

A CHRONOLOGICAL DIGEST OF EVENTS AFFECTING THE ROMA OF HUNGARY 2002—2006²

2002

Fourteen Roma organizations joined the agreement on co-operation at the Parliamentary election 2002 signed by Fidesz, MDF and Lungo Drom National Civil Federation for the Protection of Roma Rights on 21th December last year. The fourteen organizations include Phralipe National Independent Roma Organization, as well as the independent organizations for Roma rights in the city of Miskolc, and Békés, Somogy, Szabolcs and Győr-Sopron-Mosony counties, and the Association for Roma Rights. According to the chairman of Lungo Drom, Flórián Farkas the agreement concluded with Fidesz makes it possible that more Roma politicians can be Members of Parliament, as Lungo Drom can nominate one person for one of the first 15 places on the national electoral lists of both parties, one person for those of the 16—25 and 26—35 places, as well as for seven regional lists.

MSZP is not considering concluding an agreement similar to that of Fidesz – Lungo Drom with any of the Roma organizations, but they have several Roma candidates, amongst others Aladár Horváth a former SZDSZ general assembly representative. Further potential candidates are Tibor Oláh, the chairman of MSZP's Roma Division, Éva Orsós, the former head of the Minority Office, and László Teleki, the deputy chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self Government. That way, Teleki might be the only Roma politician of the National Roma Self-Government established by Lungo Drom who becomes an MP of MSZP and not as that of Fidesz.

2001 was called by Viktor Orbán the year of the breakthrough in his annual state of the nation delivered in the Vigadó concert hall on Thursday. He underlined the fact that

² Based on the archives of the websites of Népszabadság, Romapage and Rom.net

the number of Roma students receiving scholarship has become thirteen times more in 2001. As he said, the way of the Roma to their rise leads through work and learning.

In case of their victory at the elections, the Roma inhabitants were promised by MSZP new work places and higher housing subsidy, and, amongst others, they want to make arousal of hatred be punishable. Péter Medgyessy candidate for Prime Minister announced that six Roma candidates will be on the national electoral list of MSZP. In case of its coming into power, MSZP would involve the Roma in large number in the governmental activity. They would improve the conditions of the minority self-governments' operation. MSZP wants to make propaganda against community and arousal of hatred punishable, and they would enact laws providing equal treatment for every Hungarian civilian and prohibiting negative discrimination.

Possibilities of work and further education for all the Roma is promised by Fidesz and Lungo Drom—it was told after a negotiation with the participation of Viktor Orbán, the leading governing party and the chairman of the Roma organization. Following the negotiation, Zoltán Pokorni said: Fidesz grants in its programme that every Roma youth who wants to study in higher education may have the chance to it and it cannot be prevented by the small number of scholarships. Elaboration of another system is also needed; the one that should help and teach Roma children, as well as develop gifted Roma children. The basis of such a system has already established by János Arany Programme for Education of Gifted and Talented Children. According to Mr Pokorni, a further important goal is that anyone who wants to work may do it. The state, via conscious location of industrial investment should create work places in underdeveloped regions. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Family Affairs a Roma Integration Bureau would be set up, and it would have a special department within the Prime Minister's Office. The work of the bureau would be evaluated by the Prime Minister and Lungo Drom at cabinet meetings every half a year.

The Hungarian Roma Parliament asks the Roma to support MSZP, rather than Fidesz which is in a kind of league with the MIÉP, as in his opinion the socialists are ready to adjust their Roma policy to the Roma's real problems. On the contrary Béla Osztojkán,

the vice president of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government thinks the governing parties made it clear that they are not willing to co-operate with István Csurka's party.

In the first turn of the parliamentary elections most of the Roma voted for the MSZP's list, while in the individual electoral wards the votes were shared between the candidates of the coalition and the opposition parties—said a socialist candidate, László Teleki, the deputy chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self Government on the basis of reports from twelve counties and his own experiences. The Roma politician thinks, approximately 200,000 more votes were given by the electors than it had been expected. As he said, the Roma population's most important goal was to prevent the extreme right MIÉP's coming into power.

In the new Parliament four Roma politicians have seats. Fidesz has never had before Roma Members of Parliament but now they have three of them. The MSZP faction group is strengthened by one Roma member. As it is clear from all these, previously Fidesz and MDF have not taken care of supporting Roma persons' participation in the work of the Parliament. In last December Fidesz and MDF concluded an agreement with Lungo Drom, the Roma organization with the largest number of members. The governing parties granted to provide ten places for Roma candidates on their national and regional lists. Consequently, as many as three Roma candidates have seats in the Parliament: Flórián Farkas, the leader of Lungo Drom and the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government, József Varga, the head of the Public Foundation for Roma in Hungary, and Mihály Lukács, the chairman of the committee of Lungo Drom. There were six Roma politicians on the national list of the Social Party, but only one of them had a place with real chance. The paper form came true: after the second turn of the election it became clear that the only Roma politician in the Socialist faction would be László Teleki. During the coming political period considerable changes are expected in Roma policy, since four Roma members of Parliament will work in the legislation, which is unprecedented.

In an open letter, leaders of the National Roma Self-Government (OCÖ), who had become Members of Parliament from party lists, were called upon to resign by Miklós

Pálfi deputy chairman, the chairman of the Roma self-government in Szolnok County. He reminded of the resolution adopted by the presidential board in 1998, still in force, prohibiting the representatives of OCÖ to enter for parliamentary seats as candidates of any political party. As he writes, consequently and with the recognition that the National Roma Self-Government cannot serve the interests of any party, personal and structural changes are inevitable. According to Miklós Pálfi, the first necessary step is that all those having their seats in the Parliament as members on any political factions, are due to resign their functions, which is their both moral and political responsibility.

László Teleki is expected to be the political under-secretary of state dealing with Roma affairs in the Prime Minister's Office. László Teleki, the deputy chairman of the National Roma Self-Government and the leader of the National Association of Gypsy Organizations, is the only Roma politician became a Member of Parliament as a socialist candidate. According to information strengthened from several sources, with the leadership of Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy a cabinet of Roma affairs is to be established. Although no official decision has been made yet, possibly Teleki will hold the post of secretary in that board.

Flórián Frakas stayed the chairman of the Roma Self-Government: at the general assembly of the organization held at Nyíregyháza on Friday, the majority of the members of the board being present turned down the proposal concerning personal issues. Flórián Farkas' opposition wanted the chairman to resign because according to a resolution adopted by the OCÖ four years ago; its members cannot enter the parliamentary elections as a candidate of any political party. At present, this prohibition concerns three members of the organization: the chairman and Mihály Lukács deputy chairman, the MPs of Fidesz and László Teleki socialist MP, would-be Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs. According to the Roma Press Centre in the opinion of Mr Teleki who holds the post of deputy chairman in the organization, within the OCÖ, rather than the opposition between the supporters of the right and the left wings, formation of other two groups can be detected, one for and another against democratic operation.

The Prime Minister is counting on the minorities' participation in preparation of laws as well as in the would-be National Council which is going to replace the second

chamber of Parliament. Péter Medgyessy promises, amongst others, to establish new institutions for the benefit of the minorities.

Following the municipal election in autumn, the number of minority self-governments may increase up to the double of their current number, as it is thought by Antal Heizer president-elect of the National and Ethnical Minority Office. On the one hand, this increase is welcome, but, on the other, corrupt practices should be prevented. In his opinion new laws are needed so that candidates who are not representatives of any minorities may have less opportunity to enter the election of minorities.

The chairman of the Roma self-government in Jászládány appealed to the minority ombudsman and the county administrative office as in his opinion the local authority had unilaterally changed the pedagogy programme of the local general school. The chairman of the local minority self-government László Teleki said: a decision of the local authority made the other day deleted the catch-up education programme for Roma children from the syllabus, consequently, the authority does not receive state subsidy for the education of Roma children any more. He thinks, it means several million HUF less income for the school budget.

Each government took successful measures. It is method that would have been needed, said László Teleki Socialist MP, Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs in the Prime Minister's Office, evaluating the last twelve years' work. In his opinion the new government should have a real picture of the Roma's situation before taking any significant steps. He reinforced that he voluntarily resigns his post of deputy chairman in the National Gypsy Self-Government as it is incompatible with his office of under-secretary.

Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy will be the president of the Roma Coordination Council which is to be established in September. The Roma Coordination Council will take part in preparation and realization of the government's strategy for Roma affairs as well as in harmonizing the activity of different ministries. The government has not decided about the composition of the board of 21 members yet, but it is taken for granted

that non-Roma experts will be involved in it: the Under-Secretary is counting on the participation of Antal Csongor, the director of Autonomy Foundation. Aladár Horváth, leader of the Roma Civil Rights' Foundation, the councillor of Roma affairs to the Prime Minister will take part at the meetings, too. Of the Roma politicians, Flórián Farkas, chairman of the National Gypsy Self-Government and Lungo Drom and a Fidesz national assembly representative is expected to be a member of the Council. Recently, in a broadcast discussion Jenő Zsigó, the leader of the Roma Parliament sharply called a fatal failure the fact that the Socialist party nominated László Teleki, the (other day resigned) deputy chairman of the National Gypsy Self-Government as their representative and then as an under-secretary. Mr Zsigó thinks, that Mr Teleki, whom he qualified as of stone-age thinking and a kapo, has repressed the Roma in Hungary for eight years. In spite of this critical remark, the Under-Secretary would welcome the president of the Roma Parliament in the new co-ordination council.

With a decision made on Friday, the government added HUF 400 million to the budget separated for scholarship subsidy supporting Roma youths' studies. This means a 35 per cent increase in comparison with the last year budget, and according to calculations it will ease the studies of 17 thousand Roma youths. In the last five years' course the number of Roma youths receiving some kind of scholarship has become fifteen times more, and a fifty percent further increase is expected from the next year.

