

Migration vs. Inclusion:

Roma mobilities from East to West

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abstract

The Roma migrations, which are becoming more topical today, have prompted policies giving attention to issues of Roma inclusion first in the East, but then also in the West. Inclusion policies have, by and large, failed to improve the situation of Roma communities. In order to achieve a better understanding of these issues, we argue that attention should be paid to Roma as distinct ethnic communities, but that are still integral parts of their respective civic nations. In the premodern past, Roma migrations mostly involved the Roma as ethnic communities of itinerant service providers looking for new markets during times of economic uncertainty. Contemporary migrations involve the Roma as part of their respective societies, that is, they migrate together with and for the same reasons as their fellow nationals. Some Roma, however, still migrate as ethnic communities, for example, by applying for asylum on the basis of minority rights violations or by engaging in stigmatized economic activities. Migrations as a society and as an ethnic community are unevenly represented in policy and in academic debates, with the latter type dominating both and, to some extent, normalizing a representation of the Roma as a community that is in constant need of support. As a consequence, policies targeting Roma often have completely opposite results from their stated objective and rather than promoting inclusion are contributing to the maintenance (or even the worsening) of the current situation.

KEY WORDS: Roma, community and society, migration, mobility, integration, inclusion.

In recent years, the “Roma issue” has gone from a problem specific to the Eastern European countries in transition to one of the leading themes in the pan-European public space. Public interest in this issue was caused originally by mass migrations of Roma from the East to the West. After the accession of most of the Eastern European countries into the European Union, the problems of social integration and inclusion of the Roma came to the fore – but now not just of the Roma living in Eastern Europe, but also those who are migrating to the West (and especially and almost exclusively of those who originate from South Eastern Europe).

The failure of national integration policies towards the Roma in Eastern Europe became a failure of national integration policies towards the Roma in Western Europe as well.¹ Today it is clear that there has been a complete failure in policies for Roma inclusion on the pan-European level, and the few individual cases of successful policies and projects are unable to alter the overall picture.² In the end, contemporary policies of integration and inclusion do not lead to a decrease in the rate of Roma migration nor to increased Roma inclusion in their home countries or host countries, and if there are cases of successful inclusion of Roma migrants, these are in spite of, and not because of, these policies.

This at first glance shocking conclusion can be understood by keeping in mind the main patterns of Romani migrations from Eastern to Western Europe. In the last two decades, numerous academic studies about contemporary migrations have been published by Romani Studies scholars and by scholars in other disciplines. Thus Roma migrations have become the dominant and most exploited topic of contemporary Romani Studies.



Representatives of ten municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina in March 2018 signed a Memorandum of Understanding confirming their commitments to involve Roma citizens in the work of local authorities. This is part of a joint programme of the European Union and the Council of Europe – ROMACTED (“Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at the local level”).

Many of these studies explore specific aspects of the topic, but what is currently lacking is a broader view of the phenomenon of modern Roma mobilities that takes into account the principal differences with past Roma migrations. Along with this overlooked aspect are the consequences of contemporary Roma migration for the social integration and inclusion of the Roma in their home countries as well as in a united Europe.

IN THIS ARTICLE WE will propose an answer to the question of how the Roma migrations affect Roma integration and inclusion – both in their countries of origin in the East and in their host countries in the West. We will emphasize the misdirected predominance of the understanding of Roma migrations as ethnic communities, which generates academic and policy discourses framing the Roma as a community and an object of support, thus ignoring both the larger social causes of emigration/mobility in the sending Eastern European countries and the concept of Roma agency as EU citizens. We approach the topic of Roma migration as a historical process that has changed its character over the centuries. To illuminate this process, the article will go from accounts of historical migrations to the contemporary migration to the West followed by strategies for Roma integration and the consequences of such strategies.

Theoretical background: The Roma as an ethnically specific community

In order to understand the topic better, the modern patterns of Roma mobilities need to be described in a way that provides a deeper knowledge of the specifics of the Roma as an ethnic community and their historical fate. We have written extensively about this in our previous works, and below we present a concise review of the conclusions that are relevant to the present article.

The Roma, whose historical homelands are the countries of Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, are an “imagined community” in the sense formulated by Benedict Anderson³.

They are descendants of early (at least a thousand years ago) migrants from the Indian subcontinent and have existed for centuries as a social structure, which we defined in our earlier works as an “Inter-group Ethnic Formation”.⁴ The Roma speak different dialects of the Romani language,⁵ and many of them have adopted the languages of their surrounding

population as their mother tongues (including Turkish, Greek, Albanian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Romanian, Hungarian, Ukrainian, etc.), and quite a few prefer to identify as another ethnicity, e.g. as Turks, Greeks, Albanians, Bulgarians, Serbians, Romanians, Hungarians, Ukrainians, etc.⁶ Some of them also even try to

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create their own new, entirely different ethnic identity, such as the *Balkan Egyptians* and *Ashkali* in the countries of the former Yugoslavia and Albania, respectively, and the *Millet* and *Rudari* in Bulgaria.⁷ Despite their distinct ethnic identities, all Roma groups also possess a national identity and a feeling of belonging to the civic nation of the state of which they are citizens, or in conditions of migration, the states of which they were citizens in the recent past.⁸

