteristics, it shows that the more isolated and segregated the settlement is, the more deeper and harsher is the poverty in it, from which logically follows that the resident also have fewer opportunities to work outside the village because they lack sufficient funds to travel for their work and consequently, it increases the likelihood that the majority of Roma will continue to live in isolated settlements and poverty will subsequently deteriorate.

Social, as well the economic indicators show, that the Roma in segregated settlements are doing much worse because these settlements' unemployment rate is in most cases 100%, and therefore, there is a poorer education, and health status of the population. Roma living in segregated settlements, which are located in poor areas are called "doubly marginalized" - because they face a higher risk of political and social exclusion.

2.1. Indicators of poverty

One can only agree that Slovakia still remains the first indicator of income poverty assesment. Thus, adversely built situation is the result of, perhaps, a lack of experience with alternative methods of tracking poverty.

Due to lack, respectively, no no income, many Roma equate poverty with their current living conditions are poor and inadequate housing conditions, not fully built infrastructure, poor health status, but primarily, the lack of food and drinking regime, lack of clothes, almost no social net they could count on and high unemployment and finally, anti-social exclusion. Most of them do not work in the long term, thereby, it is affecting a significant lack of funding and they can not prove their families with proper food, not even for their children.

Another factor affecting the Roma poverty is their low level of education from which derives the mere change of finding a job, which precedes the indicators adopted. Problems is seen in the fact, that most of the Roma population have not completed primary education, but of course, there are also an individuals who hs the apprenticeship, some of them even finished high school or university. And it is the ignoramus of Roma which, to a great extent, is the consequence of the poverty and social exclusion of the Roma ethnic group, causing unemployment, hunger, malnutrition, poor housing conditions, as well as poor health.

2.2 Lack of education of the Roma as the most serious causes of poverty of Roma ethnicity

Education of Roma children is one of the topics on which most discussion in the efforts to classification and association of Roma. It is, therefore, one of the key areas, in which intervention is required, first, by the state, but of course, by the third sector as well. Training and education is also one of the areas where a more complex system reform has taken place and all changes are therefore, partially implemented within the inefficient functioning of the school system. The critic of unequal access of Roma children to education is facing a long-term critic, which comes mainly from the Slovak third sector, and from the external manily from internation organization whose focus is human rights. But, the need of imporvment of the situation of Roma education has also been mentioned in several various government documents. It is true that it has not took place, yet, in the context of a comprehensive reform of education but on the other hand, it should be noted that, in the field of education it recent years, there was perhaps, the most action made, and it is still not possible at present time, to measure their success.

The issue of training and education of Roma is one of the many themes that resonate in our society and this issue is addressed on a global scale. Education is one of the main conditions for the development of every human community, but at the same time, a great need for personal growth of each person who is preparing by education for his own life with a positive integration into society. In our society, it is considered that Roma do not value education. Young Roma until now, still did not know the relationship between education and socio-economic success. Roma do not realize that only the education from early childhood and education leads to not only to meet the material requirements but also the spiritual abundance. However, the present case is that Roma who wants to go t school, face many obstacles. Especially for Roma, living in segregated settlements away from the town or vilalge, the very way to school itself, is the obstacle. Subsequently, the parents of Roma children often can not afford to buy even an adequate clothing and not to mention the school supplies and food. Consequently, a major problem is the teachers themseves approach to Roma children. Roma

children are never separated in classes, to not be with the non-Roma children. They must, therefore, often attend separate classes that were not in the same class with non-Roma children. Not only in Slovakia but also in many other countries, there is a disproportionate number of them assigned to the schools for the mentally handicapped, therefore, in special schools. This may be a wide-social problem, resp. the problem of the whole system, because the lack of scholarship of Roma children is related, mainly due to the fact that many Roma parents describe their consent to their children without understanding, in order for their children to be assigned to special schools. By doing this, the children are already prejudged to the poor life, because without qualification, they have no chance to apply for the labor market in their future. However, many Roma parents often do not even know what they sign, because they, themselves, can not read and this way, they can aware come to awareness of the dire consequences of the proceedings. Several official investigations have shown that the inclusion of Roma children in schools, serves as a tool of segregation of these children. That conclusion has been confirmed, in some cases, by the state school inspection.

