



# CIVIL SOCIETY, CIVIL INVOLVEMENT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION OF THE ROMA



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# 1

## Introduction

The main objective of this background paper is to analyse the civil society involvement of Roma and assess the civic actors' views on the social inclusion of the Roma. In order to do that, I used the data of the 2004 and 2011 UNDP<sup>1</sup> Regional Roma Survey, conducted an online survey with Roma and pro-Roma NGOs, and carried out 13 semi-structured interviews with Roma NGO activists from various Central European and South-Eastern European countries.

The aim of the background paper is to provide an in-depth analysis on different forms and patterns of civil society involvement and participation of the Roma. Moreover, the paper attempts to advance our knowledge about the process of social inclusion of Roma with the contribution of the Decade of Roma Inclusion based on the critical evaluation of the role played by Roma and pro-Roma NGOs as well as by Roma activists. The empirical data will be supported by the theoretical concept of the "Civil Society" and it will be utilised in the course of the research. By doing that, I also attempt to reflect on how the discourses of civil society intersect with the Roma-related academic and policy discourse. In Roma-related literature and research, in general, the theorisation or the ideological nature of the civil society is not emphasised; however their empirical consequences in policy making are taken into account.

This paper looks into the causes of exclusion of Roma from civic participation in countries of Central Europe and South-Eastern Europe. It uses the data from the 2004 and 2011 UNDP surveys on the status of Roma civic participation, as well as the level of trust in various institutions of civil society. In addition, (where possible) it will attempt to measure the changes, as regards to civil society participation, in attitudes and other related variables between two rounds of the regional survey (from 2004 and 2011).

The concluding session of the paper provides specific recommendations for amendments to policies aimed at improving the civil participation of the Roma.

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1/ The countries covered by the survey are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, and Slovakia. The methodology was designed to allow for comparisons of Roma communities with the control samples of non-Roma, living in close proximity. For details see Ivanov, Kling and Kagin (2012).

# 2

## Conceptualisation of civil society regarding Roma civic activism and participation

### 2.1 Theoretical framework of the civil society

“Civil Society” is a diffused concept which is widely used both in academic and public policy contexts. The interest in civil society draws strength from its European philosophical roots, which are traceable to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century developments, leading to the distinction between the civil society and the state (Keane, 1998). There are several approaches to the conceptualisation of civil society and for the purpose of this paper I review the ones that are used most frequently. In her 2005 study, based on her extensive review of literature, Constanza Tabbush distinguishes two theoretical frameworks regarding the conceptualisation of civil society. Both frameworks have their own ideological perspectives: i) the neo-liberal pluralistic paradigm and ii) the neo-Gramscian paradigm.

The neo-liberal pluralistic paradigm is connected with the pluralist principle that *“associations are the precondition for freedom and equity in a democratic society”* (Tabbush 2005:18). This stream of conceptualisation positions civic organisations (e.g. associations, foundations) as fundamental bases of the democratic society. The central idea of this conceptualisation is that pluralism can hold states accountable and make political institutions more transparent and efficient. Tabbush associates several theorists with this ideological school: e.g. Gellner (1994), Putnam et al. (1993) and Fukuyama (1995). She claims that all of them used and focused on the neo-Tocquevillian concept, which emphasises *“the positive and indirect outcome of associationalism and its importance for a healthy democracy”* (Tabbush 2005:18). She also stresses that the neo-liberal pluralistic paradigm highlights certain aspects of civil society: *“For example: (i) association is a way to protect the interest of minorities; (ii) there is a linkage between flourishing civil society and democratic practices; and (iii) civil society acts as a counterbalance to state involvement in every aspect of social life”* (Tabbush 2005:18). In Europe, there is also a strong influence of the Habermasian (1992) conceptualisation of civil society, which also belongs to the liberal pluralistic pattern. Habermas (1992) focused on the interdependence of the “life world” (public sphere) and “system” (the nexus of the state and market economy) and the negotiation. Habermas’ conceptualisation of civil society belongs to the same theoretical framework of the civil society, which provides a normative character for the representation of common interest in the public sphere. He focuses

on the bourgeois public sphere which was conceived as a public space for the educated middle class to exercise the practice of rational-critical debates. His account of the public sphere triggered important critical reflections, which are very instructive for the conceptualisation of the Roma civil society. One of the major critiques of his conceptualisation is that he neglected the non-bourgeois, non-middle-class public sphere and that he and other researchers who are sharing the same theoretical concept did not problematize and failed to clarify some of the intrinsic characteristics of the bourgeois ideal that constitute the normative basis of the civil society, namely the membership-based and voluntarism-driven organisations. Contrary to that, the vast majority of civil society institutions (particularly many Roma NGOs) in the post-communist countries are neither membership-based nor voluntarism-driven (interview with András Biró 2012. 06.23.). However, Roma NGOs are not just offering a public space outside of state control; they also, in some of the cases, are providing services and job opportunities for the local community.

There is another important critical reflection on the Habermasian conceptualisation, proposed by Nancy Fraser (1992). She emphasised the nature of 'subaltern counter publics' which is framed by race, gender and class. Some groups may claim to be representative of the entire constituency and others may diverge from the dominant discursive frame. This raises some fundamental issues regarding the diversity of political representation, even within the Roma civil society. Who represents whom? Who sets the policy agendas? How various interest, identities and experiences are represented by civil society organisations – both "to what extent?" and "how procedurally?"? These issues were addressed by the Roma activists who were interviewed in the course of this research.

The **neo-Gramscian ideological perspective on civil society** refutes the opposition between the state and the civil society, the latter is rather conceived as an interdependent category between the state and market (Tabbush, 2005). Tabbush argues persuasively: *"Civil society is seen as not just a place for creating social cohesion, but also as an arena where the struggle for hegemony is contested, and where these organisations are engaged in setting up and negotiating the rules of a given social order"* (Tabbush 2005:18). Besides the contesting nature of the civil society, this paradigm also acknowledges that certain sections of civil society can reproduce oppression and undermine democracy (Lenzen, 2002; cited by Tabbush 2005:38). Based on Tabbush's classification, authors like Cohen and Arato (1994), Lewis (2001) and Harbeson et al. (1994) belong to this ideological perspective.

## 2.2 The missing conceptualisation of the paradoxical development

Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor (2001:14) argued that in the 1980s Central European intellectuals' conceptualisation of civil society was much closer to de Tocqueville's liberal pluralistic conceptualisation. than to Gramsci's idea. They revive the term "Civil Society" as an autonomous space which is independent from the state. They also highlight some

features of the civil society, such as self-organisation and individual rights, freedoms and responsibilities. This conceptualisation resonates to some of the pro-Roma dissidents<sup>2</sup> who were strongly influenced by the concept of human rights (Trehan 2001). They conceived civil society as a guarantor of effective democracy and as a way to control – and resist against – the state.

In sum, the liberal pluralistic conceptualisation considers civil society as a “silver bullet” against the non-democratic enemies of the democracies. The neo-Gramscian theorisation, applies a more down-to-earth approach, since it highlights the importance of the grassroots mobilisation contrasted with the elitist participation in civic organisations. It also recognises the potentially dark, oppressive side of the civil society, which might undermine democracy. However, the classical conceptualisations of civil society are mainly based upon the capitalist voluntarism-based civil society in the XVIII and XIX centuries. The task of the new theorisation should be to reflect the emerging global economic crises, austerity measures, increasing long-term unemployment, social and ethnic inequality, racial violence, decreasing social services (which become naturalised as the rational and normal function of states) to the changing face of the civil society. The need for a new theorisation and of a new language describing civil society has never been as clear as it is now, even if the possibility of constructing new theories is more difficult than ever before. The changing face of the civil society was depicted by Ivan Krastev in a following way: *“The language of rights is exhausted, and what we can see in the last year is the decline of civil society and the rise of uncivil society”* (Krastev, 2011).

Nowadays in Europe, we are witnessing the paradoxical development that the space of civil society is used influentially and tactically by extreme-right groups. There is a rapidly changing face of civil society, where extreme-right and populist groups based on anti-democratic, intolerant and fundamentalist values, are gaining “territories”. These political forces – in most of the cases masked as civic activities – are emerging not only in the post-communist countries, but also in Western-European countries where there is a strong legacy of democratic traditions, such as Denmark, Sweden, Norway, France and Netherland (Miszlivetz 2012).

Recently, there were a number of cases in Hungary,<sup>3</sup> and also in Bulgaria,<sup>4</sup> when extreme-right groups, capitalizing on a combination of facts, semi-facts, rumours, myths and anti-gypsy sentiments, were able to mobilise people to threaten Roma communities. These events reflect upon the complex reality of the Roma in these societies. It exposes partly the inefficiency of the human rights discourse, which mainly addressed the Roma issues as well as the misconception of non-Roma who perceived Roma as a “privileged and over-supported minority”. Moreover, it also challenged the values and nature of the democratic civil society and the cohesion of local civil societies. In most

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2/ In the text I use the term of pro-Roma dissidents as well as pro-Roma organisations. Pro-Roma refers to a person or an organisation, which does not have a Roma identity, but is working for the Roma cause. The term of dissident is used particularly in state-socialist countries and refers to those citizens who were radically critical against the practice and ideology of the political establishment.

cases, local non-Roma society rather tacitly supported the anti-Roma groups, rather than visibly showing solidarity towards the Roma.<sup>5</sup> In Hungary, during the night of August 19, 2012, several neo-Nazi groups (formalised in civic associations) and extreme right media actors dispersed an anti-gypsy rumour that members of a Roma community attacked rightist groups and the police. This false information was enough to mobilise several hundred people, who went on to threaten the affected Roma community and show their solidarity with the Hungarian Guard (an extremist paramilitary organisation) and the police. Roma organisations (none of them being local NGOs) issued a statement, and organised a protest against the extreme-right groups and racial violence.

The starting point of the new conceptualisation of civil society should be the post 1989 socioeconomic and political change, which fundamentally changed and redefined people's lives, values and behaviours. The concept of civil society based on liberal pluralistic values has been challenged by the extreme-right groups whose values are supported by large numbers of people: this should be taken into account in the new conceptualisation of the civil society.

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3/ In Hungary the explicit anti-Roma rhetoric became transferred into the political discourse in 2010 when the Jobbik party (populist, xenophobic, extreme right) gathered 16% of the vote during the parliamentary election. However amongst Roma activists and scholars there is a consensus that the extreme anti-Roma discourse became legitimized by the incident in October 2006 at Olaszliszka. A middle aged non-Roma teacher was driving through Olaszliszka with his two daughters. He accidentally hit a girl crossing the road. The local Roma group brutally attacked and killed the driver. This was the incident when the radical far right coined again the term of "Gypsy-crime". This coincided with the proliferation of the extreme-right paramilitary groups (such as Magyar Gárda, Szébb Jövőért, etc) which used a harsh anti-Roma discourse which became favored by various media outlets.

As a result of this process from 2008 there were series of murders against Roma. According to the European Roma Rights Centre, forty eight attacks against Roma and/or their property in Hungary—many believed to be racially motivated—were reported in the media between January 2008 and July 2010. Nine people were murdered—including two minors—and dozens injured. Perpetrators used firearms, Molotov cocktails, or hand grenades in at least twenty-four attacks. Nine incidents of property damage were also reported. (<http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/attacks-list-in-hungary.pdf>)

4/ Similar anti-Roma grass-roots mobilisation took place in Bulgaria. On September 24, 2011, in Katunitsa, a 19-year-old non-Roma man was murdered by members of an affluent Roma family. As a response to the brutality of the murder, several hundred people from the victim's home village revolted against the Roma family and destroyed their property. During the following days, massive anti-Roma protests were organised in Bulgarian cities. The murder in Katunitsa served as the symbolic catalyst for the formation of anti-Roma mobilisation across the country. The protests resulted in physical violence and unrest, exemplified anti-Semitic racist sentiments and actions, verbal abuse and scapegoating rhetoric. Raising the issues of ethnicity and race, the public protests escalated into violent rallies toward Roma neighbourhoods across the country (mostly young people, carrying Bulgarian flags, marched into Roma neighbourhoods, and destroyed Roma property); See: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BisJFHADTg> (last accessed: August 22, 2012)

5/ In the spring of 2011, the Hungarian village of Gyöngyöspata was invaded by extreme-right groups in order to defend ethnic Hungarians from the "Gypsy Crime". There is a study prepared by the Ecopolis Foundation, which elucidates the role of the local elite in the ethnic conflict; See: <http://okopoliszalapitvany.hu/hu/publikacio> (last accessed: August 22, 2012).

**Box 1 : Statement from Roma leaders**

From Roma Leaders in Hungary – Sent on Monday, August 20, 2012

**STATEMENT**

There was a state of emergency in Cegléd after right-wing extremists stated that the Hungarian Guard and the police were attacked by local Roma. The Pest County Police refuted that any disorderly conduct or assaults had occurred, but the rumour was enough to mobilise a nationwide call of neo-fascists to continue terrorizing the Roma through [barikad.hu](http://barikad.hu), [kuruc.info](http://kuruc.info), and [szentkoronaradio.com](http://szentkoronaradio.com). With this action, they have committed a hate crime. According to the news, on the night of August 19, hundreds of people (400–500, or, according to other source of information, 1,000) flooded into Cegléd. Many of the Roma families fled in fear to their relatives. We believe that legal norms proved to be untenable, and not just the right-wing extremists, but also the contradictory positions and policies of the government and police leadership are also responsible for the developments, by tolerating the racist acts of the former.

Roma organisations and representatives held a vigil at the National Police Headquarters during the night. They reported to the police that the Hungarian Guard committed the criminal offense of apartheid. They asked the Roma to remain calm and not to yield to provocation.

We expect the complete diligence of the state, that the police act in accordance with the full strictness of the law, protect public peace, social harmony and human dignity. We claim solidarity with the police officers serving at the venue, who were also attacked by the right-wing extremists. We expect the government to fulfil its international obligations and prevent and stop racial violence. The government should act against the continuing physical threats against Gypsies. It is intolerable that the right-wing forces besiege and blockade Hungarian citizens and families in their homes.

Until these conditions are met, Hungary is not a safe country for Roma. For the right-wing, we have become the scapegoats. Their real goal is to overthrow the rule of law and democracy.

Amenca Group; Among Us, Roma Community Network (Ide Tartozunk Roma Közösségi Hálózat); Budapest XIII District Roma National Minority Self-Government; Roma Parliament; Phralipe; A New Approach Group (Új Szemlélet Csoport); Oprea Roma Group; Bhim Dzsáj Community; MCDSZ Budapest XIII. District Member Association; We Ourselves – For Ourselves Society (Mi Magunk – Saját Magunkért Egyesület)

Source: See: [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Roma\\_Daily\\_News/message/18043](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Roma_Daily_News/message/18043) (last accessed August 27, 2012).

**2.3 Roma civil society and the process of democratisation**

The aftermath of the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe created an unprecedented event of civil society development. Prior to that, Central-European intellectuals in the 1980s already started to conceptualise the idea of civil society. Vaclav

Havel (1985), György Konrád (1984) and Adam Michnik (1985) problematised the term of civil society, sharing a theoretical base with de Tocqueville's notion. They put strong emphasis on self-organisation and individual responsibility, connected to the liberal pluralistic paradigm. In Roma related scholarship, Trehan (2001, 2009) was one of the most articulated authors, who stressed the neoliberal<sup>6</sup> character of the civil society, which had been expanded and supported by Western philanthropists (2009). She describes the process of how the human rights regime and civil society linked together as guarantors of effective democracy. One of strongest points that she made, was that after the political changes in Central and Eastern Europe (1989–1990), the development of civil society was “external to the Roma community”, as it was mainly arranged and managed by “individually-minded human rights entrepreneurs”, who were dissidents, or disciples and partners of key Western human rights NGOs, such as the U.S.-based Project on Ethnic Relations or Open Society Institute (2009:58). According to her critical analysis, these actors used the Roma as a vulnerable group to expose human rights violations and build their political careers in the process, during the democratic deficit in the Central and Eastern European countries. She also emphasised that the input of representatives of the Roma communities was symbolic, or rather a tool to legitimise the elite's interventions. These factors implicate the (re)emergence of asymmetries of knowledge and power within post-socialist civil society, and have negative implications for the autonomy of the Roma civil society movement itself, also (Trehan 2001; Rövid-Kóczé 2012).

Marushiakova and Popov (2005) gave a historical account of the history of the Roma civil emancipation, which was manifested in various associations and organisations from the 19th century, particularly in the Balkan countries. Klimova-Alexander (2005) refutes all the “crafters of Romani nationalist history”, like Puxon (1975) and Hancock (1999), who claim to establish, on the dubious historical grounds, an account of Roma political activism even in earlier centuries.

Based on a wide body of knowledge scholarship, the roots of the contemporary formal Roma political activism can be traced back to the first World Romani Congress held in 1971 in London (Klimova-Alexander 2005). This is still considered as the founding moment of the international Romani political activism today. Kóczé and Rövid (2012) distinguish three periodical phases of the emerging Roma civil society based on three dominant issues: i) 1970s–1980s: self-determination; ii) 1990s–early 2000s: human rights violations; iii) from late 2000s: social and economic inclusion.