In the course of the last fifty days the Roma in Hungary have received compensation for the previous fifty years, László Teleki, the Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs in the Prime Minister's Office stated. Commissioners are planned to deal with Roma affairs in six ministries. There will be much more money for Roma youths' scholarships than ever before, and minority self governments will be granted more subsidy, too.

Within the Ministry of Employment Policy and Labour a Directorate for Equal Opportunities has been established. At a press conference on Wednesday Péter Kiss minister introduced Katalin Lévai, the head of the new institution. The three secretariats of the Directorate will deal with employment rehabilitation, equal opportunities for men and women, and labour market programmes for the Roma.

None of the political forces may build its policy on hatred, since who arises hatred, that is doomed to failure, Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy said at a wreath ceremony for the memory of Roma holocaust in Nagykanizsa last evening. In front of the only memorial for the Roma holocaust, the Prime Minister said: Hungarian society has historical debt to the Roma. According to Medgyessy the Roma in Hungary suffered not only of Nazi genocide, but after 1945 of discriminating practice of the left wing authoritarianism also caused severe damages since the Roma were not officially recognized as an independent nationality for decades. The Prime Minister said, the Roma population is the main loser of the transition therefore the new cabinet has to improve the Roma's situation urgently. Amongst the first steps the Prime Minister mentioned the establishment of the Under-Secretariat for Roma Affairs, the appointment of commissioners dealing with Roma affairs in six ministries, and the increase in the budget funds for Roma children's education by forty percent.

This weekend two school opening ceremonies will be held in Jászladány at the school of Heroes' Square: one by the municipal school on Saturday, and another one by the newly established foundation school on Sunday. As far as we know, the private school has no ministerial licence to operate yet. At the time of the school opening ceremonies the local gypsy self-government will hold peaceful demonstration protesting against the foundation school which, in their opinion, was established illegally as its goal is to segregate pupils of Roma origin. The pupils of the foundation school have to pay tuition fee, and the Roma families living in poverty cannot afford it, László Kállai said. Of the 650 pupils earlier attending the municipal school in Jászladány 205 had been registered out by the end of August, this is the expected number of pupils attending the new foundation school, Mrs. Ferenc Vincze headmaster of the municipal school informed us. She added: the rooms in the new school building, opened six years ago, were shared, one wing will be for the pupils of the foundation school, the other for the pupils of the municipal school.

On Thursday an electoral coalition was established by the Forum of Gypsy Organizations of Hungary, the Democratic Roma Organization, the National Association of Roma Organizations, Roma Civil Rights' Foundation, the National

Association of Roma Intellectuals, the Integration Roma League, the Association of Roma Women of Public Life, and the New Roma Round-Table. According to their co-operating agreement the main goal of their coalition is “to replace Lungo Drom led by Flórián Farkas, and reformation and democratic re-structuring of the National Gypsy Self-Government”.

The Ministry of Education, referring to lack of conditions ordained by regulations, did not grant ministerial identification number to the controversial foundation school in Jászladány. Without such a number the school cannot begin its operation. Earlier, the ombudsman judged the establishment of this school as a step against the local Roma population.

In Jászladány a demonstration was held by the parents of children who had been enrolled at the new institution for this year, to protest against the suspension of the foundation school’s operation. Zsolt Bagi, a local inhabitant, one of the organizers of this demonstration read out the letter that had been written to Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy. As he said, in their opinion, with the suspension of the school legality had been given up since parents are granted by the education law to provide the best education for their children. Ibolya Tóth, headmistress of the foundation school said, nobody was asked about his or her origin at the admission process, and everybody was admitted who undertook the conditions of the institution, amongst others, paying a HUF 3,000 monthly tuition fee. She hopes the school can remove the earmark of illegality, and the institution may operate, according to the will of the settlement’s vast majority.

The parents, who had enrolled their children at Mihály Antal Foundation School, blocked the main road leading from Jászladány to Jászkísér with almost eighty cars, trucks, tractors, and motorbikes. This week this has been the second movement of the parents, who are protesting because the Administrative Office of Szolnok County, referring to the infractions of the law when establishing the institution, withdrew the school’s licence to operate. As it is well known, according to the local Gypsy self-government the private school is discriminating as the poor and mainly Roma families cannot afford the monthly tuition fee. The Ministry of Education and the ombudsman took a similar standpoint.

As many as fifty Roma have been forced to live in tents in Paks for two weeks now, since the local authority demolished their houses as being life-threatening buildings. The seven homeless families are trying to buy houses in the nearby villages, but each settlement refuses that the Roma move in therefore the owners of the chosen properties usually call off the bargain. It is to be feared that the Roma camping near Paks cannot find flats for themselves before the beginning of the winter.

Károly Kolompár's family managed to purchase a two-room house for HUF 2,5 million in Németskér on Wednesday. The Mayor of Paks paid the purchase price, however the family has not moved in. The reasons for this are explained by Mrs. József Mihályi, the mayor of Németskér, a settlement of 1,800 inhabitants: "On learning about the intents of Paks to purchase houses for the Roma from Bedőtanya here, at Németskér as well, the inhabitants of the village became shocked. Therefore called on the owners of the ten houses on sale here, I informed them about the public sentiment, and I suggested to them that they would rather not sell their houses now. All of them agreed with me. I failed to meet only one owner. At that time he was in Paks to receive the money for his house. On Thursday we called together an extraordinary session of the representatives' board where we decided to persuade the seller to call off the bargain; even at the cost that we pay the HUF 2.5 million purchase price to him. To tell the truth, we think that this house is not worth even a million. We also offered to reimburse him for the expenses in case he would be sued for calling off the bargain. By then, several people in Németskér had already offered their help with this. However, we tried to convince the seller in vain, he did not step back. On hearing this, ever more people from the village marched to the house already sold saying they would not allow the family from Bedőtanya to move in. They did not care that the police strengthened by commando had already surrounded the house by then."

As it is clear from the account of the mayor, the notary of Paks, the head of the county administrative office, and Aladár Horváth, the chairman of the Roma Civil Rights' Foundation were also present at the house, and they thought that the family from Bedőtanya should not move in here, as it were dangerous for them. They warned the family, already on their way, to turn back. The family did so, and the police, thinking that the danger was over, left Németskér. After eight on the Thursday evening several hundred people from the village invaded in the estate sold, and they began to destruct the house.

When the police arrived, the roof tiles were missing in patches of several square metres, and no windows or doors remained intact. The building attacked became temporarily unfit for use. Yesterday the police attempted to record the extent of demolition. It is evident now, that on the basis of the footprints in the dust it cannot be determine who had participated in the destruction, and, therefore, who committed criminal offence. The detectives cannot count on the help of the local inhabitants either.

The local authority of Németskér will purchase the house dilapidated by the villagers last Thursday, so protesting against that the Mayor of Paks bought that house for a Roma family remained homeless from Bedő tanya. The representatives' board of Németskér decided about purchasing the estate yesterday. The settlement deposited the two and half million Forints at a solicitor. The representatives of Németskér also decided to pass the house to the local Gypsy minority self-government. The minority self-government is going to maintain it as a community house.

At the weekend at 1,308 settlements and metropolitan districts 1,870 minority self-government elections were held, and 1,810 of them was successful. All the thirteen national and ethnical minorities in Hungary recognized by law may establish self-governments, half of the boards will be formed by the Roma. As many as fifty Roma representatives were elected to local self-governments as well. According to the data of the Ministry of the Interior at almost eighty settlements a candidate of the minority became the mayor. 35 of the are German, 20 Croatian, 12 Slovakian, and four Slovenian and Roma, respectively.

In line with the electoral law anyone may be a candidate of a minority provided he or she undertakes to represent that minority. That is how in Jászladány Mrs Gabriella Makai Dankó the local mayor's wife, Mrs Gellért Nagy, the vice president of the foundation running the ill-famed private school, János Balogh, the official in charge for constructions at the self-government, and Árpád Tolvaj, local electrician stood for election and won as representatives of the Roma, although none of them are of Roma origin. The only representative of Roma origin is Mrs Rita Suki Banya who is regarded now a traitor by many of the Roma in Jászladány.

With the leadership of Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy the Council for Roma Affairs is to be established this week, László Teleki, the Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs announced in Budapest on Monday. In accordance with the government decision Elemér Kiss, the leader of the Prime Minister's Office will be the new chairman of the Interministerial Committee for Gypsy Affairs, and his deputy chairman will be Mr Teleki. Earlier, the Under-Secretary of State suggested the appointment of six Roma commissioners into different ministries. The government theoretically supports the suggestion, but in its recent decision the government did not define the ministries where the posts of these commissioners should be created.

The inaugural meeting of the Roma self-government in Jászladány took only for thirty minutes yesterday afternoon. The five-member board—four of whom are non-Roma—decided about the election of the chairman and the representatives, and about forming two committees, without discussion or voting against. Mrs Rita Suki Banya, the only Roma member of the self-government was elected as the chairman of the board, and Mrs Gellért Nagy, the vice president of the foundation running the private school became her deputy. The wife of Jászladány's mayor, Mrs István Dankó dr Gabriella Makai, solicitor—who received the highest number of votes at the minority elections—did not undertake any leading position.

Never before so many Roma politicians have been qualified to participate as electors at the electoral assembly to choose the new National Gypsy Self-Government. Their number may be as many as five thousand. The Roma electors should prepare for a long electoral procedure.

2003

Forty to fifty Roma families are returning to Hungary from Canada every month. They are people who emigrated there over the past five years but have failed to secure refugee status or residence rights. Some statistics indicate that at least 5,000 Hungarian

citizens applied to the Canadian authorities for refugee status, about 300 of whom were able to satisfy the agencies considering their cases. The Canadians declared the remainder economic migrants and returned them to their country of origin. Some time ago the Hungarian authorities undertook to give returnees the possible assistance.