On the other hand, there is an prevalent view, that segregated education can even have its weaker but also its better effects. The positive one, is that Roma children are in their own community, they are not pushed away and underrated. The curriculum is also adapted in that way, that Roma children will receive the most appropriate scholarship, which should be manageable for him or her. These kids learn here what is the most important for the self-realisation. The negative side is that as long as the kid does not suffer any mental retardation of a subtle degree, his/her personal development stagnates and is insufficiently developed and prepared for further education and life.

Here again, we encounter the root causes such as poverty, poor social conditions, but least, as we already noted, profound underestimation of education. On the other hand, the shortcomings of the school system must be noted too. "Portik, in his book states that : the analysis of the failure of Roma pupils indicates that the majority of pupils is primarily caused by egoneous factors of socio-economic environment, lack of educational stimulation, lack of hygiene and medical care, rather than genetic factors. " (M. Portik, 2003.)

Despite the many efforts of the Slovak society, is just at the beginning of its search for appropriate ways of dealing with Roma issues. Despite the intensive efforts of many governmental and non-governmental organizations, it can be stated that the Roma situation regarding education and training completely failed in its solving. The current situation can not be considered as optimal, and it is therefore, necessary to say that the policy of preferential treatment do not have the support of the general public and not even of the representatives of political life. Some social change could happen if the xenophobic perception of the Roma would be suppressed, in accordance with the awareness of the need to build our society.

2.3 Unemployment as a result of Roma poverty

Position in the labor market, together with the employment status and educational attainment, is among the most important factors. A mismatch between high unemployment and weak skill is ultimately excluding Roma from the standard of living and other life chances. The fact that the bulk of the Roma ethnic group suffers the exclusion in the labor market has also deep historical roots, which may be due to the marginalization of Roma in the labor market mentioned several factors such as as:

- Low level of education and qualification level

- The presence of hidden prejudice and discrimination against the Roma ethnic group by the majority population, respectively employers (reputation unreliable workers without work ethics, discipline and motivation).

- Low status housing, living conditions and the poor state of health

- Persistently high (long-term) unemployment and the associated devastation of human capital and loss of work habits.

In addition, to these factors on the Roma population which are affecting the employment, respectively, unemployment is currently in the adverse conditions in the area of employment by various employers, whether it is a private, respectively, public administration. As can be noted, however, there was a loss of heavy industry in which, the Roma often found their job positions in a great extent, the heavy industries have been broken into the individual peasant cooperatives, which also employed a large part of the Roma in the past. There have been major changes in the bulk structure of the demand for unsilled labor in the labor market and significant growth in competition of foreign workforce.

Based on the number of available data and published statistical information, it shows that Roma unemployment is very high, and in some places it even reaches the level of 100%. A specific feature is therefore, the fact that it is a long-term unemployment, while it is one of the most risky social categories has become the youth of Roma. The young Roma mostly have not experienced any period of work responsibilities and do not have a minimum work experience. Risks for these young people is the result of interaction of their age, lack of work experience and practice, with related expertise as well as incomplete education. Such long-term youth unemployment leads to a kind of subculture of unemployment, and in those cases the subsequent attempt to apply the official labor market is minimal to none.

2.4 Poor housing as a result of Roma poverty

Multiple sources of data and information across the European Union clearly shows that many Roma in the EU are still living in conditions that are far below the minimum standards for adequate housing, as well as that of their substandard conditions, uncertain and most often segregated housing are often the cause of a very large Roma problems that interfere with other aspects of life such as education, unemployment and health. Despite the fact that the EU Directive on Racial Equality Act 2000 provides the protection of Roma from discrimination in housing, their direct and indirect discrimination on the right to access to housing remains considerably enhanced. In several member states of EU, but also in other countries, that are still many evictions of Roma occurring.

The housing situation of Roma is currently a serious problem and needs to be addressed through urgent actions of EU institutions, member states, as well as local authorities to ensure and promote equality and social inclusion. In this regard, it is important active participation of Roma in all stages of the development of housing policies, starting from planning, through its actual implementation of evaluation and assessment to both the EU, national, regional as well as local policies.

