

Public Foundation for European Comparative Minority Research

A Roma's Life in Hungary

Report 2003:
Illusory Politics and Standing Still

Edited by Ernő Kállai and Erika Törzsök
Consultant: István Kemény



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1093 Budapest, Lónyay u. 24.

Telephone: +36 —1-216-792, 456-0779; fax: +36—1-216-7696

Website: www.eokik.hu; e-mail: minor@minor.hu

Director: Dr. Erika Törzsök

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+36(20)203-9961

E-mail: info@molnart.hu

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This Report has been produced with help of studies by the following experts:

Chronology (assembled from the on-line archive of the Népszabadság daily newspaper,

Romapage and Rom.net)—*Ernő Kállai*

Changes in the situation of the Hungary's Roma population as reflected by nationally representative research studies—*István Kemény*

The main issues and the financing of Roma policy—*János Zolnay*

The influence of normative funding on integration in state-funded schools—*Iván Báder*

The chances of integrating Roma students in state-funded schools—*János Zolnay*

Romas in the press—*János Zolnay*

Social and political events—*Ernő Kállai*

Abbreviations

PFECMR	Public Foundation for European Comparative Minority Research (<i>Európai Összehasonlító Kisebbségkutatások Közalapítvány, EÖKiK</i>)
CSO	Central Statistical Office (<i>Központi Statisztikai Hivatal</i>)
EU	European Union
Fidesz	Alliance of Young Democrats (<i>Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége</i>)
GMS	Gypsy Minority Self-Government (local) (<i>Cigány Kisebbségi Önkormányzat</i>)
HUF	Hungarian forint(s) (HUF 100 ≈ € 0.40 ≈ £0.25)
ICGA	Interministerial Committee for Gypsy Affairs (<i>Cigányügyi Tárcaközi Bizottság</i>)
MDF	Hungarian Democratic Forum (<i>Magyar Demokrata Fórum</i>)
MSZP	Hungarian Socialist Party (<i>Magyar Szocialista Párt</i>)
MTI	Hungarian News Agency (<i>Magyar Távirati Iroda</i>)
NAGO	National Association of Gypsy Organisations (<i>Cigány Szervezetek Országos Szövetsége</i>)
NGMS	National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (<i>Országos Cigány Kisebbségi Önkormányzat</i>)
NNIE	National Network for Integration in Education (<i>Országos Oktatási Integrációs Hálózat</i>)
NPHMOS	National Public Health and Medical Officers' Service (<i>Állami Népegészségügyi és Tisztiorvosi Szolgálat</i>)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLANEM	Office for Legal Aid to National and Ethnic Minorities (<i>Nemzeti és Etnikai Kisebbségi Jogvédő Iroda</i>)
SZDSZ	Alliance of Free Democrats (<i>Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége</i>)
UNO	United Nations Organisation

FOREWORD

The socialist-liberal coalition of MSZP-SZDSZ forces that took office after Hungary's general election of 2002 not only promised a change in welfare to alleviate poverty and a firm anti-discrimination policy, it also set a goal of founding a social policy to secure substantial improvement in the situation of Hungary's community of 500,000-600,000 Romas.

The fundamental change in attitude that 2002 ushered in, however, with its reversal of the trend in welfare distribution under the previous government's parliamentary term, was not followed up by real changes over the course of the year 2003. Neither any declaration of clear principles of distribution nor any changes to systems for helping people into the active workforce or providing unemployment benefits took place. The programmes that were launched for training and for creating or subsidising employment of Romas have reached only a tiny fraction of Roma society and have an insignificant impact. As a result, there has been no prospect of any decrease in tensions between Roma society and the majority population.

Another set of problems may be discerned in what János Zolnay, a PFECMR staff member, writes in one of his papers: Romas are inevitably 'invisible' to big systems as in Hungary it is prohibited to make distinctions in the provision of benefits and services on ethnic grounds. As far as provisions go, one can at best infer where Romas stand on the basis of their social position, income and schooling. The totalised so-called 'Roma budget' contains both subventions for projects explicitly targeted at Romas and also outlays that do not have distinct ethnic labels. There are also serious consequences to the fact that this summation of all subventions that go to Romas contains items that assist social integration of Romas (e.g. the subsidy given to Gandhi High School, Pécs) and also items that in practice aggravate their exclusion (e.g. supplementary funding in education that may be claimed under several pretexts). Thus, insistence on the principle of 'invisibility' allows a serious issue to be accounted for without those at the receiving end feeling any improvement in their situation. For them to be able to detect a change would require a realisation that the demand aspect of Roma affairs cannot be expressed numerically in line with a departmental logic. The government of the day—and thus the Medgyessy government in 2003—puts on a show that the Roma community is financed in line with a departmental logic, through what appears to be a bar-

gaining process, but the government's Roma policy ought to mean more than an annual breakdown of items in a medium-term package of measures and the assigned outlays in the Roma budget. This attitude does not take into account the fact that the disadvantages experienced by Romas in housing, schooling and the job market are explained in part by their poverty, in part by discrimination against them, and in part by their cultural characteristics. Their chances are determined primarily by the aforementioned 'big systems', above all the financing of education, welfare redistribution, employment policy, housing subsidies, and so on.

Following the 2002 change in government, the Romas were unable during 2003 either to alter or even to influence the practice evolved by a succession of administrations. The new National Gypsy Minority Self-Government that was formed in 2003, after the previous autumn's elections for local Gypsy minority self-governments, remains a long way from being a body with the requisite political weight to have a say in politics at the top table. The new NGMS was unable to alter the situation if only because a Gypsy politician came to head it who, before he gained that position, had condemned the system of minority self-government as a form of 'institutionalised segregation', and hence a system 'to be abolished'. After three months Aladár Horváth, who had the support of many of Budapest's Roma and non-Roma intellectuals, was displaced by Orbán Kolompár, a successful businessman from the countryside who enjoyed, and continues to enjoy, the support of Roma politicians outside the capital. The pity was that these political games went on in the midst of commotions that detracted from the prestige of Roma politics and the Roma community, and thus continually reduced the institution's authority.

The underlying reason for the situation that has arisen is the games-playing set-up in which Hungarian domestic politics operate, and specifically the inadequacy of the regulations that govern minority rights.

Despite the fact that, for the first time in Hungary, four representatives of Gypsy extraction were returned to parliament in 2002, and therefore Romas not unnaturally expected them to be effective in drawing the National Assembly's attention to their hard and forlorn situation, that is not what happened. Two of the four representatives had not made their maiden speech to parliament by the end of their first full year, while the other two—Flórián Farkas and László Teleki—between them were able to occupy the attention of fellow representatives on the subject of Roma problems for a grand total of just 22 minutes.

Contributing to the low profile accorded to Roma problems in 2003 was the constitutionally uncertain sphere of authority possessed by the under-secretary of state for Gypsy affairs, operating within the Office of the Prime Minister, along with constant changes of government structures and a consequent inability to make decisions. First Péter Kiss replaced Elemér Kiss as head of the Office of the Prime Minister then, in mid-year, Katalin Lévai was appointed minister without portfolio with responsibility for equal opportunities. This appointment marked ultimate victory for the school of thought which denies the very existence of a Gypsy Question. According to the political convictions of the new minister, to whom overview of Gypsy affairs was passed from the Office of the Prime Minister, the plight of the Romas is now to be treated by equal opportunities policy on same level as the problems of the handicapped or women. The fact that these diverse groups, each of them struggling with completely different sets of problems and requiring different sets of solutions, were lumped together as a single community preordains the policy to failure and serves only to turn variously disadvantaged groups against one another when it comes to spreading the money around at the next budget.

This was the mindset in which Law CXXV/2003: Promoting Equal Treatment and Equality of Opportunity, a long-overdue piece of anti-discrimination legislation that the EU expected to see placed on the statute book, was enacted. Whilst this has certainly plugged a gap in the law by defining the types of discrimination that are now recognised in Hungary's legal system, it is offset by the fact that the law now sees the widespread practice of discrimination that afflicts Romas as falling into the same category as issues relating to the physically disabled or gender identity—to say nothing of the fact that no institutions have been set up to expose and deal with discriminatory behaviour. In short, this is a necessary piece of legislation but one that lacks teeth.

Sadly, the case for re-thinking the Ethnic Minorities Act fared even worse during 2003. The frequent absurdities that have arisen in elections to, and the operations of, minority-group self-governing councils prompted the legislature to hasten reforms, but this got bogged down in a series of protracted debates about registers of the names of individuals who belong to ethnic minorities, and passive or active eligibility to vote. A new draft bill has been produced, but it has yet to go to parliament for approval.

The nexus of Roma institutions has been steadily eroding since the 2002 general elections. During 2003 the Roma Affairs Council gradually turned into a body that was con-

sulted merely as a courtesy, whereas the Office for Roma Affairs, originally conceived as an administrative body concerned with strategic planning and direction, was set up on a rocky footing from the outset. It is true that a programme offering a new approach emerged from the strategic planning, implementation of which could have represented a qualitative step forward for Romas, but it became clear during the process of interministerial reconciliation that this could not be carried out due to the problems outlined in this Foreword. A comprehensive programme of this kind needs adequate resources behind it, but in this case the necessary political will was lacking. The regular spending departments wished to carry on with their earlier practice of deciding for themselves what sort of Roma-related programme to implement, and how much of their budget they would devote to it, and this long-ingrained yet ineffective procedure is the one that has continued to receive political support. The school of thinking that 'there is no such thing as a Gypsy Question' has become increasingly predominant, and at government level this has resulted in all institutions and programmes that are targeted specifically at Romas being condemned for serving as a form of segregation. In place of the latter what gains more weight is a so-called equal opportunities policy in which Gypsies are not the subject of a separate programme of their own but are included in some broader target group. This policy switch has made the Office for Roma Affairs totally redundant. Thus, unable to implement its strategic programmes, the Office has increasingly been going through the administrative motions.

It is a natural consequence of these events that there should be a constant tension and a searching for, or confusion of, roles among individuals who have been given administrative roles in ministerial structures, those with positions within the government structure, and the leaders of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government. As a result, despite coming more under the spotlights during 2003, the situation of Hungary's Romas has become a pawn to in-fighting. In reality, the situation of Hungary's community of 500,000-600,000 Romas has deteriorated further rather than improved.

These are the processes that our Report 2003 seeks to present.

Budapest, 29 November 2004

Erika Törzsök

1. A CHRONOLOGICAL DIGEST OF EVENTS AFFECTING THE ROMA OF HUNGARY IN 2003

January

One in every ten pupils enrolled at Hungarian general (elementary) schools is of Roma descent. More than one third of these children are in classes where the majority of the pupils are also Roma. Almost one in every five of Roma children attending general school has at least a mild learning disability. Through the integration norms to be introduced from the coming school year onwards, the Ministry of Education intends to intervene at the core of the system by having segregation replaced by integrated education.

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 every possible assistance.

According to an analysis carried out by the United Nations Development Programme and International Labour Organisation, the living standards of the Gypsy populations of 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 Gypsy 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 educational 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 Gypsies nevertheless manage to find work on an

occasional or regular basis, though usually in the black or grey economy. Their incomes (including all social assistance) are so minimal that more than half is spent paying for everyday necessities. When hard-pressed, their only available sources of private loans are at predatory interest rates. The poorest Romas, the study alleges, receive no assistance even from wealthier Gypsies, but a ‘class solidarity’ does exist with the most underprivileged non-Roma populations. Despite a widespread perception to the contrary, the vast majority of Romas resort to begging or stealing for their survival only in extremis, and with feelings of shame and guilt at having been reduced to that. In reality, the bulk of Romas seeks to be integrated into society at large. but at the same time—like any other minority—they reject assimilation and the loss of their own identity.

Candidates for the Democratic Roma Coalition (DRC) obtained 52 of the 53 seats on the newly elected National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (NGMS) in voting at the 11th January electoral assembly as, with a single exception, only individuals representing this organisation 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 the 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 were received by the NGMS’s previously serving deputy chairman, Miklós Pálfi, whilst among the DRC candidates for the 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 ‘change of Roma régime’ 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 total 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 a quorum.

Flórián Farkas, a Fidesz national assembly representative and chairman of the Lungo Drom coalition, has asked the prime minister, Péter Medgyessy, to appoint a government commissioner to ensure fair and legal conduct of the re-run electoral assembly for the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government. Lungo Drom's chairman considers that close supervision is necessary to forestall electoral irregularities. The request was made in a letter that was sent to the head of government on Wednesday. Mr Farkas justified the request on the grounds that "he had no wish to be a party to serial fraud and infractions of the law." Provided there was no repetition of the events to which they had taken exception during the previous vote, they would not walking out of deliberations at the re-run electoral assembly that is due to be held on 1st March. In his letter Mr Farkas urges "avoidance of possible mass manipulation," whilst in the interests of ensuring equality of chances coaches transporting electors to the assembly venue should only set off from county centres and deliver electors straight to the place where the deliberations are to be held, with the timetable for the coaches being communicated to those concerned at least eight days ahead. Mr Farkas furthermore asked that seating provision be made for the total of 4,500 electors at the assembly venue; that entry to the area that was being used be allowed only via 'control points'; and that VIPs—invited in equal numbers by the big national Gypsy organisations—be located in a 'clearly separated area' within the hall. Registration and the counting of the votes should be scrutinised by observers who were on no account to be electors, Mr Farkas proposed. He also felt it was important that those arriving to vote should be registered by producing their identity card and using a PIN code; that the agenda of the meeting be split up between the parties; and electors "be informed that they may not take into or display in the hall any sort of distinctive marking that might lend itself to influencing the result." Lungo Drom's chairman also suggested that bars not be open whilst the meeting was in progress, or that they only be allowed to operate during intervals. For open votes he proposed that there be two tellers

per sector, with votes being recounted until both arrived at the same figure. Prior to secret ballots the presiding chairman should check that the assembly was quorate. “It is in the interests of every democratically minded and committed citizen that the election called for 1st March be fair and its result not under any shadow of dispute,” Mr Farkas noted in his letter to the prime minister.

February

The Democratic Roma Coalition addressed a number of questions to Flórián Farkas, the chairman of Lungo Drom. According to DRC leaders Aladár Horváth, Orbán Kolompár and Vilmos Kövesi, last year the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government, then led by Mr Farkas, received approaching HUF 1 billion in budgetary support. One of the questions runs: “When can the public expect to gain a proper account of how that support was spent?” The DRC leaders are also curious as to where Lungo Drom was at times when mass evictions of Roma families were taking place, and how many times it intervened against racist attacks or exclusionary measures directed against Gypsies. The Coalition claims that the NGMS designated HUF 300 million for the construction of social housing, whilst Flórián Farkas in his position as chairman had a budget allowance of HUF 20 million. It is seeking advice on how the said amounts were spent. In reference to recent statements made by Mr Farkas, the DRC leaders emphasised that, based on the position taken by National Electoral Commission, no fraud had occurred at the NGMS electoral assembly held on 11th January, and the DRC had won the election within the bounds of the law as it had been interpreted up till now. Even the Supreme Court was not ordering a re-running of the election on the basis of charges relating to fraud but on account of the failure to reach the necessary quorum at the time votes were cast, which had been occasioned by the walk-out staged by Lungo Drom. The Democratic Roma Coalition considers that the system of minority self-government is in need of radical reform, and it also regards it as being in the public interest to remove Flórián Farkas from his position at the head of the NGMS.

The Democratic Roma Coalition sees its basic principles as being the elimination of Roma segregation and their integration into mainstream society. Assuming that it wins the March election of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government for which it is now

gearing up, the Coalition would reconstruct one third of the existing Gypsy shanty settlements within the next three years. “Experts have now worked out what needs to be done to close the gap for the Roma population; all that has to be done is start to implement it,” announced Aladár Horváth, one of the three leaders of the DRC. The grouping intends to enter the March 1st election without declaring a candidate for the chairmanship. In reference to ideas about 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 house construction programme, only HUF 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 Gypsy ghettos in Hungary that currently provide dwellings for almost 100,000 people. As he expressed it, “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 adviser 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 areas 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 a tax trap. He declared that if the Coalition wins, the new NGMS would step in with all available means to fight segregation of Gypsy children at school.

Following the Supreme Court ruling that the election to the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government was null and void, Flórián Farkas, the chairman of Lungo Drom, requested the prime minister to appoint a government commissioner in order to guarantee the legality of the re-run ballot. In his written response, the text of which was published yesterday, Péter Medgyessy stated that the government was not at liberty to extend its role beyond that laid down in the constitution and thus was unable to comply with Mr Farkas’s requests. The cabinet was not in a position to exercise any influence on the legality of the election, either through the appointment of a government commissioner or by

prescribing any of the technicalities relating to the conduct of voting. The prime minister nevertheless is asking the office of the Minister of the Interior, under whose supervision the National Electoral Commission falls, to examine the other proposals made by Lungo Drom and, in so far as they are compatible with existing legal provisions, make use of them. In his letter, the prime minister finally noted: "I am sure that all public administrative bodies that are involved in preparing for the election will adhere strictly to a firm grounding of legality. Beyond that, however, democracy also calls for those who are entitled to take part in the election to be responsible and sober in their decision and thereby facilitate the formation of the minority self-government."

The poverty index of Hungary's Romas is three times that for the country as a whole, while the support provided to them by self-government is quadruple. Thus, Gypsies are employed somewhat more on public work projects, though such jobs are rather looked down on by 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, Gypsies tend to live in greatest deprivation in settlements where their numbers are relatively small. Examining social inequalities, the research found that in settlements where Romas 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 to put it another way, Gypsy children are always relatively at a disadvantage as compared with their non-Gypsy 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. It is curious that 2 per cent came out as the breakpoint a number of other times in this work. For instance, when looking at interethnic conflicts it turned out that disputes were relatively uncommon when the Gypsy population was below 2 per cent, whereas there was 'a sharp increase' above that. In light of a sampling of opinions from local government leaders, the likelihood of conflict within a community is a function not just of the number or proportion of Romas but of the size of the settlement. The researchers were able to demonstrate a 'strong correlation' between the distribution of Romas within a settlement and the frequency of conflicts. Thus, social discord is more common in the case of Gypsies who

live in poverty on the margins of a community than it is with Gypsies living in better circumstances within the heart of the settlement. Based on estimates of experts in the local governments questioned, the group that undertook the survey put the size of the Roma population within the settlements they investigated at 8.8%.

The re-run election for the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government is to commence on 1st March at the Hungexpo site in Budapest. The results of an electoral assembly held on 11th January, 2003 were ratified by the National Electoral Committee, but the Supreme Court, in sustaining a complaint by the Lungo Drom coalition, which had marched out of the assembly site, ordered a new ballot on the ground that “fewer than half of the chosen electors at the electoral assembly had participated, consequently the electoral assembly was not quorate.” The NEC subsequently took the view that the number of votes cast did not necessarily have to reach the 50% required for quorum. In so far as the second election is also unsuccessful, Hungary’s Roma population will be left without a minority self-government for four years. One issue is what will happen if the assembly remains quorate but the number of votes cast nevertheless still falls below the 50% level: would the view taken by the Supreme Court ruling or the NEC’s determination take precedence? Emilia Rytókó, head of the National Electoral Office, did not wish to offer any opinion, noting that this was a matter of the NEC’s ‘informed decision’. In her briefing on the technical details Ms Rytókó pointed out that, as in January, electors arriving from outside the capital to vote on the Saturday would be able to use public transport free of charge. Those travelling by rail would be issued a free ticket on showing their letter of invitation. Apart from this, coaches would be transporting participants to the capital from every county centre, with almost one hundred coaches—95 to be precise—being placed at the disposal of the Roma electors. At the rerun election, an identity check would be made not only to register electors on arrival but also to keep track of those leaving, so that it would be possible to know precisely how many electors were present in the hall at any given time, Ms Rytókó stressed. She added that in order meet the Supreme Court’s expectations, the NEC had decided that, in addition to the number of electors registered at the start of the assembly, it would also be officially recorded how many electors were present when balloting effectively started. The electors would hold open votes on the individuals who would be chairing the assembly, the committee of tellers charged with

counting the ballots, and the nominees. In a departure from the procedure in January, the participants would be able to cast their votes with a special card issued at the venue, rather than with their invitation, Ms Rytók mentioned. In line with previous practice, the representatives in the NGMS would be chosen by the electors in a secret ballot.

March

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 winners were offered by past chairman Flórián Farkas. The rerun NGMS election on Saturday evening was notable for its high turn-out and placid atmosphere. Lungo Drom had marched out of the first electoral assembly, held on 11th January 2003, and the Supreme Court had annulled the sweeping victory that the DRC had likewise registered then, ruling that the ballot was inquorate. The National Electoral Commission had accordingly called a new ballot for 1st March, and in line with the Supreme Court's reasoning it was required that a quorum of electors be present not just at when the assembly commenced but when balloting got under way.

In January 2,685 of the very nearly 4,600 qualified electors had registered for the first assembly, whereas this time there were 2,993, or in other words a turn-out of 65%. The proceedings at the Hungexpo site in Budapest started early on Saturday afternoon, considerably later than was officially scheduled. Electors of the Democratic Roma Coalition again wore white scarves, but unlike at the first assembly no red carnations, marking Socialist Party members, were on view. In order to avoid the chaotic scenes that had characterised the previous assembly, the two main alliances, Lungo Drom and the DRC, had reached prior agreement on nominees for the chairpersons for the proceedings and the committee of tellers. With the electors of both alliances keeping to the recommended individuals during the open voting, no count was made of the actual number of votes cast in view of the 'clear majority'. Thus, unlike at the January conclave, it could not be gathered at this stage which of the factions was numerically stronger. Alongside

Lungo Drom and the Democratic Roma Coalition, the Third Force Alliance, a new organisation that is seeking to support independent electors, was also in evidence. Nomination of candidates was completed speedily and with no hitches, the names of 150 electors being set out in alphabetical order on voting cards. Apart from the 53 candidates each proposed by Lungo Drom and the DRC, there were 35 nominees of the Third Force Alliance, led by Miklós Pálfi, and nine who were unaligned to any organisation. The sole surprise was that Mr József Ráduly, leader of the Budapest 100-Strong Gypsy Orchestra, who was running for the Third Force Alliance, failed to receive the 10 percent of the votes cast needed to be confirmed as a candidate. At the start of the secret vote to decide the composition of the new NGMS, the chairman announced that on the basis of the computer record 2,832 electors were present in the hall and thus the assembly was quorate. With voting papers being distributed at about 9 p.m., a total of 2,869 were finally counted as having cast their ballots, thus rendering irrelevant discussion as to what would happen if the number of votes did not achieve the necessary quorum.

Despite the clear-cut advantage in seats won by the DRC, it has to be said that, as with the NGMS electoral assemblies in 1995 and 1999, the margin was not as substantial in reality as that suggests; however, the rules of voting by party lists preclude any element of proportional representation in the result. The highest number of votes cast (1,537) were for Aladár Horváth, whilst of the other two DRC leaders, Orbán Kolompár (1,391) came in ninth, and Vilmos Kövesi (1,365) was twentieth. The 1,109 votes cast for Flórián Farkas only sufficed for 52nd place. In speeches from the platform, the DRC leaders and their elected representatives thanked the electors for their discipline and patience during the election. Mr Horváth gave assurances that the losers had nothing to fear from either witch-hunting or discrimination. He, along with the other two leaders, emphasised that the new NGMS would be doing everything within its power to be truly representative of Hungary's Roma population. Through the programmes that were to be launched for alleviating poverty, they would be seeking to improve the situation not just of Gypsies but of all needy Hungarian citizens. At present, there is no sign that Lungo Drom intends to lodge any objection to the election; in an announcement he made to press reporters on the Hungexpo site but in another building at the time the election result was announced, Flórián Farkas congratulated the winners. In response to questions, he said that he would "in all probability" be taking part in the work of the NGMS.

The new body will hold its inaugural meeting after the elected representatives have received their letters of credence. The person most likely to win the position of chairman—though the DRC did not officially nominate a candidate—is Aladár Horváth.

At its Tuesday meeting, the National Electoral College formally ratified the results recorded in the official minutes of the electoral assembly held last weekend for the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government. Prior to the decision making, the NEC chairman, Lajos Ficzer, reminded those present that no complaint or objection had been lodged to date in regard to the deliberations. “As we were able to observe, the assembly was conducted in an orderly fashion and in accordance with the provisions laid down for it,” Mr Ficzer added, also noting that the process had been quorate throughout, with a level of participation continuously in excess of 60%.

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 figures in the Democratic Roma Coalition. By a similar margin Orbán Kolompár, chairman of the Forum of Gypsy Organisations of Hungary, was elected executive chairman. Prior to the voting, members of the National Association of Gypsy Organisations (NAGO) 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. In giving thanks for the support following the ballot, Mr Horváth declared that he had hoped that at the inaugural session, after months of strenuous effort, the NGMS’s affairs would finally reach a position of rest and would be able to elect a chairman in the presence of all representatives. On Thursday he would be appealing by letter to the leaders of NAGO to propose that they seek agreement on ways in which the Association would be able to gain representation in the charring of the NGMS. He singled out the creation of equality of educational opportunities for Roma children with the children of Hungary’s majority society, the provision of work for the unemployed, and the provision of decent living conditions as the most essential tasks, emphasising that their aim was that these benefits should also be accessible to underprivileged non-Roma Hungarian citizens.

The National Association of Gypsy Organisations considers Wednesday's election of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government's chairman illegal and will be lodging an objection to the vote on Friday, Vilmos Kövesi, NAGO's vice- chairman announced. According to Mr Kövesi, several issues relating to yesterday's election had posed a legal problem. For one thing, invitations had been sent out to the members of the new NGMS only three—not the prescribed eight—days in advance; secondly, his own name had been printed on the invitations without his permission. The tension that arose during Wednesday's election had not subsided by the next day; on Thursday morning, one of the representatives had assaulted a colleague, who was currently receiving hospital treatment. Having examined the NGMS statutes, NAGO's own legal experts, including György Kolláth, a constitutional lawyer, have concluded that there are grounds for lodging a protest against Wednesday's decision. NAGO was a member of the Democratic Roma Coalition, the electoral alliance that gained a stunning victory at the rerun election of representatives on the NGMS on 1st March. Even before the election, there had been arguments between DRC members as to which organisation would supply the chairman of the NGMS. At its inaugural meeting on Wednesday, which NAGO's representatives had walked out of, the NGMS had ended up voting Aladár Horváth, a Roma Parliament politician, as its chairman. One of the deputy-chairmen chosen at the same meeting has already announced that he will step down from the newly won position. The statement released to the press, datelined Bányternye, 13th March 2003, runs: "At the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government's inaugural session yesterday, I did not agree that a walk-out was the appropriate response under the circumstances. In view of the divisions within the NGMS, however, I do not wish to play a leading role within the body, and for that reason I resign my office of deputy-chairmen. Szilárd Szomora, NGMS representative." In giving his own reaction to this to the Roma Press Centre, Aladár Horváth, the newly elected NGMS chairman, commented that he was staggered by the course events had taken, and he found it incomprehensible that defeat in an election could provoke such tempestuous passions: "This is a matter for the police, but equally a heavy political responsibility is borne by those who, by raising tempers and provocation, seek to undermine confidence in the newly elected NGMS." Mr Horváth called on all his fellow representatives to resolve their political differences peacefully. He noted, "There is no reason for anyone to be anxious. Just a few dozen are prepared, through actions such as this, to jeopardise the moral standing of several hundred thousand Romas."

April

The Gypsy minority self-governments of the S.W. Hungarian town of Mohács and surrounding villages are sending a petition to Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy to request that public works programmes be set up in their district. István Kovács, chairman of the Mohács Gypsy minority self-government, said that 80% of the able-bodied Romas living in the town are unable to find employment, and as a result the roughly 3,500 local Gypsy population faces major problems with making a livelihood. Those problems had been alleviated somewhat over the past 18 months by a public works programme that provided a modest, but more or less steady income for some 50-80 families. This year, however, the programme proposal worked out by the Mohács Gypsy minority self-government had been rejected by the Ministry of Works due to lack of funding, and that was made worse by the fact that public works projects were also not being organised for the Roma inhabitants of nearby villages, although these too were suffering from high unemployment. The district's Gypsy minority self-governments are now looking to the prime minister for assistance. If the Ministry of Works continues to reject the claims of the Mohács district's Gypsies, the Roma inhabitants were threatening to close down and paralyse traffic at the Hungarian-Croatian border crossing at Udvar, Mr Kovács declared. They were well aware that a demonstration of that kind was illegal, he added, but their level of deprivation and hopelessness had made them willing to run the risks that might arise from such an infringement of the law.

Many fewer people would lose out through Hungary's accession to the European Union than would have been the case had the country stayed out, chancery minister Péter Kiss suggested. Accession would give new opportunities, through teleworking or part-time employment, to those who had been unable to adapt to earlier changes, the head of the Office of the Prime Minister pointed out. He also noted that during the three years after accession roughly the same number of people would be able to work abroad as do so currently, the difference being that they would now be able to do so legally. Aladár Horváth, chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government, sees a chance for the Roma population not to come out as losers in the modernisation process. As he put it, Hungary could be a thriving nation if the Romas, who are in most need of progress, are

part of that. Mr Horváth sees the most important tasks as being to guide Roma children back into 'the normal educational system' and decreasing segregation within settlements. Under questioning, he said that he did not think there was likely to be a mass emigration by Gypsies following Hungary's accession to the EU.

