

Integrated programmes for the social inclusion of Roma – a comparison of the Hungarian and Greek situations: with particular attention to mutual relevance, similarities, important questions, national strategies, successes, key issues for debate

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The theme of the discussion paper is on the social inclusion of the Greek Roma and we would like to add to this discussion from the Hungarian perspective. We intend to talk about the various programmes instituted by the Hungarian government recently. Although there are initiatives to upgrade the housing situation and integrate the Roma within their local communities, the government is making serious efforts to encourage Roma children to stay longer in educational settings and job training schemes. However, it is in the area of employment opportunities that the government of Hungary has decided to focus on.

The Hungarian Government determined our country's priorities in accordance with the Roma Integration Council and has adopted the following Decision: No. 1105/2007. (XII.27.) Korm. of the Government on the Government Action Plan for 2008–2009 related to the Decade of the Roma Inclusion Programme Strategic Plan Regarding Government measures for 2008 and 2009 necessary for the implementation of objectives as enshrined in Resolution 68/2007 (VI. 28.) OGY of the Parliament on the Decade of Roma Inclusion Programme Strategic Plan (hereinafter referred to as Strategic Plan). This decision determines the tasks of different ministries. This is a multi-ministerial approach to the whole of the Roma integration complex with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour taking the leading role on the majority of the problems to be solved.

The employment situation of the Roma in Hungary

The discussion paper cites the World Bank study: the widespread impoverishment of Roma in the CEE region is due to the loss of their former jobs in the Communist economy. According to a research led by Mr Istvan Kemeny in 2003, less than one-third of Roma men aged between 15 and 74 had any income from work identified as the primary source of subsistence and one-third of them had some regular work. Another characteristic of Roma people's employment is the wide-ranging occurrence of undeclared, casual work.

According to the aforementioned research, only one-sixth of Roma women had any income from work and identified work as the primary source of subsistence. One-sixth of them had some regular work.

The reasons for high unemployment: A major proportion of Roma people live in those micro-regions of the country that are afflicted with social, economic, infrastructural, employment disadvantages. The low level of school qualification of the young Roma adults - According to the survey in 2003, 82.5% of young Roma people aged between 20 and 24 have actually completed primary school. On the national average, in 2001 54.5% of 18-year-old people had general certifications of secondary education, while in the case of young Roma people between the age of 20 and 24 in 2002 5% could complete secondary schools. The proportion of Roma students admitted to universities and colleges was even lower: 1.2% of Roma people aged 20–24 attended institutions of higher education. Public work programmes only provide temporary employment for young Roma. During the public work programmes there are no possibilities either to participate in training programmes or to create working careers.

Legal background: 68/2007 (VI.28.) parliamentary resolution on the Decade of Roma Inclusion Programme Strategic Plan; 1105/2007. Governmental decision on the Government Action Plan for 2008–2009 related to the Decade of the Roma Integration Programme Strategic Plan. A chapter in both of the parliamentary resolution and the governmental decision is dedicated to the labour market integration of Roma. The goal is to facilitate the Roma people's integration into the labour market in association with their training and retraining, and generally the improvement of the level of Roma people's employment.

Government Action Plan for 2008–2009

“Decentralised programmes for the employment of disadvantaged persons” – human services, vocational trainings, labour market trainings, and supported employment are provided for the participants. Social workers as mentors as well as professional networks assist them to get into the labour market. The total number of participants is thousands. Resource: New Hungary Development Plan, Social Renewal OP 1.1 measure.

START programmes – their goals are to facilitate employers for employing disadvantaged persons (as young people, persons getting maternity benefit or carer's allowance, persons over the age of 50 as well as persons with low school qualifications). The number of claimants of START card: 99794 persons, START-PLUSZ card: 13378 persons, START-EXTRA card: 6145 persons.

“Make a step forward!” programme – it gives possibilities for people with low school qualifications to get a vocational qualification or a vocational qualification one level higher than they currently have. In addition those people with invalid or obsolete qualifications can update to current standards giving them the possibility to get a new and economically proper qualification. During the implementation of the programme more than 22.000 persons can be supported.