The quality of housing of Roma in global-scale, is still necessary to monitor and of course, improve. Some authors in their works argue that the states should affirm the right of people to pursue sedentary or nomadic lifestyles, according to their own free choice, and to ensure equal treatment with various authorities should make all the conditions that would suit such cultivation lifestyles. It should be ensured housing conditions of Roma in the form of, for example, access to the building, planning and access to private land.

In Slovakia, the majority of Roma live in settlements and do not even own their homes or land on which the dwelling is built. Many of them does not even has a water, gas, electricity or

water closets. Many Roma settlements have still not settled the ownership of land as a key to improving the overall condition of their housing conditions, as local authorities and governments are not willing, or not able to invest in the maintenance of buildings or local infrastructure, if this property is not settled. "Improvement of infrastructure in Roma settlements is one of the fundamental objectives of the current policy of the Council of Europe. Unfortunately, many governments are not willing to invest in improving the housing situation of Roma and these processes are, thus, too lengthy. " (Council of Europe Information Office in Bratislava, 2008, p, 29).

2.5 Poor health as a result of Roma poverty

The Roma population's health condition rates their health condition very favorably compared to the total population in the Slovak Republic. But, we know, that the score does not reflect the reality at all, and there is a different reference framework for the assessment of both groups of their own health. Research has found that Roma suffer from a low number of chronic diseases, "but we believe, that there is a large number in this population of undiagnosed diseases. Since the Roma have poor access to health services, many of them are visiting the doctor only when it is the symptom of advanced disease stage.

Hunger and food are among the main determinants of measurement factors that affect the poor health status of the population. If we could compare different periods, we could rate the period before the 1989 in Slovakia positively in terms of procurement, of at least, the basic food of the Roma population, mainly because of their almost full employed status, as well as the possibility of subsidized consumer goods. In the transition period, these conditions have changed very significantly, while Roma households in the poorest settlements have huge difficulties in procuring sufficient quantities of food and thus, to maintain adequate nutrition of families. Malnutrition of Roma children is seen as a common problem, resulting in poor health associated with the symptoms of stunting among Roma children.

Thus, on the basis of the facts above, we know that another important manifestation of overall prosperity or poverty condition. Doctors have confirmed, several times that in Roma settlements, there is significantly worse health status compared with other populations, the main factors are being attributed to unhealthy lifestyle, including mainly due to poor nutrition, smoking, and of course, the terrible living conditions. Research methods were clearly found that the incidence of various infectious diseases, together with poor conditions, is significantly higher in the more isolated and segregated settlements. " In most cases, there are a different epidemic hepatitis occurring, also trachoma, tuberculosis, meningitis and various skin diseases, including scabies among the inhabitants of Roma settlements. These diseases were eliminated almost completely in the majority population and today are associated only with the overpopulation, consuming non-potable water, shortages in the removal and disposal of waste and proximity of environmentally contaminated areas, all of which are characteristics of Roma living conditions. " (FSG, 2007, p. 31).

The most common reasons for the occurrence of dangerous diseases is their bad lifestyle, poor diet but often, also untreated injuries. Information about congenital diseases are inadequate, and in the majority, there are no health index. Regarding research, drug addiction in Roma communities - it is being eliminated by the poverty itself, however, there is a high occurrence of alcoholism.

A significant problem with the Roma in terms of their health, is their low health awareness and highly unsanitary environment in which they live. Therefore, isolated Roma settlements are a warning sign because of their alarming health situation for the whole society.

"Disastrous and ever deteriorating living conditions, low health awareness and low, respectively, no vaccination rates suggest that the trend of increased risk of infectious diseases in the population of the Roma ethnic group will continue. Especially, a high risk of diseases associated with low hygienic standards, which range in epidemic scale." (FSG, 2007, p. 26). Given the very poor state of health and well adversely access to health services of Roma, there should be needed to develop a participative way of involved individual components of the special health programs that would be, first but not last, dedicated to one level the inequalities of Roma and non-Roma population in health and on the other hand, their main aim would be to focus on tools that would increase the individual responsibility for their own health, education, employment as well as their social status.