According to an analysis carried out by the United Nations Development Programme and International Labour Organization, the living standards of the Roma populations in the prospective European union members Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia are stuck at much the same level as Black Africa, the world's poorest zone. One Roma in ten suffers more or less constant hunger, one in two suffers it on a regular basis; their drinking-water supply is unsanitary, their children are severely malnourished, their education opportunities are slight, so that the chances of securing employment would be low even if they were not subjected to racial discrimination. Alongside a relatively high birth rate is an alarmingly high infant mortality, and a low life expectancy; thus, even though the Roma populations themselves consider their health 'reasonable' in reality it is catastrophically poor. Despite their multiple disadvantages and being caught in sundry social traps, very nearly half of the Roma nevertheless manage to find work on an occasional or regular basis, though usually in the black or grey economy. Their income (including all social assistance) are so minimal that more than half is spent paying for everyday necessities. When hard-pressed, their only available sources for private loans are at predatory interest rates. The poorest Roma, the study alleges, receive no assistance even from well-to-do Roma, but 'class solidarity' does exist with the most underprivileged non-Roma populations. Despite a widespread perception to the contrary, the vast majority of the Roma resort to begging or stealing for their survival only in extremis, and with feelings of shame and guilt having reduced to that. In reality, most of the Roma are eager to be integrated into the dominant society. But at the same time — like members of any other minority — they reject assimilation and the loss of their identity.

Candidates for the Democratic Roma Coalition (DRC) obtained 52 of the 53 seats on the newly elected National Gypsy Minority Self-Government in voting at the 11th January electoral assembly as, with a single exception, only individuals representing this organization appeared on voting papers. Apart from DRC candidates, only Elemér

Farkas, who was sponsored by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarian Gypsies, gained a seat in the self-government. At the assembly, with some 2,700 electors registering their attendance, a total of 1,347 individuals actually voted at the ballot boxes late on Saturday night. Lungo Drom did not participate in the voting; its supporters had previously left the hall to travel home because the protests that the party had lodged with the national Electoral Commission (NEC) over the assembly were rejected as unfounded. The highest number of votes was received by the NGMS's previously serving deputy chairman, Miklós Pálfi, whilst among the DRC candidates for chairmanship Vilmos Kövesi came in third and Aladár Horváth in 26th place. At a press conference early on the Sunday morning, after the declaration of results, Aladár Horváth promised a democratic system instead of the 'despotic' one-party system and personality cult that had characterised the NGMS hitherto, laying emphasis on the importance of humanity in the 'Roma transition' that was now being ushered in. Vilmos Kövesi stated that the new NGMS would be working in close partnership with the current national government to further the interests of Hungary's Roma population.

A Supreme Court ruling has quashed the decision by the National Electoral Commission to uphold the results of the election to the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government and ordered a re-run of the voting. In its pronouncement on an appeal lodged by the Lungo Drom electoral coalition, the Supreme Court found that only 1,347 of the 4,592 electors qualified to vote had actually participated at the electoral assembly to choose members of the NGMS, and the voting had in consequence failed to reach the numbers required for quorum.

The elimination of segregation and the Roma populations' integration into the dominant society is regarded as its principle by the Democratic Roma Coalition. In case of its victory the Coalition, gearing up for the March elections to the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government, would reconstruct one third of the existing Roma shanty settlements within the next three years. "Experts have now worked out what needs to be done to close up the gap for the Roma population; all that has to be done is to start to implement it," announced Aladár Horváth, one of the three leaders of DRC. The grouping intends to enter the March 1st election without declaring a candidate for the

chairmanship. In reference to ideas about the provision of habitable housing, Orbán Kolompár noted that so far, of the HUF 300 million earmarked by the NGMS under Flórián Farkas's leadership for its construction programme, only 48 million had been spent. Mr Kolompár feels sure that this amount could be multiplied threefold from EU sources. He also spoke about demolishing the 460 Roma ghettos in Hungary currently providing dwellings for almost 100,000 people. As he expressed: "The houses in the shanty settlements have to be bulldozed and homes fit for human beings constructed in their place," As to implementing the item on slum clearance in the medium-term government programme that was accepted six years ago, no government has, as yet, accepted so much as a single draft decree. According to a briefing given by Aladár Horváth, the Prime Minister's advisor on Gypsy affairs, the DRC wants to reach agreement with the government on the technical aspects of the plans so that at the very least one third of existing slum housing are cleared within three years. The alliance would like to set up a network of Roma social assistants who would maintain contacts with local schools, the local minority self-government and social institutions. Mr Horváth considers that a consolidation programme is needed to support families that have been caught in tax trap. He declared that if the Coalition wins, the new NGMS would step in with all available means to fight segregation of Roma children at school.

The poverty index of Hungary's Roma population is the treble that for the country as a whole, while the support provided to them by self-government is quadruple. Thus, Roma are employed somewhat more on public work projects, though such jobs are rather looked down by the society at large. These are among the findings of a survey commissioned by the national Association of Local Self-Governments from the Social Research Institution Rt. According to the survey, the Roma tend to live in greatest deprivation in settlements where their numbers are relatively small. Examining social inequalities the research found that in settlements where the Roma form under 2 per cent of the population the chances that Roma children will attend a school in another village or town fall to one half that for the population as a whole. With higher ratios the chances of attending a school in a more distant district do grow, but this never attains the average mobility; or put it in another way, Roma children are always relatively at a disadvantage as compared with their non-Roma contemporaries when it

comes to entering the school of their parents' choice. The survey shows that such inequalities are not affected by the size of the settlement in question.

The Democratic Roma Coalition recorded a clear-cut victory at the rerun electoral assembly for the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government held at the weekend. Only two of the candidates from Lungo Drom—Flórián Farkas and János Bogdán Jr—were elected to the 53-seat body. According to the results declared at dawn on Sunday, 2nd March, the highest vote was recorded for Aladár Horváth. Congratulations to the winner were offered by past chairman Flórián Farkas. The rerun NGMS election on Saturday evening was notable for its high turn-out and placid atmosphere.

At its inaugural meeting on Wednesday, the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government elected Aladár Horváth as its Chairman. In the ballot—with the candidate abstaining—31 representatives voted for Mr Horváth, who is one of the leading figure in the Democratic Roma Coalition. By a similar margin Orbán Kolompár, chairman of the Forum of Gypsy Organizations of Hungary, was elected executive chairman. Prior the voting, members of the National Association of Gypsy Organizations who had been nominated onto the body staged a walk-out since, according to a statement made by vice-chairman Vilmos Kövesi, they considered that the manner in which the meeting was convoked had been irregular.

Radio C, the only radio station in the world that is broadcasting to a Roma audience round-a-clock, is facing serious financial difficulties. László Teleki, Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs, has revealed that György Kerényi, Radio C's head of programming, recently put in a request to his office for a HUF 30 million grant package. Teleki has offered Radio C HUF 6 million from the discretionary budget available to him, and he will be seeking to make up the remainder of the total from other government sources. Aladár Horváth has announced that the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government will launch a collection to assist the station. The HUF 30 million will only provide a temporary respite. In a press release altogether HUF 70 million to pay off accumulated debts and still remain on air for the rest of the year.

One in ten Roma youngsters do not complete their elementary education—that is one of the findings of a survey carried out by Delphoi Consulting, an advisory and research firm, under the guidance of psychologist Ferenc Babusik. According to the study, 97% of non-Roma children complete their elementary schooling by the age of 15, whilst for Roma children the ratio is just 70-75%. There is also a substantial difference between Roma and non-Roma youngsters in regard to further education. More than three quarter of Roma children who complete their elementary education go on to a trade school which offer little in the way of useful qualifications, whilst only 15% enrol in a vocational middle school, and fewer than 7% continue studies in grammar school. For non-Roma pupils, some 47% go to trade school, and almost one in five—18.5%—wins entry to grammar school. The summary of the results of the study takes the view that nowadays gaining vocational qualification without passing the regular secondary school diploma leaves people a short step away from finding themselves unemployable.

How Roma pupils fare at elementary school was also the subject of a study by Gábor Havas, István Kemény and Ilona Liskó. This analysis shows that in the decade from 1985 to 1996 there was a 40% growth in places available at Hungarian grammar schools and 70% growth at vocational middle schools, while the number of youngsters completing elementary schooling actually declined. Due to the way school funding depends on hitting numbers for class sizes, it lies very directly in teachers' interests to accept and retain as many pupils as possibly they can. "With fewer pupils applying for a greater number of places, room has now been found for Roma children as well. Secondary schools need children, and under those circumstances even Roma children have been accepted in the same way as Roma workers were accepted by mines and steel works 30-40 years ago. In order to ensure that pupil rolls were met, they have relaxed their insistence on previously applied standards. To put it bluntly, they have relaxed their insistence on the children being white and even on their knowing anything."

In Hungary the average level of registered unemployment is 6%, but among the Roma minority it can run as high as 60%. This year Ministry of Employment Policy and Labour has allocated HUF 10 billion to programmes aimed at helping

those in the Roma minority into work, said Gábor Csizmár, under-secretary of state at the ministry.

The National Association of Gypsy Organizations is calling on Aladár Horváth chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government, to resign on account of his unethical political conduct and his opaque economic endeavours. Vilmos Kövesi, NAGO's deputy chairman, told the MTI news agency on Friday that he and a number of fellow representatives were hoping the present leadership would declare the NGMS's 29th May session an extraordinary meeting for the re-election of officials. He added that in his actions hitherto and during the elections Mr Horváth had not fulfilled his promises of democracy and regime change but, on the contrary, had stirred up conflict with the Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs and several ministries. "Hungary's Roma population and society at large need Roma leaders who are capable of thinking responsibly and have a feeling for social peace, not non-Roma experts hiding behind inauthentic programmes," Mr Kövesi asserted. He announced, NAGO calls on Aladár Horváth to resign immediately on account of his unethical political conduct and his opaque economic endeavours.