The 1970s–1980s was the era when Roma political activism became transnationalised. According to Peter Willets (1982) the transnationalisation of Roma activism was running simultaneously with transnationalisation of other movements. The “transnational

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6/ The neoliberal character of civil society is closely related to the David Harvey' concept of neoliberalism: „this is a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advance by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.” (Harvey 2005: 2)

issue”, which provided the cohesive “common denominator” amongst various Roma activists’ groups, was the Roma Holocaust, and the associated claims for reparations. In that period, mainly Western Roma activists were outstandingly active, however, the situation changed significantly after 1989. In Central and Eastern Europe, it was high time to create NGOs at the local, and even on the transnational level. Romani activists and intellectuals have started to create their own NGOs, in order to gain influence on policy making, as well as to offer social services for Roma communities. They perceived civil society as an alternative arena to claim their political interests and influence public discourses and policy making on Roma issues. According to Iulius Rostas “...Romani activists preferred to use civil society as a strategy to influence political decisions, in order to achieve social change and mobilisation of Roma communities...” (2009:163).

This era was characterised by the issue of “human rights violations” (Kóczé and Rövid 2012). Besides Roma activist founded NGOs there were some pro-Roma non-Roma NGOs as well. Western philanthropic organisations played a dominant role in supporting the development of Roma NGOs, and they defined the political priorities regarding Roma issues (Guilhot 2005, Trehan 2001). The most important organisation that supports Roma issues in the region is the Open Society Institute, founded by George Soros. For instance the European Roma Rights Centre, which is an international public interest law organisation, was also established by the Open Society Institute in 1996. The main aim was to monitor human rights violations and to encourage and carry out strategic litigations concerning discrimination against, and human rights violation of, the Roma.

The establishment of Roma NGOs was backed by financial as well as political support – within the strict limits of the neoliberal ideology. As some scholars noted, liberal intellectuals in the early days of the transition celebrated the virtues of a strong civil society and its potential for ‘democratising’ the region (Forbrig, Demes and Shepherd 2007). They believed that there is a policy, political and institutional gap with clear – neoliberal – ideological scent left by the reduction of the state sector. The gap, the logic went, could be filled by a dynamic civil society and its interests. They apparently believed that they could eradicate racism and social exclusion in their societies by services offered by individual rights based civil society organisations and activists.

### **2.3.1 Civil society development as a project of the elite**

Trehan (2009) wrote comprehensively about the work of the dissidents in the Roma civil society in the 1990s. Kóczé and Rövid (2012) emphasised the dissidents’ role too; they characterised them as “those who had risked unpopularity under totalitarian regimes and had participated tirelessly in early ‘democratisation’ movements in Central and Eastern Europe, played a key role in establishing human rights NGOs with the focus on violation of Roma’s human rights” (2012:110). They succinctly emphasised also that: “Despite their progressive views about justice for minorities, most of these well-meaning intellectuals knew little about the day-to-day problems that many Romani people faced” (Kóczé and Rövid 2012:111). This observation coincides with the Gramscian and neo-Gramscian critique of the contemporary civil society, which is a site for the (re)



production of hegemony by bourgeoisie, rather than a site for emancipation (Cox 1999; Zizek 2005; Trehan 2009). These critical writings mainly refer to the non-Roma as bourgeoisie who are working on this field.

Huub van Baar held an interview with Nicolae Gheorghe, who is one of the most distinguished Roma scholars and activist in Europe. In the article, Gheorge reflected upon the increasing Roma participation and representation in political and social institutions. Gheorge characterised the development of Roma civil society as largely an elite's affair:

*"[W]e have a small elite; we have a Roma intelligentsia, a Roma bourgeoisie, a Roma middle class, a Roma nomenclature. [...] I think we are starting to lose contact with the grassroots, with the communities. We are not managing to enter there in a systematic way, on such a scale that we can really generate a change. [...] [I]n the 1990s, we hoped to generate a major change in the mentalities, and then in the institutions of the states, and then in the everyday life of the people, including the mentalities and everyday life of the Roma. I think we are starting to lose that; we are rather in a threat of creating bodies, documents, whose impact on the real life [of Roma] is very difficult to measure"* (interview was held by van Baar in 2003, quoted by van Baar 2008).

Nicolae Gheorge emphasised the enormous distance between the meta-discourse on Roma policy making and the deteriorating social and economic reality faced by the majority of the Roma population in Europe.

Hana Synkova (2011:281) presented a remarkable observation regarding Roma NGOs in the Czech Republic. In her article, she examines how NGOs can use the label of 'Romani'<sup>7</sup> for their own strategic legitimisation. She also refers to the NGOs as containers of the Romani elite: *"In the Czech Republic, people who start "Romani" organisations are frequently relatively well educated, have certain knowledge of institutions, are from more powerful, business-minded backgrounds and grew up in mixed or activist families. Organisations can definitely function as [...] possible mobility channels for those who are already skilled"* (Synkova 2011:281).

The elite-building feature of the Roma civil society has been recognised extensively by scholars, including Iulius Rostas, who himself was a director of the Roma programme of the Open Society Institute. After he had left his position at OSI, he admitted in an article that there is a tiny English-speaking group of Roma activist who are dominating, at the transnational level, as the voices of the whole Roma community – without any mandate or social base for their claims (Rostas 2009: 180; Trehan 2001). András Bíró – founder of the influential Hungarian pro-Roma NGO Autonomía Foundation (Autonomía Alapítvány) – criticises Roma civil society, which became a society of professional service delivery NGOs, which mainly concentrate on grant application and report writing, instead of mobilizing communities and developing a participatory democracy

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7/ The adjective 'Romani' in this context refers to those organisations whose leadership is comprised by Roma persons.

with the involvement of the Roma community.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.3.2 Roma civil society organisations – “intermediaries” or “value providers”

At the beginning of the 1990s, the generous funding schemes for non-governmental and civil society organisations (NGOs and CSOs<sup>9</sup>) resulted in the ‘NGO-isation’ of civil society with a profound impact on the Roma communities, as well. The civil society had been revived in the post-communist countries roughly at the same time of the global ‘NGO boom’. This boosted extension of NGOs is deeply embedded in the social, economic and political re-structuration of societies. Some of the authors note that in the post-communist countries, the NGO-boom conjured with the economic neo-liberalisation, which influenced the development of NGOs (Haney, 2002). This trend was characterised by the phenomenon that besides the small number of Roma intellectuals and activists (members of the Roma elite), there was a large number of experts and developers who got involved in Roma issues by providing consultancy or performing pro-Roma NGO developmental work. Reflecting on this phenomenon, some of the Roma NGO leaders started to use a similar critique, which has been used by post-developmental scholars<sup>10</sup> regarding the “Third World”.<sup>11</sup> There is a seminal work by Arturo Escobar (1995), in which he provides a theoretical framework for analysing the local effects and politics of international intervention in developing countries, by exposing how development intervention by Western countries in Latin America has influenced the creation of imaginative geographies such as the “Third World”. Escobar’s work, to some extent, is applicable when studying the Roma development initiatives in post-socialist countries by pro-Roma organisations.

For Escobar, “development” is an encompassing cultural space, where power differentials play a crucial role in the dissemination and implementation of knowledge (Escobar 1995:6-12). By the same token, it is important to talk not just about the critique of the “developmental industry” but also about the genealogy of the term of ‘development’, which has been evolved and shaped by the UNDP as well as by the World Bank. Based

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8/ Interview with András Bíró 2012 June 23.

9/ While distinctions are clearly made among different civil society entities—“civil society organizations” (CSOs), “community-based organizations” (CBOs) and “non-governmental organizations (NGOs)”, due inter alia to differences in scope of operation or territorial focus—in this and the next chapters the three terms are used as synonyms. They refer to non-state, non-business actors that are involved in implementing Roma-targeted interventions. Donors (non-governmental organizations in many cases) are not considered part of the “civil society community” here.

10/ Post-developmental theory arose in the 1980s and 1990s through the works of scholars like Arturo Escobar, Gustavo Esteva, Wolfgang Sachs, etc. The post-developmental school has critical views on the developmental theory and practice, which according to them always reflect upon Western hegemony. Some of the critiques raised by Roma activists have similarities with the post-developmental theorist. Lately, the post-developmental theory has been critiqued too, and the question remained on how developmental work can be more inclusive and supportive towards their target group.

11/ Even harsher critique was raised against the developmental industry by Graham Hancock in Hancock (2012).

on the Amartya Sen's definition, the "development can be seen, [...] as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy" (Sen 2000: 3). This idea coincides with the 'human development' concept which has been evolved and applied by the UNDP. The human development paradigm was first articulated in the 1990s Human Development Report, which stated that: "The real objective of development is to increase people's choices" (cited by UNDP 2011). The focus of the UNDP policies related to 'human development' remained on people's lives, freedoms and capabilities.<sup>12</sup> The main message of the 'human development' was that the people, who are the target of the developmental interventions, are the agents of change and they are the main beneficiaries of the work. Thus, the "developmental industry" was criticised by Arturo Escobar and Graham Hanckok. Based on their analysis, the development experts are misusing the concept of 'human development', and instead of increasing choices and creating opportunities and more freedoms for the socially excluded groups, they are increasing their control over financial resources and misusing their powerful positions.

So, the critiques of the developmental work coincide with a critical scholarship on Roma civil society and NGO-isation that exposes the hierarchical and asymmetrical relationships between the high-profile pro-Roma NGOs, Western philanthropic organisations and the local Roma constituencies (Trehan 2001; Trehan 2009; Iulius 2009; Kóczé 2011).

During the post-Cold War period, Western aid to post-socialist and post-Soviet regions shared similarities, on some levels, to the development industry and "mechanisms of rule" cultivated by actors working in the so-called Third World (Barsegian 2000). This mode of intervention was continued after 1989 in the post-communist countries and it became applied in the Roma civil society developmental work. Rudko Kawczynski, Roma activist and currently President of the European and Traveller Forum referred very critically to the intervention of the pro-Roma agencies, NGOs, experts and developers as the "Gypsy Industry". Based on his observations, the "Gypsy industry" has an interest in cultivating the disadvantaged social and economic status of the Roma (Kóczé 2011). Certainly, Escobar's argument coincides with Rudko Kawczynski's statement on the "Gypsy Industry". Escobar argues that the Third World – with its poverty, illiteracy and hunger – is the object of Western "academic programmes, conferences, consultancy services and local extension services", and became "the basis of an industry for planners, experts and civil servants" (Escobar 1995:46). Similarly, Kawczynski argues that the Roma communities became fields of research and project generating objects for "experts". Thus the Roma became the same developmental basis for an industry in Europe, as the Third World has become for Western hegemony. What is common in both these 'industries', based on Escobar's and Kawczynski's account, is that these industries never stop producing goods in the forms of new reports, research documents and projects, however they rarely involve, employ, capacitate or offer real support to their objects.

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12/ There is an extended literature review on the evolvement of the concept of "human development" by Sabine Alkire Human Development Research Paper 2010/01 Human Development: and Related Concepts. The paper is accessible at [http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2010/papers/HDRP\\_2010\\_01.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2010/papers/HDRP_2010_01.pdf)

The same phenomenon was described under the term of “ethno-business” by Trehan (2001). She referred to the tensions which are *“rooted in the pay differentials between local Romani NGOs and the intermediary NGOs, between Romani and non-Romani employees, and between foreign and native workers”* (Trehan 2001:139).

Kathy Pinnock (1995) also used the developmental framework concerning Roma related activities in Central and Eastern Europe. She argues that the West believed that techniques and their *“application to the ‘developing’ world has proven to be a suitable model for those practitioners working on Roma issues in Eastern Europe and embarking on policies of ‘participation’, ‘self-help’ and ‘community development.’”* (Pinnock 1999:15). Western donor agencies and policy makers in Central and Eastern Europe supported NGOs working on Roma issues particularly in the 1990s, believing that participation ‘from below’ can help to nurture an active civil society and consolidate a genuine form of democracy.

However, despite the massive support many Roma NGOs received from Western donors, in reality, most of these organisations functioned just as “pseudo organisations” without the required human and financial capacity to carry out any projects that could generate social change. As Orhan Tahir, Bulgarian Roma activist formulated: *“Maybe I am cynic, but I cannot remain polite... [...] Now we have quantity in terms of Roma NGOs, but do we have quality? We have to work on the quality of the Roma NGOs.”* (Interview with Orhan Tahir, July 4, 2012)

It is also important to note that most of the Western donors’ funds were allocated to the “financially reliable” pro-Roma and Roma organisations, operating usually on the transnational or national level, and being used as intermediary organisations to act as buffers between the donors and the impoverished Roma population. These intermediary organisations either distribute funds amongst local NGOs or spend on their policy making activities (or do both of these things). Their presence at local level is very limited and the local impact of their work is hard to evaluate. Therefore, the post-developmental critiques, which are used by some Roma activists, target these intermediary NGOs who are gaining money to “improve the situation of the Roma”, but they never reach out to the local communities. One of the activists characterises the intermediary organisations: *“They never will address the real problems in the community. They will use us to justify their own operations. Local Roma are not beneficiaries of their projects; they are the justifiers.”* (interview with Enisa Eminova, June 26, 2012).

These NGOs, as Dagnino elucidated, are *“...responsible to the international agencies, which finance them, and the state, which contracts them as service providers, but not to civil society, whose representatives they claim to be, nor the social sectors, whose interests they bear, nor to any other organ of a truly public character”* (Dagnino 2008:59-60).

Furthermore, there is some evidence that if it comes to the regions, where Roma live in the most underdeveloped, socially and ethnically segregated areas, there are no NGOs that are eligible to apply for EU grants or could be involved as partners, in consortia with local municipalities (Kadét-Varró 2010). The absence of Roma NGOs among the mature legally registered institutions/organisations, which can do real ground-level

work, could be considered as being a major obstacle to local change.

The intermediary organisations' best interest would be to support and increase the value of local organisations, which would give substance to their lobbying and advocacy work. Without valuing and giving due respect to service-oriented local NGOs, which are implementing tangible changes in the communities, the work of the intermediaries will be meaningless and irrelevant. Therefore, their responsibility should be to empower and vitalise local civil society, in order to improve the situation of the Roma. However in reality, this is far from happening – maybe because the intermediaries' capacities do not go beyond the English language and project writing proficiencies.

On the other hand, local Roma activists should also recognise the value of the intermediaries, which are capable of influencing the policies affecting the lives of the Roma: Hypothetically, there is a strong interdependency, which should be mutually beneficial for both parties. This recognition should change the dynamics between the grassroots and intermediaries, which ultimately affect the work with local communities.

### 2.3.3 Cooptation and clientalism

The other characteristic of the Roma civil society, which still has not received its due attention by the researchers and the Roma civil society activists alike, is the cooptation. During socialist times, everyone, including Roma and non-Roma leaders and politicians were dependent on state structures for financial support. After the collapse of communism, this picture was not identical. Non-Roma political parties (at least those that managed to restructure and redefine themselves in the new parliamentary systems) continued receiving support from official state sources, as well as from private lobbying groups. The Roma did not manage to organise themselves in national-level politics and thus were cut off from such party funding channels. The only bursts of interest in the Roma "voice" was prior to elections when different parties were (and are) overtly buying Roma votes through petty hand-outs and promises that are immediately forgotten after the elections. Only the major philanthropic donors were genuinely interested in developing the NGO sector, and the Roma civil society in particular, and were consistently supporting them – making them dependent in the meantime. The Open Society Institute (OSI), founded by George Soros, became the major philanthropic organisation concerning Roma issues in the region after 1989. The OSI provides financial and institutional support for Roma-related activities and funds some key organisations, which are operating their own Roma-related programmes, such as the European Roma Rights Centre or the Roma Educational Fund. The OSI is facilitating Romani representation and leadership at the transnational level, and has played an important role in international initiatives, e.g. the Decade of Roma Inclusion or the development of the EU Roma Framework Strategy. The significant majority of the functioning Roma and pro-Roma NGOs in Central and South Eastern Europe are funded by the OSI or OSI-related organisations.<sup>13</sup> There are several critiques against the pro-Roma NGOs (including the OSI and their affiliated organisations) in the region, claiming that these NGOs are

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13/ The second part of the paper will show the results of the online research.

parts of a non-Roma elite driven leadership project, which is effectively creating a new kind of cooptation and dependency mechanism within the Roma civil society (Barany 2002; Trehan 2001, 2009; Rostas 2009). Furthermore, there is a critical evaluation of the practice of these organisations. “They usually hire young English speaking Roma for senior positions, who are in their late twenties or early thirties, preferably men, who can be co-opted more easily than someone from the older generation, who is more critical and independent” (Interview with Ágnes Daróczi, July 22, 2012). This perception is controversial and it revokes some further research and discussions particularly amongst those Roma and non-Roma that are playing an important role in Roma related policy making at the transnational and national level.

The original idea on the logic of civil society and democracy is to show the counter-logic of clientelism. Habermas (1989) in his pioneer work “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere” endorses the programme of modernity, where the competing, transparent public interests and accountability are the foundation of the operation. Clientelism is embedded in the governments’ and NGOs’ modes of operation; and as well as donors’ relations in the post-communist countries. This general trend of clientelism, which is supported by a wide range of social, political and administrative practices, reflects upon the Roma civil society as well, and requires some further empirical research.

There are two viewpoints on the practice of clientelism. On the one hand, Boissevain (1966), Powell (1970) and Silverman (1970) and others argued that clientelism was a step forward, in terms of political development, by connecting people based on friendship and increasing the visibility of their political interests. In this regard, this connects social networking and social capital to clientelism. People trust in each other rather than institutional mechanisms, or in someone whom they do not know. From this point of view, clientelism is not only inevitable but also functional (Roniger and Günes-Ayata 1994). This kind of “non-modern pattern that reincarnated in post-modern reality” is clientelistic mode of mechanism. It is particularly traceable when it comes to the beneficiaries of key pro-Roma organisations, and also regarding the participation of Roma activists on the trans-national level.