2.6 Poverty and social exclusion

Is not necessary to ask the question in this regard, it is better to measure poverty and social exclusion. It can also be said that every measure of poverty, resp., social exclusion involves some clear idea about their causes and consequences. The poverty measure, i.e. by setting the poverty line, represents the measurement of only a certain symptoms of poverty, i.e. a concept of poverty. However, in respect of social exclusion, it is necessary to focus not only on the description of possible dimension and specific indicators, with the help of which, we can examine social exclusion, but also point to the very concept of social exclusion. Uniform definition of what social exclusion means and how to measure its breadth and depth, certainly does not exist, but perhaps, it is possible to rather point out to the various alternatives.

However, it should be an effort of various scientists to the future, and all involved in this issue focus on the problem of poverty and social exclusion in a comprehensive manner to obtain a various of useful and relevant data to describe and identify risk factors for most vulnerable groups in this way, to provide social policy makers, such data on which it could be credibly and effectively conceive the various strategies and plans. In addition to this, as a member state of the EU, we are committed to regularly handle the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion and monitor poverty and social exclusion, with the help of the common indicators. However, in addition to common indicators that allow international comparisons, it would be also useful to construct a national indicator of poverty (i.e. Social exclusion), reflecting the specific situation of Slovakia.

Social exclusion is mainly the lack of participation of individuals who are part of the majority considered distinct. It relates to poverty and highlights the social, economic, cultural and political context.

Social exclusion is associated with its opposite, to social inclusion, integration and cohesion. In this context, there is an issue of inclusive capacity of the communities and region getting to the spotlight, in which there are socially excluded Roma groupings. It is primarily, the capacity of institutions and organizations working in the following municipalities and regions, to provide members of socially excluded grouping services (social, educational, health, etc.), which would allow the development of their human, social and cultural capital and to ensure the social development of socially excluded grouping as a whole." (A. Mušinka 2011, p. 115).

3. Social and economic situation of the Roma

Solving the poverty of Roma in Slovakia, but also in the world is a long-term task, which can be in process for further decades. Of course, it is a complex task that requires participation of the whole society and versatile solution at ministries. NGOs, international organizations to the level of the European Union. It is still very needed, to create a new effective projects in this

area, to which it would be possible to engage the Roma themselves, in cooperation with local governments and municipalities in Slovakia. Great opportunity to address and financing of such projects is being offered by the EU, and henceforth, by ensuring projects in their external financing.

The EU and its member states have a special responsibility for the situation and the solution of the Roma living in the member states, and in the candidate countries, the potential candidate countries respectively. The values on which the European Union is built are set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. These values should be applied in practice in order to improve the situation of the Roma, who also represent the largest ethnic minority in the European Union. Roma inclusion is in line with the priority educational growth, which is in the context of the EU 2020 strategy and particularly, its pilot initiative called the European Platform against Poverty. Achieving full Roma integration would result in significant economic growth and especially for those countries that have declining populations and should not afford to exclude part of their potential labor force.

Challenges of the European Union to address the situation of Roma and poverty in the future mainly include:

- Improved collaboration between stakeholders at European, national and international level and representatives of the Roma communities, which are based on a commitment in favor of Roma Inclusion
- Reflecting such undertaking, and this cooperation into positive changes at the local level. Here is the need to co-responsibility of local authorities, civil society as well as Roma themselves in such a way, to implement various programs and projects.
- More effective communication in the context of the benefits of Roma inclusion for local and national economic and social development. Social and economic integration of Roma is a two-way process, which requires a change in mindset of the majority, as well as members of Roma communities and their leaders
- Support the integrated use of EU funds in order to address the multidimensional challenges associated with the exclusion of the Roma
- Developing policies to eliminate segregation, particularly in education and housing, and support them through the Structural Funds
- Achieving a special focus on the most disadvantaged micro-regions
- Focusing efforts on Roma inclusion in the broader policy areas, such as education, employment, public health, infrastructure, urban planning and economic and territorial development.