On Friday Radio C asked the media regulator that it be allowed—contrary to the programming undertakings laid down in its contract—to carry on putting out music-only broadcasts for a further two weeks. In other words, it is still uncertain that the radio station, which is struggling with its finances, will be able to relaunch. According to a statement made by Mr György Kerényi head of programming, donations of HUF 7 million have come in to the radio station, but these were insufficient to meet even the staff payroll for March.

According to a recently published survey, 15 percent of Roma respondents who were questioned in five Central and Eastern European countries admitted to being more or permanently hungry. A sizeable generation of the Roma is now growing up whose members often go without sufficient food, are in poor health, attend inappropriate schools and as a result are likely to find they have relatively few opportunities on the job market.

Aladár Horváth was relieved of his post as chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government at an extraordinary meeting for the re-election of officials held by the body on Wednesday. The majority of representatives who sit in the body were present and they unanimously chose Orbán Kolompár, hitherto the NGMS's executive chairman, as their new leader. Mr Kolompár asked Mr Horváth to continue to cooperate, promising that there would be mudslinging within the NGMS. Mr Horváth, who lost the body's confidence, because—among other things—he was seen as a divisive figure, described as irregular the fact that the extraordinary meeting had been called, and he anticipated that legal consequences were likely to follow.

According to information he himself passed to the news agency, László Teleki, the Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs, gained his secondary school diploma this Wednesday. “I sat the examination at the István Széchenyi Vocational Secondary and Trade School, Nagykanizsa, and passed with an average grade of 4,” Mr Teleki announced. He noted that, contrary to the information supplied by the National Assembly's home page, he does not have a college degree, but during the mid-1990s he completed a one-year extramural course in Roma studies at Zsámbék Catholic College. “The craft diploma that I gained more than twenty years ago was enough to be admitted for that,” the under-secretary of state commented.

In Hungary close to 20% of Roma adults and 60% of Roma children go hungry, it has emerged from a recently publicised UNO study. A piped supply of running water is not available to 34% of Roma households, whilst two thirds of households are not connected to sewage disposal network. According to the survey, close to half of the Roma population lives on less than HUF 900 per day. The Roma find there is a lack of employment and educational opportunities, and they feel that their political interests are not represented either at national or the local level. Most think that they can only rely on themselves, and at best can look for help from their neighbours.

One week before children go back to school, it is still impossible to learn exactly how many of them will be attending the Mihály Antal Foundation School in Jászládány and how many will remain at the local self-government elementary school. Anna Berkes, director of the latter, stated that it will only become clear on 1st September, the

day the new school year commences, how many pupils will have transferred to the private school. Ibolya Tóth, headmistress of the foundation school, earlier indicated that two hundred and four children had applied for admission to classes there. It may be recalled that the foundation school began the school year at this time in 2002 but was forced to close its doors on 2nd September due to its failure to obtain the Ministry of Education identification number that is needed to operate. This year, however, the ministry has issued a number to the school, thus allowing it to announce that it would be opening from the start of the academic year of 2003-4. A meeting that was held to promote enrolment provoked scandalous scenes when the headmistress refused to accept letters of intent from a number of Roma parents. Ms Tóth claimed that in the cases of seven children who had sought admission late in the day the school would only be able to enrol them by setting up an eleventh class, instead of ten classes, on which earlier plans were based. The foundation that finances the private school's operations, however, did not have enough money for that, the headmistress said.

A new Roma organization has been set up under the leadership of Aladár Horváth and calling itself the Roma Civil Rights Movement (RCRM). The organization has been founded by some fifty Roma and non-Roma individuals to promote the effective assertion of the Roma's civil rights. At a press conference held during the organization's inaugural meeting, Mr Horváth declared that the formation of the body had nothing to do with the situation that had arisen in the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government, from whose chairmanship he was recently removed under controversial circumstances. Mr Horváth did, however, express concern that in next year's budget the government was not going to commit enough money to promoting Roma integration.

At its session on Tuesday, by unanimous decision, the National Assembly's Committee for Human Rights, Minorities and Religious Affairs agreed in principle to set up a parliamentary committee to look into the matter of compensating Roma individuals who were persecuted in Hungary during the Holocaust. With the Committee giving over the meeting agenda—at the original suggestion of the Roma Civic Grouping (RCG)—to informing itself about the situation with regard to compensation, the motion was put to the committee by Flórián Farkas (Fidesz). In line

with the decision, the proposer of the motion will submit a detailed motion within the next two weeks. At the meeting, István Makai, the RCG's chairman, explained that, despite the good intentions of the German, Austrian and Swiss governments who were funding the programme, the compensation process was a labyrinthine and lacked transparency. As he himself put it, although for Hungarian Romas subject is 'the most momentous issue of the post-transition period,' it nevertheless remains 'a big black hole' for them.

Over half of those who live in Roma households in Hungary belong to the bottom decile of income distribution in the population and are thus poor, in the most literal sense of the word, unable even to keep themselves adequately nourished. That was one of the facts that was to be heard at a conference organised by the Institute for Minority Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Comparable national surveys had previously been conducted only in 1971 and 1993. In the 1990 national census 143,000 individuals had characterised themselves as belonging to the Roma minority, whilst in 2001 census 190,000 had likewise done so. Sociologist István Kemény pointed out that it would be mistake to infer from that numerical growth that Gypsies were becoming more willing to declare their origin, because in the meantime there had been substantial growth in the actual Roma population, and if one looks at proportions, then in 2001, as in 1990, only around one third of the actual Roma population had declared themselves to be so. It emerges from the survey data that employment among working-age Roma people barely exceeds 20%. Sociologist Béla Jánky reported that even fewer Roma individuals than this—just 16% of men and 10% of women—are in regular, officially reported job providing guaranteed 40-hour week. About 70% of Romas who do have opportunities to work earn their money as unskilled or semi-skilled workers. Only 22% of Roma people in employment have jobs as 'blue-collar' workers, and mere 8% earn a livelihood with non-manual work in 'white-collar' jobs (which for the purposes of the survey includes the uniform services). The average net monthly pay for people in their main job was HUF 61,000 over the country as a whole, ranging from no more than HUF 48,000 in the Eastern counties to HUF 65,000 for workers in the Greater Budapest industrial conurbation and southern Transdanubia. On average, Roma men earned HUF 9,000 more than Roma women.

Just four or five people in Hungary decide who is racist, Sándor Fábry asserted in a debate held by Roma Civil Rights Foundation. Fábry—an inimitable figure in the light entertainment field and not just in his own estimation—has again made a small but significant contribution to media history. In the most recent edition of his widely watched evening TV show his invited guests were exclusively Romas. A number of things emerged from the statements made by the guests; for instance, that Romas are great boasters ('If less than a thousand turn up for a wedding reception, that's just pitiful!'), male chauvinists ('A Roma woman may only walk behind her husband, not beside him'), and put their sons on pedestal ('Pure gold, of course. We had it made specifically for him'). Last but not least, one learned that a Roma voivode, or chief, is lord of life and death ('For us Romas he's like a tribal chief among the native American Indians').

A Roma delegation has returned home from a pilgrimage to the Vatican. Government politicians who made statements over the course of the visit emphasised that the trip counted as a milestone in the cooperation between Hungary's Roma inhabitants, government and Roman Catholic Church. Orbán Kolompár, chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government, categorised the pilgrimage as more productive than might have been expected. The Hungarian Romas and the government representatives who also made the trip to Rome—Katalin Lévai, Minister for Equal Opportunities, László Teleki, Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister, and Antal Heizer, Chairman of the National and Ethnic Minorities Office, who joined the delegation on Tuesday—proclaimed during the trip that they were confident their joint pilgrimage would contribute to the more complete integration of Romas into Hungarian society. Pope John Paul II received the 180-strong Hungarian delegation at his regular Wednesday audience. This was the largest delegation of European Romas ever to call to see the head of the Catholic Church. During the audience the pope gave his Apostolic blessing to Hungary's Romas and, at the request of the pilgrims, blessed the cross that will be erected next Whitsuntide at Csátka, the most important Roma pilgrimage-site in Komárom-Esztergom County.

"This is the kind of effort that I personally have always stood for," Ms Lévai remarked to reporters. She laid particular stress on the fact that Pope John Paul II

preaches reconciliation, and she noted, “He was the first pope to bring together representatives of the major religions and to ask for forgiveness for the sins committed by Christians.” There were marvellous gestures that offered examples to be followed by each and every one of us. In response to a question as to why she had felt it was important to be personally involved in the pilgrimage, the minister said that she wanted to draw to the world’s attention the fact that Hungary has a very serious Roma problem for which a rapid solution is required. “Hungary’s Romas are important to the country; let them be important to the whole world,” she added.

The lifespan of the Hungarian Roma is 10-15 years shorter than that of non-Roma, and the Ministry of Health is inquiring whether that is related to any factors to do with the level of provision of health care, it was announced. The Ministry of Health has provided funding for a survey carried out by the National Institute for Primary Care and the Delphoi Consulting Social Science Research Unit in which those who complete the questionnaire are asked their opinion on a series of derogatory statements about the Roma. These include: “One can never be too careful with Roma”; “Those who want to limit the role of the Roma have in public life should be able to spread their views freely”; “The Roma should be encouraged to emigrate.” Among statements that refer to stereotyped attributes are: “They are lazy, incapable of doing the work one should be able to expect”; “They can only blame themselves if others are hostile towards them”; “They are dirty, they don’t wash themselves enough.” The president of the Hungarian Association of District Nurses categorised the questions as outrageous and commented that it would have been better if they had been consulted in advance.