This functional approach of clientelism in civil society was challenged by several authors including Zuckermann (1977) and Barnes and Sani (1974), who claim that clientelism did not lead to democracy. It discourages those who are out of the clientura, and silence those who are critical with the *modus operandi*. However, it is also important to mention that, based on the interviews, one of the observations made was that at the transnational level there is a detectable trend. Some Roma and pro-Roma organisations prefer to work with specific groups of people. Each organisation creates its own clientelist expert network, which causes isolation and less dialogue between policy experts, and create unchallenged parallel institutional monologues.

### 2.3.4 Roma NGOs as shakers and movers

Sobotka (2011), McGarry (2010), Vermeersch (2006), Klimova (2005) and Kóczé–Rövid (2012) attempted (besides others) to examine the power relations, role and influence of the civil society organisations that attempt to provide a voice for Roma communities.

This type of scholarship focuses on the Romani movement, from the social movement theory, transnational advocacy theories, theories of international relations and ethnic mobilisation perspectives (van Baar 2011). The above mentioned scholars analyse the relations between inter-governmental institutions (e.g. European Union, United Nations, Council of Europe, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) and pro-Roma transnational activism, as well as the legal and political advocacy, which resulted in the recognition of the Roma issues on the policy agendas as a positive outcome. These scholars focus on *“the formal side of the movement”* (Vermeesch 2006:9, cited by van Baar 2011: 235): if there is a formal side of the movement then there has to be also an informal side of it, whose members have been interrogated by the previously mentioned scholars that are critical of the Romani movement, problematizing its limitations, their vested interests and also pointing out the lack of grass root support for the Romani movement.<sup>14</sup> I argue, based on our empirical finding that in most cases the informal side of the movement is driven by substance, and the level of involvement at the community level. In contrast to this, is the formal side of the movement, which is more procedural driven. Particularly, concerning the funding and supportive framework, civic organisations are structured around the formal side of the movement, which consist of several legal entities. The informal face of the Roma movement is closer to the local community, and hence these are doing some substantive work.

However, despite all the criticisms of scholars, almost all of them admit the significant role of Roma and pro-Roma civic and political activism that has shaped and moved the agenda of policy makers at the national and transnational level, even though this has not yet manifested into substantial improvements in the social and economic conditions of the Roma.<sup>15</sup>

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14/ See most notably Kováts (1994), Bárány (2002), Trehan (2001), Trehan and Kóczé (2009), and Rostas (2009).

15/ Roma and pro-Roma organisations – e.g. the Open Society Institute, European Roma Rights Centre, Roma Educational Fund, European Roma Grassroots Organisation, European Roma Information Office, European Roma Policy Coalition, Romani Women Initiative (this list is not exhaustive) – contributed to an enormous progress regarding Roma issues, particularly on the transnational level.

# 3

## Theoretical framework – contrasted with empirical findings

Based on the reviews of the relevant literature on Roma civic participation, as well as on the results of my preliminary research (which included 13 semi-structured interviews with Roma activists and a review of reports of some relevant empirical research projects), one of my main hypothesis is that Roma involvement in civil society activism and civic organisations is very limited, particularly at the grassroots level, since the whole inclusion process was structured as a top-down policy intervention. The existing Roma and pro-Roma NGOs are more likely to work on the national and transnational level as intermediary organisations, using formalised channels of access and visibility that are usually detached from the socially excluded local communities.

The 2004 and 2011 UNDP Regional Roma Databases are particularly relevant to test my hypothesis, since the sample was designed in a way to reflect the civic activism of the most disadvantaged local Roma population. The sample consisted of households in Roma settlements or areas of compact Roma population; and representatives of Roma population who implicitly identify themselves as Roma. The control group consisted of households of non-Roma populations living in close proximity to Roma in the sample.<sup>16</sup>

The primary dimension of comparison will be between Roma and non-Roma living in close proximity to Roma households in 2004 and 2011. There will be a very limited comparison between the two datasets, since most of the questions regarding civil participation were not identical in the two databases. In addition, in July of 2012, we<sup>17</sup> launched an online survey, which was aimed at assessing the views of the Roma and pro-Roma NGOs on the issue of “social inclusion of the Roma”. Seventy NGOs responded to our online-questionnaires, and we gained important information on the various characteristics of these organisations. Moreover, we conducted 13 semi-structured interviews with Roma activists from Central and South-Eastern European countries.

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16/ For more details on the methodology of the two surveys see Ivanov, Kling and Kagin (2012).

17/ The author of this paper, in close cooperation with UNDP staff members, and with the assistance of the Roma Decade Secretary and the OSI Roma Initiative Office, compiled a contact list, aimed at inviting NGOs to participate in the online-questionnaire. The Roma Virtual Network also offered assistance to approach NGOs through various Roma networks.



### 3.1 Civil and political society participation: a key indicator of social inclusion

For many years, civil society was conceptualised primarily in the realm and at the level of the “national” society. In reality, civil society is manifested by various formal and informal practices, actions, self-organised non-profit and non-governmental associations, social movements and networks transcending national borders. Transnational networking of Roma organisations has dramatically accelerated during the last decade amongst various Roma networks. The transnational – or global – feature is probably the most successful aspect of the story of Roma participation in civil society during the last decade (McGarry 2011). There are different approaches to define “success”. The success of the organisation can be measured by their visibility as well as the impact of their work. The visibility of the NGOs is creating more immediate results while the impact of that can be measured only through a systemic evaluation process. In the last decade, particularly at the transnational level, the Roma NGOs visibility made some impact in the process of recognising the rights of Roma. However, at the national level, they did not make such an impact. Taking into account the dynamics and the content of the civil society discourse, I have to note that the transnational context is more open towards the recognition of Roma rights, therefore it is more “easy to succeed” there, compared with more rigid and conservative national levels.

There is a widely cited normative definition by Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor: *“global civil society is the sphere of ideas, values, institutions, organisations, networks, and individuals located between family, the state, and the market and operating beyond the confines of national societies, politics, and economies.”* (2011:17).

The Civil Society Index (CSI) research project<sup>18</sup> used a similar normative definition concerning the local, regional and national level: *“the arena, outside family, government, and market where people voluntary associate to advance common interests.”* So both definitions indicate that civil society is a public space where various value systems and interests interact, hence strengthen the social inclusion of the individuals or groups. However, these definitions mainly reflect upon the values of the middle class voluntary based organisations and do not take into account the specificity of NGOs, which implicitly or explicitly represent the interests of an ethnic group. Moreover, also it did not talk about organisations, where amongst the members there are strong familial interests or NGOs that are linked to the state. Based on the interviews, there are Roma NGOs where familial networks and contacts are embedded in the structures of NGOs. The same phenomenon is observable in a non-Roma NGOs as well, where however it is less visible.

In the 2004 UNDP Regional Roma Survey, there was an item concerning efforts to initi-

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18/ The Civil Society Index (CSI) is a research project that aims to assess the state of civil society. The idea of CSI originated in 1997, when the international non-governmental organisation CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation published the New Civic Atlas containing profiles of civil society in 60 countries around the world; see: <http://www.civicus.org/> (last accessed: July 28, 2012).

ate NGOs in the local communities of respondents: “Has anyone from your household ever tried to found an NGO?” Only 1.7% of Roma and 1% of non-Roma from the total sample have ever tried to found an NGO. Apparently the data shows that Roma are a bit more active than the non-Roma living in a close proximity to them, but given the low shares in both cases, the difference is negligible. The lack of substantive difference is a message in itself. It may suggest that both groups are equally disinterested in founding an NGO, albeit for different reasons. One might expect that in the case of Roma the share of those who tried could have been higher (Roma apparently would need more such CSO structures, to compensate for the deficits in terms of inclusive support from the state and local governments.) The UNDP research supports the hypothesis that the most marginalised communities are lacking even the NGOs support. So the most educated members of the communities are leaving due to the devastated circumstances. International donors, instead of providing incentives to stay and create local opportunities for the educated people, are rather passive in investing human capital in the most marginalised communities.

Several scholars have argued that civil society was structurally poor in post-communist countries after 1989 (Miszlivetz 2012; Bernhard 1993). The structurally poor civil society refers to the different structures and conditions of the civil society in the post-communist countries, compared to the wealthier and architecturally different Western civil society.

Studies on ‘social capital’ in the region found lower levels of social trust, civic and community engagement, and confidence in social and political institutions across Central and Eastern Europe (Rose 1999, Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer 1996). Studies by Howard (2003) and Bernhard and Karakoç (2007) and also, the World Value Survey (2005-2008) among others, have shown low levels of voluntary associational membership, and lack of public participation in the post-communist countries.<sup>19</sup> In disadvantaged communities, such as the Roma, the general lack of civic participation and community engagement was even more dramatic. Based on interviews, the civic and community engagement in the socially and ethnically marginalised communities differ from the middle class community engagement. These communities have a more informal nature that can be worked as closed and oppressive internal systems. The material deprivation reinforces the familial ties, and hence these types of informal relations can easily be transformed into NGO activism in the marginalised communities as well.

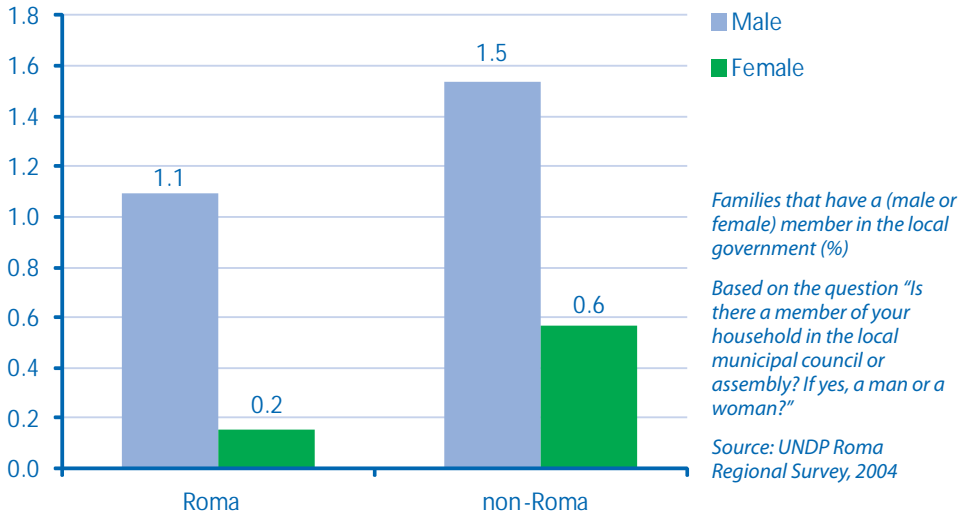
In the 2004 UNDP Regional Roma Survey, there was a question concerning the participation of the members of the household in the local municipal council or assembly.

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19/ Based on calculations of TARKI (Hungarian Social Research Institute), which show that the civic activities are the highest in Sweden and Finland; and are the lowest in Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria. The study has been published in Hungarian: Giczi, J-Sik E. (2009) *Bizalom, Társadalmi tőke, intézményi kötődés*, in: Tóth István György (szerk) *Európai társadalmi Jelentés*: Budapest: TÁRKI, pp. 66–84.

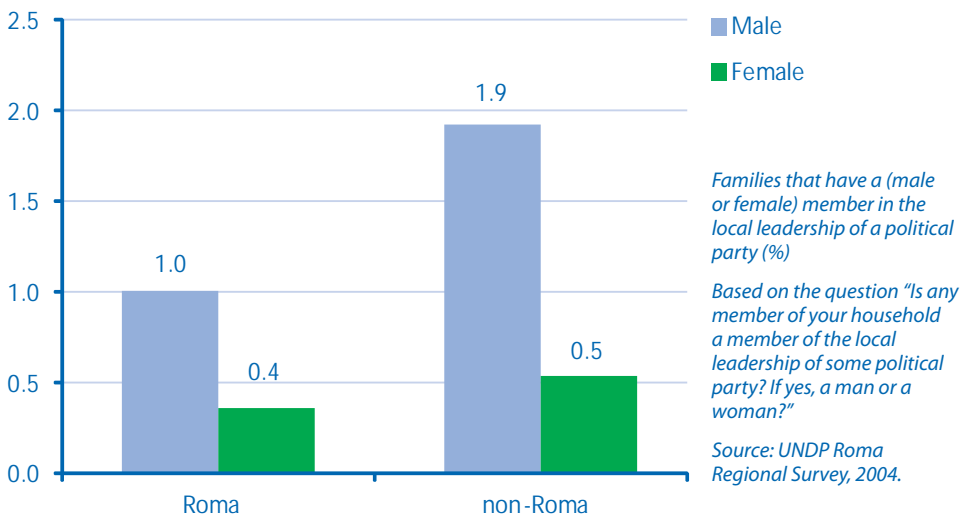
Further on, the respondents were also asked about the affiliations of household members in the local leadership of some political party. These two questions gave some indication about the involvement of the Roma and non-Roma in local decision making mechanisms.

**Figure 1: Family member in the local government**



According to the 2004 database, 1.1% of Roma families had a male family member and 0.2% had a female family member in the local government. At the same time, 1.5% of non-Roma families had a male member and 0.6% had a female member in the local government (see Figure 1). Even though these values are extremely low, in order to design an intervention in these marginalised communities, it is important to recognise the extremely low participation in the decision and local policy making process.

**Figure 2: Family member in the local leadership of a political party**



1% of Roma families have a male, 0.4% have a female family member in the local leadership of a political party; while 1.9% of non-Roma families have a male, and 0.5% have a female member in the local leadership of a political party (see Figure 2).

Based on the 2004 UNDP research, the figures for the Roma and non-Roma household are similar: even though the numbers shows some differences between Roma and non-Roma political participation, however, these are statistically not significant.

The very low level of Roma civic and political participation suggests that the interest of Roma communities are not represented in the local decision and policy making mechanisms that might affect the daily life of the communities. The low civil and political participation of Roma is deepening the trust, access and interest in political structure, as well as the intentional and unintentional social and political exclusion of them, by the political elite.

### 3.2 Social capital and the level of trust

Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988, 1990) and Putnam (1993, 2000) were the first scholars in the social sciences to developed the concept of social capital. This concept offers a kind of a universal answer to the question: “what keeps societies together and leads individuals to act for collective goals?” (Ostrom, 1994; Levi, 1996; cited by Welzel-Inglehart and Deutsch, 2005). How the social capital manifests itself in the disadvantaged Roma communities, what kind of forms it takes, how does it differ from the non-Roma disadvantaged communities?

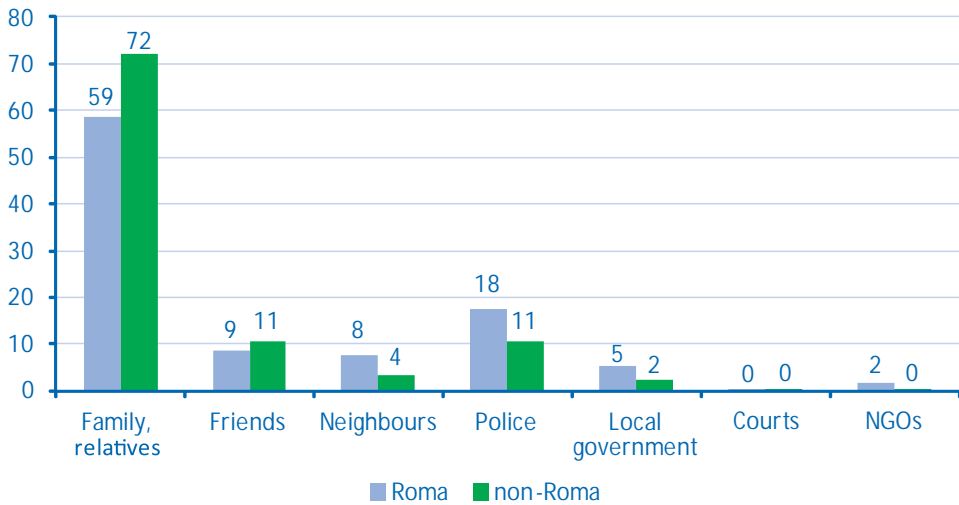
One of the main components of the operationalization of social capital is the interpersonal and institutional trust and trustworthiness. These are used as indicators of social capital.

In the 2004 Roma regional survey, there was a question regarding local interpersonal and institutional trust: *“If you are in trouble, whom will you approach first?”*

A large majority of Roma and Non-Roma respondents turn to family members and relatives for help, 58.7% and 72.2% respectively. The second most cited source of help is the police, for 17.6% of Roma and for 10.7% of non-Roma. The third most frequently mentioned option is, for 8.7% of Roma and 10.6% of non-Roma respondents, to turn to friends for help. NGOs are the last options to turn to in cases of emergency (see Figure 3).

The lack of trust in NGOs can be interpreted in many ways: first, that there are not many functional NGOs at the local level; another reading is that even if there are some NGOs at the local level, the local population does not benefit from their work, or simply they cannot access their services (if they have any at all), thereby they are not helpful in emergency situations.