3.1 Discrimination

Equality and equal treatment and/or respect for different and diversity are an essential part of each individual of a dignified life in society. But, these are often just an ideal to which we are trying to move closer, than reality itself. Discrimination and discriminatory practice still remain widely prevalent, which in many cases, is of structural nature.

Anti-discrimination legislation is valid in Slovakia since 2004, which provides equality of all citizens and protection against discrimination based on skin color, age, gender, sexual orientation, wealth, social origin, disability, membership of a national or ethnic minority or religion. The reality is that no legislation can not reliably prevent discrimination. "As shown by the experience of other countries in the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation (f.e. UK), the ingrained discriminatory structure is changing very slowly" (M. Sekulová 2010, p. 7). There is almost the same situation in Slovakia.

Despite the legislative and structural roots of discrimination mean that there are still prejudice and stereotypes prevailing, not only against selected groups, but there are also specific acts occurring, which are discriminatory. "In other words, even though the principle of equality and non-discrimination is enshrined in many national and international documents, not all people are equal in real life". (M. Sekulová 2010, p. 7). The existence of unequal treatment experience with phenomena of discrimination and racism are clearly not visible only through deeper insight into public discourse, media reports, but not least, it is often being reflected in the statements of several public officials.

Ultimately, discrimination may be the result of historical deprivation and exclusion of certain groups in society. According to available materials there was a comparative research on the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights carried out in 2009. This research was focused on the issue of discrimination against minorities in the European Union, while also covering Slovakia. Research has produced interesting results about the subjective experience of Roma and Romani with discrimination in Slovakia. This particular survey showed that 41% of those surveyed Roma and Romani women felt to be discriminated. Roma men and women largely face discrimination in the private sector. Other parts of the areas, where they experience discrimination are - the labor market, job search, public health, specifically with medical staff. What was interesting and significant result was that they experience the least in education.

In that context, it is appropriate to stop and think about it, since the Roma realize the discriminatory practices, because it is the education which is now widely discussed in relation to discrimination because of the prevalence of segregation. The conclusion of that research was that these people often face discrimination and perceive it as widespread.

However, in the present context, a true measure of discrimination of Roma in Slovakia is difficult to quantify precisely because of the continuing lack of ethnically specific data. So, in order to obtain a comprehensive view of the problem of discrimination against the Roma population, the specifically oriented research against Roma population of such a real situation is needed. "In this context, however, there is a raising persistent problem of obtaining reliable data on discrimination on grounds of ethnicity or race (mainly because of Roma ethnicity), disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, but also social status and multiple discrimination in accordance with legislation governing the protection of personal data. One consequence of this situation is the impossibility of evaluating the impact and measuring the progress of anti-discrimination policies and their individual actions." (Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma communities, Strategy for the integration in 2020, 2011, p. 43).

The principal legislative instrument in compliance with the principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination in Slovakia is called "Anti-discrimination Act of 2004", as a general rule covering social security, labor law and similar legal relationships, such as education, healthcare, provision of goods and relating to the calculation of the protected grounds, including national or ethnic origin, race or color. In terms of the incorporation of European anti-discrimination directives in the Slovak legal system, a key moment was the adoption of

the Law no. 365/2044 Coll. on equal treatment in certain areas and protection against discrimination and amending certain laws (Anti-discrimination act).

The law was adopted on 20th of May in 2004 and entered into force on 1st of July in 2004. The law prohibits discrimination - in area of employment and similar legal relations - on sex, religion, belief, race, national or ethnic origin, disability, age or sexual orientation. According to Law no. 365/2004 Coll. of equality, there has been a Slovak National Centre for Human Rights established as the main, central body for monitoring these complaints. In addition, to these centres and other bodies, these complaints are also being monitored by other bodies such as. Institute of the Ombudsman, and the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities.

There is a prohibition of discrimination applying for specific legal relationships circuit (of § 112 paragraph. 1 of Act no. 387/1996) - according to which: "An employer must not publish job offers containing any restrictions or discrimination based on race, color, language, sex, social origin, age, religion, political or other opinion, political affiliation, trade union activity, the nationality or ethnic group or other status. "(Act of NR SR no.387 P 1996 Coll employment).