Social scientists at the Szolnok-based Lowlands Scientific Institute, which is an affiliate to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences’ Centre for Regional Research, have produced an analysis of the reasons for conflicts between Roma population, and non-Roma population, and possibilities of alleviating them, in the three northern Lowlands towns of Jászladány, Mikepércs and Nagyhalász. According to the survey, the majority of those questioned in Jászladány agreed with the proposition “Every Roma has a right to be taught in the same school classes as non-Romas.” In contradiction to that, though, are other findings which demonstrate that the driving forces of prejudice lie

not far below the surface, with most people seeing conflict in community as having an ethnic colouring. Jászladány's inhabitants consider that this could be reduced through a joint effort by local self-government and the state, and they would even see the county self-government as having major role in reconciliation efforts. Prejudice against Roma minority groups in Jászladány is strong, though it does differ significantly in degree from that found nationally. For those questioned, all other ethnic groups were preferred to the Roma on a so-called 'sympathy scale', and only groups that are 'stigmatised' on account of their lifestyle—alcoholics, drug addicts, skinheads—scored worse. In accordance with this, for instance, the majority of the non-Roma would not want to work in the same workplace, or live in the same street as the Roma.

Next year will mark the start of the programme to demolish Hungary's remaining run-down Roma colonies. It is planned that by the end of 2006 half of the 446 identified colonies will have been replaced by new dwellings, László Teleki, Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs, announced at a press conference in Salgótarján on Wednesday. Based on sociological survey, that is the number of isolated Roma colonies that are located outside the public administrative domain and lack access to public utilities. He added that close to HUF 1 billion would be expended on the eight model programmes for clearance and rehabilitation of these settlements that are to commence in January 2004. From the second half of the year it was expected that additional finance would be drawn in from domestic and international sources. Those who were going to be affected would be involved in the construction work, having been given 6-8 months training in advance. Following clearance and rehabilitation of these settlements, integration of the Roma families would be assisted by putting in place a mentor network to maintain daily contact with workplaces, educational establishments and social institutions.

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Judit Berki, the ex-leader of the Office for Roma Affairs, whose department was removed from the Office of the Prime Minister and placed under the Governmental Department for Equal Opportunities, did not accept the leadership of the new office,

the Directorate for Roma Affairs, which was offered to her. “In this new body within a new structure, I do not think that I would have a chance to represent the Roma affairs in the long run,” she commented her decision.

As far as we are informed, three names have emerged as candidates for the post of minister without portfolio with responsibility for equal opportunities in case the current minister, Katalin Lévai, who is on the MSZP’s list of candidates for the elections to European Parliament, obtains a seat at June elections: Kinga Göncz, the social Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Health, Social and Family Affairs, Viktória Mohácsi, the commissioner in the Ministry of Education, and Krisztina Morvai, a criminal lawyer, who is well-known for her role in the fight against violence within family.

According to The Sunday Times, after the enlargement of the EU, at least 100,000 Roma are going to travel to the UK, the only sizeable member country that opens its labour market and social welfare system to the accession countries. The leading British Sunday paper claims that 1,7 million Romas live in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and the other accession countries, and “the health care system, educational opportunities and pension benefits will be available for migrants the same way as for the British themselves.” (Actually, these services are granted only citizens of the European Union whose residence in Great Britain is legal and who have a legal income.) In the article of The Sunday Times it is also mentioned that according to local Roma leaders in the Czech Republic alone 100,000 Roma individuals will be attracted to the UK by the chance of taking the advantage of its social welfare system. The British Government opens the door to immigrants from the new member states arguing that essential labour force is attracted to the country this way, nevertheless, even officials of the government “are about to recognize the potential danger of welfare tourism.”

The Act on Equal Opportunities has come to effect this year but the administrative office, which is to take measures in line with the new Act, will be set up only next year. A penalty up to HUF 6 million may be imposed on the law breaker if the complaint is judged to be founded. The money is not awarded to the person who suffered discrimination on account of his or her sex, ethnicity, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, or

political affiliation. He or she is rehabilitated, while the amount of the penalty is spent on the implementation of the equal opportunities programme. In case of discrimination, individuals as well as civil organizations are entitled to commence proceedings.

One of the government's main goals for this year to demolish Hungary's Roma colonies and shanties; 460 colonies are identified all over the country that lack access to public utilities and infrastructure, said László Teleki. According to the Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs somewhat 150-200,000 Roma people are living at these colonies. He added that HUF 1 billion of the state budget will be expended on clearance of the Roma colonies and construction of new flats, but further funds are expected from EU sources and three of the five Operative Programmes of the National Development Plan. According to László Teleki by 2006 in case of 40-50% of the Roma colonies the clearance should be commenced, however, no sooner than in 10-12 years' time the demolition of the last colony will be started.

The government negotiated about a mid-term package of measures concerning the Roma. According to László Teleki Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs the package is particularly aimed at the education and training of the Roma and it emphasises the importance of improving the Roma population's living standards and equal opportunities. The under-secretary of state disagrees the opinion that the only significant feature of this package is the increase in the amount granted for Roma students' scholarships. He stressed the fact that both the Roma Public Foundation and the Roma Cultural Fund were established in accordance with the government's will. Ministries are required to make public how much money they expended on Roma programmes during a certain period. On the implementation, the ministries are due to report to the Interministerial Committee for Gypsy Affairs and monitoring is carried out by a body which is to be established in the near future. The body will be comprised of independent experts. The office of equal opportunities wants to obtain the necessary funds for the clearance of Roma colonies from EU loans for which the government vouches.

István Hiller, the Minister of Culture appointed Katalin Kállai as a commissioner for Roma affairs. She is responsible for maintaining communication with organizations rep-

representing the interests of the Roma, with Roma self-governments and other governmental organizations. Her further duties include representing the Ministry in the preparatory processes for government decisions concerning Roma issues and to coordinate different Roma related tasks within the competence of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage.

In Hungary the proportion of children identified as special needs is extremely high. At a press conference, Viktória Mohácsi, the commissioner responsible for Roma affairs in the Ministry of Education said whilst in the European Union 2.5% of the children were identified as special needs, in Hungary this ratio was 5.3% (it means as many as 49,000 pupils). She told 2,500-2,800 children per year were wrongly identified as being special needs. Very high percentage of Roma children were sent to remedial or special needs school (according to a data from 1993, the last year when the ethnicity could be registered, 42% of the children in these schools were Roma).

According to the report of the Minority Ombudsman in some schools the only reason recorded as a reason for special needs was 'Roma origin'. "Approximately in 600 of the 3500 elementary schools Roma children attend segregated classes", said Viktória Mohácsi who is responsible for the integration of disadvantaged and Roma children. 70% of Roma children attend segregated classes which is disquieting on account of race segregation as well as the much lower level of education, especially in the fields of languages and informatics. Normative funding for Roma children's integration, amounting HUF 60,000 per child, is available from the academic year 2003-4 by schools undertaking to eliminate segregation in their institution by 2008.

The Hungarian State Audit filed an action against unknown offender for disappearance of money from National Gypsy Minority Self-Government probably as a result of financial offences. The data available reveal that the deficit amounting to HUF 60 million accumulated between 1999 and 2003, during this period auditing rules were violated and costs were illegally reimbursed in several cases.

The editors of Romaweb within the Government Office for Equal Opportunities sought accommodation in Debrecen for their course in April. The organizer of the

event asked price offer from the owner of a smaller hostel on phone. On hearing the name 'Romaweb', the owner asked if representatives of minority belonged to the participants. The organizer said yes to which the owner's answer was: "In this case, unfortunately, we cannot provide accommodation to you." Following this incident the Legal Aid Office for National and Ethnic Minorities (NEKI) tested the hostel with the assistance of a Roma and a non-Roma couple. On 9th April two Roma youths sought lodging in the hostel for night but they were informed that the hostel was full. The two Roma youngsters also were inquiring if they could hold a course for members of Roma self-governments in the hostel later on. The owner replied that the hostel was full until September therefore he could not help. Some five or ten minutes later the non-Roma testing couple arrived and they were offered a choice of rooms. Each of them booked a room. Next morning they inquired whether they could hold a conference there. The owner was unsure about the date of mid-May so he suggested that they should speak on phone later. A week and a half later the non-Roma people asked price offer, which they received, and also agreed about the date. The owner said they had room for the conference and also asked about the ethnicity of the would-be participants. "They are Hungarian" answered the testing person. Then the owner asked: "There won't be Gypsies among them, will they?" Then he added he asked it for safety as some time earlier Gypsies had wanted to rent the hostel to hold a conference there.

In an open letter to Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy, several Roma parties and civil organizations claim the dissolution of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (NGMS) and call the government to take welfare and catch-up measures. In the course of the last one and half a year, the leaders of the NGMS have proved to be incompetent both professionally and politically, said István Makai, the chairman of the Roma Civil Grouping. He added: they call the government to take urgent welfare and catch-up measures leading to the Roma's real integration.

Roma Intellectual Resource Centre should be established in Heves County in order that the county is able to submit tenders for support from financial sources for catch-up programmes. That was said at a meeting for Roma leaders of Heves County with the participation of László Teleki, the Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs.

At the meeting several questions were asked about when funds for the abolition of Roma slum colonies would be available, when certain Roma self-governments might obtain computers, what could be done in order that Roma workers were employed legally in the fields of agriculture, and how subsidies were available for children's schooling. László Teleki informed the participants that for the purposes of abolishing the Roma colonies, the Government Office for Equal Opportunities had applied to the European Development Bank for loan. In order to obtain the sum of HUF 10.5 billion, the government's guarantee and government decision are needed. The decision should include which settlements' Roma colonies will be demolished by the end of 2006 and at what pace. Hungary has passed the first phase of the competition. According to László Teleki the five operative programmes of the National Development Plan provide almost unlimited financial opportunities for the Roma.