The Roma are not a hermetically isolated and self-sufficient social and cultural system⁹, and they have always existed in two dimensions. This fundamental principle is based on the juxtaposition between “community” and “society”.¹⁰ This distinction is used with altered content cleared from its evolutionary hierarchy, and in our understanding it concerns relations between two simultaneously existing typological phenomena intertwined in one inseparable unity. In this case, “community” means the Roma as an ethnic formation that is clearly distinguished from its surrounding population, and “society” means the Roma as ethnically based integral parts of the respective nation-states of which they are citizens.¹¹ In order to understand the nature of the processes of historical and contemporary Roma migrations, attention must be paid to the Roma as an ethnically specific community that at the same is an integral part and a constituent element of their respective civic nations of origin.¹²

Historical background: First and second migration waves

Over the course of the centuries after the Roma’s arrival in Europe from India, their migrations took on a repetitive pattern¹³ in which we can distinguish a few large and several smaller migration waves where they have crossed state borders, dispersed in new territories, and claimed new social and economic spaces.¹⁴ Roma migrations in the past and today are driven by the demand for collective strategies in response to ongoing political and economic changes; they are indeed in search for better quality of life, and they appear to be more or less non-coherent in practice due to the heterogeneity of Roma populations and because the situation varies in different countries.¹⁵

The first of the large migration waves started at the beginning of the 15th century, when several “Gypsy” (according the relevant historical sources) nomadic groups penetrated Western Europe from the Balkans, leaving behind those groups who were already settled on Ottoman lands.¹⁶ This migration wave was a case of the successful acquisition of new territories by nomadic communities that were searching for new economic niches. The reasons for this first large wave of migration from the East to the West were primarily economic, in spite of the attempts to be given (at least in the beginning of mass migrations) a religious and political motive, like the stories about their alleged state called “The Little Egypt”, which they left because of the Ottoman invasion, and other similar stories.¹⁷

The second large migration wave was during the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th-centuries, when the countries of Europe and later those of the New World (predominantly North and South America) were invaded by nomadic



PHOTOS: ROMA EDUCATION FUND

Sustainability of the Secondary School Scholarship Program for Roma – Dimension of Cooperation Between Government and Civil Society.

Roma groups originating from Walachia and Moldavia and the adjoining regions of Austria-Hungary.¹⁸ This second wave of mass migration included some settled Roma communities that were dragged along with the nomadic groups, but the majority of settled Roma (who were much more numerous than the nomadic communities in their home countries), remained where they had settled. This mass resettlement of Roma has been explained as the direct consequence of their liberation from slavery in both of the principalities, which allowed for their freedom of movement. As recent research shows, the end of the slavery of the “Gypsies” in Walachia and Moldavia is indeed an important factor, but it is not the beginning, nor the only reason for the major Roma migrations.¹⁹ It might sound paradoxical, but the large migrations after the end of slavery were rather an escape from the freedom and the new obligations and responsibilities as citizens that the nomadic Roma were not able to assume. The second wave of migration was mainly based on social and economic reasons as well, and the political factors, such as the abolition of slavery and lifting of passport control at state borders for those who left Austria-Hungary in 1865, only regulated the time frames of these processes.²⁰

Initially, in the case of the first large waves of migration, one can see the movement of predominantly nomadic ethnic communities that led a way of life defined in scholarly writing as peripatetic²¹ or service nomadism.²² It is typical for service nomadism to involve the intertwining between a nomadic and a settled way of life and for the nomadic groups to be dependent on the resources created by the settled population. The mobil-

ity of service nomads is expressed through continuous cyclical wandering, usually in familial groupings, in search of economic niches where it is possible to pursue their servicing occupations. In times of uncertainty, in order to maintain their existence, the communities of service nomads move and thus the access to and availability of resources are the determining factor of the groups' movements, and different political factors only influence the scale and direction of travel.

Contemporary Roma migrations: The third migration wave

The third migration wave began in the 1960s and has continued to the present,²³ but processes of integrating nomads into society and the availability of new sources of income have resulted in the loss of importance for nomadism as a distinct way of life for the vast majority Roma communities in Eastern Europe, and thus the nature of the third wave of migration is different in comparison with the first two waves. In contrast to the previous waves of migrations, the main moving force behind Roma mobility is no longer communities of nomads or former nomads seeking to acquire new economic niches and territories, and representatives of settled Roma communities and the nomads or former nomads form only a small part of the current wave of migration. Societal changes, the availability of new sources of income, and an increased degree of social integration of the Roma have resulted in the inclusion of Roma in Eastern Europe in the general migration processes flowing within the societies of which they are an integral part.

The first signs of the emergence of this new type of migration can be traced to previous historical periods when the migration of service nomads still prevailed. During that time some settled Roma communities had left their countries of origin together with the majority population and for different reasons but which were in common with the majority populations' reasons for migrating, including colonization of new territories (e.g. by movement of whole villages, including "their Gypsies" from the Balkans to the Russian Empire in the first half of the 19th century), labor migrations (e.g. workers from Slovak lands to the US in the late 19th and early 20th centuries), exchanges of populations (e.g. resettlement of Roma from Asia Minor to the Balkans and correspondingly from the Balkans to Turkey after the Lausanne agreement in 1923), postwar disturbances and expulsions (e.g. after the Second World War II), etc. The Roma shared the reasons of migration and followed the same routes and patterns of settlement and adaptation as their non-Roma neighbors.