In 2004, there was also a law promulgated - Act. 5/2004 Coll. Employment Services. According to § 50 of this Act, there may be a contribution given to the employing the disadvantaged employer (graduate of school up to 25 yrs. old, the candidate over 50 yrs. old, long-term unemployed ones, lone citizen caring for a child, a disable person and the like.). Although, the law nor the concept encourage employment of disadvantaged jobseekers in terms of labour, social affairs and family in 2004 arising from it, it does not confer the ethnic minorities directly, a large proportion of socially excluded Roma population falls into the category of disadvantaged job seekers, as defined by law. (World Bank, Foundation S.P.A.C.E - INEKO 2002, p. 57).

The constitution of SR, in article 35 guarantees everyone the right to work. According to Article 12, everybody has a right to work, regardless of sex, race, color, faith and religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, nationality or ethnic origin, property, birth or other status. (Act no. 460/1992 Coll., Constitution of the Slovak Republic).

Also, the Act. 428/2002 Coll. of privacy policy protects ethnic minorities in the sense that it prevents a potential employer during the interview employment to require the candidate information about his ethnicity.

"Other sources of data, which may terminate, in particular about the discriminatory potential of the opinion polls, which show that Slovakia is deeply rooted by prejudices and stereotypes about the Roma minority. There is also a strong likelihood linked to this, for example, employers apply such an approach to the recruitment of Roma unemployment. Although, it can be stated that the issue of discrimination against the Roma in the labor market after the legislative side was sufficiently covered, in practice, many problems probably still persist for long time, since, in practice, the legislation is being used insecurely and insufficiently. Overall, there is a problem in practice, when examining the situation and both, rates of discrimination and then, the application of anti-discrimination legislation itself. "(Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, Strategy for the Integration in 2020, 2011, p. 43). The experience of the EU shows that the area of labor relations is an area where there is very difficult to prove the discrimination.

4. Aspects of Roma policy

The solving of social situation and poverty of the Roma is a complex task, which should be addressed in a collaborative approach among many partners, various organizations and as well as the state itself. Roma themselves should be also involved to the solution, but also non-Roma. The details of the Roma living in settlements can only encourage considerable unease about future policy. There has been numerous projects carried out to this topic for decades, which should solve the problems of the Roma ethnic group, but it must also be acknowledged that a longer-term horizon on the Roma problem can only lead to a deeper entrenchment of segregation and the consequent impoverishment. It is necessary to adopt a package of short-to-medium-term measures that are targeted at the most important area of improving the living conditions of the Roma in the Roma issue.

Finally, in this regard, the involvement of non-governmental organizations such as the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma affairs is very important.

Peter Pollák, the government Plenipotentiary for Roma said that "over the last 20 years, there has been 17 different concepts worked out for the Roma issue, and despite that, the situation for the segregated community is still difficult." He also further emphasizes that the Roma issue is complex and can not be resolved in the short term. And the production of proposals of law than on a treadmill can not be expected. Nevertheless, ÚSVRK in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family submitted the National Council Act of Material Deprivation in 2013, which includes three pillars of Roma reform, that are the hardest measures of the Roma reform.

The representative, Peter Pollák, has also spoken very favorably about the issue of placement of Roma in special schools. The Office also supported the pre-school education for children from socially excluded communities. The ÚSVRK gave thousands of Roma children a chance for better future through projects and through variety of programs created 590 jobs. Plenipotentiary Peter Pollák also raised the issue of settlement land with Roma settlements and there was an expert group established to perform this task, which has to analyze the settlement of the land". (Peter Pollák, cas.sk, 24.11.2013).

4.1. Proposed measures

In this part, I would like to suggest the possibility of policies and measures that could be implemented to improve the living conditions of the Roma. The idea is that these measures should eliminate poverty of Roma, and improve their future opportunities through expanded opportunities for education and work. It is possible to benefit from the numerous proposed, as well, as the taken measures, concepts and projects in Slovakia, as well from other European countries with these proposed measures.