The distance between local communities and NGOs is reflected in the extent of the

**Figure 3: Source of help in emergency situations**

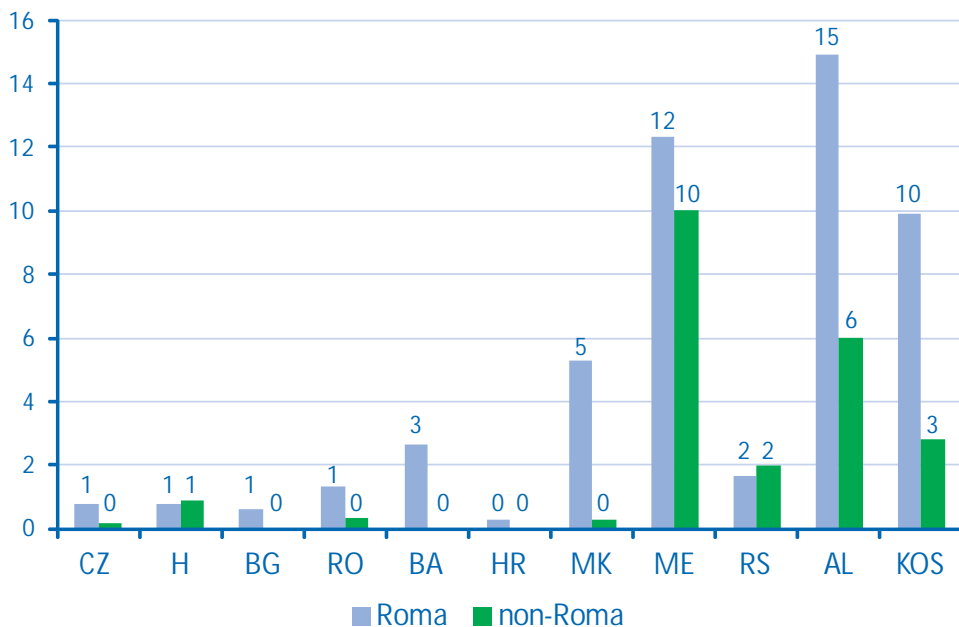
Respondents turning to the following institutions for help (%)  
Based on the question "If you are in trouble, whom will you approach first?"

Source: UNDP Roma Regional Survey, 2004.

received aid. Data from the survey (see Figure 4) refers to the percentage of the respondents in 2004 who received financial aid from NGOs during the preceding month. There is a clear division between Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and Czech Republic as prospective EU members in 2004 and South-Eastern European countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, and Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244/99). Croatia rather belongs to the first group.

The data visualised in Figure 4 shows the frequencies of receiving financial aid from NGOs. The supporting financial structures of NGOs are very different in Central and Eastern Europe than in the South-Eastern European countries.<sup>20</sup> Also, the types of services offered by NGOs in the Western Balkan countries are more community-oriented thus the work of NGOs has a tangible effect on the Roma and non-Roma households. This type of developmental approach is typical in the region of the "Yugoslav War". However, there is a difference in the distribution between the number of Roma and non-Roma

20/ With the EU accession process in Central and Eastern Europe many international donors withdraw their aid funds and programmes, such as USAID, Charles Mott Foundation, etc. Meanwhile these funds were transferred to the Western Balkan countries and Central Asia. The same happened with the CARDS programme (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation) the EU's main instrument of financial assistance to NGOs, which was re-directed to the Western Balkans, covering the countries of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244/99) and Albania. CARD programme was established in 2000 by Council Regulation 2666/2000, started to operate in 2001, and during the first period of its operation, it supported projects previously funded by Phare and OBNOVA programmes.

**Figure 4: Financial aid from NGOs**

For visual clarity, in figures 4, 5, 6 and 9 the following abbreviations were used : AL (Albania), BA (Bosnia and Herzegovina), BG (Bulgaria), H (Hungary), HR (Republic of Croatia), CZ (Czech Republic), KOS (Kosovo UNSCR 1224/99), ME (Montenegro), MK (FYR of Macedonia), RO (Romania), RS (Republic of Serbia), and SK (Slovakia). The abbreviations are following the country codes used by EUROSTAT, [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Glossary:Country\\_codes](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Glossary:Country_codes)

*Respondents who received financial aid from NGOs during the preceding month (%)*  
 Based on the question "From what source has he/she earned most in the preceding month?" – for those respondents who stated "NGO support" as a source.

Source: UNDP Roma Regional Survey, 2004)

who received aid from NGOs in these countries, particularly in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244/99).

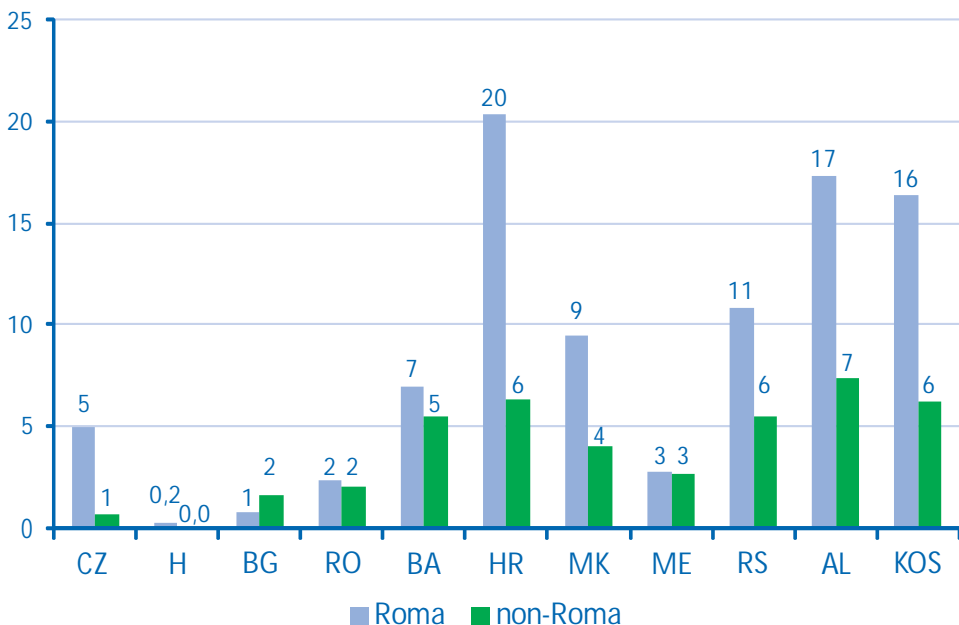
In the 2004 UNDP Regional Roma Survey there is a section, which gives a detailed list of those institutions that are helping people to solve different problems. "If you are facing these threats, who do you think could best help you in managing them?" – was the question in case of different situations: lack of sufficient income; local inter-ethnic conflicts between different groups; hunger; ordinary crime; denied opportunity to practice your religion; lack of housing; organised crime; corruption of officials; environmental pollution; denied access to education; poor sanitation related diseases; physical insecurity; denied access to health care services. Respondents could choose from a list ranging from family and friends to the government, church and NGOs. This paper is particularly interested in the role of NGOs as prominent civil society institutions; therefore the analysis will focus on this aspect of the issue.

In the main text, I will present only the first threat and also the aggregation of the respondents who chose to seek help from an NGO in at least one of the 13 cases (%).

The data shown in Figure 5 suggests that from those who seek help from NGOs, Roma are more likely to ask for help in case of insufficient income from NGOs than their non-Roma neighbours – 8.4% compared to 3.8%. The highest percentage (20.3%) of Roma turning to NGOs for financial help live in Croatia. The proportion of Roma respondent who chose NGOs was also high in Albania (17.3%) and Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244/99) with 16.4%; despite the fact that in these countries non-Roma households benefited more than Roma household from NGOs' aid services. In Central Europe, Roma in the Czech Republic were inclined more to ask financial help from NGOs than in the other countries in the survey.

According to the outcome of the 2004 survey (see Figure 6), an average of 36.3% of Roma chose to seek help from NGOs when facing at least one of the above mentioned 14 problems; while 51.9% of non-Roma chose NGOs at least once. 84% of the Roma chose to seek help from NGOs in Albania, 50.7% in Croatia, 46.8% in the Czech Republic and 44.1% in Kosovo (under UNSCR 1244/99). 86% of non-Roma chose NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina (where Roma only did so in 33.1% of cases), 85.3% in Albania, 81.6% in Montenegro (where Roma only did so in 7% of cases), 71% in Croatia, 56.2% in Serbia

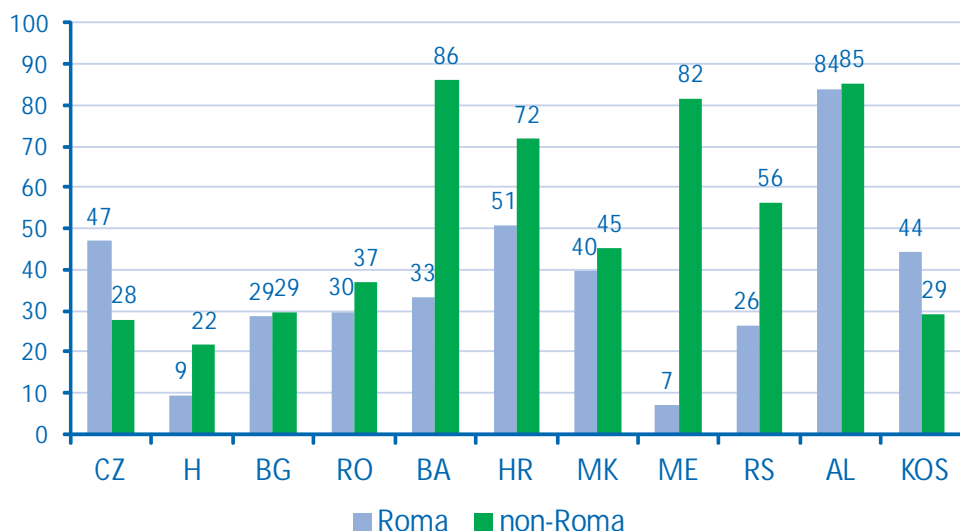
**Figure 5: Threat of insufficient income**



*Respondents who chose to seek help from an NGO in this case (%)*

*Based on the question "If you are facing the lack of sufficient income, who do you think could best help you managing this situation?"*

*Source: UNDP Roma Regional Survey, 2004.*

**Figure 6: Seeking help from NGOs**

Respondents who chose to seek help from NGO in at least one of the 13 cases (%)

Based on the question "If you are facing these threats (lack of sufficient income; local inter-ethnic conflicts between different groups; hunger; ordinary crime; denied opportunity to practice your religion; lack of housing; organised crime; corruption of officials; environmental pollution; denied access to education; poor sanitation related disease, physical insecurity; denied access to health care services), who do you think could best help you in managing them?"

Source: UNDP Roma Regional Survey, 2004.

(26.5% for Roma) and 50.7% in Croatia. In total, the non-Roma were more inclined to ask help from NGOs than the Roma.

There are lots of reasons that could explain this situation. First, the local Roma communities might have fewer experiences with NGOs than their non-Roma neighbours do. The existing civil society organisations are more accessible for the non-Roma than for the Roma groups, and there are only very few NGOs performing community developmental work. As it was described by a Macedonian Roma activist that: "the Roma communities need tangible changes in their lives, what not many Roma NGOs can achieve. [...] Either they do not have the necessary resources or simply instead of doing community developmental work, they focus on policy work." (interview with I.S., July 6, 2012).

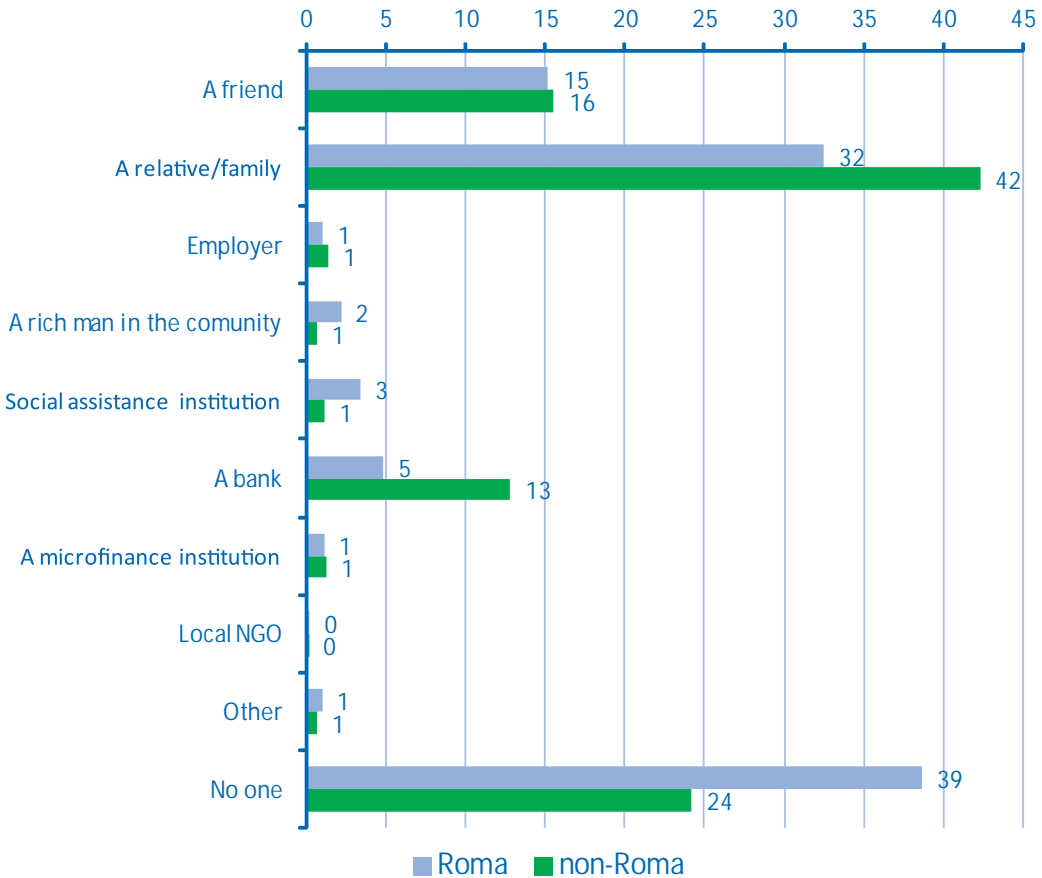
### 3.3 The changes of civil society between 2004 and 2011

The UNDP, in cooperation with the World Bank and the European Commission, carried out the Regional Roma Survey in 2011 in the following countries: Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Moldova. The research applied the same methodology as in 2004.



The 2011 survey contained a question: “Think about an emergency situation that requires you to raise X amount of money. On whom can you rely on in such a situation?” The table (Figure 7) shows that in a situation like this, both groups (similarly to the findings from 2004) rely much more on their closest network (friends, family members, relatives).

**Figure 7: Raising money in emergency situations as a proxy of support networks (share of Roma who would rely on the respective source in case of emergency, in %)**



Based on the question “In an emergency situation, on whom can you rely on?”

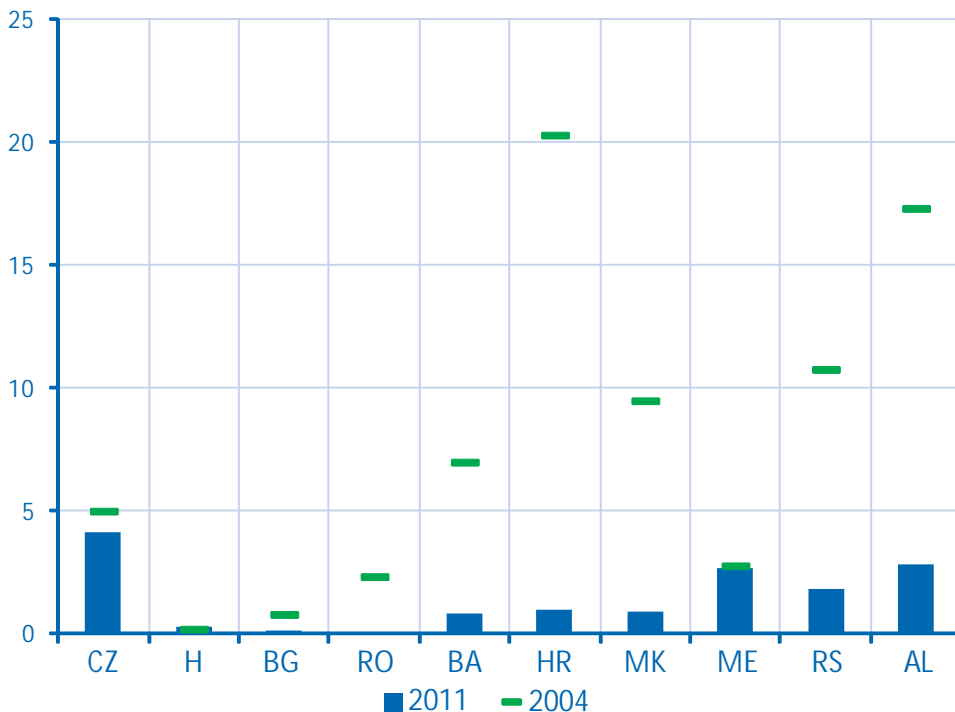
Source: UNDP Roma Regional Survey, 2011.

There is also a striking difference between Roma and non-Roma households’ opportunities to access commercial bank services. The non-Roma neighbours have a more than two times higher opportunity to get a bank loan, compared to the Roma households. The latter, based on the data of the survey, could not rely on the help of local NGOs in an emergency situation. The data shows the general lack of social network of the Roma: there is a shocking result that 38% of the Roma households do not expect any help

from anyone. It also indicates long-term (generations-long) poverty of the Roma: that there is no one even in the extended family who could provide financial assistance in an emergency situation. The fact that Roma in the marginalised communities rely less on family does not mean that their “extended family capital” is low – it means that the members of the extended family are equally poor and they cannot support financially other family members, as it is more common in a wealthy family.

In 2011, the civil society organisations, like NGOs are less significant for the Roma and non-Roma population in case of financial emergency, as what was documented in 2004. (Although, the question was not formulated exactly in the same way, hence it is not fully comparable, but still indicates the attitudes toward NGOs in cases of financial emergency.)