Almost 30% of the adult Roma population has not completed the elementary school and hardly more than 10% of them have the regular secondary school diploma, that is one of the findings of a survey carried out by Delphoi Consulting, an advisory and research firm, under the guidance of psychologist Ferenc Babusik. Their chances to be admitted to colleges or universities have just slightly changed during the past decades. It is hopeful, however, that younger Roma generations in growing number continue their studies in secondary schools that provide 'maturity exam', which is the precondition to be admitted to study in higher education, therefore the Roma youngsters have more chances to have college or university degree than ever before. The achievements at school partly depend on the family's financial circumstances whilst the family's financial situation depends to great extent on the place of residence. According to previous research studies, the Roma living in mixed environment together with non-Roma are much better qualified than those living segregated in ghetto-like colonies. The chances of getting employed, nonetheless, mostly depend on qualifications. It is a vicious cycle called by the researchers carrying out this survey as 'the trap of poverty'.

The Supreme Court awarded HUF 100,000 per person as indemnity to six Roma families from Zámoly that were granted asylum in France. According to the binding

judgement seven years ago the local authority had the families' houses illegally demolished as the families had no opportunity to appeal against the decision on demolition.

In Hungary everybody can freely decide about admitting him- or herself belonging to one of the minorities; on the other hand, the state will not inquire about anyone's ethnicity. Under such circumstances it is questionable how supports to the Roma will be obtained by them. According to an announcement by István Csillag, the Minister of Economy, this year again his ministry conducts competition for support to Roma undertakings. The total budget of the competition is HUF 200 million of which no more than HUF 3 million is available for one competitor.

We would like to see actual results concerning the social integration of the Roma, said Orbán Kolompár after a meeting where the professional body of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government discussed the Roma integration plans of different ministries. The action plans are much too general and it is not clear how their implementation is to be carried out, therefore they initiate negotiations with the different ministries. They would like the goals laid out in the programme of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government to be included in the action plans of the ministries.

The management of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government held its recent session on 8th July 2004 with the participation of István Csillag, the Minister of Economy. Csillag reinforced to the management that the integration of the Roma in Hungary is regarded by the government as of prior interest.

Less than expected, as many as eighty people were present outside the Police Headquarters of Kecskemét to commemorate Richárd Jakab, a 19-year-old Roma youngster who died while subjected to police measures. The vigil in candlelight, organized by the Roma Foundation for Civil Rights and the Roma minority self-government of Kecskemét, was interrupted by an incident. A middle-aged man appeared on the spot carrying placards with inscriptions like: 'We are fed up with hysteria' or 'The defender of the order deserves praise'. The participants of the demonstration attempted to send the man away but then, as failed to obey, it came to blows. The plac-

ards were taken away from the man and torn into pieces. The man, who was allegedly a private person from Budapest, ran across the street but a few minutes later three women, with the victim's mother among them, followed him and got him down. They were whacking and kicking him and broke his glasses; the man suffered minor injuries in his face. The man—who was freed by some civilians and journalists—left by car. Aladár Horváth, the chairman of the Roma Civil Rights' Foundation who was on the spot said that the Roma present there thought the incident to have been deliberate provocation and also felt humiliated in their mourning. In connection with the case of Richárd Jakab he added: "We are aware of the fact that everybody is bound by law, nevertheless, the execution of it does not normally lead to death."

The National Gypsy Minority Self-Government initiates talks with the presidents of the four Parliamentary parties in order to draw their attention that the amendment of the act on the minorities is needed this year. "We are afraid that the part of the current unconstitutional act referring to minority elections cannot provide basis for holding minority municipal elections. In this case, in 2006 the somewhat a thousand Roma self-governments, which represent effectively the Roma interests albeit their mean conditions, will cease to operate," said Orbán Kolompár. He called 'absolute political nonsense' that for lack of agreement between the parties the act will not be amended.

At Csátka in Komárom-Esztergom County, the most important Roma pilgrimage-site, the chapel, where the cross blessed by the pope will be erected on Sunday, has been completed, announced the Chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government. The construction of the chapel took one and half a month and a part of the money needed to it was donation by Roma entrepreneurs, said Orbán Kolompár. The building material was financed from the self-government's own budget as well as from other supports. The chairman could not provide information about the total expenses of the chapel but the costs of the building material exceeded HUF 6 million. The handing over ceremony will take place on Sunday, at the annual fiesta of Saint Mary.

The appointment of commissioners for Roma affairs and a new office for Integration of the Roma was proposed by the participants of a meeting held at the headquarters of the

National Gypsy Minority Self-Government on Wednesday. The meeting with the representatives of Roma civil organizations had been initiated by Orbán Kolompár, the Chairman of the NGMS. For various reasons, some of the well-known Roma politicians did not take part at the meeting, amongst others Flórián Farkas (Lungo Drom), Aladár Horváth (Roma Civil Rights' Foundation), and Jenő Zsigó (Roma Parliament). The participants, who were as many as twenty, had the opinion that their standpoint in connection with the changes within the government should be discussed in broader Roma public.

There is little cohesion between the programmes for the Roma elaborated by different ministries, and their activities should be more harmonized, said Kinga Göncz in an interval during the meeting of the Interministerial Committee for Gypsy Affairs. According to the minister it would be necessary to follow up the allocation of budget funds whether they reach those whom they are assigned for. This will be controlled by a monitoring office established within the Government Office for Equal Opportunities. László Teleki under-secretary of state said that the ministry had spent HUF 16.7 billion for programmes aimed at the integration of the Roma which is HUF 5 billion more than it had been planned. From the reports on the ministries it emerged that the Ministry of Labour and Employment has spent the largest sum, HUF 8.5 billion on this purpose.

It was not a toilet in the corridor but a toilet attached to the labour room where a woman from Bánhegyes gave birth to her child, said Gábor Kátai the director of the hospital. The woman submitted written complaint on the incident. According to Ildikó L., who brought forth her fifth child, it is probable that the doctor of the hospital did not treat her properly in spite of her pains on account of her Roma origin. The doctor left her with an elderly nurse with the words "You will do the sawing up as well." The director said that the hospital had already been accused of having separate rooms for Roma women and its doctors generally being less polite with the Roma, however, the director of the hospital defied these claims. Mr Kállai added: the preliminary investigations did not identify any malpractice in this case either.

Ferenc Gyurcsány candidate for Prime Minister included a sentence in the Lovari language in his exposition at the beginning of the debate on the government pro-

gramme on Wednesday. “Zhanav ke jekh Ungriko them si: le romengo thaj gazhengo them,” said Ferenc Gyurcsány after having spoken about his government intention to continue their predecessor’s attempts in creating opportunities in order to provide the integration of the Roma in the fields of education, labour, health and culture. Reacting to interruptions by other MPs Mr Gyurcsány went on saying: “There are people here who understand what I am saying. There are people here, who understand these words if no other way, with their hearts. My dear Fellow-Representative, I will help you. There is only one Hungary, a common Hungary of the Hungarian and Roma people and I am proud of that,” The speech called forth applause. Later on Bálint Magyar, Minister of Education complained about someone shouting at the quoted part of the speech, “This is the Hungarian Parliament.”

Disciplining of the Roma is aimed by an Ethics textbook published this year for pupils of grade seven or eight in elementary school. According to the book the Roma cannot always resist to crime and it claims that Roma parents should not live on unemployment benefit as it is much burden to the society as a whole. The book, published by Apáczai Csere János Publishing House this year, entitled “Ethics” mentions, among others, Roma women who tell future to gullible people at market places and also states that Roma people in short of money for living are tempted by survival crime “to which many of them cannot resist.” The authors of the book think that the reason for the Roma’s being squeezed out to abandoned parts of towns and villages is, beside prejudices, the Roma mentality. In order to improve the Roma’s situation, the authors of the book name different tasks for the state, Roma parents, and their children. The Roma parents’ task is that if a Roma family is provided a flat or granted credit, “they should appreciate it and use it appropriately without abusing it”; if a Roma adult is employed he or she “should be understanding and use the opportunity, work and should not try to live on unemployment benefit and burden the society and the tax-payers.”

The National Gypsy Minority Self-Government wants to launch the first national Roma radio channel; it was announced by the chairman of the NGMS after a talk with the leader of the media authority. György Kovács, the head of ORTT stated, as far as he knew there was no free frequency available. “By the end of November the concep-

tion should be worked out,” said Orbán Kolompár adding they would negotiate about financing no sooner than the conception is ready.

The managing board of the SZDSZ univocally nominated Viktória Mohácsi, the commissioner in the Ministry of Education, to the party’s seat in the European parliament recently having become vacant. Viktória Mohácsi, who had the third place on the party’s list for the European Parliamentary elections, is a committed liberal politician and an expert of human and minority rights which are the priorities in the party’s programme. She is young, speaks several languages, and has international experiences; according to the party she will be welcomed by the liberal political group of the European Parliament.

“The Hungarian Socialist Party made a very big mistake when it did not delegate any Roma representatives into the European Parliament,” said Zita Gurmai on a meeting organized by the European integration Roma department of MSZP with title of ‘Roma Way to Europe’.

“Next March the Roma Museum and Roma Library will be able to open its doors,” said Orbán Kolompár. The two institutions will be located in the headquarters of NGMS in Dohány Street. In Ózd, the NGMS at its general assembly of on 13th February decided about the establishment of four institutions, a national museum, a Roma library, a Roma people’s college, and a Roma radio. According to Mr Kolompár the Roma museum and the Roma library will cost about HUF 15-20 million.

The National Roma Minority Self-Government does not perform the tasks it undertook therefore the Roma Civil Grouping (RCG) initiates its dissolution, István Makai, the chairman of the RCG announced at a press conference. The NGMS “has tasks and duties, and the act provides that if the organization fails in its duty, does not meet the voters’ will, its operation becomes unconstitutional”, said István Makai.