Contemporary Roma migrations in general bear a common feature of "modernity". If we are using the categories of the aforementioned distinction of Roma as a "community" or "society",

then in the current wave of migration the Roma migration as "society" dominates, i.e. as an integral (though ethnically detached) part of the general migratory flows from the countries of Eastern Europe to the rich West (Western Europe, the US, and Canada).

Roma migrants in the West

Because of the "modernity" feature, the third migration wave might be defined as one common migration wave in spite of its heterogeneity and different characteristics over the years. In this framework, we can distinguish the following four types of migration:

1. "Gastarbeiter" from Yugoslavia,
2. Political and quasipolitical asylum seekers,
3. Refugees from war and ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, and
4. Transborder labor mobilities within the European Union.

These four basic types of migrations often fully or partially overlap chronologically. They are not unchangeable, and one type can transfer to another, and in the end all four types might eventually lead to the permanent settlement of Roma from Eastern Europe in Western Europe.²⁴

As already mentioned, in the past the Roma migrated as part of the larger society only occasionally and only in specific individual cases. This type of mobility grew into a real migration

wave only with the mobility of the Yugoslavian citizens (including the Roma), which began during the 1960s and was strengthened during the 1970s when Tito opened Yugoslavia's borders (formally in 1968) and encouraged its citizens to work in Western Europe. This contractual labor migration was based on traditional forms of labor mobility, known by the Ottoman Turkish term *gurbet*. *Gurbet* was characteristic for the Balkans already in the times of the Ottoman Empire and has been preserved in the Balkans in a modified form up to today,²⁵ and it has been adopted by the Roma as well. The

first individuals going to work in Western Europe in the framework of the *gurbet* model were Yugoslav citizens ("Gastarbeiters"). In the beginning, they stayed within the framework of the *gurbet* model and did not terminate their connections with their homeland where their family members remained. The *gurbet* migrants periodically returned home, they helped their relatives, and they even built themselves houses in their homeland for their old age. Gradually, however, and mainly after 1972, when Yugoslavian "Gastarbeiters" received permission to take their family members with them, many of them opted for permanent settlement in their new countries. All Roma who migrated from the former Yugoslavia did so as Yugoslavian citizens (i.e. as an integral part of the larger society in which they

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lived) and were not singled out as Roma by the authorities and initially remained almost invisible to the surrounding population. This was the start of the processes of “hidden” Roma migration, which in current times have become numerous but have remained mostly invisible, i.e. the “hidden” Roma migrants are not noticed by official statistics or by researchers and therefore are not the subjects of specific policies within their host countries or of academic studies.²⁶

Starting with the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989–90 and continuing today, large parts of Eastern Europe’s population have travelled to different Western European countries (including Greece), and many Roma have been migrating as a composite part of the population of their home countries such that their ethnic belonging has gone mostly unnoticed in their new homes. This movement in the case of the Roma is usually designated as migration, but should rather be referred to as labor mobility. In the beginning this repeated the well-known historical patterns of single male and female *gurbet*, and the ones heading west were doomed to work illegally or semi-legally to fill the deficits for cheap labor in different spheres – agriculture, construction, certain kinds of social services, etc. This migration started from South Eastern Europe, and even now Roma from this region are still the main component of this migration; however, after some time this wave of migration has included some Roma from Central European countries²⁷ and some from the countries of the former USSR.²⁸ After the EU accession of most countries in Eastern Europe and the removal of visa obligations, the processes of transborder labor mobility (which were already legal) began to take place en masse. The tendency for transforming short-term mobility into constant emigration became obvious, and while initially only single Roma of working age headed abroad, today the dominant trend is for the permanent settlement of entire families. The countries preferred by the migrants from South Eastern and Central European countries are different, as are the processes of legalization, preferred occupation, and so on, but in any case the Roma have their own place in this common migration wave that encompasses all of Europe.²⁹

Under the current conditions of migration, when Roma from Eastern Europe become permanently settled in Western Europe and become local citizens they preserve themselves as Roma communities, but at the same time they remain (at least for now) linked to the national migrant diasporas of their respective countries of origin. Moreover, Roma in migration maintain much higher levels of contact with their respective national diasporas than with Roma migrants from other countries or with Roma from their host countries (with only some individual exceptions, such as among the so-called Kaldaraši from Bulgaria who occasionally create networks with Kaldaraš from the former

Yugoslavia living in the West, but not with other Kelderari from Romania who are related to them too). A specific case involves Roma communities with preferred Turkish identity from Bulgaria, who in the conditions of emigration are using networks of migrants from Turkey for settling in host countries (mainly in Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium) and are often striving to meld with the Turkish migrant diasporas in these countries.³⁰

Parallel to the “invisible” or “hidden” migrations described above, when Roma move to other countries as inseparable parts of the society, there are still cases, although not so numerous, when Roma migrate as a distinct ethnic community and are highly visible in the public sphere. The beginning of these processes was at the end of the 1980s when in Germany, under the active influence of human rights organizations, a public campaign for legalizing the status of the Roma migrants from Yugoslavia started, but for Roma not as Yugoslavian citizens, but as a separate community. The initial idea of the human rights organizations, which insisted on a special approach towards the Roma, was that the Roma had been a discriminated minority in their homelands where their human rights had been constantly violated. Such a thesis, however, could not be accepted without doubts, especially in regard to Yugoslavia, thus a new argument was invented, that the Roma are a priori bearers of a specific type of culture, which is related to their nomadic way of life, and for them being national citizens is not the primary aspect of their condition, but instead it is their traditions, that they are “de facto stateless”, which is why the approach towards them should not be the same as for all other Yugoslavs.³¹