**Figure 8: Raising money from NGO in cases of emergency in 2004 and 2011 (% of Roma who would turn to NGO)**



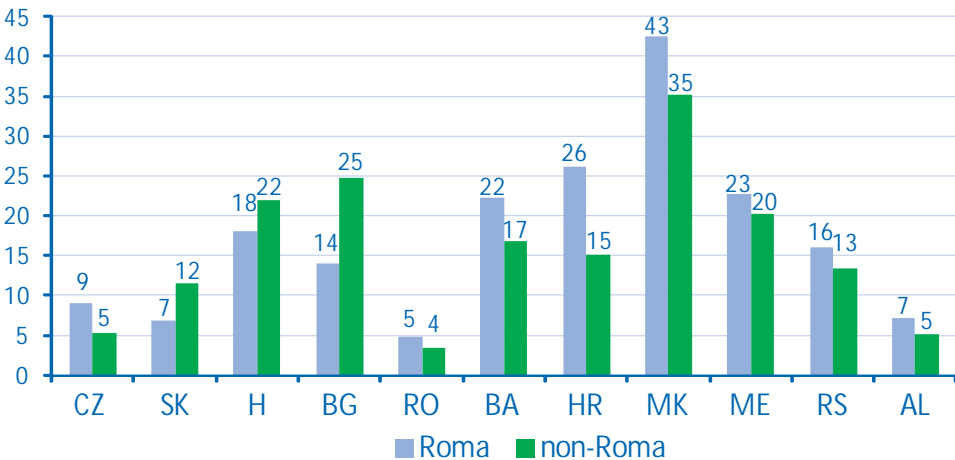
Sources: UNDP Roma Regional Survey, 2004; 2011.

Data from the survey suggest in the Western Balkan countries, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Albania the changing profile of the NGOs: from the community development level they moved to the policy making national level. Also, the local community has learned by experience that local NGOs are not “money lenders”; because the financial regulations ruling NGOs do not allow the lending of money. The survey shows the same decrease amongst non-Roma as well. (Appendix FIGURE 9b.)

### 3.4 The role of the Decade of Roma Inclusion

In the 2011 UNDP Regional Roma Survey a section was included, where Roma and non-Roma households were asked about the Dosta! Campaign<sup>21</sup> and about the “Decade of Roma Inclusion” (DRI). (The Decade of Roma Inclusion is a direct outcome of the regional conference: “Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future”, which was held in Budapest from June 29–July 1, 2003.<sup>22</sup>)

**Figure 9: Awareness of the Decade of Roma Inclusion**  
(% of respondents 16+ who have heard about it)



Based on the question “Have you heard about the “Decade of Roma Inclusion” initiative?”

Source: UNDP Roma Regional Survey, 2011.

21/ “Go beyond stereotypes, meet the Roma”. The Dosta! Campaign as it is phrased by the Council of Europe, is an “awareness raising campaign, which aims to bring non-Roma closer to Roma citizens by breaking down the barriers caused by prejudices and stereotypes” This initiative was integrated in a wider Council of Europe/European Commission Joint Programme named “Equal Rights and Treatment for Roma in South-Eastern Europe” and has been implemented in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of Serbia, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia during 2006 and 2007.

22/ “At the conference, government leaders, led by the Hungarian Prime Minister, committed to launching a Decade of Roma Inclusion to run from 2005 to 2015. During this Decade, within the broader context of inclusive national economic and social policies, countries will design and implement policies promoting Roma inclusion to break the vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion. The objective of the Decade is to accelerate progress in improving the economic status and social inclusion of Roma, by creating an action framework comprising of three activities: (i) The setting of clear, quantitative national targets for improvements in the economic status and social inclusion of the Roma population, and the establishment of the necessary information base to measure progress toward these targets, (ii) The development and implementation of national action plans to achieve those targets, and (iii) Regular monitoring of progress against agreed targets, and adjusting action plans as necessary over the Decade.” See: First Meeting of the Roma Decade Steering Committee: Minutes and Summary, December 11-12, 2003, <http://www.romadecade.org/5130> (last accessed: August 8, 2012).

According to the results (see Figure 9), 42.5% of the Roma have heard about the Decade of Roma Inclusion in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 26.2% in Croatia, 22.8% in Montenegro and 22.2% in Bosnia & Herzegovina, while less than 20% have heard about it in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and Albania. 35.2% of non-Roma have heard about the DRI in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 24.7% in Bulgaria, 22% in Hungary and 20.3% in Montenegro, while less than 20% have heard about it in the remaining countries.

The data shows that despite the fact that both initiatives address the Roma population, however, these initiatives do not manage to reach Roma communities. There was no country in the sample, where more than 45% of the respondents have ever heard about the Roma Decade or about the Dosta campaign. Even more important seems to be the fact that only in three countries – Slovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria – the share of non-Roma who have heard about the Decade of Roma Inclusion is higher than the share of non-Roma. In an ideal situation, the decade should be an initiative targeting the entire society, but first of all the non-Roma. One of the reasons of this phenomenon could be the lack of intermediary NGOs, which could inform the local Roma communities about these initiatives and work with them on the objectives of these programmes. In addition, it is also possible that the communication of these transnational initiatives did not reach the local Roma population, and they mainly remained on the national and transnational level.

In the online survey, 94% of the respondents have already heard about the Decade of Roma Inclusion. In the online survey the respondents working in NGOs have more information on these initiatives than someone who is not working on this field and does not have access to this kind of information.

# 4

## Roma inclusion seen from the perspective of the opinion-makers

### 4.1 Who are these opinion makers?

In July of 2012, the UNDP launched an online survey on various Roma networks, e.g. Roma Virtual Network, the Roma Decade network and several others to assess the Roma and pro-Roma NGOs views on “Roma Inclusion” as well as to get a better understanding regarding the characteristics of funding of those NGOs, which are proficient in English and are capable of influencing policies on Roma issues at the transnational and national level. We had 70 respondents from all over the world.<sup>23</sup> (The online survey included representatives of various Roma and pro-Roma organisations from 23 countries: Argentina, Belgium, Bulgaria, Central America, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the Ukraine, and the USA; some of the respondents indicated “Central America”, “Europe” and “international” as the location of the NGO they work for (see Figure 10).

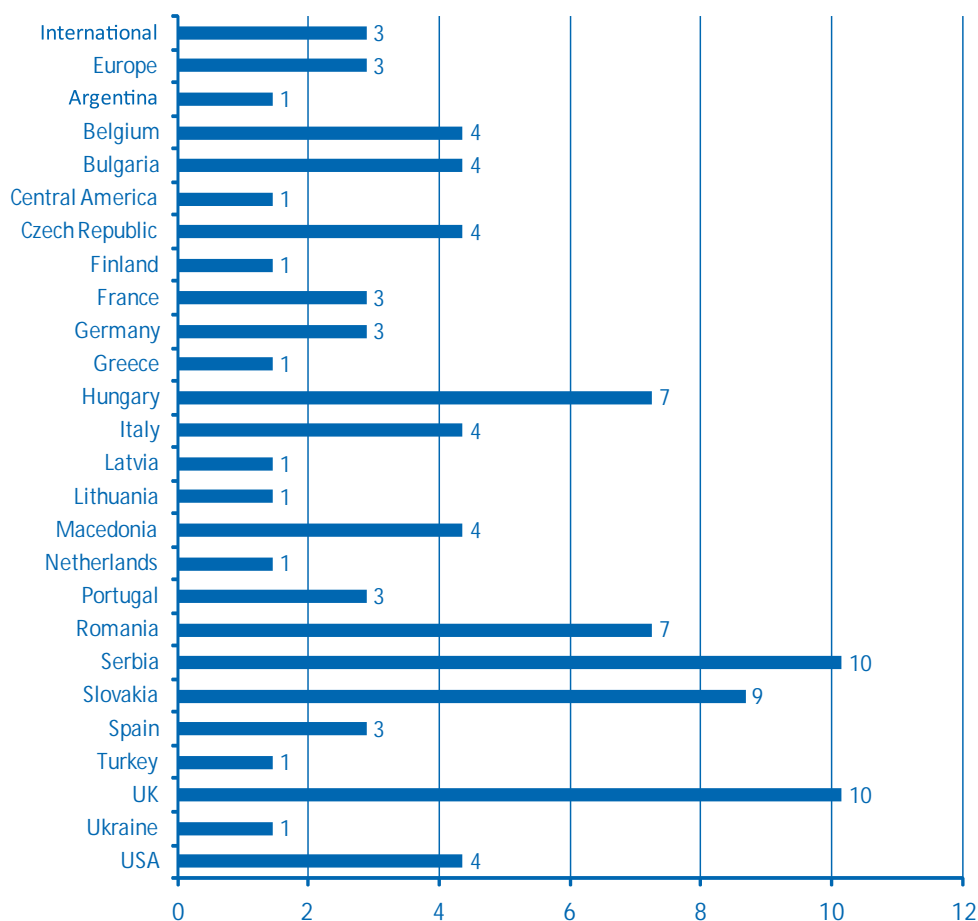
Some countries – e.g. Serbia, the United Kingdom, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania – were slightly overrepresented in the survey (see Figure 10). Concerning Hungary, this phenomenon is connected to the fact that several transnational pro-Roma organisations – e.g. European Roma Rights Centre, Roma Educational Fund – are based in Budapest.

The gender distribution of respondents was almost balanced: 47% female and 53% male respondents (see Figure 11). As for the level of highest educational achievement of the respondents, 14.7% hold a PhD, 51.5% hold a Master’s Degree; 26.5% hold a Bachelor’s Degree; 5.9% finished upper secondary school, 1.5% finished only elementary education (see Figure 12).

We asked the respondents to describe their own fields of activity – multiple activities could have been indicated. The overwhelming majority (62%) described themselves as civil activists, 43% as specialists on a specific field, 33% of them are academics or

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23/ This survey is not strictly representative; however, it suggests some observable trends amongst Roma and pro-Roma NGOs. The online survey can be kept as an on-going instrument that can be systematically updated.

**Figure 10: Location of NGOs by country (%)**

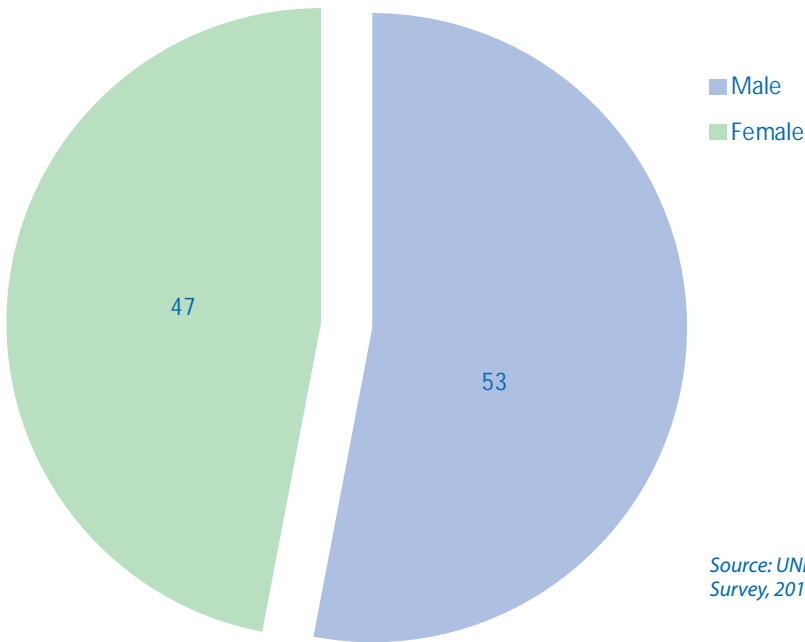
Based on the question "Please, indicate the location of the organisation you work for".

Source: UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012.

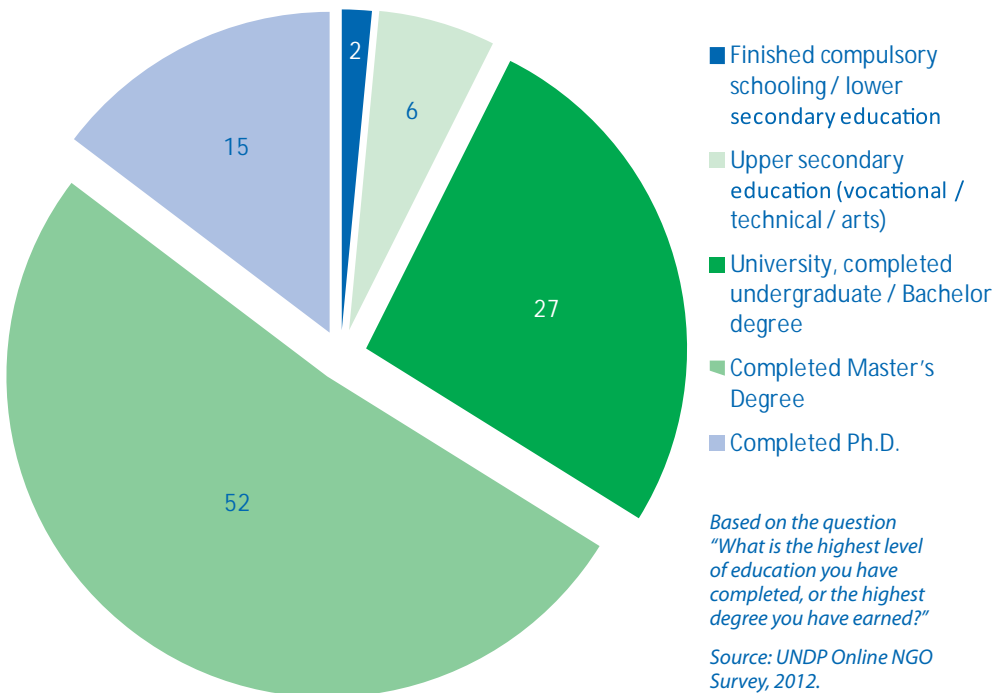
researchers, 9% of them are advocates or lawyers, 17% are volunteers and only 8% are students (see Figure 13).

The professional and educational profiles of the respondents in the online survey are very high – this phenomenon resonates with what was highlighted by one of the Roma activist: "The most educated Roma are employed by international NGOs and unfortunately very few of us stay at the grassroots level to channel local problems into the policy making mechanisms" (interview with K.B., July 12, 2012.)

There was a question in the questionnaire aimed to measure the scale of activities performed by the organisations: the majority of the organisations (52.2%) are working on

**Figure 11: Gender distribution of the respondents (%)**

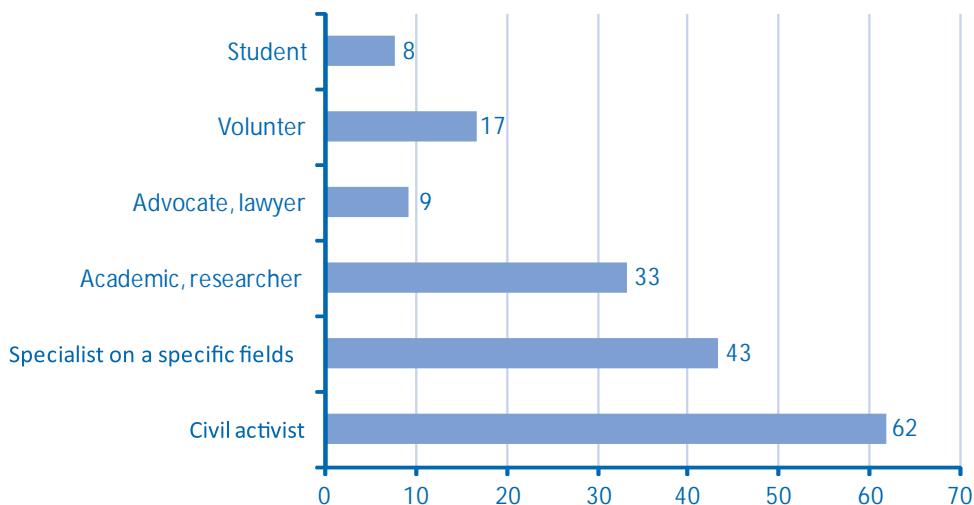
Source: UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012.

**Figure 12: Highest education achieved by respondents (%)**

Based on the question "What is the highest level of education you have completed, or the highest degree you have earned?"

Source: UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012.

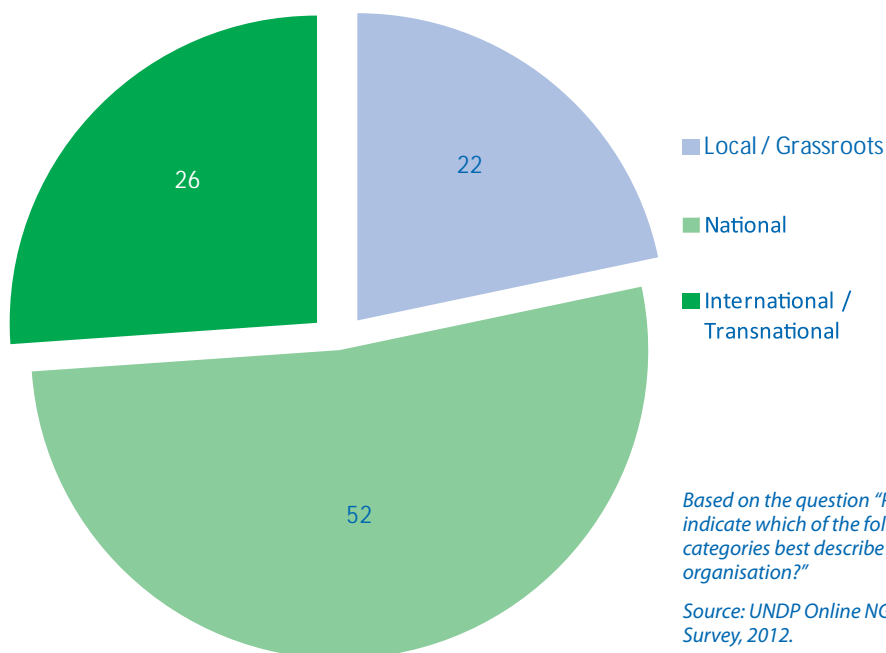
**Figure 13: Profession of the respondents**



Source: UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012.

the national level, 26.1% on the transnational level, and only 21.7% are working on the local level (see Figure 14). This finding correlate with my hypothesis that shows at the local level there are only few NGOs who are implementing substantial work in Roma communities.