Discrimination against the Roma is widespread in the European Union, not only in the ten members newly accessed in May; this emerges from a report carried out by

the European Centre for scrutinizing the phenomena of racism and xenophobia. The report observes that for many people the accession of the Central and Eastern European countries was the first occasion to face with the problems of the Roma, the Sinti or the 'travellers'. Although cases of discrimination were not unprecedented in many of the former 15 member countries but the public attention was rarely drawn to them. The report published in Vienna pointed out that the European Roma population of some 8 million suffered discrimination in employment, obtaining flats, and education. Most of them lived in poverty and did not access to education, work and public services, and many of them are stuck on the periphery of the society.

Ferenc Gyurcsány gave the opening speech at the second National Roma Day held in the hall of the upper house in the Parliament. "We would like a country where there is no room for anti-Semitism, racism, and prejudices", he said. According to the Prime Minister the society cannot be indifferent to the problems of the Roma: "They are brothers and sisters of ours." Orbán Kolompár, the chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government thinks the programs for employment have not achieved their goals in the last 15 years. The Roma affairs are similar to a patient just before heart attack being in need of quick and urgent interference, said Orbán Kolompár. Even it is not a negligible issue whether a qualified doctor or an unskilled nurse takes care of the patient. The Roma have become a determining factor of interior politics, Mr Kolompár pointed out. He also warned the parties: the Roma had to eat as well, not only to vote.

2005

2004 was undoubtedly the year of constructions: one of the greatest achievements is that the government set aside funds for abolition of the Roma slum housing, said László Teleki, the Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry for Youth, Family and Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities. His statement referred to the fact that the budget for 2005 accepted the other day includes a HUF 800 million item necessary for launching the programme to demolish the colonies. According to Mr Teleki there

is no reason for being satisfied with the situation of the Roma but it is an outstanding fact that in the year of 2004 the Public Foundation for Roma in Hungary was able to spend almost HUF 1 billion for the incitement of Roma pupils and students with good achievements. He mentioned as another achievement that employees of Roma origin work for several ministries and public offices. Commissioners of Roma affairs and further four rapporteurs of Roma affairs work on the implementation of programmes providing opportunities. The under-secretary of state thinks that the efforts taken in the fields of education and employment will gradually have their results in the next five or ten years.

2004 was not a year of construction but a year of degradation, said József Varga a Fidesz national assembly representative, the chairman of the Public Foundation for Roma in Hungary with disapproval. He stated that the whole institutional system of the Roma was on its way to the total breakdown. The National Gypsy Minority Self-Government is in short of resources, the Information Centre has no staff, no electricity or heating. The Public Foundation for Roma in Hungary also lacks resources; for the first time this year the foundation has not received the top-up payments of several million HUF per year from the state budget. The representative of the opposition thinks that this year has brought any good for those only who have been employed in certain offices as Roma and therefore they are granted reasonable salaries now. According to Mr Varga the funds set aside for the purposes of demolishing the colonies are much less than enough so where the demolition has not been commenced so far the coalition will presumably leave the lion's share of the work to the next government.

At the end of the year it is important to speak out straight that there has been no change in the quality of the Roma's situation, stated Tamás Csík, the chairman of the MSZP's national Roma division. He thinks that the construction should have already been completed long ago, and real results should have been achieved. On the contrary, as the Roma politician of the larger government party says, the government's measures were rather superficial. Mr Csík forecasts for 2005 that it will be the year of the truth: Roma people will realize that nothing has happened for their benefit during the last fifteen years. He urged the Roma leaders, both on the left and the right wing, with whose participation nothing had happened to draw the conclusion and get out of the way of professionals and those who are ready to take the necessary steps.

Police believe a fraud of HUF 50 million has been committed in connection with the competition conducted by the Ministry of Education for Roma youths. The investigation found 300 students to have attempted to receive money illegally. The recommendations required to the scholarship are affixed with the official seal of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government. During house searches Police arrested, among others, 292 receipts for registered letter addressed to the Public Foundation for Roma in Hungary with the addresses of those receiving scholarship, and 50 sheets of paper with the official seal of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government in its right corner and with signature of György L. who is one of those who pass judgement about the scholarships. György L. told the Police that a man had visited him from the Students' Self-Government at University of Szeged, introducing himself as Ferenc Nagy. The man brought several hundred applications with recommendations. György L. signed all of them without checking. In connection with the sheets of paper with an official seal and a signature or a signature only he said that the signatures on them were not of his, the official seal must have been affixed on them while he was away from his room. During the investigation a graphologist will scrutinize the signatures.

Hungary is the co-organizer of the Decade of Roma Inclusion. The program officially will launch in Bulgaria on 2nd February. Its four main fields cover housing affairs, health situation, the problems of education, and employment conditions, said Kinga Göncz, Minister of Youth, Family and Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities on a meeting on Friday held with the participation of the leaders of national Roma and civil organizations. At the event László Teleki Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs explained that the restructuring of the work on Roma affairs within the government had been begun. The meeting was held with the participation of eighty guests from the 19 counties and Budapest. Kinga Göncz emphasized the importance of the fact that together with the Roma in Hungary 8-9 million Roma from other counties have accessed to the European Union, consequently, the government has to handle the Roma integration and the connecting tasks as priorities. The minister mentioned also as an issue of importance the expected amendment of the Minority Act as a result of which the conditions of the minority self-governments may considerably change. She called a significant measure the establishment of the Office for Equal Treatment which

was required by the act on antidiscrimination. The office is being formed and it is expected to commence its operation in a few weeks' time. According to László Teleki these programmes should put a stress on sports and culture "through which the discrimination against the Roma could be further reduced."

Mrs Zsolt L. was not employed by a nursery school at a settlement because the parents threatened to cancel their children's subscription for meals if "Gypsy is in the institution". Roma people searching for job are often told directly "We do not employ Gypsies". The notary of a settlement had the shovelling of snow made by pregnant Roma women, and some Roma youngsters were not admitted into the most famous disco in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County. The Roma in Hungary most suffer from discrimination most frequently when searching for job but cases of discrimination are not rare even in the practice of the Police, courts and prosecutions, this emerges from an annual publication entitled 'White Book' given out recently. The publication is a collection of 21 cases of discrimination against Roma people in 2004. These cases prove that "discrimination is still constantly present in our everyday life" although hate speech and abusive language about the Roma is disappearing from public life.

The Roma community in Hungary is treated as 'minor', decisions are taken on programmes, acts and persons without consulting with them therefore Roma affairs should be placed on new basis in politics, said Tamás Csík, chairman of the MSZP's Roma division when justifying his resignation. According to him in the last 15 years nobody has listened to the suggestions by Roma leaders; Katalin Kállai a member of the socialist party's managing board has not even met with the leaders of the Roma division, neither with their thoughts since her appointment in October.

In the next few weeks the changes in the management of the MSZP's Roma division, for which two socialist politicians left the party, will become obvious, said the president of MSZP. István Hiller also pointed out that "MSZP's Roma policy did not reach the Roma themselves." To the question to whom it reached he answered: "it took form of documents therefore it was hypocritical." According to the politician reason for the recent withdrawals is that not everyone can agree with "what has happened in

connection with Roma policy behind the scenes in the Socialist Party during the last two months.” He said MSZP’s management trusted Katalin Kállai who was in charge of Roma affairs in the body.

The government resources for abolition of Roma colonies are dwindling away. On the contrary to the budget of HUF 10 billion, as it was heralded, only HUF 680 million turned out to be granted for that purpose in the framework of a closed tender in two rounds. The first round of the model programme has already been finished. Out of the 37 actual bidders only 22 settlements were allowed by the Ministry of Equal Opportunities to take part in the second round.

The Prime Minister does not believe in programmes launched on the basis of ethnicity; as Prime Minister he undertakes to help poor people in general. In an interview to Radio C Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány said: “I believe (...) in programmes that are aimed at the rise of the poor and outcasts; I don’t think these programmes should be launched on the basis of ethnicity.” He added: “I believe in learning and education, I highly believe in special programmes to overcome disadvantages, and I support such initiatives; but never on the basis of Roma or non-Roma origin but on account of social disadvantages. (...) There are more Roma people in need than non-Roma but as Prime Minister I have to help generally people in poverty. (...) When it comes to the solution of social troubles, the real problem of the Roma is not their identity but their poverty and their hopeless situation.”

“There are and there have been some problems we have to face when shaping and implementing the Roma politics of the government because the situation of the Roma often do not improve to the extent we would like in spite of the government efforts,” states Andor Ürmös in his account to the employment subcommittee of the Parliament’s employment and labour committee. He added: the mid-range government programme for the integration of the Roma helped with this, too. According to Andor Ürmös further elaboration and reconsideration of the programme is needed. As for the operation of the Interministerial Committee for Gypsy Affairs Mr Ürmös said the ministries’ activity in the committee was still not sufficient.

A security company was fined for HUF 500,000 as they are not willing to employ Roma people. This is first time that someone is sentenced in line with the act on equal opportunities.

Both the commissioner for minorities and the commissioner for data protection have objections against the amendment of the Minority Act. MSZP and Fidesz agreed on the amendment on Tuesday. Jenő Kaltenbach explained that the draft was a step-back in comparison to the previous version. He said the two parties submitted the package without having consulted with him. According to commissioner for data protection Attila Péterfalvi it is not justified that the statements referring to ethnical identity is registered by a state organization. He added, the bill did not enact about how and how long the notary should handle the documents.

The Parliament passed the amendment to minority election act. The amendment is based on the agreement of the four parties in the general assembly. Next year the minority elections will surely be constitutional. The principle of the new process is that those can take part in the elections who asks for registration on the list of the voters at the local notary. Candidates may be nominated by minority organizations. The election of the national minority self-governments has been simplified, there will be no electoral assemblies with several thousand participants which often became chaotic. Just the SZDSZ general assembly representatives voted against or abstained; only three of them voted for the amendment otherwise two MSZP representatives voted against and three Fidesz representatives abstained so it was approved by a preponderant majority vote.