A joint press conference to mark International Roma Day was held at the Kossuth Club in Budapest by Mrs Magda Kovács Kósa, the Socialist Party parliamentary representative, László Teleki, Under-Secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister, and Aladár Horváth, chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government. Information provided in a hand-out stated that the first World Gypsy Conference was held in London in 1971, with 21 countries sending delegations, and it was they who had decided that 8th April would thenceforth be designated International Roma Day. Speaking about the increasingly active part that Romas are playing in Hungarian public life, Mrs Kovács Kósa pointed out that surveys indicated that participation in the most recent parliamentary and local government elections had been as high among Romas as among the non-Roma population. As she put it, the Gypsies have produced their own political élite. The current government was seeking to improve the situation for the country's Roma population by working with Gypsies, not ignoring them or going over their heads. Mr Teleki asserted that what he was hoping to see from EU accession was an end to all forms of exclusion, including segregation in education, whilst from leading figures in Gypsy public life he was looking forward to common stands being taken on major issues. Mr Horváth now sees a possibility, for the very first time, of harmony being achieved between modernisation, catch-up by the Roma population and the achievement of human dignity. He called for a high turnout by Roma voters to support Hungarian accession to the EU in Saturday's referendum.

Radio C, the only radio station in the world that is broadcasting to a Roma audience round-the-clock, is facing serious financial difficulties. László Teleki, Under-Secretary of State for Gypsy 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 to the MTI news agency Mr Kerényi noted that Radio C needed altogether HUF 70 million to pay off its accumulated debts and still remain on air for the rest of the year. The head of programming reported that despite all belt-tightening Radio C has accumulated a debt of more than HUF 50 million, and so far they had seen none of the HUF 6 million that the government promised last December and that was needed for sheer survival. For the time being, programming was being cut back to transmissions of music only, but soon even that might not be possible.

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 Gypsy 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 quarters of Roma children who complete their elementary education go on to enter trade schools, 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 a high school. For non-Roma pupils, some 47% go to a trade school, and almost one in five—18.5%—wins entry to high school. The summary of the results of the study takes the view that nowadays gaining a vocational qualification without passing the regular high-school diploma leaves people a short step away from finding themselves unemployable. Despite that, a mere 15-22% of Roma youngsters who complete their basic education manage to gain entry to secondary institutions that offer their students a decent chance of being able to obtain jobs in the current labour market. The researchers point out that the ratio of Roma pupils also strongly affects choices at secondary level: in general schools that have high numbers of Gypsy pupils, as compared with the national average, only half the non-Roma children go on to high school.

How Roma pupils fare at elementary school was also the subject of a study by Gábor Havas, István Kemény and Ilona Liskó, the results of which have appeared in book form.

This analysis shows that in the decade from 1985 to 1996 there was a 40% growth in places available at Hungarian high 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 they possibly can. The book points out: "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 other words, significantly more young Gypsies are staying on in school, but those youngsters who belong to the majority society are gaining the education at a higher level. The gap between Romas and the others has not diminished in recent decades.

May

The Ministry for the Environment and Water Management has announced that it is inviting entries—to be submitted by the deadline of 31st July 2003—for projects aimed at "Reducing environmental hazards occurring in Gypsy settlements". The background to this competition, as the sponsor sees it, is that "the environmental state of Hungary's Gypsy settlements has been remarkably neglected. We therefore wish to make it possible for local Gypsy minority self-governments to put their surroundings into a more habitable condition by taking advantage of public works and utilities."

In Hungary the average level of registered unemployment is 6%, but among the Roma minority it can run as high as 60%. This year the 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 Csizsár, under-secretary of state at the ministry, in a speech to the Roma Job and Training Fair organised by the Békés County Job Centre. Fourteen Roma job-search managers have set about helping non-registered unemployed Roma to sign on. A total of 1,685 individuals have been assisted one way or another under

what was called the Roma Start programme, stated Ágnes Nagy, director of the Békés County Job Centre. Encouraged by the successes that have been achieved to date, they are continuing that programme under the name of Roma Start Plus. In addition to their primary service of giving careers and employment advice, the Roma managers would be helping to set up a family assistance network within the county. At the Job and Training Fair, which was organised at the Békés Sports Hall, approximately 1,000 Roma visitors had the opportunity to choose among 41 training opportunities and 520 jobs notified by close to 100 employers.

The National Association of Gypsy Organisations 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 régime change but, on the contrary, had stirred up conflict with the Under-Secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs and several ministries. "Hungary's Roma population and society at large need Gypsy 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.

At this Thursday's session of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government, a heated debate broke out between representatives loyal to the Horváth and Kövesi platforms. In line with the announcements that he had made beforehand, the NAGO leader proposed a motion of no confidence in Aladár Horváth, the NGMS chairman. Among the reasons that he cited for proposing the motion, which had twenty-one signatories, Mr Kövesi mentioned that over the past two months, in contravention of the electoral agreement, there had been no significant cooperation between the two platforms. In NAGO's view, Mr Horváth had not been successful in representing Hungarian Roma society and there had been no perceptible attempts to make further progress. To fend off accusations that might be made against himself, Mr Kövesi pointed out that the criticisms he was putting forward were not

fuelled by right-wing motives; he had already publicly dissociated himself from right-wing political attitudes. The mood then turned somewhat ugly. NAGO's representatives asked that the session be declared a closed meeting and the vote of no confidence be held by secret ballot; however, these requests were rejected by a majority of the representatives. The Kövesi platform then claimed that inappropriate provisions had been applied to determine the order of voting, and thus the decision made by Orbán Kolompár—deputising for Mr Horváth, who was disqualified on grounds of personal involvement—to put discussion of the motion of no confidence to an open vote had infringed the rulebook. In their opinion, Mr Horváth's supporters had thereby influenced the end result of the no-confidence motion by thwarting the possibility of Roma representatives voting according to conscience rather than along party-political lines. Aladár Horváth rejected NAGO's accusations at the meeting: "Experience has shown that the past two and half months have not been sufficient for NAGO to come to terms with the final outcome of the election [to the new NGMS]. Another attempt had been made to split the coalition that won that election. My congratulations to NAGO and Lungo Drom on their marriage, and may I be the first to wish them every success in their role as opposition. Gypsies will understand what the message of today's session is for NAGO and for us." For purposes of being able to reassure the group of representatives putting forward the no-confidence motion, the executive chairman had asked the NGMS's legal expert for an opinion on the matter in issue, and in the expert's view Orbán Kolompár and those present had proceeded in full compliance with the relevant provisions, and that in regard to the Rules of Procedure, as currently formulated, there is no foundation for requesting that a secret ballot be ordered.

June

The National Gypsy Minority Self-Government is striving to avoid giving even the least appearance of corruption or shady financial dealings, insisted Aladár Horváth. In the opinion of this Roma politician, who is widely known for his human rights work, the government will have to make serious efforts to head off a large-scale westwards migration of Romas following accession to the European Union. Mr Horváth noted, "As was promised, we are carrying out a régime change in Roma politics. The sham politicking that depended on whoever was in power is now a thing of the past with the defeat of Lungo Drom. All the

same, speedy, radical changes are not going to remove at a stroke received ideas of what the NGMS was about till now. Previously there was a tacit agreement between successive governments and the so-called Roma elite to the effect that we'll hand over a bundle of money but not look too closely at how you spend it, and in return you won't criticise us and you'll keep a muzzle on Roma opinion. That world of the old pals' act and unprincipled deal-making is finished, but some of my fellow representatives can't quite believe this and still think of Gypsy affairs as a cross between a system of nationalist tribal heads and a business enterprise. For my part, I am seeking to bring value-driven politics into wider currency. The absence of a democratic culture can also cause problems, with many people having not yet learned how to assert their rights and interests legally. That is understandable. For centuries the state has driven Gypsies to the margins, forcing them to adopt solutions that lie outside the law. It is in the balance right now whether the current government truly is offering Hungary's Gypsies a historical perspective on integration."

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. Radio C has been given HUF 3 million by the Pro Cultura Urbis Foundation, a fund set up by Budapest's Metropolitan General Assembly, or town council, HUF 2 million by the local self-government for Budapest's Eighth District, and HUF 1.6 million plus 25% VAT by the Ministry of Employment Policy and Labour. Due to its financial problems, Hungary's first Roma radio station has been forced, since 7th April, to suspend its programmes and broadcast a music-only stream. Statements made by the Head of Programming at that point indicated that in addition to its regular income of HUF 60 million the radio station required HUF 50 million in order to settle its accumulated debts and a further HUF 20 million to be able to operate satisfactorily. On 29th April, Hungarian Radio signed a long-term agreement to cooperate with Radio C, which would settle the Roma station's financial worries and guarantee continued future operation. Under the agreement, Hungarian Radio has undertaken to purchase from Radio C a min-

imum of one hour per day of a magazine-style compilation that will be broadcast by all of Hungarian Radio's regional radio studios.

On Friday, the Gyöngyös Gypsy Minority Self-Government this year awarded eleven individuals a Pro Egalitate prize for work done to promote Roma equality. Among those recognised, on what is now the fifth occasion the prizes have been awarded, were Nancy G. Brinker, the USA's ambassador to Hungary; Péter Kiss, chancery minister; Bálint Magyar, Minister of Education; László Teleki, Ferenc Baja, Under-Secretary of State of the Office of Prime Minister; and Jenő Kaltenbach, Parliamentary Commissioner (or Ombudsman) for Minority Rights. The others include Colonel Michael C. Hart and Major Mark Wills, US Army representatives in Hungary; József Pásztor of Érsek, counsellor; László Szabó, managing director of MAUT Kft; and Zsolt Iványi, general manager of the Property Managing Company of Gyöngyös. Most of the awards were accepted by proxies for the prize winners. In a speech following his own acceptance, Mr Teleki, the Under-Secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister, emphasised that the government was committed to securing a rise in social and economic standards for Gypsies and obstructing discrimination against them. One sign of that, he claimed, was the historical step of ensuring that Gypsy affairs were represented at a high level within the Office of the Prime Minister.

Radio C has so far received a fraction of the subventions that had been promised. György Kerényi, Head of Programming, hopes that with a few months it will be possible to end the station's current involuntary breaks in transmission.

According to a recently published survey, 15 per cent of Roma respondents who were questioned in five Central and Eastern European countries admitted to being more or permanently hungry. A sizeable generation of Romas 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 chairman 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 no 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. László Teleki, the Under-Secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs, was evasive in his response to a question about whether the government regarded the meeting as legitimate. That would only emerge after he and his legal experts had been able to go through the current rulebook. The NGMS headquarters had to be vacated yesterday after a bomb threat was received. It is not known whether this scare was in any way associated with the organisation's current internal dispute.

July

The nine countries taking part in a regional Roma conference have created an intergovernmental working group at prime ministerial level, which the Hungarian prime minister, Péter Medgyessy, was charged with setting up. At an international press briefing for the three-day conference, the Hungarian prime minister said that the shared goal was to elaborate a programme for the integration of Romas within their societies—a task that would span several generations but one on which a start had to be made without delay. The other task would be to help the nine countries make effective use of international aid that was received to promote Roma advancement.

Up till Monday afternoon, the local Gypsy self-governments of 19 settlements had informed the Hungarian new agency MTI that they objected to Aladár Horváth being stripped of the chairmanship of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government at its recent extraordinary meeting. Reacting to this, Mr Horváth said, “I sense the confidence and affection in which I am held.” Gypsy politics in Hungary is well-organised, which explains how letters of protest from different parts of the country can appear with exactly the same wording and layout, he noted. Those who had signed the letters of protest “are giving utterance to their outrage” at what was happening within the NGMS and “are protesting about the ille-

gitimate and shameful attempt to replace its leader.” They were underlining that their reason for sending their representatives to the minority self-government was “so that a régime change should also take place at last in Roma politics.” Some letters that bear a 26th June date also note that “if necessary, we shall be able to enforce our will by way of street demonstrations.” Mr Horváth is calling for another NGMS general meeting to be held on Friday, because he considers that the Wednesday session convoked by Orbán Kolompár to relieve him of his office was unlawful. “My aim is that the NGMS should come to democratic and lawful decisions on Friday,” he stated, adding that he had been attending a conference in Budapest on “Romas in an integrating Europe” as chairman of the NGMS, and he “continues to regard himself as chairman” at least until the meeting he has called for Friday.

According to information he himself has passed to the news agency, László Teleki, the Under-Secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs, gained his high-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 [the highest grade is 5],” 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 adult Romas 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 a sewage disposal network. According to the survey, close to half of the Roma population lives on less than HUF 900 per day. The Romas 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.

In line with earlier reports from the Roma Press Centre, Roma women of the Eger district have been complaining that on arriving to give childbirth at Eger County Hospital their

race is used as a ground for placing them in a segregated ward. Employees of the Press Centre used a hidden camera to record the hospital's midwife explain that Roma women in childbirth had separate wards. After its own subsequent investigation, the hospital claimed that no racially motivated segregation had occurred in the institution; it was filing charges to gain redress from those media organisations that had published the information. The cases against the Népszava daily newspaper and the Medical Tribune weekly specialist magazine, in which the court concluded that Roma women were indeed discriminated on the basis of skin colour, ended today. The Medical Tribune has been ordered to communicate to its readership that, despite this being the case, it had been wrong to report that segregation extended to the delivery rooms themselves. The court censured Népszava for featuring what it found was the unsubstantiated term 'C' Ward—[for 'Cigány' i.e. 'Gypsy']—in the title as well as in the body of article. The court felt that the report in question gave the false impression that a Roma woman had been sterilised on account of her race. The hospital had admitted that the woman was indeed sterilised, but this was not mentioned in her final report on discharge. The woman in question is expected to sue the hospital.

In so far as the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government fails to pursue policies that keep the interests of Gypsies and the country to the fore, then Aladár Horváth, having weighed up the situation, is contemplating withdrawing from the body, he communicated to the MTI news agency on Friday. According to information learned by the Népszava daily newspaper, and irrespective of any future decisions that the organisation or courts may make, Mr Horváth is soon to retire for good from the NGMS's work because he does not see the body's future as secure, while due to worsening relations he is finding it impossible to work with the NGMS's other Roma politicians. For the time being, Mr Horváth continues to regard himself as the NGMS's chairman, classifying his recent removal from the post as irregular. At Friday's session of the NGMS in Budapest, the Roma politician called on those who had ousted him from office to refrain from putting unlawful decisions into effect.

August

A good week since the Sziget [Island] Festival in Budapest, which this year may have been visited in even greater numbers than before by youngsters curious about the more

popular programmes, which undoubtedly did a power a good for the box-office receipts. Many people had been concerned that a one-week event would lead to a dilution of content, but those fears were not borne out because the main stage, the world music stage, and the theatre and Roma tents all presented important and demanding performances to maintain a balance. The Roma tent—given the very difficult situation in which Radio C, the organiser of its programmes, currently finds itself—was a focus of specially close attention. Operating the tent and putting together nearly 40 programmes cost approximately HUF 15 million, and György Kerényi, Radio C's Head of Programming, has pointed out that they still have to find HUF 3 million of that total. There are few opportunities to cut back on that expenditure because they feel under pressure, whether this is explicit or tacit, not to transmit what is actually the mass culture of Hungary's Gypsies but to provide a challenging international roundup of Roma music, in which space needs to be found equally for re-imagined authentic Gypsy musics as for Roma jazz or contemporary electronic dance music. Radio C's Roma tent, as a regular feature at the Sziget Festival, has become a major meeting point for people of Roma and non-Roma origin. Those who did not find an opportunity to visit the tent this year can look forward to a somewhat similar programme being run this autumn. As plans stand, Petőfi Hall in Budapest will host another festival of Roma culture, possibly somewhat wider-ranging than at Sziget, which is again being organised by Radio C staff members.

In an event organised as part of the Sport and Culture against Racism, Hungary's Gypsy national team beat a British team of ethnic-minority players by 7-1 at the Ferenc Puskás Stadium, Budapest.

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 (MoE) identification number that is needed to operate. This year, however, the MoE have issued a number to the school, thus allowing it to announce that it would be opening from the start of academic year 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 the 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.

In another item of news relating to Jászladány, the Jászladány Job Opportunities Club for Gypsies has appealed to the non-Roma members of the local Roma minority self-government to resign from the body. The club's chairperson, Mrs Ferenc Lázók, declared that in their opinion the job of representing local Romas in the minority self-government ought to be a matter for real Gypsies. It may again be recalled that in the local elections held in October 2002 the only representative actually of Roma descent voted onto the five-person Gypsy minority self-government was Mrs Rita Banyáné Suki, who was later chosen to chair the body.

The Equal Opportunities Office has asked the government for HUF 1.2 billion for this year from the budget reserve. For the forthcoming 2004 financial year it will be calling for HUF 30 billion.

A new Roma organisation has been set up under the leadership of Aladár Horváth and calling itself the Roma Civil Rights Movement (RCRM). The organisation has been founded by some fifty Roma and non-Roma individuals to promote the effective assertion by Romas of their civil rights. At a press conference held during the organisation'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. The press briefing and

inaugural meeting were later on interrupted by a bomb warning, as a result of which the founders continued their deliberations in the public square outside.

September

In a paper written before the start of the school year, Aladár Horváth comes to the following views on the practice of segregation in the educational system: “It is our responsibility that there is room for ambiguous selection procedures in all too many Jászladánys throughout the country. We have been training our teachers, conditioning society as a whole, for selective education for decades on end; since the 1989-90 change in régime, we have even given financial encouragement to segregation. That cost a big chunk of the budget then in order that it will now cost even more to end the segregation and bring in an integrated education system. The more Roma children were classified as unsuitable for normal education, the better that suited the body maintaining a school. The segregation of Roma pupils was linked to the intellectual undervaluing of an entire ethnic group, and vice versa. Attempts to promote ‘catching up’ never achieved any catch-up, only impairing self-respect, for generation after generation of Roma pupils. There are many who believe that the way today’s situation arose was a natural process, with a minority becoming detached from the ‘Magyar’ Hungarians, as if this form of apartheid were not an affliction for everyone, Roma and non-Roma alike. Because that’s what apartheid is, in the legal sense of the term as well.”

October

“The National Gypsy Minority Self-Government welcomes the fact that the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), as well as Fidesz, wishes to include candidates of Roma background on the list of candidates it puts together for the elections to the European Parliament,” announced Ferenc Fodor, the NGMS’s press chief. Speaking on behalf of the NGMS chairman, Orbán Kolompár, Mr Fodor noted that this would further increase the chances that Romas will achieve “effective representation in Europe” after Hungary has acceded to the EU. In confirming that news to the MTI press agency on Monday, László Kovács stated that the MSZP is indeed thinking along these lines, but no final

decision on the matter has been taken within the party: “That is one of the leadership’s intentions, just as it is also our intention to see that, sooner or later, a person of Roma origin is selected for an ambassadorial posting,” the MSZP chairman declared.

Not long ago, the local self-government for the town of Keszthely, at the southern end of Lake Balaton, ordered that a plank fence was to be built in front of a group of dilapidated houses that are standing on the land of a former brick works at the edge of town and currently provide dwellings for four or five Roma families. In justifying this step, Mayor József Mohácsi reckoned that the fencing was the only solution they had been able to come up with to screen this eyesore from tourists. The town currently does not have enough money to demolish the properties, which are owned by the local self-government, and resettle the Roma families involved, most of whom have taken them over as squatters. Local leaders claim that they were forced into taking urgent action because the brick works site lies right beside the main Keszthely—Hévíz thoroughfare, the most heavily used stretch of highway in the whole district, where foreign visitors are regularly surprised at the desolate appearance of the buildings and their environs. By building the fence, it was asserted, they had not shut the Roma families living there into a ghetto, nor had they banished them, simply hidden the sight behind a plank fence from the eyes of those passing down the highway. Mrs Gyula Horváth, chairperson of the local Gypsy minority self-government, stated that the families living in the brick works dwellings had not raised any complaint over the construction of the fence. She added that she personally also finds that the local authority was justified in taking this action because the filthy and untidy homes of the Roma families on the brick works land had for a long time been a poor advertisement for Keszthely and Hévíz, which are very dependent on the income earned from the foreign tourist trade.

“My God! There are so many of them that it’s a pity Hitler didn’t begin with them!” is one statement the deputy clerk for the town of Piliscsaba is alleged to have made in regard to the Romas, according to Mária Varga, a foster care officer. The chairman and deputy chairman of the local Gypsy minority self-government claim they also heard the statement. The deputy clerk has been working for the town’s self-government for five months and, with the chief clerk on sick leave, has had to attend all the chief’s duties as well. Others who are working for the self-government are also protesting; in a letter deliv-

ered to the town's mayor they maintain they cannot work together with the deputy clerk, and it has become virtually impossible for the office to function. The deputy clerk has rejected the charges and is seeking legal remedy. The employees' petition was the sole item under discussion at an extraordinary meeting of the Piliscsaba town administration on Friday. Gábor Laboda, the mayor of neighbouring Üröm and a Socialist Party parliamentary representative, has asked Piliscsaba's mayor by letter to investigate the matter. László Teleki, Under-Secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister, likewise considers that an investigation is essential and has therefore referred the case to Jenő Kaltenbach, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Minority Rights.

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 labyrinthine and lacked transparency. As he himself put it, although for Hungarian Romas the subject is “the most momentous issue of the period since the change in régime,” it nevertheless remains “a big black hole” for them. He threw out the idea that in Hungary, as in some other countries, a public foundation might be established to handle compensation-related tasks. Tibor Lázók, the RCG's legal adviser, complained that only those who had directly suffered wrong or had been slave or forced labourers were entitled to apply, whereas those who lost lives during the persecutions were excluded. Anikó Bakonyi, speaking for the Budapest office of the International Organisation for Migration, clarified that the compensation rules were set by German law and a court decision that had been reached in the USA. Erika Plankó, head of the main section in the Ministry of Justice, pointed out that in Hungary several hundred thousand individuals, including many Romas, had received compensation over the past ten years or so.

November

Over half of those who live in Gypsy 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 the 2001 census 190,000 had likewise done so. Sociologist István Kemény pointed out that it would be a mistake to infer from that numerical growth that Romas were becoming more willing than before 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 Romas barely exceeds 20%. Sociologist Béla Jánky reported that even fewer Romas than this—just 16% of men and 10% of women—are in a regular, officially reported job providing a guaranteed 40-hour week. About 70% of Gypsies who do have opportunities to work earn their money as unskilled or semi-skilled workers. Only 22% of Romas in employment have jobs as skilled ‘blue-collar’ workers, and a mere 8% earn a livelihood with non-manual work in ‘white-collar’ jobs (which for the purposes of the survey includes jobs in the uniformed 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 a racist, asserted Sándor Fábry in a debate held by the 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 Gypsies. A number of things

emerged from statements made by these guests; for instance, that Gypsies 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 a pedestal (“Pure gold, of course. We had it made specifically for him”). Last but not least, one learned that a Gypsy voivode, or chief, is the lord of life and death (“For us Gypsies 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 Gypsy inhabitants, government and the 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 Gypsies and the government representatives who also made the trip to Roma—Katalin Lévai, Minister for Equal Opportunities, László Teleki, Under-Secretary of State for Gypsy 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 Gypsies ever to call to see the head of the Catholic church. During the audience the pope gave his Apostolic blessing to Hungary’s Gypsies 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 integration 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.” These 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 Hungarian Romas is 10-15 years shorter than that of non-Romas, and the Ministry of Health (MoH) is inquiring whether that is related to any factors to do with the level of provision of health care, it was announced. The MoH 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 for their opinion on a series of derogatory statements about Gypsies. These include: “One can never be too careful with Gypsies”; “Those who want to limit the role Gypsies have in public life should be able to spread their views freely”; “Those who call for violence to be used against Gypsies should be able to spread their views freely”; “Gypsies 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. In the opinion of Aladár Horváth, chairman of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation, the survey in itself is discriminative and prejudicial. “If they are only conducting investigations of this kind among Romas, then that in itself is discrimination and can only serve to reinforce prejudices,” he noted, adding that it was impermissible to identify the Roma population with grinding poverty. Some two thirds of Romas were integrated, perhaps some better than others, but nevertheless incorporated into Hungarian society, he noted. The National Gypsy Minority Self-Government expressed regret that the MoH had not asked them for their views before carrying out this Roma-related survey. Ferenc Babusik, head of the Delphoi Consulting Social Science Research Unit which compiled the questionnaire, stated that there was no deliberately provocative motive behind the questions. More than three decades of international practice had shown that negative biases were most readily quantifiable if their gist was expressed explicitly—and as prejudicially as possible, he noted.

“The police and Romas have an equal interest in seeing a reduction in prejudiced attitudes,” Police Commissioner László Salgó emphasised at a national conference for police

chiefs that was also attended by officers of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government and László Teleki, Under-Secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs. This social tension can be a serious obstacle to the growth of democracy, which is why it has to be curbed. “The outcome of prejudiced attitudes is decided on the streets, in town and village, not here in this room,” the commissioner warned. In summing up what needed to be done, he stated that he was going to set the ball rolling next year with a national conference at which police liaison officers and Roma coordinators could jointly evaluate their experiences at working together, whilst the national conference for police chiefs would conduct an annual review of that cooperation. The police chiefs would support any local initiative, the commissioner added. Mr Teleki pointed out that prejudices can appear in any sphere of life, and everything had to be done to conquer them. The fact that the police and Gypsy representatives are forging real links at the local level, and not solely over problem cases, is a significant indicator. “The police have to become acquainted with the Gypsy population,” he emphasised. Orbán Kolompár, the NGMS chairman, pointed out that communication between the police and Gypsies was not working well. “Prejudices arise from there being no communication, little information. The media bears a big responsibility, however, for how it chooses to present conflicts,” he noted. It would be better if both sides were to shift the focus onto prevention. Cooperation between the police and Gypsy self-government bodies was necessary at both county and local level, with direct links being built up between the local police commander and the local Gypsy leader.

December

The Zala County Public Prosecutor’s Office has commenced criminal proceedings at Kaposvár Military Prosecutor’s Office on grounds of there being a well-founded suspicion of failure to render assistance in connection with the case of Attila Forgács, a prisoner who was found dead following a cell fire last Thursday in Zalaegerszeg Prison. This is the third set of proceedings into the case, an internal inquiry into which has been instituted by the National Headquarters of the Prison Service and criminal inquiries are being conducted by Zala County Police Headquarters. On 27th November, under as yet unexplained circumstances, fire broke out at Zalaegerszeg Prison in a solitary confinement cell known as ‘the rubber room’, which led to the death of 29-year-old Mr Forgács, who was being held in the cell at the time.

Social scientists at the Szolnok-based Lowlands Scientific Institute, which is affiliated to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' Centre for Regional Research, have produced an analysis of the reasons for conflicts between Romas and non-Romas, and possibilities of alleviating them, in the three northern Lowlands towns of Jászládány, Mikepércs and Nagyhalász. According to the survey, the majority of those questioned in Jászládány agreed with proposition "Every Gypsy child has a right to be taught in the same school classes as non-Gypsies." 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 the community as having an ethnic colouring. Jászládány's inhabitants consider that this could be reduced through a joint effort by the local self-government and the state, and they would even see the county self-government as having a major role in reconciliation efforts. Prejudice against Roma minority groups in Jászládány is strong, though it does not differ significantly in degree from that found nationally. For those questioned, all other ethnic groups were preferred to Romas 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 non-Romas would not want to work in the same workplace or live in the same street as Gypsies.

One possible line for reducing conflicts, the researchers believe, is by securely establishing equal rights policies. Among respondents it was particularly those of Roma descent who felt it was one of the jobs of the educational system to remedy social disadvantages. Most respondents—particularly those with university degrees—believe that experiences picked up at school can exert a positive influence in altering a family's cultural habits. According to Tibor Szarvák, differences could be lessened in a variety of ways; for instance, if settlements were able to institute income-generating programmes to provide subsidies that would allow at least some Romas to return to working land of their own in order to make a living. Currently, two thirds of working-age Romas in Jászládány are unemployed and, the survey suggests, see no chance of that situation improving in the near future. The researchers consider that it would help if Romas had the chance to become familiar with the benefits of information technology and the internet, given that there is a study which suggests barely one per cent of them use a computer.

“The biggest difficulty stems from the fact that there is no uniform set of criminal statistical criteria that realistically reflect reality on which one could uniformly adopt a position as to who should be considered a Gypsy. Differentiation based purely on the name is not satisfactory... That is why a differentiation that allows us to speak about offenders of Gypsy descent who are assimilating or who are unable to assimilate seems appropriate.” This is a passage that present and future teachers will be able to read in an anthology with the title *Roma Pedagogy: Theoretical and Practical Foundations*, edited by two members of the Pedagogy Department at the Károly Eszterházy College and published in 2000 by Okker Kiadó.

Next year will mark the start of the programme to demolish Hungary’s remaining run-down Gypsy 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 Gypsy Affairs, announced at a press conference in Salgótarján on Wednesday. Based on a sociological survey, that is the number of isolated Gypsy colonies that are located outside land in 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 latter 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.

2. CHANGES IN THE SITUATION OF HUNGARY'S GYPSIES IN THE LIGHT OF NATIONAL SAMPLE SURVEYS

Over the past 33 years three representative sample surveys have been carried out into the Gypsy population of Hungary—in 1971, in late 1993, and in the first quarter of 2003.

All three surveys classed as Gypsy any family or household whom those coming into contact with regarded as being a Gypsy. This approach has been a constant subject of debate from the beginning. Many would argue that it is incorrect to adopt that definition. However, no other workable criterion offers itself as only about one third of Hungary's Gypsies are prepared to identify themselves as being of Gypsy ethnicity in their declarations to the national census. In other words, if one were to proceed solely on the basis of those declaring themselves to be of Gypsy ethnicity, then one would be gaining information on the circumstances and position of only one third of the population. Nor is there a way of recording the census data that will allow one to know where people who declare themselves to be of Gypsy ethnicity happen to live, at what address, and thus one cannot use this as a line of approach to them. The only feasible way is to take as a basis the opinion of those who come into contact with them.