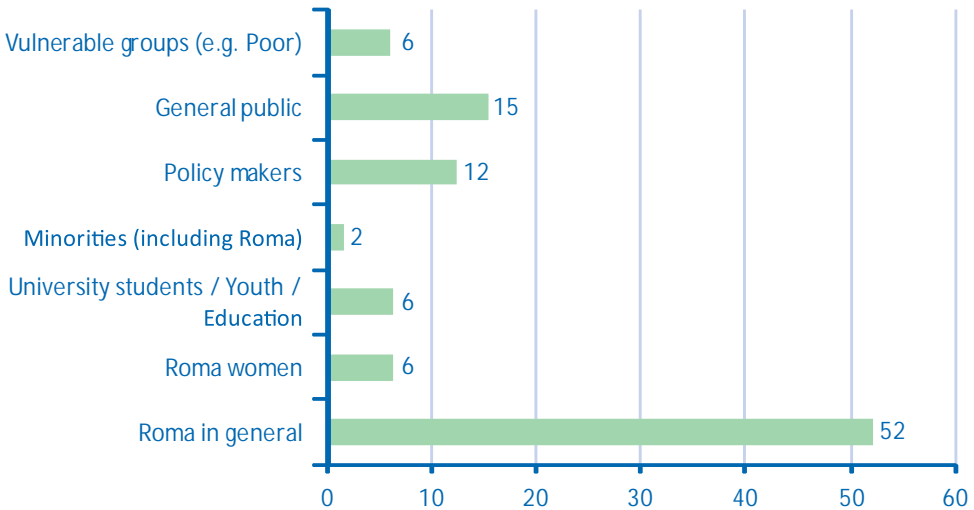
**Figure 14: Category of the organisation (%)**





In the survey the respondents had an opportunity to indicate the main target group of their organisations (see Figure 15). Based on the data, the main target group is explicitly “the Roma”. This correlates with the Roma Regional survey findings that more Roma know about the “Decade of Roma Inclusion” than non-Roma. Based on the online survey, 6.2% of the organisations target specifically Roma women; 12.3% target policy makers; and 15.4% the general public. The remaining 13% of the organisations target students, youth and other vulnerable groups.

**Figure 15: The main target group of the organisations (%)**

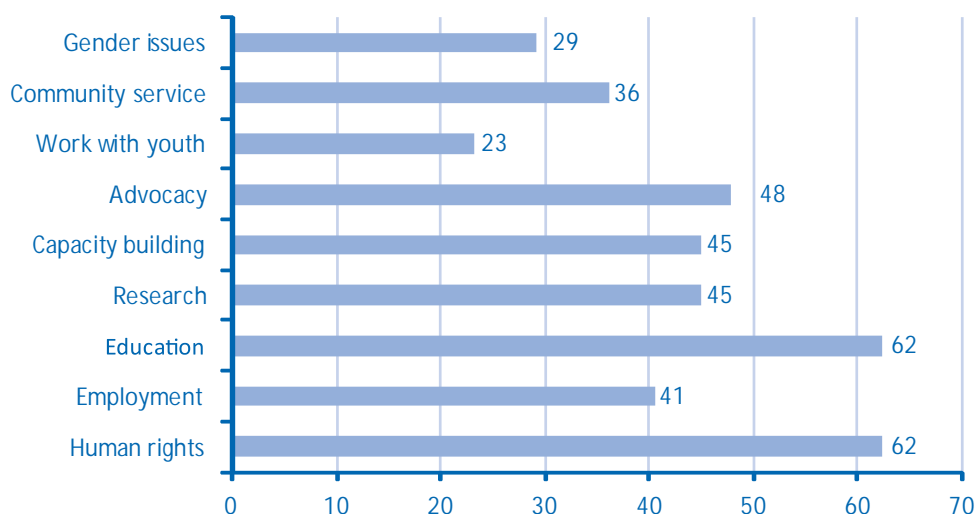


*Based on the question “Please indicate the main target group of your organisation”.*

*Source: UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012.*

NGO representatives were asked to indicate from a list, the issues on which their organisations are working (see Figure 16). More than 90% of them are working on several issues, 72% are working on 2 to 4 issues. 62% are working on human rights issues, 41% on employment and 62% on education issues, 45% conduct research, 45% work on capacity building, 48% do advocacy work, 23% work on youth issues, 36% on community service and 29% on gender issues. A few organisations indicated that they are working on policy development and good governance.

Apparently, the youth and gender issues are less preferred concerns amongst NGOs. The same applies to community service – only 36% of the organizations stated that they work at community level. This low percentage suggests that the substantive focus of Roma NGO sector is strongly biased towards general issues (like human rights promotion and community development at the local level) and are less involved in the nitty-gritty of the real work in the most marginalized communities that would actually make possible for the Roma to actually use the nominal rights they have and materialize their development potential.

**Figure 16: Issue areas of the organisations (%)**

Based on the question "What are the key issue area(s) of your organisation?" (Multiple choice)

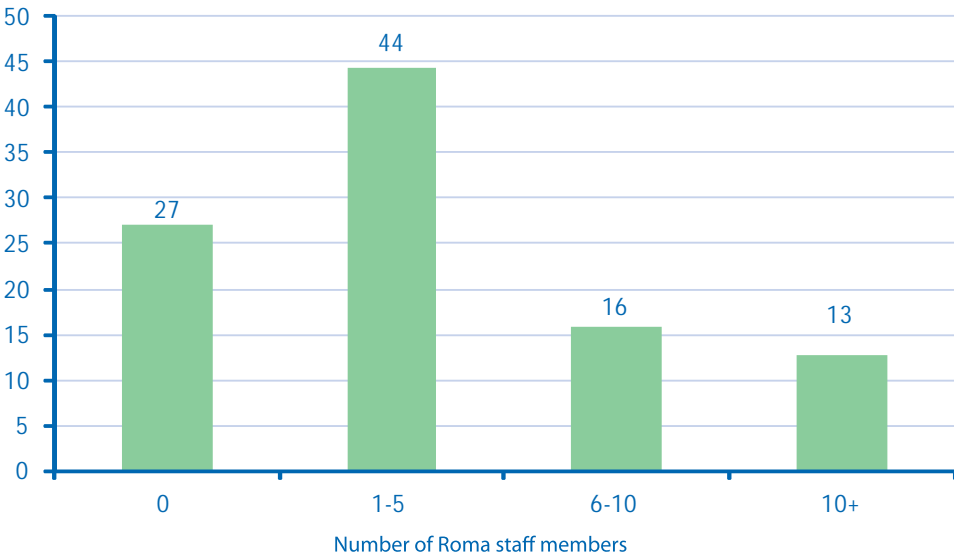
Source: UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012.

A strikingly high number of organisations (90%) indicated that they are working on several issues. This indicates that most of the focus and activities of Roma NGOs are shaped by the available financial sources. Even though sometimes there could be a conflict between the needs of the community and the available resources, however the NGOs need to survive and finance their activities from the resources. One of the issues, which was raised by several activists during the interviews as well, was that the NGO's activities are project financed. There is no core fund for civic organisations that supports the general operational costs. As a result of this kind of funding mechanism, the NGOs are doing whatever is available for them and they turn into supply driven organisations. These NGOs, instead of challenging the transformed welfare regime that turned the poor Roma into the poorest "out-cast" underclass (Ladányi-Szelényi 2006), tacitly provide services delivery that contributes to the neo-liberal argument that the state should be decreased.

To what extent are Roma NGOs involving Roma to work on Roma inclusion? Data summarized in Figure 17 provides some insights. 27% of the organisations do not have any Roma staff members at all. 44.4% have 1 to 5 Roma staff members, 15.9% have 6 to 10 and 12.7% have more than 10 Roma members. In total: 73% of the organisations have at least 1 Roma staff member in their organisation. Even during the Decade of Roma Inclusion, 27% of the organisations that participated in the online survey, did not have any Roma staff members, although they declared to be working on the Roma issues. The principle of "working for Roma with Roma" simply does not translate into the organisational structure. There is a need to recognise Roma not just as a target group for project implementation, but also actors that need to be more directly involved in ad-

addressing Roma exclusion – incl. hiring or enabling Roma as staff members. By no means this is easy to achieve (and measures like quotas for Roma in organizations working for Roma would definitely not work when not enough Roma employees are skilful and available for employment). But the issue needs to be put on the agenda as a long term objective so that the preparation of the future generation of Roma professionals starts already today.

**Figure 17: Roma staff members – share of organizations with respective number of Roma staff (%)**



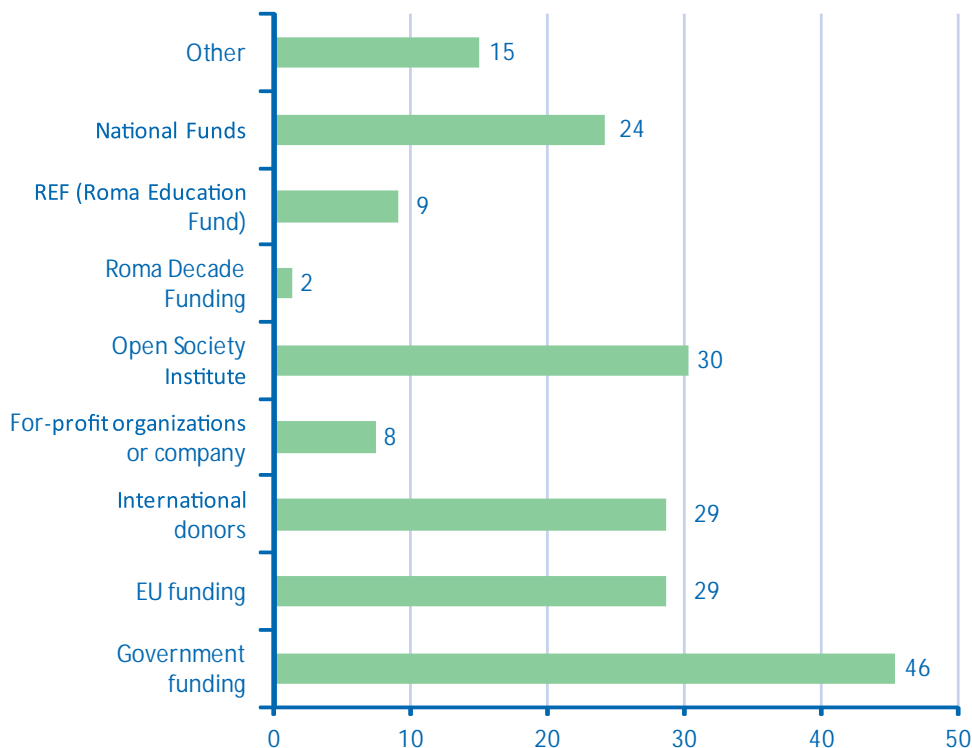
Based on the question "How many staff members in your organisations are Roma?"

Source: UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012.

The online survey also measured the type of funding of these organisations (see Figure 18).

The data shows that organisations receive their funding from various sources. We asked respondents to specify these sources. 45.5% of the organisations receive funding from the government, 29% from the European Union, 29% from international donors (e.g. Ford Foundation, World Bank, etc.), 8% from for-profit companies, 30% from the Open Society Institution, 2% from the Roma Decade Fund, 9% from the Roma Education Fund, and 24% from national foundations. 12% also indicated individual donors. Based on the online survey, the EU supports a smaller amount of organisations than the Open Society Institute, even though there is a wide range of EU funding available in Central and Eastern-European countries, and also in the Western-Balkan republics. Overall, the majority of organisations are funded by the government – this is particularly relevant for the EU countries. In these countries, the structure of the financial support radically changed during the last decade, due to the withdrawal of external funding. In order to survive, NGOs rely on the government, which keeps civil society organisations dependent and limits their activities, particularly monitoring activities.

**Figure 18: Funding sources – share of organizations receiving funding from the respective source (%)**



Based on the question "Please indicate, who funds your organisation? (Multiple choice)"

Source: UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012.

The last part of the questionnaire was more concerned with perception issues: How do the NGOs perceive their own work, how do they evaluate the "Inclusion of Roma", and how do they define the responsibilities of different actors, such as donors and civil society organisations?

The majority of the organisations (93.8%) believe that they are working with the Roma. A little bit less (91.5%) of them think that they are working for Roma and 73.8 % think that they can speak on behalf of the Roma (See Table 1). The results also implicate that the role of the NGOs have been politicised. They are perceived as legitimate partners for various organisations to represent (speak on behalf) of the interests of the Roma community. However, the results of the 2004 and also 2011 UNDP Regional Roma Survey show that the local Roma population do not have much trust in the NGOs: there is a discrepancy between the NGOs and the local Roma population, as to whom they are supposed to speak on behalf of.

The data summarized in Table 1 shows the decrease regarding the number of organisations as we move from the very general, abstract kind of tasks towards the more

concrete, community-oriented tasks. The most shocking finding is that 93.7% of the organisations think that they are “working to improve the situation of the people in the country”, while only 45.1% of the organisations are “organising children’s activities in the Roma communities”, and even a bit less “provide training on health and/or hygienic issues”, which are clearly community-oriented tasks.

**Table 1: Tasks undertaken by the organisation**

<b>Works undertaken by organisation</b>	<b>Per cent of organisations</b>
<b>Working for Roma</b>	91.5
<b>Working with Roma</b>	93.8
<b>Speaking on behalf of Roma</b>	73.8
<b>Working on to improve the situation of people in the country</b>	93.7
<b>Working on to improve the situation in the specific locality within a country</b>	83.6
<b>Working for socially and economically disadvantaged people</b>	93.1
<b>Providing literacy training for adult Roma</b>	45.1
<b>Providing education for Roma children</b>	52.8
<b>Providing training on health and/or hygienic issues</b>	44.0
<b>Providing employment training for Roma</b>	46.2
<b>Improving the employability of Roma</b>	71.7
<b>Organising campaign for various rights of Roma</b>	63
<b>Advocate for policy change on behalf of the Roma community</b>	86.7
<b>Improving infrastructure of Roma settlements</b>	52.8
<b>Enabling members of the Roma communities</b>	78.6
<b>Organising children’s activities in Roma communities</b>	45.1

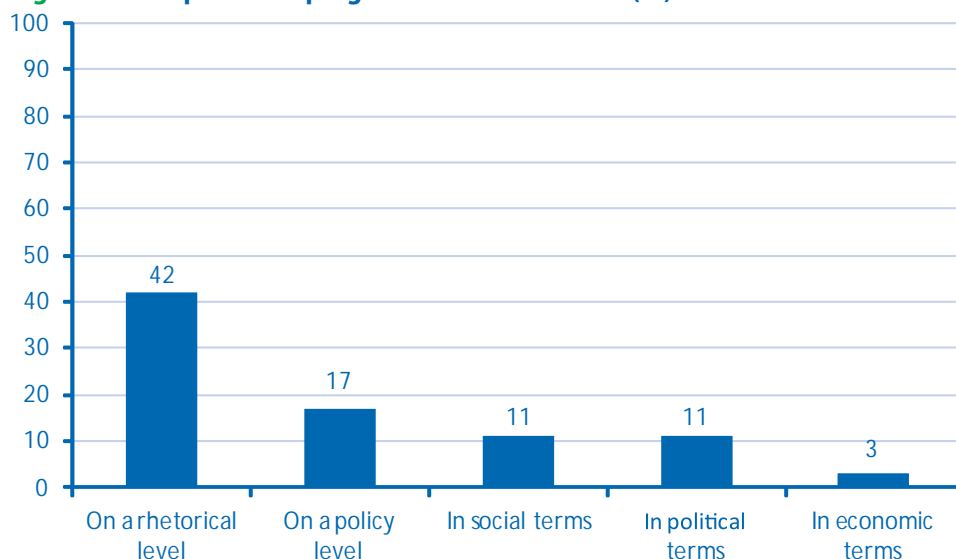
Based on the question “Please indicates from the list below, what kinds of tasks are undertaken by your organisation?”

Source: UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012.

## 4.2 Opinions on the progress of Roma inclusion

Respondents were also asked about the progress of Roma inclusion during the last 10–20 years, ranging from the rhetoric to the economic and social levels.

**Figure 19: The perceived progress of Roma inclusion (%)**



*Based on the question "Please evaluate, from your point of view, how far the process of Roma inclusion has progressed in your country during the last 10–20 years?"*

*Source: UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012.*

According to the outcome of the 2012 survey (see Figure 19), 42% agree with the statement that Roma inclusion had progressed on the rhetorical level; 17% agree that it progressed on the policy level; 11% agree that it progressed in social and political terms; and only 3% agree that progress has been made in the field of the economy. 48% think that only partial progression has been made on any level; and no one agrees that definite progress has been made on all of the above levels.

Most of them agree that Roma inclusion made most progress on the rhetorical level, and the least in economic terms. This reflects the phenomenon that was conceptualised by some scholars as a paradoxical development (Kovats 2001). There is huge gap between the rhetorical level and the daily life of the Roma communities facing structural discrimination, which is embedded in institutional relations as well as in everyday social interactions.