Almost immediately after the breakdown of the socialist system, the theme of violated human rights of minorities and the discrimination of the Roma in Eastern Europe emerged. This

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gave new political dimensions to the attempts of the Roma to migrate from these countries and try to find political shelter in different countries in Western Europe (as well as in the US and Canada) under the argument that they were persecuted by the majority communities in their countries of origin. These migrations (or attempts at migration) were uneven in scale, chronology, and country of origin and destination, and they were determined by different circumstances. These included the first attempts of Roma from Bulgaria and Romania to receive political asylum

in Germany in 1991–1993, which was followed by the emigration of Roma from Poland and the Baltic states to Great Britain during the second half of the 1990s; the emigration of Roma from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary to Canada, which started to grow in importance and size after 1997; and the entrance of Roma from the Czech Republic and Slovakia to Great Britain in 1997 and later to Belgium and Finland in 1999–2000 and so on.³² However, following the EU accession of the Eastern European countries, which



Girls from the Roma camp and girls from the neighboring non-Roma settlement Vrela Ribnicka are attending dancing classes together in Podgorica, Montenegro.

PHOTO: OSCE



Presentation of a new EU project for Roma inclusion.

PHOTO: EU-DELEGATION TO THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA 2018

presupposed the ratification of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the introduction of specific measures for minority protection, these types of migrations came to an end. Nowadays the only country continuing to accept (although reluctantly) Roma as refugees is Canada.

The case with Roma refugees from former Yugoslavia is more specific, but is also an example of migration of Roma as a separate community. After the dissolution of the Yugoslav federation, the continuous wars and ethnic cleansing led large groups of Roma to migrate westwards. The first migration currents emerged in the beginning of the 90s when during the Bosnian War (1992–95) many Roma migrated to Italy. Especially large were the migrations from Kosovo after the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999 and the continuing ethnic cleansings being carried out by the local Albanians. Many Roma, Egyptians, and Ashkali (collectively referred to as RAE according to the accepted terminology) were forced to leave the province and to escape to Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia³³, where they continue to live under the status of internally displaced persons. Many of them managed to reach Western Europe (mainly Germany), where they also remain with unclear status and are under the continuous threat of being deported back to Kosovo, despite the

fact that international forces and local authorities are unable to assure their safety there.

In Italy in the 1980s, as a result of active lobbying from NGOs mainly linked to the Catholic Church (especially the NGO *Opera Nomadi*), the local (Italian) nomads (officially referred to as Rom, Sinti, and Camminanti) received the right to lead a nomadic way of life and the right to stop in proper “halting camps”.³⁴ Based on the perception of Italian Rom, Sinti, and Camminanti as nomads, all other Roma migrants, including refugees from the wars in Yugoslavia, were automatically declared to be “nomads”, and according to this criterion they were exempt from the programs for integration of other refugees and migrants and were directly accommodated in “campi nomadi”.³⁵ Placing the Roma from Yugoslavia, the majority of whom had been a settled population for several centuries and had a high level of social integration, into unknown conditions for such a long time, in which a new generation had already grown up without knowing other social and cultural realities, has ultimately led to one of the most striking cases of mass desocialization in Europe in recent decades, the results of which will be very hard to overcome.³⁶ Such desocialization affected not only the Roma war refugees from former Yugoslavia in Italy, but also other Roma migrants. In contrast is the case of Roma refugees from the former Yugoslavia who fled to different countries (such as Sweden, Switzerland, and Germany) and who were not perceived as “eternal nomads” and who received residence permits and seem to have become well integrated with their host populations.

The migrations of Roma took on new forms and dimensions after 2001, after the removal of visa restrictions for most of the countries in Eastern Europe, and especially after 2007, when Romania and Bulgaria also joined the European Union and their citizens gradually received full rights within the framework of the common labor market. Thus, formally speaking, Roma from these two countries had already become an integral part of the total flow of labor within the EU and were not semi-legal migrants. In these cases, it is no longer justified to speak about Roma migration instead of simply about Roma mobility within the united Europe because their travels are in compliance with the fundamental principle upon which a united Europe is built – the free movement of people, goods, and capital. From this point of view, the so-called (still!) Roma migrations are actually an integral part of the overall flow of labor mobility within the united Europe and they are, at least to some degree, subject to the general rules of the pan-European labor market.

If, however, Roma mobility is reduced simply to migration, in the sense of a change of domicile (from Eastern to Western Europe), then even in this regard important changes can be observed over the past quarter century. In the 1990s, with the exception of refugees from the Yugoslav wars, the vast majority of Roma (especially from Romania and Bulgaria) migrated within the framework of the *gurbet* model mostly to the Mediterranean countries. Gradually, however, large parts of these migrants brought their entire families to the West, many of them residing in the north (mainly Germany), and in the last decade family migrations have tended to include not only small children, but

also the elderly generation. The return home, if such a return is a future prospect at all, is postponed for an indefinite future and is only for future retirees, not for grown up children who have lost connections to the homeland of their parents. Of course, the situations for these populations are very transient and there is no sharp boundary between temporary labor mobility and migration for permanent living, although there is a clear trend in this direction.