This was the approach adopted by the Statistical Office in a national Gypsy census that was carried out in January 1893, when great efforts were made to record all Gypsies without exception. Thus the 1893 census was a complete register, whereas the 1971, 1993 and 2003 surveys were representative, with 2% of Gypsy households being assessed in 1971 and 1993, and 1% of households in 2003.

The Roma population

According to the 1893 census, 65,000 Gypsies, including infants, were living within what are the present-day borders of the Hungary. To put it another way, there were 280,000 living within the entire territory of the country (which was approximately three times the present area), but only 65,000 of these were living within the territory of today's Hungary. For comparison, the number of Gypsies was estimated to be 320,000 in 1971,

470,000 in 1993, and 570,000 or 600,000 in 2003. Thus, over the 110 years from 1893 to 2003 the Roma population grew ninefold.

Of the 470,000 individuals living in Roma households in 1993, however, some 18,000-20,000 had a non-Roma spouse. Strictly speaking, therefore, the number of Gypsies was about 450,000, which with dependants came to a total of 470,000.

Two figures are given for 2003: 570,000 or 600,000. Where do these figures come from? In the survey 1% of the population was sampled, and 5,408 individuals were recorded. Multiplying 5,408 by 100 gives 540,800 for the total; in this survey, though, as in 1993, allowance was made for the fact that however careful and thorough the search for Gypsies in the country may be, it is impossible to locate and record every person, every household and every address. If the assumption is made that only 95% of them have been found, then that suggests 570,000 instead of 540,000. If, on the other hand, it is assumed that it is only 90% of them—or in other words 10% have escaped being recorded—then that gives 600,000 for the total population. These are realistic estimates and comply with the logic that statisticians conventionally follow in similar cases. Here the remarkable readiness of respondents to give answers to survey questions is particularly relevant. Generally, when one reads in a newspaper about a piece of public opinion research, the views that people adopt on various issues, as a rule 30-50% of the people who are approached will actually respond to the questions. In this 2003 survey, of the 5,400 Gypsies living in 1,160 households there were altogether 100 instances when it was found that the individuals being sought were not living at that address or had moved away, or else the housewife said she was not prepared to give any answers because her husband was not at home. To put it another way, the Gypsies were so extremely obliging that a high degree of accuracy is assured for the results of the study.

As was already noted, the current number of Gypsies in Hungary is nine times what it was in the same area in 1893. It is possible to do a certain amount of forecasting, at least for the immediate future, and state with some confidence that by 2010 the population will be somewhere between about 640,000 and 670,000. Forecasting 25 or 50 years ahead, however, is a hazardous business because customs change, and one possibility, for instance, is that Gypsy families will have fewer children than they do at present.

As in 1993, the total of 570,000 or 600,000 includes 18,000-20,000 cases where there is a non-Roma spouse, so if one wishes to look strictly at those who are regarded as Gypsies the current number is 550,000 or 580,000.

Geographical distribution

Ten per cent of Hungary's Roma population lives in Budapest, 50% of them live in provincial towns, and 40% in villages. This distribution differs from the earlier survey results in that 8% lived in Budapest in 1971 and 9% in 1993, whilst just 14% lived in provincial towns in 1971 and 30% in 1993, leaving 78% who were village dwellers in 1971 and 60% in 1993.

The Gypsies are also scattered unevenly across the country. Altogether 30% of the total live in the northern region, consisting of the counties of Borsod, Nógrád and Heves, and 20% live in the eastern region, which includes Szabolcs, Hajdú and Békés counties. A further 10% in the Lowlands region of central Hungary and not quite 20% in the southern Transdanubian region, leaving a sparse few who live in the western Hungary.

Number of live births

The number of children born per 1,000 inhabitants in Hungary was 15 in 1971, 11 in 1993, and 9.5 in 2003, which has resulted in a major decline in the number of children in the population. There has also been a decline among the Roma population, but the rate was higher to begin with and the fall has been much smaller: in 1971 there were 32 children born per 1,000 inhabitants, in 1993 it was 29, and in 2003 it was 25.

Looking at this from another angle, in 1971 out of a total 152,000 children born in Hungary 10,000—or 7%—were Roma children, but in 1993 out of a total 116,000 children 13,000—or 11%—were Roma, and in 2003 out of a total 97,000 children 15,000—or 15%—were Roma. One can therefore say that in 20 years, when these children have grown up, 15% of 20-somethings and 11% of thirty-somethings will be Gypsies. In some 20-25 years the point will be reached where more than 10% of Hungary's inhabitants are of Roma descent. That 10% is a boundary level about which can say that once the ratio of Gypsies exceeds this, then there will be a quantum leap in their influence on the life

of the country as compared with now. Indeed that influence will be exerted not only on the life of the country but on their own lives, because essentially all the measures that presently affect the lives of Gypsies—in fact roughly 94% of them—are the measures of majority society. In 20-25 years, whilst there will still not be a Roma majority, a Roma population bigger than 10% will nevertheless be able to exert a much stronger influence on the measures that the country as a whole votes for.

With Roma families having significantly more children than non-Roma families, the age distribution is very different between the two. Right now, not quite 37% of Hungary's Roma population is under 15 years of age, as compared with 17% for the country as a whole. On the other hand, 20% of the national population, but only 4% of the Roma population, is over 59 years old. That last figure alone is an indication that the life expectancy of Gypsies at birth is much shorter than it is for non-Gypsies.

Linguistic groups

The Gypsies of Hungary belong to three linguistic groups: the Magyar Gypsies, or Romungros, who speak only Hungarian; the bilingual Vlach Gypsies, who speak both Hungarian and Romani; and the bilingual Beash Gypsies, who speak both Hungarian and Romanian.

Back in 1893, 80% of the Gypsies then living on what is the present territory of Hungary spoke Hungarian as their native language, whilst 10% were Romani speakers, 4.5% Romanian speakers, and 6% had some other mother tongue. A subsequent shift took place, such that by 1971 the proportion of Gypsies speaking Hungarian as their mother tongue had declined to 71%, with 21% now Romani-speaking Vlach Gypsies, 8% Romanian-speaking Beash, and just 1% speaking other languages. The reason for the growth in Romani- and Beash Romanian-speakers between 1893 and 1971 was immigration, with the Beash generally coming from the south—from Croatia and, more especially, Serbia—and settling in the south of the Transdanubian region, whereas the Vlachs mainly came from those areas of western Romania that had been integral parts of Hungary prior to 1920, though there was also a steady trickle from historically Hungarian-dominated Transylvania and indeed from other regions of Romania, including Wallachia and Moldavia.

By 1993 a steep decline was being seen in the proportion of Romani- and Beash Romanian-speakers, with the ratio of Hungarian-speakers having risen to almost 90%, leaving 4.4% speaking Romani and 5.5% Beash Romanian as their mother tongue, which suggests a widespread linguistic assimilation occurred during the two decades between 1971 and 1993. One of the determining factors in this would have been the fact that between 1965 and 1984 a substantial proportion of Hungary's Gypsy colonies were swept away, with Roma families pulling out of the separate Gypsy-only areas—typically some distance outside the village or town borders—that they had previously inhabited and moving either to the outskirts or right into the middle of the town or village that had previously been the preserve of non-Roma families. That move increased contacts with the non-Roma population, thus hastening the process of linguistic assimilation. A still greater influence was the fact that between 1971 and 1989—in stark contrast to the present day, when the greater part of the Roma population is unemployed—virtually every adult male Roma was in some sort of employment where the language of communication was Hungarian, and thus they were compelled to use that language 8 hours or more every workday. A large proportion of Roma women also took on work for outside employers, and there too the language of communication was Hungarian. School was an even greater stimulus for swapping languages. This was compulsory for all children of school age, and there was a marked improvement in school attendance by Roma children between 1971 and 1993. At school, of course, there was no chance of speaking Romani or Beash, only Hungarian, which inevitably had repercussions in the form of widespread linguistic assimilation.

Naturally, deliberate intention and determination also have a part in linguistic assimilation. Thus, despite the fact that Hungarian is not their mother tongue and they normally speak, say, Romani with one another, the parents of a child may decide that they will speak Hungarian with the child because they see that in Hungary the best way to get on in life is to communicate in Hungarian. That is a matter of conscious decision, though naturally the decision may be a function of a great many factors.

By 2003 a certain degree of linguistic reversion has become evident. Whereas in 1993 the proportion of native Romani speakers was less than 5%, in 2003 that had gone up to 8%, whereas among the Beash the ratio continued to decline. That does not alter the fact that there is still a strong tendency for the Gypsies' own languages to be squeezed to

the margins, even in communication between native speakers, and one can only count on those languages continuing to be rolled back in the years and decades to come.

Ethnicity

In Hungary's 1990 national census 143,000 individuals declared themselves to be of Roma ethnic descent, whilst in the 2001 census the corresponding figure was 190,000. We know, however, that in 1990 the actual number of individuals of Roma descent was 440,000-450,000, so that of these 143,000—or 32%—were willing to declare this as their ethnicity. In 2001 likewise 190,000 out of an actual total of 550,000-570,000 Gypsies—or 33.3-34.5%—chose to declare themselves as being of Roma ethnic descent. It is common for this to be interpreted as showing that Gypsies do not wish to admit to—even actively deny—that they are Gypsies. The fact is, however, that they could not do so even if they wished, in part because their appearance shows that they are Gypsies, but also in part because non-Roma neighbours in both villages and towns, or colleagues in workplaces, keep tabs on the fact that somebody is of Roma origin. Denial would therefore be a frankly futile exercise, and indeed it is not commonly encountered. Undeniably there are some Gypsies who would like to be able to deny that they are of Roma descent, but very few of them actually succeed in doing so.

The one third of Gypsies freely declaring their ethnicity does not mean that the rest are seeking to deny it but reflects the fact that they are counting on a declaration of their Roma ethnicity marking them out from the majority in Hungarian society, which may be associated with various disadvantages. If, however, they declare themselves to be of Magyar (Hungarian) ethnicity, then that will not only not be associated with any disadvantages but may indeed be associated with certain advantages.

In questioning about ethnicity in the 2003 survey a chance was given for respondents not merely to describe themselves as being 'Hungarian', 'Gypsy', 'Beash', or whatever they wished, but also to use the term 'Hungarian Gypsy'. This term did not feature on the national census form, but our reason for including it was an expectation that some respondents would choose this. It had already been tried in 1993, but in the 2003 survey it was found that 38% of Romas declared they were of Magyar ethnic origin, 30% of Magyar Gypsy origin, 27% of Gypsy origin, 4.5 of Beash origin, and a negligible 1.1% as being of

some other ethnicity. What one finds is that those Roma who are from the Beach ethnic group did indeed declare themselves to be Beash, and the Romani speakers generally declared they were Gypsies; a fair proportion of monolingual Hungarian-speaking Gypsies, however, likewise declared themselves to be Gypsies, with another group identifying themselves as Magyar Gypsies, and altogether 38% declaring themselves to be Hungarians. These differ from the proportions recorded in 1993 with rising numbers of Romas declaring themselves to be Gypsies or Magyar Gypsies. So often and so comprehensively have Gypsies been shown rejection by the majority society that over the past decade there is now a growing number of Gypsies who say they are not Hungarians, they are Romas.

Housing segregation

In 1971, two thirds of all Hungary's Gypsies lived in what were more or less their own 'colonies'. The dwellings in the colonies were not proper houses but rather shanties, without electricity, running water or toilets. In 1964, a total of 49,000 such dwellings, inhabited by 222,000 individuals, were recorded across the country. The following year a start was made on clearing these colonies. At the initiative and say-so of the state, and with the state's explicit backing as guarantor, the National Savings Bank (OTP) offered Gypsies who were in regular employment loans to build houses for themselves. In those days, some 85% of adult male Gypsies were in regular employment, so the vast majority were in a position to take on such loans. What this meant in practice was that with the loan, which was not received in the form of cash, it was possible to buy a plot of land and to have a rather inferior quality family house built on the plot. A large number of these low-grade, basic-amenity houses—'CS' houses as they were abbreviated in Hungarian—were built at that time, and very many Gypsies moved from the old Gypsy colonies into such 'CS' houses. The other possibility they had was to purchase cottages that Hungarian peasants had vacated to move elsewhere, whether to town or another village.

This clearance of the old colonies went on for some two decades. By 1984 just 42,000 out of the originally recorded 220,000 Gypsy inhabitants were still living in such housing. Accordingly, the Hungarian Roma population experienced a major decrease in its degree of separation and segregation from the rest of society between 1971 and 1993. In 1993, out of the total Roma population of 470,000 some 62,000 (14%) were living in a slum colony. In

that year's survey data were collected not merely on how many Gypsies were living in a colony but what sort of environment they were living in. Thus, respondents were asked about the numbers of Gypsies living in the immediate area around their dwelling. In 30% of cases the answer was that the neighbourhood was inhabited exclusively or predominantly by Gypsies, whilst in 30% of cases Gypsies and non-Gypsies were mixed up together; in yet another 30% of cases the majority of people living in the neighbourhood were non-Gypsies, leaving 10% of cases where there were no other Gypsies living nearby.

In 2003, out of the total Roma population of 570,000-600,000 some 36,000 (6%) were living in a slum colony, but 2% were still living at some distance from a settlement. In answer to similar questions about the neighbourhood, in 56% of cases this was inhabited exclusively or predominantly by Gypsies, whilst in 22% of cases Gypsies and non-Gypsies were mixed up together, in 17% of cases the majority of people living in the neighbourhood were non-Gypsies, and in 9% of cases no other Gypsies were living nearby. It is safe to say, then, that segregation has increased for Gypsies between 1993 and 2003, with 56% of them (instead of 30%) now living mainly or exclusively surrounded by other Gypsies.

At the present moment, 50% of all Hungary's Gypsies live fair and square within the area of their home town or village, whilst 42% live on the edge of that settlement; as already noted, 6% still live in a Gypsy colony, and 2% at some distance from a settlement. This suggests that half of them are in isolated or segregated housing, but if one takes a closer look at those who are nominally living within the boundaries of settlements, it turns out that 22% of that 50% are predominantly surrounded by other Gypsies. In other words, it would be truer to say that 72% of Gypsies live segregated from the non-Gypsy population.

In short, a worsening in the situation of Gypsies in Hungary was seen between 1971 and 1993 with regard to their degree of segregation from the rest of the population, as with other aspects. If one looks at how the majority society has treated the Gypsies, it would be reasonable to say that a worsening of the situation, with a growth of tension, has occurred since 1990.

Employment prospects

As many as 85% of adult male Gypsies in Hungary were in regular employment in 1971. At that time the national figure was 88%, so the difference between Romas and non-

Romas was very small. Indeed, what difference there was could be attributed primarily to the fact that 5% of the Hungarian male population between 15 and 74 years of age were classed as students (i.e. had completed their general (elementary) schooling and were attending a secondary school, college or university). Among the Gypsies, however, students made up barely 0.5% of their numbers.

There was a different situation among women. In the general population 64% of adult women were employed in 1971, whereas among Gypsies that was true of only 30%. This was mainly a consequence of the higher birth rate among Gypsy women. Between 1971 and 1990, however, there was a steady increase in the rate of employment among Gypsy women, and during the 1980s more than half of them had a job.

Around 1990-91 Hungary was hit by an economic slump worse than any the country had faced before. As a result of the slump employment plunged throughout country, one measure of its extent being that whereas Hungary had some 5.5 million in its active labour force around the mid-1980s that figure had fallen by over 1.5 million (30%) to 3.8 million in employment by 1993. The job losses among Gypsies were proportionately even more brutal. In 1993, the proportion of working-age Hungarian males who were in employment fell to 64% from the earlier 88% level, but among male Gypsies it fell to just 29%. Among adult women employment in the general population was 66% but among Gypsy women, just 15%.

The position in 2003 is that half—50%—of the total Hungarian population between the ages of 15 and 74 years are in employment, whilst among Gypsies the corresponding figure is 15%. As for those who are not recorded as employed, of course, they are not all unemployed as some are students and others are pensioners, but there is a third group who are indeed unemployed as well as a fourth group who are economically inactive but belong to none of the three preceding categories because they are not registered as unemployed and simply do not appear in the job statistics.

In this area a huge difference is seen between villages, provincial towns and the capital. In the rural areas 20% of male working-age Gypsies are employed, 10% are students, and the rest have no job. In provincial towns the figures are 29% in a job, 11% studying, and 60% unemployed. The biggest difference is seen with Budapest, where 66% of Gypsy men are in work, 13% are studying, and only 20% do not have a job (and that figure includes pensioners). That situation arises because, for all practical purposes, there is no

unemployment in the capital, which is to say that the unemployment rate in the population as a whole is less than 5%, or in other words the level at which statisticians treat anyone who is between jobs as being unemployed. Turning to Gypsy women, in the rural areas 10% of them are in a job, 12% are studying, and 78% are unemployed, whilst as for provincial towns 17% are in employment, 9% are studying, and 74% cannot find a job. As with the men, the situation for Gypsy women in Budapest is much better, with 36% of them having a job, 1,5% studying, and 54% unemployed. The level of unemployment for Gypsies in Budapest, therefore, is at a low level and cannot seriously be complained about, but outside the capital it is widespread. Nor is this compensated for by the social benefits to which Gypsies have access: family supplements, child allowances and even pensions make up only in small part for the loss of income that results from unemployment.

Let there be no mistake about it, the situation is rather bleak for the non-Roma population as well. Whereas Hungary had a working population of 5.5 million in the mid-1980s, by 1993 that had dropped to 3,827,000, and now, in the first quarter of 2003, at 3,860,000 it is barely any higher. The slump is over in terms of productivity, with GDP having been on a rising trend since 1997 and having regained the level it was at in 1989, just before the slump. In other words, the forint or dollar value of Hungarian production is the same now—indeed several percentage points higher—as it was in 1989, but the number of employed is still no higher than it was in 1993, at the depth of the slump.

From the viewpoint of having to make a livelihood, however, the economic crisis is not over, and it weighs disproportionately on the Roma as compared with the non-Roma population. A primary reason for that is the poorer schooling that Gypsies have to fall back on: eight years of general (elementary) education are no longer enough to get a job in Hungary. Many Gypsies have not completed even eight years of general school, but even many of those who completed their elementary education are unemployed. Second, many Gypsies are living in those parts of Hungary—notably the northern, eastern and south Transdanubian regions of the country—where the employment prospects are much worse than average. Third, as a result of their lack of schooling the sort of jobs that are open to Gypsies, even when they can find employment, are usually as unskilled or semi-skilled workers, but the branches of the economy that would employ such workers—mining, steel making and the construction industry—are the very areas that have been hardest hit by the economic downturn since 1990 and, indeed, have yet to recover. As things

stand, construction is the area in which Gypsies are most likely to find employment these days, but this is now a much smaller industry than it was in the 1980s. At present there is not even a glimmer of an upswing or boom in construction that would be able to absorb significant numbers of Gypsy men and, indeed, to some degree women as well.

Pay levels and incomes

For the population as a whole, the average monthly pay packet of a Hungarian worker in the first quarter of 2003 was HUF 85,000, but ranging from HUF 65,000 for the average pay of a manual worker to HUF 109,000 for a white-collar worker. For Gypsies, however, the average pay was significantly lower—at HUF 61,000 per month—than for the general population mainly because 70% of the Gypsies in employment have jobs as unskilled or semiskilled workers, with 22% having jobs as skilled workers, and only 8% white-collar jobs. Gypsy pay is accordingly close to the HUF 65,000 average pay for manual workers.

Families have access to other incomes too, including family income supplements, child benefits and other welfare payments. Even taking regular income from work and social payments together, the average monthly income per head in a Gypsy family in Hungary as whole during the first quarter of 2003 was just HUF 21,000. In Budapest the per capita income was HUF 33,000 whereas for Gypsy families in provincial towns it was HUF 20,000, and for families in the villages it was HUF 19,000. Thus, Gypsies living in Budapest, on average, are not poor, unlike those who live outside the capital. To look at it another way, 67% of all Hungarian Gypsies live in households where the per capita monthly income is under HUF 20,000, which is an income level representing what can only be called absolute poverty. In approximately 20% of Gypsy households per capita monthly income is HUF 20,000-30,000, and in 19% it is greater than HUF 30,000. On these levels of income, about 18-20% of Hungary's Gypsies could be said to belong to the middle band of incomes for the Hungarian population as a whole, whilst 60% belong to the absolutely poor segment, and around 20% belong to an intermediate zone between those two groups.

One would expect household incomes to be decisively influenced by the employment or lack of employment of family members. The survey therefore looked at how families fared as a function of the number of adults in the family who were employed and the num-

ber who were unemployed. In families where none of the adults had a regular job, the average per capita monthly income was HUF 14,852, which is poor by any standard. In households where a minority of the adults were working the income was HUF 20,380, which is in the grey zone around the poverty threshold that separates the poor from the not poor. In households where half of the adults are employed the average per capita income was HUF 26,932; where the majority of the adults were in regular work it was HUF 35,824, and where all adults in a household were earning the average monthly income was almost HUF 40,000 per capita. Not surprisingly, then, the income of a Gypsy family depends completely on the extent to which the adults in the family manage to find regular work.

Schooling

In the general Hungarian population the vast majority of children from 3-5 years of age—88% of them—attends nursery school. This is not the case with Gypsy children of the same age group, only 41.5% of whom go to nursery school, even though these are known to be crucial years that largely determine how well a child is going to do later in life, because nursery school provides a preparation for regular school that it is very hard—indeed usually impossible—to make up for missing. Gypsy children who did not spend three years at nursery school therefore generally have a hard time getting on at their general (elementary) school, giving them little real prospect of going on to secondary school and, ultimately, university.

In regard to general school, the position in 1971 was that three quarters of Gypsy youngsters did not complete the eight grades of elementary education and therefore as a rule remained functionally illiterate for the rest of their lives. A big change occurred between 1971 and 2003 inasmuch as 82% of the 20-24 years age-group now complete the eight grades of general school. This is a major advance as compared with the position in 1971, even if a great many Gypsies achieve this much later than non-Gypsies, typically between 16 and 18 years of age (rather than at 14-15 years), with only 52% having passed the Grade 8 exams at 16 years, 64% at 17 years, 76% at 18 years, and 82% at 19 years.

Obviously, by the time most Gypsy youngsters have got to that stage the lost opportunities for further education are too great to be made up. This largely determines in particular whether or not they go on into secondary education. This area too saw big changes

between 1971 and 2003. During the 1970s a mere 1.5% of Gypsies of the appropriate age-group completed a secondary school, and that improved subsequently inasmuch as this went up to 2% during the 1980s and 3% in the early 1990s. The real change, however, has been ushered in since 1997, with ever-greater numbers of Gypsy children applying for admission to secondary school. It is not yet possible to assess what the outcome of this will be because, while we know that 1% of the age-group of 15-19 years in 2003 had finished secondary school and a further 10% were still at school, we do not yet know how well those 10% will leave school. For comparison, 5% of the 20-24 years age-group had finished secondary school and a further 2% were still attending classes at that level. Thus, the level has currently reached around 5%, but it does look as though the change that began to be evident in 1997 is set to carry on unbroken, so that in 10 or 15 years time it would not be surprising if something like 18-20% of Gypsy children will be completing secondary school, though that will still be a long way behind non-Gypsy children, around 70% of whom will be completing their secondary education by then. About 10.5% of Gypsy children who are at present in Grade 7 or 8 of general school would like to continue studies at high school and 14% at a vocational middle school, so nearly one quarter intend to stay on at secondary school. As for young Gypsies of 20-23 years of age, only 1.2% attends a university or college—a conspicuously low proportion.

One reason for this dismal situation has already been touched on, and that is the low attendance at nursery school, which leaves most Gypsy children with gaps in their education that they cannot make up for later on, between the ages of 6 and 16 years. There are also other reasons for Gypsy children falling behind. One of these again stems from the way Gypsy families are geographically located: most villages do not have a high school or a vocational middle school, so it is necessary to travel outside the village to get to such establishments, which is both wearing and costly, present a distinct disincentive against going to secondary school. Another major barrier to further education is the use of remedial schooling. A significant proportion of Gypsy children find that even as early as six years of age, before they have begun the Grade 1 of elementary education, they are referred to a special needs school or remedial classes, i.e. to forms of education that are expressly intended for children with learning disabilities. In Hungary at present 4% of all children are being taught in special needs schools or remedial classes, which in itself is rather high by international standards (in western European countries typically 2-3% of

children attend institutions of this nature) but pales into insignificance beside the figure for Gypsy children. At present 14% of Hungary's Gypsy children are shunted into special needs schools or remedial classes, and that does not include those who are pupils at normal general schools but placed in small, so-called 'catch-up' classes, which would take the figure up to 16.7%. The chances of being admitted to a secondary school from one of these institutions is effectively nil, because not only do they provide no teaching in certain subjects but the demands placed on pupils in the subjects that are taught are so modest as to make it impossible for children to reach the necessary standards.

3. THE MAIN ISSUES OF ROMA POLICY AND ITS FINANCING

The position in which the Roma community find itself in Hungary is so special and grave that one has no qualms about not encasing the term the ‘Roma policy’ in quotation marks, although—for all the present government’s genuine commitment—the concept can only be used with reservations, given that it is open to interpretation.

For one thing, the framework of Roma policy was determined by the medium-term package of measures, which in itself has been altered several times over, as well as by the decision-making and financing mechanism associated with that package. The system of interdepartmental harmonisation suggested that the government wished to make a coordinated effort to assist the Roma community. The trouble was that it was left to the individual departments to arrange the finances needed to implement the medium-term package, with the various separate sums identified by the ministries being aggregated by an Interministerial Committee for Gypsy Affairs (ICGA). The ‘Roma budget’ generated by this method then substantiates the funding for the government’s Roma policy.

Not only does this system lack transparency, it lacks any conceptual underpinning and is actually a barrier to strategic thinking.

It lacks transparency in the sense that any project for which the outlays are departures from the major budgetary streams is bound to be arbitrary. The ‘Roma budget’ is merely an arbitrary grouping of outlays—and only outlays!—which hides the actual distributional trends. Equally, this method of financing lacks conceptual underpinning inasmuch as it does not pick out the social and ethnic dimensions of the disadvantages under which Romas suffer; it takes no account of the fact that the disadvantages encountered by Romas in housing, education and employment are explained in part by their poverty, in part by discrimination, and in part by characteristics of their own culture. The opportunities that are allowed Romas are determined primarily by the funding for the ‘big ticket’ items of education, welfare redistribution, employment policy, housing support, etc. These subventions and programmes aimed directly at the Roma population are supposed to counteract disadvantages stemming from discrimination and cultural characteristics.

Finally, the present method of budgetary planning for Roma policy hinders strategic planning because decisions on the sums that are to be allocated under the individual head-

ings are all taken in advance of the spending departments' own intradepartmental decisions on the sums that are to be set aside specifically for purposes of the 'Roma budget'. Yet equally, by constructing a 'budget for Roma affairs', the government makes believe that it is providing 'financial assistance for the Romas' in line with some departmental logic.

Another way of interpreting this is that the government's Roma policy is far more important than the annual scope of the tasks of the medium-term package and the expenditures that are allocated to the 'Roma budget' under that—a strategy for welfare, employment, educational, anti-discrimination housing policy as a whole which takes into account the Roma community's distinctive needs. In what follows we shall try to provide a survey of the successes and pitfalls encountered by the government's Roma policy to date in this second sense.

Roma-related government priorities

On entering office in 2002, the present Hungarian government set four priorities that would also determine the thrust of its Roma-related policy, promising to encourage a change in the principles and practice of welfare distribution, anti-discrimination legislation, an educational policy aimed at equal opportunities, and clearance of Roma slum colonies to which was linked the construction of social housing. In principle, the four goals interlock harmoniously; nevertheless, emphases frequently become shifted in the course of interdepartmental horse-trading.

'Welfare shift' and composite social policy

By its 'welfare shift' programme the government was indicating that it sought to improve the situation of Romas through a composite system of socio-political instruments, seeing the main goal of its social policy as being to halt the widening of income differences in society as a whole, or at least to moderate their further growth and improve the position of the poorest, most disadvantaged groups. This approach works on the assumption that the social and housing situation of Hungary's Roma communities is so bleak, their exclusion from the job market so extensive, that it has become impossible to institute genuine changes solely by means of human rights and anti-discrimination measures and without significant resources.

There is obvious justification for such an approach. The widening of income disparities in Hungary was not brought to a stop, merely restrained, by the upturn in the economy in 1997. Indeed, according to the annual Monitor survey carried out by TÁRKI, a sociological research company, the results for 2003 indicate that inequalities have again been on the increase between 2000 and 2003: the ratio of the top to the bottom decile of the population when it comes to income distribution widened from 7.5:1 to 8.4:1 over that period. The economic upturn has affected different income groups in divergent ways and to various degrees. Whereas in 1999, the third year of the upswing, the only improvement seen was in the top decile of incomes, by 2001 an improvement was registered for almost all income groups—all except the lowest decile.

The income of Hungarian Romas has been on a continual relative slide ever since the change in régime, even though there may have been a slight reduction in the burden of poverty in society as a whole. Here too the only data to go on are those produced by TÁRKI. On the usual definition of poverty—anyone, that is, whose income is less than half the median income—31.9% of Hungary's Roma were poor in 1991, but by 2001 that had risen to 61.5%. If half of the mean income is taken as the threshold, then 48.9% of Romas were poor in 1991 and 68% in 2001. Looking at it yet another way, 61.6% of Romas fell into the lowest quintile of incomes in 1991, and 75.1% of them in 2002.