A question about the Decade of Roma Inclusion was asked in the 2011 UNDP Regional Survey. The highest percentage of Roma 42.5% who have heard about the Decade of Roma Inclusion was found in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. In 2012, 94% of the respondents of the online survey have heard about the Decade of Roma Inclu-

sion. It should be noted that these respondents are working for NGOs, and therefore they are more informed about Roma inclusion initiatives than the average population. There were several statements, professed by the respondents of the survey, indicating that the Decade of Roma Inclusion contributed to the inclusion process of Roma communities.

**Table 2: Progress made by the Decade of Roma Inclusion**

<b>Decade of Roma Inclusion</b>	<b>Per cent of respondents agreeing with progression in different fields</b>
<b>It raised awareness about the situation of Roma</b>	31.1
<b>It institutionalised a dialogue between Roma NGOs and government</b>	26.2
<b>It improved the social inclusion policies regarding Roma issues</b>	19.7
<b>It improved the capacity of Roma NGOs to access various national and international grants for Roma inclusion</b>	13.1
<b>It decreased the gap between the Roma and non-Roma populations</b>	9.7

*Based on the question "Could you mark the elements, from the list below, that were accomplished by the "Decade of Roma Inclusion" in your country?"*

*Source: UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012.*

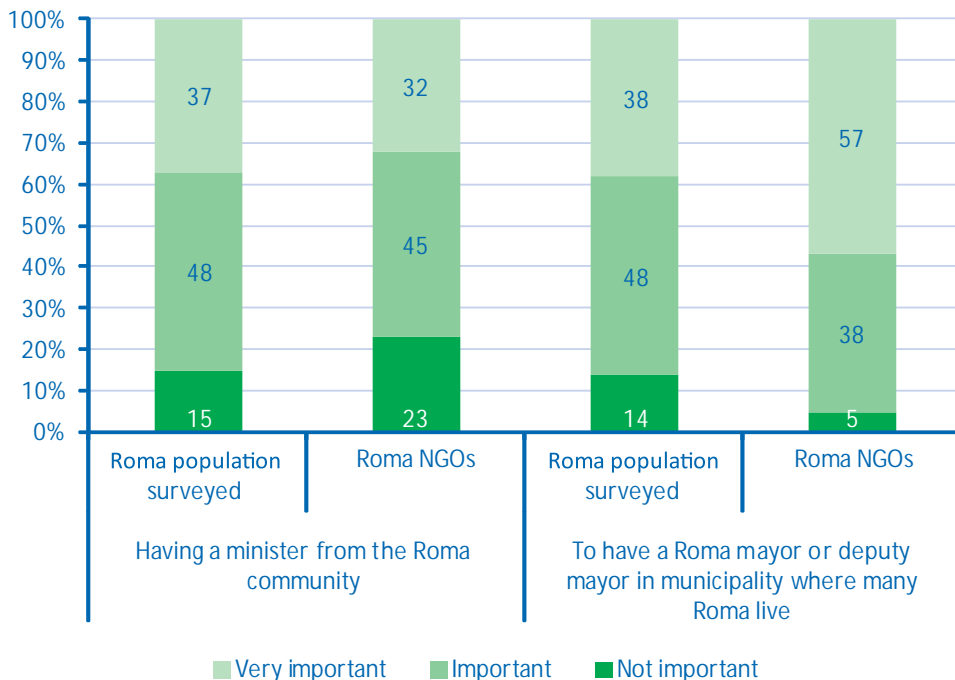
According to the survey data (see Table 2), 31% agree that the Decade of Roma Inclusion was effective to raise awareness about the situation of the Roma. 26% agree that it was successful in institutionalizing a dialog between Roma NGOs and the government. 20% agree that the Decade improved social inclusion policies regarding Roma issues. 13% agree that it even improved the capacity of Roma NGOs to access various national and international grants for Roma inclusion. However, only less than 10% of the respondents agreed with the statement that the Decade decreased the gap between the Roma and non-Roma population.

### 4.3 Aspects of integration

There were several statements in the 2011 Roma regional survey as well as in the 2012 NGO online survey, attempting to depict certain aspects of Roma inclusion. The aspects

of integration based on the statements are grouped in the following categories: political representation, social inclusion and social status. The respondents had to measure the significance/importance of these aspects. It is interesting to see that in some cases there is significant contrast between the Roma answers from the 2011 Regional Roma Survey and NGO's answers from the 2012 NGO online survey. Figures 20 a-f visualize the results.

**Figure 20-a: Aspects of Roma inclusion – political representation**

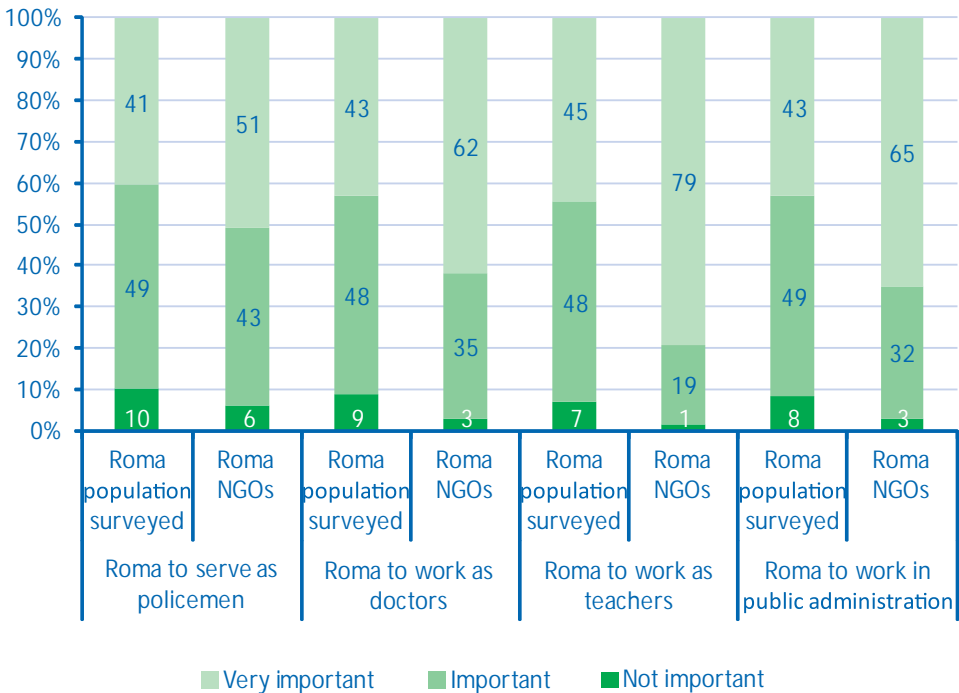


Figures 20-a – 20-f are based on the question “Roma being “included in a society” consists of many aspects of life. Could you mark which of the elements, from the list below, would be important – or not important – building blocks of “Roma Inclusion” – of a situation in which Roma are equal members of the society?” with each set of options addressing specific dimension visualized in the respective figure.

Sources: for “Roma population surveyed”: UNDP/WB/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011; for “Roma NGOs”: UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012

The questions regarding political participation of Roma play an important role in the inclusion of the Roma. There is a significant difference between the answers of Roma and NGOs regarding the importance of having a Roma mayor or deputy mayor in the municipality where Roma are greatly represented. The NGOs, 56.9% of them think that this very important, compared with the Roma respondents, where only 38.3% think that it is very important. The difference can be explained by the different social position and political perception what the two groups have. The NGOs have a greater overview on how the municipalities operate, and also they recognise the influence of the mayor on the functions of NGOs.



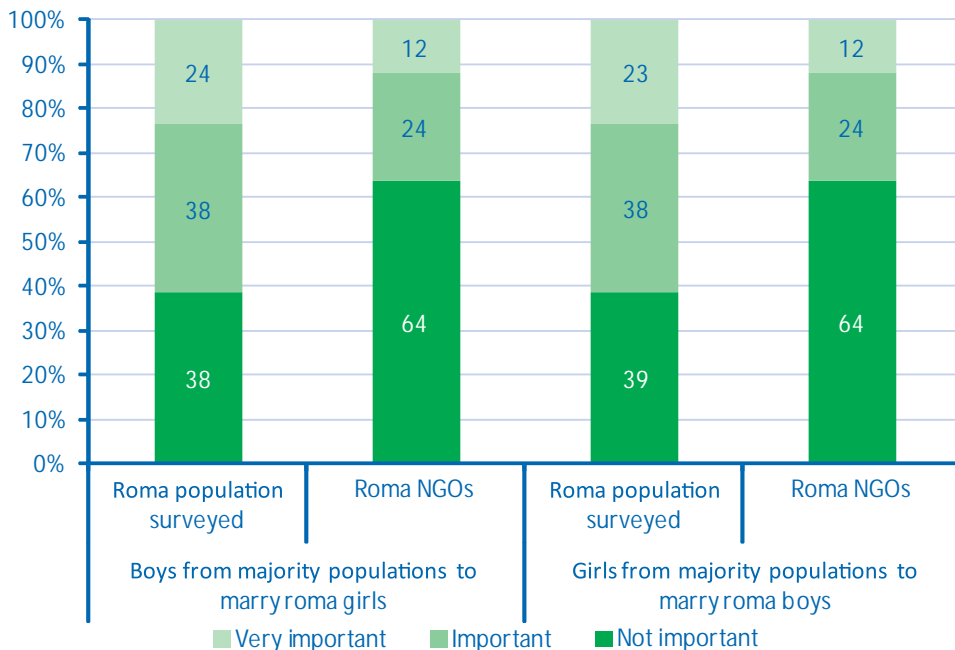
**Figure 20-b: Social Integration – Fields of work**

Sources: for "Roma population surveyed": UNDP/WB/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011; for "Roma NGOs": UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012

The social integration, particularly the high labour position of Roma would contribute to the social inclusion of Roma. To have Roma policemen, doctors, teachers and civil servants are important in both groups. There is one huge difference between the Roma and NGO answers, regarding the question on having Roma to work as teachers. The NGOs see this particularly very important (79.1%), compared with the Roma, where only 44.6% think that it would be important. One explanation of this is that the highly educated NGO activists, who have benefited from the educational system, by having at least a college degree, can valorise more and predict the significance of having Roma teachers than the poor, undereducated and marginalised Roma.

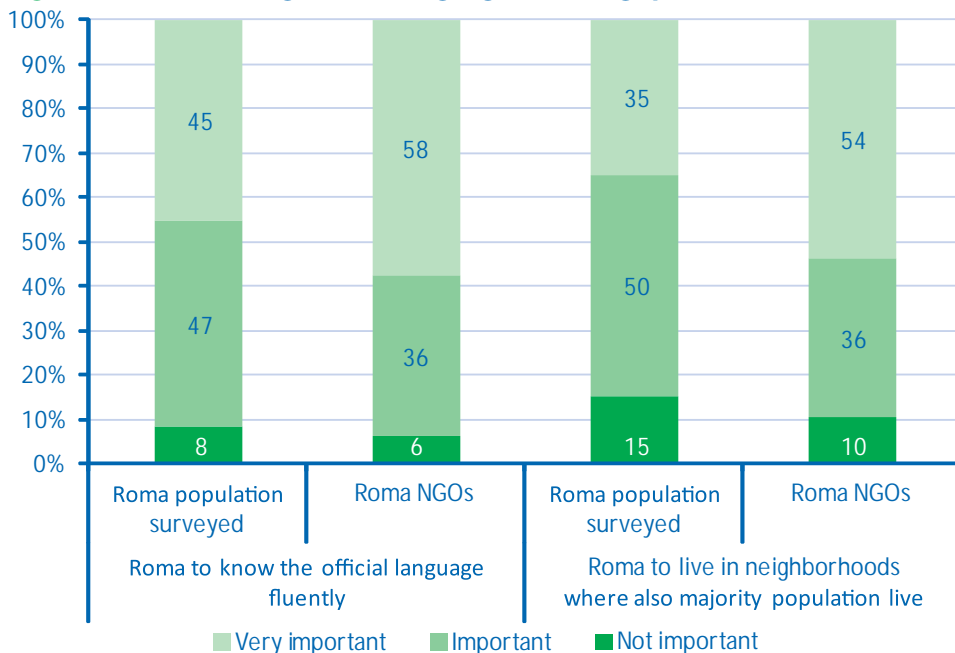
Concerning the inter-marriage between Roma and non-Roma, based on the survey, the Roma from the regional survey perceive inter-marriage more important than the activists from the NGOs. For the Roma this is as an opportunity for social mobilisation, as well as to change their social status. The difference can be explained by the different social and ethnic (in some cases) status of the two groups. The Roma groups are more inclined to be inter-married with the non-Roma than the respondents from the NGOs who are definitely in higher social positions, and many of them belong to the majority.

**Figure 20-c: Social Integration – Inter-marriage**



Sources: for "Roma population surveyed": UNDP/WB/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011; for "Roma NGOs": UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012

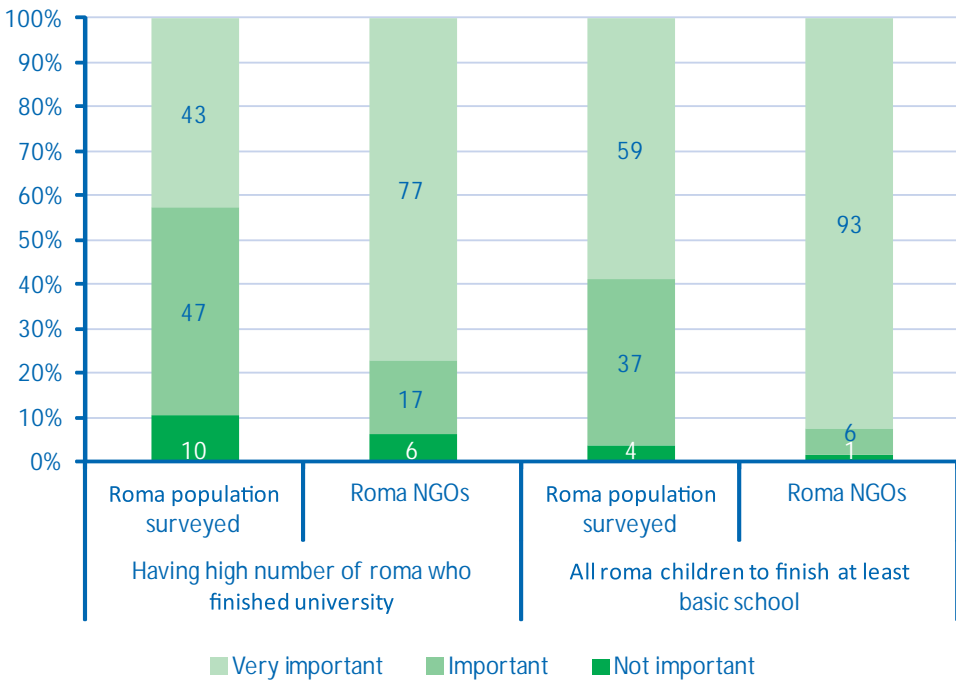
**Figure 20-d: Social Integration – Language and living space**



Sources: for "Roma population surveyed": UNDP/WB/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011; for "Roma NGOs": UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012

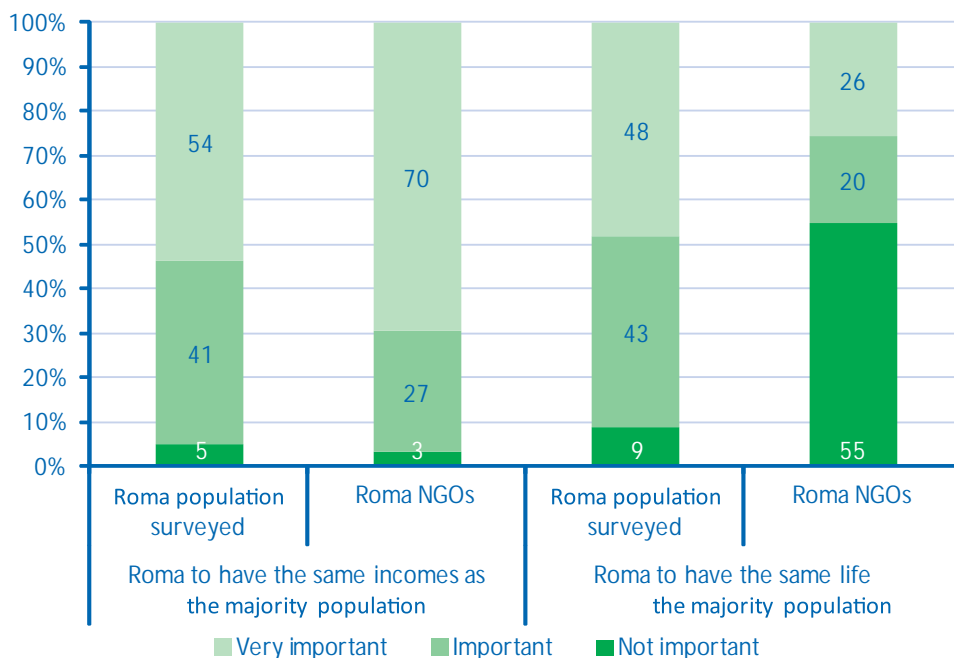
Concerning the language and territorial integration of Roma, there are some differences in the measurement between the two groups. In both cases the respondents from the NGOs think that language and territorial integrations are more important than the Roma. However, this does not mean that the marginalised group would not like to integrate from these aspects. Territorial segregations are sometimes supported by the local authorities based on the false perception that the Roma do not want to live in integrated neighbourhoods. The 2011 Regional Roma Survey shows that the vast majority of Roma from marginalised communities, 84.5% think that they would like to live together with the majority population.