The main task should be to develop a strategy that would cover the satisfied basic needs of life of the Roma and other hand, their own participation in the socio-economic, in order for them to participate on the satisfaction on their life needs. The most difficult question, as well as the solution are the Roma from the segregated settlements themselves, and their access to education, to health services, to better housing conditions as well as to education itself.

Despite investing many millions of Euros to the Roma issue, it seems that we are only at the beginning of solving this issue. Our society has also invested, as above noted, millions of Euros, to these Roma programs but the results are far behind expectations. It seems that these failures are mainly caused by the ignorance of the target group of Roma, constantly ignoring their cultural and linguistic differences as well as disregard for their involvement in the projects. However, it should be noted that on one hand, the implementation of projects, there

is a disregard for the specifics of the target group occurring and on the other hand, the projects are managed in a poor way. (A. Marcinčin, 2009, p. 46).

In various areas of social life, it is therefore needed for the Roma communities, to take measures and concepts that will be targeted as well as be more intense for this minority. Within the aforementioned areas, which are necessary for the Roma issue, there has already been many solutions proposed but we would like to summarize the most basic to the following measures:

- Living area of education

Improving the educational level of the Roma can lead to better access to employment in the labor market.

Solutions in the field of education for Roma

- Include the Roma children to the educational pre-school and compulsory attendance in kindergarten.
- Enhance the education of Roma teachers and teaching assistants who can work with parents and students, they should be able to speak the Romany language, and of course, they should know more of their history, culture, and thereby the learning would be more efficient.
- Do not place Roma children automatically in special schools, since many Roma children do not belong there.
- Put the social educator into practice, whose primary task should be to build confidence in the Roma children about the school, and the social educator would be a coordinator between Roma families and schools.
- Ensure regular monitoring of attendance of Roma children in schools
- Focus on supporting talented young Roma who are doing well and where there it is expected that they also graduate from the university and find suitable employment.

- Living area of employment

The rate of employment opportunities for Roma people is one of the preconditions for social and labor integration. It is essential that job opportunities are accessible to all and that the poorest people have the means to exploit new opportunities

Solutions in the field of employment for the Roma community

- Improve the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation.
- Develop retraining programs to acquire skills
- Involve young Roma in social and voluntary activities
- Promote the employment of Roma in the areas in terms of the historical development of livelihood were their jobs such as agriculture, forestry, then in crafts such as blacksmithing, basket-making.
- Promoting small and medium enterprises providing employment for Roma population

- Introduce an obligation, for at least for a limited period, to employ some Roma to employment agencies
- Promote better access to credit facilities to increase business opportunities even for Roma who are low-income groups.

- Living area of housing

In this area, it is necessary to adopt measures that would improve the living conditions of the Roma population and improving municipal facilities

Solutions for housing for Roma

- Settle financial circumstances relating to the ownership of land and buildings that prevent citizens and local governments to invest in the improvement and maintenance of the property.
- Provide drinking water to Roma settlements
- Offer rental housing for the Roma, who are properly classified in socio-economic life in families where there is regular school attendance

- Health living area

The solution to the problem of poor health of Roma increases precondition to improve their participation in education and the labor market. It is necessary to ensure the improvement of conditions for monitoring the health status of the Roma population.
Solutions in the field of health for Roma

- Ensure better access to the isolated Roma to health care through mobile care
- Involve schools and social workers to improve public health
- Promote the training in health education and therefore, to ensure increased standard of personal hygiene.
- Raise awareness and the number of Roma who can be vaccinated in order to reduce the incidence of infectious diseases.

- Social living area

Social impacts need to be addressed as a total complex of social policy, which is for all citizens without distinction of ethnicity. To provide social protection for the weak, to Roma and as well as to other citizens.

Solutions for Social for Roma

- Social programs directed to all vulnerable groups, including Roma, according to regional conditions of our country and increase the share of power from the state to municipalities in this area
- Re-establish, respectively, Expand the network of social workers in a high concentration of Roma

- Cause major initiative church charities and similar institutions to address social area of Roma
- Establish centers that would take and implement projects aimed at the Roma issue, they would also involve the Roma themselves in projects administered by feedback to individual ministries to address deficiencies that would have occurred in the implementation of projects.