The reason why opposition MSZP politicians were critical of the welfare policy that was followed in practice by Fidesz, the government party up to mid-2002, was that it significantly shook up the system of visible and invisible transfer payments (i.e. income boosts engineered via tax allowances) and, what is more, rigged it in favour of the better-off middle classes at the expense of the poorest strata in society. With reference to the principle of fair distribution, the Socialists attacked Fidesz for freezing the levels of family supplements, child allowances or regular child-welfare payments*, for curtailing entitlements to unemployment benefits**, for reintroducing income-related child allowance benefits, which particularly favoured high-income families, and finally—the most far-

* So-called child-welfare support (gyermekvédelmi támogatás), introduced by the Child Welfare Act in 1997, was a standard provision paid out to the parents of Hungary's poorest 600,000-800,000 children. In 2001 this was renamed the 'supplementary family allowance' (kiegészítő családi pótlék), the amount paid out being raised by a nominal HUF 400 and then frozen. What that did was to end the automatic index-linking of the sum granted under the original legislation, which had set it at a minimum of 20% of the current old-age pension entitlement.

** From the year 2000, what had been a three-pronged unemployment benefit system was reduced to a two-pronged system. First, the length of time for which the benefit would be paid was cut from 12 months to 9 months. Second, the payment of income support supplements for up to two years to the long-term unemployed was simply stopped. The payment of regular social assistance to unemployed people of working-age was lim-

reaching of all the welfare measures pursued by the Orbán government—the family tax allowance, which again mainly profited high-income families.**

During its election campaign in early 2002, the MSZP promised nothing less than to change the welfare system, though it never disclosed exactly what that would mean. The party did not promise that it was going to stem the growth in, or eventually reduce, the income gap; it did not define how far it considered it had to improve the finances of the very poorest strata in society, or the role that it envisaged social benefits or greater employment would play in achieving that; nor did it tie the assistance threshold to any guaranteed minimum income—and with good reason too. During the campaign the prime minister-to-be made much of a policy of alleviating poverty, but at the same time—to avoid certain failure at the polling box—he reassured the electorate that he would not touch ‘acquired rights, or in other words the family benefits, tax allowances, and mortgage support schemes granted by the Orbán government that are so favourable to the middle classes. This equivocation has left its mark on the welfare policy pursued by the Medgyessy government during its first two years in office.

The gravest practical dilemma faced by the MSZP-SZDSZ government, with its stated goal of welfare change, is whether it should see its goal as being to expand its outlays or to change the structure of welfare income distribution. Two sorts of pressure weigh on the government: on the one hand, it already became clear during the election campaign that maximising the vote was going to be hard to reconcile with achieving a fairer distribution of welfare incomes; on the other hand, the unbalancing effect of overspending and excessive outlays has strengthened the arguments of those who exhort the government not just to bring in restrictive measures but to take a firm stance in undertaking drastic reforms and adopt the principle of means-testing of welfare benefits. Or to put it more simply: there are fiscal limits to the expansion of outlays, whilst tinkering with income distribution carries political risks.

The Medgyessy government shillyshallied between the two expectations for as long as the resources at its disposal allowed:

ited to one year from the time a person became entitled, with the condition that the unemployed individual could be obliged to perform paid community work for 2-12 months. The legislation therefore left it to local self-government bodies to decide what portion of the support would be paid out unconditionally and what portion would be paid in return for completion of community work. The associated system of financing the re-jigged assistance scheme was also altered to work in much the same way as the defunct income support, with local self-government bodies being able to claim back 75% of the total of assistance they paid out in excess of the social norm.

** According to TÁRKI's data for 2000, the poorest 35% of Hungarian households simply did not earn enough to derive any benefit from this tax concession.

- The cruel dilemma over welfare payments could only be put off at the cost of growing expenditures. During its first 18 months the government had three welfare priorities. It moderately boosted the assistance going to the very poorest families by granting a 20% rise in the family supplement, introducing payment of the family supplement for a 13th month, and widening the entitlements to the supplement; furthermore, a 9.1% increase in regular child-welfare payments in 2003 was explicitly aimed at helping the poorest families. The incomes of the lower middle classes were improved by a 50% pay increase for civil servants and other public employees, the introduction of minimum wages for graduate employees, and the fact that, having granted the pay rise, the government was in no position to proceed—at least overtly—with its declared programme of job cuts in the public-sector. The third—and also most closely guarded—aspect was a partial reclassification of tax concessions. The introduction of tax exemption for minimum wage earners automatically reduces the size of family tax allowance, but without the government being forced to declare its hand openly. The provision for family tax allowances in 2003 was HUF 20 billion, which was 74% of the previous year's allowance, whilst the allowance for 2004 has grown by HUF 4 billion. The groups that profit from this re-jigging of tax allowances are the lower-income employed who are on fixed wages. The Medgyessy government has therefore gone some way to detoxifying the 'poison pill' of the Orbán government's welfare policy—the generous family tax allowances granted to the middle classes, that is to say—but it has not dared to remove the pill altogether.
- The year 2003 seemed to underline the dangers of the hefty wages hike and of economic growth based on consumer spending. By the end of the year the government had been forced into taking its first unpopular measure, which was to restrict the preferential mortgage concessions. The prime minister's announcements suggested that this restriction was justified not only by the need to cut government spending but also from considerations of fair distribution; however, the general public, having watched him seesaw for the past year and a half, was not about to be persuaded that such moves were informed by grand principle rather than the necessity of the moment.

In any event, by the midpoint in its parliamentary term the MSZP-SZDSZ government had managed to reverse the trend in welfare distribution that had been encouraged by its predecessor. The structure of welfare spending, with the government devoting more

of the budget to funding provisions that benefited the poorer strata in society and less to provisions or concessions that favoured the middle classes. A similar tipping-point was observable in the distribution of welfare incomes between strata, with the share of all such incomes that goes to low-income groups having once more risen since 2002.

For all that, the Medgyessy government has side-stepped both formulating clear principles of income redistribution and effective targeting of welfare incomes. The poorest of all strata receiving income support are the long-term unemployed and those who receive child allowances or regular child-welfare payments, and of course Roma families are among those particularly affected by these provisions. The government has not touched unemployment benefit, nor has there been any talk about combining child allowances and child welfare, or stopping family tax allowances, any more than about playing around with the assistance thresholds. At the midpoint in its term, the government can show that it has made the income redistribution system fairer, but income discrepancies have continued to grow, and the situation of the very poorest families has not improved.

Besides the distribution of welfare payments, the other crucial element in the 'composite social policy' aimed at the Romas would be to improve employment prospects. High unemployment is one of the most devastating points of weakness in Hungarian society. The position of Romas in the job market since the change in régime has evolved in nothing short of a catastrophic fashion, with the evidence of the 2003 survey of the Roma population recording no improvement from where they were ten years ago.

Despite the fact that this exclusion from the job market has now been going on for more than a decade, the government's programme confined its remarks relating to boosting employment prospects for Romas to generalities such as its intention to launch a large-scale, comprehensive scheme to ease the passage of Romas back into the workplace, or to provide targeted programmes to help groups that were at a disadvantage in the job market. In practice, however, the process by which actual jobs are obtained has remained unchanged as have the benefits paid out to the unemployed.

The running of local community-work schemes provided a few months' employment for around 18,000 long-term unemployed Romas in 2003, and another 6,700 took part in centrally funded public works programmes. The numbers of participants in training programmes was rather more modest: in 2003 job centres sponsored the training of altogether 3,120 unemployed Romas, and a further 1,302 Romas attended courses put on by

regional manpower development and training centres. Considering the many tens of thousands of unemployed adult Romas who are looking for jobs, the numbers who were included in such training schemes would be trifling even if those taking part had actually gained any real skills or knowledge through completing the courses. The fact is, however, that most of the training schemes offered unmarketable skills.

Government statistics indicate that in 2003 a total of 3,000 unemployed Romas were involved in composite job-market programmes, but that number is contradicted by the reports from county job centres, which indicate that over the entire period 2000-2003, never mind a single year, there were altogether 3,200 participants in programmes that, by linking various training, instructional and skills development schemes with job subsidies and networking opportunities, offer appropriate solutions for the special needs of unemployed Romas.

Subsidies given to wages or other contributions assisted a total of 2,250 to find employment or retain a job during 2003. The numbers of Roma beneficiaries of travel and mobility grants or Roma participants in the job experience programme for those starting their career came to no more than a few hundreds, whilst another few hundreds were trained and used by job centres as mentors, Roma managers or assistants. Job-centre programmes aimed at encouraging people to set up their own business or work on a freelance, self-employed basis are totally irrelevant in practice to unemployed Romas: in 2003 a grand total of 35 of them was given assistance of this kind.

In summary, the programmes offered by Hungary's county job centres and training facilities are barely able to offer Romas any substantial help in gaining employment. The number of training opportunities is slight, the courses are of mediocre effectiveness, whilst the composite programmes are only available to a few small communities and reach few unemployed Romas.

Educational integration

The Ministry of Education's efforts to achieve integration in the public education system are reflected by the amendments that have been made to the Education Act and also by the funding structure for the educational sector. In view of their huge importance, the MoE's endeavours on the integration front will be examined in greater detail in the following two chapters of this booklet.

The liberal MoE leadership's integrationist policy, backed up as it has been by substantial funding, has succeeded in keeping itself largely immune to the above-mentioned shifts in the government's focus. The ministry is tussling with another sort of dilemma: legislation passed in Hungary during the early 1990s placed the rights for deciding educational policy largely in the hands of the bodies that maintained the country's schools—for the most part, its local authorities, the self-governments. The MoE was left with just three ways in which it can have any influence on the educational process:

- It may lay down general principles within the Education Act through the usual process for amending legislation that comes up during each parliamentary cycle, as indeed happened with the revisions of the Act that were passed in 2003. One of the prime motives for those amendments was in fact precisely to expand the role of equal opportunities, though admittedly opinions are divided on the likely impact of these new elements of the Act.
- It can set a new direction for central control of the syllabus, but the SZDSZ's liberal minister of education stuck to his principles by abolishing the compulsory nature of the outline curricula that had been brought in by the previous government on the grounds that he was opposed to any form of central regulation of curricula.
- Lastly, it can restructure its funding to match its educational priorities.

In consequence, the MoE sought to achieve its integrationist goals through legal regulation that also included sanctions and through funded programmes. It also became obvious that the instruments at its disposal were limited, and if a local authority put up stiff resistance, the ministry was essentially powerless to act against local acts of segregation.

The MoE is the only government department that has made a serious attempt to achieve integration of Roma pupils within the school system and, in order to at least curb the practice of ethnic segregation, clamp down on the unjustified practice of remedial schooling and the significant resources that are channelled into it.

The plan to clear Roma slum housing

Clearing Hungary's Roma colonies is a plan that the present government, like its two predecessors, seems more and more to trundle out ritually as a pious intention. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development's forebear already made an attempt in

1997 to assess the number of Roma colonies and their inhabitants in order to lay the foundations for a clearance programme. On that count, 96,000 individuals were then living in 19,000 colony dwellings—26,000 more than had been registered by the 1993 national sample survey of Gypsies. Experts in the field, however, considered that the data local authorities supplied for this assessment were rather suspect, pointing out that the informants had a vested interest in boosting the numbers because they were hoping to gain funding for redevelopment. For what they were worth, the same data indicated that in 1997 there was no metalled road leading to half of the identified colonies, whilst 42% did not have a supply of clean piped water, and 48% lacked sewerage.

Four years were to pass from the completion of that assessment before the relevant ministry produced a bill to give a legal framework for the clearance programme. Going by its title, this bill, which was reckoning on an expenditure of HUF 43 billion over a 5-year period, concerned “the abolition of areas of colony-like slum housing.” In reality, though, it would have devolved choice between the two options on offer—demolition or redevelopment—to the local self-government concerned as the proposals laid down that it was essentially up to local politicians to decide whether they considered it was better to pull down the slum colonies and place their former occupants in more acceptable housing or it was worth to put money into redeveloping the colonies as they stood. In the former case, the old colony would be demolished and the families moved into rented housing or given assistance to build cheap houses on preferential terms. Such redevelopment was likely to entail, above all, building up the infrastructure, particularly the roads and sewerage, but the government might also provide financial support within the programme for discontinuing the use of rubbish tips or hazardous waste disposal facilities close to Gypsy colonies.

In the autumn of 2001, the Interministerial Committee for Gypsy Affairs created a precedent by rejecting the proposal that the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development had put forward. Not only did they think the planned costs of the project were excessive, they also felt the expert input was misguided, sharing the misgivings that critics of the plan had voiced that the billions of forints earmarked for the large-scale project would actually be diverted locally into supporting pet redevelopment schemes, with the entire undertaking only serving to exacerbate the spatial isolation of Gypsy communities.

After the current government took up office in the summer of 2002, responsibility for this particular task was transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to the Office of the Prime Minister. However, neither the budget for 2003 nor that for 2004 set aside any substantial sum of money for clearance of slum colonies, nor has any new proposal been forthcoming, suggesting that the government has yet to tackle the dilemmas on which the 2001 proposal ran aground.

The slum colony clearance programme in truth covers up a range of socio-political problems for which there are no appropriate political answers. The problem of spatial segregation is much vaguer than the matter of the number of colonies that are to be demolished or redeveloped. According to the 2003 national sample survey, the number of Romas living in such colonies is 36,000, as compared with the 70,000 counted during the 1993 survey or the 96,000 estimated by the responsible ministry in 1997. At the same time, however, segregation is growing apace, with 25% of Roma families now solely surrounded by other Roma families, and another 31% having predominantly other Roma families as their immediate neighbours. The government is unable to exert any influence on the process, whilst local self-governments are either unable or do not wish to withstand the segregationist pressures that are being placed on them.

A majority of the colonies were originally built as housing estates for factory workers or miners, or they were army barracks or else some other collection of properties that were not constructed as dwellings but at some later stage were reassigned for tenement housing. Another group of colonies are estates made up of basic-amenity 'CS' homes that were built in the 1970s. Essentially two obstacles are encountered to demolishing them. First of all, many non-Roma inhabitants of the towns and villages in question bridle at the very thought that Roma families from such condemned colonies might move into their neighbourhood, either by purchasing an existing property or by building a new home there. Second is the fact that there is anyway barely any supply of alternative housing that is affordable for the families who currently live in the colonies. The programme on which the MSZP entered office promised that it would promote the construction of 5,000 units of social rental housing annually by local authorities, but that programme has since been dropped. Another option would be to increase the amount of the social housing grant that is available, which the government indeed did in line with its programme; however, the bulk of Roma families who live in slum colonies are unable to take on the

35% of construction costs that they are expected to contribute. The dearth of financing opens up plenty of scope for abuses, much as occurred during the construction boom that was seen the last time the social housing grant was raised, in 1995. In 1998 the Ministry of Finance requested the Hungarian Institute of Culture to undertake an investigation of housing units that had been constructed using social grants. The survey found that one quarter of the units had been constructed entirely from the amount of the grant, without the recipients putting in any of their own resources as required. Of these underfinanced units, 80% were constructed by contractors who specialised in building such underfinanced units: 47% of these homes did not even include a bathroom.

Despite the lack of budgetary funding and the lack of a definite scheme, the government has not given up on its colony clearance programme—at least not explicitly. László Teleki, the Under-secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister, reckons that according to the information available to him there are some 150,000-200,000 people in Hungary who are currently dwelling in 450 run-down colonies. This rather exaggerated estimate does not help when it comes to calling for serious attention to be paid to an action plan: the under-secretary has stated that demolition of 40-50% of the colonies must start by the year 2006. As funding he has only mentioned a credit facility of HUF 10.5 billion that has been granted by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and that is supposed to finance the government's entire three-year clearance programme. That is a great deal less than the sums arrived at by previous calculations, whilst the need to borrow will push the start of any work on the project to the end of the parliamentary term. It is true that the National Development Plan promises to make significant funding available for the rehabilitation of Hungary's settlements, but that is focused essentially on cities and effectively excludes Gypsy colonies from being considered as beneficiaries.

The impression of a dynamically growing 'Roma budget'

According to László Teleki, the Under-secretary of State for Gypsy Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister, in 2003 the various state departments "spent HUF 16.7 billion on programmes that were working for the social integration of Romas." The growth of HUF 5.17 billion—or almost 50%—in comparison to the 2002 spending is spectacular enough to cover up the lack of a strategy for Roma policy at government level, the contradictions between

departmental spending which happens to include an element going to Romas and the measures they actually take—and even the government’s genuine achievements. Even the present socialist-liberal government has no wish to alter the logic of the financing of ‘Roma affairs’ and what are now years of going through the routine of presenting an arbitrary ‘Roma budget’ that fosters the impression of a dynamically growing ‘Roma budget’.

That same approach is reflected in the document outlining the medium-term package of measures as it has been modified yet again in the spring of 2004. As this puts it: despite the fact that the objectives of the government’s earlier programme, or rather the regulation enshrining that programme in law, have largely been fulfilled, there has been no improvement in living conditions for Romas, and the reason for this failure it sees as lying in the inefficiency with which the streams of funding identified in the budget were actually spent, their lack of transparency, and the squandering of funds at the departmental level.

For all that, the modified medium-term package still does nothing to alter this system of financing. In line with previous practice, the restated package also fails to provide orientation on essential matters. It fails to separate the social and ethnic dimensions of the disadvantages that Romas experience. No view is adopted as to how much those disadvantages might be reduced by social policy measures and how much by anti-discrimination measures. That failure to distinguish makes it virtually impossible to communicate Roma policy, because it creates the false impression that the ‘target group’ is receiving additional support rather than making it clear that Romas are being treated as members of the same society, parts of the same education, healthcare, welfare and employment systems, as anyone else—except that they have special needs and problems.

Grand social policy objectives can only be achieved by centrally coordinated measures that are sustained over several government terms—and closing the gaps that exist between Roma communities and the rest of Hungarian society is nothing if not a huge task. Any programme that is to be sustained over more than a single term requires agreement between the parliamentary parties, and no government can be held to account if that is absent. Equally, there is no chance of the present government being able to obtain the two thirds parliamentary majority that would be needed to alter the existing legislation on ethnic minorities or that on local government. When it comes to evaluating what their Roma policy has achieved so far, it would be worth calling on the MSZP-SZDSZ government to explain the thinking behind it and its coherence.

If there is an absence of thinking at government level, then it is obviously impossible to harmonise steps taken by individual ministries that also happen to be directed at Romas. Hitherto only the Ministry of Education has made any serious efforts to implement the Roma policy objective that falls within its own remit, but it has to be said that the success of this isolated, departmental-level strategy is questionable. Programmes that are aimed at integrating Roma pupils in educational establishments may yet come to grief if the government fails to make a start on clearing the slum colonies or to create a supply of affordable homes for the strata who have no prospects in the current housing market; if it fails to clarify the aims of altering the system of social provisions; and if it fails to instigate effective job creation programmes. Only coherent government action can give any hope of success.

4. THE INFLUENCE OF NORMATIVE FUNDING ON INTEGRATION IN STATE-FUNDED SCHOOLS

The problems associated with teaching Roma children are a permanent item on the educational policy agenda in Hungary. There are multiple reasons for their being singled out for attention, but the fact that stands out above all is that the majority of Roma children simply find it impossible to thrive in Hungary's educational system as it stands at present, with their rates of drop-out and repeat years being considerably above the average, while the size of the Roma school-age population is climbing rapidly.

The findings of a recent study indicate that 15% of Roma children do not continue their formal education after completing the eight grades of general (elementary) schooling, whilst 57% do continue but only enter a trade school, and a mere 20% study at a regular secondary school that provides the opportunity to take the high-school diploma. Just 2% of Roma students currently go on to a further education establishment. It is also clear from the data that not even all the children who enrol in a middle school manage to complete their studies, given the far higher drop-outs rates that are experienced with them as compared with non-Roma students. Although the drop-out rate has dropped at general school level, it has grown in both trade and secondary schools.

That study was commenced in early 2002, shortly before the change in government brought by that year's general election. The new masters at the Ministry of Education, with the particular prominence they were giving to integration, proclaimed a new educational policy.

Laying out the problem

Nursery schools

Roma children generally already start their school career at a major disadvantage, and that disadvantage only grows further over the time that they spend in formal education. This is because the kind of knowledge that resides in the typical Roma family fails to match what is called for, and indeed is usually inapplicable, within the framework of a modern school. What nursery schools should be doing is, on the one hand, reconciling

the two sets of values and, on the other, preparing the children for general school. The trouble is that a significant proportion of Roma children do not attend a nursery school.

According to the data of a sample survey completed in 1994, 40% of Roma three-year-olds, 54% of four-year-olds, and 72% of five-year-olds were enrolled in a nursery school. That latter figure seems to be a high ratio, but it has to be noted that in Hungary nursery school is compulsory for five-year-olds as a preparatory year for their entry into general school. What it means is that nearly 30% of children were not meeting this obligation at all. It also has to be underlined that enrolment at a nursery school does not, of course, signify regular attendance.

Several reasons lie behind this:

a) The actual provision of nursery school facilities is inadequate, so that existing schools are forced to reject many applicants for places. In many disadvantaged families one of the parents is unemployed or chooses not to seek work, so the 'child-minding' role that nursery schools play is undoubtedly not so important. As a result, ever fewer children from disadvantaged backgrounds are now attending nursery school.

b) There are significant geographical variations in the provision of nursery school facilities. In villages, where the numbers of disadvantaged Roma children are particularly high, it is fairly likely that the small size of a settlement and the local authority's relative lack of finances mean that it will have little in the way of such facilities, if any at all.

c) Since most nursery schools fail to provide suitable conditions (with regard to the attention, tolerance and teaching competence offered), Roma children do not like going to them. There may in addition be cultural differences between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children.

General schools

In 1994, for the country as a whole, 90% of children of 15 years or older had completed the full 8 grades of general school studies. The sample study disclosed that the figure for 14-year-old Roma children was 44%, and even if one takes into account the numbers of those who formally completed the grades later on, one can still only say that 77% of Roma teenagers eventually do so. The data collected by the Institute for Educational Research showed an increase in segregation of Gypsy children at general schools as compared with a decade ago. In 1992 roughly one Roma child in fourteen (7.1%) was being

taught in an establishment where a majority of the pupils were Roma, whereas nowadays this is true of one Roma child in every five or six (18%). The study data show that Hungary has 126 such general schools, and moreover fully 40% of elementary school-age children of Roma descent attends such a school, as compared with 6.3% of children of non-Roma descent. It may be assumed that the country currently has:

- a) 230 classes, comprising 13,300 Roma children, where more than 50% of pupils are Roma;
- b) 740 classes, comprising 10,300 Roma children, where more than 75% of pupils are Roma;
- c) 700 classes, comprising 10,000 Roma children, which contain only Roma children.

Thus 33,600 out of a total of 93,000 Roma children—or 36%—are being taught in classes where the majority of pupils are Roma.

Secondary schools

Two thirds of Roma pupils finish their general-school studies by the time they are 16, and a further 14-15% by the time they are 18. Of these, 85% carry on in some form of further education. Table 1 provides a summary of how these Roma students are distributed across the types of school, with non-Roma students for comparison:

Type of school	Roma (per cent)	Non-Roma (per cent)
Drop out from further education	14.9	3.2
Technical school	9.4	3.2
Trade school	56.5	36.8
Vocational middle school	15.4	38.1
High school	3.6	18.4

Table 4.1: Further education choices made by those completing general school, 1989/99

The significant point here is that just 19% of Roma youngsters enter schools that offer the chance of taking the high-school diploma that is indispensable for tertiary education and most careers. Some 50% of these youngsters then drop out over each of the next two years (Grades 9 and 10), leaving just 32% who start the final year (Grade 11).

It seems fair to assume that there will be more drop-outs over that year, leaving approximately 24% of those entering secondary school who last the course to pass the high-school diploma. The options for Roma girls are particularly narrow as the chances of being accepted for training for the careers in commerce, services and light industry that young Hungarian women tend to prefer depend on successfully completing at least Grade 10 of their education.

In the last four years a single initiative has aimed at introducing a second-chance programme, and that is the 'catch-up training' regulated by Section 27 §8 of the Education Act, which would offer students who had been unable to gain admittance to what in the past were called workers' night schools the opportunity to enrol for vocational classes at technical schools. Reference to this type of training cropped up for the first time in Section 27 §7 of the 1996 Education Act, though to avoid misunderstandings it might be better to call it an 'integration programme for technical schools'. This regulation in effect enabled practically any student to study any traditional discipline. Those who represented education policy failed to accept the positive discriminatory aspect of catch-up training, i.e. the regulation that students over the age of 16 years who did not possess a general-school certificate should be permitted to study those elements in the final stages of the general school curriculum that were functionally required for vocational training.

The requirements for vocational training themselves changed, and under the regulations as they currently stand catch-up education makes it possible for students to commence vocational training provided they are being prepared to take the examination that is used for marking general-school classes (i.e. if the training in effect takes on what was formerly the role of workers' night schools). Catch-up programmes of this sort have now got under way at around 20 schools, with participation from less than 400 students.

Types of segregation

Segregation between schools

The emergence of segregated Roma schools is closely bound up with the segregation of housing areas. The schools mirror the local ethnic divisions, so there is a close relation between the institutionalised segregation of Roma children and their homes being locat-

ed in isolation, apart from the main community. There are two factors that bring this about, one being the economic climate, the other being prejudiced behaviour on the part of non-Roma parents.

Over the 1990s a spontaneous migration process took place which resulted in a significant growth in the relative density of the Roma population in the smaller settlements of Hungary's poorest regions and in the more run-down areas of the cities. Families that were not disadvantaged typically sought to move away from such areas. There was a sharp fall in the enrolment of non-Roma pupils at local schools and, with prejudice at work, even non-Roma families that did not move away pulled their children out of schools where there was a high proportion of Roma children.

Roma families, for their part, were discouraged from thinking of placing their children in other schools, either because of the travel costs involved and/or they were simply unaware of their rights to choose their school, so that they usually plumped for the educational establishment that was closest to home, which likewise facilitated the emergence of ethnically segregated schools. Such schools are typically in a poor state of repair and inadequately equipped, so it is little wonder that better-off families are not thrilled to have their children taught in them. As a contributory factor, thanks to the higher normative per capita funding that the state gives for education of ethnic minorities, the schools and the authorities that run them have an interest in organising various forms of minority education in order to boost their income. There are two ways in which such education may be set up, with the educational establishment being either 'an educational establishment assisting in minority education' or else 'a minority educational establishment'. There are no clear criteria, however, as to what exactly turns a school into 'an educational establishment assisting in minority education.'

Segregation within schools

As a consequence of the normative funding of education in Hungary, it lies in the interest of schools and the authorities running them to attract as many pupils as they possibly can. Consequently, in order to obstruct the above process of spontaneous segregation, schools where the ratio of Roma children has started to grow have developed ways of structuring classes that allow the Roma children to be segregated. These organisational frameworks for separation within the school take essentially three forms:

a) Special remedial or catch-up classes, in which the demands placed on the children are lower, the teaching is of substandard, and there is a disproportionately high ratio of Roma pupils;

b) Streamed classes, generally reserved for non-Roma children, in which more hours of teaching are given for certain subjects;

c) Separate classes are organised by abusing the aim of the institution of 'Roma minority education'.

In a piece of research conducted by the Institute for Educational Research in 2000, the proportion of Roma children in remedial or catch-up classes was investigated at 192 schools. Whereas 45.2% of Roma children were placed in classes that were taught a regular curriculum and 16.2% were in streamed classes, they made up 81.8% of the children in catch-up classes.

Normative schemes of financing have the basic problem that it is difficult to define the size of the head count that will serve to achieve the goal that is being sought, on top of which the financing system is quite unable to handle school-specific variations in expenses. Those variations in expenses, moreover, are negatively correlated with the size of the school/settlement and with the proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds who are at the school. The per capita costs of educating pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are therefore going to be higher in a school operating in a small community, but funding based on head counts cannot take account of this. Another problem is the above-mentioned improper practice of providing purely nominal minority education, for if the objectives of the financial support are not defined in a clear-cut manner, then local authorities have no incentive to employ the money for the intended purposes. On the say-so of an expert committee or educational advisory centre, it is possible to have children placed in separate remedial classes within a 'normal' school, even though the child is in no way mentally sub-normal but finds it hard going at school due to learning difficulties, behavioural disorders or some other problem of integrating into that environment.

Special needs schools

Disproportionately many more Roma children attend special needs schools than could be justified by their numbers within the school-age population. As far back as the 1974-75 school year, the ratio of Romas among the children enrolled at special needs schools was

already 25%, and by 1992 it had risen to 42%, whilst the findings of an investigation carried out in 2000 indicated that almost one Roma child in five is classified as having a learning disability. Another reason for sending Roman children to such schools is that the experts who investigate the children are still using methods that are simply inappropriate for assessing the abilities of children who are from deprived backgrounds and/or have socialised in ethnic minority families.

Home-schooling

Yet another way of separating problematic Roma children is to record them as studying privately at home and exempt them from school attendance. These children are thus relieved of all classes and comply with the universal compulsory education requirement by sitting a grading examination before an examining body every six months.

There are two ways in which a child may be allowed to study privately at home. One is when this is a parental choice (though in many cases this happens because the school forces the parents to apply on the child's behalf for this legal status), whereas the second is when a child has some learning or behavioural disability and an expert committee so determines. The school is even so left with an obligation to concern itself with such a child (i.e. prepare it for the above examinations) for six hours a week.

Government efforts

Since 1989, successive Hungarian governments have elaborated various strategies for developing Roma education. Although new strategies arrive without fail after each general election, the programmes have also displayed certain shared, recurrent elements, which comprise:

- programmes catering for the needs of catch-up education and gifted pupils;
- scholarship and fee-payment systems;
- promoting the integration of Roma children;
- meeting the demands for giving children a basic education whilst school attendance is still compulsory in the face of a growing population of Roma children;
- assisting Roma children in education at secondary school level;
- supporting teachers' training that provides basic information about Roma society;
- encouraging in-service further training for teachers, social workers and educational advisers.