Today we can make a clear distinction between the two strategies in Roma migration (as a community and as part of a larger society), and this includes the transition from one strategy to the other and vice versa depending on the conditions in the various host countries. Such a modification in strategy can be implemented not only within one and the same community, but also within one and the same family.

The vast majority of the bearers of the old “community” migration strategy are Roma from Romania who in the current wave of migration are heading towards Italy, France, Spain, and Portugal, and also to Great Britain, Ireland, the Nordic countries, and elsewhere. They are using a centuries-old tactic for earning their living – begging on the streets in big towns. Because of their way of earning their living and distinctive way of dressing, they are highly visible in the eyes of the surrounding population and thus become the stereotyped image of Roma migrants as a whole.³⁷ In this way, the migrations of Romanian Roma are “visible” to the local authorities and the media, while other Roma migrants, for example, the Bulgarian Roma in Italy, remain largely out of public view and are mostly unknown to researchers and authorities.³⁸

In many cases, the policies of the host countries are the main factor for adapting this strategy of “community” migration by many (but not all) Romanian Roma. The clearest case of this is Italy, where not only Roma refugees from Yugoslavia, but also a large proportion of Roma migrants from Romania are automatically declared to be “nomads” and nobody bothers to investigate their real current or traditional way of life. According to this policy, they are exempt from the programs for integration of other refugees and migrants and are directly accommodated in the “campi nomadi”.³⁹ These policies create conditions for marginalization and desocialization, but at the same time they also establish economically favorable conditions for those Roma whose main goal is to earn as much money as possible from migrating and to send remittances home. Very often, which perhaps sounds paradoxical for communities perceived as nomads, they invest much of their earnings in the building and restoration of houses in their home countries. The only thing that they need to do in order to be able to take advantage of the offered goods (free accommodation, benefits, donations, and support from municipalities, NGOs, and churches) is to declare themselves as Roma, i.e. as a specific nomadic community, and to visibly demonstrate their belonging to these “exotic” people. In other contexts, e.g. in some places in Spain, the Roma from Romania (including close relatives of those living in camps in Italy) live invisibly in normal urban conditions.

The case of Italy is more of an exception than the rule for



Folder informing on possibilities to apply for funding for different projects targeting Roma inclusion. PHOTO: THE EUROPEAN PLATFORM FOR ROMA INCLUSION



PHOTO: FMO / MARIA KNOPH VIGSNÆS

Delia, 4, is one of the 130 children who participated in the EEA Grants supported project ‘A good start’ that started in 2014. “The project made it possible for me to go to work and support my girls, because my youngest daughter was enrolled in preschool,” says her mother Maria.

Western Europe. To some extent, the situation in France is similar, where the majority (but not all) of the Roma who are settled in camping places are from Romania (usually in the public statements of politicians and the media these migrants are explicitly mentioned as Roma from Romania and Bulgaria, but reference to Bulgaria is obviously made for political reasons because the Bulgarian Roma are mostly absent in such camping places or are present there only in insignificant numbers). These Roma are heirs of the ex-nomadic groups (who settled one, two, or three generations ago) or even communities who have never fully discontinued their semi-nomadic way of life. In this case, we could speak about a process of “renomadization”, which softens the markers of desocialization attached to such living conditions. In other countries of Western Europe, the cases of the adaptation of Roma migrants from Eastern Europe to the condition of life of the local nomads are mostly exceptions. We can also speak about a special approach towards the Roma migrants in Great Britain in many cases where a part of these migrants (mainly from Romania and Slovakia) are subject to the care of local authorities and NGOs in spite of the fact that they are not considered (at least officially) to be nomads. Similar cases of deliberate

“separation” of Roma migrants from other migrants from their countries of origin also appear in some other European countries (including Belgium, the Netherlands, the Nordic countries, some localities in Germany, etc.). Sporadically also in other localities throughout Europe, Roma, again mainly from Romania, are building illegal camps or shantytowns that are periodically removed by the authorities, and here again the choice of living place is not because of nomadism, but for economic and social reasons. Thus it is no coincidence that in the most widely known “problem cases” of Roma migrants in the West (e.g. Bordeaux, Glasgow, Duisburg, etc.) it is not actually about communities of former nomads but about Roma who have been leading a sedentary way of life for centuries. Sometimes even Roma who initially migrated as part of a community and were invisible have, under specific circumstances such as pressure and rejection by their co-citizens or because of temporary employment difficulties, moved into a visible existence through underlining their ethnic origin.

The two basic patterns of Roma migration from Eastern to Western Europe presented above are unevenly reflected in research, policies, and the public sphere. Primary attention is focused on the migration of Roma “as a community”, while the migration of Roma “as a society” in most cases is not even mentioned or at best is just briefly noted, and only a very limited number of studies that regard the Roma as part of society can be found.⁴⁰

The primary question in the study of Roma migration should be what the proportion is between the two basic strategies because this ratio determines the overall characteristics of the migration. This ratio depends largely on the specific cases for understandable reasons (lack of accurate statistics, switching from one pattern to another, changing the host countries, etc.), and it is extremely difficult (if it is possible at all) to find an accurate and definite response to this question. However, at least in general terms, we can draw some conclusions, and the following is just one example in this regard. Currently in Berlin the number of Roma families coming for a few months and begging on the city streets is in the hundreds, but the number of permanently residing Roma families (e.g. from the former Yugoslavia and Bulgaria) is in the thousands. Of course, this is an isolated example and might not be representative, but still, based on specific research in various locations and some fragmentary observations, it can be concluded that the ratio of publicly “visible” and “invisible” Roma migrants across Europe is at least 1:4, and the difference is probably much larger; in other words, when speaking and writing about Roma migrations from East to West it is most often just about the visible tip of the iceberg, and the true dimensions of the migration are yet unknown and need to be examined and clarified.