The projects of the National Employment Public Foundation: 1. Roma musician employment programme, resource: 142,5 million HUF. At present 79 persons are employed in the frame of this programme. 2. Roma (labour market and social) service network programme, resource: 160 million HUF. More than 300 persons were involved in the programme. 3. Support of Roma people's economic activity (draft programme), resource: 200 million HUF. The programme's goals are improvement of the competitiveness as well as appearance in the labour market of Roma enterprises.

Public work programmes – resources: 10 billion HUF, the employment of 13 500 persons can be supported this year. This year seven public work programmes were initiated (forestry, flood-inland inundation defence, public road, in national parks etc.)

Complex labour market programmes – regional Public Employment Services ensure several services including training sessions aiming at the completion of primary school, vocational training and supported employment in order to increase the chances of disadvantaged persons in the labour market.

The most important active labour market measures in the employment of Roma are still public work programmes, wage-supports and training supports. Thousands of persons participate in public work programmes. (The estimated number of participants with Roma origin is 12-15 thousand.)

Applications for promoting job-creation – resource: 2,66 billion HUF, 160-170 enterprises can be supported, which result 2500-2800 new jobs.

“Way to employment” programme – its goals are to create back-to-work measures for beneficiaries of regular social assistance as well as to improve these persons’ labour market opportunities. The planned programme started on 1 April 2009 can ensure annually 60-66 thousands persons’ temporary employment in 6 hours/day.

Best practices, initiatives

Employment linked educational programme

The aim of this programme: Ensuring at the same time both real, long-term employment and training possibilities for young Roma unemployed persons (who have dropped out of the educational system and labour market) thus integrating them into the labour market in the field of social as well as child welfare basic and specialized service systems and for Roma young persons finishing primary school hence providing school leaving certificates or OKJ vocational qualifications, within a training framework. Sensitize employers to the problems Roma face in the work environment and help to reduce worker prejudice against Roma in the basic and specialized service system. Resource: New Hungary Development Plan, Social Renewal OP (development of action plans for the period of 2009-2010 is under way), 30-35 persons/regions could be involved.

Ensure labour market mobility

In contrast to the high unemployment rate in underprivileged regions, in other regions there are many more jobs available. With help and encouragement to move, a better harmonization of supply-demand in the labour market could occur. People living in the most disadvantaged regions should be assisted for entering employment in regions having more labour possibilities or for moving to these regions.

Several individual reasons obstruct the interregional mobility in the labour market, specifically a lack of social housing, the enormous differences between the prices of properties in different regions, inadequate qualifications etc.

In the implementation of the above mentioned, the social system – including labour support system – should be revised so as to develop supports promoting mobility in the labour market. In public employment plans introduced in the “Way to employment” programme the measures of mobility should be considered.

The goal of the supporting policy based on the principle of equal opportunity is to support only those tenders and programmes, which can ensure diminishing Roma segregation in schools and housing.

In the framework of urban-rehabilitation programmes, 160 anti-segregation plans were prepared. These plans have to address the cities’ interventions and measures until 2013 for housing, social, health and employment integration of people living in Roma settlements.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour programme for promoting the residential and social integration of those living on encampments and encampment-type residential environments

Specific steps on the part of the government to support the social integration of the residents of encampments were made for the first time since the political transition, in 2005. At present, work has begun on the eleven encampments which won in the third round of the programme. In the spring, the Ministry will once again announce an invitation to tender.

In Hungary, nearly 100,000 people live on some 500 encampments and encampment-type residential environments. A significant number of these are to be found in small towns and villages or outside the administrative boundaries of small towns and villages. Clearing encampment and encampment-type residential environments requires a great range of varied opportunities for intervention – depending on the type of encampment, its size, micro-regional and regional location etc. Different types of resources and methods are required to achieve the integration of families living in Alsószentmárton, on Guszev encampment in Nyíregyháza or in a basement flat in Szomolya.

Flagship programme ‘We won’t give up on anybody’ from the New Hungary Development Plan focuses on the development of the most disadvantaged regions. In the social urban rehabilitation programme within the framework of the Regional Development Programme for which invitations to tender have been announced, it is possible to apply for funds to rehabilitate segregated urban areas. For this reason, the Ministry has primarily announced this invitation to tender for the kind of small towns and villages which are not able to tender for the programmes described above, and which because of their level of economic potential would be unable to implement a programme for integration on the scale of several tens of millions of Hungarian forint.