None of these elements can be said to have been fully realised in practice. No Hungarian government to date has been able to work out a coherent strategy that was able to get to grips with all the factors that lie behind Roma children's scholastic failures. Roma educational policy has been marginalised, and certainly it has not always been harmonised with educational policy for the majority society. Although statistics from recent studies suggest there have been positive changes as compared with the data from the early 1990s, there are still enormous problems with the effectiveness of teaching efforts for the Roma population.

Basic elements of an integrated educational policy

In August 2002, the Minister of Education appointed a Ministerial Commissioner with Responsibility for Integration of Disadvantaged and Roma Children. In order to give pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds a chance to obtain educational qualifications, the commissioner's office has built up a uniform and interlocking system that offers such opportunities from nursery to first degree. The principal elements are summarised below.

Applying to all levels

a) Free school textbooks in cases of need.

Effect: low-income families are not so greatly burdened by school costs, especially at the start of the school year.

Date of introduction: from 2003 for general school Grades 1-4; from 2004 for Grades 5-8.

b) Families on welfare payments receive a double family allowance in August.

Effect: to alleviate the financial burden of the start of the school year.

Date of introduction: from 2002.

c) The new Education Act explicitly bans discrimination in state education. The new regulations make it possible to rescind any decision or measure that discriminates against any group of children or students, or even a single child, on grounds of gender, age, origin, family circumstances or any other reason.

Effect: this new measure helps schools and local authorities look for legal ways of organising their education services that can win the harmonious cooperation of all concerned. The most glaring discrimination—that of separating Roma pupils in classes that offer

a substandard education—is still widespread practice in Hungary. In the year 2000 there were more than 700 separate all-Gypsy classes being operated in regular general schools.

Date of introduction: September 2003.

d) Greater caution in approvals for home-schooling.

Effect: The aim of this regulation is to prevent the most severely disadvantaged youngsters from dropping out of education in an unsupervised manner. Sociological studies suggest that Gypsy pupils are exempted from regular school attendance with an eight-fold greater probability than their non-Roma contemporaries, as a result of which 10% of Roma youngsters of 14-15 years do not attend school regularly.

Date of introduction: September 2003.

Nursery schools

a) Free provision of meals at nursery school in cases of need.

Effect: hitherto 11% of Roma children were not sent to nursery school at all, a primary reason for which has been the cost of services. This measure is therefore expected to boost attendance.

Date of introduction: September 2003.

b) The new Education Act makes it obligatory to admit a child or pupil into nursery school, day-care centre or the like if the child or pupil is held to be at risk or is subject to proceedings to be made a ward of court.

Effect: this will open up new learning opportunities for children from poor families in small settlements.

Date of introduction: September 2003.

c) A '21st Century School' programme will support the establishment of new nursery places in Hungary's more disadvantaged areas.

Effect: this programme, in partnership with the Hungarian Development Bank, invites applications from schools authorities for grants to renovate and modernise their institutions.

Date of introduction: on-going.

d) The National Development Plan's Regional Operative Programme invited applications from local authorities to expand their nursery school provision.

Date of introduction: February 2004.

General schools

a) Every disadvantaged child is entitled to be assigned to skills development training backed by a standard grant of HUF 17,000.

Effect: this provision seeks to reduce the handicaps of disadvantaged children by making it possible to organise preparatory instruction within a framework that allows pupils to display their individual abilities and talents, assists their development, enables them to catch up with other pupils, and improves their chances of continuing with studies.

Date of introduction: September 2003.

b) An 'Out of the Back Desk' programme is to be started because Roma pupils are unjustifiably overrepresented among children admitted to special needs schools.

Effect: the ratio of Roma children sent to these schools is expected to fall gradually from the current level of 5.3% (the EU mean is 2.5%).

Date of introduction: December 2003.

c) The MoE has made a start on devising a programme to enable special needs children as wide an integration as is possible within mainstream education.

Effect: Hungary currently has 60,000 special needs children within its educational system. As a result of the integration efforts, as many as 20% of them may be able to be brought out of segregated schooling. Some elements of this programme comprise part of the National Development Plan.

Date of introduction: May 2003.

d) Appointment of a Ministerial Commissioner with Responsibility for Integration of Disadvantaged and Roma Children and the establishment of a National Network for Integration in Education.

Effect: the steps needed for integration that sociologists have been urging will be implemented nationally, and modern approaches to educating disadvantaged children will gain more scope. The institutions on which the network is to be based will be located primarily in the north-east of Hungary and to a lesser extent in southern Transdanubia and the metropolitan area.

Date of introduction: August 2002 (for the National Integration Network: January 2003).

e) Prohibition on year-end failures, with repetition of a school year only being allowed in Grades 1-3 if a child fails to meet the required standard due to excessive absence from class.

Effect: being made to repeat a school year instils a sense of failure, even though most children who are assessed as needing to repeat show that they can make up the arrears if given due attention. There is little point in undertaking integration in the school system if a segment of the children are being made to fail.

Date of introduction: September 2004.

f) Longer foundational period.

Effect: some children already in Grade 1 accumulate handicaps that they are unable to throw off later in their school careers. Failure to gain adequate reading and writing skills, for instance, is almost bound to lead to lack of later scholastic success. A longer foundational course would offer time to acquire these basic skills.

Date of introduction: Progressively from 2004 (in practice from 2008, which is when the first effects will be seen in Grade 5 entrants).

g) 'Extramural coaching' programme.

Effect: 'Extramural coaching' (as referred to in Section 95 of the Education Act) is to be brought in to boost the scholastic success of disadvantaged children by occupying them outside school. Currently 70% of all Hungary's children pass the high-school diploma, compared with under 10% of Roma youngsters.

Date of introduction: a separate piece of legislation is being prepared.

h) Development and introduction of teachers' training and further training programmes to brief teaching staff on integrated education.

Effect: a working group involving higher education, the National Integration Office, and the teachers' training institutions has been formed to progress this.

Date of introduction: October 2003.

i) A programme to provide unemployed Romas with jobs and training in state educational establishments has been launched at 150 schools.

Effect: adult Romas will work as family coordinators within the schools whilst in addition being offered flexible skills training that can be put into practice at the school where they work. An important feature of the programme is that it should offer flexible training modules to ensure that the instruction is as productive as possible.

Date of introduction: Autumn 2003.

j) Review of the National Curriculum.

Effect: the National Curriculum has been amended to stipulate that all children in the state education system are required to learn about the culture of Hungary's Roma groups and elements of their history that are shared with the majority society.

Date of introduction: 2004.

k) First tenders for the National Development Plan Human Resources Operative Programme's measure 2.1 are to be announced.

Effect: Will generate proposals for projects to support integrated schooling for disadvantaged and special needs pupils as well as 'extramural coaching' programmes to encourage greater scholastic achievement by disadvantaged pupils.

Date of introduction: March 2004.

l) Implementation of training courses and development within the central programme of the National Development Plan Human Resources Operative Programme's measure 2.1 is in progress.

Effect: to ensure the development of training modules and packages that may be used in teachers' training, and to provide practice-oriented training for 11,500 teachers and educational experts, on the subject of how children from varied backgrounds may be effectively taught together. Training will also be available for the social environment (child welfare services, local decision makers, representatives on maintaining bodies, civic bodies, local minority self-governments, media personnel) in which the institutions that implement this integration will be functioning. The organisation that wins a contract to be announced in 2005 or 2006 will work out a model possessing a complex integrated pedagogical framework system that pulls in approximately 270 institutions. Programmes will be developed that serve to recognise when pupils are at risk of prematurely dropping out from school.

Date of introduction: March 2004-2007.

Secondary education

a) Linguistic preparatory year.

Effect: low-income families are unable to pay for private foreign-language tuition, so that for children who lack language skills an already disadvantaged situation only becomes worse. The aim is that all children should pick up a foreign-language skill by the time they have left secondary school.

Date of introduction: September 2004.

b) The high-school diploma will become the university-level entrance exam.

Effect: Hitherto higher-education institutions have often demanded from applicants a knowledge of material that lies outside the secondary curriculum. This further exacerbated differences in opportunities, because successful applications meant paying for private tuition and preparatory courses.

Date of introduction: 2005.

c) The focus of the János Arany Programme for Gifted Children will be altered inasmuch as the main emphasis for including children, besides demonstrated talent, will be that they have been contending with poor conditions for studying rather than just poor local facilities as hitherto. A János Arany Programme will be started to provide boarding facilities for Disadvantaged Children, with a HUF 990,000 sum to fund each place.

Effect: Many disadvantaged children who currently cannot continue studies due to the distance of their home from a suitable school will be able to attend a secondary school if they have boarding facilities.

Date of introduction: September 2004.

d) Free language and ECDL examinations.

Effect: the MoE will reimburse fees paid for state-approved intermediate language examinations by high school and vocational middle school children who take the high-school diploma or completing vocational studies at the end of the 2003/4 school year. Examination fees paid before September 2003 will also be reimbursable.

Grants to cover the fees paid by any high-school or vocational middle-school students in their final year of tuition in 2002-3 to take the ECDL exam or the computer skills certificate listed in the National Register of Qualifications.

Date of introduction: September 2003 and January-October 2003, respectively.

e) A programme has been undertaken to help expand the teaching done at trade schools.

Effect: The programme is expected to halve the long-term drop-out rate of 30% in trade schools.

Date of introduction: 2004-5.

f) Creating a realistic opportunity for teaching of Romani and Beash languages in schools by amending MKM Statute 32/1997

Effect: An OKÉV survey found that Roma children have the chance to study their mother tongues in only three state educational establishments in the entire country. According to preliminary information, once regulatory amendments are in place, Romany language teaching is set to commence at Tarnaörs, Tiszabő, Csobánka and Nagyecsed, and Beash language teaching at Csapi, Gyulaj, Darány, Magyarmecske, Gilvánfa, Kétújfalu, Városdomb, Gödre, Tereske, Nagyharsany, and Barcs.

Date of introduction: September 2003.

g) Under MKM Statute 32/1997 as now amended, the fact that a child is receiving Gypsy minority education will no longer be accepted as an exemption from having to learn foreign languages. As things stood, there were big discrepancies in local practices, with as many as 17% of Roma children in schools in N. Hungary being excused from foreign-language tuition, but only 3% of children in schools in S.W. Hungary.

Date of introduction: September 2003.

Higher education

a) Disadvantaged applicants who reach the necessary score may gain fee-paid admission to first degree courses. Thus, for children from poor families the state rather than the family pays the costs of university tuition. The ratio of such students will not be allowed to exceed 5% of the student roll at any given institution.

Effect: At present many children in low-income families cannot afford to enter higher education. The aim is to give such youngsters a chance to continue their studies.

Date of introduction: September 2005.

b) Mentor programme.

Effect: Youngsters entering higher education will be allowed to pick a mentor who will be able to assist them during their studies. It is expected that somewhere between 500 and 1,000 students will enter higher education with such assistance.

Date of introduction: September 2005.

The integration grant and its critics

From 1st September 2003 general schools will be able to draw on a per capita integration grant for children in Grades 1 and 5 which will follow them in successive

years. This will amount to three times the present skills development grant of HUF 51,000 per child. “The target group of this integration grant will be children whose parents have themselves completed only eight or fewer years of elementary education and, due to their financial situation, are entitled to draw child-protection assistance of HUF 4,600 per month. In 2001 such assistance was claimed for 780,000 children (CSO data). The national census shows that Hungary has 2,220,00 inhabitants up to the age of 18 years, which indicates that regular child-protection payments are paid out for less than one third of the total population. Integration is therefore not targeted at any ethnic group, though it is true that Roma children are to be found in disproportionately high numbers among those who will be assisted. Whereas hardly more than 20% of all school-age children fall under this category, in the case of Roma children it is 80%,” the Ministerial Commissioner with Responsibility for Integration noted in one of its press releases.

The hard definition of what such grants would mean in legal terms was supplied in the official gazette, *Magyar Közlöny* No. 152 (Appendix 3, points 24 (b)-(d) to Law CXVI/2003):

“The local self-government may claim triple the supplementary contribution for pupils participating in daytime education if the pupil is receiving instruction or education in accordance with the requirements laid down under §39(e) of MKM decree 11/1994 (18.vi) and the published programme of the Ministry of Education.”

To look more closely at the provisions of the above-mentioned decree, the individuals who will undergo integration preparation and pupils who are taking part in skills development courses and are attending the same class or (should the class be split) the same group as pupils who are not taking part in skills development courses. Integration preparation may not be combined with pooling of pupils who are taking part in the integration preparation. For purposes of the regulations, pooling of pupils will be taken to mean:

a) A single school operates in a settlement with a single class per year and the ratio of pupils taking part in integrated education within the class (or within the group, if the class is divided) exceeds 50%;

b) More than one school operates in a settlement, and the number of all pupils taking part in integration preparation in any one of those schools, in relation to the total number of pupils attending that school, is 20% higher than the proportion of pupils taking part in integration preparation in relation to the total number of pupils in all the schools

c) A school has more than one class per year, and the variation between classes in the proportion of pupils taking part in integration preparation in the individual classes of a given year, as compared with the total number of pupils in that class, exceeds 20%.

Integration preparation may be initiated in Grades 1 and 5 at general schools and Grade 9 at trade schools. The decree also orders that pupils who are receiving instruction and education at ethnic minority schools must be taught a curriculum that ensures they acquire the Hungarian language and culture, whilst pupils who do not belong to an ethnic minority must be taught a curriculum that instructs them in the culture of ethnic minorities living in the locality.

Since its introduction, the new grant has been claimed for 32,800 children, amounting to roughly one-third of Roma children.

The regulation of this new approach distinguishes the catch-up element from the cultural element in the case of the education of Roma children; or to be more accurate, it makes the catch-up element completely independent of the Roma origin of any students requiring catch-up education on account of their socially disadvantaged status.

Some criticisms have been voiced at this approach, which might be expected to throw up a variety of problems. In November 2002, the Parliamentary Commissioner for National and Ethnic Minority Rights organised a national forum on the subject of education for minority groups. Speakers at the meeting pointed out that the conditions that had been laid down for participating in skills development and integration training inappropriately limited the scope for being able to introduce them. Among those conditions were: a child may take part in training if the highest school qualification obtained by the parents is the general school certificate and the parents are entitled to a supplementary family allowance. There is no significant difference in lifestyle and employment prospects between a family where a parent has a skilled worker's diploma but is unemployed and one where the parent has only the general school certificate. Furthermore, many families do not claim the supplementary family allowance because they are unaware of it, or else they fail to enforce it even though they would be entitled to it. Only time will tell how valid these objections will prove to be.

There is also a problem with the institution of Roma minority education leading to abuses as well as to Roma children being segregated within schools. There will be no real assurances of the quality of this programme until the regime of professional inspection is tightened.

Introducing an integration grant does not represent a major change in the financing of Hungarian state education. The main difference between the present catch-up grant and the integration grant that is to replace it is that the former scheme imposes extra tasks on the school whereas the latter rewards integrated education in itself. An integration grant therefore does not, as a matter of course, increase the hourly costs of teaching.

It should be noted that none of these per capita supplementary grants offers any encouragement to stop residential segregation. Better-off families are always going to have incentives to seek out the more reputable schools in order to differentiate their children from pupils who come from less affluent families.

Another drawback is that the integration grant does not cover the various school-specific expenditures. It assumes that disadvantaged pupils are evenly distributed throughout the educational system, and thus that the cost of education is similar everywhere. That is far from being the case: the variability of the hourly costs of teaching means that in some schools the extra financial support does not cover the actual costs, while in other schools it is more than sufficient.

With these supplementary grants the recipient of the financial support from the centre is the local authority that runs the school. Local political accountability and central regulation therefore coincide to encourage schools to improve their results. This assumes that central government is making clear-cut, readily achievable demands on the schools, but if the demands are not clear, then very often the local authority is in a position to utilise the support for other purposes. The integration grant may thus pass down to schools only to a certain degree.

The advantages that the scheme offers are its transparency, simplicity, and low administrative costs, which means there is no need to reform official channels. It is also advantageous that it does not call for special efforts from either schools or teachers and yet it still carries the promise that it will be able to bring an end to segregation within and between schools.

At the same time, there are more schools where the number of Roma children is higher than that of non-Roma children, and these schools have not been able to claim integration grants. In parallel with this, the amount of the earlier ethnic minority grant has been adjusted, inasmuch as the maximum can only be claimed if the school provides tuition in Romani languages; only 50% is claimable if there is tuition in Roma cultural studies but not the lan-

guage. The only trouble with this is that most of the schools that now have a Roma majority are attended by Romungro, or Magyar Gypsy, children who do not speak Romani and whose parents in fact object to their children being taught it. As a result, such schools receive neither the integration grant and now they will not receive the ethnic minority grant that they received hitherto. In other words, schools that may have utilised the support that they received for non-segregationist purposes will now be unable to continue what had been decently functioning programmes. This raises the question of what will now become of the Roma pupils in schools where they form the majority. Is there no need to integrate them?

In the opinion of the author of this section (a teacher of Roma background at just such a spontaneously segregated school), it is impossible for grants alone to solve social processes that have spontaneously segregated institutions as their end-result. Schools cannot be forced to amalgamate or cease to exist purely in the interests of ‘integration’. The integration grant is a good thing, but it is not the sole answer. Improving quality at Roma-majority schools ought to be just as important, because it is also necessary to secure the chances of the children there gaining a high standard of education. That in turn raises the question as to what other forms of funding would improve the educational opportunities of Roma children?

Other funding options

Application-based funding

The main feature of this system is that the target institution is the school itself, which is able to undertake certain (e.g. anti-segregation) projects. As a form of funding, however, it only works over the long term. It absolutely requires a solid central government commitment to encourage schools to apply for such support. By taking one layer (the local authority) ‘out of the funding loop’ it is possible to guarantee that the government money is spent on the recommended goals, and that school-specific cost differences are taken into account. It gives central government a chance to formulate its requirements and also to create a monitoring system that will enable the recommended projects to be implemented. This is a distinct advantage as compared with the integration grant—if the government prefers to pursue a centralised policy, that is—since the only criterion for assessing extra funding in the latter case is the number of disadvantaged pupils (which in turn

is useful if the government is pursuing a policy based on the autonomous local authorities). Having said that, funding based on putting in applications unquestionably adds to administrative costs. Still it seems a rational approach as the majority of disadvantaged children are being taught in a readily definable group of schools.

Market-driven funding

Szilvia Németh has written: “Of the two feasible market-driven types of funding, one is a voucher system in which the parents are given vouchers that they may use as they see fit to purchase education for their children, whilst the second is a quasi-market system in which the institutions receive funding in accordance with their student headcount and are given the possibility of staying under the direction of the local authority or of ‘opting out’ from such control and choosing to be maintained by the central government. Both systems can lead to keen competition arising between schools in order to attract pupils—even, depending on the size of whatever additional funding is given, for pupils coming from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In either case, this funding model assumes that well-informed parents take an active part in selecting their children’s schools. The parents and pupils are consumers of educational services, and are always best advised to make their choice on the basis of the quality of those services. It should be noted that low-income families generally have little information about the quality of schools.

The government’s role is merely to determine the size of any additional funding or the appropriate value of the voucher. If the value is set too high then that will lead to segregated schools where only pupils from disadvantaged families are taught because institutions would find it worth their while to specialise in educating such pupils. If, on the other hand, the sum in question is less than the real additional costs incurred in teaching such pupils, then no institution would undertake to provide a service for them.

The chief drawback of the system, though, is that it can only work properly if the financing of the entire educational sector is reformed in the same manner. In other words, no market-driven funding can be adopted when it is only to be applied to the group of disadvantaged pupils. The advantages are clear: competition between schools would replace local or central inspection, leading to lower administration costs and better utilisation of taxpayers’ money.”

Supplementary funding mechanisms

Over and above the structure of core funding, the government is obliged to put considerable emphasis on mechanisms of continued funding. Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds need not only education but also assistance from grown-ups. Thus central government should also be funding programmes that serve to develop teaching methods and training for teachers of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. From nursery school on, the infrastructure ought to be developed in such a way that no child need ever be rejected and every child can be provided with an optimal learning environment.

As far as preparatory schooling is concerned, the need is not so much to overcome the problem of segregation as to ensure that every child attends a nursery school. It would therefore seem sensible to apply the existing supplementary funding mechanism for schools to financing the bodies that run pre-school institutions.

At secondary level the big problem is not reducing segregation but boosting the very small numbers of children from low-income families who continue their education after elementary school or the lower classes of secondary school. This appears to be more an individual rather than an institutional problem, and thus it seems sensible that any financial help be provided at the level of the pupil (e.g. in the form of scholarships). It also means such things as creating boarding facilities for secondary-school pupils, laying on appropriate transport between home and school, and ensuring that pupils have access to essential educational equipment (computers, books, etc.).

It is crucial for the government to recognise that although most Romas are disadvantaged, and the majority of the disadvantaged in Hungary are Roma, the two groups are not interchangeable. It is also essential that, alongside its work to end segregation and help those from disadvantaged backgrounds, the government also elaborates programmes to restore ethnic cultures.

As yet unresolved steps in integrated teaching

Finally, let us simply list the various tasks that need to be implemented if the integration funding is to achieve the desired result:

a) Encourage ideas of school not being tied to strict hours (preparatory training and after-care, mentoring);

- b) Project work as opposed to the traditional, chalk-and-talk approach;
- c) Providing after-school activities on the school premises;
- d) Maintaining contacts with families and community;
- e) Further training of teachers (for multicultural instruction);
- f) Partnership-style approaches to working with pupils;
- g) Rethink the principles of vocational training for youngsters from disadvantaged backgrounds.

5. THE CHANCES OF INTEGRATING ROMA STUDENTS IN STATE-FUNDED SCHOOLS

On taking office during the summer of 2002, the new head at Hungary's Ministry of Education endeavoured to face up to, or at least explicitly acknowledge, the socio-political impact of processes that are at work in the public educational field. Both in recent discussions among educational experts and in the parliamentary debate on the 2003 bill of amendments to the Education Act, a greater accent than before was placed on the issue of equal opportunities. The ministry also took serious action to achieve the 'Roma policy' objectives that had been laid down as falling under its remit. Unlike in other branches of government, it is not so much the size of the budget that the MoE is able to secure to achieve its priorities that is the token of success in educational policy; much more important is the question of whether the open and covert discrimination, and the ensuing educational disadvantage, that afflicts the Roma community is separable from the issue of equality of opportunities within the educational field. More specifically, whether there is a possibility of offering effective legal or government intervention to counter the segregation of Roma students within a system that is set up on a framework of academic freedom, free choice of schools, and control of education resting largely in the hands of local authorities.

In what follows a summary will be provided of the ministry's efforts to date and an endeavour made to assess the chances of the integration/anti-segregation policy in a big city.

Government goals and dilemmas

Equal opportunities, segregation and further education

The MoE's reform ideas based the necessity for changes on two conclusions of the Pisa 2000 report. According to this, the Hungarian education system was the least able in all Europe to offer equality of opportunity—or in other words was the most adversely selective—for children of parents who had few school qualifications or were on low incomes. Despite the outstanding results of a few elite schools, the reading, comprehension and mathematical skills displayed by Hungarian pupils were distinctly weak, knowledge of foreign languages and familiarity with information technology poor, whilst interest

groups for specialist subjects and the demands from further education establishments were placing ever more taxing demands on schoolchildren in terms of teaching hours and the extent of their book knowledge.

As far as scholastic achievements go, the selectivity of the Hungarian school system means that there is a larger distribution of results between schools than within schools. Whereas in OECD countries 36% of the range of difference in tests of reading, comprehension and mathematical skills of pupils can be explained by differences between schools, in Hungary's case the ratio is 71%, essentially double. The opposite extreme is Sweden, where 77% of the difference in tests of reading, comprehension and mathematical skills can be attributed to differences within schools and only 23% to differences between schools. In Hungary, the performance of children from lower-status families who attend the better schools is better, whilst the performance of children from higher-status families who attend the poorer schools is poorer than would be expected on the basis of their family background. Early school selection therefore goes a long way to explaining a child's chances of success.

A double trend is manifested in Hungary's education system: merciless selectivity and expansion of the secondary-school sector. Higher-status families select the schools they feel best suit their children, whilst higher-status schools in turn select the pupils they feel are most advantageous to them or rapidly drop pupils they do not want to have. At the same time, the ratio of children completing elementary school who are now applying to enter secondary schools has been growing apace: over the course of the 1990s the ratio of 14-year-olds who went on to study at high school rose from 20% to 32%, admissions to vocational middle schools (the only other establishments in Hungary that offer the high-school diploma) went up from 27% to 39%, and the proportion of 18-year-olds taking the high-school diploma increased from 36.9% to 53.6%.

These general trends also had an impact on Roma children, of course. The right to choose one's school combined with the selectivity of the school system led to a rapid growth in 'spontaneous' segregation; that is, segregation resulting from the departure of non-Roma children from a school. A few years ago the Institute of Education undertook a comprehensive study of this problem. In the year 2000, on their estimate, there were around 770 homogeneously Gypsy-only classes operating in Hungarian general (elementary) schools, another 740 classes in which the ratio of Roma children was over 75%,

and 1,230 classes in which they made up over 50%. Though Roma children make up only 10% of the total general-school population, easily one third of them—32,000 out of 93,000—were being taught in classes where a majority of the pupils were of Gypsy origin. Quite apart from ‘spontaneous’ segregation, there is a substantial amount of artificial segregation of Roma pupils, the main tool for which is the resort to unjustifiably high levels of referral to remedial education. More than 40% of all the pupils who are being taught in remedial classes or schools in Hungary are Roma in origin, whilst 20-22% of all Roma general-school pupils—more than ever before—are being allocated to such teaching (see Table 5.1).

Expansion at the secondary level partly offset the negative consequences of segregation. According to the data collected by the Institute of Education, the proportion of Roma pupils in a year who completed their elementary education and went on to be admitted to a high school rose from 0.6% to 3.6% between 1993 and 1999, whilst the proportion admitted to a vocational middle school rose from 10% to 15.4%. That move towards staying on in school remains impressive even when it is borne in mind that the chasm between Romas and non-Romas widened still further and that the drop-out rate of Gypsy pupils is substantial.

Table 5.1: Numbers of general-school pupils receiving normal and remedial education in school year 2001-2.

County	Total no. of pupils in general schools	No. of pupils in remedial schools	Per cent in remedial schools
Bács-Kiskun	53,396	2,468	4.6
Baranya	37,060	1,622	4.4
Békés	37,281	1,666	4.5
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén	78,461	3,961	5.0
Budapest	128,950	6,483	5.0
Csongrád	38,981	1,271	3.3
Fejér	42,406	2,108	5.0
Győr-Moson-Sopron	38,223	1,494	3.9
Hajdú-Bihar	57,923	2,385	4.1
Heves	29,797	3,171	10.6

Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok	41,832	1,804	4.3
Komárom-Esztergom	30,468	1,617	5.3
Nógrád	20,423	1,045	5.1
Pest	101,968	4,588	4.5
Somogy	31,781	2,264	7.1
Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	65,558	3,647	5.6
Tolna	23,466	1,279	5.5
Vas	24,587	1,261	5.1
Veszprém	35,276	1,514	4.3
Zala	26,407	939	3.6
Total	944,244	46,587	4.9

Source: Institute of Education Report 2003, as calculated by Erika Garami from data in the Ministry of Education database.

Table 5.2: Proportion of pupils continuing education in secondary school as compared with those completing elementary education at year end.

Type of school	1996-97		1998-99	
	Non-Roma (per cent)	Roma (per cent)	Non-Roma (per cent)	Roma (per cent)
Drop out of further education	2.3	16.5	3.2	14.9
Technical school	4.4	8.6	3.2	9.4
Trade school	36.5	61.6	36.8	56.5
Vocational middle school	38.3	9.3	38.1	15.4
High school	18.3	3.7	18.4	3.6
TOTAL	100	100	100	100

Source: Institute of Education

Budgetary expenditure and government measures

The Ministry of Education appointed a ministerial commissioner with responsibilities—and also set aside substantial sums of money—specifically targeted at curbing the above-mentioned segregationist processes. An effort was made to concentrate this larger

resource on supporting the settlements and schools that were actively taking part in the programme. Where possible, the ministry strove to avoid specifically labelling these new programmes and financial support as being for Roma pupils but instead chose to designate its two target groups as ‘pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds’ and ‘special needs pupils’. There are objective criteria for the former category, which covers families in which the highest school qualification is having completed the 8 years of general (elementary) school and also the income is low enough to qualify for regular child protection assistance. Special needs covers mild to moderate degrees of learning disability that require that a child is taught in a specialist remedial school.

The ministry wants to change the teaching for these two target groups by three different processes. First, integration is intended to reverse the process of segregation between schools, associated schools and classes. Second, skills development seeks to alter the practice whereby children who suffer from attention-deficit disorders, hyperactivity or other learning difficulties but are not adjudged to be mentally subnormal are taught to lower standards. Third, the aim of the ‘Out of the Back Desk’ programme is to see that pupils who have been falsely labelled as having learning disabilities and unjustly shunted into remedial education are returned to mainstream schooling.