A logical question is why in this situation the majority of mod-

ern research on Roma migration has focused only on “the visible tip of the iceberg” and only a small number of studies are devoted specifically to the “invisible” migration of Roma. It is completely possible that the focus of media attention, NGO projects, and national and local policies in the host countries in the West is only on cases of publicly “visible” Roma migrants, especially when they are living in miserable conditions or when they create certain problems. By remaining within this paradigm, current studies of Roma migration in fact take part in the process of stigmatization of the Roma as a “problematic community” that is “ungovernable”⁴¹ and that requires a special approach.

In direct relation to the two basic strategies of Roma migrations from East to West and giving preference to one of them (the migrations of Roma as a community) is also the question of the causes of these migrations. In various scholarly works we find different answers ranging from stereotypical, romanticizing explanations, e.g. Roma migrations are a “way of maintaining their freedom and cultural vitality”,⁴² to underlining the issues of poverty and discrimination, and these lead to conclusions such as “caught in this vicious circle, unable to trust either western or eastern European societies, individual applicants are confronted with a choice between coming to terms with a *long-term clandestine existence* and adopting an attitude of non-cooperation-in-principle with the majority or *gadje society*”.⁴³

In the majority of cases, however, the reality is different, and nowadays the causes of Roma migration to the West are the same as for their surrounding population and are related to the difficult social and economic crises of the time of the transition. The high unemployment rate, especially among the Roma, and an increase of anti-Gypsyism and discriminatory attitudes are just additional factors pushing the Roma to migrate. In their migration,

as well as in adapting to the host country, the Roma cooperate closely with representatives of *gadje* societies from their countries of origin and from the host countries too, thus we can hardly speak about “non-cooperation-in-principle”.

Keeping in mind that the majority of Roma today migrate as part of the general populations of their countries of origin, we can identify the main reason for migration to the West today for both Roma and non-Roma. This appears

primarily to be the huge difference in living standards between the East and West. For certain occupations, the ratio between salaries in the East and West can reach 1:10 and even more, and when speaking about the extent of social welfare it is possible to receive in the West what in some cases exceeds the amount of any wages available to the migrants in their countries of origin. Thus, it is completely understandable that the Roma, including those with a good education and with job skills, are an integral part of the national migration flows to the West. Even if we imagine that all social and economic problems that are specific for the Roma in Eastern Europe were to disappear and they were to become truly

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PROJECTS BY LOCAL
AUTHORITIES AND
NGOs.”**



equal with the majority population, this would not change their life strategies oriented at migration in the West (or would only change them to a minor degree). In this sense, all EU programs and projects that are implemented in Eastern and Western Europe aimed only at limiting the Roma migrations to the West and not at equalizing the living standards in both parts of Europe are doomed to failure.

The outcomes of the current Roma migration to the West have different dimensions. On the one hand, the migrating Roma families who settle permanently in the Western European countries and who are already part of the huge “invisible” migration from the East are meeting the continuing need of Western European market structures for low-skilled or skilled immigrant workers, thus in the end this “invisible” migration is profitable for the West. On the other hand, as a result of such migration, in Eastern Europe and especially in the Balkans the remaining Roma live mostly in marginalized communities, are unable to migrate, and have the lowest social literacy rates and the least qualifications. This further complicates and undermines the efforts for successful social integration in their home countries. In this situation, the development prospects of the Roma migration from East to West are difficult to predict, especially looking in the more distant future, but it is clear already that such migrations have particularly negative effects on the Roma who remain in their homelands.

This brings us to the main question set in the title of our text, namely how the Roma migrations affect Roma integration and inclusion – both in their countries of origin in the East and in their host countries in the West.

EU strategies, policies, and projects of Roma integration

We will start from the West because there, at least at first glance, the problems of integration and inclusion of Roma migrants seem smaller and easier to overcome. This is true to some extent because special assistance in integration is only needed by a relatively small portion of Roma migrants. Roma who are “invisible”, i.e. those who migrated as part of the macrosociety from their home countries, also face difficulties, but these are usually solved according the common rules, i.e. as far as the integration of migrants from the respective nations from Eastern Europe in the West is successful, the same degree of success would also apply to the integration of these Roma. More complicated, however, is the task of integrating those Roma who migrate as a separate community and are perceived as such, detached from any other migrants, and who are regarded in host countries as characterized by a nomadic lifestyle and a specific culture that does not allow them to integrate along with other migrants from Eastern Europe and whose integration requires special policies of support and special projects.