**Figure 20-e: Social Status – Education**



Sources: for "Roma population surveyed": UNDP/WB/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011; for "Roma NGOs": UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012

Education is measured in similar way as language and territorial integration. Both groups think that it is important to have a high number of Roma with university degrees, and all Roma children should finish the basic school. However there are some differences on the accent of what is important or very important. The NGOs value, in both cases, these as very important factors, compared to the Roma respondents, where these are also important, but not as much as for the activists. The explanation, as in many other cases, is their coming from different social positions, as well as from the lack of higher educational experiences, as well as the structural educational discrimination which particularly marginalised Roma communities face.

**Figure 20-f: Social Status – Income and Lifestyle**

Sources: for "Roma population surveyed": UNDP/WB/EC Regional Roma Survey 2011; for "Roma NGOs": UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012

Concerning the social status of Roma, to have a same incomes as the majority population is a very important aspect (53.9%) in the Roma group and 69.7% in the NGO group. However, there is a very interesting picture concerning the question of "Roma to have the same life-style as the majority" population. This is a very similar to the issue of inter-marriage, whereas the Roma are more inclined to have the same life-style as the majority. The NGO activists, 5.6% of them think that this not important, contrasted to the Roma group, where only 8.8 % think that this is not important. Marginalised Roma explicitly would like to have the same life-style as the non-Roma.

The research shows that there is a strong desire from the marginalised Roma communities to change their social status, to be married with non-Roma and have the same social life as the non-Roma. The question remains open, on how civil society can create an upward social and territorial mobility scheme for Roma to have a better social status and life conditions.

#### 4.4 Roma issues and the European Union

The European Union has become very involved in the Roma issues during the last two decades, mainly in the EU and in the accessing countries. As a manifestation of the interest of the EU to cooperate with civil society actors, the EU institutionalised the

dialogue with the Roma civil society through the European Roma Platform. This idea emerged at the 1st European Roma Summit in Brussels in September 2008. After the event, the EU countries called on the European Commission to organise “an exchange of good practice and experience between the EU countries in the sphere of inclusion of the Roma, provide analytical support and stimulate cooperation between all parties concerned with Roma issues, including the organisations representing Roma, in the context of an integrated European Platform”.<sup>24</sup> As a confirmation of the commitment of the EU, the Council of the European Union issued the “10 Common Basic Principles<sup>25</sup> on Roma Inclusion”; one of the priorities is to involve civil society at all levels. Further on, in 2011, the European Commission adopted the document “An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020”, where the role of the civil society is highlighted by the Commission. Despite all the rhetorical commitment by the European Union to empower civil society and take civil society actors as partners to improve the inclusion of the Roma, there is only a tiny segment of the Roma civil society organisations that have the capacity to engage in the competition to access EU funds, as well as to participate in the policy making mechanisms.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4.4.1 The perceived (or desired?) role for the EU

In the online survey, as well as in the interviews, one of the most important issues was to interrogate how the EU should become involved in the Roma issues, and how it could contribute to the development of the Roma civil society organisations.

In the online survey, several statements were listed to describe several options on how the European Union should get involved in Roma issues. The respondents had to measure whether the statement is “very important”, “important” or “not important”.

According to the outcome of the online survey (see Figure 21), 88% of the respondents think that it would be “important” or “very important” to have an EU commissioner for Roma issues. 78% of the respondents think that it would be “important” or “very important” to have an EU commissioner for Roma issues who is Roma. The idea to have an EU Commissioner for Roma issues is supported by Roma activists as well as some members of the European Parliament.<sup>27</sup>

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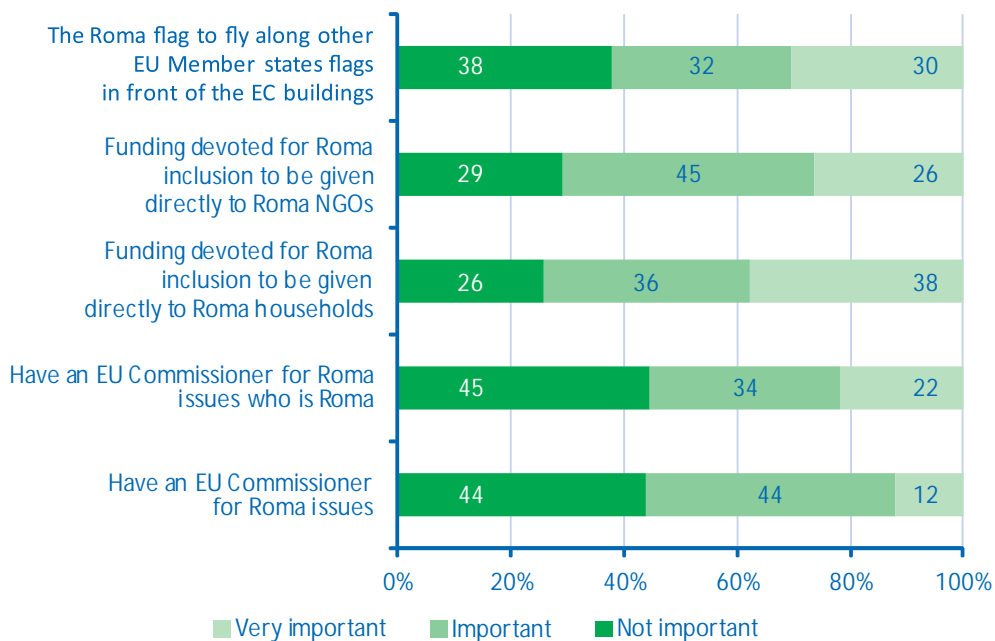
24/ Information about the European Platform [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/roma-platform/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/roma/roma-platform/index_en.htm) (Last accessed: August 24, 2012).

25/ The 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion were presented at the first Platform meeting on 24 April 2009. They were annexed to the Council conclusions of 8 June 2009. They comprise: 1) constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies 2) explicit but not exclusive targeting 3) intercultural approach 4) aiming for the mainstream 5) awareness of the gender dimension 6) transfer of evidence-based policies 7) use of EU instruments 8) involvement of regional and local authorities 9) involvement of civil society 10) active participation of the Roma.

26/ The low absorption of the EU funds are specifically mentioned in the document of the European Parliament: European Parliament resolution of 9 March 2011 on the EU Strategy on Roma Inclusion (2010/2276(INI))

27/ See for example the statement by Mark D. Knudsen on <http://www.causes.com/causes/417413-it-is-time-for-an-apology-to-the-roma-people-mr-president-obama/actions/1327296> (last accessed: August 24, 2012).

**Figure 21: Involvement of the European Union in Roma issues**



Responses to statements (%)

Based on the question “The institutions of the European Union are increasingly involved in Roma inclusion issues. Could you mark which of the elements, from the list below, would be important – or not important – for achieving real inclusion?”

Source: UNDP Online NGO Survey, 2012.

Monika Flasikova-Bennova and Hannes Swoboda<sup>28</sup> state that: “Already many years ago, while accession talks were taking place with many post-communist countries, we urged the European Commission to come forward with a comprehensive EU Roma Strategy, to break the vicious circle of poor housing, poor health, low or no access to education, and employment. Furthermore, we expressed the need for a Commission, which would be responsible for coordinating Roma policy from Brussels.” (Flasikova-Bennova and Swoboda 2011).

In the political debate on the Roma issues, one of the main concerns is that “Who is responsible for Roma issues?” Some transnational Roma and pro-Roma NGOs as well as some of the national governments tend to put more responsibility on the EU, some others claim it as a portfolio of the national governments. There are pro and con arguments, however for practical reasons, I think both the EU and the national governments, in a joint effort, should translate Roma inclusion in their policies and also in their financial mechanisms.

28/ They are vice-presidents of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament.

62% of the respondents think that it would be “important” or “very important” if funding devoted for Roma inclusion was given directly to Roma households; while 74% of the respondents think it would be “important” or “very important” if funding devoted for Roma inclusion was given directly to Roma NGOs.

70% of the respondents think that it would be “important” or very “important” if the Roma flag would be displayed along with the EU Member states’ flags in front of the EC buildings. This is connected to a demand from the NGO community (respondents) to treat Roma differently than other minorities, by recognising them as a political nation. However, it is important to mention that the marginalised Roma respondents from the 2011 Regional Roma Survey are much more inclined to be treated the same as the non-Roma. The vast majority think that it is very important to be married with non-Roma and also to have the same life-style<sup>29</sup> as the non-Roma. (Figure 20-f and 20-c) There are same value differences between the marginalised Roma groups and the NGOs who are supposed to speak and act in the name of the Roma. These differences can be explained by the different social, political and economic position.

#### 4.4.2 EU contribution to Roma civil society

The participants of the online survey had an opportunity to answer an open ended question about how the EU Funds contributed to Roma civil society development. In most of the cases, the online survey statements by NGOs confirmed the experiences of the Roma activists who were interviewed regarding the same issue. The answers can be sorted into two groups. The members of the first group are very critical of their own NGOs, because of the developments during the last two decades, with their inconsistent NGO’ identity and being dependent upon their funding relations with the government. These activists opine that their contract-based relations with the state to provide welfare services undermine their independence. One of the NGO respondents in the online survey emphasised that *“they corrupted the civil society, which is no longer a watchdog of the governmental actions”*. Also Valeriu Nicolae, prominent Roma activist, highlighted in the interview the problems of managing Roma NGOs: *“The Romanian civil society depends mainly on EU funds. Its existence is based on projects, and we are more like a project organisation. [...] The European funds are managed by the government, so in the end, this is also government controlled fund.”* Zeljko Jovanivic, Director of the Roma Initiative Programme at the Open Society Institute, confirmed the same views about EU funds: *“The governments manage the distribution of EU funds and this creates a dependency of the NGOs.”* So they admit the importance of the EU funds, however they also reflect upon that how these EU via-government type funds are limiting and transforming the identity of the NGOs.

The second group of answers is more concerned about the substantial and technical challenges of the EU funds that put significant burden on the Roma NGOs. In the online survey, one of the NGO respondents summarised this in the following way: *“[...] the*

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29/ The life-style is translated in an academic as well as in an everyday context as a cultural phenomenon.

*local, grassroots Roma NGOs have a very limited capacity for applying for such EU funds (language difficulties, complex application and budget formats). Only the professional non-Roma organisations (pro-Roma organisations) or big Roma NGOs have the capacity to apply for such funds.*” Another respondent raised the same argument: *“EU funds created frustration and apathy within the civil society. If the EU funds will be managed in a same way as they are managed nowadays, it will have a negative impact on the civil society, particularly on Roma civil society organisations.”* Most of the interviewees, as well as the online respondents, referred to the negative trend that the difficult and demanding administration of EU funds resulted in the closure of numerous Roma organisations. For example, in Hungary, one of the most influential Roma organisations, Foundation for Roma Civil Rights (Roma Polgárjogi Alapítvány) had to be closed due to some difficulties with the administration of EU funds. Some of the respondents explicitly criticised that *“EU funds do not contribute to Roma civil society development. These funds are too competitive and increase the gap between professional and grassroots organisations. They apply complex regulations that pose a huge burden for the implementing organisations. Even the calls for proposals are problematic, often irrelevant, not reflecting the problems, or have limited relevance concerning the needs”* (online survey answer). Also, they described that: *“EU funds have imposed priorities on the civil society (top-down), which has resulted in detachment from the constituency”* (online survey answers). Some of them pointed out that the EU calls are either irrelevant for grassroots, small and medium NGOs, or would be “risky endeavours”, because of the disproportionate bureaucratic burden, the constantly changing rules, and liquidity and cash flow problems of smaller NGOs. The level of expertise and the volume of financial resources needed to implement EU programmes are too high, which results in the de facto exclusion of many Roma NGOs from the competition.

Most of the interviewees highlighted that it is necessary to simplify the EU grants procedures and requests for government to provide support services; such as technical and administrative support, including training opportunities for Roma NGO’s who are working with Roma communities, particularly at the local level.<sup>30</sup>

Based on the empirical findings, the Roma NGOs perceive the institutions of the European Union as an alliance to fight against discrimination and social exclusion, as being seen as the source of financial supports. In most cases, they contrast the EU with the national governments, which are sometimes on a discursive level explicitly racist or implicitly bring policies which are disadvantaging the Roma. The EU institutions, which politically and financially are supported by the member states, are in a difficult position to provide structural justice at the national level for Roma.

The phenomenon of NGO-isation described by activists strongly relates to the distribution mechanisms of the EU funds, which inevitably influenced the features and identities of the civil organisations in the region. The bureaucratic and professionalised NGOs

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30/ See Hurre et al. (2012).



are capable of absorbing the EU funds, and appear on the transnational and national level as Roma policy makers, thereby limiting the voice of those groups who are close to the local communities and lack such professional infrastructures, including well paid and highly educated staff members (Rostas 2009).

The transformations of the NGOs are connected to the changing nature, content and ideology of the wider political narrative. They tend to depoliticise the work of the NGOs and depart from the movement agenda, which emphasised the unequal social redistribution and collective responsibility towards market inclusion, individual and community responsibility. In the case of the Roma, there are several statements by the political elite when they reduce the very complex problems that the Roma face to the issue of culture, morality and responsibility of the Roma communities. The philosophy of grand narratives is also influencing even the EU financial support system. The NGOs, who become service delivery organisations, need to implement objectives which are prescribed by the managing authorities. In this process, they become gradually detached from the community and also they lose courage to challenge the fundamental structure of the system which created and reproduces inequality.

# 5

## Conclusions and recommendations

This paper has conceptualised the changing meaning and function of civil society regarding Roma civic activism and participation. One of the points raised by the conceptualisation is that the liberal pluralistic values that constitute the foundation of civil society have become challenged by the political extreme right and populist groups whose values become supported by a large proportion of mainstream populations. The central principles of these groups are to damage the solidarity with, and inclusion of Roma in, societies. Moreover, this paper also exposes the formal and informal side of Roma civil society. The formal phase of the civil society is more recognised, particularly by the funding mechanisms of the EU, or any donor organisation. However, in a complex community developmental work, it is very important to recognise the informal power and leadership structures as well.

Furthermore, the paper aimed to describe and analyse the development of Roma and pro-Roma civil society organisations within the last two decades. Despite all the shortcomings and failures of these civil society organisations, we have to admit their significant role in raising awareness about and institutionalizing of Roma issues, particularly on the national level and transnational level.

The second part of the paper has analysed the empirical data from the 2004 and 2011 UNDP Regional Roma Surveys concerning civil society participation. These data have been complemented with the outcomes of an online survey with Roma and pro-Roma organisations, as well as with semi-structured interviews with Roma civil society activists.

One of the most striking issues, which came through from the UNDP Regional Roma Survey, is that there is low level of Roma participation in civic and political fields at the local levels, which leads to the lack of Roma participation in local decisions and policy making. Moreover, the low civic and political participation of Roma is excavating their social and political exclusion. The data also suggests the lack of appropriate social capital of the Roma. According to the findings of the survey, the Roma, and also non-Roma living in close proximity, trust more in the familial ties than institutions such as local NGOs. The online survey reaffirmed also the lack of presence and impact of the civil society organisations at the local level. Unfortunately, the lack of presence of NGOs and the lack of trust in civil society organisations are disempowering local Roma communities and limiting their opportunities to initiate changes.

The paper presents empirical findings regarding the role of the Decade of Roma In-

clusion and the European Union. The Decade of Roma Inclusion is known particularly by the Roma activists (they agree that there is still much to be done to achieve the objectives of the Decade; namely to close the gap between the Roma and non-Roma populations). The Decade of Roma Inclusion is known to a lesser extent by local Roma communities.

As for the role of the EU, there are several statements, made by the respondents of the online survey as well as by interviewees, that the European Union funds operate in a way that disproportionately exclude Roma civil society organisations, particularly those who are working at the community level.

In order to ensure and scale up Roma participation in civil society at the local, national and transnational levels, the Roma civil society organisations should be involved as partners in the operationalization of the National Roma Integration Strategies,<sup>31</sup> according to the request of the European Commission. This is one of the most concrete and foreseeable avenues for Roma NGOs to be empowered and enabled to be stakeholders and adequately translate EU requirements into local level implementation of measures, aimed at facilitating social inclusion.

The EU, in cooperation with the UNDP, OSI and other pro-Roma and Roma international organisations, should establish regional support facilities providing expertise and technical support particularly for Roma NGOs (besides other stakeholders) during the operationalization, implementation and monitoring of the National Roma Integration Strategies. Moreover, they should facilitate the process of Roma mainstreaming into the EU structural Funds. This regional support would entail:

- Setting up of an international civil society steering group, which would work out methodologies on how to mobilise local communities around issues of social inclusion and how to develop local cooperation around National Roma Integration Strategies? Moreover, provide assistance for Roma communities to establish NGOs, and for already existing Roma NGOs to improve their capacities.
- Provide expertise to develop Roma mainstreaming methodologies and tools to integrate complex social inclusion projects into the National Development Plan, connected to the respective Operational Programme.
- Offer financial and technical support for Roma NGOs facing difficulties with cash-flow or to pre-finance their activities. Moreover, ensure their financial sustainability by providing (non-project-based) maintenance support.
- Facilitate and ensure the cooperation between NGOs and local stakeholders. Moreover,

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31/ European Commission (2011) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com\\_2011\\_173\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com_2011_173_en.pdf)

Negotiate with EU members states' relevant agencies to make EU funded programmes more effective by integrating the principles of Roma inclusion, and become more inclusive by taking into account the limited capacities of Roma grassroots organisations.

- Encourage to invent and design new methodologies and support system for those socially and ethnically marginalized communities who are not reached by the EU funding system.

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