For the 2003-4 school year and onwards, the MoE has brought in two new forms of funding, one for skills development and a second for integration. The aim of the former is to provide more catch-up facilities within schools whilst the integration funding, which will be staggered in such a way that it can be claimed for pupils in Grades 1 and 5 (at general school) and Grade 9 (at secondary school), seeks to reduce the degree of segregation between schools and classes. Authorities maintaining schools that participate in the integration programme will be able to claim three times the present per capita funding that is available for children and pupils with special needs provided they undertake to meet two conditions: first, pupils who have hitherto been taught in segregated classes must be put into organised preparatory courses that will give them whatever skills they need to be able to continue their studies in normal school classes from the following year onwards; second, segregation within the system must be reduced by at least 10% annually (for that reason alone it is clearly not possible to make a specific budget provision for this funding in the breakdown of the ministry budget).

During the year 2003 HUF 900 million of the MoE’s budget was earmarked for projects aimed at supporting Hungary’s national and ethnic minorities, of which HUF 750 mil-

lion was to be allocated to Roma programmes. HUF 500 million of the latter sum plus a further HUF 100 million from the 2002 reserve was planned to go into setting up 50 foundation institutions that will form the National Network for Integration in Education (NNIE). Institutions applying to participate in this were required to meet two main conditions: first, the applicant institutions must neither be practising segregation currently nor have practised it in the past, and second, any school that wins the designation of foundation institution is obliged to develop contacts with at least five neighbouring schools that are setting up anti-segregation programmes.

The third main funding source is a PHARE project to promote the social integration of multiply disadvantaged youngsters, primarily those of Roma origin. The aim of this is to set up Roma community centres, to develop teaching courses in Roma studies, and to organise training in the subject. The total sum awarded for this project by the EU is HUF 2.4 billion, one quarter of which is to be contributed as Hungary's own portion by the MoE.

The reform of remedial school referrals never got further than an expression of intent for school year 2002-3, with those running education becoming concerned that the school system simply did not have the capability, in parallel with implementing the anti-segregation programme, to attempt in addition the transfer of several tens of thousands of children from such schools into classes that are taught the regular curriculum.

In 2004 the ministry wanted to expand the NNIE network further and also make inroads on the remedial school reform. As part of what is called the 'Out of the Back Desk' project, all children in Grades 1 and 2 who had been diagnosed as showing a mild learning handicap were to be reviewed, starting in September 2003, with the reviews being conducted by independent experts or an expert panel from another county. The children found not to be genuinely handicapped are to be transferred to classes in which the regular curriculum is taught. This whole process will be supported by a new funding under which for each child transferred into normal teaching the authority running the school will for two years receive a higher than basic per capita grant amounting to 70% of that for a remedial-school place. Serving the same ends is a reform of the tests that experts in the field of remedial education have been using over the past several decades, and this process alone is being underpinned by a National Development Plan grant of HUF 100 million.

In addition to the above, the MoE is trying to introduce regulations that will restrict the scope for two well-proven methods of practising segregation by selection: opting for private tuition and gaining exemption from certain subjects in the curriculum.

For 2004 a total of HUF 890 million was budgeted by the MoE for meeting national and ethnic minority objectives, which will be rounded out by a HUF 150 million grant from the 'Chance to Learn' Foundation. Of this, around HUF 330 million is earmarked for projects that concern the Roma community.

Table 5.3: Budgetary funding set aside for Romas by Ministry of Education in 2003-4

Reason for funding	Allocated funding (HUF x 000)	
	2003	2004
National and ethnic minority tasks	900,000 of which: 750,000 for Romas	
Social integration of multiply disadvantaged, primarily Roma youngsters (EU-funded PHARE project)		
Ethnic minority tasks		330,000
Minority nationality tasks		560,000
'Chance to Learn' Foundation		250,000

Source: Budget White Book

The MoE's budgetary provision for Romas will drop in 2004, as compared with 2003, but that will be offset by assistance promised by the National Development Plan under the priority that its Operative Programme for Human Resources Development's (OPHRD) gives to overcoming exclusion by entry into the labour market and a sum set aside for ensuring equal opportunities in the education system for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. The first three projects for which OPHRD has invited applications have been explicitly designed to complement the MoE's own efforts.

Under an allocation to fund institutional cooperation for supporting the integrated education of pupils with special needs, OPHRD will be providing HUF 600 million over a two-year period to finance the reinstatement to mainstream education of children incorrectly diagnosed as having learning disabilities. Institutions will be able to apply

for bloc grants of HUF 12-40 million, so that the total sum set aside is rather modest in relation to the number of potential beneficiaries.

The significantly larger sum of HUF 1,800 million will be channelled over a two-year period to institutional support for preparations to integrate pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, the goal of which is explicitly to reduce segregation between establishments. Under this heading, consortia may apply for grants of altogether HUF 12-15 million—a rather meagre sum that in itself begs the question of how effective it is likely to be. A tacit aim of the announcement was directly to offset the reduction in MoE budgetary support and indirectly to provide additional funding for foundation institutions. To have any hope of success, therefore, applications required that the consortium brings in at least one foundation institution. During the period over which applications could be made the only places with foundation institutions were located in regions with a high Roma population, thus the project made it possible for applicants—instead of implementing any actual inter-institutional integration—to set up their projects for adapting other experiences with integration. Many of the applicant consortia comprised schools that were distant from, and had no connection with, one another in addition to foundation institutions that were located even farther away. The biggest of the OPHRD projects, this can be predicted to have a very low efficacy.

The objective of the third of the OPHRD projects in the field of education is to boost the scholastic success of disadvantaged children by supporting extracurricular activities of model value. Again over two years, this will provide a total of HUF 600 million, with applications invited for grants of HUF 12-15 million.

According to the MoE's report for 2004, the skills development funding was claimed for 24,117 pupils in the programme's first school year, whilst local authorities claimed integration funding for 8,033 pupils in institutions maintained by them (see Table 5.4). To date 45 foundation institutions for integration have been set up, mainly in regions with a big Roma population. That means that the programme started in many schools without an adequate preparatory background.

Table 5.4: Numbers of local authorities claiming integration funding and number of pupils affected in 2004.

County	Total no. of pupils in general schools	No. of pupils in remedial schools	Covered by NNIE
Bács-Kiskun	10	358	
Baranya	28	437	yes
Békés	5	106	
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén	56	1,603	yes
Budapest	5 city districts	694	yes
Csongrád	10	219	
Fejér	9	185	
Győr-Moson-Sopron	7	18	
Hajdú-Bihar	25	1,017	yes
Heves	13	291	yes
Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok	13	517	yes
Komárom-Esztergom	7	161	
Nógrád	16	196	yes
Pest	14	161	yes
Somogy	20	366	yes
Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	50	1,407	yes
Tolna	7	154	yes
Vas	6	34	
Veszprém	6	30	
Zala	8	79	
Total	315	8,033	

Source: Ministry of Education.

NNIE = National Network for Integration in Education

The chances of, and obstacles to, an integration policy in education

The MoE is banking that its system of devices will be effective, and that by 2008 these will not only have halted but reversed the flow of non-Roma pupils away from schools where Gypsies are taught in significant numbers. It also fervently hopes by then to have

eradicated the practice of within-school segregation through setting up what the professional jargon refers to as ‘C’ classes [for ‘cigány’ = Gypsy]. Thirdly, it would like to cut the number of children being referred for remedial schooling to one third of the current rate of around 3,000 per year.

Several factors might hamstring the success of this integration policy. The school segregation of Roma children is not some isolated phenomenon but a part, indeed a consequence, of the considerable selectivity of Hungary’s school system and its guarantees of free parental choice of school. The policy of promoting the integration of Roma children thus runs counter to the school system’s ‘inherent’ inequality of opportunity and selectivity. Segregation is thus purely a part, indeed a consequence, of the complex phenomenon of inequality of opportunity in schools, and it has to be doubted whether it will be possible to reduce its extent in isolation from the wider ramifications of the equal-opportunities issue.

The other factor arises from this: the education policy decisions that have a determining influence on inequality of opportunity in schools are largely taken by each settlement’s self-governing local authority in line with what it sees as its own education policy and local development interests. The real condition for success of the central government’s integration policy will not rest solely on getting schools that already teach poor Roma children struggling with learning difficulties, or even children diagnosed as mentally backward, to sign up to the programmes but also on other schools being willing to cooperate and, crucially, non-Roma parents refraining from withdrawing their children to punish schools that do cooperate, and the extent to which the authorities that maintain a school are able or willing, or can be obliged, to adopt goals formulated by the ministry. Here local authorities are at an advantage even at the informational level, for although the ministry has made a big effort to adopt objective indices to define criteria for what is meant by a disadvantaged child, it will be near-impossible for the ministry to check the reliability of data supplied by individual school managements. Equally, it is left up to the schools how they tackle and eventually seek to change the number of disadvantaged pupils within the school. Actual segregation trends may be masked even further by such moves as amalgamating or separating schools or re-streaming pupils.

An urban lesson: ‘notional’ educational integration in Nyíregyháza

We shall endeavour to illustrate the chances of, and obstacles to, an integration policy in education through the concrete example of a thriving N.E. Hungarian county town that is run by nationally recognised politicians who side with the present government. One cannot, of course, generalise from single cases, still less see them as definitive; nevertheless this does offer certain lessons with a validity going beyond the town.

Nyíregyháza’s education policy is bound up with its leaders’ ideas about town redevelopment and managing the residential housing stock. To appreciate this, it is necessary to look at the town plan. There are two Gypsy colonies within the inner-city area: the 500- to 700-strong Orosi Avenue Estate, which is located along the thoroughfare that leads out of the town’s thriving ‘East End’, and a secluded pocket, called the ‘Hussar’ Estate, with an estimated population of at least 1,500. The local authority has a definite but not widely trumpeted redevelopment goal of being able eventually to demolish the Orosi Avenue Estate and move the families that live there into an expanded and partially modernised Hussar Estate. Romas live, or used to live, in other parts of the inner town, of course, but by targeted demolitions and house exchanges the local authority has prevailed upon the bulk of those who used to rent dwellings in the apartment buildings within the inner ring road to move out. A portion of the Roma families who reside in the town’s three big housing estates have been squeezed by rising rents to seek cheaper homes elsewhere. Since the 1970s, many Roma families have in fact moved into clusters of rundown hamlets on the outskirts of the town.

Inner-city Roma colonies

The Orosi Avenue Roma colony was built in the 1960s, when town leaders demolished Nyíregyháza’s two long-standing Gypsy shanty settlements and built a total of 89 small apartments consisted of a living room and kitchen with no modern conveniences. At that time the area seemed to be the ideal location for what was envisaged as only a temporary estate since the lack of piped water forestalled any thoughts about modernising the housing in that neighbourhood, and the town leaders did not reckon on it becoming a flourishing ‘East End’. That upgrading was the result of a decision, taken for purely prestige

purposes, to annex what had been the separate municipality of Oros to Nyíregyháza in the late 1970s, thereby increasing the county town's population to 100,000. The estate on Orosi Avenue, now firmly located within the inner-city area, grew in importance as industrial concerns set up offices, making the slum housing a growing eyesore in what was now an up-and-coming area. During the 1980s, half of the houses on the estate were knocked down and the families moved to the Hussar Estate. It seemed just a question of time before the remainder of the Gypsy homes on Orosi Avenue disappeared, but the few years that were left before the change in regime at the end of that decade proved insufficient to 'cleanse' the district completely of the temporary housing that still provided homes for substantial number of Romas.

By the late 1990s the continued existence of the Orosi Avenue slum estate had finally become intolerable, because it was hindering investment in, and utilisation of, one of the most valuable areas within the city. Growing numbers of people were arguing for the estate to be demolished, but no one had any ideas about where the families that were living on Orosi Avenue might be relocated. Whilst the basic services that were previously lacking had long ago been brought into the surrounding area, the 'temporary' homes still lacked not just bathrooms but even running water, with families only able to get this from hydrants in the street. There are too many inhabitants in this estate for them to be fitted into any other part of the city, but too few of them to be able to close in among themselves in a form of ghetto existence that would provide a measure of protection against the ever more hostile surrounding area.

The Hussar Estate is located in a more secluded area, shut off from the rest of the town by railway lines, a barracks and a zone of industrial development. The estate itself was originally built in the late nineteenth century as barracks for a cavalry regiment, with two-storey buildings as quarters for officers and this housing being bordered on two sides by long blocks of stables and quarters for the common soldiers. In 1957, the government handed the barracks over to the town council as a place to locate Soviet army officers who were posted to the town and, later on, the town leaders and top party officials. A total of 310 dwellings were set up in two phases, of which 229 were one-room houses with kitchen and bathroom in the former stable blocks. In 1958, a school was established in what had been the main administrative building of the barracks, and later on a nursery school and food store were opened.

With the arrival of the 1960s the town embarked on the construction of new housing estates. The population of the Hussar Estate was rapidly replaced, with better-off families acquiring apartments in the new housing estates elsewhere in town, whereas the estate, from the 1970s on, increasingly became home for Romas who moved into Nyíregyháza—and, moreover, through a far from spontaneous process. The town fathers were deliberately seeking to pump up the population but, at the same time, were concerned when those numbers came from Romas settling in the city. Their way of resolving this dilemma was for the housing authority to treat the Hussar Estate as the very bottom of the housing hierarchy, allocated to families that were in arrears with their rent and, to some extent, to incoming Roma families. Within just a few years the perceived status of the estate had altered radically.

The first scheme for reconstructing the Hussar Estate was put forward in 1989, after which it began to acquire an ever more strongly marked function within the town's structure, with growing numbers of people declaring that the estate's presence and redevelopment were indispensable equally for the town's further growth and for the management of its rental housing sector and its education policy.

Representatives of the town's developers were disposed to pay the price for demolishing the Orosi Avenue Estate, which was to expand the Hussar Estate. In addition the Hussar Estate homes were growing in relative importance within the available stock of rented housing as a good three quarters of Nyíregyháza's 6,920 one-time council homes were sold off to tenants, under the country's right-to-buy legislation, from the mid-1980s on. With sell-off arrangements now at an end, the town's local authority can count on three types of social housing being available for it to rent out: the remaining homes in tower blocks, the small units in houses that have been split into flatlets and old people's homes, and the dwellings in the two Gypsy colonies. The local self-government pursues a segmented approach to allocating its rented properties, with three different lists of names being drawn up. Thus, an expert committee proposes a 'basic' list to get on to which the crucial factor is not any social criterion but whether or not the selected family has a steady income and can be expected to pay the rent and running costs of the dwelling. A second list comprises those pensioners who are waiting to enter sheltered housing, whilst the third, so-called 'crisis' list covers mainly people who will be housed in the two Roma colonies. The local authority thought that renovation of the Hussar

Estate and also providing additional rental units would be advantageous even from the viewpoint of the town's three housing estates, since that would enable them to displace to them any tenants who were unable to afford the charges. The considerations with regard to education policy are more complex, but there are serious forces arguing that as many of Nyíregyháza's Roma children as possible should be directed away from other schools to the Hussar Estate elementary school with its already purely Roma intake.

An opportunity to refurbish the estate arose in 1998, when the Public Works Council invited tenders for redeveloping run-down estates in ways that would involve the labour of inhabitants on the estate. In the first phase of this programme, the stairwells of the two-storey blocks were painted, cellars were cleared, and pavements were laid in the narrow passages between the former stable buildings. Water pipes throughout the estate were re-laid and individual water meters set up for the single-room flats. The finances also ran to installing a Roma community centre.

A plan for the complete reconstruction and expansion of the estate was ready two years later. Within the scope of this large-scale project they were to complete the laying of sewerage to the estate, renovate the roofs of one-storey buildings, and connect all homes to the town's distance heating network. The small homes would be heated to a minimal temperature as a social benefit, paid for from the housing assistance that families receive in kind. If they can afford it, families renting the units may raise the temperature of their home at their own expense. Two approaches to expanding the housing stock have been put forward. Under the first of these, the town would set out building plots within the Hussar Estate or its immediate neighbourhood and then pick families whom it felt deserved to have the chance of having socially subsidised housing built for them. The second idea is counting on the likelihood that the Ministry of Defence, with major reforms of the armed forces in prospect, will soon wish to dispose of another barracks that lies close to the estate, which will give the local self-government the chance to acquire another complex of run-down properties. These properties could then be converted to rental housing units with finance from government grants.

The idea that the Hussar Estate needs to be redeveloped now has widespread political support in Nyíregyháza, but the actual aim has been rather shielded from those most directly affected, the Roma families that live in this and the Orosi Avenue Estate. This lack of frankness has to raise questions about the redevelopment of the Hussar Estate site, useful

though it would be. Unification of the two colonies is a taboo subject, with none of those concerned wishing to entertain the idea, because each set of inhabitants sees the other as providing a negative endorsement of their own position. Thus, the Roma families on Orosi Avenue have always thought of their status as being provisional and have not given up their hope that the town will some time, in some way—through allocation to rented housing, providing subsidies to build or purchase homes, or offering building plots—help them leave their slum housing. For them, however, a move to the much larger and ill-reputed Hussar Estate is in no way an appropriate alternative, despite the fact that the housing there is of better quality. The Hussar Estate families, for their part, consider that the influx of several hundred families from Orosi Avenue would have a devastating impact.

State education, segregation, integration

When it comes to inequalities in schools, perhaps one of the hardest questions to answer is the extent to which selectivity in the Hungarian school system is a product of deliberate processes. The status of general (elementary) schools is a function, first and foremost, of the success a given establishment has in picking its pupils by closing its gates to undesirable children who happen to live within its catchment area and to what extent it can make itself attractive to middle-class families that may live elsewhere. If ‘school-consuming’ parents reach their decisions by a process of weighing up rational factors, then a local authority would be able to regulate the local demand for places, and hence the degree of segregation in the state education sector, through the teaching programmes that it accepts and the financing it provides. The ratio of Roma pupils in a school, however, is an index that tends to override any sober criteria for school selection, such as the range of foreign-language teaching offered, the degree of subject specialisation, teaching approach, the provision of computers and other equipment, exam results, or the number of school leavers who remain in education. Most parents feel that the school of first choice has a decisive influence on their child’s chances, and the ratio of Roma pupils is certainly one—if not invariably the most important—factor that makes a school more or less attractive. Non-Roma parents object to having their children being taught alongside Roma pupils, even though they have no qualms about other areas of potential conflict in group education: an external value judgement is thus a more important determinant of a school’s status in the ‘market’ than actual experience.

The elected representatives who sit in local self-governments more often than not are happy to stand for the irrational ‘consumerist’ interests of parents who live within their electoral district, but a municipality’s leaders will sooner or later come up against the serious consequences of such attitudes. Nyíregyháza’s political leaders have recognised that control over educational processes has slipped out of their hands, and they are less and less in a position to make rational decisions when it comes to matters of investment, funding and education policy. An outline of the city’s general school system is given in the next section to illustrate this.

Élite general schools

For present purposes, the élite general schools in Nyíregyháza can be divided into three groups. Firstly, some schools (e.g. the inner-city József Bem General School) have very few or no Roma families living within their catchment area.

A second group that is attractive to middle-class parents consists of schools that employ a range of tactics to avoid having to admit Roma pupils. For the most part, these are schools that made a reputation for themselves before the 1989-90 change in Hungary’s political régime. The Zsigmond Móricz General School, for instance, can ascribe much of its prestige, and also the circumstance that there are hardly any Roma pupils on its roll, to the fact that during the 1980s it was allowed to instigate special courses in physical education and mathematics. The school’s current head still manages to keep the doors closed to children he sees as unwanted despite the fact that the nearby Hussar Estate and a fair few clusters of Roma hamlets to the south of the city fall within the school’s catchment area. Its counterpart is the Károly Vécsey General School, which is taking in growing numbers of Roma pupils from such hamlets and from the Érkert housing estate. There are also two neighbouring schools on the Örökösöld housing estate: one, the Ferenc Móra General School, lay the foundation for its still continuing exceptional status when the *Mátyás Hunyadi General School* was built nearby and some of the Móra School’s pupils were relocated to the new establishment. The Móra School’s director manipulated his political contacts to ensure that he got to pick which children would be relocated—an effect which has been reinforced since the change in régime.

Making up a third élite group are those general schools that do not have a prescribed catchment area and so are legally free to pick and choose who is admitted. These include

the Zoltán Kodály Music School, the two teaching practice schools of Nyíregyháza College of Education, and of course the various church-maintained schools.

Controlled selection

Nyíregyháza also has several educational institutions that have been established to handle particular teaching problems or accommodate children with special needs. The municipal education authority considered that it is best able to keep control over school mobility by partially segregating its chief ‘problem groups’, that is to say, children with mild learning disabilities, the partially handicapped, the hyperactive, the over-aged, early drop-outs, and pupils who come from low-income, isolated hamlets.

The *Viktor Göllesz Special General and Training School* was set up primarily for children with learning disabilities but has been complemented with a training school facility which endeavours to provide ‘auxiliary students’ with an opportunity for further education. Some 40% of these ‘auxiliaries’ are Roma. The *László Bencs General School* was also established to ‘take the pressure off’ regular schools by catering for children who, whilst not considered mentally handicapped, suffered from a variety of partial disabilities. Its function has in the meantime changed, with its being turned into a kind of school for ‘drop-outs’, which takes on youngsters of 14-18 years of age that other schools have not accepted or who have failed to attend or have been transferred from some other school for disciplinary reasons; it also provides tuition within the framework of ‘catch-up’ courses for vocational schools for some 30-40 city children who have failed to complete the 8-grade general school before they reach the age of 16. These courses amount to a cut-down training in which students are able to make good on Grades 7-8 of their schooling but are not obliged to complete Grades 9-10 before making a start on their training for a trade qualification, so they already receive some career orientation in the first year and some technical training in the second year. In the past there used to be a so-called day-release general school course for youngsters, a kind of ‘sink’ school that took children who had been discarded by the city’s other general schools. With Hungary’s declining birth-rate, though, any general school nowadays would think very hard before letting any pupil go, so there is no demand for such a facility.

Nyírszőlős General School and Student Home has likewise, through deliberate planning, become a place for pupils who would not be looked on favourably in most other

establishments. Lying about 12 kilometres to the north-west of Nyíregyháza's centre, the village of Nyírszőlős used to be administratively part of nearby Kótaj. As a result of a decision that the district made during the 1960s, a hostel was built to provide board for children from the more distant hamlets. When the village was subsequently attached to Nyíregyháza, the city authorities again came out with a 'two-track' solution, with a hostel that was in the city centre being designated a boarding school for gifted children, while the hostel at Nyírszőlős was given the task of looking after children with hyperactivity and behavioural problems. With growing numbers of Gypsy families moving into the hamlets around the city, more and more Roma children were to be found among the boarding pupils. In addition, a temporary home was sited next to the hostel, while in Nyírszőlős five lodgings were set up for children in state care. Around 20% of the school roll, which now numbers 300 children in 16 teaching groups, are of Roma background, but that ratio is rising among the younger pupils. Two thirds of those who complete their elementary schooling there go on to a trade school, but one third continue studies at a secondary institution where the high-school diploma can be sat. The suburbanisation of Nyírszőlős carries on apace, turning it into an increasingly attractive garden city, however the well-off families who are moving in are not sending their children to the local school but enrolling them in Nyíregyháza's inner-city schools.

A few years ago, those in charge of Nyíregyháza's educational policy decided to change the profile of *László Bencs General School* and as a result to enrol elementary school pupils with partial disabilities at *Gyula Benczúr General School*, where they are assigned to small classes with less demanding curricula. These small classes have been designated PHYMOLD classes (standing for pupils with physical, mobility and learning difficulties) for the freely acknowledged reason that they do not wish to alert parents immediately to the real purpose of the special training. The number of disabled children that it has proved possible to enrol in the school is much less than was expected: over a 5-year period they have only been able to start up two of these small classes. On the other hand, the school considers it a clear benefit that it is also able to teach disabled pupils from its own catchment area in such classes.

Through selective enrolment of pupils with special needs, the city hall leaders are unable to control the mobility of pupils in the education system, in large part because the ratio of Gypsy children in a school is a rock-solid index of its standing in the hierarchy.

Local authorities have no means of limiting parents' freedom to choose a school, but town leaders do not dare take the risk of trying to keep a tight hand on the schools' practice of freely selecting their intake of pupils.

Cat-and-mouse struggle

The process of segregation in Hungary's education system has been accelerating since the change in régime, with the advent of free choice of school as well as the opening of church-maintained and also private schools, and Nyíregyháza's leaders have no control over this. The model is simple: once the number of Roma children enrolled in a school passes a certain threshold it does not stabilise but swiftly rises, with non-Roma parents soon electing to take their children out and enrol them in another school, even if that is farther away, as shrinking school rolls, due to Hungary's ever-declining birth-rate, mean there is rarely any trouble getting a non-Roma child into any school. Meanwhile, in that first school within a few years Roma children make up a majority of the pupils and the total roll declines to the point that the school's continued existence may be threatened. The local self-government may eventually choose to close it down as being financially unsustainable and transfer the pupils to another establishment. The demographic trends might therefore work to promote the integration of Roma children, but instead the pupils from the closed-down school will almost always be transferred to a place that is already attended by a lot of Gypsy children, setting off the same process all over again.

The central building of the *Mihály Váci General School* complex lies in the Rozsrétszőlő district in the south-eastern part of Nyíregyháza, and of its three branch schools for outlying hamlet pupils the earliest to cease operation was the one at Butyka. Closure of the lower-grade school at Mandabokor, which is now down to just 28 pupils, has been halted by the local Slovak minority self-government on the grounds that the school provides Slovak-language tuition. In the branch school at Felsőshima, being taught in two merged classes, there are now just 23 children, all Roma: the reason for the decline in enrolment is clearly that non-Gypsy families have chosen to send their children to schools in the city centre. The Felsőshima branch was closed from September 2003, with most of the children being accepted by the Károly Vécsey General School, a school that (as noted above) already admits substantial numbers of Roma children from the hamlets out to the south and from the Érkert housing estate. Several others are now going to

Nyírszőlős General School and Student Hostel or to the school in the nearby village of Kálmánháza, which is closer than the city-centre schools.

To the south of the town, on the way to Debrecen, lies the village of Kistelekiszlő, where a local branch school of *Zsigmond Móricz General School* is located. As already noted, the latter is one of Nyíregyháza's élite schools, whilst in recent years Kistelekiszlő has become an attractive suburb into which many people have moved from the city—a process that has lifted its residential status but done nothing to help the school. Five years ago 130 pupils were going to the eight classes of this branch school, whereas today there are just 77 because the ratio of Roma children rose over the same period from 25% to 60%; the other children have been taken out by parents and sent to inner-city schools. Despite having two years ago sunk HUF 70 million into putting up a brand-new two-storey building for the lower-grade pupils, the self-government nonetheless decided in 2003 to close down the upper school classes. There is no question of those pupils being transferred to the main campus of elegant Móricz General School, even though the town centre is quite easily reached by bus. That is not the case, however, for the neighbouring hamlet of Borbánya, which may be closer on the ground than the city centre but, since it only has a dirt track to connect it with Kistelekiszlő, pupils will be faced with a walk of 3-4 kilometres each way to attend the school in Borbánya to which they will actually be transferred. A total of 44 lower-school children—virtually all of them Roma—will be left in the new building at Kistelekiszlő, and one can take it for granted that the life of this lower school are now likewise numbered.

The fate of the *Mátyás Hunyadi General School* that was built on the Örökösöld housing estate during the 1980s was already sealed when the existing *Ferenc Móra General School* on the same estate was allowed to pick the pupils that it would retain. With the Orosi Avenue Estate, one of the two main Gypsy colonies in Nyíregyháza, being situated not far from Örökösöld, some Roma children went to the Hunyadi School. The familiar segregation process, and the attendant drop in the school roll, speeded up after 1989-90, and within a few years a huge school building where 1,100 children had been taught by over 100 teachers was reduced to what is now a total of 283 pupils. In school year 2003-4 there will be no Grade 1 classes taught, because just 13 Roma children applied for places.

On the opposite side of Orosi Avenue, located in the Malomkert housing estate, is Gyula Benczúr General School. Currently, 20% of the school's 419 pupils are Roma,

though that ratio is increasing rapidly among the younger children, rising from 11% to 45% in the Grade 1 classes over the last four years, while the number of children entering that grade has fallen from 68 to 48. The school's experienced staff are well aware where this process will lead: if the contraction at *Hunyadi School* carries on, that will accelerate the pace at which enrolment at *Benczúr School* turns into a Roma-dominated intake as the Roma children from the Örkösöld estate will be going there. The staff at the well-equipped *Benczúr School* are frustrated as this is not what they had been preparing for a few years back, when they started advanced teaching in mathematics and computer technology for special groups from Grade 3 onwards. Based on indices of preparedness of children for enrolment at secondary level schools, *Benczúr School* is one of the strongest general schools in Nyíregyháza. In recent years, despite the high intake of Roma children, 36-45% of the pupils go on from there to high school—many to the city's most prestigious high school; indeed, *Benczúr School*'s leaders are fond of citing statistics to show that graduates of the school achieve better-than-average results. Nevertheless, none of this is capable of halting the process. The school is desperately attempting to stop the inevitable decline in overall performance by introducing internal selection, with children with disabilities being taught a reduced curriculum in separate classes (the above-mentioned PHYMOLD classes). Every effort is made to hide from parents who enquire about enrolling a child there the proportion of Roma children in the school, but the truth is only too evident on the first day of the school year, when typically five or six parents promptly withdraw their child. It is thus more than likely that September 2003 will mark the tipping-point when Roma children will form a majority of the Grade 1 pupils.