As already mentioned, whether Roma migrate as a community largely depends on the policies of the host country towards them, i.e. it might sound paradoxical, but in fact it turns out that the host countries have largely created their problems with Roma migrants themselves. This paradox is due primarily to

the special attitudes towards the Roma, which, although quite different in different countries, are part of a general paradigm in perceiving Roma as a very specific community. Here the question is not whether the Roma are housed in special camps, or are provided with tents or caravans, or are allowed to build their temporary settlements, or are receiving social housing, etc. In any case, Roma migrants are perceived as a community that needs special care, resulting in many projects by local authorities and NGOs. Nobody wants to pose a simple question such as – why do Roma migrants in their home countries not live in tents or temporary housing and do not sleep in the subway but on the contrary are often building new houses with the money earned in the West?

Taking into account the differences in living standards between East and West, it is obvious that many Roma prefer to live in this way in the West (at least temporarily, although it is often the case that what is provisional over time tends to become permanent) instead of seeking employment and social integration in their countries of origin. In other words, this approach towards Roma as a specific community that needs special care, not only fails to contribute to the integration of Roma in the West, and it also prevents their integration in the East. Indeed, here lies the answer to the question of why the integration of Roma migrants in the West encounters so many problems and why their future prospects are unclear. This is because the leading paradigm for achieving this integration is the attitude towards the Roma as a detached, specific, and stigmatized community, not as part of broader migration flows within united Europe. Thus there has been the growth of lobbyists of local authorities in individual regions or networks of cities, as well as numerous NGOs, for whom the Roma migrants are important social capital through which they generate significant financial income (in some cases these funds are crucial for the very existence of individual NGOs).

This leads to a number of absurd situations, for example, Roma arriving from Romania are provided with tents or even with trailers and are encouraged to settle on open spaces in cities (which is otherwise forbidden for local residents); in order to hide begging on the streets, Roma are provided with special newspapers that they are “selling on the streets” to support vulnerable groups; and when the host countries try to prohibit begging, the EU institutions explain to them that begging should not be forbidden because it is a form of free expression. In this situation it is not surprising that in recent years the levels of anti-Gypsy sentiments have dramatically increased both in Western and in Eastern Europe.

From this, it becomes clear why the vast majority of the realized projects for social integration of Roma migrants are actually directed to the opposite direction, not to the migrants themselves but to the endless training of local authorities and social servants about the specifics of Romani culture, the flyers that are translated into the Romani language, etc., and much less time is allocated (or is not allocated at all) to the training of Roma migrants in the local language and in the rules that must be respected in the local community if they want to successfully integrate into it. Moreover, for many years various projects un-



The project “EmPower; from dream to action” trained eleven Roma-women, age 18–30, and taught them skills in human rights, reading, writing, and social entrepreneurship.

PHOTO: EMPODER

der the auspices of the Council of Europe (Romed, RomAct) have been implemented based on the principle of mediation, which de facto preserves the current situation and which in fact stigmatizes the Roma as a community that is in need of constant special care, and the tendency is to expand the field of such kinds of projects from the East to the West. In fact, many policies, projects, and concepts currently being implemented in the West have already been tried for the past two decades in Eastern Europe and have repeatedly been shown not only to fail to solve the problems of the social integration of Roma, but on the contrary to lead to increased anti-Gypsy sentiments among the majority population. After the accession of most countries in the region to the European Union, the newly formed NGO sector largely transferred its engagement in Roma integration to the national and local authorities, which retained their leading models, and therefore achieved the same results, in other words, they achieved nothing. The models of the so-called “Gypsy industry” that during the time of transition failed to solve the problems of social integration of the Roma in Eastern Europe are being transferred to the West, and it is clear that the failures in the East will be repeated in the West.

Attempts of the EU bureaucrats to limit Roma migrations to the West by transferring the responsibility for social integration of the Roma to the countries in Eastern Europe, which are already members of European Union, actually constitute a breach of one of the fundamental principles upon which a united Europe is built – the free movement of people, goods, and capital. It is not difficult to forecast that the adoption of the European Framework of National Roma Inclusion Strategies,⁴⁴ followed by the development of national strategies for solving the problems of Roma in individual EU member states, will also end in failure. Not the least reason for this is drastic fun-

damental differences in what should be understood by “social integration” in Eastern and Western Europe. As an example of this, a guiding principle in Roma education in Eastern Europe was (and remains today) desegregation, i.e. removal of Roma children from different types of special schools (including from territorially detached mainstream schools with a predominant number of Roma pupils) and directing them to the mainstream education system. We can observe just the opposite attitude in the West, where there is the steady implementation of projects experimenting with various forms of what in the East would be called special (segregated) education, for example, in Sweden where under the pretext of combating discrimination (according to the Antidiscrimination Centre for the Roma in Stockholm “one of the major discriminatory aspects in the Swedish schools is the Romani pupils feeling of being invisible”)⁴⁵ and “to secure linguistic and cultural rights of Roma numerous projects initiated by municipalities are implemented in organizing particular classes or schools for the Romani pupils”⁴⁶ (including a form of home schooling).

The repercussions of Roma migration to the West on their home countries

When speaking and writing about contemporary Roma migrations within a united Europe, the focus is usually on the problems in host countries in the West. Very little, however, is written about the problems caused by these migrations for the countries of origin of Roma migrants in Eastern Europe – both for the countries as such and for the Roma who remain in those countries. Naturally, the strongest are the negative effects of Roma migration on the countries from which most migrants come (Romania and Bulgaria), but negative effects are also seen in other countries in the region.