During the past three years, 31 towns and villages have been awarded total funding of 1.5 billion HUF.

The fundamental objective of the programme is to create conditions for the social reintegration of residents of these towns and villages. The priority is for planned, documented programmes to be set up which achieve the following in parts of towns and villages where the social status of residents is low (working age residents with a maximum of 8 years’ primary-level education at

best and without a regular income from employment): to prevent further increase of the housing stock, to move towards anti-discrimination, anti-segregation and to reverse exclusion and promote integration. The main target for the programme is to bring the proportion of persons with low social status among residents of areas which are considered as being segregated up to the same level as for the general population of the town or village as a whole. In order to do so, it is necessary to radically reduce the number of persons with low social status in segregated areas, which in the majority of cases can be achieved by the dissolution of the segregated areas. The residents of these areas are confronted by the lack of basic infrastructure and exclusion arising from their low level of education, long-term unemployment and discrimination in many areas of life.

In addition to the housing aspect, a mobilisation strategy is being drawn up in which there is great emphasis on programmes for the integration of children and young people in education, integration of adults into the employment market, facilitation of access to social and health services and community development.

The towns and villages used exceptionally varied methods while implementing the programme and varied cooperation developed, even more so because there was no single formula in place for implementing the programme. In all cases, the emphasis was on creating and implementing a flexible programme which adapted to local characteristics and needs.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour programme for promoting the residential and social integration of those living on encampments and in encampment-type residential areas is continuing in 2008 with nearly HUF 1 billion (funding from Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the National Public Fund for Employment), in towns and villages with a population of less than 15.000.

	2005 programme (implemented)	2006 programme (implemented)	2007 programme (planned)
Number of families moving into new homes	42	77	83
Number of homes refurbished and fitted with sanitary facilities	412	95	46
Number of participants in training programmes	28	148	305
Number of participants in employment	202	39	87

Education

When education policy is mentioned in the discussion paper it is noted that over half of Greek Roma adults have never attended school. The situation is much better in Hungary on that specific point, but at the secondary level of the education system, the Hungarian situation is very bad. About 70% of Hungarian youth pass the secondary school leaving exam while only 7% of Roma youth in Hungary do.

The discussion paper writes about education policy in international terms which is a new direction in Hungary. Until 2002 integration was no more than an expressed goal in the education of Roma children. Romas are considered a national-ethnic minority in Hungary. Professional conditions for teaching the Romani and Beas languages in public education institutions should be created and developed. The development of material necessary for teaching of Romani and the Beas

languages as well as related research and surveys should be supported. Professional tasks related to Romani and Beas language teacher's and interpreter's training should be coordinated and supported and means by which the accreditation of such training programmes could be promoted should be examined.

This collective national minority status has unfortunately allowed local authorities to segregate Roma children. Although Roma children represent less than 10 % of student population, almost half of Roma children go into classes where they are the majority!

From 2002 the Hungarian Government implemented an educational integration policy on every level of education. In the framework of the support of the implementation of one hundred and seventy equal opportunity action plans in public education, chance creating programmes (especially those for desegregation, kindergarten education, integration and methodology, the revision of deficiencies and the support of further education) affecting almost five hundred public education institutions had to be launched.

In order to create a high quality inclusive school model and to establish the professional cooperation of schools applying modern pedagogical methods, a programme should be launched for the support of the conversion of at least thirty-five schools engaged in integration practices into methodological and hospitation service centres.

For the maintenance and strengthening of the educational success of Roma youth studying in higher education and for the support for high level attainment within their chosen field of expertise, four so-called "Invisible Colleges" should be created.

Conclusions

We feel this meeting allowed for the frank exchange of views regarding both the special national conditions as well as the international dimension. From our perspective, the most important factors must include the elements which will lead, over time, towards true social integration. However this cannot be achieved by narrowing the focus simply within the Roma context and treating it as a range of inter-related 'problems'. Of necessity the whole of society must be involved to limit discrimination and segregation, as these are at the core of the situation. In conclusion we feel that the whole of society must change very fundamental attitudes for there to be real success in our common goal of social integration.