An all-Roma estate school

The Hussar Estate, as was pointed out above, came into being as the result of conscious decisions on town development and how social housing was to be distributed within Nyíregyháza. One outcome of that process is that the estate's general school is now attended solely by Gypsy children. Before the 1989-90 change in régime the town council did try to experiment with 'spreading out' the Grade 1 pupils, but it was forced to climb down when faced with outright resistance from the schools that were picked to admit the children. Subsequently, the local authority had to weigh up whether it would be

more expedient to close the school, and consequently relocate its pupils in neighbouring schools, or to maintain it as a school for the estate and turn a blind eye to the considerable costs that it incurs. It came down on the side of keeping the school on the estate and developing it. It has renovated what was once the sturdy main building of the original barracks, which was hard (not to speak of costly) to keep heated, introducing gas-fired central heating, and by getting rid of the few apartments that used to be on the upper floor space has been found for all the classes within a single building.

The task facing education policy makers in Nyíregyháza is somewhat similar to that for the estate as a whole. Over recent years, the city has invested several hundred millions of forints of its own resources to redevelopment of the estate and the school. The local self-government cannot be accused of ‘whistling’ for its money as the investments signal ever more clearly that estate and school have the function of becoming the place where the bulk of Roma families living in the inner-city area are to be located. Those who support this development argue that even as it stands the school would be capable of catering for a lot more pupils than it takes at present.

The eight-class school now has 104 pupils, and it has been stuck at around that size for years, even though double or even triple that number could be accommodated within the building. The school’s inventory of computers is now very out of date, and the sole foreign language that is taught there—the city’s only school that now offers this—is Russian. These limitations all inevitably restrict the opportunities that the school’s children will have to continue their schooling there, although the Roma Community Centre on the estate does what it can to make up for such deficiencies by, for instance, running English-language courses. All pupils who finish the Grade 8 year stay on in the school system, admittedly most of them only going on to a trade school and with a high drop-out rate. Years back, with assistance from the Soros Foundation, a ‘Step by Step’ teaching programme was introduced in the estate’s nursery and general school, the essence of which was individually tailored growth for the children, creativity, and regular collaboration with the parents. The city has contributed to defraying the additional costs of this programme even after the Soros Foundation ended its support. The school is thereby going against the general practice of schools in the same situation by experimenting with teaching methods that centre of the individual rather than falling back on mechanical conveying and cramming of data.

The school's staff are not frustrated by segregation so much as by the fact that the Hussar Estate is kept out of the integration programme, and thus denied the opportunity to apply for additional funding, on the grounds that the 'Gypsification' (and hollowing out) of schools that do take part in the integration programme cannot be stopped in any case. However, by making a big point of integration the ministry is actually punishing the Roma schools it claims to be helping. Their interest lies in having as many Roma children as possible enrol at the Hussar Estate school, and hoping that the ministry, when it acknowledges that nothing can be done to alter the situation, will eventually invite applications for grants by which it will fund Roma-only schools.

Bystanders: participants in the integration programme and their chances

In 2003, those in charge of education in Nyíregyháza decided that the city would become involved in the MoE's integration or anti-segregation programme, but they were also not keen to whip up any major conflict. The 'spreading out' of Roma or other disadvantaged pupils among institutions is not an aim of the integration programme, nor is the Hussar Estate's all-Gypsy general school nor any élite institution part of the programme—after all, two schools were able to block the transfer back to them of even pupils at their own 'Gypsified' branch schools on closure. The establishments, teachers and pupils who are involved in the programme are 'bystanders' in the Nyíregyháza school system: they are in a transitional phase and regard the integration programme in part as compulsory, or at least an inevitable acknowledgement of their situation, and hope the programme will assist them in their efforts to avoid closure.

It almost goes without saying that one of the five schools involved in the programme is *Nyírszőlős General School and Student Home*, the staff of which had no particular problems accepting it. The teachers there have long been accustomed to having a lot of pupils who are poor, from isolated hamlets, in foster care or Roma. The directors of the Mátyás Hunyadi, Gyula Benczúr and Károly Vécsey General Schools, on the other hand, fear that the programme might officially brand them, making them even more unattractive to parents in the majority society, and the same goes for the fifth establishment, the Garden City General School, which takes pupils from Vajdabokor and, to a small extent, the nearby Hussar Estate.

The integration programme here is a good deal less ambitious than the concept as originally elaborated by the ministry. For the ministry, integrated education implies that

participating schools do not experiment with internal selection but integrate disabled pupils with the mainstream and initiate activities to keep gifted children occupied. Of course, there already existed schools which had made a practice of integrating the disabled. At Nyírszőlős School, for example, a battery of tests is employed to sift out the disabled children, who are then allocated to separate development groups, to learn according to individual plans within their own special timetable but including some lessons that they take with children of their age-group in normal classes. To take another example, *Benczúr School* goes about this quite differently, with disabled children being separated in small PHYMOLD classes, in which they stay until they have finished their general school education.

A prospective development: unification of the two Gypsy colonies

Two of the five schools participating in the integration programme, the Mátyás Hunyadi and Gyula Benczúr Schools, are on the same side as the interest groups that wish to see the Orosi Avenue Estate demolished and the families who live there being decanted off to an expanded Hussar Estate, with the younger children being enrolled in that estate's general school. If the Orosi Avenue Estate were to be shut down, then both the schools would lose the bulk of the Roma children who currently live within their catchment area, and the hope that the schools might again be made attractive to middle-class parents would be revived.

The city has not abandoned its plans to unify the two estates, even though relocating the families from Orosi Avenue presents a considerably bigger task than was thought a few years ago. Certainly a start has now been made on increasing the housing stock on the Hussar Estate, with a first nine-unit block of single-storey rental apartments being completed in June 2004 and further houses earmarked for construction. The local authority is also dividing out land that it owns close to the estate to sell off for socially subsidised house construction, with an initial tranche of plots promised to ten families from the estate. A more rapid and large-scale expansion of the stock of rental apartments could be secured once they are able—as seems likely to be the case in the near future—to take over the neighbouring army barracks and refurbish the dwelling units there.

If the city authority manages to wind up the estate (as remains its top redevelopment priority), the bulk of schoolchildren from Orosi Avenue will be transferred to the Hussar

Estate school, with the Garden City or Károly Vécsey Schools as possible fallbacks. The objective of the integration programme will be accomplished, on paper at any rate, with the proportion of Roma pupils diminishing in at least two schools; meanwhile within the city as a whole the de facto segregation of Roma children will grow, and the cluster of ‘Roma schools’ will narrow.

The integration programme may well have the beneficial outcome that elementary schoolchildren who have to struggle with disabilities, hyperactivity or other learning disorders are not separated and pushed into remedial institutions, or not organised into their own study groups, but an effort is made to help them catch up within a framework of integrated teaching. Referral to remedial schooling in general might also decline, though it is not very likely that too many children who were earlier diagnosed as being mentally handicapped will be transferred to normal schools. And there is no chance at all of being able to halt the trend to growing segregation between institutions.

The city fathers are offering the Roma community a deal: insofar as they accept the social position that has been allotted them, then the local self-government will be a willing partner in obtaining the government funding needed to acquire the basic modern amenities, be that a matter of renovating a Roma colony or education programmes or integration within the state school sector.

Summary

The Ministry of Education’s visionary and even risk-taking determination clashes with the conflict-and-reform-shy policy line that has been taken by the government as a whole. The liberal-minded MoE leadership has evidently resolved that it will go to extremes in order to achieve its goal of a liberal dispensation in state education. The ministry is prepared to take on a maximum of conflict—within the limits set by Hungary’s equally liberal-inspired system of self-government—with the local authorities that maintain the schools. It should be made clear that freedom of teaching is a major principle in the country’s legal and institutional system, but complete freedom of choice over schooling makes it impossible to deal with segregation. The system of self-government, based as it is on a high degree of decentralised legislative and economic autonomy, is likewise a major principle of the country’s constitutional arrangements, even though the social priorities of

many local authorities differ considerably from those of the present government. The current régime in education is in effect destruction testing whether a liberal educational or self-government system is compatible with the principles of equality of opportunity, solidarity and a consistent stand against discrimination.

Nyíregyháza provides an example of how major socio-political objectives can only be accomplished through coordinated measures that span several government terms, and giving Hungary's Roma communities the chance to catch up with rest of society is nothing if not a huge task. The likely success of individual strategies pursued at ministry level is questionable. The programmes aimed at integrating Roma pupils within the state education system may well come to grief if the government meanwhile fails to make a start on demolishing segregated Roma slum housing; fails to create a supply of affordable rented homes for those strata in society who have no chance of entering the housing market; does not clarify the point of altering the system of social benefits; and does not instigate effective job creation programmes.

6. ROMAS AND ROMA AFFAIRS IN THE MEDIA

Thematic analysis aims, on the one hand, to find answers to the question of who is able to push or dictate, and how effectively, what the subjects of 'political discourse' will be on the front pages of newspapers or the headline items on television news programmes; on the other, it looks at what interpretation of these items becomes the benchmark for consumers of news. Since the immediate 'market rate' of news items relating to the Roma community is generally low, very little political capital rides on picking up these subjects. That is one reason why human rights organisations as well as Roma news agencies, information bureaux and internet news pages have assumed a greatly enhanced role in spreading 'Roma news' by uncovering and reinterpreting cases of discrimination, or interpreting and reinterpreting as cases of discrimination items presented by other sources. The weighting given to news items naturally depends on the decisions made by editors of the leading press organs, but Roma news bureaux are gaining in importance as primary sources of news and as secondary, sympathetically interpretative news services.

The great bulk of news items about Romas in the press are reporting on conflicts and usually setting arguments of a purely emotional or legal nature against one another; discerning analysis of the background to conflicts and phenomena is much less common. A Roma woman or man is still only ever allowed to be featured in the media labelled as a Roma, even in cases where the consumer is being told about achievements and successes. The foregrounding of legal arguments has at least given a touch more subtlety to the portrayal of Romas in the media, because the use of legal terminology offers the possibility of rational argument over conflicts, whereas the emotional approach more or less precludes that. Indeed, Romas might even come out of a legal debate as 'winners', whilst one is not likely to see a Roma come out 'on top' or even be portrayed sympathetically in an emotion-dominated clash. All the same, there are examples of how legal arguments have managed to play down the decisive element of a given item of 'Roma news'.

In the following pages a brief review will be provided of certain news items or subjects for which a legalistic argument or interpretation proved critical in how they were presented in the media.

‘News Story of the Year’: the Jászladány school row

There certain conflicts and stories involving Romas that are capable of stirring up a national political storm. One such in recent years was the furore in late 2000-early 2001 about a group of Roma families from Zámoly that sought and were granted political refugee status in France, and the closely related rush of overseas migration which led to the imposition of visa requirements by the Canadian authorities in December 2001. These controversies became headline news not just because ministers, party chairmen and heads of state debated them in detail but also because they threw light on genuine and serious social problems.

In 2003, as in the previous year, the ‘headline news’ was the continuing struggle over the setting up of a private foundation school in the central Hungarian village of Jászladány (see PFECMR Report 2002, pages 80-94). Much was at stake in this settlement of 6,000 inhabitants—specifically, would it prove possible, by using this approach as a new, legal model for segregating Roma children within the state educational system, to halt the drift of non-Roma children away from the local elementary school? Leading officials in the Ministry of Education also thought that a lot was at stake as the credibility of their entire integration (or anti-segregation) policy might rest on the outcome of the affair. The row stirred up extreme emotions locally, but for the wider public it was more through the legal aspects of the tussle that they followed developments.

The Parliamentary Commissioner (Ombudsman) for Minority Rights was right to regard it as an unparalleled abuse of the law that the village’s non-Roma majority population should be able to hijack Jászladány’s Gypsy minority self-government (GMS) to its own ends by electing four openly non-Roma members to the five-member body. One of those voted onto the body was the wife of the local mayor, who in the school conflict had taken up a position that was opposed to Roma interests, whereas even the GMS’s former chairman, László Kállai, failed to gain election. Kállai went on to set up a Jász Region Roma Civil Rights Organisation, but neither the GMS nor, as it turned out subsequently, the Minister without Portfolio with Responsibility for Equal Opportunities considered this as being a partner. The overriding of genuine representation of the Gypsy community had the effect not just of clearing what had been the main obstacle to the operation of the foundation school but also of magnifying a local dispute into a national political scandal. Up till October 2002, the new Minister of Education who took over

after that year's general election had been able to bank on the constitutional guarantees of cultural autonomy for ethnic minorities this time—as a rare exception—proving serviceable, so that even Jászladány's leaders would sooner or later yield to the opposition of the local Roma minority. After the hijacking of the GMS, however, the Jász-Nagykunszolnok County Administrative Office and its legal department as well as the Ministry of Education became directly involved. The media were no longer reporting on some local war over schooling but a political conflict of national significance, and one which moreover hung on several strands of legal dispute.

Up to the middle of 2003 what was at stake was whether the MoE would issue the *Mihály Antal Foundation General School* the ID number that was effectively its licence to operate before anti-discrimination clauses that were introduced as modifications of the Education Act could come into force. By August the parties were disputing the legality of enrolment at the school, as the ministry, having been obliged to issue the ID number, changed strategy: it considered that, with external financial assistance, the village's Roma pupils would be enrolled at the foundation school and, what is more, in sufficient numbers to achieve the real goal, which is that segregation between Roma and non-Roma pupils should be impossible within the education system.

In August 2003, though, the *Mihály Antal Foundation General School* rejected the applications of 101 Roma children, arguing that it had met its target recruitment numbers and could only accept applications from parents who had signalled their intent back in February 2003—and that despite the fact that the school was not granted the ID number it needed to operate until August. Later, the school's director, Ibolya Tóth, turned down the application forms for a further 19 Roma children on the claimed grounds that school did not have the capacity to take on more pupils, even though it had been licensed to take on 250 pupils and only 209 had been enrolled at that point. This was how teaching in a foundation school that hardly had any Roma pupils at all commenced at the beginning of September—in effect an institutionally blessed near-complete segregation of Roma pupils within a local education system.

It was virtually impossible for outsiders to keep track of the complex legal arguments between the Jászladány self-government, the county administrative office with its legal department, and the ministry, yet the media nevertheless managed to pass on its essence. One of the parties certainly got its standpoint across, since György Kolláth, who

was providing legal counsel to Jászladány self-government, made himself known to television studios as an expert constitutional lawyer. Kolláth argued that the sole right that a community's self-government has been left is the freedom of teaching: by creating an alternative educational framework, Jászladány wished merely to stop the village's non-Roma pupils being enrolled elsewhere. However, by its refusal to take on Roma pupils the school's own actions showed that there was no way children of Roma origin were going to gain admittance—an impression that was reinforced by the decision to hold the customarily public school-year opening ceremony behind closed doors, with security personnel in attendance. Viewers of one of Hungary's commercial TV channels had earlier learned from a hidden-camera report that Roma and non-Roma children were already being segregated before the foundation school was officially opened, which bore out the MoE's standpoint that the division of the *Jászladány General School* premises on which had been possible to establish the foundation school was not legal.

At the school-opening ceremony, the mayor asked the media to give the foundation school a chance to prove that it does not seek to discriminate against Roma children. He shrewdly recognised that with their victory in the legal battle for recognition the school and the self-government had the advantage, because they were now in a position to play the more gratifying role of the conciliatory party whereas their opponents were pushed, like it or not, into the role of discontented troublemakers who were seeking to stir up more strife. The Jászladány self-government had brought an 'integration committee' into being and the mayor "noted with regret" that neither László Kállai nor any representative of his Jász Region Roma Civil Rights Organisation wished to sit on this.

Orbán Kolompár, chairman of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government was the first person to offer himself as a 'peacemaker' in an attempt to settle the dispute. Not long after that, Katalin Lévai, Minister without Portfolio with Responsibility for Equal Opportunities, made a visit to Jászladány and likewise proclaimed that the foundation school should be given a chance. That statement ruffled a few feathers within the government team, since Bálint Magyar, the education minister, having pledged to stick with his very forceful earlier point of view, could hardly back down without losing face, yet equally he could hardly admit that his ministry was unable to get a village to implement its educational policy principles. The minister was thus left with no choice but to accept the conflict in his own person, along with its attendant political risks.

The Office of the Prime Minister would have been greatly relieved to resolve the matter. The chairman of the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities personally asked a conflict management expert to take part in the Jászladány ‘integration committee’s’ deliberations, thereby indicating that events in the community were on his agenda. The education minister, for his part, turned to Jenő Kaltenbach, the Minority rights ombudsman, who came to the conclusion that it had been improper to grant the foundation school an ID number in the first place as the very basis on which the school was brought into being lay fundamentally against the constitution. For consumers of the news, this represented the main rejoinder to György Kolláth’s line. According to the one line, what had happened was an assertion of the free will of a settlement’s majority community; according to the other line, an infringement of the constitutional rights of a settlement’s minority community. It proved impossible to settle this local row about schooling, because the matter was of much wider significance.

What did not become ‘News Story of the Year’: the Case of the demolished house at Németskér

Like the Jászladány affair, another story that started in 2002 (see PFECMR Report 2002, pages 101-103) and had its dénouement in 2003 could have been a big ‘Roma news’ item but was not because in this case the lawyers advising the local authority managed to defuse the ethnic angle of the case—the fact that local citizens in the village of Németskér, 10 km to the N.W. of the southern Hungarian town of Paks, with the connivance of their mayor, extensively damaged a house that a Roma family wished to move into. To recap briefly the events that led up to this: Paks’s self-government had pulled down several purportedly hazardous properties in the Bedőtanya area, on the outskirts of Paks, that were being lived in by Roma families. The plan had been to assist the families to relocate by paying for compulsory purchase of the land and properties, with the money being paid in escrow to a local solicitor. The families were given a free hand to look for dwellings in neighbouring villages. Both authorities and inhabitants of the villages around Paks reacted badly to this and vowed they would block any attempts by the families in question to move there. An all-too-familiar story with all-too-standard lines of argument: a prosperous town seeks to rid itself of some problem families in need of assistance at the expense

of poorer surrounding villages, which complain about ‘Roma exports’. A similar conflict blew up in 1997 around the fate of a group of Roma families from Rádió Road in the city Székesfehérvár. What happened next in the Paks case, however, cannot be regarded as standard, because members of the Németkér community took it into their own hands to wreck the house that one of the Roma families had actually purchased.

The incident threw light on one of the most serious socio-political dilemmas that Romas have to face. The Paks self-government really was trying hard to place the Roma families in question beyond its own administrative boundaries, albeit with subtler means than Székesfehérvár had adopted five years previously. The protests from the nearby villages and the wrecking of the house at Németkér are proof that areas of whole settlements or settlements up to a certain size, given effective help by their representatives and local authorities, are able to block attempts by Roma families to move in. The incident was front-page news in the autumn of 2002, with one of the committees in the National Assembly dealing with it as a major issue, while the minority rights ombudsman filed a damning report against Németkéri’s mayor with the local public prosecutor’s office.

Szekszárd Municipal Public Prosecutor’s Office, however, declined to follow up the case, claiming there was insufficient evidence that any criminal act had been committed. The Ombudsman filed a complaint but Tolna County Public Prosecutor’s Office in turn dismissed that on the simple grounds that it was true that an influx of Roma families was ‘bad news’. By April 2003, the police had closed their investigation and recommended that the prosecutor bring charges on the matter of culpability for the lower-value damage that had been perpetrated. This allowed the real essence of the events to be ducked. What the media were keen to report, above all, was that the Németkér self-government bought the wrecked house back and then handed it over to the local Gypsy minority self-government. In the final analysis, a case of relatively low-value damage is not something to get particularly worked up about.

Educational discrimination in Pátka

According to a report that the minority rights ombudsman published in February 2003, the community of Pátka, just outside the city of Székesfehérvár in Fejér County, was adversely discriminating against Gypsy pupils, because they were being taught a separate

curriculum, were made to use separate eating utensils in the school's dining room, and their native Lovári Romani dialect was viewed by their teachers as a social handicap. No one disputed these findings, but the case did not arouse much interest, despite the fact that the ministry put out a statement condemning the practice. Rather more publicity was received by a textbook on ethnic groups for lower-grade general school pupils in which there were several passages that more than a few people regarded as racist.

Ordinary cases of discrimination in the school system will only make headline news if there is some strikingly pictorial aspect that lends itself to a more or less tabloid-newspaper presentation. Thus, separate eating facilities or graduation ceremonies for Roma pupils are among the favoured topics of widely watched magazine programmes on the commercial TV channels. It was through a hidden-camera report that the general school of Bogács, a village just outside the town of Eger in northern Hungary, attracted attention a few years ago for making the Roma pupils eat apart from the others, whilst the segregated end-of-school celebrations in the more easterly small town of Tiszavasvári were the subject of another TV report. An emphasis on visual presentation, however, can make for superficiality, often failing to explain the background to incidents. Nevertheless, from time to time human rights bodies and Roma news bureaux will take cases they have unearthed and 'work them up' for the TV magazine programmes in order to get issues aired at all. If that works, they can then try to get more in-depth analysis.

Police brutality

News items in the press that deal with reported assaults on Romas by policemen have declined in 2003 as compared with analyses made a few years ago. Verdicts were reached in three court cases concerning such assaults. In all three the accused policemen were convicted and received a prison sentence, which was suspended in one case.

In the most serious of the cases, two policemen were convicted of having arrested a 17-year-old boy in the northern Hungarian village of Bátonyterenye, in County Nógrád, without informing his parents. Male members of the family had tried to make inquiries at the home of one of the policemen but found only his wife there. The frightened woman had then alerted her husband, who went to the Roma family's house with his partner but found only women and children there; nevertheless they sprayed tear gas on those pres-

ent and threatened them with their service weapons. The appeals court may have reduced the length of the prison terms that were set by the original judge but did not grant any suspension of the sentence.

Two policemen in the western Hungarian town of Kapuvár were sent to prison for obtaining statements under duress by punching and threatening a group of minors suspected of a burglary in order to extract confessions from them. The actual perpetrators had meanwhile given themselves up voluntarily.

In the third case, another pair of policemen, convicted of beating up a 14-year-old boy whom they had caught ‘poaching’ then forced to wade into the ice-cold River Tisza with his clothes on, had the prison sentences that they received in the court of first instance reduced to a suspended sentence on appeal.

The line taken by the police forces in each of these cases, on being given publicity, was to refute that there was any ‘ethnic character’ to the incidents; or to put it another way, they claimed that the fact that the plaintiffs were of Roma origin had no bearing on what had happened. The media for their part, however, would anyway have presented these as ‘Roma cases’ purely to increase their news value.

The other extreme is found with the sort of news items about Roma-police ‘clashes’ (or, for that matter, ‘socialising’) which leave the impression that it is a matter of wrangles (or dialogues) between the members of rival subcultures or fan clubs that do not get on with one another rather than about the legality, professionalism and moral impeccability of the work that is carried out by an armed organisation. Police chiefs occasionally say that they are looking for ‘channels of communication,’ though it is not at all clear who exactly they wish to communicate with; members of their force are learning the Lovari dialect and there is a long tradition of the annual football match between the local force and Romas. This downplaying approach came in with the change in régime, when skinhead attacks on foreign students in Hungary were reported by newspapers as if they were the clashes of supporters of Ferencváros and Újpest Dózsa, the two leading Budapest football teams: both sides were unpleasant, but that was no reason for making a fuss.

The convictions that were obtained in the above cases of police brutality may certainly be regarded as setting a precedent, however long it may have taken to obtain them, because custodial sentences against such culprits will ultimately force the police to look very hard at the legality of their actions.

Innocent parties remanded in custody

This relates to legal actions that are taken by Romas who seek compensation for being locked up awaiting trial for offences they did not commit. Thus, a diabetic man spent six months in custody due to suspected involvement in a murder case that, as was eventually demonstrated, he had nothing to do with. The arresting officers meanwhile announced at a press conference that they had solved the case and arrested the guilty party. In the action that he brought after his release, the man in question won a judgement of HUF 800,000 from the court.

Another, somewhat similar case stirred up a national outcry. The claimants, a pair of Roma brothers, had spent fifteen months on remand in connection with a murder case before they, too, were proved innocent. They sued for HUF 2 million each, but the judge hearing the case in the first instance awarded them HUF 1.2 million each. What roused widespread outrage was not the size of the award but the way the judge, in his reasoning, argued—with reference to a psychiatrist’s report that had been prepared in relation to the original crime—that in view of “their more primitive than average personalities” the plaintiffs “had not suffered the degree of psychiatric damage” during detention that the sum they had asked for would suggest.

The press, for the most part, managed to confuse the two aspects of the judge’s reasoning, the diagnosis of “primitive personalities” and the court’s opinion that these alleged primitive personalities had reduced the degree of harm that the plaintiffs suffered during their detention. The medical expert had pointed out that the diagnosis of ‘primitive’ merely meant that the claimants had little schooling, whilst their personalities were ‘simple’. The press walked into the trap by seeing the epithet ‘primitive’ as being the salient aspect, rather than questioning why, if a poor, unschooled innocent man was detained in custody, that should be treated as a less weighty matter in regard to compensation than the false arrest of a person with, say, a university degree. It should be underlined that the judge’s reasoning did not refer to lost income but specifically to damages of a non-financial nature.

The way the ‘primitive personalities’ case got picked up was not driven by Roma news bureaux but by heated exchanges over the case between the prime minister, the president of the Supreme Court, the minister of justice and the minority rights ombudsman. The prime minister made no secret of the fact that he was incensed by the reason-

ing given for the court's judgement, even though his post should have disqualified him from commenting on any on-going case. The minority rights ombudsman was a bit more circumspect, but he too made his opinion obvious. The president of the Supreme Court, for his part, roundly rejected an indeed distinctly unfair newspaper article penned by Gáspár Miklós Tamás about the work done by Hungary's courts, but the thrust of this outburst was actually directed at the prime minister. The blazing row about judicial independence, the bounds of criticism of the courts and the merits of the particular case was sterile: neither the prime minister nor the minister of justice disputed the principle that the executive arm of government should not give the impression that it had tacit expectations about how the courts should go about administering justice. The president of the Supreme Court, however, was demanding more than that—that it should be taboo for anyone to criticise sentences passed in court of law. In the case in question, the appeal court ruled to uphold the original judgement and merely struck the offending sentence from the written judgement. Despite the huge publicity it attracted, the case did not set a new standard that future judges could take as setting a precedent.

Training material for the European College of Law

In the year 2000 Debrecen Municipal Court passed judgement in a fraud case in which the tenant of a dwelling had 'sold' the property. The court ruled in the legal owner's favour and invalidated the sale agreement. The reasoning for the sentence mentioned that the tenant resembled the owner but "was browner-skinned and slightly Gypsy-like in his appearance." The court did not doubt the purchaser's good faith yet the written judgement still felt it proper to remark that, other factors aside, the swindler's "Roma extraction should perhaps have been cause enough for a greater degree of circumspection". On hearing the appeal, the Hajdú-Bihar County Court upheld the verdict but again deleted from the record those parts of the written judgement that referred to the tenant's origins.

A newspaper reported in 2002 on the written judgement of the Debrecen court, and pursuant to that the president of the county court warned the judge concerned. In 2003, however, the Roma Civil Rights Foundation called on the National Council for the Administration of Justice to state a position on the matter, and this was picked up by a national daily newspaper, thus promoting the case into a news item. The president of the county court was

obliged to reconsider the original municipal court verdict and concluded that the judge who had written the inappropriate judgement had subsequently realised he was technically at fault. By now, though, the matter could not be left at that. The Roma Press Centre pointed out that the county court had not warned the judge in question after it had heard the appeal but only after the newspaper article had brought it to public notice (admittedly still without eliciting any reaction) two years later on. The plaintiff's legal representative made a slip by trying to make light of the offending passages in the written judgement, saying there had been no need to be quite so frank. Though this lawyer was obviously not responsible for the wording that had led to the storm, his misfired jest did nevertheless help discredit the county court's explanation that it had been no more than a matter of a judge's slipshod phraseology in a written judgement. The president of the county court himself was guilty of an unfortunate choice of words in saying that the "careless" judge was in other respects "alarmingly well-prepared" —a stylistic howler that only made things worse, giving newspapers an excuse to poke fun at the judge's "alarming preparedness".

Final outcome: a national daily newspaper reported that the Debrecen Municipal Court judge's written judgement will be incorporated into the training materials on discrimination that are used by the European College of Law. The message is clear: norms that are still regarded as appropriate here in Hungary do not conform to rules of conduct and law elsewhere in Europe.

This 'Roma extraction' story is a classic case of how a 'dormant issue' can be reactivated into live headline news even years later. A clever and sustained piece of collusion between a civil rights body and newspaper reporters managed to raise a non-definitive local court judgement that the court system believed had long been forgotten into a news item that received national coverage. Roma news bureaux then exploited the situation by not allowing the case to be lightly dismissed. As a result, the written reasoning for the verdict in a years-old case—and moreover one that had been revised on appeal—was turned into precedent that can no longer be ignored.

Legal aid techniques

A Roma woman who had worked as a data recording clerk at the Ferenc Jahn Hospital sued the organisation for dismissing her on what she was convinced were racial grounds,

claiming that her former employer had subsequently hired a much younger, non-Roma woman for the same post. The Office for Legal Aid to National and Ethnic Minorities (OLANEM), which provided legal representation for the woman, based its strategy on the assumption that in this particular case the onus lay on the employer to prove that there had been no discrimination.

In another case OLANEM adopted a test approach to prove that its client had not been appointed to a hoped-for post on account of his Roma origins. Having previously clarified by telephone that his qualifications and experience met the needs of an advertised job at a printing works, a Roma printer was told that the post had already been filled when he actually turned up at the works. The printer then went home and telephoned again, using a fictitious name, to enquire about the post. He was again encouraged to go down to see them at the works. At this point he asked OLANEM to help. The legal-aid body made use of a Roma and a non-Roma test subject to explore how the printing works responded: they sent the Roma subject away but offered a job to the non-Roma.