Especially for the Roma living in Eastern Europe, migration to the West has led to comprehensive and significant changes in the internal structure of the community. As noted above, towards the West are heading primarily those Roma who are socially active and educated, or at least minimally literate (by the end of the period of state socialism the majority of the Roma population in Eastern Europe had reached this level). In the countries of origin remained primarily the largely marginalized sections of the community without social literacy and without any vocational qualification (as the saying goes - those who remained are those who are not able even to buy a bus ticket to the West).

Also remaining in the home countries is a tiny part of the new Roma elite created during the times of transition, for example, in Bulgaria 15 years ago there were more than 20 Roma political parties and over 600 Roma NGOs, but today there remain no more than a dozen NGOs. Outside of these publicly visible “Roma activists” in Eastern Europe, other parts of the community also remain home, but they are closed off within families and prefer not to publicly demonstrate their Roma identity.

In recent years, significant changes have taken place in the overall social context in Eastern Europe in which Roma integration and inclusion should be implemented. The anti-Gypsy attitudes from the time of transition are changing, and now a

new dominant anti-Gypsy public stereotype has appeared.⁴⁷ This stereotype involves the “privileged” Roma and is not just an extension of the existing anti-Gypsy public attitudes. It occupies a special structure-forming position and allows for the reconsideration of centuries-old anti-Gypsy stereotypes in a new light and gives them new meanings and social dimensions. From the perspective of the quantification of anti-Gypsy public attitudes, this does not lead to their increase or decrease, but it does change their content and overall public impact. Based on this stereotype, the Roma have begun to be perceived as a community that not only parasitizes on the labor of society, but is allowed and encouraged to do so. The Roma are perceived as a community that is making their living mainly from social assistance and child allowances, for whom there are assigned many special programs and projects, and for whom huge funds from the individual states and from the European Union are poured. The general public firmly believes that Roma do not have to comply with state laws or to observe public order and are not pushed to fulfill their civic obligations. In contrast, they are seen as being allowed by the state to enjoy special privileges to be parasites. The political elites in Eastern Europe often use the misconception of the special, privileged position of Roma as a cover for their own bankrupted efforts to solve the real problems of the Roma, justifying their policies for the social integration of Roma (or more often the policies are imitations of real or effective policies) as a result of pressure from the outside (by the European Union, the US, or numerous international organizations and institutions).

In this situation, all explicit actions are pre-destined to fail. It turns out that the more policies, programs, and projects aimed at Roma are realized, the more aggravated the anti-Roma public attitudes become. Roma migrations to the West have not only intensified anti-Gypsy attitudes according to which Roma migrants are accused of creating a poor public image of their countries of origin, but moreover, they have given Eastern Europeans a way out – so, as the popular sayings go now: “see, the West cannot integrate the Roma, but they want us to do this”, or even “if those in the West are so clever and know best how to integrate the Roma, let them to take all the Roma from us and integrate them into their own countries”. It is obvious that this social atmosphere, combined with economic discrepancy, is pushing the most active populations of Roma to migrate and is the reason for their choosing an “invisible” ethnic existence. Therefore, the prospects for social integration of the Roma in their home and host countries in the European Union are not encouraging at all – they are just the contrary – and the prospects for the integration of Roma who originate from countries outside of the European Union are even more desperate.

As can be seen from everything said so far, the policy towards the Roma and their migration from Eastern to Western Europe cannot in any case be considered successful – neither in the East nor in the West. In fact, and this is the most important consequence of Roma migration, the policies and projects for the social integration of the Roma have often had the opposite of their intended results and have led to the mass desocialization of cer-

tain parts of the Roma community. Given these developments, it would be naive to expect that things will improve in the near future if no changes are made to the overall general paradigm of current Roma policies. ✖

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From the documentary film *Merry Is the Gypsy Life*.



The salvation of Bulgarian Roma during WWII

THE FIRST FILM of a Roma director in Bulgaria is related to the little known history of the salvation of Bulgarian Roma during the WWII. *Merry Is The Gypsy Life* is a story of those saved and those unsaved.

The film director and script-writer Ludmila Petrova Zhivkova explains that she wanted to show historical facts to younger generations.

“It is most natural for me to have my debut on a theme related to the salvation of my community by my Bulgarian people. This fact is, unfortunately, not sufficiently known in Bulgaria



Ludmila Petrova Zhivkova.

she became aware of the lack of historical information about the Roma and the Roma Holocaust in particular.

“My own grandmother lived in a Jewish neighborhood here in Sofia during the WWII. Bulgarian authorities warned Muslim Roma

and abroad. Zhivkova has always been interested in historical research. While studying filmmaking at Sofia University,

families that unless they changed their names and converted to Christianity, they would be deported along with the Jews.”

THE FILM'S scenario is based on historical sources, and it presents key fragments showing the attitude of Germany, Croatia, and Bulgaria towards the Roma community during WWII.

Of course, Bulgaria is a special case with its unrevealed secret around the salvation of Bulgarian Roma. The parallel to the other countries as well as the investigation by the film's author tries to answer the question ‘How come

the Bulgarian Roma survived during WWII?’

“By way of comparison, we demonstrate the differences and similarities in their policies and the great decision of Bulgaria to save not only its Jews, but also its Gypsies, she says and continues:

EMINENT ROMA studies scholars have expressed their opinion on the question, such as Daniel Vojak, Elena Marushiakova, Vesselin Popov, Plamena Slavova and others, as well as some Bulgarian Roma activists.” ✕

NINNA MÖRNER