Conclusion

Solving the poverty of Roma in Slovakia is a complex task that requires time and patience. Poverty among has many aspects and deep historical roots. Effective policies on its solving requires comprehensive approach and the creation of national partnerships among Roma and international organizations, national governments, non-governmental organizations at all levels, local governments and communities. The accession process to the European Union provides an excellent opportunities to Slovakia, to solve the problems through programs and projects financed from external sources.

The latest overview of Roma programs in Slovakia suggest the existence of a number of projects, that have been implemented to address the needs of the local Roma. Many of them apply creative approaches to solving difficult problems and to engage dedicated and dynamic individuals and communities. Future activities should be built on these experiments. In that regard, it is therefore important to emphasize the critic need for establishment of mechanisms to monitor the results of the projects, dissemination of good experiences and developing the strategies to promote and proliferate the smaller initiatives across regions and communities. This process requires the involvement of the whole spectrum of different partners, including governments, NGOs and other civil society subjects, as well as the international community. Finally, I would like to add that it is necessary that the Slovak Republic should use and draw te European Union funding to adress Roma integration into social life at all levels, since the experience has shown that due to the long-term Roma issue, it wold not possible, from the government perspective, to cover such solution via financial resources of the state and it also

would not be possible to find such a socio-economic tool by which this issue should be solved. It is necessary to participate to this field, to many quality projects and not just to address the removal of the weaknesses but also to promote growth opportunities.

Used literature (sources) References

Agency FSG, 2007 Brochure: Healthcare in socially excluded Roma communities, p. 26.31, available on the Internet: fsg@fsg.cz web: www.fsg.cz

COUNCIL OF EUROPE, GO SR, 2008 Enough! Enough! - Overcome Prejudice Meet Roma, ISBN 978-80-8106-008-3, p. 29, available on the Internet: www.euroinfo.gov.sk

Mann AB, Kalligram, 2001, Roma History, ISBN 80-7168-762-6, p. 2.22, available on the Internet: kyberia.mizu.sk/Romsky-dejepis.pdf

Marcinčin A. Marcinčinová L. Costs of Roma exclusion. The key to integration is respect for diversity. Bratislava: OSF, 2009, ISBN 80-968-237-9-4., P. 46, available on the Internet: www.iz.sk/download-files/sk/osf-straty-z-vylucenia-romov.pdf

Mušinka A. Benč V., 2011, the post-crisis recovery in SR: Increasing employment and inclusion of Roma, p. 115, available online at: www.euroinfo.gov.sk/data/files/1602_zbornik1_text_web.pdf

Draft Concept of Education of Roma children and pupils, including the Development of

DOI: 10.1515/cks-2015-0003



Secondary and Higher Education, 2009, p. 1, available on the Internet:
www.romainstitute.sk/data/files/96.pdf

P. Pollák, Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, cas.sk, 24.11.2013.

Portik M., 2003, Determinants of education of Roma pupils, Prešov, ISBN 80-8068-155-4

Sekulová M., O. Gyárfášová 2010, discrimination and multiple discrimination, ISBN 978-80-89345-24 -3, p. 7

World Bank Foundation SPACE - INEKO, 2002 Roma Poverty and Welfare of the Slovak Republic, ISBN 80-88991-15-3, p. 13, 57, accessible on the Internet:
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTRROMA/Resources/povertyinssk.pdf>

Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities Facts about Roma, Roma history, accessible on the Internet: www.romovia.vlady.gov.sk,
Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities, 2011, the strategy for the integration by 2010, p. 43, available on the Internet: www.minv.sk/?romske-komunity-uvod&subor=160449

Vašečka M., 2010, the independent cultural and social news Roma in Slovakia, nasea Romano lived with. 4, available on the Internet: <https://www.rnlweb.org/>

www.gipsy, www.rnl.sk, www.rpa.sk,

Act. 460/1992 Coll. The Constitution of the Slovak Republic

Law no. 387/1996 Coll. Employment

Ing. Lenka Kováčová
College of Health and Social Work of St. Elizabeth, Palackého no. 1,
810 00 Bratislava, Slovak Republic,
+421908566642,
lenka.kovacova55@gmail.com