OLANEM and the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) decided that they would institute proceedings against the Hungarian state at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg because the mayor of the N.E. Hungarian settlement of Gyüre, in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, had prevented a Roma woman from purchasing a house in the village, whilst the police had closed their investigation having failed to come up with any evidence of a criminal offence. The Roma mother of six children, whose house had been washed away by floods in 2001, wanted to buy a property in Gyüre with the help of a state subsidy. After the contract of sale had been signed, the village mayor had threatened the family that was selling the house that it would be set on fire if they were to sell to a Roma buyer. That evening, unknown perpetrators wielding axes battered down the gate to the property and threatened to kill the owners. A few days later, the Roma woman who was purchasing the property was invited to the mayoral office, where the mayor, the district clerk and the chairman of the local Gypsy minority self-government together 'convinced' her to abandon the purchase, alleging among other things that the owners were not legally entitled to sell the property as they were of Ukrainian nationality. The Roma woman was finally unable to cope with the pressure and signed a statement that she did not wish to purchase a property in the village.

The family that had been intending to sell the house reported to the police the threats that had been made against them, whilst the woman who had been intending to buy it

reported the mayor and the district clerk for abuse of authority and also instituted a suit for damages. OLANEM undertook to provide legal representation whilst the ERRC agreed to cover the costs. The unknown perpetrators were never found, and the local police closed the investigation against the mayor and district clerk on the grounds that they were unable to find evidence of a criminal offence having been committed. OLANEM appealed to the public prosecutor's office, but their complaint was rejected—as was the woman's case for damages.

In the wake of these reverses, OLANEM put forward another, rather similar case in which another Roma family had been prevented, in a similar manner, from purchasing a property in Gyüre, only this time the aspiring seller too sued for damages. Citing this, the legal-aid office applied to the Supreme Prosecution Service to request that a new inquiry be ordered into the cases—a request that was forwarded to the county prosecutor's office. That left OLANEM and the ERRC a third route—that of taking the case to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Cases of discrimination in the job and property markets form classical territory for human-rights cases. In view of the difficulties of obtaining hard evidence in such cases, Hungarian legal-aid bodies try to employ techniques that have proved themselves in other countries. What are required above all, both from the plaintiff and the plaintiff's legal representatives, are determination and efforts that may need to be sustained for years on end. The reward, though, is that this may make a 'front-page' story, if the case is successful.

It is evident from statements that come from job centres that discrimination is an everyday phenomenon in the Hungarian job market. OLANEM has for years been employing the above-described 'test' method to gather evidence that employers really have rejected applicants due to their racial origins. Discrimination in the property market, however, is still widely held to be absolutely natural by the Hungarian public, who look on the nearby presence of Roma dwellings as constituting a disastrous threat to the tone and market value of their area and property. That is true essentially irrespective of any actual experience of conflicts when living alongside one another, because values in the property market, of course, are not set by the owner of a property but by how the outside world views them. Even if they personally have few or no anxieties about living alongside them, most people would object to the nearby presence of Roma dwellings and find it quite in order that in certain areas people are not willing to sell a house or build-

ing plot, to let or sublet an apartment or room, to Romas. It is thus seen as standing just as much to reason that villages where no or very few Gypsy families have been living should do everything within their power to stop Romas moving in—most often by resorting to buying up any property in the village that is vacated. Gyüre’s self-government, by threatening both seller and purchaser, then underlining the threats by sending round ‘unknown’ house wreckers, had recourse to unusually crude methods. Despite managing to dig up a second case in the same village, OLANEM failed to make any legal headway.

Health matters

A Roma woman in N.E. Hungary who underwent live-saving surgery found that during the operation, without her prior knowledge or properly informed consent to the procedure, she had been sterilised. A legal action by the woman to obtain damages was dismissed by Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Court in May 2003. It turned out that although the surgical team had indeed got her to sign a consent form, the woman had not understood what the term ‘sterilisation’ actually meant. The court rejected the claim even though it found that the information supplied to the patient had indeed been inadequate. This was bolstered by the argument that sterilisation—albeit only in a negligible fraction of cases—was reversible, from which the judge concluded that “it has not been shown that the plaintiff has suffered a lasting deficiency through the loss of her fertility,” and even if she had done, then it could not be proven that “this was causally related to the surgical sterilisation procedure that had been undertaken in the hospital defending the case.” Even though OLANEM provided legal representation for the Roma plaintiff and ensured that the case and the verdict received publicity, they still did not manage to generate headline news from the story.

A considerably bigger response was prompted by a hidden-camera recording made in the Ferenc Markhot Hospital, Eger. An employee of the Roma Press Centre, presenting as a fake patient, made it known to the head nurse in the obstetrics department that “she would not like to be put together with Romas in the same ward.” By way of reassurance, the head nurse went straight to the point: “We have a designated ward for them, so we’re not generally in the habit of putting them in the same one...” The fake patient asked again if she meant separate wards, and the nurse confirmed that. The recording was

presented on a widely viewed magazine programme of one of the commercial channels. Although the hospital denied there was any segregation, the protests were none too convincing when set against the striking and quite unambiguous evidence to the contrary.

At this point, the Parliamentary Commissioner (Ombudsman) for Minority Rights opened an investigation, but the hospital—invoking patients’ data protection rights—refused to make the required information available, so the investigation got nowhere. The government did not take any action, nor did the Minister without Portfolio with Responsibility for Equal Opportunities make a visit to the hospital, claiming that she did not know what she ought to look for if she did. For all the publicity it was given and the indisputable evidence, the case had no genuine legal or administrative consequence. The only legal proceedings were suits that the hospital filed to obtain redress from a number of newspapers and the Roma Press Centre, which had sparked the whole thing off. Admittedly the verdicts in those case happened to bear out the essence of the whole affair, the fact that segregation was indeed being practised on the wards, even if the courts did find in favour of the plaintiff in regard to certain elements of the press reports. That was not newsworthy, however, which leaves the ultimate message that segregation of Roma and non-Roma patients may be a proven fact, but it carries no consequences. Even with such spectacular and upsetting cases, the Roma news bureaux were unable to get the problems that Romas encounter with provision of healthcare taken up by news media with the requisite vigour.

Evictions

The Roma Civil Rights Foundation embraced the cause of a group of families in Budapest’s Second District that were evicted by the local authority in 2002 without an appropriate injunction. The families found themselves having to seek temporary shelter in a workers’ hostel then, either with the Foundation’s assistance or, in the case of several individuals who had been in state care, with the housing subsidy to which they were entitled, moved into alternative rented properties.

In February 2003, the mayor of Budapest’s Twenty-second District agreed with the local Gypsy Minority Self-Government and the Roma Civil Rights Foundation that the local authority would accept a moratorium on evicting tenants until March. Until then they would find places for two previously evicted squatter families.

In June, the self-government of the small town of Sárbogárd, east of Lake Balaton, decided to evict two families that they had temporarily rehoused in 1999 after their home was swept away by flooding. Ombudsman Barnabás pointed out to the local authority that the families were still entitled to social welfare, but immediately remarked that he was only thinking of the provision of temporary living quarters.

Dunaújváros has such temporary housing, but the city's self-government decided in September 2003 that 30 families would have to move out of those quarters because the families were unable to pay the high rent—equivalent to that on a privately sublet room—that was demanded for the small (20 square metre) dwellings. In his recommendation, the minority rights ombudsman censured the local authority for its neglect of the buildings in question, as well as for having set such unrealistically high rents, and for not giving a timely response to the crisis. The city's General Assembly decided that it would consider the Ombudsman's recommendation as part of the agenda for its November meeting—six weeks after the deadline for the eviction order.

In November, the self-government of Budapest's Seventh District, with due regard to a moratorium on evictions during the winter months, relocated three families from a Garay Road apartment house that was to be renovated into temporary homes until March 2004. The families had previously been living illegally in nearby Király Road and had then been allowed to move temporarily into the Garay Road dwellings that they were now obliged to leave.

For many years, stories about evictions of Romas have followed much the same script: the press reports on crisis situations then, once the immediate panic has subsided, treats the matters as closed cases. The way the cases figure in the news, the events that led to this point—let alone solutions—tend to be lost sight of. The authorities ordering these evictions not only have a stack of regulations that they can cite but usually also do their best to stir up passions against those who are being evicted. The rights protection bodies equally seek to build on emotions when looking to the wider public for support. The Roma Civil Rights Foundation was able to report on successes, constructive discussions and sensible compromises in regard to its affairs in Budapest during 2003, though nothing at all was really solved: district authorities showed their readiness to defer evictions by a few months, but this did not fundamentally alter anything.

The problem of eviction for individuals who are involved in squatting or other forms of illegal occupation of homes, or what is pronounced to be such, is merely a symptom – a symptom, in part, of the dearth of construction of social housing for the rental sector and, in part, of the fact that, under existing legislation and interpretations of the constitution, the state has no direct responsibility for the housing of its citizens, or that responsibility is limited solely to averting direct threats to life. Arguments advanced by the general and the minority rights ombudsmen were just water off the backs of the local authorities in Sárbogárd and Dunaújváros. That is why stories about evictions, which are usually Roma causes, can only be pitched at the level of emotions, not in legal terms. Unlike with educational or discrimination cases, the press is not interested in communicating arguments and counter-arguments about legal principles but pictures of crying children, angry officials, and possibly acts of charity.

Roma colonies

The Gypsy Minority Self-Government in Tápiószecső, a community on the eastern fringes of Budapest, appealed to the National Public Health and Medical Officers' Service (NPHMOS) and the regional environmental protection inspectorate when an illegal rubbish tip was established near a local Roma colony. The NPHMOS established that the dump presented a danger from both general public health and epidemiological standpoints; locals spoke less delicately about rats and asthmatic children. The local GMS threatened to take legal action against the local authority because in its opinion the latter had taken no steps to end the illegal dumping of rubbish.

Much greater publicity was accorded to a matter that was of lesser significance: the town of Keszthely, at the southern end of Lake Balaton, built a plank fence to hide a group of dilapidated houses for Roma families from the view of foreign tourists who holiday there in the summer season. In the wake of this being spotlighted, the city ordered the fencing to be pulled down.

One of the national daily newspapers provided a summary of the situation in Tápiószecső, then a few months later the NPHMOS in N.E. Hungarian Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County diagnosed a case of infective hepatitis A in a Roma colony in the town of Ózd. There are few hard data firmly linked to such colonies, so at best it is only the

problems of illegal rubbish tips (and more generally the proximity of many colonies to rubbish tips) and public health service investigations that provide any substantial material. The case of Tápiószecső is important because expert reports may be crucial in deciding between the two parties. Otherwise, though, the national press offers only superficial reports about Roma colonies.

A public official's race-hate statements

In the Pest County settlement of Piliscsaba, the local foster-care administrator saw the deputy clerk, Noémi Toldi, to sort out some cases relating to state subsidies and child protection. In response to a question from the deputy clerk, the administrator stated how many Romas were living in the settlement, at which the deputy clerk exclaimed, "My God! That many! What a pity Hitler didn't start with them." The remark angered not just the administrator but the chairman of the local Gypsy Minority Self-Government, who happened to be waiting in the ante-room and heard what was said. Through the mediation of the Roma Press Centre, one of the commercial television channels made a report on the case, thus turning it into a news item with coverage that provoked a national outcry.

The local mayor at first tried to brush the deputy clerk's remark aside, saying that it was not his job to investigate whether the incriminating sentence had actually been uttered: "Everyone is entitled to a presumption of innocence, and meanwhile the representative body has more important business. No one wants to play Sherlock Holmes." The only trouble was that at the request of the under-secretary of state for Gypsy affairs, an investigation was opened by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Minority Rights, and he proposed that disciplinary proceedings should be started, with the deputy clerk being suspended from office. The National Assembly representative for the district demanded an immediate inquiry and stated that if the accusation were to hold up, then the deputy clerk should be dismissed from her job. The local German and Slovak Minority Self-Governments came out solidly behind the Romas, and even the chairperson of the notarial section in the Union of Hungarian Civil Servants and Public Officials felt that Piliscsaba's deputy clerk could have no place as a public official if the accusation were shown to be true. The local authority was ultimately forced into initiating disciplinary proceedings and suspending the deputy clerk whilst an inquiry proceeded.

There is no question that the Roma news bureaux and minority group leaders were keen to exploit the situation for all it was worth and finally see a precedent being set. There had been no precedent in Hungary of statements of this kind uttered by a mayor or other public official having any serious consequences. To take just three of the more noteworthy cases of recent years: in connection with the Zámoly affair, Dezső Csete, mayor of the Fejér County community of Csór, was caught on TV cameras declaring that, “There is no place for Romas among people in this country, because parasites are cast out in the animal world as well.” Károly Laczkó, an earlier mayor of Sátoraljaújhely, went on record just as publicly voicing his conviction that Gypsies were genetically prone to criminal behaviour. Then too there was a statement by Péter Szegvári, a former under-secretary of state in the Ministry of Health, who came out with a statement that Gypsies ought to be given free supplies of contraceptive pills because they had too many children in relation to their living conditions.

The immediate stake in the Piliscsaba case is whether or not the deputy clerk will be dismissed and thus some limit is drawn as to what behaviour can be considered unacceptable from a public official.

Press on the press’s image of the Romas

The weekly periodical Magyar Fórum was bound over by the Metropolitan Court of Justice to pay a fine of HUF 100,000 and also damages of HUF 80,000 to a Roma plaintiff who, with OLANEM’s assistance, had instituted legal proceedings against the magazine for an article that it published in 2001 under the title “Gypsy reign of terror in Pánd.” The article alleged: “By committing the most diverse, frequently cruel criminal acts, the 300 Gypsies living in the community are able to terrorise the Hungarians who still, for the time being, form the majority of its inhabitants.” The report mentioned “a capo of the Gypsies” and a “K clan”, and the court found in its judgement that the magazine had infringed on the personal rights of ‘K’—that is to say, László Kolompár, the plaintiff. The verdict nevertheless still threw no light on what was actually the main point of the article, the intention to foment hatred against Gypsies.

In July 2003, three Roma girls, one of whom was a minor, were subjected to a routine ID check by police in the Józsefváros inner-city district of Budapest. The policemen were

accompanied by a photographer, who took pictures of the girls but did not inform them that these were being taken to appear in the police force's in-house magazine, Zsaru ['The Fuzz?']. A few days later, the girls saw themselves in the magazine with a caption stating that this was a picture of prostitutes. The magazine's editor-in-chief regretted the "inadvertent error", but the girls were not content with that and started proceedings to recover damages. This is not the first time that Zsaru has been involved in a case of this kind.

The National Radio and Television Board (NRTB), which is charged with supervising Hungary's broadcast media, ordered that Commercial Television "Channel Two" cease transmission for half an hour in April 2003, based on its finding that the Channel had infringed the Media Act by broadcasting a programme entitled 'My Frigging Huge Roma Wedding' [Bazi nagy roma lagzi] on 30th March 2003.

The finding against Magyar Fórum did not arouse a great deal of interest, much as the action taken against Zsaru was not thought important enough to be mentioned outside the Roma news bureaux. TV2's 'My Frigging Huge Roma Wedding', however, kept headline writers busy for weeks, whilst the NRTB's decision could be seen as groundbreaking because it represented the first time in Hungary that a broadcasting authority had censured a programme for making purported comedy at the expense of Romas. The most unloved minority groups—the Romas first and foremost—regularly find themselves the targets of the most boorish comic banter. The comedian will trick out the butt of his derision out in some arbitrary comic garb and then proceed to make fun of him or her. The funsters assume that representatives of the target group have two options: either to grin and bear it or to be offended, with the former being seen as more agreeable than the humiliating role of the person who is not a 'good sport'. That there might be a third option—to sue—was a surprise.

Half a year later, one of the popular programmes on a rival commercial channel "RTL Club", the 'Fábry Show', got invited Roma guests to don stereotype costumes, and the host, while slapping their backs, made fun of these strange beings. Laughing along with him were his guests, Gypsy 'voivodes' or clan heads—in reality, overweight entrepreneurs in gold chains—who mouthed off about money being the only thing of any importance, and even today a voivode will decide between parties who are in dispute. Government ministers, the NRTB and leading Roma intellectuals strive to put a brave face on it.

7. EVENTS IN GOVERNMENT, POLITICS AND SOCIETY

“... A review of the activities of the new government to date shows that ambitious plans are being drawn up, but we are awaiting concrete actions. It therefore seems fair to call 2002 a year of change and expectations,” was how we ended last year’s report. One had been expecting to see some major breakthrough or results in 2003, but it has to be admitted that those expectations have been disappointed. The initial momentum ran out, and with nothing happening that was backed by genuine vision or political will, one can speak only of idling or marking time.

Embroidments around the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government

January 2003 started with the electoral assembly of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (NGMS) and the associated scandal. That scandal was not to be imputed to the Roma themselves, as many would have liked to believe, but to the inherent explosiveness of the legislation and electoral arrangements relating to Hungary’s national and ethnic minorities. The fact that they surfaced now for the first time, however, was a product of genuine political rivalry. This was the first occasion on which a political force that looked capable of replacing the Roma leaders who had dominated the body over the first two parliamentary terms was offering itself for election to the NGMS council. Naturally, that did not go down well with the group that had been enjoying undivided authority up till then. That in itself would not have been a particular problem. What compounded the situation was the absurdity of the regulations, which required those who were entitled to vote in the elections—more than 4,000 electors—to be herded together into a single venue and, if possible, kept together until the elections had been completed in a process that lasted the best part of a whole day. Most of the electors had set off from their rural homes at dawn and, not surprisingly, began to flag after a while, with verbal sparring and political dissension descending to roughly the same low level as was seen during the campaigns for the country’s general election in 2002. When it became clear to the coalition group that had been holding power that they were not going to win this time round, they walked out of the election venue. The election itself went ahead, of course, and the

National Electoral Commission declared that the members of the Democratic Roma Coalition had been victorious.

The losing Lungo Drom coalition under Flórián Farkas lodged a protest. On paper, there was little chance of this being accepted, as everything had taken place by the same procedure, not so much laid down in law as sanctified by custom, as had been adopted during the previous two terms. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court allowed the appeal and ordered a rerun of the election. The principal argument in the reasoning behind this judgement was that by the time the final vote was taken there were no longer the requisite 50% of electors present as prescribed by the relevant rule. The relevant rule, however, merely stipulates that this quorum must be present when the electoral assembly commences, making no reference to final votes—and that was indeed how both the NEC and the Supreme Court itself had previously interpreted the rules. Given the new interpretation—under which elections to the previous two NGMS councils must equally have failed to comply with the law—it seemed necessary to announce a new electoral assembly for early March. The lack of rules, coupled with this approach to interpreting what rules did exist, had placed a powerful weapon in the hands of political groups that are about to lose, because they were able to invalidate an election simply by walking out of it. Thus, there was every reason to fear that a NGMS might not be formed at all. It is typical of the continuing legal uncertainties that the various parties kept on appealing to various forums to request that a ministerial commissioner or government commissioner be ordered, or international observers be sent, to scrutinise the new election. Given that, the members of the Democratic Roma Coalition won a surprisingly smooth rerun election by a huge majority, with only two members of Lungo Drom gaining seats in the new national body.

This was far from marking an end to the shenanigans that had arisen from the lack of clear rules, as for a good three quarters of the year the NGMS provided the public with a talking point that pushed any other issue relating to the Romas into the background. ‘Ructions’ continued already at the inaugural session of the new NGMS, but now they were between members of the newly elected Democratic Roma Coalition. With several individuals aspiring to chair the body, the candidates persistently questioned any steps taken by their rivals, because the rules, as they stand, fail to specify who is authorised to call an inaugural session of the NGMS, and when. At the inaugural session which was eventually convoked, where still more rough stuff was on display to the press, the NGMS elected Aladár Horváth, a Roma politician with a reputation as something of a radical, as their chairman, which prompted one

of the parties within the Democratic Roma Coalition to withdraw from participating in NGMS business. Mr Horváth's election not only surprised more than a few but even caused a fair amount of consternation, because in the past he has roundly condemned the entire system of minority self-governments as backward, a form of 'institutionalised segregation', and thus ripe for abolition. Whether that is the direction in which he would actually have pushed matters we were never to find out. After three months, during which Mr Horváth had been endeavouring, if anything, to assess and consolidate the situation in which the NGMS found itself, Orbán Kolompár, the body's dissatisfied deputy chairman, along with representatives of the organisation that had walked out of the inaugural session, made use of a motion of no confidence to turn Mr Horváth out of the office he had only just taken on. The chairmanship was taken by Mr Kolompár. The ensuing months were characterised by proceedings that the two rivals instituted against one another to bolster or query legal interpretations, and then by Mr Kolompár's efforts to consolidate his position, rather than by any substantive progress.

In summary, then, the evolution of events in connection with the NGMS can be seen as a perfectly natural process, with nothing happening other than the deposal of an 'old guard' leadership followed by the deposal in turn of Aladár Horváth, a person with support mainly among the Roma (and non-Roma) intelligentsia of Budapest, by Orbán Kolompár, a successful entrepreneur, whose base of support was among Roma politicians and leaders of areas outside the capital. The only trouble is that it all took place at the cost of extraordinary antics that detracted from Roma politics, and hence the Roma community as a whole. The underlying reasons for that are surely to be sought in something that has long been evident: the inadequacy of the legislation that covers minority group rights. Amending that, however, is a matter for the 'grand politics' of the National Assembly.

Governmental Roma policy

The government's programme gave space to ambitious plans for improving the living conditions of Hungary's Roma population, while the activities of the Office for Roma Affairs that began work in 2002 promised a fundamental shift in ways of thinking as well as genuine changes. Those fond hopes were soon dashed, however. For the first time ever, four representatives of Roma origin had been returned to parliament, and the expectation was that they would at last be drawing attention, compellingly and often, to the hard and des-

perate situation of so many Romas in the country. There was even a fleeting thought that they might be able to set party-political differences aside to push, in an eye-catching way, for the interest's of Hungary's Romas. That did not happen. Two of the four representatives have still (in late 2004) to make their maiden speech to the National Assembly, whilst of the other two, Flórián Farkas has taken the floor on five occasions, László Teleki on three, to burden the attention of their fellow representatives on the subject of Roma problems for a sum total of 22 minutes. Commentators—and possibly Romas too—had counted on more than that. Party discipline may be important for their personal futures, but in knuckling in to it these representatives are letting a historical opportunity slip.

László Teleki, for his part, was given the chance to do something in his government position. His sphere of authority as a political under-secretary of state was constitutionally more than a little suspect from the start, considering that he was given the task of giving shape and definition to the government's Roma policy by guiding and influencing ministerial commissioners and Roma rapporteurs appointed by the various spending departments. It rapidly became apparent that this was a trick that was going to be near-impossible to accomplish in practice. For one thing, the process of appointing people with departmental responsibilities trickled to a stop, and even in departments where ministerial commissioners and Roma rapporteurs were appointed, this was to civil service posts under the control of the ministry concerned, leaving Mr Teleki with no real say in their work or their sphere of authority. However good their intentions might be, the young Romas who were appointed to the positions turned out to be essentially powerless: as beginners, with only slight administrative experience, they were at the bottom of bureaucratic apparatus, which meant that they were at best onlookers rather than actual movers when it came to their department's Roma-related programmes. A sole exception to this was Mrs Viktória Mohácsi Bernáth, whom the junior government party, the SZDSZ, nominated as ministerial commissioner in the Ministry of Education. She encapsulated the SZDSZ's ideas on Roma policy and was given both the support and chance to put a plan for integrated education into practice. It is premature to pronounce on the yields of this undoubtedly forward-looking intention, but among commentators and interested circles there are already serious debates about the basic principles and practicalities of the programme (as discussed in earlier sections of this Report).

The objective that led to the Roma Affairs Council being set up met a similar fate. This was originally intended as an advisory body of outstanding Roma and non-Roma figures,

chaired by the prime minister himself, but a substantial number of those who sat in the body were looking to have a say in the shaping of Roma policy. It gradually turned into little more than a ritual body.

The greatest expectations were placed in the Office for Roma Affairs. A body that was conceived as concerning itself fundamentally with strategic planning, its administrative and managerial status were placed on a shaky footing. Like László Teleki's post, this body came under the purview of the Office of the Prime Minister, headed by Elemér Kiss, with its direct running being overseen by Judit Berki as a deputy under-secretary of state. The links between the two, however, were unclear from the start, resulting in some curious situations.

A typical instance of this was the matter of the revision of the government's package of medium-term measures. Experts and officials within the Office for Roma Affairs—picking up on a policy decision that was also being pushed by the under-secretary of state—were among those who considered the matter, and they concluded that a totally new programme was required. The programme that emerged in the course of strategic planning was one that promised a quantum leap ahead if it were to be implemented. Whilst the interministerial reconciliation process was going on, it became clear that it would be impossible to carry out the new programme: as a rule, such comprehensive plans can only be realised by a whole-hearted concentration of resources, but in this case the political will did not stretch that far. The regular ministries wished to continue with their earlier practice of deciding for themselves what sort of Roma-related programme they wished to implement, and how much of their budget they wished to devote to this. Decades-old and ineffective as it is (as research has all too vividly displayed), this procedure is still the easiest to operate and is what continues to receive political support. No one had the will to produce real changes in the circumstances that Gypsies have to deal with through a programme of targeted and concentrated measures. Indeed it would be fair to say that increasingly, even at government level, a notion that 'there is no longer a Gypsy Question' has gained currency, which more or less condemns any institution or programme that is specifically aimed at Romas, since that is seen to be a form of segregationism. More and more this is being replaced by so-called equal-opportunities policies in which there is no separate programme involving Gypsies, but the Gypsies are included as part of some wider target group that needs to be addressed. This policy switch has made the Office for Roma Affairs totally redundant: it has been in no position to implement its strategic programmes and has increasingly been going through the administrative motions, with most of

its staff's time being spent dealing with irrelevant issues. They might just as well be giving their opinions about proposed changes to the Highway Code or Animal Protection Act.

Given all this, governmental Roma policy is defined by issues that look spectacular but do not actually affect the mass of Romas. The cause of demolishing the country's slum colonies, still not embarked on to this day, sprang up like an underground stream, with committees being formed and then wound up. The real successes, as with the previous government, were those achieved by distributing subsidies and other not particularly large sums of money, not least of them that perennial 'hit' of scholarships.

Contributing to a gradual worsening of the situation was an inability to take decisions coupled with constant changes. First Elemér Kiss was replaced by Péter Kiss at the head of the Office of the Prime Minister, then in the middle of 2003 Katalin Lévai was appointed Minister without Portfolio with Responsibility for Equal Opportunities. Each and every such change would mean time waiting to find out what ideas the new person had on a given issue, and whether the programmes elaborated to that point could be implemented or would need to be revised. The biggest change was undoubtedly the one that ensued from Ms Lévai's appointment, given that it represented the definitive triumph of the line of thinking that denies the existence of a 'Gypsy Question'. According to its adherents, programmes of this kind merely intensify the isolation of Gypsies, since they primarily address social issues and thus should be dealt with as a part of general social policy. Anything that is 'left over' can be handled by equal-opportunities policies, the current targets of which are women, the disabled and the Romas. The present author considers that this is a fundamentally flawed approach. Putting together groups that are struggling with very different types of problems, and consequently require different solutions, and calling these a 'community' is to condemn the policy to fail from the outset. It will still not avoid setting the groups, each with its own peculiarly disadvantaged situation, against one another when it comes to the budget spending round.

This is the school of thought that gave rise to Law CXXV/2003: Promoting Equal Treatment and Equality of Opportunity, the long-missing anti-discrimination measure that the EU has been expecting to see enacted. The legislature has now defined the types of discrimination that are to be recognised in Hungary's legal system. That said, however, there has been much criticism of the way in which the widespread discriminatory practices that afflict Romas are again lumped together with the totally different kinds of problems of the physically disabled, gender identity, etc., which many found offensive—to say nothing of

the fact that no institutions have been established to uncover and deal with cases of discrimination. This, then, is yet another case of a necessary piece of legislation being enacted without the backing of an effective system of sanctions.

If anything, the new approach to the Ethnic Minorities Act came off even worse. The gaping flaws in the election procedures for minority self-government bodies, as well as the frequently insoluble tangles that have been experienced during the operation of those bodies, prompted the legislature to speed up reforms. Questions of registering members of minorities and passive or active eligibility to vote, however, were just the opening shots in a series of protracted debates. A new draft bill was produced, but nothing has been heard since then about its presentation for parliamentary approval. Instead, those who cared to were able to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the feeble Ethnic Minorities Act that currently operates and the absurd situations to which it has given rise.

By the end of 2003, the fate of the Office for Roma Affairs had been sealed. Following Katalin Lévai's appointment, the question of whether it would remain within the Office of the Prime Minister or whether it might be bundled up with the areas over which Ms Lévai had surveillance, and thereby create a quasi-ministry, was left in abeyance for a long time. The decision finally came down in favour of the latter solution. A Government Office for Equal Opportunities was established, with Roma affairs being adjudged a full-blown department within that. As subsequent events have shown, this seems to be every bit as misguided a move as the previous government's decision to delegate the 'Gypsy Question' to the Ministry of Justice, but it is entirely of a piece with idea that there is no such thing as 'Roma affairs'. Mr Teleki is now left even more in a constitutional vacuum, whereas Judit Berki, having no wish to be part of this set-up, resigned from her position. This has left the Roma cause, which started off so encouragingly after the change in government in 2002, effectively in limbo.

To sum up, the events of 2003 can only be viewed as a great disappointment. Progress was seen at most only on the much-discussed matter of student scholarships; in every other area one can only speak of 'stagnation' at best. The demotion of the self-standing Office for Roma Affairs, in our view, represents a major setback. The positive signals that were sent out after the change in government having died away, with the best will in the world one can only call 2003 a year of standing still.