Out of the forty settlements invited to the programme for the clearance of Roma colonies only nine bidders were awarded support by the Ministry of Youth, Family and Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. To the tender such settlements were invited on the territory of which there are colonies and the inhabitants of which live both socially and geographically separated. 17 settlements bade in the second round these settlements “aimed at a solution of the problems of those living at the Roma colonies via elaborating the housing and social issues in a complex way.” The following settlement

will take their share of the HUF 680 million support: Dencsháza, Hencida, Galambok, Kerecsend, Kisvaszar, Szentgál, Táska, Tiszabő, Uszka.

Roma students will not receive any more scholarship this year; this emerges from a letter written by Kinga Göncz, Minister of Youth, Family and Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities to József Varga, a Fidesz general assembly representative, chairman of the Public Foundation for the Roma in Hungary. Referring to the problems about the right of some bidders, the minister informed Mr Varga that the ministry would pay the second part of the scholarships, which is HUF 640 million, to the public foundation at the beginning of the next year. Consequently, as it is put down in the letter by Ms Göncz, the foundation will be able to grant the scholarships for the first semester of the academic year 2005/6 only when the semester is completed, in 2006. This might be carried out only after the modification of the contract between the ministry and the public foundation, the process of which has already been launched by the ministry.

The Ministry of Equal Opportunities has assigned the administration of the Roma scholarships, earlier handled by Public Foundation for the Roma in Hungary, into its own scope of authority. Neither the chairman of the foundation nor the Fidesz representatives of the general assembly have raised objections. István Bogdán Jr, the deputy chairman of Lungo Drom pointed out: József Varga has been a representative of the opposition for three years now and it is not understandable for him why the government realized this fact only by now. "Not the payment of scholarships is at stake now but the mere existence of the public foundation, as well as pushing into the background the organizations and its leaders that are disliked by the government," said the Roma politician.

The candidate to the body of minority representatives who received the largest number of votes at the minority elections cannot obtain his seat; this is the decision made by the Constitutional Court yesterday. According to the board the related paragraph of the Minority Act, which has already been passed though not promulgated, violates the principle of direct and equal suffrage. Therefore Constitutional Court cancelled this paragraph.

The Foundation of Chance for Disadvantaged Children has proceeded against the city of Miskolc since they think in several general schools of the city Roma children are segregated. According to the foundation the segregation is created in schools after unification of institutions, one attended mostly by Roma children and one mostly attended by non-Roma children from better background. Although the catchment areas were unified the facilities of the schools and the ratio of Roma and non-Roma pupils remained. According to the self-government of Miskolc the unification was the first step of Roma integration and their pedagogical programmes will promote further catching up. They previously said that the foundation had proceeded against the municipality without having been informed about the local conditions.

According to László Teleki Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs the clearance of the Roma colonies was one of the priorities of the socialist-liberal government that took office in 2002. Although HUF10 billion had been promised for the purposes of the clearance, only HUF 680 million was granted in 2005 and HUF 400 million is planned for the next year. This might be enough for as many as further four colonies besides the nine ones demolition of which was started this year. The definition of Roma colonies or colony-like living circumstances is debated by the experts. However, there is an agreement concerning the number of these colonies it is estimated to slightly over 500. Since the transition several governments have had plans for the clearance of the colonies but none of them have been implemented.

The head of the integration department in the Ministry of Equal Opportunities and his relatives were not allowed into a bar in Hatvan. It was not the title that provoked exclusion as it cannot be seen. On the contrary, the colour of skin can.

At a press conference László Teleki, the Under-Secretary of State for Roma Affairs accounted about the Roma related programmes launched by the government during the last three years. Of the measures for the purpose of Roma integration Mr Teleki emphasized that for two years now in the nursery schools meals are granted for free to those in need. Thanks to this measure, the number of three-year-old Roma children attending nursery school has increased with the third of the earlier number.

According to the under-secretary of state the number of Roma students and pupils who receive scholarship has increased from 10 thousand to 23 thousand in the last three years and none of the bidders were rejected referring to lack of resources. The clearance of Roma colonies started this year is to be continued next year: HUF 400 million is set aside from the budget and further HUF 1 billion is awarded by Council of Europe Development Bank for the programme. Flórián Farkas, a Fidesz national assembly representative said: “László Teleki was boasting of the Medgyessy-Gyurcsány government’s Roma policy again. It made it clear again that the government of the luxurious left is insensible to the more than half a million Roma living in poverty. In the representative’s view, the previous government created the opportunity for Roma youths for studies in higher education. The socialist-liberal government, however, let the Roma youths down as they did not pay their scholarship needed to their studies. “The government wants to fill the gaps of the budget through forcing poor Roma families to credit the scholarship to the government,” he wrote in a communiqué today.

2006

The cultural issues of the minorities in Hungary should not be exposed to the political campaign; the Ministry of Culture gave this reason for why they would call together the Cultural Council of Nationalities not until the parliamentary elections are held. The body has not had a session for more than a year now and the minorities did not receive any support for their publications.

A group of the experts of social policy withdrew their support from the programme launched for the clearance of Roma colonies because in several cases the self-governments were not able to create regular work places or realize the integration of the Roma. From budget resources not more than two percent of the colonies might be demolished.

This is the of transition for the Roma as it will be the first time that we vote for ourselves and our children at the elections, said Orbán Kolompár the chairman of the

MCF Roma Union. He pointed out that it would be an event of historic importance for the Roma of Hungary as this is the first time that a Roma party has been able to have a national list for the elections. In October a thousand representatives from five hundred settlements made a decision to break up the cooperation with the Socialist party. Every honest Roma politician had to vote for this decision. The Roma are fed up with policy of promises: before the elections the Roma were promised everything but after them the promises did not come true and no sooner than three and half a year passed when the members of the parties turned to us again asking for our support and promising everything: housing and working opportunities, that is the opinion of Mr Kolompár, the chairman of the Roma party and the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government.

A job advertiser was fined HUF 700,000 by the Authority of Equal Treatment for turning down applicants on account of their Roma origin. The authority compared the clients' statements and the evidences and found that the advertiser had violated the requirement of equal treatment in connection with the complaints' origin therefore the advertiser was forbidden to keep on the illegal conduct and imposed to pay HUF 700,000. It emerged from a test that one of the test persons with a name referring to Roma origin was treated differently in comparison to the other test person. The person with the name Kolompár [a typical Roma family name] was not provided with any substantial information while the other person was informed about the nature of the job as well as the amount of the salary.

Orbán Kolompár the chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government asked the presidents of the parties and the leaders of the parliamentary factions to make a decision about the advantageous seats of the minorities in an extraordinary session. They suggested that the text of the Act on Self-Governments in force before November 2005—which made it possible to obtain a seat receiving one fourth of the otherwise necessary votes—should be reinserted in the text of the current act; they also suggested that the draft amendment submitted by Flórián Farkas and László Teleki—according to which the candidates of minorities could obtain a seat at the municipal elections if they received the half of the average votes received plus one—should not

be supported. In accordance with an earlier decision by the Constitutional Court the parliamentary representation of the minorities should be granted by law; however the Parliament has failed to pass such an act so far therefore it has been committing constitutional default for fourteen years now. "The National Gypsy Minority Self-Government is really sorry because the parliamentary parties do not feel their responsibility in connection with the issue of the minorities' representation. So we ask the Constitution Court that the Parliament may pass make the necessary regulation before the municipal elections in autumn" said the spokesman of the national self-government. Lungo Drom accuses the MSZP with sabotage; a bill that would have provided advantageous seats to the minorities at the municipal elections was submitted but MSZP did not put it on the agenda before 13th February, and eventually, on the last day of the plenary sessions MSZP, referring to some fallacious pretence, made it impossible to pass it.

The Roma are getting more and more ill because, on account of their low education and the high ratio of unemployment among them, their right to healthy way of life is curtailed, this emerges from a survey. The number of the Roma people suffering of allergy and heart diseases is also increasing; the experts blame for this the Roma people's poverty. In families with bread-and-butter worries the healthy way of life falls into the background. People living in the colonies will see the doctor only in case of great troubles.

According to the plans of the Ministry of Education by 2008 there will be no segregated schools. Although in consequence of the steps towards creating equal opportunities in education the segregation within education has lessened to a certain extent, the differences in opportunities and indices of segregation are still dramatic. It emerges from the data of the Ministry of Education that of the Roma children attending general school, who are amounting to 11-15 percent of the total school-age population (as many as 100-138,000 pupils), at least 28,000 are learning in classes of Roma majority, and in 73 percent of homogenous Roma classes in general schools with normal curricula the pupils are taught according to simplified (catching-up or remedial) curricula. It is rather problematic that schools admitting disadvantaged children in large num-

ber operate with staff and facilities worse than the average. In spite of the aggravation by law almost fifth of general school age Roma children attend remedial, special needs school or remedial class (in case of non-Roma children this proportion is 2 percent); whilst in Hungary the index for identifying children as special needs is more than double as the average in the EU.

The Roma Gallery and Library was opened in Budapest at the headquarters of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government in Dohány Street. The library has 50,000 volumes although the visitors can browse only among half of them owing to lack of space. Nevertheless, for the first national Roma library all the research studies referring to the Roma, archival materials from the previous century, and works by Roma writers, poets and composers were attempted to be collected. In the new institution alongside the publications there is room for fine arts as well: in the gallery works of Roma artists will be exhibited periodically whose works would not be seen in other galleries.

In the new government programme the plans for Roma related measures are described in an individual chapter. Unfortunately enough, among the apparently nice and promising words almost no feasible facts are included in the government programme entitled 'New Hungary; Freedom and Solidarity'. The government intends to continue the fight against discrimination, the clearance of Roma colonies, and the Cserehát programme; they also want to reinforce the Roma media. However, regarding the superficial measures of the last four years, no real progress can be expected in the next four years either.

(Ernő Kállai)